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**Iberian Theology
and Contemporary Challenges**

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INTRODUCTION

The current issue of AUC Theologica is dedicated to the theme of Iberian theology, exploring its historical depth, theological innovations and contemporary relevance. The articles in this special issue examine the distinctive theological contributions from the Iberian Peninsula, highlighting their impact on anthropology, liturgy, cultural memory, and poetic expression. This issue underlines how Iberian theology engages with modern challenges while remaining deeply rooted in its historical and spiritual traditions.

At the same time, dialogue between Iberian theology and the wider theological traditions of the West and East remains an essential task. Theological discourse, shaped by historical and cultural particularities, benefits greatly from encounters between different traditions that share their historical riches in different ways. The Western theological tradition, with its philosophical precision and institutional frameworks, and the Eastern tradition, with its mystical depth and patristic continuity, offer complementary perspectives that enrich theological reflection.

Looking at Western Europe from an Iberian perspective has a unique significance. Historically, Iberian theology has maintained both a critical and a creative engagement with theological developments in Western Europe, especially in relation to the Reformation, Enlightenment rationalism, and modern secularisation. While sharing common theological foundations, Iberian theology has its own way of integrating spirituality, historical consciousness, and a strong connection to the social and cultural realities of the Global South. Moreover, the richness of Iberian theology lies in its interdisciplinary approach, drawing on philosophy, literature, anthropology, and the arts to construct

a theological vision that is both contextually relevant and globally engaged. While focusing on Iberian theology, this issue invites further engagement with the theological voices of Eastern Christianity, fostering an ongoing conversation between different theological traditions that can illuminate contemporary ecclesial and cultural challenges.

The first article, “Behold the Human Being”: Messianic Anthropology for Our Times’ by Enrique Gómez García, provides an in-depth analysis of Xabier Pikaza’s theological contributions, focusing on his concept of messianic anthropology. The article traces the development of Pikaza’s thought over nearly half a century, illustrating how his theological project addresses contemporary crises such as economic inequality, exclusion, and social violence. Through a Christological lens, the study proposes a theological anthropology rooted in gratuity, poverty, and universality.

Alfredo Teixeira’s ‘Christian Memory in Contemporary Music Creation: Tensions and Transitions’ investigates how contemporary musical compositions engage with Christian memory within the framework of secularised modernity. The article critically examines the reconfiguration of religious elements in contemporary musical aesthetics, drawing on Max Weber, Theodor Adorno, and Michel de Certeau. It argues that religious symbols and themes, while no longer necessarily tied to traditional Christian structures, continue to inform artistic expression and cultural production in innovative ways.

The next article, ‘Insights on the Eucharist in the Iberian Peninsula: Theological and Pastoral Challenges from the Life and Thought of Mercedes Carreras Hitos (Madre Trinidad)’ by Susana Vilas Boas, explores the theological and pastoral implications of Madre Trinidad’s eucharistic spirituality. The study presents Madre Trinidad as a significant, though often overlooked, figure in the Iberian theological landscape. Her life and thinking offer insights into the renewal of eucharistic devotion and its role in shaping Christian identity and practice.

Finally, ‘Poetry as a Kenotic Exercise in José Tolentino Mendonça’s “The Days of Job”’ by Alex Villas Boas examines how the poetic language of José Tolentino Mendonça functions as an exercise in kenosis or self-emptying, drawing on biblical exegesis, patristic interpretation and contemporary philosophy. The author argues that Mendonça’s poetics not only engages with the theological aesthetics of resistance but also creates a space for political spirituality, offering a reconfiguration of theological discourse through poetry.

Taken together, these contributions affirm the vitality of Iberian theology in addressing contemporary cultural, philosophical, and artistic challenges. Theological reflection, as these articles reflect, is not only an academic exercise but also a means of understanding and responding to the complexity of human existence in its spiritual, social, and aesthetic dimensions. By bringing biblical hermeneutics, theological anthropology, aesthetics, and lived religious experience into conversation, this issue of *AUC Theologica* is a significant step towards dialogue between the West and the East, from the margins of the continent. Our deepest gratitude!

This issue invites scholars, theologians, and readers from different disciplines to engage with the theological questions presented here and to continue the dialogue between Iberian theology and culture in an ever-expanding way.

Alex Villas Boas

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THEME

**Iberian Theology
and Contemporary Challenges**

‘BEHOLD THE HUMAN BEING’: MESSIANIC ANTHROPOLOGY FOR OUR TIMES

ENRIQUE GÓMEZ GARCÍA

ABSTRACT

Diego Irarrazával says that theology is contextual. European theology too, even if it has been considered a *theologia perennis*. Despite globalisation, there are sociological and cultural traits that are more entrenched in these latitudes than in others, which requires and enables another approach from the sources of revelation. In these pages, we study some of the publications of Xabier Pikaza, Spanish theologian and exegete, focusing on his analysis of the European and Spanish contexts, as well as the possible practical repercussions of this discourse. The approach to his works shows that, over almost half a century of reflection, he has devised a project with which he calls for a way of being and living as humans and as a society that reverses the negative consequences of the neoliberal system that characterises our time, namely: the will to power, violence, wealth, and exclusion. In the light of the history and person of Jesus of Nazareth, the author proposes a messianic anthropology, which strengthens the will to love and moves towards peace, gentleness and universal dialogue.

Keywords

Xabier Pikaza; Messianic anthropology; Gratuitousness; Poverty; Universality

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In the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council took on a dynamic understanding of reality and redesigned an ecclesial configuration that was in keeping with the inculturation of the Gospel. This can be seen in the way in which the Council fathers, as pastors, examine the situation of human beings in today’s world (cf. GS 4–10), which reflects a deep concern for human beings (cf. GS 3), their message distilling Christological personalism.

In the same vein, for Pope Francis, we are witnessing a ‘change of epoch’,¹ in which ‘rapidification’ prevents us from being aware of the change itself (cf. LS 18). Such a scenario leads him to enunciate the Church’s constant concern for each person. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the Italian version of *Fratelli tutti* the word ‘dignity’ appears sixty-four times. However, in this case, conciliar communitarian personalism drifts towards a more holistic proposal, as it includes the ecological perspective, giving birth to what some call an ‘integral humanism’.²

The Spanish context does not escape this situation. It is not appropriate here to unravel the challenges facing the particular churches in this country. I will only mention some of the most common ones: violence, drug addiction, lack of job opportunities, socio-economic inequalities, migration, multiculturalism, religious pluralism, new secularisation, loneliness, climate change, political polarisation, institutionalised lies, etc. In the wake of Vatican II, Spanish theology has been sensitive to these challenges, has been renewed and has developed, among other things, a pastoral (in the conciliar sense) and committed reflection in dialogue with Latin American theologies.³ An example of this is the ‘evangelical’ systematic approach of Xabier Pikaza, a lucid, multifaceted, and original thinker,⁴ a Christian who is concerned with and involved in the pathways of the inhabitants of this geographical area.

In these pages, I will take a closer look at his thought. Specifically, to an exegetical-theological project that he began in the eighties and which, although reoriented, is still valid in his recent publications. With this project, he claims a disposition and a way of situating ourselves as Christians in this changing world that corresponds to our configuration

¹ By way of example, Pope Francis, ‘Address at the meeting with the world of culture (Cagliari, 22 September 2013),’ https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130922_cultura-cagliari.html.

² Cf. Paul Veladier, ‘L’humanisme intégral selon le pape Francisco,’ *Études*, no. 4265 (2019): 79–89.

³ Cf. Juan José Tamayo Acosta, ‘Nuevas teologías y nuevos teólogos en España,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 1094 (1977): 23–30; Casiano Floristán, ‘La teología española después del Vaticano II,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 2401 (2003): 23–30; Eloy Bueno de la Fuente, ‘Cincuenta años de Teología en España,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 2401 (2008): 23–30.

⁴ The richness of his work is shown in Juan Bosch, ‘La teología en España,’ *Vida Nueva*, no. 2199 (1999): 23–31. To the Trinitarian, Christological, Marian, and exegetical references, we must add his contributions to ecclesiology, sacramentology, theology of religious life, positive sciences of religion, history of theology, interreligious dialogue, without forgetting his philosophical thought.

as messianic men and women, in the manner of the Father of the Kingdom, in harmony with the eschatological prophet Jesus of Nazareth, who is impelled by a spirit of gratuity and communion.

I first show that the author outlines a recognisable theological project. I then point out that his proposal denotes a profound anthropological-social (and ecological) concern. I close the article with a description of the messianic anthropology that, according to him, emanates from Jesus and can reverse the imbalances suffered by contemporary society.

1. A Project on the Horizon

Pikaza’s bibliography is considerable. The *Dialnet* publications portal lists 112 monographs, 34 collaborations in collective works and 95 journal articles.⁵ At first glance, there seems to be no comparison between them: varied themes, diverse hermeneutics, and disparate motivations. Even so, they are united according to a thread of argument established in the 1980s, although, with the passage of time, it has undergone reorientations and enrichments. His work *Biblical Anthropology* can serve as a reading key.

Both in his ‘Note to the Reader’ and in the ‘Prologue’, the author explains that it is in the same vein as *The Gospel I. The Life and Pass-over of Jesus*.⁶ He devotes a first chapter to what he calls the ‘messianic categories’, with which he condenses the ‘founding anthropology’ that has been sketched out since Jesus of Nazareth in *The Gospel*.⁷ He also acknowledges that he has not yet tackled the second part of *The Gospel*, concerning the core aspects of a biblical Christology, and anticipates a project: this anthropology is to be continued with a *Biblical Ecclesiology*.⁸

According to this statement, the author has set himself a plan: in *The Gospel*, he unravels the Christ event from an exegetical (volume I) and theological (volume II) perspective; this is followed by an approach to

⁵ Cf. ‘Xabier Pikaza Ibarrondo’, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=270333>. Consultation carried out on 1 February 2024.

⁶ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Antropología bíblica. Del árbol del juicio al sepulcro de la pascua* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1993), 11, 14. Although this work has a second edition (2006), I am handling the first for reasons that the reader will perceive.

⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 19.

⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 21.

the ecclesial community that is born of it; and, between the two works, he has inserted a reflection on the human being that is made transparent in Jesus, the prototype of the ecclesial community.

If one looks at *The Gospel*, Pikaza aims to elaborate a *Christian Biblical Theology*. This volume will be followed by *The Gospel II. The Action of Believers*, referring to 'the content of Christ's messianic message', and a 'more theological study, centred on the main aspects of Christology', based on the Gospel of John. This *Biblical Theology* will also include pneumatology, the foundation of later ecclesiology and sacramentology. All this will be preceded by a fundamental theology, which is why *The Gospel* occupies volume 2 of his *Theology*.⁹ There is thus a departure from what was said in *Biblical Anthropology* as regards the object of study of *The Gospel II*, while there is no mention of any anthropology.

On the other hand, between *The Gospel* and *Biblical Anthropology* appears another Christological writing, catalogued by the author as a simple reflection along the lines of *The Gospel*, although elaborated in a freer (less exegetical) way and mixing exegesis with philosophy.¹⁰ He does not allude in the prologue to his project, although he makes it clear that what is dealt with here must be completed with other studies in the collection *The World of the Bible*, especially those dedicated to 'Jesus, Messiah and Lord and The God of Jesus and of the Church'.¹¹ Years later, he published in this collection a manual of theodicy that fits the second reference, in which he invites the reader to encounter the face of the living God of the Gospel, the God of grace.¹²

Shortly afterwards he published an ecclesiology of the Gospel of Mark. In his prologue, Pikaza recalls his *Biblical Christian Theology*, in which he includes elements absent in his first formulation, and omits others. He speaks of anthropology, pneumatology, trinitarian theology and ecclesiology, and specifies that *The Gospel* and *Biblical Anthropology* have already been published.¹³ Moreover, he qualifies that this

⁹ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *El Evangelio I. Vida y pascua Jesús* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1988), 12–15.

¹⁰ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *La figura de Jesús. Profeta, taumaturgo, rabino, mesías* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1992), 10.

¹¹ Pikaza, *La figura*, 11.

¹² Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Dios judío, Dios cristiano. El Dios de la Biblia* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1996).

¹³ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Pan, casa, palabra. La Iglesia en Marcos* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1998), 9.

‘Confessional Ecclesiology (...) in messianic perspective’, continues the logic of *Biblical Anthropology*,¹⁴ from which it can be deduced that perhaps this ecclesial commentary constitutes the ecclesiology of his theological plan; but he does not make this explicit.

Nor does he do so in his latest publication.¹⁵ In it, he does not allude to any previous project,¹⁶ although it is clear that he develops this messianic ecclesiology. Thus, he presents the Church as the group of companions and the association of friends of Jesus, linked by the same love, which, ‘in order to remain faithful to its origins’, ‘must take up its messianic principle (its Gospel), at a time of crisis such as ours’.¹⁷ Hence, he calls it a ‘messianic movement’, inserts it into the person and dynamics of the Messiah, and defines the transformation implied by the Kingdom as its fundamental task, becoming a home, a messianic Church.¹⁸ To this can be added that the argument and structure of the book dates back to 1982,¹⁹ the decade in which his project was forged.

Finally, in the second edition of *Biblical Anthropology*, he explains that his anthropological proposal is in line with his new treatise on theodicy,²⁰ whose common thread, the word and dialogue as expressions of gratuitousness, he takes up again in a recent theology of Scripture.²¹ His initial project is also extended by a new trilogy, once again incomplete. In his prologue to *Theodicy*, he states that his teaching vicissitudes prevented him ‘from writing an overview of the main contents of the subject, centered on God, in a philosophical key (Theodicy), but also of theology (Trinity), and in the perspective of the interior life (Spirituality)’;²²

¹⁴ Cf. Pikaza, *Pan*, 9 and 14 (note 9).

¹⁵ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Compañeros y amigos de Jesús. La Iglesia antes de Pablo* (Maliaño: Sal Terrae, 2024).

¹⁶ The author does propose a later project: the present volume will deal with the ecclesial communities up to the year 35, leaving for a second volume ‘the identity and history of the first Churches in the writings of the NT’, i.e. from Paul and the Gospels onwards (cf. 11, 13).

¹⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 9–11.

¹⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 297, 166–176, 180, 236–256. It is striking that at no point in this ‘ecclesiology of Jesus’ (240) does he refer to his work *Pan, casa, palabra*.

¹⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 13, 406.

²⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología bíblica. Tiempos de gracia* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2006), 15. He refers to *Dios es palabra. Teodicea cristiana* (Maliaño: Sal Terrae, 2003).

²¹ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *La palabra se hizo carne. Teología de la Biblia* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2020).

²² Xabier Pikaza, *Teodicea. Del hombre a Dios* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2013), 8.

once he retired, he wrote this trilogy. The *Theodicy-Trinity*, an open itinerary,²³ corresponds to the promised treatise on God, while *Spirituality* brings to mind his pneumatology, still to be elaborated.

2. Changing Times, Concern for the Human

In the declaration of intentions of *Biblical Anthropology*, one can perceive the centrality of the historical person of Jesus for Pikaza: it is the starting point and illuminates his entire programme.²⁴ The relevance of his concern for the human is equally clear, since ‘he is interested in man and I want to specify the main elements of his history’. To this end, he presents ‘the figure of man from Christ’, recognising that he integrates Christology ‘in a more extensive perspective in theological anthropology’.²⁵

This interest in the human has been with him for a long time. In the second edition of the work, he acknowledges that he had been ‘almost thirty years’ thinking about this reflection, ‘under the influence of two types of biblical understanding of the human being’: that of Cullmann (which emphasises gratuitousness) and that of Bultmann (which emphasises freedom).²⁶ Later on, he reiterates that ‘the contributions and questions’ outlined in this book have accompanied him throughout his life and ‘have been the starting point for various publications linked to man and violence’.²⁷

Elsewhere he expresses this request by paraphrasing the famous Kantian questions (although he personalises *What is the human being?*) as follows: Who am I? Where do I come from? What must I do

²³ Cf. Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 18; Pikaza, *Trinidad. Itinerario de Dios al hombre* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2015), 7; Enrique Gómez García, ‘Proyecto a manera de legado: convergencia de itinerarios,’ *Estudios Trinitarios*, no. 2 (2016): 407–441.

²⁴ In both *La figura de Jesús* and *La nueva figura de Jesús* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2003), the author analyses the life and work of Jesus, opting for a historical approach, although he deals with elements that go beyond the historical (cf. Pikaza, *La nueva figura*, 5). The same logic, perhaps more theologised, is to be found in Pikaza, *Compañeros*.

²⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 15.

²⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 13.

²⁷ Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14. Although his publications have an anthropological connection, on this subject I would highlight *Para comprender hombre y mujer en las religiones* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1996), with which he wants to help us to feel and value the human being; and *Sistema, libertad, iglesia. Instituciones del Nuevo Testamento* (Madrid: Trotta, 2001), his social anthropology, reworked in *La novedad de Jesús. Aportación y legado* (Madrid: Fe Adulta, 2019) and in *Compañeros*.

to be happy? How can I love and be loved? In what can I hope? How can and must we behave, so that we do not destroy ourselves by annihilating life on earth?²⁸ These questions show that, although they concern the great human questions of all times, they are historicised in our own time, as revealed by violence on a global scale (nuclear war and globalised capitalism) and the destruction of all life (ecological crisis).²⁹

In fact, his writings are full of references to today’s society, which he describes as globalised, secular, and pluralistic, both culturally and religiously, rather than offering detailed analyses. He summarises the former with the symbol of the system. With regard to the second, he approaches Jesus more historically than confessionally, so that both believers and unbelievers have access to his figure, and his proposal is in no way understood as an indoctrination or subjugation of the latter.³⁰ As for the third point, his position as a professor of history and phenomenology of religions endorses his view.³¹ I would also highlight his identification with the defence of women and his commitment to a feminism of identity as well as to sexual diversity.³²

He also describes our times as a ‘change of era’, full of contrasts: we are witnessing socio-economic and cultural globalisation (neo-liberal system), but individualism and selfishness abound, which elevate a few and exclude the majority; personal rights and freedom are absolutised, but a slave structure is supported, which imposes the will of a few and prevents the vast majority from enjoying them.³³

At all times, the author avoids Manichean commentary. He knows that the current situation should not be demonised, given that it harbours values and has an appreciable creative capacity. The system, he says, is neutral. If it is currently ‘negative in its application and deadly in its political concreteness’,³⁴ it is because, instead of exploiting the possibilities of creativity and the reasons for gratuitousness and

²⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 12.

²⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 21; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 311–312; Pikaza, *Teodicea*, 13.

³⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *La nueva figura*, 5; Pikaza, *La novedad*, 13; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 12.

³¹ Because of the context in which he writes, he deploys interreligious dialogue with Judaism and Islam. From his extensive bibliography, suffice it to mention his *Diccionario de las tres religiones: judaísmo, cristianismo, islam* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2009). His interest in interculturality is reflected, for example, in Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 28.

³² Cf. Pikaza, *Para comprender*, 5–8; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 30–32, 356–368.

³³ Cf. Pikaza, *Sistema*, 15, 17–18, 26–34, 35–48.

³⁴ Pikaza, *Sistema*, 39.

dialogue that it carries, it is opting for the will to power that lurks in every system and its repercussions: violence, wealth, and exclusion.

He frequently deals with violence and consequent death, especially since his dialogue with René Girard. This is expressed in *Biblical Anthropology*:

In the last third of the twentieth century, I discovered more and more about the influence that violence had and still has in the unfolding of life, according to the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, and I wanted to write a work entitled, more or less, *The Bible, Book of War*. However, I also discovered that the theme was deeper, that war is inseparable from the whole of a history that is torn between the search for a future and the eternal return of the same thing.⁵⁵

Linked to this aspect is his ecological sensitivity, given that the crisis that afflicts the world today in this area stems from the violence generated by human beings dominating the earth in the name of power.⁵⁶

The second risk arises from wealth, along with its inherent iniquity and injustice. Influenced by Latin American theologians and Scripture, Pikaza makes the duality of Mammon and the God of the Kingdom one of his central themes, though he has only recently begun to systematically address the issue. As with his perception of the system, he qualifies that money is not sinful in itself, since it is possible to foster 'a type of economy that is life-enhancing for the whole of humanity'.⁵⁷ The problem arises when neoliberal society becomes fetishistic, idolises money, and turns having into a vehicle of domination, exploitation, and slavery because it serves money instead of using it to live.⁵⁸ In this way, the system bows to the anti-trinity constituted by capital (the father, the origin of the system), the company (the son, at the service of the first), and the market (the spirit, the meeting place of capital and company).⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14. The work referred to is *El Señor de los ejércitos. Historia y teología de la guerra* (Madrid: PPC, 1996), a logic taken up in *Violencia y religión en la historia de Occidente* (Valencia: Tirant Editorial, 2005).

⁵⁶ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *El desafío ecológico: creación bíblica y bomba atómica* (Madrid: PPC, 2004); Xabier Pikaza, 'Dominad la tierra... (Gén 1,28). Relato bíblico de la creación y ecología,' in *Ética del medio ambiente: problema, perspectivas, historia*, coord. José M.^a García-Heras (Madrid: Tecnos, 2001), 207–222.

⁵⁷ Xabier Pikaza, *Dios o el dinero* (Maliaño: Sal Terrae, 2019), 7; cf. 557–559.

⁵⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Dios o el dinero*, 8; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 215–220.

⁵⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 291–294.

The result of this social fetishisation is not long in coming: ‘an intense crisis of human identity and social injustice’.⁴⁰

The third risk results from the absolutisation of wealth: exclusion and the particularisation of possibilities. Only a social minority, judged to be creative, ‘arrogant bandits’, steers the destinies of history in the name of all. In this way, human beings are ‘burdened and perplexed by questions of the oppression of money’. Alongside this slavery, there is iniquity, an ‘unequal dominion...’, which favours some and expels and marginalises the majority’.⁴¹ Faced with such a situation, what can be expected, can anything be done, or do we allow ourselves to be overcome by the imperative of powerlessness?

3. The Face of the Full Human Being

3.1 On the Path to a Messianic Anthropology

In accordance with this analysis, in *Biblical Anthropology*, Píkaza seeks to ‘elaborate the figure of man from Christ’. However, Christ does not cease to be the new Adam, the ‘messiah of history’. This idea could perhaps be further refined: his theological project is motivated by getting to know Jesus better in order to make possible, through the encounter with him, the conversion of the human being, so that he becomes ‘human in the most intense (messianic) sense’.⁴² For the author, therefore, the solution to the challenges posed lies in the fact that all people, not only Christians, live the features of this messianic humanity. In more recent language, they refer to the ‘messianic mutation’ of which Jesus was the messenger and promoter; they are a ‘miracle’, that is to say, a sign of gratuitousness, a song of life and a principle of freedom.⁴³

This desideratum is also evident in one of his re-readings of the (messianic) story of Jesus, through which he wants to reach out to believers and non-believers because all must work in unison to achieve a truly human society, this being the messianic future towards which the image of Christ tends. It is expressed in these terms:

⁴⁰ Píkaza, *Teodicea*, 10.

⁴¹ Píkaza, *Sistema*, 40; cf. Píkaza, *Teodicea*, 9.

⁴² Píkaza, *Antropología*, 16.

⁴³ Cf. Píkaza, *Compañeros*, 351–356 and 174, respectively.

He wants to expose the newness of Jesus without palliatives or patches, in a line of gratuitousness and option for the marginalised, of overcoming judgement and personal healing, overcoming social and sacral structures that try to impose themselves on men.⁴⁴

The backdrop of his theological programme, therefore, is given by the explicit expression in the history of a form of humanity capable of reversing the current system, built, as we have seen, on a will to power that relies on violence to impose the principles of merit, wealth, and exclusion. This messianic modulation of the human transmutes this will into the will to want, understood ‘in the key of personal dialogue: I have been given life and I can give it, share it’.⁴⁵

This discourse highlights the importance of the title ‘Son of Man’ for Pikaza.⁴⁶ Among the various interpretations of this Christological title, the author equates it with ‘human’: that Jesus identifies himself with the ‘Son of Man’ signifies that ‘a person has already arrived, someone who knows how to realise humanity on earth’,⁴⁷ who reveals ‘the full content of the human (...). It seems that, at the heart of all his actions and discourse, Jesus has sought to define himself simply as a man.’⁴⁸ From this, it follows that Jesus was the messiah by ‘being a simple human being, son of man, linked to all human beings and to the history and destiny of nature itself (of the earth)’,⁴⁹ and that his messianism places us at the origin of the founding humanity, as Paul expresses it.⁵⁰

The author is no stranger to the discussion on messianism in Jesus’ time.⁵¹ But, in any case, messianic hope represents ‘creative imagination, at the service of the new humanity’.⁵² The distinctiveness of Jesus’

⁴⁴ Pikaza, *La nueva figura*, (7)–8.

⁴⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 24–25.

⁴⁶ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Hermanos de Jesús, servidores de los más pequeños* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1984), 89–127; Pikaza, *La figura*, 33–36; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 233–236; Pikaza, *Este es el hombre* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1997), 213–221. It is not arbitrary that he titles this manual with the quotation from Jn 19:5, for in it Jesus is presented as ‘the true man’ (cf. p. 9).

⁴⁷ Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 23.

⁴⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 27–28.

⁴⁹ Xabier Pikaza, *Hijo de hombre. Historia de Jesús Galileo* (Valencia: Tirant Editorial, 2007), 13.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 25.

⁵¹ The hypothesis that, according to Mt 2:22–23, Jesus is a messianic *Nazoreo* serves as an example (cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Historia de Jesús* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2013), 13–14, 107, 111–112, 575–577).

⁵² Cf. Pikaza, *La novedad*, 50–54.

messianism is that its quest for human fulfilment carries an obvious eschatological and subversive charge. The eschatological involves an existential, dynamic, and realisational understanding of the human being, in keeping with the role of history in the author’s work as the realm of the revelation of God’s gratuitousness and the place of the unfolding of the human, for the person is a *faciendum*, not *factum*.⁵³ Messianism, then, is the possibility, the consummation, or the final view of what the human being is, insofar as he is in the hands of God – who will culminate his original action by fulfilling his promises – and insofar as he has been endowed with responsible creativity. Hence ‘messianism is the experience of finding ourselves in the process of humanisation: we tend towards the true man (the son of man)’; it is the ‘expression of the final truth of man’,⁵⁴ which in his last reflection he summarises as that they should be happy, heal and live free.⁵⁵

Subversion, for its part, can be seen in the discrepancy between the messianic hopes of his countrymen and the realisation of this human messianism experienced by Jesus. Messianism thus implies a radical change in the way of being human where the only thing that could be expected is condemnation and annihilation.⁵⁶ Therefore, as we shall see, the messianic anthropology illuminated by Jesus reverses the model imposed by the will to power of the current ideology.

3.2 Messianic Flesh

Having explored the relationship between messianism and ‘new humanity’, I can present the categories that make the messianic human being concrete. These are revealed in the ‘flesh’ of Jesus; that is to say, they are those proper to the incarnation of God in history, as the author deduces from Lk 15,11–32; 10,25–37; Mt 20,1–16 or 25,31–46.⁵⁷

⁵³ Cf. Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 21.

⁵⁴ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 29 and 25, respectively.

⁵⁵ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 129–166.

⁵⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 34, 45.

⁵⁷ The importance of the flesh is expressed in his last work: If the Church does not want to become a gnosis and an incarnated community, the story of Jesus with his friends before the resurrection and the link of the women, which allows ‘the identification of the risen Christ with the Jesus of the flesh’, must be vindicated. Christianity must always safeguard the ‘identity (and difference) between the Jesus of the flesh, who dies (...), and the Christ the Son of God, who rises’, as Mark was able to perceive (cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 338–341).

In fact, they ‘condense the whole Gospel’,⁵⁸ running through the pages of *The Gospel* and of its most recent synthesis.⁵⁹ Pikaza systematically notes them in his first edition of *Biblical Anthropology*,⁶⁰ albeit in a paradoxical way.

They do indeed summarise the story of Jesus, but their exposition seems unnecessary. The author acknowledges that one can begin his work with the second chapter. Even so, he presents them in order to offer ‘the bases or assumptions of my founding anthropological vision’.⁶¹ In the second edition of this work, he dispenses with these pages and begins with the development of the origins of the human being. For my part, I consider them essential to understanding the author’s proposal. I begin his presentation with the following synthetic formulation:

The whole book is interpreted on the basis of the grace of God, who loves the poor (sinners) and through them offers us a path of universal hope, of inter-human union.⁶²

According to this summary, the first category is gratuitousness, as opposed to the schemes of action, merit, and judgment that reign in our efficient society.⁶³ Grace underlines that, ‘more than what I do, what matters is what they do to me: I am because they love me’,⁶⁴ in the context of the will to want. The human being is grace: ‘He is born by grace and by grace becomes human (...), always being more than an object that can be manufactured or organised by law and introduced into a system.’⁶⁵

Here we see the link between gratuitousness and the renunciation of self-realisation, but also with the word and communication: at the beginning is the power of the creative word, which calls from love and for love, and transforms from within what is called, generating

⁵⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 16.

⁵⁹ Indeed, he describes as the goal of *Compañeros* that we can all ‘love and be loved... through as yet unexplored expressions of freedom, gratuitousness and communion of life’ (12).

⁶⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 30–47, 522–525.

⁶¹ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 19.

⁶² Pikaza, *Antropología*, 16.

⁶³ On grace as opposed to judgement, cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 17, 20; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 199–205.

⁶⁴ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 24.

⁶⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14.

a new beginning, as expressed in the recreating forgiveness and resurrection.⁶⁶ It is up to human beings to remember this history of grace, for to forget it would mean to corrupt their life in the world, believing themselves to be the lord and master of all that exists.⁶⁷

One can perceive here the influence of personalism;⁶⁸ but, above all, a certain rereading of Scripture, since gratuitousness is based on the being of the Father to whom Jesus refers. The author describes him as a creative energy that ‘calls and dialogues with men’; a force of freedom that does not impose itself and that forgives, that breaks the moulds of the system; a Father who ‘loves us and does not need to count for his love’.⁶⁹ From this divine perspective, gratuitousness differs from arbitrariness and is scandalous: it is based solely on the Father’s will, without imposing conditions or demanding conversion or repentance, as the beatitudes show.⁷⁰

Likewise, from the Father, messianic gratuitousness transcends passivity and is full of creativity – creativity based on the creative power of self-giving, in the style of Jesus: aware that I am a gift and that everything has been given to me, I feel impelled to give myself, to open myself to others and to make it possible for them to be at my side.⁷¹ In this way, gratuitousness and responsibility are two sides of the same coin; gratuitousness extends to my responsibility to commit myself to those in need – of ‘dubious persons: socially and legally impure, liberated women, children without families and sick people of various kinds’.⁷² Grace, therefore, is opposed to evasion.⁷³

Thus we come to the second characteristic: poverty. Jesus of Nazareth expresses his messianism by announcing, as gospel, the gratuitousness

⁶⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 25, 32, 35, 445–474; Pikaza, *La novedad*, 125–143; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 227–229, 189–193, 349–351.

⁶⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología* (2006), 14.

⁶⁸ More specifically, the Mounierian re-reading of Carlos Díaz, *Soy amado, luego existo* (Bilbao: DDB, 1999–2000), 4 vols; *La persona como don* (Bilbao: DDB, 2001); *Del hay al doy, ¡Ay, si nadie diera!* (Salamanca: San Esteban, 2013).

⁶⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 36; Pikaza, *La figura*, 55–67; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 309–369; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 177–193.

⁷⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 48; Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 61, 67–80; Pikaza, *La figura*, 156; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 135–139.

⁷¹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 24, 523; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 320; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 332–336.

⁷² Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 111.

⁷³ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 36.

of the Father to the marginalised and by welcoming the lost of his time; he expresses it in this way because he was poor, an artisan, a peasant without a field, 'a worker of the people, at the mercy of others'.⁷⁴ Thus, in the light of his counter-cultural rabbinism, the poor man emerges as one who recognises that he can expect nothing of himself because he is on the margins of the productive system, not finding for himself a place to live.⁷⁵ To be poor implies, therefore, 'to assume in gratuitousness the whole existence',⁷⁶ connoting a receptive dimension, linked to the full trust in the creative force of the other.

Echoing the criticism of liberation theologies regarding the 'canonisation of poverty',⁷⁷ Pikaza explains that the poor reveal divine gratuitousness 'in a peculiar and more intense way'⁷⁸ and mediate the salvation that comes from gratuitousness, not by the moral perfection of being poor or by being free from the will to power and violence, for they too must be converted,⁷⁹ but by the goodness of the Father. Because they are poor, they are lost, they can do nothing and they need everything to the utmost degree, making them the best place where God reveals his love for human beings and his joy in 'giving life in abundance'.⁸⁰ In the divine logic, therefore, the poor are not worthwhile because they are poor but because they are loved by God and 'because, in their own lack, they are in the hands of others. It is precisely where they neither demand nor impose themselves that they come to show themselves to the world as the seed of grace'⁸¹ that carries the 'messianic gene'.⁸²

Now, from Jesus' point of view, poverty also acquires a creative dimension. The poor person, experiencing himself as grace, opens himself to give everything, even unto death, in order to enrich those around him with his creative strength (donation).⁸³ In the messianic claim of Jesus, poverty is not only a socio-economic fact but a planned fundamental choice, which is exposed to crucifixion and death. It is

⁷⁴ Cf. Pikaza, *La novedad*, 62–69; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 98–101.

⁷⁵ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 492.

⁷⁶ Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 99.

⁷⁷ Cf. Adolfo González Montes, 'Los pobres como sujeto histórico-salvífico,' *Salmanticensis*, no. 2 (1984): 207–224.

⁷⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 40.

⁷⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 488.

⁸⁰ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 39.

⁸¹ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 45.

⁸² Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 355.

⁸³ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 530.

linked to selflessness and generosity. In this way, ‘by sharing what they have and welcoming what is offered to them, the poor open a space of communication and hope for all’;⁸⁴ they generate, within an unjust and excluding society, a space of solidarity and shared life. Because of their receptive power, the poor focus on the actions of others: they call them to solidarity and initiate the path of giving.⁸⁵

The third feature concerns universal openness. The human being is a universal living being, called to encounter and communion. The developments of gratuitousness and poverty suggest this. As he expresses on a certain occasion:

This (Christian) universalism can only emerge where grace and poverty intersect and become fruitful. Where grace becomes poverty, by offering what it has; where poverty accepts all that is offered to it: there arises shared life and experience.⁸⁶

From the above argumentation, it follows that poverty is the sphere where solidarity is founded: that relationship of mutuality through which one gives and welcomes. Solidarity therefore marks the path of ‘free communication’ of life, which facilitates insertion into the divine logic of loving: ‘We can only know and love each other if we know and love others and allow them to know and love us.’⁸⁷ Universal communion then takes place.

This is how it is perceived in Jesus, founder and guarantor of the ‘universal openness of the human being’.⁸⁸ He proclaims a gospel of grace destined for all, placing himself on the other side of history: if the grace of the Father reaches the margins of the system, this means that no one is excluded.⁸⁹ This universal openness can be seen in the communion of the table with the lost but also in the pro-existential practice with those in need of life, in the role of therapist and liberator. Through healing and exorcisms, Jesus breaks down the walls that prevent the

⁸⁴ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 523; cf. Pikaza, *La figura*, 152–153.

⁸⁵ Note the parallel with Jon Sobrino, ‘Redención de la globalización. Las víctimas,’ *Concilium*, no. 293 (2001): 805–810.

⁸⁶ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 524, cf. 43; Pikaza, *El Evangelio*, 95, 101.

⁸⁷ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 525.

⁸⁸ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 18.

⁸⁹ Cf. Pikaza, *Hermanos*, 431–444.

excluded from being integrated into the human community and opens up a space for universal interpersonal communication.⁹⁰

It is through the mercy of the Kingdom that authentic universality is consummated because in this practice every human being assumes his or her poverty and places at the service of the excluded what he or she is and can be.⁹¹ In this way, the poor are ‘the first sign of grace and are then the promoters of a path on which the rich themselves can be integrated (already transformed and reconciled) and become servants of gratuitousness’.⁹² In conclusion, because God wills it, the poor become ‘the measure and foundation of the new human edifice’,⁹³ from which no one will be excluded.

3.3 The Goal of the Messianic Family

Throughout these pages, it has been affirmed that, in the beginning, there is the founding grace of God, expressed through the creative word. Subsequently, the itinerary of human activity has been traced through gratuitousness, poverty, and universality. Finally, Pikaza points out the horizon of his messianic anthropology: to invert the logic of power, characterised by violence, in order to build a messianic family, in which peace and meekness reign. He concretises this horizon in the experience of fraternal dialogue.⁹⁴

But how is this dialogue to be understood from the point of view of Jesus’ existence? On a certain occasion, the author states: ‘To dialogue means to let oneself be killed: It is to speak to others without imposing our ideas on them with violence; it is to listen to what they tell us without wanting to demand something from them for it (without revenge)’.⁹⁵ According to this, the messianic human being is the one who dialogues, knowing that sometimes this dialogic reason is achieved by giving one’s life.

⁹⁰ Cf. Pikaza, *La figura*, 103–107. Note the importance he attaches in his last work about exorcisms, in addition to healings (cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 156–166, 394–399).

⁹¹ Cf. Pikaza, *Antropología*, 44.

⁹² Pikaza, *Antropología*, 46.

⁹³ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 46 and 44, respectively. Again the parallel with Jon Sobrino, *Jesucristo liberador* (Madrid: Trotta, 1991), 170.

⁹⁴ Cf. Pikaza, *Este es el hombre*, 21–22; Pikaza, *Dios es palabra*, 290–299; 338–342; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 221–229.

⁹⁵ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 480.

So far it would seem that this messianic anthropology looks at the individual human being. However, Pikaza outlines a social anthropology, with the aim of embracing the whole of humanity, whether or not it believes in the creative founding force of the Father. In this framework, he writes about the messianic family, which assumes and travels personally and communally the itinerary of the grace of the Kingdom.⁹⁶ Its nucleus is the followers of Jesus, the Church in our day, as a universal sacrament of gratuitousness, which serves the communion of the Kingdom, witnesses to and mediates a salvation which surpasses it and on which it cannot impose conditions.⁹⁷

It is precisely this that becomes the object of study in his latest publication – a reflection yet to be completed. In the light of John 15:15, Pikaza conceives of the Church as a group of companions and friends of Jesus, bound by the same love and committed to the transformation implied by the Kingdom.⁹⁸ Underneath this simple description are hidden the messianic categories outlined above, now applied to a social group: affective communion, a reflection of grace, which makes possible the communication of life, tending towards universality, and economic communion, proper to poverty and solidarity, are emphasised. In this way, the signs of ecclesial identity are given by the grace of not judging and loving the enemy; the mutual love proper to the fraternity/sorority of those who share the bread; and the salutary and exorcising forgiveness, both social and religious, which make of the Church ‘experience and space of coexistence, resurrection of one in another’, without any walls.⁹⁹

It is within this widening of the space of messianic humanity that the meaning and purpose of the task of discipleship are understood (Mt 28,18): ‘It is not that the people of the world have to become disciples in the process of personal change or conversion of habits (...) It is the disciples of Christ (...) who must offer to others (...) the life and communion they have received, the grace and experience of their discipleship.’¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Cf. Pikaza, *La novedad*, 144–167; Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 123–125, 175, 236–256.

⁹⁷ Cf. Pikaza, *La figura*, 168.

⁹⁸ Cf. Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 9–10, 151.

⁹⁹ Pikaza, *Compañeros*, 322; cf. 166–176, 188–193, 199–220, 245, 248, 250.

¹⁰⁰ Pikaza, *Antropología*, 466.

4. By Way of Conclusion: Tell Me Which God and I Will Tell You Which Human

This approach to Pikaza's theological project as a response to the challenges of European and Spanish society shows that the author follows the path marked out by Vatican II: Jesus is the new man who reveals to human beings the meaning of their humanity (cf. GS 22). In this perspective, his anthropology reflects a clear Christological density; but it enriches by far the relationship between theological anthropology and Christology traced in the 20th century.¹⁰¹

His Christological concentration is not self-enclosed, as is the case when the creativity with which God endows the human creature is subsumed under the parameters of Christ. Expressing himself in terms of messianic anthropology, against the background of Jesus' messianic claim and his own relativity, the author stresses that the ultimate foundation and paradigm of human formality is given by the God revealed and incarnated in him. At the end of his *Biblical Anthropology*, he explains that the messianic categories correspond to the 'primordial or foundational properties of the divine being himself'.¹⁰² In this way, his anthropological itinerary is identified with a God who is universal communion or shared life. It can be said, in this sense, that messianic anthropology is configured trinitarily.

Indeed, God is first and foremost a founding gift, a grace in himself; because he is such in a radical way, he can be called the Father. To be the Father implies donation, self-giving; in him, we see the dialectic *Deus semper maior et semper minor*: because he has everything, he can empty himself completely by giving himself to the other. In this sense, God is poverty, the Son who gives everything in 'original generosity' and absolute trust in the Father. But this dynamism of magnanimity only takes place in the personal sphere of universal communication that facilitates 'original grace' and 'original generosity': the Holy Spirit.

At this point, we come to that part of Pikaza's project yet to be developed: his pneumatology. In part, he has already hinted at it in other writings;¹⁰³ but his messianic anthropology will only be understood if it

¹⁰¹ Cf. Luis F. Ladaria, *Introducción a la antropología teológica* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1993), 70–79; *Jesucristo, salvación de todos* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2007), 31–41.

¹⁰² Pikaza, *Antropología*, 444; cf. 527–532.

¹⁰³ Cf. Xabier Pikaza, *Dios como espíritu y persona* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1989), 189–270, 353–435; 'Espíritu Santo,' *Iglesia viva*, no. 130–131 (1987): 429–454;

is prolonged as a pneumatic or charismatic anthropology, which allows itself to be configured by that Spirit of grace and universal communication in diversity from particularity, as he hints at by placing the gift of the Spirit as the first significant feature of the messianic family.

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CHRISTIAN MEMORY IN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC CREATION: TENSIONS AND TRANSITIONS*

ALFREDO TEIXEIRA

ABSTRACT

After a period in which secularisation as an explanatory model – linear and teleological – became hegemonic in the social sciences, it became necessary to find other ways of accessing the sites of religious reconfiguration in the context of multiple modernities. In this situation, it has become crucial to bring the scientific gaze, at different scales, closer to the places where new relationships between the sphere of the religious and other social worlds are established, mediated by the displacements of the sacred. This article explores contemporary musical creation as a laboratory for discovering these new configurations.

Keywords

Secularity; Sacredness; Music; Religion; Christian memory

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Part of the sociological discourse on secularisation, hegemonic until the 1990s, was in danger of becoming a theory of religion that legitimated the narratives of modernity. The vigorous use of this model has backfired in that the very representations of modernity have been weakened. While the category of secularisation continues to describe crucial trajectories of change in societies, it has lost its linear

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and teleological character. In the cultural practices that describe multiple modernities, the religious sphere and other social worlds unfold in transactional interplays between secularities and sacralities in constructing meanings and values.¹ The universes of contemporary musical creation offer a privileged laboratory for building a model of secularisation in a minor mode.²

1. Theoretical Archipelagos

In the short essay entitled *Excursus* and his *Sociology of Religion* – a text included in *Economy and Society* – Weber, starting from his already much-discussed thesis of religious activity as the origin of rationalisation processes sets out on a journey to overcome the magical stage. In this journey, Weber tries to show that the relations between religion and the world are governed by a logic of ‘tension’ and ‘conflict’. This logic is evident in five spheres of reality, a register in which the affinities of the different social spheres generate tensions: the economic sphere, the political sphere, the sphere of eroticism, what Weber calls the intellectual sphere and, finally, the aesthetic sphere.

Max Weber starts from the general observation that some of humanity’s most influential creations have emerged from transactions between religion and aesthetics. However, as art developed its autonomy, tensions emerged that Weber saw crystallised in the diptych of ‘content and form’. On the one hand, religions of salvation developed historically as complex sets of ways of giving meaning to the experience of the world (content). On the other hand, art, which emerged with similar functions, found new contexts facilitating the emancipation of form. According to Weber, the modern possibility of disarticulation between form and content finds its most explicit testimony in aestheticism. With this concept, Max Weber seeks to interpret cultural situations in which the overemphasis on the aesthetic experience of the world can be both a substitute for religion and an intellectual refuge for those disillusioned by rationalist excesses. Aestheticism would thus be a kind of

¹ Alfredo Teixeira, ‘Tension and Transaction: Dynamics of Religious Recomposition from a Multiscopic Perspective,’ *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 1–21.

² Albert Piette, *Le mode mineur de la réalité: paradoxes et photographies en anthropologie*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers de l’Institut de Linguistique de Louvain 65 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992).

‘intramundane salvation’. According to Weber, aestheticism replaces ethical judgements with aesthetic ones.³

In the circles of contemporary thought, the so-called Frankfurt School has become the banner of modern reformism, in the sense of recovering ‘spiritual’ modernity to the detriment of that ‘material’ modernity that has been radicalised and reduced to the market and the impulses of techno-science. In musical aesthetics, this critical heritage finds its most essential references in the thought of Theodor Adorno.⁴ That is why he became a fundamental influence on the post-war avant-garde, legitimising an attitude of permanent search for the new and the affirmation of anti-conventionalism as a guarantee of aesthetic validity and distance from mass music. For Adorno, the avant-garde (represented by the ‘new music’ embodied in the so-called ‘Second Viennese School’) was a way of escaping the capitalist commodification of the aesthetic product. For Adorno, the authenticity of art is inversely related to its fruition, thus encouraging the composition of music without external motivations. We are therefore faced with the affirmation of a radical emancipation of the act of musical creation – Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*, in its atonal and non-serial freedom, is a model for Adorno; Stravinsky, as a user of the past, is a counter-type in this discourse.

We are thus in the universe of the modern belief in the power of revolution as a critique of the normalising functions of tradition. The relationship with the material received is one of irony, satire, and distancing, sometimes through quotation or montage, sometimes through negation, and always through a process of re-contextualisation with structural consequences. However, according to Adorno, it is only in the avant-garde that we find the internalisation of musical autonomy. Art becomes a system that replaces concepts with formulas, makes technique or means an end, and abandons ideas, denying its essence as art. We are thus in the universe of the modern belief in the power of revolution as a critique of the normalising functions of tradition. The relationship with the material received is one of irony, satire, and distancing, sometimes through quotation or montage, sometimes through

³ Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: Severus Verlag, 2015); Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Hauptwerke der großen Denker (Paderborn: Voltmedia, 2006).

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music: Theodor W. Adorno*. Selected, with Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2009).

negation, and always through a process of re-contextualisation with structural consequences. However, according to Adorno, it is only in the avant-garde that we find the internalisation of musical autonomy. Art becomes a system that replaces concepts with formulas, makes technique or means an end, and abandons ideas, denying its essence as art.⁵

Adorno considered Alban Berg's music to be the one that could best represent 'the memory of the original unity of man and nature' and now proposed that 'the new music should become *musique informelle*, that is, a music that rejects all forms that are external, abstract, rigidly opposed to it, and that, completely free of what is heteronomously imposed on it and foreign to it, is nevertheless constituted in an objectively necessary way'.⁶ The post-war musical avant-garde thus translated itself, as an aesthetic stance, into a broad movement to emancipate musical poetics from all kinds of heteronomies, either as forms of subordination to another symbolic system – religion, for example – or as updates of inherited norms.

Adornian hermeneutics inscribes the post-war musical avant-garde in the modern narrative of emancipation. However, as in other theoretical proposals, we do not find a way of understanding cultural productions that are not linked to celebrating this autonomy, nor do we find answers to the question of what remains or is transformed about the old alliance between religion and aesthetics. It is worth recalling what Michel de Certeau observed in his studies on the metamorphoses of belief in Western societies, those societies that have experienced the fragmentation of Christianity as a social body, the social disintegration of 'objective Christianity'. Certeau sought to understand this end of the structural articulation between the believer's personal experience and the community's social experience through the church as a 'body of meaning'.⁷ The consequence of this disarticulation is the spread of the religion:

⁵ About this Adornian concept of art: Mário Vieira de Carvalho, *Pensar é morrer, ou, O Teatro de São Carlos: na mudança de sistemas sociocomunicativos desde fins do séc. XVIII aos nossos dias*, Temas portugueses (Lisboa: Impr. Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1993), 239–240, 286.

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music* (London: Verso, 1994), 271. In Mário Vieira de Carvalho's interpretation, the concept of *musique informelle* is close to the idea of the self-referentiality of the musical work (Carvalho, *Pensar é morrer*, 287–289). The expression *Vers une musique informelle*, coined by Adorno in French, recalls the attitude of Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918) in his Futurist manifesto.

⁷ Michel de Certeau, *Le christianisme éclaté*, En collaboration avec Jean-Marie Domenach (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), 13.

Convictions soften, lose their contours, and end up in the common language of a mental exoticism, in a *koiné* of fiction: convictions accumulate in that region where what *is no longer done is said*, where questions that can no longer be thought of are theatricalised, and where various ‘needs’ are mixed, still irreducible, but devoid of *credible* representations.⁸ [*free translation*]

In these displacements of belief and how avatars of belief are produced, tactical figures are created who use religiosity as a reserve of fragments available to marketing agencies, aesthetic endeavours and the reinventors of the values of civility. The users of these relics are no longer believers; they are managers and consumers, creators who use the wreckage of a shipwreck according to certain needs, according to certain programs, within which churches can be ‘museums of beliefs without believers’.⁹ In this context, Christianity becomes an archive of vocabularies, a treasure trove of symbols, and a supplier of signs and practices that can be reused in an uncontrollable bricolage.

This is the context in which the symbolic elaboration of the sacred can be emancipated from the objects conventionally recognised as religious. These can become the material for new recompositions in a regime of symbolic parody. The mythemes and ritualities can no longer be explained by the logic of the *creed* that organised them or by the regulated practices that updated them.¹⁰ Michel de Certeau’s interpretive proposal unfolds in three ways. First, ‘the folklorisation of objective Christianity’.¹¹ A few decades ago, Christian belief was still firmly

⁸ Michel de Certeau, *La faiblesse de croire*, Collection Esprit (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 183.

⁹ Michel de Certeau, *L’Invention du quotidien* (Paris: Union générale d’éditions, 1980), 264.

¹⁰ ‘Parody’ here does not mean ironic commentary. It has the sense of *contrafactura*, as it was used in the 16th century to characterise compositional processes that started from a pre-existing model, a model that sometimes had nothing to do with the character or function of the final work. These appropriations could concern the text (an old text with new music) or the text and the music (the adaptation and development of a musical element with a new text). For instance, consider the use of Ockghem’s *chanson* ‘Malheur me bat’ in Josquin des Prez’s Mass of the same name. Historians therefore refer to this mass as a ‘parody mass’ or ‘imitation mass’, and in its time it would have been identified as an ‘imitation mass (parody) of *Malheur me bat*’. Parody does not have a pejorative meaning here; it simply identifies a process of musical composition: Alfredo Teixeira and Cristina Delgado, ‘A emancipação do sagrado e a paródia do religioso. Notas exploratórias sobre a criação musical na segunda metade do século XX,’ *Revista Portuguesa de Ciência das Religiões* 2 (2005): 35–62.

¹¹ Certeau, *Le christianisme éclaté*, 9–15.

anchored in specific groups and behaviours. There was no room for fluidity of contours. One either adhered to a language or joined the ranks of those who fought against it. In a second way, Michel de Certeau considers the dynamics of the 'aestheticisation of the religious'.¹² The body of Christian writings and rites is used as a set of fine arts serving the interests of aesthetic creation, from the most secret poetics to theatrical and musical compositions, including the reinvention of Christian spaces and architecture practices. Finally, it is necessary to consider the erosion processes of the boundaries of symbolic systems. This issue stems from what Certeau saw as a widespread crisis in the credibility of institutions.¹³ For at least three centuries, the status of truth-giver claimed by ecclesiastical institutions has been in deep crisis. This dissonance no longer takes contentious forms. Thus, 'Christians without a church' are multiplying, without this being translated into the constitution of peripheral groups – as in the 17th century – which renounce ecclesiastical mediation in the name of a more spiritualised religion. Deprived of the old guarantees – political, cosmological and others – symbolic systems are unprotected by the boundaries that defended them, leaving their symbolic heritage at the mercy of multiple reappropriations in multiple cultural contexts.

The metaphor of the 'fragment' used by Michel de Certeau – a figure of the shattering of an authorised memory – differs, albeit closely, from the metaphor of the 'remnant' proposed by Marcel Gauchet. Reinscribing the question of secularisation in Weber's thesis of the 'disenchantment of the world', Marcel Gauchet characterises Christianity as the religion of the 'exit from religion'. In Gauchet's view, a particular conception of the transcendence of God and the world's autonomy in terms of its foundation favoured a cultural trajectory of erosion of the lived religious as an experience of dispossession of the foundation of existence. Gauchet's secularisation thesis is based on the assumption of the inevitable erosion of the social function of religion:

Should not the elimination of the fundamental *social function* of the religious end up bringing with it an inevitable loss or erosion, even if very slowly, of the possibility of a belief? We might be tempted to think so. Unless we argue against another problem, which complicates matters: the

¹² Certeau, 18–20.

¹³ Certeau, 27–31.

subjective function that religious experience retains - or acquires - when its social function is erased.¹⁴ [*free translation*]

In his conceptualisation, Gauchet predicts that the age of religion as a structure has ended. Nevertheless, it would be naive to think that the same could be said of religion as culture. Gauchet speaks of a 'remnant' of 'singular experiences and belief systems' rooted in the ultimate core of religiosity, constituting an 'irreducible anthropological remnant'.¹⁵ His reading ends with the assertion that the subjective experience of a religious type has no necessary connection with any content. The 'ineliminable subjective layer of the religious phenomenon' is the basis of religious experience and precedes any explicit formulation of religion. Thus, Gauchet affirms the fundamental character of religious experience and denies that the necessary character of any religion can be affirmed based on this irreducibility. Gauchet separates the experience he describes as religious from the sphere of religion. The subjective religious experience to which constituted religious systems refer can function independently. It does not need to be projected onto fixed representations articulated in a doctrinal and social body. It can be updated in another place, different from the one that has been its preferred territory.¹⁶

Gauchet sought to determine the theoretical structure of this 'anthropological substratum' by identifying the 'remains of religion'.¹⁷ For the author, one of these remains is aesthetic experience. It concerns how we take in the appearance of things, the imaginary organisation of our perception of the world; it involves our faculty of imagination and not our faculty of intellection. Aesthetic experience is identified with the experience of the sacred, the irruption of the 'totally other' into the familiarity of things.¹⁸ An experience of difference and rupture, aesthetic perception presents the world as an opening to an unknown mystery that is, offering itself as a mediation of the sacred:

¹⁴ Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: une histoire politique de la religion*, Bibliothèque Des Sciences Humaines (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 236.

¹⁵ Gauchet, 133.

¹⁶ Gauchet, 292.

¹⁷ Gauchet, 293–303.

¹⁸ Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde*, 296–97. We find some echoes of Rudolf Otto's notion of the 'sacred' (*Das Heilige*, 1917).

The sacred is the presence of the absent [...], the sensitive and tangible manifestation of what is normally beyond the human senses and grasp. Moreover, as we moderns understand it, art is the continuation of the sacred by other means. When the gods desert the world, when they cease to come and signify their otherness there, the world itself appears different to us, revealing an imaginary depth that becomes the object of a special search, endowed with an end in itself, returning only to itself. In this way, the imaginary grasp of reality, which was the anthropological support of religious activity, begins to function on its own, independently of the old contents that channelled it.¹⁹

Therefore, difference, otherness, and depth are not to be found within the world's limits because since the 'end of religion', the world has not signalled anything outside itself. In Gauchet's view, only aesthetic experience, which was once one of the pillars of the sacred – and in modern times has become art for art's sake – can break with the linearity of everyday life and manifest the presence of absence.²⁰

More recently, Weber's theses have received other critical readings. According to Hans Joas, 'disenchantment' is a metaphor intended to interpret complex social processes.²¹ But this goal has produced many ambiguities in Weber's works and posterity. 'Disenchantment' is a broad-spectrum concept. Joas notes that the notion agglutinates three phenomena not assimilable into a single process: *a*) de-magification, the decline of the influence of magical thinking; *b*) de-sacralisation, the rise of secular forms of understanding the world; *c*) de-transcendentalisation, the decline of narratives that invoke 'otherworldliness' (an extramundane otherness). According to Joas, the uncritical diffusion of Weberian conceptuality has contributed to deepening the disinterest in sacredness's role in modern social life. In general terms, Joas approaches the set of critics who read in the narrative of

¹⁹ Gauchet, 297.

²⁰ It should be noted that the use of the semantic field of 'creation' to qualify artistic activity clearly carries a biblical and Christian heritage, which for Gauchet is at the origin of the 'departure from religion'. The connotations can be manifold: artistic activity as producer of new objects and ideas; the contemplative relationship with the object; the articulation between work (transformation of the world) and jubilation (celebration of life); the correlations between technique and aesthetics; as well as the dissemination of the idea of artistic experience as a form of transcendence.

²¹ Hans Joas, *Les pouvoirs du sacré: une alternative au récit du désenchantement* (Paris: Seuil, 2020), 163–187.

disenchantment an explanatory model that is too evolutionary, one-dimensional, and Eurocentric²² – the West becomes the culminating place of a quasi-evolutionary trajectory of development, according to a teleological dynamic, that stretches between ancient Judaism and Protestantism. Joas's critique starts from the observation that the Weberian analysis of 'religion-modernity' tensions forgets that the experience of self-transcendence is constitutive of human beings. It is this experience that structures the processes of sacralization. Joas emphasises the human phenomenon of idealisation.²³ Human action, in its creativity, is influenced by various kinds of otherness – respected ideals, traumatic experiences, festive memories, the example of other human beings, etc. Forming these ideals as an expression of the creativity of human action takes very different historical forms. As an anthropological structure, the dynamism of self-transcendence does not translate into a one-way historical process. And modernity is not the place of its erosion but instead its proliferation.

2. Amnesia and Anamnesis

Norbert Elias' thesis on Mozart – one of the most influential attempts to build a sociology of musical genius – is well known.²⁴ Elias sees in Mozart's journey, particularly in his emancipation from the court and ecclesiastical power, the emergence of the individual composer as a social actor who asserts himself outside the institutional frameworks that regulated his trade – the 'independent professional'.²⁵ This is reflected in the music itself as the new social contexts allow the composer to assert his individuality in a way we did not know before. Musical forms became more emancipated from the ritual, religious or

²² Siniša Malešević, 'Disenchantment, Rationalisation and Collective Self-Sacralisation,' *Journal of Political Power* 15, no. 2 (2022), 369–79.

²³ Hans Joas, *La créativité de l'agir*, trad. de l'allemand (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999).

²⁴ Norbert Elias, *Mozart: sociologia de um génio* (Lisboa: Edições Asa, 1993).

²⁵ For a sociology of the artist's profession, from the perspective that interests this article, a reference classic: Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste: artisans et académiciens à l'âge classique*, Paradoxe (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1993). It is important to compare this approach with Bourdieu's thesis. For the sociologist, the emergence of a libertarian discourse in the field of artistic production, under the sign of autonomy, is nothing more than an adaptive response to a world that is changing and in which the old guardians are also losing their ability to exercise patronage: Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'Art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Libre examen (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1992).

political syntax that had given rise to them. In this line of analysis, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* often appears as a prototype. According to the Roman ordo, the text of the common mass supports a compositional programme that is unremarkable in the ritual scene itself – the scale of the musical work is not compatible with the duration of the ritual.²⁶

On this path of cultural change, Hans Küng, in a theological essay on music and religion in Mozart, Wagner and Bruckner, presents the thesis of a radical incompatibility between musical modernity and the tradition of sacred music historically built up in Europe.²⁷ In this opposition, Hans Küng sees, on the one hand, a musical tradition that seeks to narrate a shared religious tradition and, on the other hand, the affirmation of an irreducible subjectivity in which religion becomes religiosity (or, according to more common codes today, 'spirituality'). Hans Küng maintains the Weberian tension model, based on the incommensurability that juxtaposes music as the practice of a shared narrative (community) and as a resource for self-affirmation (individual).

Hans Küng's observation does not seem sufficient to understand the many ways creators have made themselves autonomous. Indeed, the artist's status has undergone a major transformation in historical modernity. We have moved from the artist-craftsman to the artist-professional who seeks to produce himself.²⁸ In the artist-craftsman model, the role of the creator is to represent the religious narrative. The professional artist is a social actor with his margins of autonomy. When the artist appropriates something from the vast archive of the sacred from this external place of autonomy, it can be said that there is a logic of (re)use. In other words, the repertoire resulting from symbolising the sacred is put at the service of an artistic production. What can be intriguing is the fact that this (re)use of the sacred materials is sought to give value to the artistic work and demand a different attitude from the public.

In this context, part of social analysis tends to favour not the institutionally objectified religion but the fluid, implicit religion that crystallised in functional substitutes. In a famous 1968 article, the anthropologist

²⁶ William Drabkin, *Beethoven: Missa Solemnis*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁷ Hans Kung, *Música y religión: Mozart, Wagner, Bruckner* (Madrid: Trotta, 2008).

²⁸ Anne Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré: le cas de la Symphonie du Millénaire,' *Religiologiques* 22 (2000): 87.

Roger Bastide pointed out that the sacred does not die; it moves.²⁹ Roger Bastide's perspective on the displacement of the sacred had an important reception in Quebec religious studies in the 1980s and 1990s. Robert Tessier showed how discourses in various social fields (re)use religious vocabulary to propose new ethics or answers to social problems. In his hermeneutics – in which we can discover something of the Durkheimian heritage – the sacred is defined as a semantic function that manages the social tensions of human groups, weaves the bonds of solidarity and produces the symbolic representations necessary for the construction of collective identities.³⁰ In this model of analysis, the difficulties of reconstituting the configurations of the inherited sacred lead to new strategies of sacralisation. Artists, based on the *professional* model – in other words, beyond the game, the work – participate in the reflection and construction of new times and spaces of the sacred. The means of disseminating art opens up the space of creation to that of the exhibition, calling for contemplation.³¹ Contemporary art creators can now use religion's old symbolic supports to legitimise their value proposition.

Observing the relationship between the production of musical works in the post-war generation and religious narratives and myths from Föllmi's perspective underlines a direction that has already been documented: the affirmation of the subjective dimensions of musical creation takes place along a path of emancipation from liturgical ritual.³²

²⁹ Roger Bastide, 'Anthropologie Religieuse,' in *Universalis* II (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1968), 65–69.

³⁰ Robert Tessier, *Déplacements du sacré dans la société moderne: culture, politique, économie, écologie* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1994), 12.

³¹ Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré', 90.

³² Beat Föllmi, 'Spiritualité et musiques contemporaines: entre expression personnelle et exigence liturgique,' in *Spiritualité Contemporaine de l'art*, ed. Jérôme Cottin, Wilhelm Gräb, and Bettina Schaller (Labor et Fides, 2012), 278. It should be noted that according to one of the most influential theses of the 1980s, that of Habermas, religious practice, beyond its ethical orientation, would tend to become obsolete as a ritual. Habermas interprets religious symbolism as the 'pre-linguistic' root of communicative action (archaic sacred symbols express a traditional normative consensus that is prolonged and renewed in ritual practice). The functions associated with the symbolic reproduction of the lived world – cultural reproduction (culture), social integration (society) and the socialisation of individuals (personality) – gradually left the sacred domain for the profane structures of communication through language. This 'linguistification' (*Versprachlichung*) of the sacred is a process in which the authority of belief is replaced by the authority of the rational consensus sought by communication, in other words, a consensus resulting from free and reasoned discussion between subjects capable of speaking and acting: Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des*

As liturgy takes on a public character in the more formalised Christian institutional universes, institutional grammar and community syntax are prominent, reducing the space for individual creative freedom. The persistence of the religious comes at the cost of a *poiesis* of individualisation, in a relationship of divergence with the communal ritual scene – which does not mean that the aesthetics and politics of ritual cannot be recomposed in a new context of bringing musical works closer to audience participation, as will be shown below. Generally speaking, the individual creator occupies the space of the mediating institution. However, this does not exclude strategies aimed at creating a community.⁵³

As has already been pointed out, this social landscape is not homogeneous. It is necessary to find a hermeneutic that explains both the persistence of religious referentiality in the creation of music in the European tradition, both in the first and in the second half of the 20th century and the unprecedented fact of discovering composers whose catalogue we cannot find any trace of explicit references to biblical narratives or Christian rites, an essential resource for the grand tradition of sacred music of European origin. For example, in the context of musical modernism in the first half of the 20th century, the last work written by Arnold Schönberg in 1950 was entitled *Modern Psalms*.⁵⁴ But it should also be pointed out that there are composers whose archives we do not find any relevance to the European tradition of sacred music, such as the case of Webern.⁵⁵

The hypothesis pursued here points to a correlation between the use of religion and the place of memory in compositional processes. In the words of Jean-Marc Chouvel, memory is the possibility of time moving from pure fluidity to form.⁵⁶ Based on this guiding principle, we

Kommunikativen Handelns. 2: Zur Kritik der Funktionalistischen Vernunft (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 118, 292, 487.

⁵³ Alfredo Teixeira and Luísa Almendra, 'A memória religiosa entre estética e política: o *Magnificat* de João Madureira,' *REVER – Revista de Estudos de Religião* 17 (2018), 52–75.

⁵⁴ *Moderner Psalm für Sprecher, Gemischten Chor und Orchester*, Op. 50C (1950).

⁵⁵ However, the British composer John Tavener – one of the most recognised in the world of contemporary Orthodox music – considers Webern's music to be one of the most spiritual. Its conciseness and abstraction are seen as indicative of spiritual sublimity. Narrative and ritual are dispensed with in the symbolic creation of an inner space, which John Tavener reads as a trace of a mystical attitude, as he explained in an interview with the BBC: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04pddst>>.

⁵⁶ Jean-Marc Chouvel, 'Avec le Temps, il n'y a pas de Forme sans Mémoire...', in *Musique et Mémoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 47.

can find a particular mapping of compositional processes. It should be noted that much of the music created in the 20th century adopted the attitude of claiming an autonomous theory for each work. This is where some of the audience's problems lie. Our listening skills do not seem to have such radical versatility. In any case, a work written in time cannot fail to require a relationship with memory.³⁷ Studying musical works from the perspective of their relationship with memory can be effective if we pursue the nuances of their religious referentiality. Approaching religion as a form of belief that establishes a tradition highlights a frequently observed fact: there is no religious belief that does not refer to a symbolic material received, to a legacy, to a memory that solidarises the past and the present, thus helping to reduce the risks of transitoriness or aggressive change. In this sense, religious belief creates a communicative space in which the believer is called upon to respond to precedence made up of images and narratives. The religious dynamic declines genealogically, as a relationship with a founding memory, recited and practised transmission. From this perspective, being religious is knowing how to be generated – or, in more individualised societies, wanting to feel generated.³⁸ A methodological focus on this perspective can contribute to constructing a comprehensive model of the use of religious memory in contemporary compositional practices.

In this context, it is curious to note that Stravinsky's path posed some problems for the post-war avant-garde. The metamorphoses of his compositional work were firmly anchored in a relationship with the memory of European musical creation. In the softer interpretations, the composer was not seen as a traditionalist because he did not canonise any tradition. In other words, his relationship with memory degenerated into a game in which he was the protagonist – he chose the tradition. From this perspective, 'choosing' tradition is not a traditional gesture.³⁹

In musical modernity after 1945, Makis Solomos emphasises the predominance of the desire for amnesia in the face of socio-historical memory. Xenakis is an example of a total asceticism of memory, and Boulez represents partial voluntary amnesia.⁴⁰ Xenakis biographically

³⁷ Chouvel, 'Avec le Temps, il n'y a pas de Forme sans Mémoire...', 48–51.

³⁸ Alfredo Teixeira, *Um mapa para pensar a religião* (Lisboa: UC Editora, 2015), 37–58.

³⁹ Boris de Schloezer and Marina Scriabine, *Problèmes de la musique moderne*, Aesthetica (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016).

⁴⁰ Makis Solomos, 'Stratégies contemporaines de construction de la mémoire musicale,' in *Musique et Mémoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 239–41.

conveys the figure of a migrant from a region plagued by the traumas of the 20th century, forced into a process of extensive identity reconstruction. The scenarios concerning the place of traditional materials in the compositional process involved a confrontation with the Greek ‘popular’ tradition (which he describes as demotic), jazz, traditional European music, dodecaphony and electronics. His response was radical. In his works *Metastasis* and *Le Sacrifice*, we find a desire to renounce all traditions. This is modernity *ex nihilo*, with the ambition of achieving a new universalism through a high degree of abstraction. This emptiness of memory is understood as a space of freedom in which all references can be reconstructed.⁴¹

In *Jalons (pour un décennie)*, Boulez exposes this problem in a dilemmatic way.⁴² This is a period in which avant-garde tendencies have already been undermined by the various waves of postmodernism, according to a widely used categorisation.⁴³ Boulez observes that we live in a time that is increasingly full of memory and that forgetting is becoming urgent. His position is expressed in a tricky balancing act. He opposes two extremes: those who live on the glorification of the musical archives of the past and the competitors of the *tabula rasa*, for whom the present has no origin. For Boulez, there is no tradition, only a chain of individuals who have used each other’s models and tools. This emphasises the *de-authorisation* of tradition or, in other words, the non-necessary nature of tradition.

In other universes, there is a different logic, which Makis Solomos characterises with the category of anamnesis.⁴⁴ In their heterogeneity, Adams, Pärt, Penderecki, Górecki or Rihm can exemplify this will to memory. In the case of John Adams, his transition from the American minimalism of the 1970s to more hybrid models aims to perpetuate what he calls universal musical laws: periodicity, pulse and tonality.⁴⁵ In the case of Arvo Pärt, in the period of works such as *Tabula rasa* (1977), the desire to visit a particular representation of medieval music

⁴¹ Iannis Xenakis, *Musiques Formelles: nouveaux principes formels de composition musicale*, Stock-musique (Paris: Stock, 1981), 185.

⁴² Pierre Boulez, *Jalons (pour une décennie): dix ans d’enseignement au Collège de France (1978–1988)*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Paris: Bourgois, 1989).

⁴³ Jean-François Lyotard, ‘Musique et Postmodernité,’ *Surfaces* 6 (1996): 4–16.

⁴⁴ Solomos, ‘Stratégies contemporaines de construction de la mémoire musicale,’ 241–44.

⁴⁵ John Luther Adams, *The Place Where You Go to Listen: In Search of an Ecology of Music* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2009).

is evident, identifying with the figure of the anonymous composer – as if in an exercise of authorial asceticism. Within the framework of the current functioning of the musical field, authorial anonymity is a symbolic fiction, but it nevertheless produces meaning.⁴⁶ The densification of the explicit presence of the archives of music from the past is particularly visible in music labelled ‘sacred’. Because the label ‘sacred music’ refers to forms inscribed mainly in the history of European music, it can attract the attention of a wider audience. This aspect can facilitate reading new languages.⁴⁷ Appealing to ritual memory or received religious imagery can provide a mediating context for new languages.⁴⁸ Under the sign of amnesia, as mentioned above, other composers refused to reuse this memory in the name of a rupture or as an expression of radical autonomy.

The third constellation proposed by Makis Solomos concerns the impact of globalisation on the idea of tradition.⁴⁹ In this case, it is not about amnesia or anamnesis in the sense mentioned above. It is about integrating the memory of cultures into the compositional process. This sense of ethnicisation has been present, in different ways, in some of the work of composers as diverse as Bartók and Berio. In the example of Makis Solomos, the desire to renew compositional structures based on processes discovered in a multiplicity of cultural references is more evident.⁵⁰ Works such as *Drumming* (1970–71), *Music for Eighteen Musicians* (1976) or *Tehillim* (1981) by Steve Reich can document this attitude. The term ‘extra-European influences’ is perhaps not very apt. Reich does not seek the exotic. It is not the strangeness of the sound he is after but the discovery of structural processes. Furthermore, in this context, all traditions are available: the European tradition from 1200 to 1750, the gamelan music of Java and Bali, the surviving music of West Africa, American jazz between 1950 and 1965, the modernity of the first half of the 20th century or the traditional cantillation of the Hebrew

⁴⁶ Alfredo Teixeira, “‘Cantus Firmus’: persistences et métamorphoses du sacré musical,” in *Persistence de l’Œuvre: Art et Religion*, ed. Tomás Maia (Lisboa: Documenta, 2020), 141–78.

⁴⁷ Robineau, ‘Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l’utilisation du sacré,’ 86.

⁴⁸ Alfredo Teixeira, ‘Religion and Cultural Mediations: Perspectives from Contemporary Portuguese Society,’ *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023), 1–25.

⁴⁹ Solomos, ‘Stratégies contemporaines de construction de la mémoire musicale,’ 244–46.

⁵⁰ Solomos, 244–46.

Scriptures.⁵¹ The structures he discovers there establish a constructed relationship with the heritage of organology European music, without having to resort to non-European instruments as a fiction of this globalisation. Steve Reich works within a certain abstract universalism framework, in which cultures are a vast *stock* available without any particular authority or need for reproduction. They are available as heteroclite fragments that only make sense in the compositional programme.

This is the centre of the social dynamics that define multiple modernities⁵² and witness the emergence of the ‘time of the globe’.⁵³ Many interpreters of our contemporaneity emphasise the centrality of this social dynamic. Nestor Canclini⁵⁴ uses the term ‘border cultures’, and Arjun Appadurai⁵⁵ proposes the neologism ‘ethnoscape’ to describe a human landscape marked by different kinds of mobility. Peter Burke,⁵⁶ one of the leading exponents of so-called cultural history, has tried to show that cultural hybridity, in its pluriformity, is one of the most characteristic phenomena of historical modernity. This is the terrain of the metaphor introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss – the metaphor of *bricolage*, used to translate how the mythical imagination explores the play of possible recompositions of the stock of fragmented, heterogeneous and heteroclite materials assimilated by tradition, import or deviation.⁵⁷ Within this social framework, composers who integrate the practices of symbolic transhumance into their creative process, creating new possibilities of contact between different cultural fragments, are, in a way, composers between worlds, taking the literal meaning of their professional name. The interval, the diaspora, the transit, the border, and the interstitial spaces constitute their creative habitat. This path is particularly represented in many current interpretative trends in so-called ‘early music’. The creolisation effect has become a widespread resource in this context.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Steve Reich, *Writings on Music, 1965–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵² S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

⁵³ Peter Sloterdijk, *Im Weltinnenraum des Kapitals: Für eine Philosophische Theorie der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).

⁵⁴ Néstor García Canclini, *Diferentes, desiguales y desconectados: mapas de la interculturalidad* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2004).

⁵⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁵⁶ Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009).

⁵⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*, Agora 2 (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1962).

⁵⁸ Alfredo Teixeira, ‘O compositor entre mundos,’ *Glosas* 15 (2016): 9–10.

3. Tension and Deviation

As we have seen, in societies marked by Christian religious memory, the sacred and art have undergone metamorphoses that can be correlated.⁵⁹ Tension, in the Weberian model, can take the form of the itineraries of artistic autonomisation mentioned above. But it can also take the form of cultural conflict – which in other historical moments would be ‘blasphemy’. The religious meaning and practice sphere is relativised in societies that have experienced secularisation in all its diversity. It can no longer establish itself as the organising centre of the perception of limits. The possibility of social identification of the ‘blasphemer’ or ‘blasphemy’ is thus reduced since the operations that allowed the religious identification of the ultimate boundaries have no chair. It is no coincidence that the current tensions between freedom of expression and the right of religious groups to have their heritage respected end up being transferred to the sphere of ethical and axiological argumentation, where, despite ideological struggles, a certain consensus can be built.⁶⁰

In this new context, sacrilege no longer typically consists of an act such as desecrating a sacred place. From a certain point of view, sacrilege has become the mission of art that presents itself as contemporary. To use Marcel Duchamp’s term, the aesthetic attitude proper to this art would be ‘deviation’ (*détournement*). In this explanatory horizon, art consists of placing something (artefact, idea, act, saying, writing) outside its context in a place outside its received legibility.⁶¹ This ‘deviation’ aims to invest it with a different meaning, or at least to give it food for thought. In this context, contemporary art makes what would be blasphemy in another social context the new critical morality, the new sacred. True blasphemy would now be the censorship of this ‘deviant’ power of art, and the defence of this ‘transgression’ becomes a public service – not least because a significant part of artistic production in

⁵⁹ Alfredo Teixeira, ‘*Cantus firmus*: Persistances et métamorphoses du sacré musical,’ in *Persistance de l’œuvre, II: Art et Religion*, ed. Tomás Maia (Lisboa: Sistema Solar, 2020), 141–178.

⁶⁰ Alfredo Teixeira, ‘Uma política da imagem: leitura antropológica da blasfêmia visual a partir de Pierre Legendre,’ *Revista Portuguesa de História*, no. 40 (2009): 143–74. doi: 10.14195/0870-4147_40_6.

⁶¹ Marcel Duchamp, *Duchamp du signe: écrits* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013).

European societies depends on the state.⁶² In this order of analysis, the disputes between religious groups and the field of contemporary art would be close to the figure of the ‘war of religion’. It is no coincidence that these public disputes have been called ‘cultural wars’ in the USA.⁶³

It should be noted, however, that certain sensibilities can read particular artistic creations that are the subject of the blasphemy controversy as works that highlight aspects of Christianity that are considered essential but overshadowed by the weight of historical incorporation. Paradoxically, what some interpret as an insult is perceived by others as rehabilitation – in this case, the mechanism of *deviation* produces an effect of unveiling. The essential argument concerns that they do not seek transgression as an end but as an effective means of criticising the *mainstream*, including ideologies and religious practices.⁶⁴ The work *Piss Christ* (1987) bears witness to these ambiguities. Andres Serrano photographed a banal crucifix of no apparent artistic value immersed in its urine – the work is part of the *Immersion* series, a cycle in which various objects suffer the effects of immersion in different fluids.⁶⁵ The work has caused quite a stir. When it was exhibited in Avignon in 2011, it was vandalised.⁶⁶ One of the most talked about cases in the European Catholic sphere concerns the dialogue that the Bishop of Poitiers, Albert Rouet, established with a group of works and artists selected by Gilbert Brownstone. Among them was the photographer Andres Serrano. Albert Rouet’s commentary confronts the core of the Christian message – the ‘flesh of God’ as the ‘flesh of dialogue’ – with a group of works that typically carry the label of provocation. The bishop tends to praise the ability of these works to bring their interlocutors face to face with the most crucial aspect of human life and, in this capacity,

⁶² Aude de Kerros, *Sacré art contemporain: évêques, inspecteurs et commissaires* (Paris: Godefroy, 2012), 21.

⁶³ Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

⁶⁴ This interpretative approach can be in dialogue with Metz’s perspective on Christianity as a ‘dangerous memory’: Petr Jandjsek, ‘From Dangerous Memory to Dangerous Hope: Reading the Theology of Johann Baptist Metz,’ *AUC Theologica* 13, no. 2 (2024): 47–63. doi: 10.14712/23363398.2023.25.

⁶⁵ Tyler Shine, ‘Taboo Icons: The Bodily Photography of Andres Serrano’, *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture* 4 (3 August 2015): 24–44. doi: 10.5195/contemp.2015.141.

⁶⁶ The trail of controversies can be seen in the media archives. For example: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/18/andres-serrano-piss-christ-destroyed-christian-protesters>>; <http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2011/04/18/la-destruction-de-piss-christ-uvre-impie_1509185_3246.html>.

to share the core of the Christian incarnation and paschal narratives: 'I call a *work of art* that which opens me up, which passes through me so that I accept to go towards the mystery that inhabits me.'⁶⁷

Romeo Castellucci's equally controversial *Sul Concetto di Volto nel Figlio di Dio* (2010) documents the same ambivalence. The dramaturgical work unfolds in three independent sequences that, according to the author, aim to materialise the moment Christ enters human flesh. The Italian director is interested in understanding the abandonment of the divine state. Dialysis, incontinence, faeces and the stoning of Christ's face – in a reproduction of the work by the painter Antonello Da Messina, *Salvatore Mundi* (1465) – embody an eschatological reflection that has been labelled as Christianophobia by some. In an interview with *Le Monde*, the director said: 'I make a theatre of questioning, of restlessness, which plays with ambiguity [...]. Art rests entirely on the condition that it raises problems, otherwise it's purely decorative [...]. Today, religion has lost its ability to raise questions, and art has taken its place' (*Le Monde*, 27-10-2011).⁶⁸

The figures of these *cultural wars* do not find such apparent public records in the musical archive. They are more easily reproduced in the mediasphere of visual cultures. This kind of aesthetic attitude finds perhaps more complex, more abstract resources in music, which is why public confrontations are not so often documented. However, the aesthetic of *détournement* finds parallels in the musical work of some of the most distinctive composers of the second half of the 20th century. Mauricio Kagel's (1931–2008) work can be seen as an important parallel in some of its registers. One work in particular stands out: *Sankt-Bach-Passion* (1985). Commissioned in 1979 for the *Berliner Festwochen*, it was first performed in 1981 and premiered on 9 September 1985. It is a Passion in terms of its architecture – choruses, recitatives, arias, etc. But it is not a narrative of the Passion of Jesus

⁶⁷ Gilbert Brownstone and Albert Rouet, *L'Église et l'art d'avant-garde: de la provocation au dialogue* (Paris: Michel, 2002), 107.

⁶⁸ The work passed through Portugal without public reactions comparable to those documented in other national contexts: <http://www.teatrosaoluiz.pt/catalogo/detalhes_produto.php?id=591>; <<http://www.teatromunicipaldopoito.pt/PT/programa/romeo-castellucci-it-sobre-o-conceito-do-rosto-do-filho-de-deus-sul-concetto-di-volto-nel-figlio-di-dio/?categoria=teatro>>. <<https://www.publico.pt/2015/12/17/culturaipsilon/noticia/previsoes-para-2016-romeo-castellucci-divide-o-rivoli-com-um-espectaculo-de-choque-1717591>>.

Christ according to one of the Evangelists or any other source. This is Bach's Passion:⁶⁹

I have been dealing with him [Bach] intensively for some time now, the culmination of which was the Chorbuch (1978). To this day, the amount of emotion in a simple Bach protestant chorale has remained a mystery. In 1975 or 1976, I began to cherish the idea of carrying out a project on the person of Bach. [*free translation*]

If Bach's biography invades the narrative, the same cannot be said of his musical language. The work falls within the limits of Kagel's compositional grammar:

I started with what I did not want, and it is often what a composer rejects that stimulates his imagination. So, no Bach quotes [...]. I only wanted to confront the super-father Bach with my music. [*free translation*]

However, Kagel does not renounce the opportunities that his serial idiom finds in numerological schemes and combinatorial formalisations of technemes (such as those allowed by the lexeme B-A-C-H itself), in a straightforward approach to the more rationalist dimension of Bach's work. The recourse to the secrets of the combinatorial art, in this and other musical itineraries of the 20th century, makes it possible to overcome the arbitrariness of the system. This problem is even more acute now that musical languages cannot be articulated based on a consensus grammar:

I would like to be a real Kabbalist. I am only intuitive and raw, trying better to understand the hidden meaning of numbers and proportions. The same can undoubtedly be said of Bach: he used a numerology known in his time in the art of composition, which nevertheless hints at mysterious relationships [...]. I deduced rhythms from the numbers in Johann Sebastian Bach's name, which gave rise to new structures. Vowels, consonants, numbers of syllables and words, I transformed all this into series of durations, intensities and heights, and formal proportions. [*free translation*]

⁶⁹ The quotes from Kagel collected here are part of an interview conducted by Werner Klüppelholz and included in the *booklet* that accompanies the CD: Mauricio Kagel, 'About the "St. Bach Passion" (Conversation with Werner Klüppelholz),' in *Sankt-Bach-Passion* (CD Audivis/Naïve, 2002).

As in Bach's Passions, the textual montage is essential in organising the musical narrative. In the case of *Sankt-Bach-Passion*, we find a plurality of sources that form part of the *Bach-Dokumente*. The result is an assemblage of heteroclite textual elements that bring together the necrologies left by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Johann Friedrich Agricola, as well as fragments of the texts of Bach's cantatas, adapted, recomposed according to combinatorial logics that provide Kagel with the primary syntactic material:

This piece falls into the category of pure music with text, as is often the case with Bach. Pure music is not music that avoids words, but music in which words become music. [*free translation*]

The work recounts a life marked by suffering, exploring the contrast between the painful conditions of existence of a singer who did not reach the top honours of his time but who produced a musical work capable of surviving any era. This material is organised according to the architecture of the Passions performed by Bach in a play of 'parody' that is the inverse of what Bach himself knew: the use of a folk or so-called profane theme in a religious composition. In the case of *Sankt-Bach-Passion*, it is a religious form that is now the object of 'profane' bricolage. Kagel 'believes' in Bach, in the sense suggested by the work's epigraph:

*For
HIM
with all humility
in deepest devotion
and
dedicated
to his memory*

Mauricio Kagel

[*free translation*]

In this effect of substituting the figure of Jesus Christ, Bach is not, in the first instance, as he could be for Messiaen, a Christ figure. In other words, a figure who, under the impulse of spiritual exegesis, would present himself as an *alter Christus*, a transparent being in whom the traces of the imitation of Christ can be discovered – in the case of Olivier Messiaen, for example, the figure of St Francis. In Kagel's work, it is

predominantly a Promethean type of substitution. The human individual takes the place of God.⁷⁰ In Feuerbach's posterity, God is the most essential thing that can be discovered in the human condition.⁷¹ Or, in a language closer to Kagel's, the reflex of the human condition. The musical work thus has the effect of self-revelation of humans.

4. From Tension to Transaction

Various studies have shown that despite the decline in the capacity of churches and other religious institutions to oversee the economy of the sacred, there is still evidence of a demand for the satisfaction of spiritual needs.⁷² The ability to respond to this demand mobilises many actors and institutions, even in a context of tremendous fluidity, to meet this demand. The ability to respond to the demands of this needs circuit is still a possible way to build social credibility. The social impact of these initiatives depends on investment in rebuilding 'spaces of convergence',⁷³ making these experiences not just a context for individual enjoyment but a social manifestation.⁷⁴ This is why the contexts in which people position themselves about artistic production are, as we have seen, a practical laboratory for understanding the interplay of tensions and transactions. In the most widely reproduced research models, the gaze is recurrently distributed between two scenarios: on the one hand, the ritual-liturgical scenario, which continues to mobilise aesthetic mediations; on the other, the public sphere as a place of tensions, often resulting from processes of re-using religious memory, in new forms of *contrafactura*, detached from the authorities and institutions that manage the transmission of this memory.⁷⁵

However, there are other scenarios with equal social relevance in which religious actors and institutions establish unprecedented

⁷⁰ 'It turns out that not all musicians believe in God, but they all believe in Bach.'

⁷¹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *L'essence du christianisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

⁷² Alfredo Teixeira, 'Religion and Cultural Mediations: Perspectives from Contemporary Portuguese Society,' *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 534. doi: 10.3390/rel14040534.

⁷³ Here, the concept of '*espaces de rassemblement*' proposed by Alberto Melucci is taken up again: Alberto Melucci, 'Mouvements sociaux, mouvements post-politiques', *Lien Social et Politiques* 75 (2016): 173–90. doi : 10.7202/1036303ar.

⁷⁴ This is the case studied by Anne Robineau, *Symphonie du Millénaire*, a musical project created in Quebec, with state support, to celebrate the turn of the millennium: Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré'.

⁷⁵ Only this second logic of action is the subject of this article.

relationships with the field of artistic production. Moreover, they construct the ‘artistic field’ (in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu⁷⁶) by including religious memory in the processes of cultural transmission. Roger Cailliois stressed that religious groups mobilise to make their values more accessible through symbolic objects.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, historically and socially, this investment can have different meanings. In certain ways of analysis, these logics of action give rise to internal secularisation itineraries. In other perspectives, the support of religious institutions for artistic creation is interpreted as a way of adapting to the contemporary displacement of the sacred. In this context, it is essential to take into account the transaction regimes that are established between religious institutions and the field of artistic producers. On the one hand, religious universes provide materials (constellations of narratives, images and forms) inscribed in the medium and prolonged course of cultures. This happens through the heritageisation of religious signs, narratives, and practices, as well as other forms of transaction in which the symbolic-religious stock becomes available for the most varied aesthetic recompositions. On the other hand, since it is not a question of ‘church art’ (like the *musica da chiesa* in the past), but rather the constitution of border-places, churches have seen their place of inscription extended – a space of shared citizenship – open to new senses of public relevance.

Access to these strategies differentiates religious institutions and groups. In Christian geography, it is possible to distinguish between logics that favour the dynamics of individual conversion and those that favour strategies of Christianisation through cultural mediation. Although not exclusive, the latter is more likely to be found in churches that value their heritage as a medium, in the sense of a vehicle or a bridge, favouring inclusivity strategies. The historiography and sociology of the reception of the Second Vatican Council highlight the persistence of the Roman Catholic Church’s strategies of ‘reconciliation’ with artists.⁷⁸ This institution underwent a transformation in which the initiatives for dialogue with non-believers (Pontifical Council for

⁷⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l’art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Libre examen (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1992).

⁷⁷ Roger Cailliois, *L’homme et le sacré* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).

⁷⁸ Isabelle Saint-Martin, ‘Entre commandes officielles, résurgences et provocations: le catholicisme en France face à l’art contemporain,’ in *Catholicisme en tensions*, ed. Céline Béraud, Frédéric Gugelot, and Isabelle Saint-Martin (Paris: Éditions EHESS, 2012), 266–68.

Dialogue with Non-Believers) were incorporated into a new organic model in 1993, becoming the Pontifical Council for Culture under the active guidance of Cardinal Poupard. Since 2007, Cardinal Ravasi has renewed the role of this body. This renewal can be documented in initiatives such as the ‘Patio of the Gentiles’ or the participation, since 2013, in the Venice Biennale. We should also mention a document issued under the authority of John Paul II, the ‘Letter to Artists’ of 1999, and the meeting with artists in the Sistine Chapel in 2009, promoted by Benedict XVI.⁷⁹

Several initiatives that bear witness to this logic of action can be identified within the Catholic institutional structure in Portugal. First, the Portuguese Bishops’ Conference has valued the National Secretariat for Cultural Pastoral Care. Between 2003 and 2014, its director was the priest, poet and theologian José Tolentino Mendonça, a personality who is widely known in Portuguese intellectual circles and who is present in various sectors of society, whether through his presence in one of the leading Portuguese weeklies or through the presence of his works on spirituality in the large book trade. As part of the Portuguese Bishops’ Conference, the ‘Árvore da Vida – Padre Manuel Antunes’ (Tree of Life – Father Manuel Antunes) award was created, as well as his participation in the IndieLisboa film festival, also with an award.⁸⁰ Based on the local dynamics of the Roman Catholic Church, these initiatives can be integrated into cultural projects for regional development. This is the case of the ‘Festival Terras sem Sombra de Música Sacra do Baixo Alentejo’⁸¹, an initiative of the Department of Historical and Artistic Heritage of the Diocese of Beja, with various partnerships, whose programming concept brings together music, cultural heritage and biodiversity, with strategies for attracting audiences that have extended to the Iberian space.⁸²

However, this approach must be read in the light of the reciprocities it describes. Isabelle Saint-Martin, who has done extensive research on the relationship between churches and contemporary visual arts, speaks of a resurgence of religious motifs in the repertoires of creators

⁷⁹ URL: <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pt/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.html>; <https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pt/speeches/2009/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20091121_artisti.html>.

⁸⁰ URL: <<http://www.snpcultura.org/>>.

⁸¹ URL: <<http://festivalterrassemsonombra.org/>>.

⁸² Ana Santos, ‘Festival Terras Sem Sombra de Música Sacra do Baixo Alentejo,’ *Invenire* 2 (2011): 64–65.

in a context of free circulation and access to artistic and religious goods.⁸⁵ As she notes, there is no single meaning to this resurgence: neither the provocative effect nor the confessional logic exhaustively describes the persistence of the religious in contemporary art. It should even be stressed that in many cases, this reinvestment in religious motifs coincides with an aesthetic attitude of reinventing art inherited from the past – in the form of commentary, deconstruction, allusion, and so on. Sometimes, the aesthetic attitude of revaluing religious materials is no different from valuing the artistic production of the past as a support for new forms of artistic communication – along the lines of the processes of anamnesis mentioned above.

These creative itineraries can have a remarkable public impact. It is often the case that state institutions, even in countries with stricter models of secularism, end up supporting art with explicitly religious references. The results are often far from consensual or can even be seen as provocative or blasphemous.⁸⁴ However, in many cases, reactions to certain forms of re-use of religious references are not easily distinguishable from a rejection of contemporary art languages themselves.⁸⁵

In the interpretive framework pursued in this article, artistic creation can be a place of dialogue for religious institutions and groups – to make their message relevant – and religious memory, specifically ritual, can be a context of interface between the creator and the public. Classically, from its etymology, *ars* denotes the conscious and intentional capacity to produce objects, but also the set of norms and techniques that must be used to represent reality. In this way, art is understood as a technique of conception and a form of knowledge. In order to legitimise this form of knowledge, the creator's individuality may not be enough; it needs a critical mass.⁸⁶ As Balandier observed in his essay on power and modernity, the reference to a horizon of sacredness symbolically validates cultural, social and political experiments that aim to create meaning.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Saint-Martin, 'Entre commandes officielles, résurgences et provocations,' 272–74.

⁸⁴ Eleanor Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics: The Catholic Imagination in Contemporary Art* (New York, NY: Midmarch Arts Press, 2004).

⁸⁵ Nathalie Heinich, *L'Art Contemporain exposé aux rejets: études de cas* (Paris: Fayard, 2012).

⁸⁶ Audiences or a group of peers, in the case of creations that focus more on the virtuosity of the technique itself and are therefore less accessible to a broader audience: Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré,' 90–91.

⁸⁷ Georges Balandier, *Le Détour: Pouvoir et Modernité*, Espace du politique (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 205.

Strategies can include extending the action to the public and valorising ‘places of memory’, ‘sacred places’, as *mise-en-scène*. This favours practices that abolish or attenuate the classic distinction between spectacle and rite since the exteriority of the audience is mitigated. In other words, everyone is a *practitioner* – characteristic of ritual action. Attempts to abolish the distance between spectacle and play or ritual involve creating a relationship, a game of collage-reunion-assembly of different elements, which are re-appropriated, undergoing adjustments in meaning or destabilising boundaries. As Andrée Fortin observed, ‘the encounter between the playful and the aesthetic is favoured by the fact that, in both cases, one is included in something broader that surpasses, encompasses or fuses us’.⁸⁸ These creative contexts do not celebrate a break with tradition like some avant-gardes. Instead, it is a utopian gesture that gives the floor to everyone. In this utopia of participation, art objects are no longer untouchable but can be handled – it could be said that this is the secularisation of art itself.

Within the framework of the interpretative hypotheses explored here, revisiting the case study Anne Robineau presented is beneficial. The research focused on a musical project presented on 3 June 2000 at the Oratory of Saint Joseph in Montreal. Under the name *Symphonie du Millénaire*, the project took on the dimension of a significant event mobilising institutions, composers, professional and amateur musicians and a vast audience – whose presence was integrated into the very performative conception of the work. The contours of the mega-event were unique: 19 composers, 333 performing musicians, 15 instrumental groups, pre-registration of 15 sets of bells from the city’s churches, and 2000 public members who were given small bells. The relationship between electroacoustic materials and the music produced on-site unfolds in a commentary on the liturgical hymn *Veni creator*.⁸⁹

Anne Robineau collected the material produced in the communicative mediasphere, studying the categories of journalistic reception and the speeches of the event’s protagonists. She focuses on certain qualities that she considers crucial for the characterisation of the event: the large gathering, its festive nature and the desire to celebrate

⁸⁸ Andrée Fortin, ‘L’exposition du public à l’art,’ *Cahiers de Recherche Sociologique* 28 (2011): 92. doi: 10.7020/1002528ar.

⁸⁹ Robineau, ‘Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l’utilisation du sacré,’ 85, 93.

two thousand years of shared culture.⁹⁰ We are, therefore, faced with a device that appeals to the effects of festive behaviour in its ability to reduce social distance and promote a sense of collective belonging, as Durkheim's descendants have noted. Anne Robineau sums up her interpretation of the artistic practices in question as follows:

The new social strategies of artists, especially those that involve the public in the creation of the work, bringing them together across their differences, using the ancient resources of collective memory, lead artists to reconceptualise the sacred punctually and ephemerally.⁹¹ [*free translation*]

It is important to emphasise that the means of constructing the work-event, to celebrate two thousand years of shared culture, makes use of liturgical and ritual heritage, reusing Christian memory in a context that is no longer that of the experience of an *objective Christianity*, to return to Michel de Certeau's emblematic expression. The work-event is realised in a context of fragmentation of Christianity as a social body, taking up Michel de Certeau's perspective (1974, 1987).⁹² In this cultural situation, the work-event Millennium Symphony is marked by a logic of reuse that calls for a different game with established memory.

Michel de Certeau's anthropology of everyday life can provide a perspective on these logics of reuse.⁹³ In his proposal, the culture of everyday life is marked by two dynamics: that of the producers and that of the consumers. Producers have strategic power – control of the means of production. Tactical operations define the consumers' regime of action. In the wake of Michel de Certeau's anthropology of cultural practices, research is discovering a renewed interest in the combinations of operations beyond those models that made *usagers* simply passive and dominated consumers. This poetics of everyday life, of which de Certeau spoke, is disguised – perhaps like camouflage techniques of other kinds – in the very places occupied by institutionalised production, the logic of which is to control the production and use of the product. In the present situation, religious institutions and artists can establish transactions according to regimes of action in which the qualities that describe this zone of tactics become predominant. This plasticity

⁹⁰ Robineau, 93–96.

⁹¹ Robineau, 96.

⁹² Certeau, *Le Christianisme éclaté*; Certeau, *La Faiblesse de Croire*.

⁹³ Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*.

allows for greater inclusivity regarding the diversity of languages and guarantees an interval of autonomy between religious symbolic capital and the artistic *medium*. The results can be unexpected.

Epilogue

The itinerary we have travelled can contribute to constructing a comprehensive approach capable of considering the emergence of a new field, beyond tensions and conflicts, within the framework of the transactions established between religious institutions and the artistic field. The sites of this encounter have the qualities of borderlands because they allow transactions between different worlds – they involve conflict, compromise, exchange and cooperation. New social dynamics unfold.

Among the theoretical models explored, the one that emerges from Michel de Certeau's anthropology deserves particular attention. In a context in which a vast space is opened to the plasticity of reuse tactics, the *objects of belief* can undergo profound remodelling, with results not foreseen by the institutions that had strategic power over the construction of orthodoxies and orthopraxies. Resistance or deviations from an authorised memory should not only be seen from the perspective of a theory of the avant-garde or a sociology of minorities. Instead, using the paradox figure suggested by Michel de Certeau, we should speak of the marginality of a majority.⁹⁴ This is because these 'arts of practice' are incorporated into the zone of elasticity of cultural practices and not in the context of dissidence or simple obsolescence (a perspective that was quite recurrent in some theories of secularisation until the 1990s). These 'arts of doing', typical of the tactical zone, also create meaning. Within a framework of autonomy of spheres, religious institutions and groups can find in artistic mediation a frontier place that allows a zone of contact with signs of displaced or diffuse sacredness.

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⁹⁴ Certeau, XLIIIs.

INSIGHTS ON THE EUCHARIST IN THE IBERIAN PENINSULA: THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL CHALLENGES FROM THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF MERCEDES CARRERAS HITOS (MADRE TRINIDAD)

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ABSTRACT

Like the rest of the Christian world, the Iberian Peninsula has seen different ways of approaching and living the faith over the centuries, particularly of living the Eucharist. There have been many theologies, pastoral actions and episcopal guidelines on the importance of the Eucharist for the life of the believer, but undoubtedly there have been many more examples of life that, in the social and ecclesial background, have been shaping and transfiguring testimonies of the way of living the professed faith. Both in Spain and Portugal over the last century, there have been many people whose lives have contributed to the theological and pastoral development of the Eucharist. In a way, they were the pioneers of theologies that only found expression at the academic or teaching level decades later. One of the most notorious examples that marked both countries of the peninsula was Mother Trinidad. From her actions and life, it is possible to develop theological thinking on the Eucharist and on pastoral and theological practices that urgently need to be implemented today.

Keywords

Madre Trinidad; Eucharist; Adoration; Christian credibility; Eucharistic fervour

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At the centre of Christian life and at the centre of an identity shaped by the Paschal Mystery is the Eucharist. Throughout the ages, the Eucharist has marked the rhythms of believers' lives, both through the encounter generated by the celebration, the communion of Christ's body and blood and his adoration. It should be noted that the phenomenon, devotion and practice of the Eucharist has varied over time. Sometimes the community of believers lived off this daily

nourishment, and sometimes the fear of receiving Communion unworthily led them to develop forms of adoration and contrition that sustained their union with the mystery of redemption.¹

These ups and downs and different ways of thinking and living the Eucharist created the need for continuous theological and liturgical updating. At the same time, because of its importance to the life of the Church, the Eucharist has been a constant presence in the different councils and debates at the Magisterial level. In a way, the trivialisation of practices or the abandonment of an active and effective pastoral approach led to the need to continually emphasise the importance of the Eucharist. What was seen as obvious, central and unavoidable in the first centuries, is presented throughout history as something to be taken care of so as not to be forgotten. This is the only way to understand why, in our time, the Second Vatican Council still has the need to affirm the Eucharist as ‘the source and centre of all Christian life’ (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 11). What should be a lived reality for everyone who claims to be a believer, especially after modernity, is hostage to continuous confirmation that it is through living the Eucharist that ‘the Church of God is built up and grows without ceasing’.²

The Iberian Peninsula was no exception to the rest of the Christianised world and continued to be influenced by the pastoral ecclesial currents and movements of each era. It is therefore no coincidence that

the Second Vatican Council spoke clearly of the Church as the fundamental and universal sacrament of salvation. This concept must be taken seriously by theology. The ecclesial community as a whole is the matrix from which all the sacraments spring, which are therefore always sacraments of the Church, and especially that central sacrament which is the Eucharist. This relationship between the Eucharist and the Church is so deep and so

¹ As Marcel Certeau warns, ‘at the turn of the twelfth century [...] the mystical body of the Eucharist (spoken of by the church as a visible body) was turned on its head: at the end of this pivotal century, the mystical body was the church and the major signifier that spoke of it was the visible corpus of the Eucharist. The opacification of the ecclesiastical institution due to political and sociological factors led to a fundamental upheaval. The church is no longer that which speaks in clarity of the mystery of the Eucharist; it comes to occupy the place of the very mystery of which the Eucharist speaks in transparency. The place of the mystical sign has been hijacked.’ Daniel Vidal, ‘Figures de la mystique: Le dit de Michel de Certeau,’ *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 58, no. 2 (1984). doi: 10.3406/assr. Cf. also: M. Gesteira Garza, *La eucaristía, misterio de comunión* (Madrid: Crisandad, 1983).

² Gesteira Garza, *La eucaristía, misterio de comunión*, 11.

intimate that neither the Eucharist could exist without the Church, nor can there be a Church without the Eucharist.⁵

The lives of countless Christians are clear examples of this being ‘Church-Sacrament’, linked to the Eucharist. For example, in Portugal, Alexandrina Maria da Costa (Blessed Alexandrina of Balazar)⁴ and Fr Abílio Gomes Correia (beatification and canonisation process underway)⁵ reflect an action and way of life that is in line with the Eucharistic movements in central Europe. However, in the Iberian context, there were unavoidable names that were a sign of contradiction, favouring and prioritising the Eucharistic life even when the ecclesial world seemed to want to go in another direction. Among these names, I would like to highlight that of Mercedes Carreras Hitos (Mother Trinidad).⁶

Mother Trinidad did not stand out for her brilliant theological knowledge of the Eucharist, or even for an impactful action that gave her fame in ecclesial circles. On the contrary, her humility and strength of faith transfigured practices within religious life without, however, going outside what was considered ‘usual’ in her time. His way of thinking and lifestyle serve today as a reference and pastoral methodology, both for a renewed understanding of Christian life, whose vital force comes from the Eucharist; and it opens doors to new paths to be developed in the field of practical and pastoral theology.

The aim of this article is to present a practical theology in which the Eucharist plays a central role. It will start from a generalised understanding of the theological and pastoral meaning of the centrality of the Eucharist in the Christian life, understanding in particular the way in which this centrality has been developed in believing communities and, specifically, in religious communities. From here, an approach will be made to contemporary Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula, with a special focus on the life of Mother Trinidad. The third and final part of the

⁵ Gesteira Garza, *La eucaristía, misterio de comunión*, 235–236.

⁴ Cf. *Alexandrina Maria da Costa* (1904–1955), *Leiga, da União dos Cooperadores Salesianos*, https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20040425_da-costa_po.html; Alexandre Freire Duarte (ed.), *Obras completas de Alexandrina Maria da Costa: Autobiografia*, vol. 1 (Balasar: Fundação Alexandrina de Balasar: Faculdade de Teologia da UCP, 2018).

⁵ Cf. Fernando Leite, *O cura de Ars português: P. Abílio Gomes Correia, 1882–1967* (Braga: A. O., 1982); António Costa Neiva, *Pe. Abílio G. Correia e Eucaristia* (Braga: Comissão Fabriqueira S. Mamede de Este, 2015).

⁶ Cf. *Causa de Canonización Sierva de Dios. Madre Trinidad Carreras*, <https://www.madret Trinidadcarreras.com/>.

article will articulate the ways of thinking and living the Eucharist in the first centuries and the theological and pastoral dynamism that can be learnt and recovered from Mother Trinidad's actions and lifestyle. From this articulation, pastoral and theological paths and proposals will open up for a renewed Eucharistic praxis, where the Mystery of Christ regains its centrality in contemporary human lifestyles and mystery.

1. The Eucharist in the First Centuries and Its Pastoral Challenges

The stories of the Passion of Christ and the salvific power of Christ's self-giving at the Last Supper were – and are – unavoidable dimensions in Christianity. The Eucharist, which nourished the first communities like daily bread, was the driving force behind an active and working faith, even in times of persecution and martyrdom. In these *agape* encounters, the community united with Christ's sufferings, but also with the mystery of his redemptive death. At the same time, as an expression of the transfiguration brought about by the communion of life with the Risen One, the community created and strengthened bonds, making charity and love of neighbour the only acceptable way of life for anyone who claimed to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Saviour (cf. Acts 2:42–47; Acts 4:32–35).⁷

With the expansion of Christianity and its imposition as the religion of the empire, the experience of the Eucharist departed from its initial intimacy. Little by little, the liturgical rite developed and the space for fraternal encounter diminished, reducing dialogue and the sharing of life based on listening to the word to a set of expressions and formulas designed to express faith. At the same time, Eucharistic communion, in the concrete form of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, went from being food to strengthen the sinner, helping him to overcome sin, to becoming a 'prize' for the pure, deserving of this salvific reward. The inversion of the meaning of the Eucharistic experience therefore oscillates between merit and fear. In a way, Christ's redemptive sacrifice seems to be transformed into a cruel business: if you live an exemplary life and fulfil the precepts of the Church, you have the right to receive the Communion of the consecrated species and access salvation; if you live what is considered a life of sin, then you have no right to receive the

⁷ Cf. Gesteira Garza, *La eucaristía, misterio de comunión*, 65–194.

Body of Christ or to receive the salvation offered (freely) on the cross. To do so is to run the risk of eternal damnation, in a process similar to that of Judaism described in Lev 16:2–13.⁸

What seems surprising is that, despite a certain perversion of the way of living and looking at the Eucharist, it remained central to the development of the spiritual life of Christians. From the continuity of practices linked to daily Communion to the expansion of frequent movements of Eucharistic adoration, there were many ways of maintaining the centrality of the Eucharist in ecclesial communities throughout the medieval period. In parallel with these community movements, religious life also took on a fundamental role in these practices. In fact, while there was an initial religious impulse linked to contemplation and daily communion, little by little, religious communities – especially women’s communities – were forced to find ways of subsisting that often took their members away from a practice of continuous adoration and/or daily participation in the Eucharist.

Progressively, outside the religious orders designated as ‘contemplative’, the space previously devoted to the Eucharist and adoration was replaced by social works: hospitals, centres for the poor, colleges, etc. This was a trend that spread and became a practice not only in religious orders but also in male conventual orders in which the religious were not ordained. This does not mean that Eucharistic participation was reduced to weekly practice or that there was no longer adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. What happened was a decrease in Eucharistic fervour and consequently a decrease in both the frequency and duration of Eucharistic practices.

Despite this decline in the intimate relationship of believers with the Eucharist, and despite the Christian schisms linked to the Eucharistic Sacrament, it is undeniable that it is an intrinsic requirement of ‘being Christian’ to have the Eucharist at the centre of their believing identity. It is no coincidence that, against the grain, ‘the tradition of the Church rightly maintains that Christ’s sacrifice is made present in a mysterious but real way in the celebration of the Eucharist and is therefore a re-presentation, or better still, a presence of the sacrifice of Jesus’.⁹ It is in this certainty that many have struggled, despite the difficulties, to maintain such an intimate relationship with the Eucharist – both

⁸ Cf. Gesteira Garza, *La eucaristía, misterio de comunión*, 195–362.

⁹ Gesteira Garza, *La eucaristía, misterio de comunión*, 363.

through daily celebration and communion and through the daily practice of Eucharistic adoration. Take the example of Mother Trinidad who, even before her religious profession, emphasised the need for the Eucharist to always be her privileged food and, with Mary as her guide, saw the cross as her staff of choice.¹⁰

2. Mother Trinidad and the Religious and Eucharistic Renewal in the Iberian Peninsula

At the beginning of the 20th century, the reality of Christian life, as far as the Eucharist is concerned, seems to have been reduced to participating in the celebration on a weekly basis – on Sundays and feasts of vigil – with times of adoration being linked to specific feasts of the Universal Church (such as the feast of the Body of God) or feasts specific to particular Churches (feasts of the patron saint of the parish, diocese or country). In general, non-contemplative religious orders follow this same trend and, particularly in the Iberian Peninsula, they are linked to social works linked to health or education, depending on the charism of the founder and the needs of the context in which these congregations arise. In this respect, Mother Trinidad's personal story is very representative and, for this very reason, her life choices appear to be surprising and shaping a new and Iberian way of thinking and living the Eucharist in religious life.

Mother Trinidad del Purísimo Corazón de María was born in Monachil (Granada) – Spain, on 28 January 1879, and baptised with the name Mercedes Juliana Carreras Hitos. There was nothing special about this child that could have given her a great love and intimate relationship with the Eucharist from birth. However, it's worth noting that one day, after her first communion in 1887, when she saw the glow of fireflies, she ran to her mother with a metaphorical wish that somehow seemed to foreshadow her Eucharistic fervour: 'Mum, [she said] I wanted to be like this firefly on the key to the tabernacle, to take all the children inside and tell them how much Jesus loves them.'¹¹

When her mother died, and as was the custom of the time in similar situations, Mercedes' father and grandmother sent her and her sister

¹⁰ Cf. Madre Trinidad, *Escritos 2* (cadernos 2, 3, 4) (Madrid: Postulación de la Causa de M. Trinidad del Purísimo Corazón de María, 1995), 66.

¹¹ Madre Trinidad, *Escritos 6* (cadernos 15–25) (Madrid: Postulación de la Causa de M. Trinidad del Purísimo Corazón de María, 1997), 135.

to the Convent of St Agnes in Granada to study at the school. Although Mercedes was clear that her relationship with the convent and religious life was solely for study, her relationship with Jesus Christ soon intensified and her visits to the tabernacle multiplied. Little by little, the duration of these meetings increased and Mercedes found herself totally seduced by Jesus in the Eucharist. As this relationship intensified, Mercedes no longer wanted to be solely at the convent school. She left school and decided, aged just fourteen, to enter the Convent of St Anthony in Granada, where the Rule of St Clare was observed according to the Capuchin reform.¹² From the beginning, and especially during his time as a novice, his posture in the convent stood out for the long hours she spent in front of the tabernacle. It was there that his life and vocation took root, and she made her religious profession on 26 November 1897.¹³

Everything seemed to be going well, but Mother Trinidad's story takes a turn. Her Eucharistic fervour did not fit in with the way of life of her religious congregation. For her, religious life had to be guided by a continuous relationship with the Blessed Sacrament and so she proposed that the Capuchins implement and live Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in their convents. Her spiritual director – Fr Ambrose Valencina – encouraged her to follow this purpose. In a way, Mother Trinidad's restlessness, derived from her intimate relationship with Jesus and the Eucharist, also provoked inner questioning in those around her. However, the Capuchins, while recognising the importance of Adoration, saw the implementation of convents of perpetual Adoration as a burden that would, to a certain extent, jeopardise or even prevent regular observance.

Mother Trinidad remains faithful to her vocation and continues to try in a variety of ways to implement the regular practice of Adoration, notably when she is appointed prioress of the convent even before she is old enough to do so. Despite the apparent futility of her efforts, Mother Trinidad remains unwavering in her resolve. In particular, on the occasion of the celebration of the 7th centenary of the Approval of the Rule of St Clare, on 19 March 1912, after receiving Communion, Mother Trinidad felt the great call that the Lord was making to her: 'I want you to work to surround the Tabernacle with penitent souls, dedicated

¹² Cf. Madre Trinidad, *Escritos* 6, 17–145.

¹³ Cf. C. Palomo Iglesias, *Vida y Obra de la Madre Trinidad Del Purísimo Corazón de María* (Madrid: Esclavas de la Santísima Eucaristía y de la Madre de Dios, 2000), 85–95.

to adoring me, day and night, in this Sacrament of love, which I instituted for the consolation and life of the souls who leave me abandoned, even those who are consecrated to me.’¹⁴

This call became a mission, and there are countless places where Mother Trinidad refers to them in her writings. This was the decisive factor that prompted a concrete and resolute step toward the establishment of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Unable to find the communal and canonical means to implement the reform within her congregation, yet certain of her calling to live out Eucharistic fervour, she spoke of these concerns to her confessor. Encouraged by his guidance and by the Eucharistic force that inhabited her, she ultimately made the painful decision to leave what she considered her beloved community, taking steps to establish a convent where the vow of Adoration would be fully realised.¹⁵ This was no easy task, either personally or canonically. However, his strength and love for the community led to a generalised questioning of the importance of the Eucharist in Christian life and, specifically, in religious life.

After many attempts, finally on 11 April 1925, Mother Trinidad, in the company of eleven other nuns, left the Convent of San Antonio to form the first community of Capuchine Adorers in Chauchina, Granada. This community became the cradle and foundation of today’s Congregation of the Religious Slaves of the Most Holy Eucharist and of the Mother of God.¹⁶

It should be noted that, against the expectations of her time, Mother Trinidad left her community and embarked on a journey whose primary mission was to restore the centrality of the Eucharist in Christian life and specifically in religious life. Without denying the way of thinking about the religious life of her time, Trinidad did not abandon the mission linked to the colleges. On the contrary, she established colleges alongside each religious community. However, her vision was more daring, anticipating and intuiting a theology that would only be fully affirmed and ecclesially understood with the Second Vatican Council: social life and work are not obstacles to an intimate relationship with

¹⁴ Madre Trinidad, *Escritos 3* (cadernos 5, 6, 7) (Madrid: Postulación de la Causa de M. Trinidad del Purísimo Corazón de Maria, 1995), 81.

¹⁵ Cf. Madre Trinidad, *Escritos 1* (caderno 1) (Madrid: Postulación de la Causa de M. Trinidad del Purísimo Corazón de Maria 1995), 74.

¹⁶ The Holy See granted definitive approval to the Congregation under the name ‘Handmaids of the Most Holy Eucharist and of the Mother of God’ on 10 January 1949.

God. Rather, they serve as the concrete expression of a faith that is actively lived and nourished by the celebration of the Eucharist.

In a way, Mother Trinidad responded to the calls of the contemporary Church, so threatened by the advances of secularisation and the mechanical ritualisation of acts of worship. Certainly, it cannot be denied that her life objectively embodied the appeals of John Paul II, who called for a faith nourished daily by the Eucharist and Adoration. If the Pope urged believers, and especially consecrated persons: 'Find him, dearly beloved, and contemplate him in a very special way in the Eucharist, celebrated and adored every day, as the source and summit of existence and apostolic action',¹⁷ Mother Trinidad demonstrated just how far zeal and love for the Blessed Sacrament can reach and bear fruit.

Mother Trinidad travelled around Spain and Portugal. Wherever she went, she created communities and colleges, seeing these as places of service and the Eucharist as a privileged place of community and intimacy with God. The determination of the Eucharist and daily adoration for all the members of her congregation makes the Handmaids of the Most Holy Eucharist and the Mother of God a unique reference in the Iberian context and for the world. The Eucharist is no longer a 'footnote' in the life of the community. On the contrary, because it is central and a priority, its authentic daily living is the starting point and shaper of the agenda, both at the level of the convents and in the works linked to education.

In the same way, the obligation to have times of adoration leads to a constant presence of the community before the Blessed Sacrament, while at the same time guiding and helping each religious to have an intimate relationship with God. In this case, the real presence of Christ visibly becomes a 'personal presence' within religious communities. A presence that is felt beyond the convent walls, since schedules and other social actions depend on this priority of life. Only from this perspective can we understand her words when she exclaims:

O divine Eucharist, the throne of love where I see you radiant with glory, in union with the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, send to my soul the most pure waters of grace that flow from these three divine sources of grace and flood my soul with wisdom, purity and love. May I adore God as

¹⁷ Cf. João Paulo II, 'Homília (2 de fevereiro de 2001),' *L'Osservatore Romano* (4 de fevereiro de 2001), 69.

if I really saw and heard him, because faith that is alive sees, hears, touches and embraces with greater certainty than if it saw.¹⁸

Even today, the Handmaids of the Most Holy Eucharist and of the Mother of God have the same Eucharistic fervour, making their daily actions – including works related to education – an echo and complement of the time spent with Jesus in the Eucharist. For the dozens of communities present in different parts of the world, the intimate life with the Eucharist and the life of Adoration continues to be ‘like a delicious bath of love in which one immerses oneself and sinks to the bottom... This real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist makes one feel and savour the gift of God intimately, making the soul enjoy and savour the sweetness of the beloved that it possesses and adores.’¹⁹

3. A Pastoral Care of the Eucharist or the Eucharist as a Pastoral *Locus*?

Far from being a relic of the past, relevant only to a Christianised Iberia with different social rhythms, the commitment, devotion, and charism of Mother Trinidad remain vibrant and enduring. As in the past, and despite the rapid pace with which contemporary societies operate, the Handmaids of the Most Holy Eucharist and the Mother of God continue to live the centrality of the Eucharist as their essence and way of life. In their lives, they fulfil the wishes of their foundress when she said that her religious should be ‘the lightning rods of the world so that, perpetually prostrate at the feet of Jesus in the Eucharist, they may attract the blessings of heaven to the holy Church, our mother, which is persecuted by those who profess her faith’.²⁰

Extending beyond the Iberian borders, where communities abound in both Spain and Portugal, the congregation today also has a presence in Cape Verde, Angola, Benin, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru and East Timor. The mission linked to education continues to develop, both through the numerous colleges (a number that exceeds the number of communities) and through the active presence in university academic circles, contributing to theological knowledge and, through education,

¹⁸ Madre Trinidad, *Escritos* 6, 23.

¹⁹ Madre Trinidad, *Escritos* 3, 90.

²⁰ Madre Trinidad, *Escritos* 4, 166.

expressing an intimate experience with the Blessed Sacrament. In such a secularised world where Eucharistic celebrations are often reduced to ‘fulfilling the precept’, this continues to be the proclamation and daily nourishment of the life and mission of these religious.

The love and relational intimacy with the Eucharist that so characterised Mother Trinidad’s life and work is still very much present in the current constitutions and directories of the Congregation, where it is clearly stated that ‘the Handmaid of the Eucharist must be an extension and prolongation of Jesus Christ the sacrifice’.²¹ A gift of life, united to the sacrifice of the Redeemer, meant that to the classic vows of the evangelical counsels, the Congregation added a fourth vow specific to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Thus, giving continuity to the charism of the foundress, ‘the spirit of poverty, simplicity and self-denial, drawn from the primitive rule of St Clare... And the spirit of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, coming from the Seraphic St Francis of Assisi, continues to mark the spirit of the Congregation.’²²

Mother Trinidad’s Eucharistic fervour represented a special and unique way of living the faith and doing pastoral work. Women’s religious congregations were already abundant in her time and, if analysed carefully, there seems to be little difference between her vision of religious life and that proposed in the Convent of San Antonio. However, her faith and love of the Eucharist made her pastoral proposal and her sense of consecrated life new, creative and daring. In theological terms, there seems to be an urgent need for the same attitude, both at the level of theological praxis and at the level of pastoral theology that does not stagnate in the face of the difficulties of a world in rapid movement.

Practical and pastoral theology often seem to want to align themselves with official figures and statistics: What percentage of Christians participate in the Eucharist daily? How many weekly? What is the frequency and regularity of personal moments of adoration? What are the reasons for doing so or for having abandoned the relationship with the Eucharist? Since these questions are pertinent and significant, we cannot think of a theological methodology or a pastoral praxis that only focuses on the form – by changing the times of the celebrations, changing the music or the homiletical style. All of this, while important, is not about the essence of life in God. All this is mediation

²¹ Escravas da Santíssima Eucaristia e da Mãe de Deus, *Constituições* (1983), Art. 20, 18.

²² Escravas da Santíssima Eucaristia e da Mãe de Deus, *Constituições* (1983), Art. 11, 13.

for something greater and more fruitful. There is an urgent need to implement a methodology similar to that of Mother Trinidad: a pastoral and theological understanding that leads to methodologies and praxis resulting from Eucharistic fervour and the authenticity of lived and nourished faith. As Michel de Certeau reminds us, there can be no separation between professed faith and sacramental life, lived faith. In this sense, it is important to conduct our practices bearing in mind that ‘Emmanuel is present locally, in the Eucharistic sacrament of his body, in the gathering of his faithful in church, in the gathering of his words and gestures. These are the sacraments of unity, reiterated, maintained, commented on and reinterpreted by the successors of the first apostolic community, the judges and guardians of the unifying faith.’²³

Just as apathy and religious indifference seem to be gaining ground after the advances of modernity, so active, itinerant and persevering witnesses will be better able to respond to contemporary challenges than merely changing celebratory forms. The movement of surrendering one’s life, through an intimate relationship with the Eucharist, is in itself a primordial method for responding with love to the escalations of violence that seem to multiply every day. The coherence of life and the continuous exercise of a superabundance of love that springs from the Paschal Mystery, present in the Eucharist, allows the concrete passage from professed faith to lived and active faith. In this regard, Certeau uses the expression *les arts de faire* (the arts of doing), meaning something that is not material or directly accessible (living the faith), but leads to concrete action and a visible lifestyle.²⁴ In this sense, the focus of pastoral theologies should be more on the witnessing action of believers than on the number of believers who continue to attend Eucharistic celebrations. From this first step, it would be possible to understand why there is a continuity of praxis.

This does not imply that we should overlook the increasingly widespread phenomenon of empty churches during Eucharistic celebrations. Rather, it calls for a shift in approach: to identify pastoral strategies that foster an intimate relationship with Jesus and the Eucharist, irrespective of the effort or risks involved. In following the example

²³ Michel de Certeau (1925–1986), *L'étranger ou l'union dans la différence* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), 42.

²⁴ Cf. Patrick Royannais, ‘Michel de Certeau: l’anthropologie du croire et la théologie de la faiblesse de croire,’ *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 91, no. 4 (2003): 499–533. doi: 10.3917/rsr.054.0499.

of Mother Trinidad, it is possible to engage in credible pastoral work without departing from established social norms or canonical structures. What is impractical is the fatalistic contemplation of contemporary times, as if nothing could be done to stop the flight from God's love offered on the Cross and present in every tabernacle in the world. The first step will therefore be to leave the structural spheres of academia and the Church and start the whole pastoral and theological project from Eucharistic Adoration.

Only by embracing and living out of fervent zeal for the Blessed Sacrament is it truly possible

to enter with love into the sufferings of history, not to accuse, judge and condemn; nor, as has happened throughout the history of Reparation, to neutralise our enemies, to find a purifying force to help us free ourselves from evil and, at times, to channel our violence and inability to reconcile; but to enter with love into the sufferings of history, to live them from within, because only in this way is it possible to take them on, welcome them and turn them into bearers of meaning.²⁵

My intention here is not to criticise current pastoral actions or the methodologies of pastoral theology but rather to warn that without an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, all actions become empty and fruitless. Perhaps the different vocations and charisms help make theology grow, but what we cannot do is close our eyes to these hidden treasures that, more implicitly or explicitly, have guided the way we live the faith that animates pastoral life and theology. The example of Mother Trinidad stands out precisely because of the consistency and coherence of her life: a life of self-giving that made religious life in the Iberian Peninsula shine and bear fruit. The Eucharist and Adoration were not for her, nor is it for her Congregation, a *plus* that helps to live the faith. Rather, this fervour seems like a fire capable of spreading and warming the cold and suffering realities of our time with love.²⁶

This seems to connect in a unique way with the way in which the Second Vatican Council came to speak about and highlight the Eucharist when it defended that 'the liturgical celebration, especially

²⁵ N. Martínez-Gayol et al., *Retorno de Amor: Teología, Historia y Espiritualidad de la Reparación* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2008), 317.

²⁶ Cf. Madre Trinidad, *Escritos 4*, 167.

that of the Eucharist, is the “source and summit”, the “center” of the Church’s liturgy and of the Christian life’.²⁷ This affirmation of the Church’s Magisterium remains a significant challenge, not only for believers within religious life but also for the broader Christian community. In fact, this ‘source and summit’ only has expression if the sacrament is recognised from the deepest sense of unity: the unity of internal coherence between professed faith and lived faith, and Christian unity, where everyone – regardless of the Christian denomination that gives them identity – can celebrate the faith around the same altar. It is possible that a pastoral path capable of placing the Eucharist as the true ‘source and summit’ of Christian life could lead to this unity between life and faith and between all Christians.

It is therefore important to note that Mother Trinidad’s methodological principle was not so much to find out how many convents of Perpetual Adoration existed, but rather to find ways in which many could exist. Mother Trinidad’s belief made her pastoral work credible and has allowed us to understand the theology behind her thinking to this day. In a way, she understood the sacrificial mystery present in what theology calls ‘transubstantiation’. Through transubstantiation, ‘the recapitulation or eschatological transformation of reality into the body in the fullness of Christ, into the kingdom of God, is anticipated and realised in the first fruits. Sacrifice is thus transubstantiating and transubstantiation is sacrificial: it is the Eucharistic presence of Christ’s sacrifice that gives rise to transubstantiation and not vice versa.’²⁸ In the same way, it is not through pastoral action – however intense and theologically complete it may be – that the experience of faith will be realised or its fruits produced. It is through a true and intimate encounter with Christ that theology can develop and open up pastoral paths leading to a life in God with a visible manifestation in today’s world.

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²⁷ André Tourneux, ‘Igreja e Eucaristia no Vaticano II,’ *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 112, no. 3 (1990), 352. See also: *PO*, 5; *PO*, 6, 14; *AG*, 9; *CD*, 30.

²⁸ Gesteira Garza, *La eucaristía, misterio de comunión*, 10.

POETRY AS A KENOTIC EXERCISE IN JOSÉ TOLENTINO MENDONÇA'S 'THE DAYS OF JOB'

ALEX VILLAS BOAS

ABSTRACT

This article explores the intersection of theology, literature and spirituality in José Tolentino Mendonça's *The Days of Job*, focusing on poetry as a kenotic exercise of self-emptying (*kenosis*). By engaging with biblical literature, particularly the Book of Job, Mendonça reimagines poetic language as a space of vulnerability and transformation that resists ideological rigidity and fosters ethical openness. The study explores how Mendonça's poetics resonates with Michel de Certeau's *heterology*, Michel Foucault's notion of *political spirituality*, and Giorgio Agamben's critique of the loss of poiesis in modernity. In dialogue with patristic interpretations of Job (Gregory the Great, Basil of Caesarea) as well as contemporary philosophical readings (Fredric Jameson, Antonio Negri), this work argues that Mendonça's poetry enacts a theological aesthetics of resistance in which language becomes an instrument of spiritual and ethical reconfiguration. In this framework, poetic expression is not merely an aesthetic exercise, but a radical way of inhabiting suffering, silence and longing, echoing Job's existential questioning as a source of meaning and creative resilience.

Keywords

Theology and literature; Contemporary Portuguese poetry; José Tolentino Mendonça; Political spirituality; Spiritual exercises

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*There must be ways to go further
the small failure
now take half a dozen steps
but blindfolded
to see life...¹*

José Tolentino Mendonça
Frontier Theory

First Words...

One of the strong lines of work in Portuguese-language theology and religious studies has developed in dialogue with literature. Of the almost forty international research groups on this dialogue between theology, studies of religion and literature, almost half are developed in Portuguese-speaking groups, especially in Brazil, but with a great deal of dialogue with Portugal, and with Portuguese-speaking African countries. However, the research carried out in these Lusophone groups is not restricted to Lusophone authors but rather indicates a great interest in the field, and in particular the great demand for this dialogue comes from outside theology.² Two expressions of this interaction can be seen in ALALITE – Latin American Association of Literatures and Theologies, founded by Argentina, Chile and Brazil, but with associated countries from Europe, with a strong presence from Portugal and Spain; and in the journal that derives from the association called *Teoliteraria* – Journal of Literatures and Theologies.³ Many dialogue models have been developed over the last four decades.⁴

Currently in Portugal, a perspective of public theology has been developed, as a task of thinking about theology in the intellectual

¹ All the poems by José Tolentino Mendonça used here are free translations by the author of the article.

² Alex Villas Boas, 'Teologia e Literatura: A construção de um campo de estudos sobre religião e linguagem,' in *Religião: Linguagens*, ed. C. E. B. Calvani and C. C. Bezerra (Curitiba: Editora CRV, 2020), 115–127.

³ *Teoliteraria* – Journal of Literatures and Theologies: <https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/teoliteraria/issue/view/2919>

⁴ Antonio Cantarella, 'A produção acadêmica em Teopoética no Brasil: pesquisadores e modelos de leitura,' *Teoliteraria – Revista de Literaturas e Teologias* 8, no. 15 (2018): 193–221. doi: 10.19143/2236-9937.2018v8n15p193-221.

debate that involves cultural and social issues in the country, in order to also offer Portuguese citizens literacy about religious phenomena and how theological interpretation takes place within each phenomenon. It has been working with an archaeology of theological knowledge, in which literature has a historical role of being a heterological actor and an important element of political spirituality as a form of genealogy of ethics in resistance to the processes of resistance of genealogies of power that evoked political theologies.

In this sense, the figure of José Tolentino Mendonça has played an important role in the dialogue between theology and literature, as well as in the dialogue between theology and society. Portuguese, born in 1965 on the island of Madeira, with a childhood in Angola, he was ordained a priest in 1990 and completed his doctorate in biblical theology in 2004. He was appointed to the episcopate in 2018, and as archbishop takes on the role of archivist and librarian of the Holy See. In 2019 he was appointed to the cardinalate, and in 2022 he was appointed Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education. Throughout his ecclesiastical career, however, Tolentino has become one of the great voices of contemporary Portuguese literature, with an extensive body of work since 1990, and the winner of almost two dozen literary prizes. The purpose of this article is to develop some aspects of this dialogue between theology and literature in the work of this contemporary Portuguese author.⁵

The poetic exercise in José Tolentino Mendonça's *The Days of Job* is ultimately a kenotic movement, one that unfolds in the space of vulnerability, dispossession, and openness to meaning beyond fixed certainties. This article explores how Mendonça's poetry reactivates the spiritual exercises of self-emptying (*kenosis*), positioning them as a form of resistance to ideological closure and theological dogmatism. Through its engagement with biblical literature, particularly the Book of Job, Mendonça's poetics performs a double movement: first, the exposure of human fragility in its encounter with suffering, and second, the creation of a language capable of sustaining meaning in the midst of existential desolation. This poetic practice aligns with Michel de Certeau's understanding of *heterology*, a theology of difference that resists rigid identity

⁵ This text is an adaptation of the closing conference of the International Congress 'Job: justice and suffering', held by the Centre for Contemporary Languages and Literatures (CLLC) at the University of Aveiro in Portugal.

structures, and Michel Foucault's notion of spirituality as an ethical genealogy of the self. In this sense, poetry emerges not as an ornament to theology, but as a space where theological discourse is stripped of its triumphalism and reconfigured as an exercise in listening, in making room for the silences of existence. Mendonça's approach to Job, then, is not merely exegetical or philosophical; it is an existential practice that invites a new way of inhabiting the world, a *poiesis* of faith that dares to embrace the fractures of human experience as sites of transformative possibility.

Introduction

In the 19th century, Robert Lowth (1710–1787) rediscovered the theological importance of literary study in opposition to what he called 'metaphysical theologians' in his work *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum*, the result of his lectures at Oxford. Lowth identifies a deficit in the understanding of theological hermeneutics that ignores the importance of poetry for the composition of theological meaning, namely that 'the intimate nature of the poem' is realised in the human soul in such a way as to organise lived experiences, unite apparent discontinuities, awaken to other experiences, and sometimes has the virtue of calling existence into question. In an extensive comparative analysis of biblical literature with the Greco-Latin classics, Lowth identifies the same common characteristic, namely the aim of 'teaching by delighting' and thus producing an *inner articulation* through language, so as to make it possible to grasp an itinerary of meaning that, by changing the way one thinks, one changes the way one lives.⁶

St Basil of Caesarea also recommended that young Christians read the Greek and Latin classics to help them think for themselves, in direct correlation with the Gospel. However, thinking for oneself was not an isolated exercise in the individualisation of existence, but rather personalisation through the appropriation of the common heritage of *Humanitas*, which is constitutive of the participants in the human adventure, a fundamental element for the city to have a human face, an appropriate *ethos*.⁷

⁶ Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (London: Routledge, 1995), 549.

⁷ Basílio de Cesaréia, *Aos jovens, sobre como tirar proveito da literatura*, intro. and trans. Miguel Cabedo e Vasconcelos (Lisboa: UCP Press, 2018), 64.

In this sense, while biblical literature in general, and the book of Job in particular, are part of this itinerary, they are one of the paths that can lead to a greater density of the fabric in which *concord* emerges over what is fundamental to life, by establishing the profound connection between poetics and politics, the influence of inspiration for feeling, thinking and acting that affects the overcoming of discord, which allows the emergence of the *polis*. This is not exactly a romantic ideal of a reconciled city, which is why a series of messianic autocracies were set up to eliminate the forms of discord that disintegrate unity, but rather it concerns the emergence, albeit temporary, of concord in a diversity reconciled around the common good and common dignity. Here poetry and politics converge in the task of building a common space in which differences are respected, just as they are diametrically opposed to the maximum expression of political chaos in its dissolution, which is war. Concord, always ephemeral, and therefore always renewable in the constant call to dialogue, constitutes, even if temporarily, a force of unity between differences for a vital space of the human condition, tension. And here the image of Job can be seen as theologically capable of not succumbing to this tension.

An important commentator on the Book of Job who grasped its political relevance was Gregory the Great (540–604). Having been elected *prefect* of the city of Rome, then the former imperial capital, it was there that he had become known to the people before deciding on the monastic life and, according to the customs of the time, having been acclaimed by the clergy and the people to take on the mission of Bishop of Rome in the midst of imperial Christianity in crisis in the sixth century. Gregory, who had found tranquillity in the monastic life, was, for seemingly divine reasons, called back to political life – this time as Roman Pontiff. His return came in the context of a power vacuum in the Eternal City, following the fall of Rome, the relocation of the imperial capital to Constantinople, and shifting political priorities, such as containing the Persian advance rather than defending Rome from Lombard attacks. The dissolution of the Senate during the Gothic Wars and the resulting exodus of Roman aristocratic families further deepened the crisis. Although Gregory, like Augustine, interprets the character Job as resigned to God's will, his exegesis entitled *Moralia in Job* places the biblical character in the context of the dissolution of *Romanitas*, the unity of the Roman world, in the emergence of various power conflicts, internally between Latins and Greeks and externally

between Romans and barbarians. In this reading, Job is the very political image of Rome, from its imperial exuberance to its decadence and abandonment. Gregory himself refers to his context as the moment when ‘the end of the world is near [*crebrescentibus termino*]’.⁸ Gregory then sets about explaining the work to his brother monks using the usual method of the time, in which he adds to the literal exegesis an exercise in contemplation that finds a deeper meaning in the *allegory* for his contemporaries, but also adds the need to find a *moral* meaning, exemplified by testimonies from Christians who took Job as a model of life.⁹ Given the moral crisis in which the context was situated, the very value of the wisdom of biblical letters was at risk.

Thus, despite Job’s transformation into a figure of submission to God, Gregory the Great’s allegorical interpretation remains deeply invested in uncovering moral forms of resistance to the political disintegration of Rome. Fredric Jameson observes that the method of patristic exegesis produces not only the effect of the perception of communion with God in the *anagogic way*, the source of resilience for the reader of biblical literature, but would also have an anagogic political effect among those who have the same experience, which is consolidated in the constitution of a political body from the reinvention of the way of existing with a new sense of collectivity.¹⁰

This political potential of the biblical character inspired the Italian political philosopher Antonio Negri to write *The Labour of Job* in 2003, conceiving the biblical text as a parable of human labour in late capitalism. The philosopher is obviously not concerned with the religious question as such, but with thinking about the potential for liberation and subversion that suffering possesses from the narrative wisdom of the book of Job, and thus bets on the creative persistence of workers to build new possibilities for justice.¹¹

Negri is thus betting on the role of social creativity as a force for redemption that finds its conditions of possibility and collective strength to the extent that people come to understand each other’s pain. This

⁸ Gregorii Magni, *Moralia in Job – Libri I–X*, Corpus Christianorum – Series Latina CXLIII (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), I, 27–28.

⁹ Gregorii Magni, *Moralia in Job*, I, 95.

¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Arqueologias do Futuro: O desejo chamado Utopia e outras ficções científicas*, trans. Carlos Pissardo (Belo Horizonte: Editora Autêntica, 2021), 18–25.

¹¹ Antonio Negri, *The Labor of Job: The Biblical Text as a Parable of Human Labor*, New Slant Series – Religion, Politics and Ontology (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 48.

understanding is not just an intellectual act but has its origins in ‘suffering together’ [*patire assieme*], as a condition of possibility for creativity. For the Italian thinker, *creation* ‘is the content of the vision of God’ that Job sees. A new vision from the pain of history is already the utopian redemption that is not yet realised but requires the tension of struggle and search in order to welcome inspiration.¹² Innovation would then come from the ethical tension of social resistance and psychic resilience. It is in this same direction that Viktor Frankl speaks of experiences of meaning in the midst of a concentration camp, because the human condition is inherent in its desire for meaning, and to the extent that it discovers a horizon of search, like the psychoanalytic foundation of the libido that moves towards desire, existence is mobilised towards what gives it meaning. Frankl called tragic optimism the bet that despite all the absurdity, life was capable of meaning, and to the extent that existence is consumed towards the horizon that gives meaning to existence, the effect of fulfilment is found, despite the absurdity.¹³ The poetic task, however, in Negri and Jameson’s conception, would have the anagogic purpose of uniting personal experiences of resilience into a new collective force of resistance in the exercise of understanding the challenges of one’s own time, and in it creating the conditions of possibility for redemptive creativity, less identity-based and more in solidarity.

The various interpretations of Job – from Gregory the Great’s political-theological reading to Antonio Negri’s vision of Job as a paradigm of labour resistance – offer distinct yet complementary perspectives that illuminate Mendonça’s poetic approach. Gregory’s *Moralia in Job* situates the biblical figure within the disintegration of *Romanitas*, reading Job as an image of collapsing world order and the search for moral resilience in the midst of crisis. This aligns with Mendonça’s poetics, where Job’s suffering becomes a space for reconfiguring meaning beyond institutional certainties. Likewise, Negri’s interpretation of Job as a figure of creative resistance in late capitalism resonates with Mendonça’s insistence on poetry as an ethical and political act – a practice that, like Job’s lament, refuses ideological closure and instead fosters a solidarity of vulnerability. Jameson’s reading reinforces this

¹² Negri, *The Labor of Job*, 98.

¹³ Viktor Frankl, *Em Busca de Sentido: Um Psicólogo no Campo de Concentração*, 21st ed. (São Leopoldo: Editora Sinodal; Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 2005), 17.

by highlighting how biblical exegesis, when approached poetically, generates new forms of collective resistance rather than merely affirming pre-existing theological structures. By integrating these perspectives into his poetics, Mendonça not only reclaims the narrative of Job as a space of existential questioning but also reimagines it as a literary-spiritual exercise that resists the commodification of human suffering. In this sense, the poetic word becomes a mode of kenotic engagement with the fractures of history, transforming Job's silence into an act of radical openness to meaning beyond the discourses that seek to contain it.

1. Spirituality as an Ethical Genealogy in Michel Foucault

It is also in this sense that Michel Foucault bets on spirituality as ethically reflected practices of self that reinvent the subjectivity given by the time in which one lives in its discursive context. The French philosopher thus revisits the idea of spiritual exercises as political spirituality, first initiated by the need for a 'diagnosis of the decline of revolutionary desire in the West', and is interested in the 'religious origins of modern revolutions'.¹⁴

Spirituality, for Foucault, is not restricted to religious practice or ritual and/or doctrinal adherence but is prior to this and concerns an attitude towards oneself, responding to an imperative of self-transformation. There is no denying that religion can be a 'kind of welcoming structure for forms of spirituality, but it doesn't necessarily coincide with spirituality, because religion can also be part of the structure for maintaining an unacceptable reality and start to operate ideologically. The political spirituality envisaged by Foucault is a genealogy of ethics, in which a shared collective will can emerge'.¹⁵

Foucault's notion of *political spirituality* suggests that spirituality is not merely a private, contemplative exercise, but an active force that shapes subjectivity and social structures. It is an ethical genealogy – an ongoing process of self-formation through resistance to dominant power structures. In this sense, Mendonça's poetic exercises can be seen as an enactment of a *political spirituality*, in which the poetic word resists ideological rigidity and opens up a space for reimagining

¹⁴ César Candioto, *A dignidade da luta política: incursões pela filosofia de Michel Foucault* (Caxias do Sul: EDUCS, 2020), 111–112, 16.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *O enigma da revolta: Entrevistas inéditas sobre a Revolução Iraniana* (São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2018), 20, 23.

ethical and theological commitments. Just as Job's lament challenges theological orthodoxy, Mendonça's poetry disrupts conventional modes of religious discourse, insisting on a spirituality that remains unfinished, questioning and deeply engaged with the suffering of the world.

From analysing the spiritual exercises conceived in the Greco-Roman period, and especially the first two centuries of the Christian era, the French philosopher identifies a broader conception of spirituality that is implicated in the practices of *self-care*, which include practices of reading poems, writing about oneself, meditation, but also health care, with spiritual exercises being practices of caring for the whole, in its interiority and exteriority. However, the French philosopher believes that due to what he called the 'Socratic-Platonic moment', spirituality had been reduced to an ontological-cognoscente structure expressed in the maxim of 'knowledge of oneself' (*gnôthi seautón*), with the most drastic consequence being the dissociation between spirituality and philosophy. Since then, the philosophical task has been reduced to a search for access to the truth, without the need for inner work of an ethical nature.¹⁶ In this way, there is a serious risk of believing in one's own convictions, in such a way as to unlearn how to discern the depth of the wisdom they contain when called upon to make sense in new scenarios, originally conceived as a spiritual exercise of putting life into question. The moment wisdoms become certainties, we run the risk of not connecting with the people of the present time, with their new dilemmas and pains. This is where poetics, in its unity with politics as a spiritual exercise, is an exercise in reviving and reinventing the heritage of human wisdom in order to discover new ways of living.

2. Poetry as a Spiritual Exercise in José Tolentino Mendonça

For José Tolentino Medonça 'the poem is the spiritual act par excellence'.¹⁷ In the epigraph of his *Poesia reunida*, Tolentino Mendonça can find a quote from Michel de Certeau that can be seen as a literary programme for theology: 'In its misery, theology looks at the door.' By evoking the French Jesuit, he also seems to inscribe his poetics in the perspective of conceiving it as a spiritual exercise, a dimension that

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *A hermenêutica do sujeito* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2006), 19.

¹⁷ José Tolentino Mendonça, *A noite abre meus olhos*, 4th ed. (Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 2014), 214.

makes it possible to reactivate an unfinished dialogue between Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau,¹⁸ as a task of discerning the present time.

Like Foucault's spiritual exercises, Certeau emphasises the process that operates in the intimate, with the exercises being a 'mode that characterises a proceeding', but it presupposes a 'desirer', in which what is in the text functions as a cypher for the music, because it is coordinated outside the text, giving voice to the desires that inhabit it and provoking in it the opening to an itinerary that allows it to reveal its deepest desires to itself. The *foundation* of Certeau's exercises 'is not the exposition of a universal truth' but 'the outline of a movement' between unveiling the spaces of the architecture of desire and silence. Recognising desires is 'the starting point of a *trajectory*'.¹⁹ For Certeau, the poetic task can be seen as a heterological exercise correlated to the task of a 'theology of difference', precisely that of conceiving heterological cultural forms, analogous to a God who, being radically different in nature to the human being, does not see difference as an impediment to communion. 'Not without you' is the way in which God acts heterologically from the perspective of the French Jesuit, because he is always 'greater' [*magis*] than the limits of borders,²⁰ a heterological dynamic that is realised in literature – in the first place – as a vocation to break down walls of identity resistance in relation to the other.²¹

Michel de Certeau's concept of *heterology* – literally 'discourse on the other' – refers to an epistemological framework that resists totalising narratives and embraces difference as a constitutive part of knowledge. In a theological context, *heterology* implies a way of thinking about God and spirituality that does not seek to resolve tensions but to live them creatively. Mendonça's poetry responds to this dynamic by creating a theology of displacement in which the divine is encountered not in certainty but in the openness of poetic language, much like Job's engagement with suffering and silence.

¹⁸ Jean-François Petit, *Michel Foucault et Michel de Certeau: Le dialogue inachevé* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2022).

¹⁹ Michel de Certeau, *El lugar del otro: Historia religiosa y mística*, trans. Victor Goldstein (Buenos Aires: Katz Editores, 2007), 261–262.

²⁰ Michel de Certeau, *L'Étranger ou l'union dans la différence*, nouvelle édition établie et présentée par Luce Giard (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), 179–188.

²¹ Michel de Certeau, 'Heterologies: Discourse on the Other,' *Theory and History of Literature* 17 (1986), 171, 193.

Thus, spiritual exercises are kenotic exercises in the daily reinvention of space in order to empty rigid identities and make it possible for different people to live together; a movement away from self-referentiality, given the power of literature to weave alliances. It is in recognising differences that we can ‘glimpse’ the transparency of common dignity.²² This transparency implies the task of learning the ‘nakedness of life’ as the realm of the common.²³

It is therefore also part of a critical dialogue with contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben,²⁴ a dialogue that can be situated between the latter’s archaeology of the present time and the poet’s mysticism of the present time, both of which converge to recover the role of literature in general, and poetry in particular, as a way of revisiting the historical and cultural forms of Christianity. There is a convergence in the work of both, in that for Agamben, one of the causes of the crisis of contemporary thought is precisely the divorce between poetics and politics. To the extent that modernity loses sight of the ‘poetic status’ of humanity on earth, poetic production is reduced to the productivity of praxis. *Poiesis*, then, is overshadowed by a philosophy of *praxis*, energised by the will for justice and freedom, for a new work of art, namely the construction of a new history, understood as society. From the Italian philosopher’s perspective, both Nietzsche and Marx are not atheists but dispense with a rational theology that inhibits will and change.²⁵ *Poiesis*, transformed into *praxis*, gives a sense of mysticism to the processes of social transformation; however, it loses the dynamic of distancing itself from reality in order to re-elaborate creatively, returning to reality and inspiring praxis. By merging with praxis, *poiesis* ceases to dynamise the *polis* and becomes the ideology of praxis, creative but apologetic reason.

The exegetical and political readings of Job – whether Gregory the Great’s response to the decline of Rome, Negri’s vision of Job as a figure of resistance in late capitalism, or Jameson’s insights into the communal impact of biblical literature – highlight a persistent tension

²² José Tolentino Mendonça, ‘Creio na nudez da minha vida – onde a mística e a literatura se encontram,’ in *Teopoética: mística e poesia*, ed. Maria Clara Bingemer e Alex Villas Boas (Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: Ed. PUC-Rio/Paulinas, 2020), 34.

²³ José Tolentino Mendonça, *The Mysticism of the Present Moment: Embodied Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2021), 38.

²⁴ José Tolentino Mendonça, ‘The Reactivation of Paul: A Critical Dialogue on Giorgio Agamben,’ *Didaskalia* XLI, no. 2 (2011): 53–63. doi: 10.34632/didaskalia.2011.2305.

²⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *O homem sem conteúdo* (São Paulo: Autêntica, 2012).

between suffering, resilience and meaning-making. But this tension is not just a historical or theological matter; it is also deeply embedded in the ways in which individuals construct their subjectivity and ethical commitments. This is where Michel Foucault's concept of spirituality as a genealogy of ethics intersects with Mendonça's poetic vision. Foucault argues that spiritual exercises are not mere religious rituals, but constitute ethical and political practices that shape new ways of being in the world. Similarly, Certeau's notion of heterology suggests that the poetic word functions as a space of displacement, disrupting established modes of discourse to reveal an alternative logic of resistance. By engaging with these perspectives, we can better understand how Mendonça's *The Days of Job* employs poetry as an existential and political practice – one that not only responds to suffering but transforms it into a means of ethical reconfiguration.

The reduction in the importance of *poiesis* in contemporary culture, and especially its transformation into an apologetic creative reason for an ideal, produces the presence of a fetish, the substitute for an absent, inaccessible and ideal object. Agamben also evokes patristic acedia as an effect of the absence of *poesis* in order to understand a perverse *éros* in narcissism that is incapable of creative labour, a desire for meaning, but unwilling to follow the path that leads to it, a poetic unwillingness that reveals contemporary political unwillingness, because it manifests itself as ethical unwillingness, by generating a self-referential dynamic to a system and way of thinking incapable of self.²⁶

In this sense, the evocation of naked life can be thought of from the correlation between *poiesis* and *praxis*, or how poetry can act as a space that opens up gaps in the radical immanence of the walls of politics. In Agamben, nakedness is thought of from its theological dimension²⁷ and its political ramifications.²⁸

From a political point of view, nakedness is seen as an action of stripping under the narrative sign of an event that takes place in the temporal condition of human life and is therefore situated in the capture of the narratological core of different historical forms of political theology and not in the metaphysical-ontological register. In this way,

²⁶ Certeau, *El lugar del otro*, 264.

²⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Nudez*, trans. Davi Pessoa (Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2014).

²⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer – O poder soberano e a vida nua I* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2010).

by identifying the one who is the object of the action of stripping human dignity, the question is also asked of the subject who makes this act operational in history. In particular, the Italian philosopher evokes the figure of the *homo sacer* in archaic Roman law – an individual deemed unfit for sacrificial offerings to the gods yet still ‘killable’, whose perceived insignificance renders their killing inconsequential and not legally considered homicide.²⁹ From this figure, we can think of the naked life of *homo sacer*, as a figure stripped of the dignity of rights, as well as the sovereign power of the *imperium* magistracy as a right that enables the act of stripping someone’s life. This power, which evolves from the absolute right of the *pater familiae* over his children, also resides in a theological-political dimension (*sacratio*) that legitimises the stripping away of someone’s dignity through the suppression of *civitas*, in other words, the suspension of its legal form.

From a theological point of view, ‘naked life’ is produced from the question of original sin, as the loss of the glorious garment in the narrative of the Edenic couple, with the human being having been conceived from the action that causes their divestment from grace, a situation in which the ‘opening of the eyes’ and the ‘realisation of naked life’ as a human condition takes place.³⁰ Nudity inaugurates an epistemological perspective with the opening of the eyes that makes the human being ‘know good and evil’ (Genesis 3:5),³¹ but not as a divine being (Genesis 3:6), frustrating the ‘desire to be like God’ for learning that emerges from an *event* that causes the ‘fall’ of the ‘mind’ and the consequent realisation of the condition of being naked, a being vulnerable to the evil of the world, and doomed to the corruption of the body. In other words, nudity corresponds to the condition of being ‘disgraced’.³²

However, the need to once *again veil* the condition of nudity indicates an ‘indelible residue’ of something that remains in its inapparence, in which this second veil, even in its precariousness (Genesis 3:7), indicates something reminiscent of the ‘unveilable’ nature of beauty, once resplendent, the ‘beautiful’ being that ‘to which the veil is essential’,³³

²⁹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 83.

³⁰ Agamben, *Nudez*, 93.

³¹ All biblical texts were taken from *Biblia Sacra. Utriusque Testamenti – Editio Hebraica et Graeca* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

³² Agamben, *Nudez*, 101; 114.

³³ Agamben, *Nudez*, 122.

and at the same time inaugurates the need for an infinite exercise of unveiling.

In Agamben, the ‘laying bare’ of the *magister* and *pater* has the same narrative form as the act of undressing the Edenic couple, attributed to God by the Italian philosopher. However, the narrative does not point to the direct act of God’s stripping the couple naked but rather indicates a loss of the state of grace, and the consequent divine action of re-veiling something that can only appear under the movement of unveiling, even though the veil is of the same precarious nature that resides in the condition of the created world.

In this sense, Tolentino’s notion of nudity appears more closely aligned with the act of unveiling the indelible trace of an ungraspable beauty inherent in the human condition. From a mystical perspective, insofar as it is inscribed in the perspective of the biblical author, the divine character does not eliminate the beauty of human dignity but protects it insofar as he involves it in the dynamic of unveiling, and this act of unveiling the human condition is also an experience of unveiling the theological intentionality of re-veiling the reminiscent beauty, seeing in the figure of the biblical God someone who presents himself as the carer of human frailty.

On the other hand, this dynamic that involves the mystical perspective occurs precisely through the literary strategies of the biblical narrative. This is where Tolentino sees nudity as precisely ‘where mysticism and literature meet’, the foundation of which is the ‘emptying of Christ’. The ‘mysticism of nudity’ is a kenotic spiritual exercise, and poetry is not adornment, nor is it a work of idealisation: ‘it creates a method that always leads us into the experience of the unnameable, into the silence of naked life’,⁵⁴ into that reminiscent beauty that can be a source of resistance to the multiple forms of political attacks that unveil human dignity.

Kenosis, as a theological concept derived from Pauline theology (Philippians 2:7), can here mean a process of self-emptying – an act of renouncing power, privilege or certainty in order to create space for transformation. In Mendonça’s poetics, this self-emptying is not only theological but also literary, manifested in a language that embraces fragility, silence and openness rather than imposing fixed meanings. In this sense, poetry mirrors Job’s act of facing suffering without resorting

⁵⁴ Mendonça, ‘Creio na nudez,’ 30–31.

to definitive answers, allowing for a spirituality of listening rather than proclamation. Tolentino thus seems to bring the nudity of life closer to poetic practice in order to think of a kenotic exercise of nudity, in the poetic dynamics of evangelical literature, in which evil is not the final word because it is not capable of eliminating the possibility of meaning in life, despite its absurdities. There is a poetic and evangelical commitment to the indelible beauty of life, despite all the horrendous ways in which human dignity is stripped away, a beauty that is sought from the realisation of its lack, of the emergence of meaninglessness, which at the same time instigates the search for that which is vanishing. In Tolentino's literary work, there is an aesthetic and poetic task that is tributary to the evangelical vision of awakening faith in the resurrection of a beauty embodied in life that is wounded and stripped of its dignity but not extinguished and which is at the same time the source and resurrectional gesture of the emergence of a view of life as capable of meaning, despite its absurdities. This paradox requires a thirst to seek out where the beauty of life waits to be unveiled through the performative transformation of the gaze that is found in the very gesture of unveiling, literature being a way of giving form to this inexhaustible beauty, because it is indelible, even when deformed. The poetic rescue of residual beauty in naked life is also a source of political resistance in the struggle for human dignity.

If Foucault's spirituality is a practice of self-transformation and Certeau's heterology a theology of difference, Mendonça's poetic exercise can be seen as a confluence of the two – a spiritual practice that resists closure and embraces the radical openness of literature. Giorgio Agamben's critique of modernity's loss of *poiesis* reinforces this, arguing that when poetry is reduced to ideology, it loses its capacity to reimagine the world. Mendonça's poetics, however, resists such reductionism, insisting that the act of writing is a kenotic process – a stripping away of illusions in order to recover the fragile but indelible dignity of existence. This is why his engagement with Job is not merely literary or theological but profoundly existential: the biblical figure becomes a paradigm for inhabiting the void without succumbing to nihilism, for articulating meaning not in the form of doctrinal certainty but as an invitation to live poetically. It is in this space that Mendonça's poetry resonates with the tradition of spiritual exercises, offering not a solution to suffering but a mode of engagement with it, where the poetic act itself becomes a gesture of hope.

3. Praise of Thirst: the *Spiritual Exercises* by José Tolentino Mendonça

In 2018, Pope Francis invited José Tolentino Mendonça to give the Spiritual Exercises to the Roman Curia and the retreat was published in book form under the title *Praise of Thirst*. In this work, Tolentino brings together another aspect of this spiritual journey, namely *thirst* as a metaphor for approaching the central element of the exerciser, desire, thought of in its paradoxical density of presence in absence and therefore of the relationship between ‘distance’ and ‘attraction’, of being inhabited by a will to overcome the remoteness of what is expected, at once ‘absence’ and ‘mobilising expectation’.³⁵ In its paradoxical density, this longing for happiness is also the cause of pain, of the lack that is the reason for the search, and it is not uncommon for the tiredness of the steps to result in emptying or even dispersion. Desire is directly related to the ‘extreme vulnerability’ present in nudity, and thirst requires the willingness to achieve such nudity because it is a stripping away of that which leads to covering up, even from oneself, the deepest desires, which often exhaust our own strength in their slowness to be realised: ‘Thirst takes our breath away, exhausts us, devitalises us and makes us lose our strength. It leaves us under siege and without the energy to react. It pushes us to our limits. It’s understandable that it’s not easy to expose our thirst.’³⁶ [*free translation*].

For this existential task of getting in touch with his own thirst, which is also the terrain of mysticism, Tolentino relies on the literary tool capable of the spiritual exercise of building his own singularity:

I believe that literature can help us to ascertain the state of our thirst [...] Literature is, in fact, a sapiential tool. Perhaps we are now better realising that writers and poets are pertinent spiritual teachers and that literary works can be of enormous help on our path of inner maturation [...] Literature is an instrument of precision, as there are few because it is equal to the uniqueness, freedom and tragic nature of life (in fact, it can relate the I and the we, the ardently personal and the collective adventure, but also grace and sin, encounter and solitude, pain and redemption). Spiritual

³⁵ José Tolentino Mendonça, *Elogio da Sede* (Lisboa: Quetzal Editores, 2018), 34.

³⁶ Mendonça, *Elogio da Sede*, 38.

life is not prefabricated: it is implicated in the radical singularity of each individual.⁵⁷ [*free translation*]

Tolentino's inclusion in the dialogue with Agambian political philosophy and the Certeausian look at the *door* towards the exit from the self-referentiality of the theological Tradition, in dialogue with the French Jesuit's conception of spiritual exercises and Foucauldian thought, is pertinent to a literary analysis of the Jobian elements in his poem. If, on the one hand, the French philosopher conceives the ethical genealogy from the emergence of a new subjectivity born of the agonised struggle to establish a limit that interrupts the destructive path of blindness, his primary reference is Sophoclean Oedipus. On the other hand, Certeau incorporates the tragic task and extends it to dialogue with biblical literature, with the character Job being precisely a correlate for Oedipus in the French Jesuit.

From the silence that echoes from life and the muteness of the possibility of a God, the stunned emptiness of the tragic episode is installed, which places the enclosed desire inside the existence closed by the door of fear. And here the 'experience of Job' is evoked in its nudity, which episodically reveals the total condition of the nudity of existence, and which also lays bare the friends' desire for truth and power. To the extent that the wisdom of a Tradition is wielded as a coercive weapon in order to obtain a supposed confession from the I-poetic, it disfigures its sapiential truths into 'mere generalities', which are consequently useless, vain and do not help us to live.⁵⁸

However, the desolate emptiness at the moment of the deconstruction of the fleeting has not yet reached the clarity of the new horizon it yearns for, and its struggle is still arduous, entrenched in the field of the hopeful intuitions of desire in the face of the army of apologetic arguments from those who are ontologically unwilling to self-criticise. Therefore, the poetic itinerary of the nudity that inhabits emptiness does not operate a verbose re-signification of names, but rather gropes the infinite space of emptiness, seeking to dilate the analogue space of emptiness that inhabits the frame of the desiring self. There is a poetics of the sensible that resides in Job's prayer, which takes precedence over the conceptual, also present in Tolentino. The poetic self in the book of

⁵⁷ Mendonça, *Elogio da Sede*, 49–50.

⁵⁸ Certeau, *El lugar del otro*, 59.

Job says: ‘I [...] must take my soul in my hands’ (Job 13:14). The hands carry within them intelligence of everyday things and know tenderness or labour that lacks a name; they also have the ability to say what the intellect does not yet have or no longer has a vocabulary for. They only touch the void: however, what they designate is not an absence, but an aspiration or a certainty of faith.³⁹

From the notion of spiritual exercise, there is a paradox that originates in Tolentino poetics: the poetic act takes place in recognition of its intrinsic fragility and at the same time its potential because for Tolentino the task of the ‘poem does not reach that purity that fascinates the world. The poem embraces that impurity that the world repudiates’.⁴⁰ After all, verses exist first and foremost ‘only/ as (poor, desolate) homage/ to what each face once was/ across the landscape’,⁴¹ but they can also be doors ‘that open creakingly/ to things that don’t exist’.⁴²

Tolentino’s poem, ‘Spiritual Exercises’, summarises the Jobian attitude to life:

There must be ways to go further
the small failure
now take half a dozen steps
but blindfolded
to see life break down in the rule of the void
taking risks instead of the usual stumbles
the infinite fall.⁴³ [*free translation*]

In this sense, Job’s resilient attitude lies in the strength of his weakness in believing, which unites with the still pulsating desire as a call to an act of faith: precisely the act that emptiness does not correspond to nothingness, and in doing so, transfigures the same emptiness into eloquent silence, which believes that life is still capable of meaning and therefore still believes in the poetic word in which the meaning-giving word emerges and poetically reinvents life. Job’s poetics springs from his prayer and, at the same time, a political problem that, in its insistence on justice, questions the manipulation of theological discourses to

³⁹ Michel de Certeau, *La faiblesse de croire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), 23.

⁴⁰ Mendonça, *A noite abre meus olhos*, 202.

⁴¹ Mendonça, *A noite abre meus olhos*, 112.

⁴² José Tolentino Mendonça, *Teoria da fronteira* (Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 2017), 62.

⁴³ Mendonça, *Teoria da fronteira*, 75.

legitimise the tragedy of others. In his nudity, his prayer demands that tradition be stripped of the devices that imprison its potential for wisdom.

If tragedy was valued as a symbolic dynamic of desire and its need to establish a constitutive limit for a subjectivity that ethically decides on its own existence, the appropriation of Jobian literature in a doctrinal key encloses it in a monosemic pretence of the will to truth, which the textual investment of the Tolentine poem seems to try to rescue from such wisdom.

His movement to strip away the kenotic truths that guarantee useless certainties in order to insist on extracting a wisdom that is still pertinent to another time invites Job's poetic self to the salutary and soteriological capacity of inhabiting the darkness in order to see in it a space for listening in the silence produced by the emptiness of our usual answers. This space is configured as a poetic ritual of existence stripped of pretensions unaware of the equal condition of human nudity.

In the poem *The Days of Job*, there is a Jobian lesson in which prayer is a way of knocking on doors that open onto nothingness:

Sometimes I pray
I'm blind
and I see the words
the gathering of the shadows

sometimes I say nothing
I hold out my hands
like a shell
pure sign of the soul at the door

I wanted you to knock
take them one by one
my refuges
these restless fingers
in the ignorance of fire

for what time will it shelter the angels
and what day will all the sun rise on the dunes

that's why it sometimes rains when I pray
sometimes it almost snows on the bread [*free translation*]

In the poem above, Job's prayer is not driven by certainty but by a posture of daring and at the same time confidence in life. Sometimes prayer, in search of the fire that illuminates and mobilises desire, obtains the opposite of what it desires, in the antithesis of the desire for the weather that shelters the sun and the angels, it ends up raining when we pray, or the snow that occupies the isthmus of the high mountains ends up falling under the bread, invalidating illusion as food for our dreams. But is this not our condition, which requires us to be serene enough to accept ourselves?

Conclusion

Cannot times of crisis also be pregnant with creativity, especially in the crumbling of old illusions and illusory certainties, especially if we strip away the self-referential forms of certainty that reduce wisdom to ideology? Job, in terms of the intersection of religious and cultural issues, can be revisited, both in Certeau and Tolentino, in his correlation with the Crucified, in which there is no resurrection of the word without inhabiting the void. It is on this journey that Jesus is presented as the one who can guide the way, but above all help 'to listen to the call behind hunger and thirst to the end'. Listening to the call of thirst is at the same time a way out of 'the delirium of self-affirmation and self-referentiality' which is a type of 'theological narcissism'.⁴⁴ Jesus' way is to share thirsts, and his 'beatitude of thirst' lies in transforming the thirsty into pilgrims and the thirst into a map and journey as a soteriological itinerary of our protectionist scepticism.⁴⁵

The tragic reveals that all desire has is nothing and nothing is all that is needed to move desire. The Jobian stance of seeing the emptiness in nothingness invites us to dare to inhabit the discomfort of uncertain times in the certainty that poetically we inhabit the emptiness of the world, and poetically, therefore, we dare to love, to suffer, to know... in ethical insistence as a source of inspiration for existential, cultural and social-political creativity, and thus a source of resistance to the throwaway culture of our times. I wonder if the university should not be a school of prayer – a Jobian prayer, at once atheistic and reverent,

⁴⁴ Mendonça, *Elogio da Sede*, 144–145; 117.

⁴⁵ Mendonça, *Elogio da Sede*, 164.

that teaches us to inhabit the darkness of our time through the poetic insistence of believing in the perennial fragility of life.

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VARIA

KALLISTOS WARE AND HIS DIALOGICAL APPROACH IN THEOLOGY*

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the notion of dialogue as it was promoted by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. The initial general description of the idea of dialogue and dialogical personalism is followed by the analysis of both theological reflections on dialogue and suggestions for its implementation as put forward by Ware. He is presented as a strong advocate of a dialogue from the positions of both personalist philosophy and Trinitarian theology, putting a special emphasis on love as a foundational principle of the relations. He stressed the importance of love for other people, God, and all living creatures. He argued for the importance of dialogue for the resolution of inter-Orthodox conflicts and was also a fervent supporter of and a participant in ecumenical dialogue. This article analyses his argumentation in favour of dialogue, as well as, at some points, its limits.

Keywords

Kallistos Ware; Dialogue; Personalism; Ecumenical movement; Love

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Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of Diokleia (1934–2022) became one of the most influential Orthodox theologians in Great Britain. Being born Anglican, he was enchanted early on by Eastern Orthodox ascetic spirituality and embraced Orthodoxy in 1957 after a few years of consideration. He interpreted and explained Orthodox

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tradition through the lenses of a modern Western intellectual. Moreover, his openness towards other Christian traditions and broader society contributed to both an ecumenical dialogue in Britain and the attractiveness of Orthodoxy within the Western world.¹ In this article, I would like to analyse his dialogical approach in theology. First, I discuss the idea of dialogue and its philosophical and theological exploitation. Then, I examine Ware's reflections on dialogue and the relational nature of a person in his published works and lectures. This is followed by the analysis of the implementation of dialogue in relations among Christian communities, as suggested by Kallistos Ware.

1. Dialogic Theology and Its Roots

The notion of dialogue is not as obvious as it may seem at first glance. The word 'dialogue' is derived from ancient Greek and most likely comprised of the words *διά* (*diá*, through) and *λόγος* (word, speech). Sometimes, instead of the prefix *διά*, another Greek prefix *δι-* (*di-*, two) is also considered, which leads to 'dialogue' being misinterpreted as a conversation involving only two subjects.² In contemporary English, according to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, the word 'dialogue' has two basic meanings: 1) 'conversation that is written for a book, play, or film'; and 2) 'formal talks between opposing countries, political groups, etc.'³ While other dictionaries suggest more nuanced meanings, they all, in fact, can be summarised as two main notions, 'conversation' and 'negotiation', where the former is information exchange between two or more people, and the latter is an exchange of standpoints between different parties, each presenting their own positions, trying to understand the other's position, and looking for ways to reach a solution acceptable to both sides. With reference to Jürgen Habermas' terminology, it can be stated that the word 'dialogue' can describe both communicative action

¹ For the account of his life, see, Andrew Louth, 'Biographical Sketch,' in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West (Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos [Ware] of Dioklea)* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003); also, an overview of his life and theology by Andrew Louth, 'Metropolitan Kallistos and the theological vision of Philokalia,' in his *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From Philokalia to the Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVanity Press, 2015), 332–48.

² 'Dialogue,' *New World Encyclopedia*, accessed January 14, 2024, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dialogue>.

³ 'Dialogue,' in *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed on January 14, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dialogue>.

and discourse.⁴ In extrapolating these notions of dialogue to theology, one can easily observe that dialogue as conversation might be applicable to any kind of personal interactions: between a person and God, among members of a community, and among communities themselves, while the notion of dialogue as negotiation could be more readily applicable to relations among confessions and faiths.

However, besides this initial linguistic perspective, the notion of dialogue has its own specifics and history in philosophy and religious thought. Dialogical philosophy and theology imply that to become a true person, one needs to enter into relations with other persons. In general, it was developed in the realm of German philosophical thought. Its origins can be traced either from the traditional Kantian philosophy of cognition or from the personalist movement.

A follower of Immanuel Kant, Johan Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), for the purposes of accurate cognition, pointed out the difference between I and Not-I, explaining the latter to be a result of self-cognition. This line of thought led Fichte to further differentiations: between I and Things, and between I and Thou, where Thou is another person, but not a thing. In the latter type of relationship, ethics became obligatory. He made this discernment in the framework of differentiation between theoretical and practical philosophy, as he called them. Fichte came to the conclusion that a person could not become a complete personality in isolation and needs for this achievement other persons and, more broadly, society. In turn, a person becomes responsible to society.⁵

Moving in a similar direction, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72) asserted that a human being always thinks for others. This means that he or she tries to realise whether his or her thoughts would be understandable / acceptable for others. Apart from realm of the ideas, physicality is also formative for people. Harmonious wholeness can be achieved in the union, both emotional and physical, between a man and a woman. Similarly to Georg Hegel (1770–1831), he articulated the fact that true

⁴ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 75–95.

⁵ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Principien der Wissenschaftslehre* (Jena and Leipzig: Christian Ernst Gabler, 1798); ‘Vergleichung des vom Herrn Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der Wissenschaftslehre, 1795,’ in *Werke*, vol. 2, *Zur theoretischen Philosophie II*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 421–58. doi: 10.1515/9783110881844. Cited from Małgorzata Jantos, *Filozofia dialogu: Źródła, zasady, adaptacje* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo PAN ‘Nauka dla wszystkich’, 1997), 12–14.

connection between people is built by love (as a feeling).⁶ As it becomes obvious, similar ideas lie at the core of the later dialogical movement. So, it can be derived from German Classic philosophy.

The other source of dialogic philosophy is considered to be a personalist movement. As such, personalist philosophy regards a person as the highest form of reality possessing an ultimate value.⁷ The formation of this philosophical stream took its roots as well in the late 18th century in the realm of German Romanticism. Thus, Cyril Hovorun attributes the origins of personalism to Friedrich Schleiermacher, who first introduced the term *der Personalismus* in his work *Über die Religion* in 1799,⁸ while Jan Olof Bengtsson claims that the first employment of personalist ideas without calling them so can be found as early as in the 1780s in the works of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi.⁹ By the beginning of the 20th century, personalism became widely popular in the broad context of Western intellectual culture. Needless to say, it was not a strict and uniform system, but encompassed a broad set of ideas and different internal currents. One of its currents is considered to become a dialogical personalism. It was distinguished by its special emphasis on the idea that to become a true person, one needs to enter into relations with other persons.

The emergence of this dialogical personalism is often connected with interwar Jewish-German religious thought. Thus, its ideas were initially formulated by Hermann Cohen in his work *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, published posthumously in 1919 and then followed and developed by Franz Rosenzweig (*The Star of Redemption*, 1921), Ferdinand Ebner (*The Word and the Spiritual Realities*, 1921), and, most famously, by Martin Buber (*I and Thou*, 1923). The new element in dialogical thinking, introduced by Martin Buber was the differentiation between relations of I-Thou and I-It, or between important

⁶ See, for example, Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Über den Anfang der Philosophie,' in Ludwig Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 2, 'Philosophische Kritiken und Grundsätze' (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976); Jantos, *Filozofia dialogu: Źródła, zasady, adaptacje*, 18–30.

⁷ Van Harvey, 'Personalism', in *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 184.

⁸ See, Cyril Hovorun, *Meta-Ecclesiology: Chronicles on Church Awareness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 130.

⁹ See, Jan Olof Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism: Origins and Early Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10.

personal relations and all others.¹⁰ In the course of the development of these ideas, two other prominent Jewish thinkers, Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy and Hans Ehrenberg, organized in 1919 the so-called ‘Patmos Circle’, an intellectual group focused on the importance of interpersonal encounter. It was joined by Gabriel Marcel, Eberhard Grisebach, and Friedrich Gogarten among others. In 1926–1930 it published in Berlin its own journal *Die Kreatur*.¹¹ Although this circle is often considered to be the foundation of dialogic personalism, in fact, the latter flourished even earlier or simultaneously in many other settings as well.

One such setting, and notably an earlier one, was the intellectual movement of Slavophiles in the Russian Empire. It is considered to be initially inspired by German Idealism. Trying to criticise the West for its individualism and urbanization, Slavophiles shared dialogic ideas and developed their own notion of *sobornost’* (communality). These can be found in works by Alexei Khomiakov, Ivan Kireevsky, Vladimir Solov’ev, Sergii Bulgakov and others.¹² Moreover, Vladimir Solov’ev wrote in 1892–94 a special brief treatise, called *The Meaning of Love*, where he formulated the idea that relations between a man and a woman are foundational for the spiritual maturity of a person because they help to surmount own selfishness. The ideal goal of love is the creation of a new united personality. Since it is impossible in physical earthly life, sexual love at least helps to improve two personalities. Such and similar ideas would be also characteristic of later manifestations of dialogical personalism.

Nikolai Berdyaev, in his work *Solitude and Society*, published in 1934 in Paris, developed ideas of dialogical personhood, grounding them on both Russian tradition and Martin’s Buber contribution. He, however, went further and articulated the idea that the indispensable feature of any inter-human communication is solitude as relations with other people are never able to lead to the fullest psychological and intellectual

¹⁰ See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, transl. by Ronald Gregory Smith (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937), part I, III.

¹¹ McNroy, ‘Karl Barth and personalist philosophy,’ 48–49.

¹² On Slavophiles and their influence on Orthodox theology, see, for example, Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2015), 6–9, 65–67, 150–52; Parush Parushev, ‘The Slavophiles and Integral Knowledge’, in Ivana Noble, Katerina Bauerova, Tim Noble and Parush Parushev, *Wrestling with the Mind of the Fathers* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2015): 121–55.

unity and are always limited by one's physical self. He concludes that the ultimate realization of dialogical relations is possible only between human being and God. The innermost desire for intimacy, inherent to every human, is, in fact, a desire for God. So, only religious experience can overcome solitude completely.¹³

All above-mentioned settings, i.e. German Idealist and Russian philosophy, Jewish-German religious thought, represent only some of the intellectual circles, where dialogical personalism was discussed. Simultaneously, it gained growing popularity in Christian theology, especially among its Orthodox wing. Unlike their either Jewish or secular counterparts, Christian thinkers from its very inception felt that the ideas of dialogical personalism could be convincingly justified and expanded within trinitarian, Christological, cosmological and eschatological perspectives. Moreover, many of them arrived at these ideas independently from one another. As a vivid example of this could serve Karl Barth. He was personally acquainted with many of the above-mentioned Jewish dialogical philosophers, and for a long time it was considered that his dialogical approach was inspired by them. However, as Mark J. McInroy proved in his research based on Barth's correspondence and other archival documents, he considered that he independently had come to similar ideas as Martin Buber but from a rather different Christian perspective. Karl Barth explained the need for deep personal relations between people in the light of trinitarian theology and Christology. He explained that Jesus Christ was 'a person for other people' (*der Mensch für die andere Menschen*), so, he lived *only* for others. His driving force was a deepest empathy, mercy for the fallen human beings, which motivated him to enter into relations with them freely and gladly (*gern*). And, of course, the foremost importance had the relations with God, as people were created to be God's allies (*Bundesgenossen*) and only in such a capacity they can fulfil their historical and existential mission.¹⁴ He also criticized Buber for his disregard of the moral responsibility for the dissolution of the relations.¹⁵

¹³ See Nicolas Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society* (London: The Century Press, 1938). First published in Russian under the title *Ya i mir obektov. Opyt filosofii odinochestva i obscheniia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1934).

¹⁴ Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. 3.2, *Die Lehre von der Schöpfung: Das Geschöpf*, § 45 (Zürich: Zollikon, 1948).

¹⁵ See McInroy, 'Karl Barth and personalist philosophy,' 59–60.

Since then, dialogical personalism appeared in the different denominational branches of Christian theology. As Hovorun puts it, together with Eucharistic ecclesiology, it became one of the ‘transconfessional ecclesiological languages,’ employed by each tradition in its own way.¹⁶ In Orthodoxy, this approach was most expressively formulated by Metropolitan John Zizioulas. He accentuated notions of personhood and *koinonia* (communion) as the most important features of the Holy Trinity. So, he gave preference to the communication between the persons of the Holy Trinity to their substantial identity.¹⁷ The idea that the persons of the Holy Trinity relate to each other due to their mutual love and represent the most perfect unity to be followed became particularly beloved by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware as well.

Among other Christian thinkers, who dealt with different kinds of dialogical personalism, there are such Catholic theologians as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, Jacques Maritain, Jürgen Moltmann, and most recently, Matthias Sharer and Bernd Hilberath; on the Orthodox side, there are also Vladimir Lossky, Dumitru Staniloae, Christos Yannaras and others.¹⁸

¹⁶ Hovorun, *Meta-Ecclesiology*, 26. He also made an account on personalism in modern Greek Orthodox theology on pp. 195–96.

¹⁷ See, John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2006). For the analysis of Zizioulas’ ideas on personhood see, for example, Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, 214–20; Aristotle Papanikolaou, ‘Personhood and Its Exponents in Twentieth-Century Orthodox Theology,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Pantelis Kalaitzidis, ‘Dialogical Ethos of Trinitarian Theology, East and West: Theological and Political Implications,’ *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2022): 223–51.

¹⁸ See, for example, Hans Urs von Balthasar, ‘On the Concept of Person,’ *Communio* 13 (Spring 1986): 18–26; Jacques Maritain, *Saint Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1942); Jürgen Moltmann, ‘God the Father in the Life of the Holy Trinity,’ *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 1, no. 1 (2010): 38–48; Matthias Sharer and Bernd Jochen Hilberath, *The Practice of Communicative Theology: Introduction to a New Theological Culture* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008); about personalism in the works of Joseph Ratzinger, see Antonio Panaro, ‘The Personalism of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI,’ *Roczniki Teologiczne* 67, no. 2 (2020): 5–14. doi: 10.18290/rt20672-1; Nikolas Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society* (London: The Centenary Press, 1938); Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: James Clarke, 1957); Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, vol. 2, *The World: Creation and Deification* (Brookline, MS: Holy Cross orthodox Press, 2000); finally, Christos Yannaras defended his doctoral thesis in the University of Salonika exactly on this topic (‘The Ontological Content of the Theological Notion of Personhood’).

It is worth mentioning, however, that the theological perspective on dialogue is much less strict than the linguistic one. Its core idea, namely that a human being becomes truly a person only through relations with others, effectively confuses the notions of relations, communication, and dialogue. However, as theoretical as it may seem, the theology of dialogical personalism presupposes a series of implications for the life of Christians and the church. Thus, Pantelis Kalaitzidis describes its consequences as follows: ‘One could further describe dialogue as an inherent dimension of [this] theology, as being an integral part of it. This means that there can be no theology faithful to its Trinitarian ethos without entering into a constant dialogue with its surrounding setting, with realities and areas beyond the scope of the church. [...] Dialogue constitutes the most characteristic expression of the loving and perichoretic ethos, the ultimate testimony of Christian love and reconciliation.’¹⁹ He stressed, however, that genuine dialogue is impossible without metanoia – regret for the loss and lack of the other. And pointed to the interpretation that the very creation of the world by the Holy Trinity was a dialogical or conciliar act.²⁰ So, dialogical theology serves as a basis for the development of dialogical and ecumenical ethos that should be guiding for church’s and individual Christian attitude and behaviour towards the other and the world in general.

Now I will analyse the ideas of dialogical theology present in the works of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware.

2. Kallistos Ware on Theoretical Foundations for a Dialogue

Metropolitan Kallistos was always a strong proponent of dialogue, of engagement in relations aiming to bring parties closer. This concerned at least three dimensions: dialogue with other people, among Christian denominations and different faiths, and between a person and God. To ground his opinion, he drew upon at least three arguments – of a person as a relational being, of Christ’s commandments of unity and of the foundational importance of love. I would like to analyse his arguments one by one, emphasizing their implications.

First, Ware subscribed to a personalist approach in theology. He derived the need for dialogue from the belief that a person is created in

¹⁹ Kalaitzidis, ‘Dialogical Ethos of Trinitarian Theology,’ 234–35.

²⁰ Kalaitzidis, ‘Dialogical Ethos of Trinitarian Theology,’ 235, 225.

the image and likeness of God. On one hand, this means that human beings possess a set of features that distinguish them from animals, who do not share the image of God. In contrast to animals, a human being has the ability to think and to speak, to feel wonder and to pray to God. Further, a person has a strong need to have relations with other people. To support this idea, Ware mentioned: ‘We are also a “political” animal, created by God to live in the organized community or *polis*. We are, that is to say, a dialogic and a relational animal that becomes truly itself when it embarks on interchange with other relational animals.’²¹ To this point, Ware also referred to Scottish philosopher John MacMurray, who developed the idea that personhood is relational.²²

On the other hand, the image and likeness of God also means that a human being is the reflection of God, Who is revealed to us as a person and love at the same time.²³ Experience of God as a person denies the suggestion that God can be an abstract phenomenon, the assumption made by nominalists. Regarding love, Ware was an adherent of the view of God the Holy Trinity as a God of mutual and shared love. The teaching about the unity of three hypostases of the Holy Trinity lay at the heart of his set of ideas about the relational nature of human beings. Ware often mentioned this in his various works, however, he made the most comprehensive analysis of this issue in his article ‘The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity’.²⁴

The classical explanation of the unity within the Holy Trinity of early centuries, as formulated in the Nicene Creed, was based on the categories of Aristotelian logics, that is differentiation between the essence and particularities, where essence was divinity and particularities were hypostases of the Holy Trinity. That is why, the foundational term there was *homoousious*, or ‘consubstantial’ that showed that the hypostases of the Holy Trinity shared the same divine substance and were effectively the one God. It is important to accentuate here, that every

²¹ Kallistos Ware, ‘Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Obstacles and Hopes,’ *Sobornost* 38, no. 1 (2016): 9.

²² Kallistos Ware, ‘What Can Evangelicals and Orthodox Learn From One Another?’, a lecture delivered at North Park University in Chicago in February of 2011, *Ancient Faith Ministries*, February 25, 2011, https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/kallistos_lectures/what_can_evangelicals_and_orthodox_learn_from_one_another.

²³ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 19.

²⁴ See Kallistos Ware, ‘The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity,’ *Sobornost* 8, no. 2 (1986): 6–21.

teaching about the Holy Trinity leaves space for the apophatic element because no human explanations are able to clearly and exhaustively reveal her divine mystery. To emphasize this, Ware reminded us that ‘all, then, that is implied in our limited understanding of a human person and of human love, this we affirm also of God the Trinity, while adding that in him these things mean infinitely more than we can ever imagine’.²⁵ However, as shown in the abovementioned article, even at this early stage, somewhat different understandings already existed. Namely, the Cappadocian Fathers, St Basil the Great and St Gregory of Nyssa articulated that the unity of the triune God is based on communion (*koinonia*) of the *hypostases*, which implies internal relationality or communication. St Augustine tried to express the mystery of the Holy Trinity with various comparisons, once more unipersonal as of different faculties of the human mind (memory, understanding and will), which led to a more wholistic interpretation as of one God with *hypostases* as his different properties, other time more interpersonal, describing the Holy Trinity as one, Who love (Father), other, Who is loved (Son), and love (Holy Spirit) between them. Kallistos pointed out that this approach might somehow hint at the Filioque, although Augustine himself was not a proponent of it, and depersonalizes the Holy Spirit, as love itself is not a person unlike those, who love and beloved one. However, Ware found Augustine’s approach very insightful as it clearly highlighted the relations of love within the Godhead.²⁶ The most important thing is that all later interpretations, which assert that the unity within the Holy Trinity is ensured by the mutual love of the Three Persons and their mutual indwelling, are derived from a solid theological foundation – the Gospel of John, which repeatedly articulates that God is love and that the relationship between the Father and the Son is, in fact, a relationship of love and *perichoresis*, or existing within each other.

Exactly this interpretation of the unity within the Holy Trinity was brought to the fore in twentieth-century theology. However, Ware based his argumentation in favour of this approach on strict historical and theological research, not just on popular theological trends. He investigated further into the history of Christian dogma and focused

²⁵ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 33.

²⁶ Kallistos Ware, ‘The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity,’ *Sobornost* 8, no. 2 (1986): 8–9.

attention on 12th-century Scottish theologian Richard of St Victor, who, in his treatise *De Trinitate*, interpreted the Holy Trinity as both mutual and shared love.²⁷ In his own theology, Ware favoured precisely this approach. In his book *The Orthodox Way*, he stated:

There is in God genuine diversity as well as true unity. The Christian God is not just a unit, but a union, not just unity, but community. There is in God something analogous to ‘society’. He is not a single person, loving himself alone, not a self-contained monad or ‘The One’. He is triunity: three equal persons, each one dwelling in the other two by virtue of an unceasing movement of mutual love.²⁸

Such an understanding of the Holy Trinity, however, implies that to become a true person in the image of God, a human being also needs to love others. And these others refer not only to other people but to God and all living creatures as well. Thus, in an interview about the relations between religion, science and technology, Ware pointed out the difference between people and machines: ‘Through loving other humans, through loving the animals, and loving God, we become ourselves, we become truly human. Without love we are not human. [...] You may love your computer but your computer does not love you.’²⁹

According to Ware, relations built on love help humans achieve at least three goals: to know the truth about another person, to gain proof of God’s existence, and to acquire deification. While hatred distorts someone’s worldview and leads to false conclusions, love becomes a key to a mutual understanding: ‘To know a person is far more than to know facts about that person. To know a person is essentially to love him or her; there can be no true awareness of other persons without mutual love. We do not have any genuine knowledge about those whom we hate.’³⁰ Love causes a need for communication or dialogue. In the article ‘Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Obstacles and Hopes’, Ware referred to the story from the life of St Macarius of Egypt, who had a conversation with the skull of the dead pagan priest of idols.

²⁷ See Ware, ‘The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity,’ 9–11.

²⁸ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 31.

²⁹ Kallistos Ware, *Religion, Science & Technology: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective*, interview by MG Michael and Katina Michael (Wollongong, Australia: University of Wollongong, 2017), 26.

³⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 20.

According to the story, the skull confessed to Macarius that he was suffering in hell but the saint's prayer gave him and his fellow priests respite. It turned out that the respite for those prisoners in hell was at least to see each other's faces. This became possible due to Macarius' prayers; otherwise, they are bound to one another back to back. Here Ware concludes that 'such is the essence of hell: not to be able to see the face of the other, not to be able to relate, not to be able to love',³¹ and continues that 'as the antithesis of hell, heaven is precisely communication, relationship, mutual love. And so, by engaging in dialogue, we set foot upon the path that leads away from hell, bringing us to heaven's gate.'³² Finally, he brings together both arguments for dialogue, personalism and following the image of the Holy Trinity, by stating:

Una persona, nulla persona: one person, isolated, cut off from others, refusing relationship and dialogue, is not a genuine person after the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity. The same point is plainly underlined in the word for 'person' in the Greek language: *prosopon* signifies literally 'face' or 'countenance'. I am not truly a person unless I 'face' other persons, looking into their eyes and allowing them to look into mine.³³

However, love gives rise not only to the relations of dialogue but to faith in God, as well. Ware considered three ways for a person to become aware of God's existence: by observing the created world and its harmony; by thinking over one's inner psychological life and wondering at the existence of consciousness; and by reflecting on relations of love. Regarding the latter, Ware explained: 'To say to another, with all our heart, "I love you", is to say, "You will never die"'. At such moments of personal sharing we know, not through arguments but by immediate conviction, that there is life beyond death. So it is that in our relations with others, [...] we have moments of transcendence, pointing to something that lies beyond.'³⁴ Thus, the interdependence between faith, the relations of love and the search for dialogue can be easily traced. On the one hand, the bonds of love with other people allow a person to realize the existence of God, to experience transcendence. On the other hand, as the Holy Trinity is the unity of Loving Persons, a Christian should

³¹ Ware, 'Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Obstacles and Hopes,' 9.

³² Ware, 'Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Obstacles and Hopes,' 10.

³³ Ware, 'Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Obstacles and Hopes,' 10.

³⁴ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 26.

follow its example and engage in relations of love and dialogue with other people.

Finally, the relations of love between a human being and God should bring a person as close as possible to the mystical life of the Holy Trinity, to facilitate the person's fullest participation in divine energies.⁵⁵ This fact emphasizes the next important dimension of communication that makes a person become a true human being: their relations with God. According to Ware, to become a true human being, it is not enough to have bonds only with other human beings; the relationship with God is no less important:

Most fundamentally of all, the image [of God] means that we humans have God-awareness, the possibility to relate to God, to enter into communion with him through prayer. And this to me is the basic meaning of the image, that we humans are created to relate to God. This is a direction, an orientation in our humanness. We are not simply autonomous. The human being considered without any relationship with God is not truly human. [...] We are created to live in fellowship and in communion with God the Creator. [...] Only then will you understand what is to be human.⁵⁶

According to Ware, dialogue as a conversation with God should be a part of a Christian's spiritual life. Such dialogue manifests itself in two ways – through reading the Bible and through receiving the answer to one's prayers. The Bible brings a person to a mystical place where he or she can meet God: 'As a book uniquely inspired by God and addressed to each of the faithful personally, the Bible possesses sacramental power, transmitting grace to the reader, bringing him to a point of meeting and decisive encounter.'⁵⁷ Moreover, as the Word that comes from God to people, it initiates real dialogue between God and a human being, thus counterbalancing prayer that comes from a person to God. To this point, Ware quotes St Tikhon of Zadonsk: 'Whenever you read the Gospel, Christ himself is speaking to you. And while you read, you are praying and talking with him.'⁵⁸

Finally, it remains to remember Christ's commandment for the unity of Christians, which is often used to promote the ecumenical

⁵⁵ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 34

⁵⁶ Ware, *Religion, Science & Technology*, 13

⁵⁷ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 149.

⁵⁸ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 148.

movement. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware is no exception. He emphasized the heavy psychological atmosphere of the Last Supper, which Christ knew to be his last moments before enduring suffering. However, He bestowed upon us the call for unity. So seriously this call should be taken by Christians. 'If, then, we engage in [ecumenical] dialogue, it is because we seek to co-operate in the fulfilment of Christ's High Priestly Prayer,'⁵⁹ – concludes Ware.

To sum up, Ware supported and developed the idea that dialogue is crucial for a person to become a true human being. He grounded his idea both on personalist philosophy and the religious belief that a human being was created by God according to His image and likeness. He stressed that a person needs to engage in relations with both other people and God. However, the core of every deep relationship is based on love, which creates unity, opens the horizons of true knowledge about the other, and, in fact, makes a person truly human.

3. Kallistos Ware on the Practical Implementation of Dialogue

Apart from theoretical reflections on the foundations of dialogue and its importance for a Christian, Ware expressed opinions regarding the practical use of dialogue in both inter-Orthodox relations and in the ecumenical movement. In this section, I would like to analyze both of these spheres.

Despite the alleged unity of the Orthodox church, in reality, inter-Orthodox relations have long been polarized due to numerous conflicts over the jurisdiction of particular territories and claims of exercising pan-Orthodox power. While the See of Constantinople openly pursued claims to be the first among equals, with concrete legal consequences, its opponent, the Moscow Patriarchate, has promoted the agenda of pan-Orthodox consensus, exploiting latent and often illegal methods of putting pressure on lesser patriarchates and thus gaining a majority of voices in pan-Orthodox gatherings. Moreover, as it appears from leaked secret documents from the Soviet era, and as it is quite obvious from the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Moscow Patriarchate, at least from the late 1920s, has become an instrument of the Russian

⁵⁹ Ware, 'Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Obstacles and Hopes,' 9.

state in achieving its political goals.⁴⁰ However, the facts that have become widely apparent in the recent war in Eastern Europe were not so clear to outside observers for decades. Moreover, while it is now easy to blame the Moscow Patriarchate, the Ecumenical one may also be subject to critique. It is worth noting that its claims for a specific kind of primacy are not universally and unreservedly accepted in the global Orthodox community because its canonical argumentation is sometimes inaccurate; canons considered the concrete historical context that existed centuries before but was different from the contemporary one. The state of pan-Orthodox unity, moreover, is weakened by smaller local conflicts between neighbouring patriarchates, such as the confrontation between Jerusalem and Antioch over the community in Qatar.

Thus, inter-Orthodox unity can hardly be described as a reality, but rather as a goal to achieve. Metropolitan Kallistos lived in concrete historical circumstances and articulated ideas that, in his opinion, could be helpful for maintaining visible unity. First, he considered dialogue and mutual consultations as preconditions for unity. In his article dedicated to the so-called Estonian crisis – a break in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate declared by the Moscow Patriarchate on 23 February 1996 in response to the former's granting autonomy to the Church in Estonia, Ware lamented the lack of mutual consultations between the Ecumenical and Moscow Patriarchates regarding this issue throughout the entire 20th century.⁴¹ Mutual attentiveness and dialogue, to his mind, would be able to prevent aggravation. He strongly condemned excommunication as a method of settling disagreements. However, in a manner untypical of Orthodox ecclesiology, he expressed scepticism about the possibility of pan-Orthodox gatherings to resolve similar conflicts and suggested establishing some kind of authoritative primacy within the global Orthodoxy:

It is easy to say that the Eucharist creates the unity of the church. But does not eucharistic ecclesiology prove in practice unworkable unless it is

⁴⁰ For the leaks concerning KGB interference in the life of the church see, for example, Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). Regarding the further exploitation of the church by the Russian Federation since 1990s, see Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine* (London; Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

⁴¹ Kallistos Ware, 'The Estonian Crisis: A Salutory Warning?,' *Sobornost* 18, no. 2 (1996): 59–63.

accompanied by a firm and viable doctrine of primacy? Of course, I'm not suggesting that we Orthodox should accept the ultramontane understanding of papal primacy, as endorsed in 1870 by the first Vatican Council. But even if we dislike Vatican I, do not we Orthodox need to articulate some alternative form of primatial authority?

When a new, and to some extent similar, crisis occurred in 2018 over Ukraine, Ware expressed the opinion that a pan-Orthodox meeting of the primates and pan-Orthodox discussion should have taken place. He criticized Patriarch Bartholomew's aim to render ecclesial independence to the Ukrainian church and the unilateral break in communion declared by Patriarch Kirill.⁴² On one hand, as mentioned above, Ware always regarded dialogue and mutual respect as essential in maintaining unity. On the other hand, compared to Estonia, he was more critical of Patriarch Bartholomew in the Ukrainian case. This can be explained by the widespread, although controversial, opinion that ordinations were invalid in the unrecognized Ukrainian churches, but even more so by Metropolitan Kallistos' deep personal involvement in narratives of Russian emigration to the West.⁴³ So, it seems that in the theoretical confrontation between Russia and Ukraine that existed before the 2022 aggression he somehow sympathized with Russia, considering it to be a great Christian state. That is why, perhaps, in the Ukrainian church crisis of 2018, he abandoned the above-mentioned idea of primatial authority and advocated a more dialogic and democratic approach, which could have favoured Russian claims.

As for ecumenical relations, Ware was strongly in favour of *inter-Christian* dialogue. He emphasized that dialogue with other Christians is important both due to the dialogical nature of a person and for the sake of fulfilling Christ's commandment for unity. As he stated:

⁴² Ware, 'Church Should Always Preserve Its Inner Freedom'.

⁴³ Before we was accepted to the Orthodox Church, he developed numerous Orthodox contacts in Oxford, mainly among Russian emigrants: Prof. Nikolai Zernov and his wife, Militza; Prof. Dmitiry Obolensky and his wife Elizabeth; Prof. Nadejda Gorodetsky; the priest of the Russian parish in Oxford, Archimandrite Nicolas Gibbs and his then assistant, priest and future Archbishop Vasily Krivoshein; finally in 1957, he met Mother Elizabeth (Ampenov), the abbess of the woman's community in London, who motivated him to make a final step towards Orthodoxy.

Dialogue is not a luxury or an optional extra. It is integral to our personhood. [...] The dialogues, then, in which as Churches we are involved – between Orthodox and Catholics, for example, or between Orthodox and Anglicans – are not something peripheral, of interest only to a theological elite, but they are matter of direct concern to every one of us as Christians and as human beings.⁴⁴

As a convert from Western Christian tradition, Ware never considered those Christians, who are not Orthodox, to be devoid of God's grace. He only insists that Orthodoxy possesses the fullness of it. Moreover, he believed that 'it may be that in His mercy He will grant salvation to many people who in this present life have never been visibly members of any church community.'⁴⁵ He emphasized that Orthodox and other Christians share a common belief in many articles of faith: in the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ and his mission of salvation, the authority of the Bible, the main sacraments and so forth. But to achieve full unity, it is important to know each other first.⁴⁶

According to Ware, dialogue is also useful because Christians may incorporate the good practices they learn from other traditions into their own. For example, in a lecture at an Evangelical-Orthodox meeting, he stressed that Orthodoxy might be enriched by the achievements of Evangelicals: a conscious and personal approach to faith and strong practical engagement in charity.⁴⁷ In this regard, his thoughts correspond to the idea of *receptive ecumenism* – formulated in the early 2000s by Durham University Professor Paul Murray and since then gathering popularity across Britain – that ecumenical talks should start by recognizing the positive achievements of other traditions and introducing them into one's own tradition.⁴⁸

However, ecumenical dialogue has its limits. Ware believed in a dialogue of truth not of compromise.⁴⁹ He often stressed the official posi-

⁴⁴ Ware, 'Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: Obstacles and Hopes,' 11.

⁴⁵ Kallistos Ware, *How are we Saved? The Understanding of Salvation in the Orthodox Tradition* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Light & Life Publishing, 1996), 72.

⁴⁶ Ware, 'What Can Evangelicals and Orthodox Learn From One Another?'

⁴⁷ Ware, 'What Can Evangelicals and Orthodox Learn From One Another?'

⁴⁸ About receptive ecumenism, see, for example, 'Publications and Resources on Receptive Ecumenism,' Durham University, accessed January 14, 2024, <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/catholic-studies/research/constructive-catholic-theology-/receptive-ecumenism-/resources-and-publications/>.

⁴⁹ For his engagement with Evangelicalism, see Bradley Nassif, 'Kallistos Ware: Theologian Who Explained the Orthodox Way to Other Christians,' *Christianity Today*,

tion of the Orthodox Church that community in sacraments might come only after agreement in matters of faith. Still, he also clarified that ‘there is a vital distinction between Tradition and traditions, between the essential faith and theological opinions. We seek unity in faith, not in opinions and customs.’⁵⁰ Furthermore, while deliberating on the Estonian crisis, he expressed regret about the absence of communion between the Orthodox and other Christian traditions: ‘It [Estonian crisis] has led many of us Orthodox to reflect, as we had not done before, on the profound sorrow that we cause to other Christians when we insist that, for reasons of theological principle, intercommunion with them is not possible.’⁵¹

It is also worth noting that Metropolitan Kallistos was an active participant in ecumenical dialogue, in particular, with the Anglican Church. He gave numerous lectures at joint theological conferences and research centres, was a member of the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius and the co-editor of its periodical *Sobornost*. Concerning official dialogue, Ware was a delegate to the international Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue from 1973 to 1984 and its Orthodox Co-Chair from 2009 until 2016. In 2017, he was awarded the Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.⁵²

To sum up, Ware advocated dialogue in the relations among church communities. In the internal Orthodox milieu, he emphasized the importance of mutual consultations and conciliar gatherings on the inter-Orthodox level. However, he also indicated the beneficial role of primatial authority if this happened to appear within Orthodoxy. As for ecumenical dialogue, Ware emphasized that Christians are not only divided but also share many common beliefs. Following Christ’s commandment, it is important to seek full unity. This search should start from knowing each other, learning from one another, and be followed by an agreement on the essential matters of faith.

August 24, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2022/august-web-only/kallistos-ware-died-orthodox-church-way-evangelical-dialogue.html>.

⁵⁰ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity*, 3rd revised ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 306–10.

⁵¹ Ware, ‘The Estonian Crisis,’ 64.

⁵² ‘The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Awards: Citations in Alphabetical Order,’ *Archbishop of Canterbury*, 9 June 2017, <https://bit.ly/3pIMxIX>.

Conclusion

Being grounded in both Western and Eastern intellectual culture, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware effectively built bridges within divided Christianity. Following the ideas of personalist philosophy, he interpreted the notion of a person as a relational being within Orthodox tradition by engaging in Trinitarian theology. This included a special emphasis on dialogue and love for the broadly perceived other as the foundational principle for the formation of true humanity. At the same time, he not only reflected on but also lived a life of dialogue being actively engaged in the relations between Orthodox and other Christian traditions. He advocated for some kind of authoritative primacy within the global Orthodoxy, which in ideal should complement conciliarity and correct its shortcomings. Regarding the inter-Christian dialogue, he opted for closer acquaintance, cooperation and borrowing of useful practices. However, in matters of institutional dialogue, he warned on the importance of agreement in essential issues of belief. Nevertheless, he expressed hope for a possible intercommunion.

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IL SILENZIO DELLA SPERANZA. IL DIALOGO ECUMENICO AD INIZIO MILLENNIO

VIVIANA DE MARCO

ABSTRACT

The Silence of Hope: Ecumenical Dialogue at the Beginning of the Millennium

Looking at the Ecumenical Dialogue in the beginning of XXI Century, in this short essay come out some fundamental lines of ‘silence of hope’. In these liquid times we cannot find great achievements or historical turning points in ecumenical dialogue. This short essay will try to enter with ‘eyes of hope’ in the wound of contemporary society, looking for signs of hope in the light of Christ our hope. And in the ecumenical field, this essay wants to point some features of hope ‘along the path’, in order to draw some lines of a new ecumenical perspective ‘on the way’, made not of great brilliant achievements but of a new ecumenical awareness in sharing christian life.

Keywords

Silence; Hope; Liquid times; On the way; Eyes of hope; Ecumenical Dialogue

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Il silenzio della speranza. Il titolo di questo articolo sembra avere in prima battuta un retrogusto amaro. In effetti in un rapido sguardo rapido a questo inizio del terzo millennio che sembrava foriero di novità e risultati insperati, risultano evidenti il disorientamento e la delusione per le speranze disattese. Un’ondata di disillusione sembra investire i nostri giorni. Nel 2020 e 2021 il dramma imprevedibile della pandemia ha avvolto il mondo con una cappa di silenzio: un’esperienza epocale nello sperimentare la fragilità della vita umana, della scienza e dei sistemi sanitari e assistenziali. Nuovi drammatici scenari

si sono aperti a partire dal 2022, dalla guerra in Ucraina al tragico massacro del 7 ottobre 2023 a cui è seguita la guerra nella striscia di Gaza e in Libano. A questi eventi il mondo assiste angosciato e impotente, mentre l'ONU mette a nudo la sua fragilità. La presidenza Trump nel 2025 sembra aprire nuovi scenari geopolitici mondiali con inconsuete tipologie di alleanze insieme a nuove tensioni e contraddizioni. Anche il concetto di Europa che dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale ha rappresentato una meta agognata trovando culmine nel trattato di Maastricht, nella libera circolazione dei cittadini e nella moneta unica, ora è completamente sbiadito: prova ne è la percentuale di astensionismo del 50 % alle elezioni europee del giugno 2024. Come osserva Francesco¹, l'astensionismo e l'indifferentismo hanno svuotato il concetto stesso di democrazia. Di fatto, molti oggi considerano l'Unione Europea come un condizionamento politico ed economico, piuttosto che come una dimensione di appartenenza comune. Per inciso: viene da chiedersi se questa non sia una delle possibili conseguenze dell'aver voluto silenziare in nome di uno pseudodemocratico laicismo, di un modello falsato di pluralismo e di presunto rispetto delle diversità, quelle radici cristiane dell'Europa che i cristiani delle diverse Chiese avevano proclamato insieme nella *Charta Oecumenica* del 2001. Ma se si tagliano le radici culturali e spirituali dell'Europa, avviene come con le piante: con le radici spezzate si può crescere solo come bonsai, senza potersi svilupparsi in altezza e in pienezza. Tutto questo mostra come negli anni Venti del Duemila venga in rilievo su diversi piani una evidente cesura rispetto all'ottimismo dei decenni precedenti. Come noto, Hobsbawm già nel 1994 parlava di "secolo breve"², dato che il crollo del muro di Berlino e il superamento della guerra fredda avevano in qualche modo messo fine al XX secolo e dato inizio al XXI secolo con nuovi equilibri, conflitti e tensioni. La modernità liquida di cui parla Zygmunt Bauman³ con intuizione geniale, caratterizza sempre più la

¹ Cf. Francesco, Discorso a conclusione della 50a Settimana sociale dei cattolici in Italia. Partecipazione e passione civile per risanare il cuore della democrazia (7 luglio 2024), in *L'Osservatore Romano* 164/153 (8 luglio 2024): 2–3.

² Cf. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994); trad. it. *Il secolo breve* (Milano: BUR, 1995; rist. 2014).

³ Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); trad. it. *Modernità liquida* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2002); *Liquid Love. On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); trad. it. *Amore liquido. Sulla fragilità dei legami affettivi* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2004); *Liquid Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); trad. it. *Vita liquida* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2006).

nostra epoca fluidificando valori, relazioni, identità investendo il piano globale e il piano interpersonale, per cui anche l'amore diventa liquido. E in questa liquidità si apre un silenzio che tutto sembra avvolgere, dalla storia alla società e alla Chiesa, dai rapporti tra persone al dialogo ecumenico.

In questo contesto, il presente articolo intende effettuare una rapida panoramica dello sviluppo del dialogo ecumenico nel XXI secolo, evidenziando come alle grandi aspettative degli anni Novanta e dei primi anni Duemila, non abbiano corrisposto le auspiccate concretizzazioni. Caratterizzare in prima battuta il tempo presente come epoca del "silenzio della speranza" sembrerebbe indicare che tutto è fluido, instabile e avvolto dal silenzio, anche la speranza. Ma in realtà l'articolo vuole entrare dentro la "ferita" di questo nostro tempo per riflettere sul significato della speranza ed interrogarsi a fondo, per vedere se si debba parlare di "silenzio della speranza" *tout-court*, cioè inteso come assenza e venir meno della speranza, o se dentro questa ferita e questo silenzio si possano discernere gli albori di un'inattesa e rinnovata presenza. Tentando di offrire una lettura teologica e assumendo come chiave ermeneutica la speranza, tema del Giubileo 2025, l'ipotesi è quella di vedere se l'epoca presente possa essere definita come tempo di speranza, pur in un quadro globale caratterizzato da una sorta di "silenzio della speranza". La *quaestio* fondamentale è tentare quindi di capire se si possa considerare il silenzio come *locus et modus operandi* della speranza, e se sia possibile reperirne alcune tracce che offrano nuovi spunti per il cammino ecumenico di oggi.

1. Un rapido sguardo al dialogo ecumenico negli anni Duemila

Ripercorrendo rapidamente gli ultimi decenni, in ambito ecumenico vengono in luce i significativi ed insperati risultati raggiunti a fine anni Novanta e primi anni Duemila grazie alla ventata di ottimismo che ha percosso l'Europa dopo il 1989 e grazie alla grande apertura ecumenica voluta da Giovanni Paolo II. Come noto, nel 1999 nel dialogo con la Riforma si è arrivati allo storico documento congiunto sulla giustificazione per fede, culminato con l'abbattimento reciproco di scomuniche e condanne del XVI secolo tra evangelico-luterani e cattolici, fino ad arrivare nel 2017 all'inimmaginabile celebrazione congiunta dei 500 anni della Riforma, voluta da Benedetto XVI ed attuata da Francesco. Nel 2007 il dialogo con l'Ortodossia produce come frutto

maturato il Documento di Ravenna, che attesta da parte del Patriarcato di Costantinopoli e del Patriarcato di Romania l'accoglienza dell'invito di Giovanni Paolo II a ripensare insieme in modo condiviso il primato petrino «in un compito immane che non posso portare avanti io da solo»⁴. I risultati condivisi a Ravenna vengono ribaditi nel Documento di Chieti 2016 e nel Documento di Alessandria 2023.

Ma a partire dal 2018 si ha l'impressione di trovarsi davanti a un cambio di rotta: non più slanci entusiastici, ma una sorta di silenzio che sembra avvolgere il rapporto tra le chiese e che potrebbe sembrare stasi, immobilismo o marginalizzazione del problema ecumenico rispetto alla pastorale ordinaria. Verrebbe da chiedersi se anche nel dialogo tra i cristiani l'amore non sia diventato "liquido". Di fatto, dal 2018 non troviamo gesti incisivi o dichiarazioni innovative capaci di scardinare condanne e posizioni secolari. Nei pochi documenti di dialogo troviamo una situazione di *stand-by* in cui ci si limita a delineare lo *status quaestionis* delle diverse tematiche per ribadire i risultati raggiunti e gli auspici per il futuro. Nel dialogo multilaterale non troviamo documenti come il BEM del 1982 o la *Charta Oecumenica* europea del 2001, non troviamo Assemblee Ecumeniche internazionali come Graz 1997 o Sibiu 2007. In questi ultimi anni non ritroviamo il grande gesto di Giovanni Paolo II nel chiedere perdono agli altri cristiani per gli errori commessi nel corso della storia, come nel 1995 ad Olomouc o a Kosice, né le coraggiose parole di Francesco nell'affermare che la Riforma è stata un dono di Dio. Nei rapporti tra le Chiese alcune situazioni sembrano restare congelate, talvolta sfumano occasioni di chiarimento. Come a Creta nel 2016, quando l'Ortodossia doveva trovarsi per il "Santo e Grande Sinodo", ma in realtà la mancata adesione di alcune Chiese non ha permesso di realizzare il Sinodo panortodosso atteso da più di un secolo. La guerra in Ucraina ha segnato una ferita lacerante all'interno dell'Ortodossia, con una drammatica tensione che si riflette in patria e in diaspora tra cristiani ucraini appartenenti a diversi Patriarcati, fino a portare il governo di Kiev nell'agosto 2024 a bandire dal territorio ucraino la Chiesa Ortodossa del Patriarcato di Mosca. E il punto culmine di questa lacerazione si è toccato il 12 aprile 2025 con la strage della Domenica delle Palme, quando un bombardamento russo nel centro di Sumy ha colpito i fedeli che si recavano alla

⁴ Giovanni Paolo II, Lettera enciclica *Ut unum sint* (25 maggio 1995), n. 95, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87 (1995): 977-978 (intero documento: 921-982).

Divina Liturgia nella cattedrale della Trasfigurazione, provocando 34 morti tra cui due bambini. Una tragedia assurda e inumana che non è stata nemmeno condannata da tutti, dato che la presidenza Trump si è astenuta dal condannare. In questo contesto, l'espressione "silenzio della speranza" scelta come chiave ermeneutica della nostra riflessione, sembrerebbe indicare che davanti a tanta devastazione anche la speranza ammutolisca in un silenzio attonito, o che nella migliore delle ipotesi si trovi, per così dire, in "modalità *stand-by*". Ma in realtà ci sembra che il silenzio non debba necessariamente essere inteso come sinonimo di vuoto, assenza di parole o battuta d'arresto. Come avviene nella musica, dove le pause hanno lo stesso valore delle note e con le note contribuiscono allo sviluppo della linea melodica, ci domandiamo se anche sul piano storico ed esistenziale il silenzio e la pausa possano avere un valore costruttivo in cui in filigrana possa leggersi la linea melodica della speranza. Prima ancora di esaminare il dato di fede, possono risultare illuminanti le intuizioni di alcuni filosofi come Heidegger, secondo cui l'Essere si manifesta non nella solarità, ma nel chiaroscuro della radura⁵, o come Jaspers, secondo cui la questione ultima della metafisica è vedere se nel fondo delle tenebre l'essere può brillare⁶. Come direbbe Heidegger, si tratta di avere il coraggio dell'angoscia⁷, o come si potrebbe dire in senso cristiano, il coraggio della speranza. Ed attingendo al dato di fede si potrebbe riscoprire il significato del silenzio come attesa e tempo della speranza: si tratterebbe quindi di un silenzio radicalmente diverso da una modalità *stand by*, perché diverrebbe attesa vigile dell'azione dello Spirito nel discernimento dei segni dei tempi. L'espressione "silenzio della speranza" verrebbe così ad avere il valore di genitivo soggettivo e oggettivo al contempo, per cui il silenzio potrebbe essere tempo del discernimento e luogo in cui la speranza opera. Si tratterebbe quindi di saper leggere nella delusione e nel silenzio il *modus operandi* della speranza che non delude. Forse davanti a una battuta d'arresto, a una mancanza o a una situazione di stallo, si potrebbe guardare in faccia quel vuoto e quel silenzio, per riscoprire una speranza che non si fonda su un facile

⁵ Cfr. Martin Heidegger, *Lettera sull'umanismo*, trad. it. di Franco Volpi, in *Segnavia* (Milano: Adelphi, 1987), 284.

⁶ Cfr. Karl Jaspers, *Metafisica*, trad. it. di Umberto Galimberti (Milano: Mursia, 1995), 352.

⁷ Cfr. Martin Heidegger, *Essere e Tempo*, trad. it. di Alfredo Marini (Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 2011), 359.

irenismo, né sull'illusione del continuo progresso della scienza che di fatto si infrange davanti a un virus che mette in ginocchio il mondo, né sull'augurio generico che “andrà tutto bene” come nello slogan diffuso nel periodo della pandemia, ma sulla luce di Cristo. E la speranza non è un sentimento soggettivo, ma è un *phaenomenon bene fundatum* che si fonda sulla solida roccia che è Cristo. Perché come è accaduto sulla via di Emmaus, Cristo nostra speranza sa rendersi presente e far nuove tutte le cose. In questa direzione si muove la *Spes non confundit*, affermando che la speranza «nasce dall'amore e si fonda sull'amore che scaturisce dal Cuore di Gesù trafitto sulla croce [...] Ecco perché questa speranza non cede nelle difficoltà: essa si fonda sulla fede ed è nutrita dalla carità»⁸.

2. L'ecumenismo e i segni di speranza

Guardando alla speranza, sembrano venire in rilievo una direzione verticale che porta a radicarsi in Cristo, una dimensione orizzontale che spinge a riscoprire il rapporto tra fratelli, ed una dimensione che si proietta in avanti nel guardare in faccia il nostro tempo in modo realistico senza tacere le situazioni di conflitto, di tensioni e contraddizioni, ma scegliendo di non fermarsi ad esse. Si tratta di guardare in avanti con occhi di speranza, capaci di riconoscere in ogni “vuoto” derivante da circostanze storiche come la pandemia o da sciagurate scelte degli uomini come la guerra in Ucraina, i massacri del 7 ottobre 2023 e la guerra nella striscia di Gaza, il volto di Colui che svuotò se stesso, *ekenosen seauton* (Fil 2), assumendo e rinnovando tutte le cose. Oggi come in ogni epoca, si tratta di credere in Cristo che è il Signore della storia che scrive diritto anche sulle righe storte degli uomini. Con questi occhi si scopre che la speranza è una realtà che si può sperimentare nel silenzio e vivere nel quotidiano in molte situazioni. Nella *Fratelli tutti* si afferma che un segno di speranza pur nei contesti drammatici come la pandemia, è la comune appartenenza di fratelli⁹, per cui è fondamentale impegnarsi per custodire la dignità di ogni persona ed accogliere l'altro senza barriere o preclusioni. In *Spes non confundit* tra i segni di speranza Francesco annovera la pace, la

⁸ Francesco, *Bolla di Indizione del Giubileo Ordinario dell'anno 2025 Spes non confundit* (9 maggio 2024), n. 3, in *Il Regno – Documenti* 69, no. 11 (2024): 321–330.

⁹ Francesco, *Lettera Enciclica Fratres omnes* (3 ottobre 2020), n. 32, in *AAS* 112, no. 11 (2020): 980–981.

condivisione, la capacità di guardare al futuro con fiducia, la prossimità nei confronti di malati, poveri, anziani, l'attenzione ai giovani, al problema della denatalità, ai problemi dei detenuti e dei profughi, e si afferma che solo nella luce di Cristo diventa possibile guardare in avanti, dato che «oltre ad attingere la speranza nella grazia di Dio, siamo chiamati a riscoprirla anche nei segni dei tempi»¹⁰. Francesco ritiene che «la speranza è una lettura alternativa della storia e delle vicende umane: non illusoria, ma realista, del realismo della fede che vede l'invisibile. Questa speranza è l'attesa paziente, come il non-vedere di Abramo»¹¹. E' un non-vedere che diventa un nuovo vedere, capace di leggere in controluce nel silenzio e nelle battute di arresto alcuni segni di speranza.

Anche nel dialogo ecumenico si tratta di guardare fino in fondo il silenzio degli anni Venti del Duemila per tentare di leggerlo con occhi di speranza. Che si tratti non di stasi, ma di un segno dei tempi? Sono passati 60 anni dalla conclusione del Vaticano II, e la generazione dei protagonisti del Concilio e dei giovani teologi di allora non ha potuto vedere con i propri occhi la meta della condivisione dell'unico pane ed unico calice sognata profeticamente da Paolo VI ed Athenagoras. Ma in questi decenni la speranza di una possibile unità tra cristiani ha compiuto grandi passi. E crediamo che il cammino ecumenico sia sorretto dalla schiera dei martiri dell'ecumenismo, tra i quali troviamo coloro che sogno andati incontro al martirio restando fedeli a Cristo come Florenskij, Bonhoeffer o Metzger, che nel tempo dei totalitarismi e del "silenzio della speranza" con il loro estremo sacrificio hanno dimostrato sensibilità ecumenica e profonda fede nella realtà della *communio sanctorum*, divenendo pilastri dell'ecumenismo dei martiri del XX secolo per l'Ortodossia, per la Riforma, per la Chiesa Cattolica. Negli anni Cinquanta, in un'epoca in cui per il mondo cattolico aderire al movimento ecumenico comportava la scomunica, troviamo pionieri del dialogo come Balthasar, Congar, Giovanni XXIII, che alla luce della speranza di Cristo hanno portato avanti il dialogo e la comunione in modo profetico, costruendo rapporti, intrecciando reti, sensibilizzando le persone della propria chiesa ad aprirsi alle altre chiese, E con loro, troviamo tanti altri che non hanno visto

¹⁰ Francesco, *Spes non confundit*, cit., n. 7.

¹¹ Francesco, Messaggio per la Giornata mondiale di preghiera per la cura del creato del 1° settembre 2024, *Spera e agisci con il creato* (27 giugno 2024), in *L'Osservatore Romano* 164/145 (27 giugno 2024), 2-3.

l'unità con i loro occhi, ma nella realtà della *communio sanctorum* restano come pietre vive della *oikoumene*, la “casa comune” che cerchiamo di edificare in Cristo nelle difficoltà del cammino e nel silenzio dell'attesa. Nella *Spes non confundit* in riferimento ai 1700 anni dal Concilio di Nicea non manca l'invito «a tutte le chiese e comunità ecclesiali a procedere nel cammino verso l'unità visibile», insieme all'auspicio che si possa «compiere un passo deciso verso l'unità intorno ad una data comune per la Pasqua»: non manca il desiderio che tutti i battezzati «siano corresponsabili nel testimoniare attraverso molteplici segni di speranza la presenza di Dio nel mondo»¹², ma forse ci saremmo aspettati che l'ecumenismo fosse definito *explicititer* e non solo tra le righe come un segno di speranza. Più esplicito è il documento conclusivo del Sinodo dei Vescovi dell'ottobre 2024, in cui si afferma che «la valorizzazione dei contesti, delle culture e delle diversità, e delle relazioni tra di loro, è una chiave per crescere come Chiesa sinodale missionaria e camminare, per impulso dello Spirito Santo, verso l'unità visibile dei Cristiani», per cui, nel ribadire «l'impegno della Chiesa Cattolica a proseguire e intensificare il cammino ecumenico con altri Cristiani», l'Assemblea dei Vescovi «saluta con gioia e gratitudine i progressi nelle relazioni ecumeniche lungo gli ultimi sessant'anni, i documenti di dialogo e le dichiarazioni che esprimono la fede comune», riconoscendo il contributo al Sinodo da parte dei Delegati Fraternali delle altre Chiese, ed invitando a «guardare con speranza ai prossimi passi del cammino verso la piena comunione grazie alla recezione dei frutti del cammino ecumenico nelle pratiche ecclesiali»¹³. Che si tratti quindi di innestare una nuova marcia, non più il ritmo accelerato degli anni 90 e primi anni Duemila, ma il ritmo continuativo e pacato del cammino? Forse si tratta di non puntare solo alla visione immediata della meta, ma alla speranza nel cammino. E ad un cammino nella speranza. Siamo infatti certi che il cammino ecumenico rappresenti uno dei segni di speranza fondati sull'amore a Cristo e alla croce, caratterizzati dal tempo della pazienza e della vigile attesa nella certezza che la speranza non delude. E forse si potrebbe ravvisare uno “stile” specifico del “silenzio della speranza”: non le grandi mete e gli obiettivi di ampia portata storica dei decenni precedenti, ma

¹² Francesco, *Spes non confundit*, cit., n. 17.

¹³ XVI Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo dei Vescovi, Documento finale della seconda sessione “*Per una Chiesa sinodale: comunione, partecipazione, missione*” (26. 10. 2024) n. 40, in *Il Regno-Documenti* 21/2024, 655 (intero documento 647-693).

obiettivi minimi, concreti, più facilmente raggiungibili. Con occhi di speranza ci chiediamo quindi se dentro al silenzio degli anni Venti del Duemila il dialogo ecumenico non abbia parlato forte: non tanto con documenti ufficiali, ma con la vita, e attraverso modalità inedite. Pensiamo all'utilizzo della modalità *online* durante la pandemia, che ha permesso frequenti riunioni, incontri, condivisioni delle esperienze difficili che si vivevano. Quante situazioni condivise tra le Chiese! E quante volte si è pregato insieme per la pace, in ogni veglia ecumenica e in ogni incontro! Solo venti anni fa il problema ecumenico era sconosciuto ai più, mentre ora sta aumentando la consapevolezza non solo da parte degli addetti ai lavori, ma del popolo di Dio, per cui sempre più persone manifestano l'esigenza di partecipare a celebrazioni ecumeniche, a convegni o corsi accademici per sapere cosa è accaduto storicamente e cosa si può fare, divenendo talvolta promotori di eventi di fraternità ecumenica e di una nuova sensibilità nell'accoglienza. E anche questo è un segno di speranza! La guerra in Ucraina infatti ha spinto migliaia di cristiani delle diverse Chiese a donare tempo, energia, beni, e a spendersi senza misura per accogliere a braccia aperte i fratelli ucraini in fuga senza chiedere se appartenessero al Patriarcato di Mosca, di Costantinopoli o alla Chiesa Greco-Cattolica. Molto importante e insostituibile è il ruolo della Caritas e delle organizzazioni umanitarie, ma altrettanto importante è il contributo silenzioso, concreto e generoso di tante parrocchie e di tanti singoli cristiani nell'accogliere persone, nel trovare per loro casa e lavoro fidandosi della Provvidenza, e questo è vero non solo per i cattolici, ma per i valdesi, metodisti, evangelici, avventisti, battisti, ortodossi, anglicani in Italia e in Europa. In tutte queste situazioni siamo stati cristiani insieme, ci siamo riscoperti fratelli, legati da una profonda sintonia umana e di fede, fratelli in cammino in un ecumenismo "di popolo" fondato sulla vita concreta¹⁴. Credo che a cento anni dalla Conferenza di Stoccolma in cui agli albori del movimento ecumenico, per la prima volta *Life and work* è uscita a vita pubblica, si potrebbe riscoprire anche oggi l'intuizione originaria, secondo cui si può avanzare nel cammino ecumenico attraverso un'esperienza concreta di solidarietà condivisa. Magari in forma diversa da quella storicamente rappresentata da *Life and work*, magari in una maniera più incarnata nel nostro tempo e nella realtà maturata in più di un secolo di cammino ecumenico, ma in ogni caso credo che

¹⁴ Cf. Giovanni Paolo II, *Ut Unum Sint*, cit., n. 32.

l'aspetto esperienziale ed esistenziale dell'ecumenismo sia una risorsa ed un segno di speranza per l'oggi. E non si tratta a mio avviso di una serie di attività o di possibili collaborazioni in vista di obiettivi comuni, ma di qualcosa di molto più profondo: si tratterebbe di realizzare l'aspetto concreto, visibile ed autenticamente spirituale della *communio* come reciprocità dell'amore e condivisione fraterna. Si tratterebbe di essere innanzitutto persone "ecumeniche", cioè uomini e donne capaci di dialogo e di tessere nel concreto del quotidiano una rete di comunione e fraternità che faccia da sfondo e da terreno solido su cui possano muoversi i passi del dialogo teologico e del cammino delle Chiese verso l'unità. Un cammino nel silenzio. Ma nella speranza. Un cammino fatto con il cuore, come indica Francesco nella *Dilexit nos*: solo «il cuore rende possibile qualsiasi legame autentico, perché una relazione che non è costruita con il cuore è incapace di superare la frammentazione dell'individualismo»¹⁵. Si tratta allora di vedere se anche in campo ecumenico il silenzio della speranza non sia un silenzio eloquente: non solo un silenzio che abbia il valore delle parole, ma che costituisca lo spazio in cui possa più chiaramente risuonare la Parola che il Signore vuol dire alla nostra epoca. E che probabilmente potrebbe essere diversa da quella che potevamo immaginare negli anni '80 del secolo scorso. Forse si tratta di riscoprire il dialogo ecumenico non solo nelle celebrazioni e nei convegni teologici, ma nel coraggio di amare la chiesa dell'altro come la propria. Con questi occhi si comprende la realtà del cammino, cioè la consapevolezza che il cammino ecumenico è ecumenismo del cammino che valorizza l'essere insieme in cammino mettendo in rilievo le realtà già esistenti, le conquiste raggiunte, i piccoli passi. Ecumenismo del cammino significa ecumenismo della pazienza. Infatti alle volte diventa necessario consolidare i passi "*along the path*" per poi proseguire il cammino. Come nella Dichiarazione di Alessandria, redatta in inglese, in cui si afferma che «*Roman Catholics and Orthodox need to continue along that path so as to embrace an authentic understanding of Synodality and Primacy*»¹⁶. Anche in una dichiarazione congiunta con la Riforma si parla di

¹⁵ Francesco, Lettera Enciclica *Dilexit nos* (24 ottobre 2024), 17, in *Il Regno-Documenti* 69/19 (2024), p. 580 (intero documento 577-611).

¹⁶ Commissione Internazionale mista per il dialogo teologico tra la Chiesa Cattolica e la Chiesa Ortodossa, Documento di Alessandria *Sinodalità e primato oggi* (9 giugno 2023), n. 5, in *Il Regno* 68/13 (2023), p. 429 (intero documento pp. 428-437).

*Ecumenisme on the way*¹⁷. *Ecumenisme on the way*: non solo ecumenismo in cammino, ma ecumenismo come cammino, in cui il Dio trinitario è l'origine e la meta. Questa prospettiva oggi intende sottolineare che il lavoro che si sta facendo nel corso del cammino non è solo un mezzo, ma è già ecumenismo vivo che si delinea con alcuni tratti peculiari come la metodologia del consenso differenziato, la condivisione concreta, la vita¹⁸. La considerazione di fondo è che la vita precede spesso la teoria, i rapporti tra le persone precedono gli incontri ufficiali e li possono facilitare. Dunque, ecumenismo in cammino con gli occhi di speranza. Con questi occhi si valorizza il Documento di Studio *Il vescovo di Roma*¹⁹ uscito dopo 30 anni dall'invito profetico rivolto da Giovanni Paolo II. Il documento è un interessante *instrumentum laboris* in cui la panoramica dello *status quaestionis* e la puntualizzazione su alcune questioni possono favorire il dialogo futuro. Anche in questo caso si tratta di scegliere se vedere, per così dire, "il bicchiere mezzo pieno o mezzo vuoto". Mezzo vuoto, perché dopo un ventennio dal documento di Ravenna, non si è arrivati a significativi gesti di incontro e di riconoscimento. Mezzo pieno, perché si prende atto che il primato del papa non si fonda sulle antiche categorie di *auctoritas* e *potestas* o sull'infallibilità, ma sul concetto evangelico di *koinonia* e *diakonia*: *diakonia* nei confronti dell'umanità e della Chiesa, *koinonia* come rapporto di comunione tra i vescovi. E alla *koinonia* sono invitati a contribuire i cristiani delle diverse Chiese. Si tratta di cambiare modello ecclesiologico: non più la piramide di stampo tridentino come modello di una *societas* gerarchicamente organizzata, né un'immagine di Chiesa come federazione di chiese autosufficienti, ma un'ecclesiologia eucaristica che guarda alla Trinità come fondamento e modello dell'essere Chiesa e dell'unità tra le Chiese. Degno di nota è che questa svolta nell'autocomprensione cattolica sia stata recepita in senso positivo dalle altre Chiese cristiane. Dunque, come è stato sottolineato, «in questi tempi in cui ogni punto di riferimento tende ad essere fluido»,

¹⁷ Cfr. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, *Declaration on the way. Church, Ministry and Eucharist* (2015), trad. it. *Dichiarazione in cammino*, in *Il Regno* 61/13 (2016), 409–416.

¹⁸ Per un approfondimento su questo tema, mi permetto di rimandare al mio V. De Marco, 'L'Ecumenismo on the way: una possibilità per il nuovo millennio,' *Firmana* n. 63 (2016/2), 37–49.

¹⁹ Dicastero per le Promozioni dell'Unità dei Cristiani, Documento di studio *Il vescovo di Roma. Primato e Sinodalità nei Dialoghi ecumenici e nelle risposte all'Enciclica Ut Unum Sint* (13 giugno 2024).

questa dichiarazione sul primato «va salutata come un segno di fiducia nell'opera dello Spirito Santo»²⁰. Ed è proprio la fiducia nello Spirito Santo che permette di cogliere con occhi di speranza la portata di intuizioni geniali come il modello ecclesologico poliedrico tematizzato in EG 236 che ben potrebbe rappresentare un modello per il futuro di una cristianità come diversità riconciliata²¹. Francesco ricorda che «la prospettiva divina non è mai quella della divisione e della separazione, ma la via di Dio porta a stringersi al Signore Gesù perché solo in comunione con lui ritroveremo la piena comunione in noi»²². E nella Pasqua 2025 la morte di Francesco è stata un evento vissuto con profonda commozione e sincero affetto dalla cristianità intera di tutte le Chiese, con un tributo colmo di gratitudine a quel papa che nello stile del “silenzio della speranza”, con la sua stessa vita ha rappresentato un abbraccio di dialogo, misericordia e comunione che ha raggiunto tutte le periferie umane e tutte le Chiese, delineando per il cammino ecumenico un vivido orizzonte di speranza.

Conclusione

In questa riflessione sul “silenzio della speranza” e sul cammino ecumenico sono venuti in luce alcuni tratti fondamentali della speranza. La speranza è tempo dell'attesa, tempo del cammino, tempo della fedeltà al presente che viene letto con occhi capaci di mettere in luce il positivo, il seme che non si vede ma che porterà frutto. La speranza è il tempo della fede in Cristo anche nell'oscurità e nel silenzio, è il tempo della condivisione concreta e di un ecumenismo di popolo. La speranza è il tempo del dialogo. E il Vaticano II non solo invita al dialogo, ma dà un'anima e uno stile al dialogo: non si tratta di un confronto tra tesi e tradizioni diverse, ma di una relazione tra persone che guarda alla Trinità come a un modello di ascolto profondo, accoglienza e dono. Nel tempo della speranza si può riscoprire nel dialogo ecumenico questo stile fatto di accogliere e ridonare, mettersi dal punto di vista dell'altro per comprenderne le ragioni e cercare insieme una luce nel cammino. Un dialogo che potrebbe rinascere dall'essere innestati in Cristo:

²⁰ M. Florio, *Il vescovo di Roma*, in *Il Nuovo Amico* (30 giugno 2024), 11.

²¹ Cf. Francesco, Esortazione Apostolica *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 novembre 2013), n. 236, in AAS 105 6 dicembre 2013 n. 12, 1015.

²² Francesco, Discorso ai Partecipanti all'Assemblea dei Primate della Comunione Anglicana (2 maggio 2024).

In-Christus-Sein, Essere-in-Cristo è la nuova modalità di esistenza in cui il credente colloca se stesso e il suo mondo. Il rapporto di Gesù col Padre, l'Ethos trinitario, diventa ethos dell'attuazione dell'identità cristiana e del mondo in quanto tale. L'essere-in-Cristo non si limita ad aprire a noi l'ingresso nella vita trinitaria, ma apre in mezzo a noi nei diversi ambiti dell'esistenza nel mondo, le relazioni trinitarie²³.

Questo stile trinitario nel dialogo ci sembra essere un segno di speranza non solo per l'ecumenismo, ma per la Chiesa e per l'umanità. Gli occhi di speranza nascono dal contemplare in Cristo e nel Dio trinitario ciò che accade e ciò che ci lega tutti, dato che «nella redenzione di Cristo è possibile contemplare in speranza il legame di solidarietà tra gli esseri uomini e tutte le altre creature»²⁴. Il tempo della speranza è il tempo dell'ascolto degli interrogativi e delle difficoltà del presente, è una modalità di credere e di agire, è capacità di guardare con occhi nuovi per incidere in modo costruttivo nel proprio tempo. Perché il tempo della speranza è anche il tempo della contemplazione e dell'apertura al futuro di Dio.

Sperare e agire con il creato significa allora vivere una fede incarnata, che sa entrare nella carne sofferente e speranzosa della gente, condividendo l'attesa della risurrezione corporea a cui i credenti sono predestinati in Cristo Signore. In Gesù, il Figlio eterno nella carne umana, *siamo realmente figli del Padre*. Mediante la fede e il battesimo inizia per il credente la vita secondo lo Spirito (cfr Rm 8,), *una vita santa, un'esistenza da figli del Padre*, come Gesù... Una vita che diventa canto d'amore per Dio, per l'umanità, con e per il creato, e che trova la sua pienezza nella santità²⁵.

Ed è ancora Francesco che negli ultimi giorni di vita ci lascia come un testamento le parole dell'Omelia della Veglia Pasquale 2025 che sembrano indicare, attraverso la metafora della notte, alcuni

²³ K. Hemmerle, *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*, in *Ausgewählten Schriften II* (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 154.

²⁴ Francesco, Messaggio per la Giornata mondiale di preghiera per la cura del creato del 1° settembre 2024, *Spera e agisci con il creato* (27 giugno 2024) n. 4, in *L'Osservatore Romano* 164/145 (27 giugno 2024), 2.

²⁵ Francesco, Messaggio per la Giornata mondiale di preghiera per la cura del creato del 1° settembre 2024, *Spera e agisci con il creato* (27 giugno 2024) n. 9, in *L'Osservatore Romano* 164/145 (27 giugno 2024), 3.

elementi in consonanza con quello che abbiamo chiamato “il silenzio della speranza”

la Risurrezione è simile a piccoli germogli di luce che si fanno strada a poco a poco, senza fare rumore, talvolta ancora minacciati dalla notte e dall'incredulità. Questo “stile” di Dio ci libera da una religiosità astratta [...] Non possiamo celebrare la Pasqua senza continuare a fare i conti con le notti che portiamo nel cuore e con le ombre di morte che spesso si addensano sul mondo. Cristo ha vinto il peccato e ha distrutto la morte ma, nella nostra storia terrena, la potenza della sua Risurrezione si sta ancora compiendo. E questo compimento, come un piccolo germoglio di luce, è affidato a noi, perché lo custodiamo e lo facciamo crescere. Fratelli e sorelle, questa è la chiamata che, soprattutto nell'anno giubilare, dobbiamo sentire forte dentro di noi: *facciamo germogliare la speranza della Pasqua* nella nostra vita e nel mondo!²⁶

Ancora oggi nel cammino ecumenico, con questo stile e con la certezza che la carità tutto spera e che Cristo può far nuove tutte le cose, si può elevare un nuovo Magnificat come canto di speranza.

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²⁶ Francesco, Omelia per la Veglia Pasquale (19 aprile 2025), in *L'Osservatore Romano* 165/91 (21 aprile 2025), 5.

DIE KONSTITUIERUNG DER BÖHMISCH-MÄHRISCHEN KAPUZINERPROVINZ (1599–1673)*

MAREK BRČÁK

ABSTRACT

The Formation of Bohemian-Moravian Capuchin Province, 1599–1673

This study investigates the context of establishment of Bohemian-Moravian Capuchin province in 1673. It separated from the previously existing Bohemian-Austrian province, which thus split in two: a Bohemian-Moravian province with a seat in Prague and an Austrian province with a centre in Vienna. In the process of dividing the Bohemian-Austrian province, which was one of the largest ones worldwide in terms of both convents (38) and friars living in them (808), the criterion of land units had in the end prevailed. The division of the province was achieved only after many years of effort because it had to overcome a sustained reluctance of the order's headquarters in Rome. Like in the case of other Central European provinces, the headquarters were opposed to the formation of new provinces because the Italian Capuchins did not want to lose the decisive majority they had since the order's foundation. Between their arrival in 1599 and the year 1673, the Capuchins had founded in the Czech Lands 21 monasteries, in which there lived 401 friars. This text analyses the main reasons for Capuchin's success in this region, which was achieved despite the catastrophic impact of the Thirty Years' War. It turns out that the support they had received from the ruling Habsburgs was of crucial importance. The establishment of the order in this region required efforts on several fronts: aside from attracting new members, it was also necessary to adjust the monastic life to the religious needs and climatic conditions in the Czech Lands.

Keywords

Capuchins; Monastic history; Czech Lands; 17th century

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Am 28. 4. 1673 wurde nach Wien das Provinzkapitel der böhmisch-österreichischen Kapuzinerprovinz¹ einberufen, auf dem man diese mitteleuropäische Provinz in zwei voneinander unabhängige Einheiten teilte: in die böhmisch-mährische und die österreichische Provinz. Den feierlichen Akt der Teilung vollzog der Generalminister des Kapuzinerordens Stefano Chiaramonti da Cesena höchstpersönlich,² nachdem er in den vorangegangenen Monaten eine Generalvisitation der Kapuzinerkonvente in Ober- und Niederösterreich absolviert hatte.

Zur selben Zeit fand auch eine Generalvisitation der Kapuzinerordenshäuser in den böhmischen Ländern statt, die aus zeitlichen Gründen von Angelus Borgomanero³ vorgenommen wurde, dem Bevollmächtigten des Generalministers. Zweck dieser Visitation war es festzustellen, ob faktische Hindernisse einer Teilung der

von seinen in tschechischer Sprache verfassten Texten über die Niederlassung der Kapuziner in den böhmischen Ländern im 17. Jahrhundert aus. Sie konzentriert sich auf die wichtigsten Thesen, die sich aus dieser Forschung ergeben (z. B. die Beziehungen des Ordens zum habsburgischen Königshaus, die Anpassung der Aktivitäten der Kapuziner an die tschechische Umgebung, und zwar nicht nur an die religiöse, sondern auch an die klimatischen Bedingungen usw.), deren Überschneidung in Mitteleuropa sich zu einem Vergleich anbietet, weshalb sie hier auch einem deutschsprachigen Publikum vorgestellt seien.

¹ Zur Geschichte der böhmisch-mährischen Kapuzinerprovinz näher: Vavřinec Rabas, *Řád kapucínský a jeho působení v Čechách v 17. století* (Prag: Vydavatelstvo Časopisu katolického duchovenstva, 1937); Marek Brčák u. Jiří Wolf, edd., *Pax et Bonum, Kapucíni v Čechách a na Moravě v raném novověku* (Prag: Scriptorium, 2020); Marek Brčák, *Působení kapucínského řádu v Čechách a na Moravě 1599–1783* (Prag: Karolinum, 2022). Von den Arbeiten, die die Geschichte des Kapuzinerordens allgemein betreffen, sei wenigstens angeführt: Hillard von Thiessen, *Die Kapuziner zwischen Konfessionalisierung und Alltagskultur. Vergleichende Fallstudie am Beispiel Freiburgs und Hildesheims 1599–1750* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2002).

² Stephanus Chiaramonti, geboren 1605 in Cesena, Einkleidung 1625, Gelübde 1626, war Mitglied der Provinz Bologna. Nach der Priesterweihe in der Mutterprovinz wirkte er zunächst als Prediger und Lektor der Theologie. In den Jahren 1658–1661, 1664–1667 und 1670–1671 hatte er hier das Amt des Provinzministers inne. In den 60er Jahren übte er auch das Amt des Generalvisitors aus, 1671 wurde er zum Generalminister gewählt, dieses Amt hatte er bis 1678 inne. Er starb am 3. 8. 1682 in Bologna. *Lexicon Capuccinum. Promptuarium historico-bibliographicum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum (1525–1950)* (Roma: Bibliotheca Collegii Internationalis S. Laurentii Brundusini, 1951), 1631–1632.

³ Angelus von Borgomanero (den Nachnamen kennen wir nicht) war Mitglied der römischen Provinz, im Orden wirkte er vor allem als Postulator (1676–1691), d. h. als derjenige, der die Unterlagen für die Selig- und Heiligsprechung der einzelnen Kapuzinermönche sammelte. Er starb 1693. *Lexicon*, 72.

Provinz im Wege stünden, doch konnte nichts dergleichen festgestellt werden.⁴

Allerdings musste noch ein langer Weg zurückgelegt werden, ehe es zur Teilung der böhmisch-österreichischen Provinz kam. Im Jahre 1600, also ein Jahr nach der Ankunft der Kapuziner in Prag,⁵ wurde zunächst ein böhmisch-österreichisch-steirisches Generalkommissariat errichtet,⁶ das die ersten drei Ordensgemeinschaften umfasste, die sich in Prag, Wien und Graz niedergelassen hatten. 1608 trennten sich die Häuser in der Steiermark und in Krain.⁷ Im Jahre 1618 wurde das Generalkommissariat zu einer vollwertigen selbstständigen Provinz erhoben, da es bereits genügend Mitglieder und Klöster umfasste. Konkret zählte es 202 Kapuziner, die in 13 Konventen tätig waren.⁸ Da auch in den darauffolgenden Jahren der Zuwachs an neuen Ordensmitgliedern nicht nachließ, gab es alsbald, und zwar bereits in den vierziger Jahren des 17. Jahrhunderts, erste Bemühungen um eine Teilung der böhmisch-österreichischen Provinz.⁹ Die aber waren lange Zeit erfolglos, obwohl die Provinz schon längst die beiden grundlegenden Bedingungen erfüllt hatte: nämlich eine genügende Anzahl von Ordensleuten¹⁰ und Klöstern¹¹ vorweisen zu können. Zudem war die

⁴ Kapucínská provinční knihovna Praha [Provinzbibliothek der Kapuziner Prag] (im Folgenden: KPK Praha), Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 394, *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provincie Bohemiae* V, S. 1003.

⁵ Zur Ankunft der Kapuziner in Prag eingehender František Tischer, 'Uvedení řádu kapucínů do Čech okolo roku 1600,' *Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk* 8 (1907): 1–55; Brčák, *Působení*, 116–132.

⁶ Das Generalkommissariat war die Organisationsform eines Verwaltungsverbandes, dessen man sich im Kapuzinerorden bediente und das man in Gebieten einrichtete, in denen keine selbstständige Provinz errichtet werden konnte, und zwar beispielsweise deshalb, weil es dort zu wenig Konvente und Ordensleute gab oder aus Gründen einer ungesicherten Formation in diesem Gebiet. Die im Kommissariat lebenden Brüder konnten sich im Gegensatz zur Provinz ihren Vorsteher nicht selber wählen. Der Generalkommissar wurde vom Generalminister bestimmt. *Lexicon*, 431–432.

⁷ Brčák, *Působení*, 141–142.

⁸ Ders, 'Působení kapucínského řádu v českých zemích během stavovského povstání (1618–1620),' *Folia Historica Bohemica* 39/2 (2024): 245–270.

⁹ Národní archiv Praha [Nationalarchiv Prag] (im Folgenden: NA), Kapucíni – provincialát a konventy, Praha [Kapuziner – Provinzialat und Konvente] (im Folgenden: ŘK), Akten, Inv. Nr. 9, Kart. 6, Bericht über die erfolgte Visitation der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz (16. 7. 1646), die der Generalminister Inocenc Marcinno aus Caltagirone (†1655) vornahm.

¹⁰ Trotz der Kriegsereignisse, wiederholter Pestepidemien und Hungersnöten im Dreißigjährigen Krieg stieg die Zahl der Mitglieder der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz im Verlaufe des 17. Jahrhunderts ständig an. Siehe Anhang, Diagramm Nr. 1.

¹¹ Im Jahr 1640 zählte die böhmisch-mährische Provinz 25 Klöster, 1650 waren es 31, 1661 33 und 1672 sogar bereits 38 Ordenshäuser. NA, ŘK, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 98,

Verwaltung eines so weitreichenden Komplexes sehr problematisch. Das am entferntesten gelegene Ordenshaus in Breslau war von den Konventen in Oberösterreich etwa 500 km Luftlinie entfernt – eine Entfernung, die bei den damaligen Verkehrsmöglichkeiten nicht einfach zu überwinden war. Darüber hinaus hatten die Kapuzinerordensleute ihren Ordensregeln gemäß nur zu Fuß zu reisen. Die großen Entfernungen zwischen den einzelnen Konventen, die sich in Böhmen, Mähren, Schlesien, in Ober- und Niederösterreich befanden, erschwerten auch eine Einberufung der Provinzkapitel, die Verlegung von Ordensleuten im Rahmen der einzelnen Klöster und deren Visitation.

Umstritten war freilich die Frage einer konkreten Teilung der Provinz. Auf dem Provinzkapitel, das am 28. 8. 1671 in Wien tagte, wurden drei konkrete Vorschläge erarbeitet, wie dieser Akt zu vollziehen sei. Der erste Vorschlag respektierte die Grenzen des Königreichs Böhmen und schlug demzufolge vor, die Ordenshäuser in den böhmischen Ländern zu einer und die Klöster in Ober- und Niederösterreich zu einer anderen Provinz zusammenzuschließen. Der zweite Vorschlag rechnete mit einer Zusammenlegung der Konvente in Böhmen und Oberösterreich zu einer Provinz, während die Ordenshäuser in Niederösterreich, Mähren und in Schlesien die andere Provinz bilden sollten. Der dritte Vorschlag sah die Vereinigung der Klöster in Böhmen und Schlesien zu einer gemeinsamen Provinz vor und die Konvente in Mähren und den beiden österreichischen Ländern zu einer gemeinsamen anderen.¹²

Am Ende wurde von dem Generalminister der erste Vorschlag gewählt, unter anderem auch deshalb, weil er die Teilung der Konvente und der darin lebenden Ordensleute auf gerechteste Weise ermöglichte. Im Jahre 1673 zählte die böhmisch-österreichische Provinz insgesamt 808 Mitglieder in 38 Ordenshäusern, auf die böhmisch-mährische Provinz fielen bei ihrer Teilung 21 Klöster: 11 in Böhmen, 7 in Mähren und 3 in Schlesien, in denen 401 Kapuziner wirkten, davon 223 Priester, 59 Geistliche und 119 Laien.¹³ Aus der erhaltenen Korrespondenz

Protocollum sive Liber provinciae, fol. 82r–v, 100v, 115v–116r, 133r–134r, 158r–v.

¹² *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae V*, S. 757–758.

¹³ Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien, Sammlung von Handschriften und alten Drucken, sign. 306596-B, *Decretum divisionis totius Provinciae Boemo-Austriacae FF Capucinatorum in duas, scilicet Boemicam et Austriacam, factae auctoritate Pontificia, a Reverendissimo Patre Stephano a Cesena, Ministro Generali, in Comitii Provincialibus, habitis in loco nostro Viennae intra urbem, anno Domini 1673, die 28. Aprilis,*

des Prager Erzbischofs Matthäus Ferdinand Sobek von Bielenberg (1618–1675), der sich ebenfalls zur Teilung der Provinz äußerte, erfahren wir, dass die Konvente ursprünglich genau zu gleichen Teilen aufgeteilt werden sollten. 19 Klöster sollten der böhmisch-mährischen und 19 der österreichischen Provinz zufallen, und nicht 21 zu 17, wie es dann schließlich auch erfolgte. Die Konvente in Znaim (Znojmo) und Nikolsburg (Mikulov) sollten, obgleich auf mährischem Gebiet befindlich, an die österreichische Provinz fallen, weil sie bis 1673 Teil der niederösterreichischen und nicht der mährischen Kustodie waren. Darüber hinaus befand sich ein großer Teil ihres Bettelbezirks auf dem Gebiet Niederösterreichs.¹⁴

Dieser Lösung stimmte aber der Prager Erzbischof nicht zu, der in dieser Sache mit Erfolg intervenieren konnte.¹⁵ Aus den soeben gemachten Angaben ergibt sich unter anderem, dass die Kapuziner in den 1670er Jahren nach der Societas Jesu, die jene zahlenmäßig um mehr als das Doppelte übertraf, der zweitverbreitetste Orden bei uns war,¹⁶ dicht gefolgt von den Franziskaner-Observanten.¹⁷

et typis mandatum in eadem Civitate, Vieniae 1673 fol. 4r–4v; *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae* V, S. 1013–1014.

¹⁴ NA, ŘK, Akten, Inv. Nr. 614, Kart. 456, sign. B4–B5; Moravský zemský archiv Brno [Mährisches Landesarchiv Brünn] (im Folgenden: MZA), E 38 Kapucini Znojmo [Kapuziner Znaim], Inv. Nr. 1, *Archivum Patrum Capucinatorum Conventus Znoymensis*, Abteilungen: *Eleemosyna* und *Obsequia* (M, N, unpag.); MZA, G 140 Rodinný archiv Ditrichštejnů [Familienarchiv Dietrichstein], Inv. Nr. 605, *Monumenta Familiae Niclasburgensis Ordinis Minorum S. P. Franc. Capucinatorum in ordinem congesta anno 1769*, Abteilungen: *Eleemosyna* et *Loca mendicationis* a *Obsequia* (P, X, unpag.).

¹⁵ Zemský archiv Opava, pobočka Olomouc [Landesarchiv Troppau, Niederlassung Olmütz], Arcibiskupství Olomouc [Erzbistum Olmütz], Inv. Nr. 528, Kart. 83, Brief M. F. Sobeks von Bilenberg an den Olmützer Bischof Karl von Lichtenstein vom 22. 3. 1671; Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Fondo Favoriti-Casoni, tom. XXXV, Brief F. M. Sobeks von Bilenberg an Kardinal Agostino Favoriti (1624–1682), den damaligen Privatsekretär von Papst Clemens, vom 4. 4. 1671 in Prag. Diesem bedeutenden Amtsträger der römischen Kurie schrieb der Prager Erzbischof deshalb, weil der Teilungsprozess der Provinz außer von den Generalvorstehern der Kapuziner auch vom Heiligen Vater selbst genehmigt werden musste, was dieser mit der Bulle vom 22. 3. 1673 auch tat. *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae* V, S. 956–958.

¹⁶ Die Jesuiten waren zu jener Zeit die überhaupt weitverbreitetste Ordensgemeinschaft in den böhmischen Ländern; ihre böhmische Provinz zählte 1673 insgesamt 43 Ordenshäuser (1 Professhaus, 25 Kollegien, 17 Residenzen), in denen 1030 Mitglieder tätig waren. MZA, G 12 Cerroniho sbírka II [J. P. Cerronis Handschriften-Sammlung II.], Inv. Nr. 80, fol. 140r–156v, *Catalogus brevis SJ. Bohemia 1673/1674*.

¹⁷ Die böhmische Provinz der Franziskaner-Observanten zählte 1658 332 Ordensleute, die in 15 Konventen lebten. Bis 1673 gelang den Franziskaner-Observanten die Gründung von noch weiteren 5 neuen Ordenshäusern. Die Ausbreitung dieses Ordens in den böhmischen Ländern zu jener Zeit war also ähnlich wie bei den Kapuzinern.

Die Ordenszentrale in Rom wehrte sich lange gegen eine Teilung der Provinz insbesondere deshalb, weil sich dadurch die Anzahl der sowieso schon zahlreichen nichtitalienischen Provinzen erhöhte, womit automatisch auch die Zahl der nichtitalienischen Wähler auf dem Generalkapitel stiege. Es bestand also die Gefahr, dass die italienischen Kapuziner die entscheidende Mehrheit im Orden, die sie seit seiner Gründung besaßen, verlieren würden. Einen ähnlichen Widerstand der Ordensleitung erfuhren auch andere Provinzen nördlich der Alpen, wie etwa die tirolisch-bayrische oder die rheinische Provinz, als sie nach ihrer Teilung strebten.¹⁸ Zwar wurde die böhmisch-österreichische Provinz nach langen Verhandlungen 1673 geteilt,¹⁹ doch erlangten die neu entstandenen Provinzen auf dem Generalkapitel in Rom vorerst nur die Hälfte der ihr laut Ordensverfassungen zustehenden Vertretungen. Das Ordenszentrum, das sich gegen eine Teilung der nichtitalienischen Provinzen wehrte, konkret der Generalminister Inocent Marcinno von Caltagirone,²⁰ erwirkte 1643 bei Papst Urban VIII. ein Breve, um die Tätigkeit des Ordens außerhalb Italiens weiter entfalten zu können. Auf Grundlage dieses Breves konnte es nämlich im Notfall zu einer Teilung der großen Provinzen nördlich der Alpen kommen, wobei die neu entstehenden Provinzen sich in die bisherige Vertretung auf dem Generalkapitel teilen sollten. Das widersprach jedoch den Ordenskonstitutionen. Ihnen zufolge wurde nämlich jede Provinz auf dem Generalkapitel durch ihren Provinzminister und entsprechend der Zahl ihrer Mitglieder durch bis zu zwei römische Kustodien vertreten, so dass die beiden neuen außeritalienischen Provinzen X und Y, die durch Teilung der ursprünglichen Provinz XY entstanden waren, das Recht besaßen, auf dem Generalkapitel durch insgesamt

Martin Elbel, *Bohemia Franciscana. Františkánský řád a jeho působení v českých zemích 17. a 18. století* (Olmütz: Palacký-Universität Olmütz, 2001), 122–123.

¹⁸ Angelikus Eberl, *Geschichte der Bayrischen Kapuziner-Ordensprovinz (1593–1902)* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1902), 188; Agapit Hohenegger u. Petr Zieler, *Geschichte der Tirolischen Kapuziner-Ordensprovinz (1593–1893)*, Bd. I (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagnerschen k.k. Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1913), 435; Arsenius Jacobs, *Die Rheinischen Kapuziner 1611–1725. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der katholischen Reform* (Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1933), 26.

¹⁹ Zur langfristigen Bemühung der böhmisch-österreichischen Provinz um ihre Teilung eingehender: Brčák, *Působení*, 187–213.

²⁰ Innocentius a Caltagirone (mit Nachnamen Marcinno), geboren 1589, Einkleidung 1607, war Mitglied der syrakusischen Provinz, in der er als Novizenmeister, Lektor der Theologie, Provinzdefinitor und -meister tätig war (1635–1638). Von 1644 bis 1650 hatte er das Amt des Generalministers inne. Er starb am 16. 11. 1655. *Lexicon*, 820.

sechs Stimmen vertreten zu sein. Dennoch wurden ihre Interessen dem erwähnten Breve zufolge lediglich durch drei Wähler verteidigt, und zwar durch ihre Provinzminister und einen römischen Kustos, der wechselweise von einer der neuentstandenen Provinzen bestimmt wurde.²¹

Damit wollten sich sowohl die böhmisch-mährische als auch die österreichische Provinz wie auch weitere deutsche Provinzen (beispielsweise die rheinische, westfälische, bayrische oder tirolische) nicht abfinden und strebten mit Unterstützung Kaiser Leopolds I. ihre Gleichstellung an.²² Unablässig wandten sie sich an die Ordenszentrale und die päpstliche Kurie in Rom,²³ bis sie 1679 endlich ihr Ziel erreichten. Am 10. 1. 1679 erließ Innozenz XI. ein Breve, mit dem er anordnete, sämtlichen Kapuzinerprovinzen das Stimmrecht zu verleihen, das ihnen nach den Ordenskonstitutionen zustand.²⁴

Die Ordenszentrale der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz wurde beim Konvent in Prag-Hradschin errichtet, wo sie sich bis heute befindet – ausgenommen selbstverständlich jene Zeit der kommunistischen Herrschaft, da die Tätigkeit des Ordens gewaltsam unterdrückt war. Die böhmisch-mährische Provinz wurde aus organisatorischen Gründen in drei Kustodien aufgeteilt: in die böhmische,²⁵ die mährische²⁶

²¹ Michael [Wickart] a Tugio, ed., *Bullarium Ordinis FF. Minorum S. P. Francisci Capucinatorum, sev Collectio bullarum, brevium, decretorum, rescriptorum oraculorum etc, quae a Sede Apostolica pro Ordine Capucino emanarunt IV.* (Roma: Joannis Zempel, 1746), 7–8.

²² Lázaro Iriarte, *Der Franziskusorden. Handbuch der franziskanischen Ordensgeschichte* (Altötting: Verlag der Bayerischen Kapuziner, 1984), 170.

²³ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Wien, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Diplomatie und Außenpolitik vor 1848, Österreichische Geheime Staatsregistratur, Inv. Nr. 12-6, Quellen zur Teilung der böhmisch-österreichischen Provinz (1671–1679); NA, RK, Akten, Inv. Nr. 8, Kart. 6, sign. Fasc. L19, Dokumente bezüglich der Gleichstellung der böhmisch-mährischen und der österreichischen Provinz unter dem Gesichtspunkt ihrer Vertretung auf dem Generalkapitel (1671–1679).

²⁴ [Wickart], *Bullarium Ordinis*, 218–220.

²⁵ Zur böhmischen Kustodie mit Zentrum in Prag-Hradschin gehörten folgende Konvente: Prag-Hradschin (Praha-Hradčany 47), Prag-Neustadt (Praha-Nové Město 32), Böhmisches-Budweis (České Budějovice 23), Schüttenhofen (Sušice 18), Leitmeritz (Litoměřice 17), Falkenau (Sokolov 17), Raudnitz a. d. Elbe (Roudnice nad Labem 16), Chrudim (16), Bischofteinitz (Horšovský Týn 14), Kolin (Kolín 13) und Brüx (Most 11). Die Zahlen in Klammern bezeichnen die Anzahl der in den einzelnen Ordenshäusern lebenden Brüder. Anhand dieser Angaben kann man sich auch eine gewisse Vorstellung von Größe und Bedeutung der einzelnen Klöster machen.

²⁶ Zur mährischen Kustodie mit dem damaligen Zentrum in Olmütz gehörten die Konvente: Brünn (Brno 27), Olmütz (Olomouc 25), Nikolsburg (Mikulov 18), Znaim (Znojmo 18), Iglau (Jihlava 16), Wischau (Vyškov 15) und das Hospiz in Fulnek (4).

und die schlesische.²⁷ Zum ersten Provinzminister der böhmisch-mährischen Kapuzinerprovinz wurde Martin Geyroar aus Freiberg in Mähren (Příbor) gewählt.²⁸ Die Ordenslehranstalt für Philosophie befand sich bei den Konventen in Olmütz (Olomouc) und Neiße (Nysa). Theologie wurde in den Prager Ordenshäusern auf dem Hradschin (Hradčany) und in der Prager Neustadt (Nové město) unterrichtet. Das Kleriker-Noviziat fungierte beim Konvent in Brüx, und das Laien-Noviziat wurde beim Konvent in Neiße etabliert.²⁹

Die Teilung der böhmisch-österreichischen Provinz hatte auch zur Folge, dass in der neu errichteten böhmisch-mährischen Provinz die in den böhmischen Ländern geborenen Ordensleute die Mehrheit ausmachten, die hier jetzt zu 66 % vertreten waren. Früher, in der böhmisch-österreichischen Provinz, waren sie lediglich in der Minderheit, obwohl ihr prozentualer Anteil im Laufe des Bestehens dieser Provinz anstieg.³⁰ Demgegenüber sind in der neuen Provinz die auf dem Gebiet des heutigen Deutschland, vor allem in Bayern und Oberfranken (20 %), sowie in Österreich (11 %) geborenen Ordensleute, die seit der zweiten Hälfte der 1620er Jahre in der böhmisch-österreichischen Provinz die Mehrheit stellten, jetzt in der Minderheit.³¹

Unter den in den böhmischen und österreichischen Ländern von 1599 an bis zum Beginn der 1620er Jahre tätigen Kapuzinern waren die auf der Apenninenhalbinsel geborenen Ordensleute anfangs in der

²⁷ Die schlesische Kustodie mit Sitz in Neiße (Nysa) verwaltete die Konvente in: Neiße (27), Neustadt (Prudnik 17) und das Hospiz in Breslau (Wrocław 10).

²⁸ Martinus Freybergensis (mit eigentlichem Namen Georg Ignatz Geyroar), Einkleidung 15. 8. 1635, war langjähriger Guardian und Provinzdefinitior. Nach der Teilung der Provinz 1673 wurde er Mitglied der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz und wurde zum ersten Provinzminister gewählt (1673–1674). Im Jahre 1677 wählte man ihn erneut zum Provinzminister, der dieses Amt bis zu seinem Tode bekleidete, der ihn am 28. 8. 1678 in Innsbruck auf der Rückreise vom Generalkapitel nach Prag ereilte. NA, RK, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 36, *Catalogus Patrum et Fratrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Boëmiae*, S. 9; KPK Praha, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 395, *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae* VI., S. 803–807 (elogium); Pacifik Matějka, 'Seznamy představených kapucinských klášterů podřízených provincialátu v Praze (1599–2005),' *Paginae historiae* 13 (2005): 176, 208–209; Ders., 'Seznam provinciálů, definitorů a ostatních představených správních jednotek kapucinského Řádu s historickým sídlem v Praze (a Vídní),' *Paginae historiae* 14 (2006): 282–285.

²⁹ Informationen, die die Anordnung der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz im Jahre 1673 näher beschreiben, sind den *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae* V., S. 1013–1015 entnommen.

³⁰ Siehe Anhang, Diagramm Nr. 2–4.

³¹ Siehe Anhang, Diagramm Nr. 5.

Mehrheit.⁵² In das böhmisch-österreichische Generalkommissariat wurden italienische Kapuziner als gastierende Ordensleute zumeist nur für eine gewisse Zeitspanne entsandt; nach Erfüllung ihrer Aufgaben kehrten sie – in der überwiegenden Mehrzahl waren sie Mitglieder der Provinz Venedig – in ihre Mutterprovinzen zurück. So kamen aus Italien beispielsweise Ordensprediger⁵³ und Baumeister (sog. *fabricatores*), Handwerker und Künstler⁵⁴ nach Böhmen, denen der Bau und die Ausstattung neuer Kapuzinerkirchen und -klöster oblag. Die meisten angereisten Italiener wurden im Kommissariat dann mit führenden Ämtern betraut, von der Funktion des Generalkommissars bis hin zu den einzelnen Konventsguardianen. Die in unserer Region auftretenden Kapuziner besaßen anfangs nämlich noch keine ausreichenden Erfahrungen. Die „versierten“ und gelehrten italienischen Kapuziner kümmerten sich auch um den hiesigen Nachwuchs, hatten also das Amt von Novizenmeistern und Lektoren der Theologie und Philosophie inne.⁵⁵

Der prozentuale Anteil der aus den böhmischen Ländern stammenden Mitglieder wuchs auch in den Jahren darauf; 1693 erreichte er bereits 78 %, ⁵⁶ weshalb seit Beginn der Konstituierung der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz auch Forderungen nach Gleichstellung des Tschechischen mit der deutschen Sprache,⁵⁷ die neben Latein die bis dato einzige Amtssprache der Provinz war, laut wurden.

⁵² Siehe Anhang, Diagramm Nr. 2.

⁵³ Die italienischen *concionatores* wurden zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts bei der Kapuzinerkirche Maria Königin der Engel in Prag-Hradschin und in Wien bei der Peterskirche eingesetzt. KPK Praha, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 390, Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provincie Bohemiae I., S. 100–101, 112–113; 120–121, 138–139, 156–157, 202–205, 218–220, 240.

⁵⁴ Der bekannteste von ihnen war Paolo Piazza, s. Alice Bartůšková, *Paolo Piazza pinxit. Kapucínský bratr malířem na sklonku rudolfínské doby* (Prag: Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät der Karlsuniversität, 2017).

⁵⁵ Brčák, *Působení*, 116–150.

⁵⁶ Siehe Anhang, Diagramm Nr. 6.

⁵⁷ Die Tatsache, dass ein Kapuziner in den böhmischen Ländern geboren war, bedeutete noch nicht automatisch, dass seine Muttersprache auch tschechisch war; denn ein Großteil Böhmens und Mährens war sprachlich überwiegend deutsch (insbesondere die Grenzgebiete und großen Königsstädte, einschließlich Prags). Auch die aus Schlesien stammenden Kapuziner sprachen überwiegend deutsch und in geringerem Maße polnisch (das Polnische war deutlicher auf dem Lande vertreten, und zwar vor allem in der Umgebung von Breslau und Neiße). Unberücksichtigt bleiben die Nebenländer Glatz und beide Lausitzen (unter 0,5 %), wo nur sehr wenige Kapuziner-Ordensleute geboren wurden, die Mitglieder der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz wurden. Eduard Maur, ed., *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí* (Prag: Mladá fronta, 1995), 113–114.

Die tschechischsprachigen Brüder wünschten, dass die Korrespondenz mit Klöstern, in denen es eine tschechischsprachige Gemeinschaft gab, nicht nur in Deutsch, sondern auch in Tschechisch geführt werde. Ferner wünschten sie, dass man in diesen Konventen bei der Lesung in den Chören und im Refektorium neben Deutsch auch das Tschechische verwende. Als sich die ersten Provinzminister der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz Martin Geyroar aus Freiberg in Mähren, Markvard aus Halberstadt³⁸ und Andreas aus Brünn³⁹ gegen ihren Antrag stellten, zögerten die Brüder nicht, sich 1685 direkt an die Ordenszentrale nach Rom zu wenden. Der damalige Generalminister Karl Maria Mandiroli aus Macerato⁴⁰ wies sie jedoch ab.⁴¹ Die tschechischsprachigen Brüder indes gaben nicht auf. Für die Unterstützung ihrer Ziele nutzten sie an der Wende von 1686/1687 auch die Generalvisitation der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz, die vom Generalvikar Vincentius aus Mercatello sul Metauro vorgenommen wurde und in deren Verlauf sie auf die Erfüllung ihrer sprachlichen Forderungen drängten. Letzterer wies sie zwar nicht ab und stimmte ihren Argumenten auch teilweise zu, doch die Entscheidung darüber beließ er in den Händen des Provinzministers Andreas aus Brünn, der nach Beratung mit seinen Definitoren seine Meinung nicht änderte.⁴²

Die Entstehung einer selbstständigen böhmisch-mährischen Provinz wurde nicht nur dank einer ausreichenden personellen Sicherung

³⁸ Marquardus Halberstadiensis (seinen Nachnamen kennen wir nicht), Einkleidung 29. 9. 1649 in Gmunden, wirkte im Orden als Guardian, Lektor, Provinzdefinitor und Provinzminister der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz (1674–1677, 1682–1684). Er starb am 2. 11. 1697. *Catalogus Patrum et Fratrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Boëmiae*, S. 13; Matějka, 'Seznamy,' 147, 164, 229, 246, 248, 250; Ders, 'Seznam,' 283–288.

³⁹ Andreas Brunensis (seinen Nachnamen kennen wir nicht), Einkleidung 27. 2. 1654, war nach der Priesterweihe als Lektor, Guardian, Provinzdefinitor und Provinzminister (1679–1682, 1684–1687, 1690–1693) tätig. Er starb am 15. 12. 1694 in Brünn. *Catalogus Patrum et Fratrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Boëmiae*, S. 13; Matějka, 'Seznamy,' 152; Ders, 'Seznam,' 285–288.

⁴⁰ Carolus Maria a Macerata (mit Nachnamen Mandiroli) war Mitglied der Provinz Pisa, im Orden war er zunächst als Lektor der Theologie und als Provinzdefinitor tätig. Danach übte er das Amt des Generaldefinitors aus (1671–1685). Im Anschluss daran hatte er die Funktion des Generalministers inne (1685–1691). Er starb am 15. 7. 1697 in Macerata. *Lexicon*, 351.

⁴¹ KPK Praha, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 397, *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae* VIII., S. 535–537.

⁴² NA, ŘK, Akten, Inv. Nr. 9, Kart. 6, Brief von Vincenc von Mercatello sul Metauro an den Generalminister Carolus Maria a Macerata, verfasst am 14. 11. 1686 in Wien. Seine Abschrift ist auch zu finden in KPK Praha, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 398, *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae* IX., S. 241–242; Rabas, *Řád kapucínský*, 73–74.

der Kapuzinerkonvente ermöglicht (siehe oben), sondern auch durch weitere Umstände. Einer der Hauptfaktoren, der zur Entfaltung des Kapuzinerordens in Böhmen und Mähren beitrug, war die große Unterstützung, die der Orden seitens des Herrscherhauses erhielt. Die Habsburger machten sich durch ihre Autorität und durch finanzielle Subventionen – waren sie doch oftmals direkt die Hauptstifter der kapuzinischen Ordenshäuser – um die Konventsgründungen in Brunn, Olmütz, Budweis (České Budějovice), Brüx (Most), Znaim (Znojmo), in der Prager Neustadt, in Schüttenhofen (Sušice) und Chrudim verdient. Gleichzeitig verhalfen sie dazu, die Kapuziner in Schlesien einzuführen, wo sie an der Errichtung der Klöster in Neiße und Breslau (Wrocław) beteiligt waren. Die Unterstützung der Habsburger war allerdings keine Selbstverständlichkeit, und die Kapuziner bekamen sie nur für ihre langjährigen und erfolgreichen Dienste für die Herrscherfamilie. Sie waren nämlich ihre Beichtväter, Diplomaten und Beamte, unter anderem waren sie auch als Geheimräte im Falle von Emerich Sinelli aus Komorn (Komárno) tätig,⁴³ ferner als Militärkaplane bei ihren Soldaten, und last but not least waren sie Hüter ihrer Familiengruft.⁴⁴

⁴³ Emericus Ungarus (eigentlich Johann Anton Sinelli), geboren am 29. 6. 1622 in Komorn, Einkleidung 4. 10. 1643 in Steyer, Gelübde 1644 in Gmunden, Priesterweihe 1649 in Passau. Sein Leben ist mit Wien verbunden, wo er lange Zeit das Predigeramt in der Schottenkirche innehatte (1659–1680) und Guardian bzw. Vikar bei beiden Wiener Konventen war. Im Jahre 1673 wurde er Mitglied der österreichischen Provinz, deren Provinzdefinitor er war (1673–1681). 1681 nahm er beim zweiten Mal das Angebot an, Wiener Bischof zu werden (1681–1685), und war der erste Kapuziner nördlich der Alpen, der die Bischofsweihe empfing. Seit den 60er Jahren des 17. Jahrhunderts war sein Leben gleichfalls auf bedeutende Weise mit dem Wiener Hof verbunden, der Kaiser betraute ihn unter anderem auch mit zahlreichen diplomatischen Missionen. Im Juni 1682 wurde er Geheimrat Leopolds I. Er starb am 23. 2. 1685 in Wien. *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae VIII.*, S. 540–550 (elogium); Franz Loidl, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Wien* (München – Wien: Herold Verlag, 1983), 93–100.

⁴⁴ Anna Coreth, 'Das Eindringen der Kapuziner-Mystik in Österreich,' *Jahrbuch für mystische Theologie* 3 (1957) 9–95, hier 62–82; Elisabeth Kovács, 'Einflüsse geistlicher Ratgeber und höfischer Beichtväter auf das fürstliche Selbstverständnis, auf Machtbegriffe und politische Entscheidungen österreichischer Habsburger während des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts,' *Cristianesimo Nella Storia* 4 (1983) 79–102, hier 83, 100; Magdalena Hawlik-van de Water, *Der schöne Tod. Zeremonialstrukturen des Wiener Hofes bei Tod und Begräbnis zwischen 1640–1740* (Wien – Basel – Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 42–43; Dies, *Die Kapuzinergruft. Begräbnisstätte der Habsburger in Wien* (Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 1993), 24–28; Susanne Hehenberger, 'Armut und Vertrauen. Die Kapuziner am Neuen Markt in Wien als Hüter eines kaiserlichen Schatzes,' in *Gelobte Armut. Armutskonzepte der franziskanischen Ordensfamilie vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart*, edd. Heinz-Dieter Heimann – Angelica Hildebein – Bernd Schmies (Paderborn – München – Wien: Schöningh, 2012), 477–501; Andreas

Vergleicht man die Stifterpersönlichkeiten der einzelnen, in Böhmen und Mähren vor 1673 gegründeten Kapuzinerkonvente, dann stellt man fest, dass sich neben den Habsburgern auch andere Adelsgeschlechter um die erfolgreiche Implantierung der Kapuziner in den böhmischen Ländern sehr verdient gemacht haben, wie die Lobkowicz, Dietrichsteiner, Trauttmannsdorfer, Waldsteiner usw.⁴⁵ Dank der Unterstützung durch den Adel – Geistliche adliger Herkunft ausgenommen – konnten in dem untersuchten Zeitraum und dem Gebiet gleich 15 Kapuzinerkonvente gegründet werden.⁴⁶ Bei zwölf von ihnen war der adlige Mäzen der Hauptstifter und bei den restlichen drei der Nebentifter. Wenn man sich klarmacht, dass es in Böhmen und Mähren 1673 insgesamt 21 kapuzinische Ordenshäuser gab, dann erkennt man klar, wie entscheidend die Bedeutung des Adelskapitals für die Entwicklung des Kapuzinerordens war.⁴⁷

Wichtig war ebenfalls die Unterstützung, die die böhmischen und mährischen Bischöfe und Erzbischöfe dem Orden erwiesen, was fast zur Tradition wurde und auch die Bedeutung des Kapuzinerordens für die Rekatholisierung bezeugt. Beispielsweise hatte sich der Prager Erzbischof Zbyňko Berka von Duba 1599 um die Einführung des Kapuzinerordens in die böhmischen Länder verdient gemacht. Die Ankunft der Kapuziner hatte er zunächst mittels seines römischen Agenten Fenzonia bei der päpstlichen Kurie und der Ordenszentrale verhandelt. Ferner gewährte er den Kapuzinern in Prag erste materielle Sicherstellung, kaufte ein Grundstück für den Bau ihres ersten Konvents auf dem Hradšchin, erwarb von Kaiser Rudolf II. die Erlaubnis zum Bau

Sommer-Mathis, 'María Ana de Austria: spanische Infantin – Königin von Ungarn und Böhmen – römisch-deutsche Kaiserin (1606–1646),' in *Nur die Frau des Kaisers?, Kaiserinnen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, edd. Bettina Braun – Katrin Keller – Matthias Schnettger (Wien: Böhlau, 2016), 141–156, hier 144; Brčák, *Pūsobení*, 188–192, 339–340, 361–367, 393, 396.

⁴⁵ Die Kapuziner boten ihren adligen Wohltätern für ihre Unterstützung insbesondere die elementaren geistlichen Dienste, d. h. Beichte, Zugang zu Ablässen, Totenmesse (einschließlich Verwaltung des Familiengraves), Fürbitten und geistliche Aushilfe in Pfarren, die sich im Rahmen ihrer Herrschaften befanden, s. die Fallstudie zur Beziehung zwischen dem Geschlecht derer von Sachsen-Lauenburg und den Kapuzinern von Reichstadt (Zákupy). Marek Brčák – Jiří Wolf, 'Julius František Sasko-Lauenburský a Anna Marie Františka Toskánská jako dobrodinci kapucínského konventu v Zákupěch,' *Sborník archivních prací* 71, no. 2 (2021): 398–423.

⁴⁶ Brčák, *Pūsobení*, 471–474.

⁴⁷ Ders, 'Strategie kapucínského řádu při zakládání řeholních domů v českých zemích v raném novověku,' *Folia Historica Bohemica* 33/1 (2018): 217–237.

dieses Klosters und trug finanziell regelmäßig zu dessen Bau bei.⁴⁸ Der Olmützer Bischof Franz Seraph von Dietrichstein beteiligte sich als Hauptstifter am Bau der Konvente in Nikolsburg, der Residenzstadt derer von Dietrichstein,⁴⁹ und in Wischau,⁵⁰ der untertänigen Stadt des Olmützer Bischofs. Auch machte sich der Kardinal um die Einführung der Kapuziner in Brünn, Olmütz, Znaim und Iglau (Jihlava) verdient.⁵¹

Ein weiterer entscheidender Faktor für den Aufschwung der Kapuziner bei uns waren ihre geringen finanziellen Ansprüche, so dass Stifter einfacher zu gewinnen waren.⁵² Ein wichtiger Aspekt beim Bau der

⁴⁸ NA, ŘK Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 5, Correspondentia Romana ratione introducendorum in Boemiam Capucinatorum, passim; KPK Praha, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 543, Protocolum seu Historia domestica Conventus Hradschinensis I., S. 2–12; Brčák, *Působení*, 116–125, 392–393.

⁴⁹ NA, ŘK, Akten, Inv. Nr. 293, Kart. 340, sign. A1.

⁵⁰ MZA E 110 Kapucíni Vyškov [Kapuziner Wischau], Inv. Nr. 1, Protocolum Conventus Viscoviensis, S. 3–4.

⁵¹ Brčák, *Působení*, 134–155.

⁵² Als Beispiel seien die Kosten angeführt, die mit dem Bau des Kapuzinerklosters und des Jesuitenklosters in der Prager Neustadt verbunden waren. Während der Kapuzinerkonvent mit 35 100 Gulden Stiftungsvermögen auskam, wobei den Großteil der Hofkriegsrat Gerhard von Questenberg und der kaiserliche General Martin de Hoeff-Huerta spendeten, kostete das Jesuitenkolleg, das hauptsächlich unter finanzieller Beteiligung von Mitgliedern derer von Sternberg errichtet wurde, mehr als 300 000 Gulden. NA, ŘK, Akten, Inv. Nr. 444, Kart. 397, sign. A3–A7; Marek Brčák, 'Pražské kapucínské řeholní komunity a jejich vnější působení (1599–1795),' *Pražský sborník historický* 50 (2022): 13–55, hier 18; Petra Nevimová, 'Novoměstská jezuitská kolej a kostel sv. Ignáce v Praze,' *Pražský sborník historický* 30 (1998), 151–186. Die Kosten für den Bau eines Kapuzinerklosters in einer untertänigen Stadt beliefen sich sogar auf weniger als 20 000 Gulden, s. den Fall des Konvents von Reichstadt (19 440 Gulden und 29 Kreuzer). Brčák, *Julius František Sasko-Lauenburský*, 411. Hierbei handelte es sich nicht nur um die eigentlichen Baukosten, sondern auch um weitere Zuwendungen, die für den Unterhalt der Klostergemeinschaft erforderlich und bei den Kapuzinern als Mendikanten merklich niedriger waren als bei anderen Ordensstypen, s. Marek Brčák, 'Kapucíni jako příjemci a zprostředkovatelé barokní caritas,' *Opera historica* 20/2 (2019): 189–206. doi: 10.32725/oph.2019.025. Von den finanziellen Aspekten zeugen vielsagend auch die Briefe der Fürsten Gundaker von Liechtenstein und Johann Ferdinand von Liechtenstein aus den 30er und 50er Jahren des 17. Jahrhunderts, in denen die Einführung einer Ordensgemeinschaft in Mäh-risch Kromau (Moravský Krumlov), einer untertänigen Stadt der Liechtenstein, erörtert wird. Ihr Briefwechsel bezeugt, dass beide sich weder Jesuiten noch Benediktiner in die Stadt wünschten, sondern lieber einen der Bettelorden. Zuerst fiel ihre Wahl auf die Kapuziner, anschließend auf die Serviten, schließlich aber wurde hier ein Kloster des Paulinerordens gegründet (1657), da sie die Gründung von Mendikanten-Klöstern für weitaus billiger hielten. NA, ŘK, Akten, Inv. Nr. 296, Kart. 335, sign. D1; Veronika Čapská, 'Vytváření prostoru pro působení servitů v českých zemích v 17. a 18. století,' in *Úloha církevních řádů při pobělohorské rekatolizaci. Sborník příspěvků z pracovního semináře konaného ve Vranově u Brna ve dnech 4.–5. 6. 2003*, ed. Ivana Čornejová (Prag: Scriptorium, 2003), 152–164, hier 160–162.

Kapuzinerkonvente war gleichfalls ihre einfachere Bauweise, womit auch das Arbeitstempo zusammenhing.⁵³

Das erste Jahrzehnt, in welchem die Kapuziner im böhmisch-österreichischen Raum auftraten, verlief nicht nur im Zeichen der Errichtung von Konventen, sondern hierbei handelte es sich auch um eine Zeit der Anpassung ihres Ordenslebens an die Bedingungen, die nördlich der Alpen herrschten. Die Kapuziner bewegten sich in einem Raum, in welchem sich die Lage der katholischen Kirche vor allem in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts als schwierig erwies. Während die Kapuziner in Italien, an der Wiege ihres Ordens, in einem relativ kompakten katholischen Milieu wirkten, wo ihnen eher Ausschweifungen ihrer Mitglieder⁵⁴ bzw. die traditionellen Feindseligkeiten der bekannten Ordensgemeinschaften, vor allem der Franziskaner-Observanten,⁵⁵ drohten, stieß der Orden in den böhmischen und in beiden österreichischen Ländern in erster Linie auf nichtkatholische Bevölkerungsgruppen.⁵⁶

Zur Entstehungszeit des Ordens 1528 und in den ersten Jahren seiner Existenz rechnete man beispielsweise nicht damit, dass sich die Kapuziner sehr aktiv auch der Seelsorge widmen würden. Der Kern ihres Auftrags bestand vielmehr in einer brüderlichen und

⁵³ Zur Kapuzinerarchitektur eingehender (auswahlweise): Karl Suso Frank, 'Gebauete Armut. Zur südwestdeutsch-schweizerischen Kapuzinerarchitektur des 17. Jahrhunderts,' *Franziskanische Studien* 58 (1976): 55–77; Dušan Foltýn u. Petr Sommer u. Pavel Vlček, *Encyklopedie českých klášterů* (Prag: Libri, 1997), 49–57; Tanja Martelanc, *Kapucinska arhitektura v slovenskem etničnem prostoru do nastanka Ilirskih provinc*, Dissertation der Universität Maribor, Maribor 2016. In dieser sehr gelungenen Dissertation kann man weitere, eingehend genannte und vergriffene Sekundärliteratur zu diesem Thema finden, ebd., S. 10–16.

⁵⁴ So erschütterte beispielsweise 1542 der Generalvorsteher der Kapuziner Bernardino Ochino aus Siena die Existenz des Ordens, weil er der Verbreitung häretischer Gedanken verdächtig war, für die er sich bei der römischen Kurie zu verantworten hatte, was er aber nicht tat. Stattdessen floh er aus Italien und wurde kalvinistischer Priester in Genf. Wegen dieses Exzesses durfte sich der Kapuzinerorden bis 1574 nicht außerhalb Italiens verbreiten, sogar seine Aufhebung wurde erwogen. Melchiorre [Turrado] de Podlabura, *Historia generalis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum I* (Roma: Institutum Historicum Ord. Fr. Min. Cap., 1947), 41–54.

⁵⁵ Marek Brčák, 'Kdo jsou praví synové sv. Františka? Soužití františkánů a kapucínů v českých zemích v 17. a 18. století,' in *Proměny františkánské tradice*, ed. Petr Hlaváček (Prag: Philosophische Fakultät der Karlsuniversität, 2019), 333–342.

⁵⁶ Näheres zur religiösen Lage in den böhmischen Ländern in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts, die im Zeichen der allmählichen Rekatholisierung stand, beispielsweise Alessandro Catalano, *La Boemia e la riconquista delle coscienze: Ernst Adalbert von Harrach (1598–1667) e la controriforma tra Roma, Vienna e Praga* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2005).

kontemplativen Lebensführung; übrigens wurden die ersten Brüder der Kapuzinerreform anfangs „*Minderbrüder vom eremitischen Leben*“ genannt.⁵⁷ Deshalb war ihnen anfangs auch nicht gestattet, Laien die Beichte abzunehmen, da es in Italien, der Wiege ihres Ordens, genügend katholische Priester gab. Zudem hätte das Recht der Kapuziner, Personen des weltlichen Standes die Beichte abzunehmen, sicherlich zu heftigem Widerstand der übrigen Orden und der Diözesangeistlichen geführt. Die ersten verbindlichen Ordenskonstitutionen von 1536 gestatteten den Kapuzinern, Personen weltlichen Standes nur aus ernststen Gründen die Beichte abzunehmen, beispielsweise wenn die Betroffenen in Lebensgefahr schwebten, oder aber mit ausdrücklicher Erlaubnis des Generalministers.⁵⁸

In den böhmischen und österreichischen Ländern hingegen herrschte eine völlig andere Situation. Angesichts des katholischen Priestermangels erhielten die Kapuziner die Erlaubnis, auch Laien die Beichte abzunehmen. Wir sehen hierin also eine Modifikation der ursprünglichen Ausrichtung des Ordens angesichts der lokalen Verhältnisse und aktuellen Bedürfnisse, was übrigens bei den Jesuiten eine gängige Erscheinung ist.⁵⁹ Die erforderlichen Genehmigungen zur Ausübung der Beichtabnahme besorgten ihnen in Rom die Vorsteher der Diözesen und Erzdiozesen, in denen die jeweiligen Kapuziner tätig waren.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Erst ab Mitte der 1630er Jahre gewannen im Orden Brüder die Oberhand, die eine möglichst weitgehende Verbreitung ihres Apostolats wünschten. Die Kapuziner richteten also ihre Aktivitäten neu aus, und zwar nicht nur auf das Predigertum, die Krankenpflege und Gefangenenfürsorge, sondern auch auf die Tätigkeit als Militärkaplan oder auf wissenschaftliches Gebiet. 1574 wurde dem Orden erlaubt, sich außerhalb Italiens zu verbreiten, weshalb zu seinen Hauptaktivitäten noch die Missionstätigkeit und das gegenreformatorische Wirken hinzukamen. Iriarte, *Der Franziskusorden*, 218–222; Mathias Ilg, 'Die Kapuziner,' in *Orden und Klöster im Zeitalter von Reformation und katholischer Reform (1500–1700)*, Band III, ed. Friedhelm Jürgensmeier u. Regina Elizabeth Schwerdtfeger (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2007), 228–230; Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540–1770* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), 27–31, 65, 68, 70–71, 76, besonders 29–30.

⁵⁸ [Fidel Elizondo, ed.], *Constitutiones Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum saeculorum decursu promulgatae I* (Roma: Curia Generalis OFM Cap, 1980), 58.

⁵⁹ Ivana Čornejová, *Tovaryšstvo Ježíšovo. Jezuité v Čechách* (Prag: Mladá fronta, 1995), 132.

⁶⁰ Die erforderliche Genehmigung zur Beichtabnahme besorgte ihnen auf diese Weise zum Beispiel der Prager Erzbischof Zbyňko Berka von Duba, zuerst 1603 für das Gebiet Prags und ein Jahr später für ganz Böhmen. KPK Praha, Handschriften, Inv. Nr. 390, *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae I*, S. 67, 71. Für die mährische Diözese war es Kardinal Franz Seraph von Dietrichstein, der ihnen die Genehmigung beschaffte. ebd., S. 144, 146. Ähnliche Genehmigungen für die

Doch nicht nur die Seelsorge war von Modifikationen bzw. der Milderung der ursprünglichen Ordensregeln betroffen, sondern auch das Alltagsleben im Kloster. Die Ordensregeln, die in dem angenehmen Klima der Apenninenhalbinsel aufgestellt worden waren, mussten verständlicherweise den wesentlich rauheren Klimabedingungen Mitteleuropas angepasst werden.⁶¹ In erster Linie adaptierte man die Ordensregeln für den Bau der Ordenshäuser,⁶² damit die hiesigen Klöster vor dem Einfluss des vor Ort herrschenden kälteren Klimas besser geschützt waren. Deshalb gab der Ordensbaumeister Antonius de Pordenone⁶³ 1607 ein Werk über die Ordensarchitektur heraus, welche in Ländern mit kühlerem Klima angewendet werden sollte.⁶⁴ Nach dieser Publikation wurden dann auch die Konvente in den böhmischen Ländern gebaut, wobei ihr Verfasser zwei grundlegende Schemata kapuzinischer Klöster vorlegte: das eines größeren, für bis zu 61 Ordensleute bestimmten Klosters, und das eines kleineren, in welchem eine

Beichtabnahme erhielten die Kapuziner auch in weiteren Provinzen nördlich der Alpen, in denen es gleichfalls an katholischen Priestern mangelte. Vgl. Jacobs, *Die Rheinischen Kapuziner*, 77–78.

⁶¹ Vor demselben Problem standen nach ihrer Ankunft in den böhmischen Ländern auch die Piaristen; zur Anpassung ihrer Ordensregeln an die nördlich der Alpen herrschenden klimatischen Bedingungen siehe Metoděj Zemek u. Jan Bombera u. Aleš Filip, *Piaristé v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku 1631–1950* (Prievidza: Scholae piae, 1992), 18–19.

⁶² Die Ordenshäuser im Kapuzinerorden wurden nach einheitlichen Regeln gebaut, die sehr detailliert in den Ordenskonstitutionen niedergelegt waren. [Elizondo (ed.)], *Constitutiones I*, 597–599.

⁶³ Antonius a Pordenone (mit Nachnamen Pisollo), Einkleidung 1581, war Mitglied der venezianischen Provinz. Vor seinem Eintritt in den Orden arbeitete er als Assistent (1577–1580) bei dem Architekten Andrea Palladio (1508–1580). Im Orden bekleidete er zunächst das Amt eines Guardian, beispielsweise in Arco (1592–1593), und ab 1601 das eines Provinzbaumeisters, unter anderem beteiligte er sich am Bau des Konvents in Arzignano. Im Jahre 1605 war er als Kapuziner Gast in der tirolisch-bayrischen Provinz, wo er den Bau der ersten hiesigen Kapuzinerklöster leitete, zum Beispiel in Rosenheim. 1620 ist er wieder in der Heimatprovinz bezeugt, wo er die Erweiterung des Konvents in Oderz leitete. Er starb 1628 nahe Castelfranco. Martelanc, *Kapucinska architektura*, 129–130.

⁶⁴ Provinzarchiv der Kapuzinerprovinz Österreich-Südtirol, Niederlassung Innsbruck, Abteilung Provinzarchiv der ehem. Nordtiroler Kapuzinerprovinz, Fasc. 19, Libri tre nei quali si scuopre in quanti modi si puo edificare vn Monasterio sia la Chiesa situata uerso qual delle IV. parti del Mondo si uogli, che quiui la si trouerà col suo disegno, conforme all'uso della Nostra Religione à beneficio della quale sono stati composti da Frate Antonio da Pordenon Sacerdote Capuccino Della Prouintia di Santo Antonio ouero Venetia, et in particolare per li paesi frigidi come di Germania, doue con le stoffe, ò Refettoria si scaldano le Celle, nelqual paese sono stati composti nel luogo di Rosnam. Prouintia del Tirol sotto il Ducato di Bauiera l'anno 1607. Et questa è la secunda parte.

Gemeinschaft von maximal 14 Mitgliedern leben sollte.⁶⁵ Im Falle des Konvents auf dem Prager Hradschin, der als einziger noch vor Annahme dieser mäßigenderen Modifikationen erbaut worden war, kam es wenigstens zum Bau eines zweiten, unterirdischen sogenannten Winterchors, der kleiner war und besser vor Frost schützte. Weil diese Maßnahme nun aber nicht der ursprünglichen strengen Auslegung der Ordenssatzung des heiligen Franziskus entsprach, mussten sich die böhmischen Kapuziner die Baugenehmigung für einen Winterchor direkt bei der Papstkanzlei beschaffen.⁶⁶

Abschließend kann festgestellt werden, dass die Kapuziner 1673 im Vielvölkerstaat der Habsburger ein gut etablierter Orden waren, denn er verfügte über starke Mäzene und Fürsprecher, von denen selbstverständlich das Herrscherhaus am bedeutendsten war. Des weiteren kamen die Kapuziner über die negativen Auswirkungen des Dreißigjährigen Krieges hinweg, die dieser auf dem hiesigen Gebiet hinterlassen hatte, was die Zahl der Konvente und der darin lebenden Brüder am besten bezeugt. Darüber hinaus passten sie ihr Ordensleben an die in den böhmischen Ländern herrschenden religiösen Bedürfnisse und klimatischen Bedingungen an. Dank der erfolgreichen Rekatholisierung, an der sie einen nicht geringen Anteil hatten, waren sie mit Ausnahme Schlesiens bereits in katholischem Milieu tätig, das im Geiste der damaligen barocken Frömmigkeit einer Förderung von religiösen Orden gewogen war. Die Ausgangslage der böhmisch-mährischen Kapuzinerprovinz war also im Jahr ihrer Errichtung vielversprechend, was auch den weiteren Aufschwung der Provinz ermöglichte.

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⁶⁵ Tanja Martelenc, “‘Libri tre nei quali si scuopre in quanti modo si può edificare vn Monast.o sý la Chiesa’: architectural treatise of Capuchin friar Antonio da Porde- none,” in *Investigating and Writing Architectural History Subjects, Methodologies and Frontiers*, ed. Michaela Rosso (Torino: Politecnico di Torino, 2014), 1058–1071, besonders 1059–1061.

⁶⁶ NA, ŘK, Urkunden, Inv. Nr. 7a.

Anhang

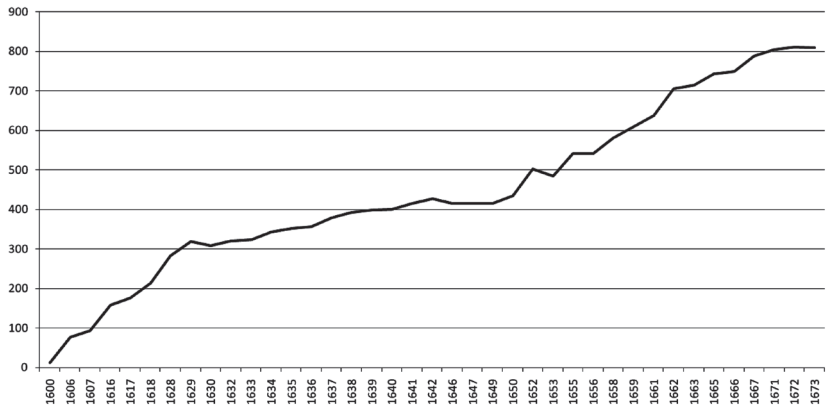


Diagramm Nr. 1: Die Entwicklung der Mitgliederzahl der Böhmischoesterreichischen Kapuzinerprovinz 1600–1673

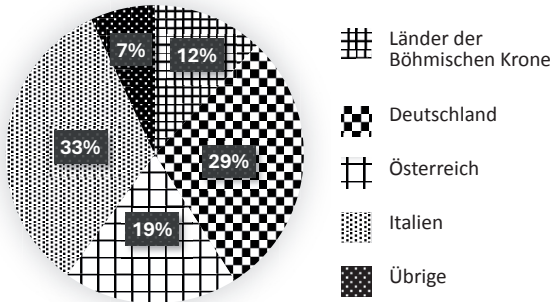


Diagramm Nr. 2: Geographische Herkunft der in der Böhmischoesterreichischen Kapuzinerprovinz im Jahre 1618 lebenden Mitglieder

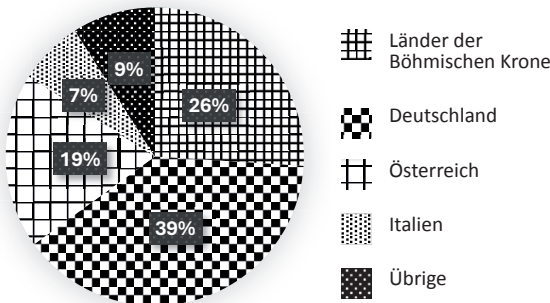
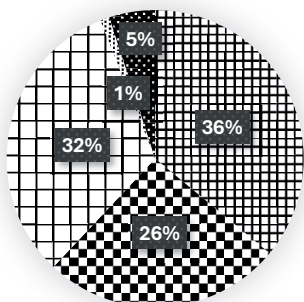


Diagramm Nr. 3: Geographische Herkunft der in der Böhmischoesterreichischen Kapuzinerprovinz im Jahre 1648 lebenden Mitglieder



▦ Länder der Böhmischen Krone

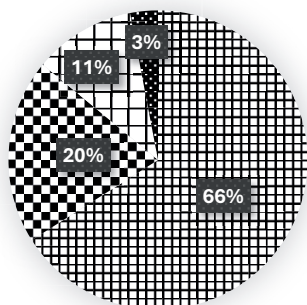
▣ Deutschland

▧ Österreich

▤ Italien

▥ Übrige

Diagramm Nr. 4: Geographische Herkunft der in der Böhmischoesterreichischen Kapuzinerprovinz im Jahre 1673 lebenden Mitglieder



▦ Länder der Böhmischen Krone

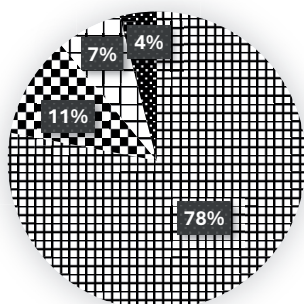
▣ Deutschland

▧ Österreich

▤ Italien

▥ Übrige

Diagramm Nr. 5: Geographische Herkunft der in der Böhmischo-mährischen Kapuzinerprovinz im Jahre 1673 lebenden Mitglieder



▦ Länder der Böhmischen Krone

▣ Deutschland

▧ Österreich

▤ Italien

▥ Übrige

Diagramm Nr. 6: Geographische Herkunft der in der Böhmischo-mährischen Kapuzinerprovinz im Jahre 1693 lebenden Mitglieder

ANIMAL RELIGIOSITY: OPPORTUNITIES AND ONTOLOGICAL LIMITS OF AN IMPERVIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL PROPOSAL

SIMON FRANCESCO DI RUPO

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the fascinating hypothesis of animal religiosity. In this respect, we are interested in Donovan Schaefer's philosophical proposal, specifically his text *Religious Affects*. In Schaefer's conceptual framework, the 'theory of affects' finds a privileged place, basically as an emphasis on the importance of the pre-linguistic affective sphere. Here, man and animal can learn about kinship, which, according to Schaefer, also implies religious experience. However, this kind of concept of 'religious feeling' distances itself from the legacy of the phenomenology of religion. By criticizing this specific aspect, we will try to understand where this proposal can generate aporetic signs of discontinuity with a reliable concept of religiosity. In our concluding thesis, we will show that the importance given to animals, given correct ecological thinking, does not have an enemy in the religious specificity of man.

Keywords

Animal; Religiosity; Affects; Sacred; Ontology

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The contemporary philosophy of religion questions a specific passage in the vast field of Animal Studies.¹ We refer to the hypothesis of an animal religiosity, i.e. an ascertainment of the animal's faculty to

¹ See Robert. N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011); Rob Boddice, *Anthropocentrism. Humans, Animals, Environment* (Boston: Brill, 2011); Aaron Gross, *The Question of the Animal and Religion: Theoretical Stakes, Practical Implications* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Clair Linzey, *Developing Animal Theology an Engagement with Leonardo Boff* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

feel religious and to behave accordingly, breaking, in fact, the chain of mechanistic actions and reactions devoid of subjectivity that anthropocentric philosophy would have favoured for centuries in defining the animal. This is the critical position of some contemporary philosophers, who, for the aforementioned purpose, must resort to dialogues with other scientific dimensions, such as sociology, anthropology and, in particular, ethology. This is the case with Donovan Schaefer,² who has the merit of producing one of the most disruptive studies representing this reading of reality. The potential convergence between Animal Studies and Religious Studies poses a challenge to the contemporary philosophy of religion: to look at the foundation of actions that we often connote as religious from an animal perspective. However, some theoretical difficulties arise with respect to the way in which the subject is represented for such a suggestive concept. Schaefer intends, in a functional sense, to ‘overcome’ the proposed break with the anthropocentric tradition by incorporating specific philosophers into the so-called ‘phenomenological’ tradition.

At this introductory juncture, it is essential to summarise Schaefer’s proposal and the critical positioning from which this article draws its doubts, as well as its point of convergence in opposition to radical atheism.

Before directly addressing the question of animals, it is helpful to examine some foundational aspects of Schaefer’s approach, particularly as outlined in his pivotal 2014 paper ‘Blessed, Precious Mistakes: Deconstruction, Evolution, and New Atheism in America’.³ This work offers a profound and innovative critique of American New Atheism, particularly as exemplified by Daniel C. Dennett. Schaefer’s scholarship stands out for its interdisciplinary methodology, which synthesises insights from deconstruction – especially the philosophy of Jacques Derrida – with post-adaptationist evolutionary biology. This convergence enables him to challenge the prevailing notion that religion is merely a collection of propositional beliefs requiring correction or elimination, a perspective he identifies as distinctly American.⁴

² Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania. For biographical notes: <http://donovanschaefer.com/bio/>.

³ Donovan Schaefer, ‘Blessed, precious mistakes: deconstruction, evolution, and New Atheism in America,’ *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 76 (2014): 75–94. doi: 10.1007/s11153-014-9446-5.

⁴ Schaefer, ‘Blessed, precious mistakes,’ 95.

A key strength of Schaefer's argument lies in his ability to draw parallels between the theme of accident in pluralist evolutionary biology and the continental philosophy of religion. By foregrounding accident as a central concept, Schaefer creates new spaces for discourse that contest the overconfidence in human reason as an infallible means of understanding the world – an epistemic stance characteristic of New Atheism. He contends that deconstruction and pluralist evolutionary theory critique the assumptions underpinning American atheism, suggesting that religion is not merely a misguided form of science but rather a complex and contingent phenomenon.⁵

Schaefer's critique of Dennett's *Breaking the Spell*⁶ is particularly forceful. He highlights how Dennett's framework rests on an overestimation of human reason and a presupposition about religion deeply rooted in an American Protestant emphasis on belief. Schaefer argues that Dennett's model, which equates religion with economic and meteorological systems, is fundamentally flawed because it fails to consider biological and religious systems' inherent complexity and unpredictability.⁷

Furthermore, Schaefer's interdisciplinary approach is innovative and highly relevant to contemporary academic discourse. By integrating deconstruction with evolutionary biology, he advances a more polyvalent understanding of religion that moves beyond the rigid frameworks of New Atheism. This perspective acknowledges the intricacy, contingency, and incalculability of religious phenomena, thereby opening possibilities for new, post-secular forms of atheism that are more attuned to the complexities of human experience.⁸

Beyond his critique of New Atheism, the most interesting point for us is that Schaefer's work has significant implications for studying animals and their potential religiosity. His methodology, which emphasises the complexity and unpredictability of life, can be extended to the analysis of animal behaviour. The critique of reductionist and mechanistic perspectives can be functional to the argument of animal religiosity, advocating instead for a framework that acknowledges animals' intricate roles within broader ecological and evolutionary systems.

⁵ Schaefer, 'Blessed, precious mistakes,' 97.

⁶ See Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

⁷ Schaefer, 'Blessed, precious mistakes,' 78.

⁸ Schaefer, 'Blessed, precious mistakes,' 79.

Such a perspective can enrich discussions on the boundaries of living beings, suggesting that non-human animals, like humans, may engage in complex behaviours and are not easily reducible to simple anthropocentric explanations.

Overall, Schaefer's innovative perspective contributes substantially to the link between the philosophy of religion and evolutionary biology. His interpretation of nature gives many opportunities for confrontations: by emphasising the themes of accident and complexity, Schaefer paves the way for a new intellectual inquiry that is certainly relevant to contemporary debates. For example, his contribution is significant as it broadens the scope of contemporary philosophical inquiry – even the political one – facilitating the exploration of how emotions and bodily sensations influence power structures and social relations. Furthermore, Schaefer's affect theory challenges conventional notions of subjectivity and agency, proposing that human beings are not merely rational and linguistic entities but rather intricate systems of affective forces. However, the comparison intended to be established in this paper does not claim exhaustiveness and is intended to confront only a specific theoretical segment concerning the ontology of religion.

The volume *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*⁹ by Donovan O. Schaefer represents a significant and innovative contribution to religious studies and is characterised by strong materialism and a multidisciplinary approach that integrates affective theories, materiality studies, and post-humanist perspectives. Schaefer followed the footsteps traced by thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, and Bruno Latour, tackling an approach that rejects traditional separations between nature and culture, and human and animal. The theoretical legacies of such a work are manifold, ranging from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, to Silvan Tomkins' theory of affect, via Derrida's post-structuralist critique and Darwin's evolutionary theory. Schaefer draws on these traditions to construct a theoretical framework emphasising materialism, rejecting Cartesian transcendence or dualism. From this perspective, religion is a phenomenon deeply rooted in bodies' materiality and interactions with the world.

The main goals of the Schaeferian proposal are to overcome the 'linguistic fallacy' that attributes excessive centrality to textuality in

⁹ See Donovan Schaefer, *Religious Affects: animality, evolution and power* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015).

religion (as in the case of sacred texts) and to demonstrate that religion is a phenomenon rooted in the materiality of bodies and their interactions with the world; this, in addition to the aforementioned intention to challenge traditional dichotomies between human and animal, natural and cultural, so that a holistic and dynamic view of religiosity is given, encompassing religious and spiritual practices in the animal kingdom.

In this volume, the concept of power is central to understanding the dynamics of religion. Power is portrayed as a multifaceted and pervasive shaping force, which is itself shaped by religious practices and beliefs. It can reveal how religious institutions and practices exert control and influence over individuals and communities. Still, it can also lead to the marginalisation of certain groups and the imposition of dominant ideologies. It is inherently problematic and contentious to link power to religion, as it can both illuminate and obscure the true nature of religious experiences, often dictating who has the authority to define and practice religion. This interplay raises critical questions regarding authenticity, authority, and the inclusivity of religious practices, highlighting the need for a more nuanced and equitable approach to understanding religious phenomena.

However, addressing the issue of power in this context is out of our range, as our primary focus is on the aporias of assimilating the same concept of religiosity for both humans and animals. Our essentialist position comes from a philosophical heritage that sees religion as an inherently human phenomenon, rooted in the intuition of the sacred, of ritual elaboration, symbolisation and myth-making. In Schaefer's reading, one is curious to challenge the paradigm that sees only human beings as possessing the capacity to transcend their existence through language and ethics in connection with the sacred, which is unique and not replicable in animals. While worthy of respect and protection, animals do not offer sufficient evidence of experiencing something similar to religion, intended as a complex of matters such as faith and revelation. In this view, the sacred is manifested through hierarchies of meanings and symbols that only humans seem to understand and articulate. Animals can be seen as part of the created sacred, and thus respected from this fundamental ethical assumption. Still, with respect to their feeling of the holy, we believe it is necessary to suspend judgment and not to confuse religious feelings with sensations and emotions, which are still too closely tied to the biological sphere.

Schaefer considers a strong materialistic approach to be sufficient without considering certain junctures in the ontology of the sacred, which, in our opinion, deserve proper consideration. A typical phenomenon discussed in the contemporary philosophical debate, which is also present in the philosophy of religion, is the multiplication of perspectives. We also encounter it in the field of animal studies. The tendency towards fragmentation of knowledge generates a series of effects in both instances: the substantial abandonment of the idea of truth, to which corresponds, at best, the search for the ideal of objectivity, and at worst, the simple retreat to merely individual perspectives. Also, the search for novel interpretations that mark a discontinuity with the previous tradition, to which corresponds a marked self-referentiality in disciplinary confrontation,¹⁰ for instance, the openness to cultural studies and gender studies, are perceived as capable of expanding the methodology of the philosophy of religion perceived as too narrow.¹¹ It will be Schaefer himself,¹² as happened shortly before in one of his teachers, Aaron Gross,¹³ who will make explicit the merits of Gender Studies as a forerunner of a critical approach capable of subverting the particularisms of the pre-established philosophical observatory, seen as anthropocentric, androcentric, and substantially lacking in a ‘conceptual ecology’, i.e. a vision capable of accounting for complexity by departing from the philosophical paradigms which claimed, in the history of the West, to define reality in a restrictive manner and, in this specific case, at the expense of animals.

1. Dancing Animals and Proposals of Religiosity

Donovan Schaefer is a philosopher who argues that we must dismiss the priority of a linguistic construct or a set of propositional beliefs to understand how religion shapes human relationships with fields of power. Instead, he proposes to think of religion in its animality

¹⁰ See Andrea Aguti, ‘La filosofia delle religioni. Introduzione tematica e rassegna dei principali modelli contemporanei,’ in *Isonomia, Online Philosophical Journal of the University of Urbino ‘Carlo Bo’* (2010).

¹¹ See Sarah Coakley, ‘Feminism and Analytic Philosophy of Religion,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. W. J. Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 494–525.

¹² Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 15.

¹³ Gross, *The Question of Animal and religion*, 80.

dimension, looking at embodied emotions rather than words as the source of the meaning of religious foundations.

In this respect, he combines an essentially post-atheist position with a well-documented interest in ‘affect theory’, which will serve him well in animal discourse. By ‘post-atheism’, in Schaefer’s case, we refer to a position which, albeit largely secularist, also distances itself from positivist excesses:

Post-atheism emerges after the disruption of the positivist overconfidence that religion can be disbanded under the pressure of a fine-tuned rational critique. By insisting that the artifacts of evolution are rational and that religion is a corrupt form of rationality, Dennett and other American New Atheists remain stuck in an unproductive atheism of calculators.¹⁴

In *Religious Affects*, Donovan O. Schaefer has the ambition to overcome this atheistic ‘unproductivity’ by incorporating affect theory and critical animal studies into the field of religious studies.

The intention that permeates the entirety of the essay is to take the notion of animal religion seriously, putting the emerging field of affect theory into dialogue with the discipline of religious studies in a way that the author considers exhaustive for a renewal of the consideration of the prelinguistic sphere. This dimension constitutes the feeling that unites both humans and animals in a religious feeling.

In its introduction, the book analyses the phenomenon of the ‘waterfall dance of chimpanzees’ described by Jane Goodall.¹⁵ Out of fear of natural phenomena (including wind, fire, and waterfalls), groups of primates express themselves in what appear as ritual dances.

Jane Goodall writes that the chimpanzee waterfall dance, disconnected from linguistically mediated belief, can be understood as an animal religion. Both the affective and the animal turns help to clarify this classification by clarifying links between bodies and systems of power outside the language register. [...] (in a ritual that, were we to see it in humans, would undoubtedly be labeled as ‘religion’), but how human religion can itself be understood as a pre-linguistic dance. The affective/animalist approach

¹⁴ Schaefer, *Animal religiosity*, 94.

¹⁵ See Jane Goodall, *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey* (New York: Soko, 1999).

fleshes out the materialist phenomenology of religion, diagramming religion as a complex, embodied response to a world.¹⁶

The idea that this dance constitutes a ‘religion’ is not intended to be justified with particularly complex ontological arguments, as Schaefer considers it sufficient to draw, from this anecdote, the valuable elements to validate the entry of ‘affect theory’ within the discourse on the religious, in which the equality between the human and the non-human animal can find common ground to discuss the importance of the body as a source of meaning. As Schaefer states regarding dance,

The dance is a dance in the way that it recapitulates and replays the affective ligaments tying bodies to worlds. Drawing lines between a set of interlocking but nonstreamlined embodied elements, religion traffics in a network of effects better understood as a regime of accidents than an icon of rationally organized logos. This template allows religious studies to consider human and nonhuman animal religion side by side.¹⁷

The problem we intend to address in this essay concerns the difficulty of taking the notion of ‘religion’ for granted, based on such empirical assumption. Despite the extensive documentation as displayed in the bibliography, Schaefer has no interest in measuring himself against the Western philosophy of religion as it has manifested itself over the centuries. His main ambition remains to address the issue with the tools of the more recent philosophy while maintaining a dialogue with biological evolutionism. Later in the text, Schaefer merely entrusts the solidity of his approach to the notion of ‘religion’ with a highly schematic definition of religion borrowed from Stephen Prothero:

In *God is not One*, Boston University professor Stephen Prothero places religion on the dissection table and finds it to contain four parts: there is a problem, then a solution (the ‘goal’ of any religion); there are techniques for reaching this goal and exemplars who lead the way. In Christianity, for instance, the problem is that the world is sinful; grace through Christ or faith or works is the solution and the practice; Jesus the mythological figure is the exemplar [...] It is difficult to escape the conclusion that

¹⁶ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 179.

¹⁷ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 17.

assessing all religions as beginning with problems fundamentally orients religion to cognitive-linguistic axis [...] This model is no doubt useful in many contexts, and Prothero is exactly right to push back on the tendency to extract religions from a historical frame by flattering their conceptual differences.¹⁸

This debt declared by Schaefer depicts a highly stylised conception of religion, in which the leading role is played by the ‘goal’ without specifying the difference between eschatology and soteriology, which could change the essence of the ‘goal’ itself. Schaefer does not even expound on which links it has with the conceptions of time underlying the religions themselves. On these premises, the underlying argument shows a postmodern side that is hugely discontinuous with traditionally understood philosophising. In this context, for the benefit of the affirmation of the position we are gradually taking on the subject, it is essential to provide a reference by the Italian philosopher of religion, Andrea Aguti:

La filosofia mira a cogliere l'essenza di un determinato fenomeno e non può accettare il presupposto di un 'ateismo metodologico'. Ne consegue che da questo punto di vista non è lecito separare la funzione della religione dalla sua essenza [...] A questo proposito Lubbe ha parlato di un 'effetto placebo' per indicare il mantenersi della funzione della religione anche in assenza del riferimento al soprannaturale; non sarebbe necessaria l'esistenza del soprannaturale, ma soltanto la credenza in esso. Tuttavia l'argomento sembra soltanto un espediente metodologico per legittimare la distanza dello studioso rispetto a un giudizio di verità o falsità sulla religione e per isolare la questione della funzione della religione dalla sua essenza.¹⁹

¹⁸ Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 19.

¹⁹ Andrea Aguti, *Introduzione alla Filosofia della religione* (Brescia: La scuola, 2016), 37. Author's translation: 'Philosophy aims to grasp the essence of a given phenomenon and cannot accept the assumption of a "methodological atheism". From this point of view, it is not permissible to separate the function of religion from its essence [...]. In this regard, Lubbe spoke of a "placebo effect" to indicate the maintenance of the function of religion even in the absence of reference to the supernatural; the existence of the supernatural would not be necessary, but only belief in it. However, the argument seems merely a methodological expedient to legitimise the distance of the scholar from a judgement of truth or falsity on religion and to isolate the question of the function of religion from its essence.'

The reference to the supernatural, natural, or believed to be accurate is thus inescapable to understanding religion and not to give it a reductive interpretation.

Schaefer's theoretical core, which occupies more space in his dissertation, concerns the 'affective turn' as a necessary response to the 'linguistic turn', which Schaefer links mainly to the figure of Jonathan Z. Smith. According to Schaefer, the feature that affective theory has to offer religion is a way to recover the centrality of feeling. From a philosophical point of view, this implies a theoretical affinity with the so-called phenomenology of religion, as in the case of James, Otto and Eliade. However, Schaefer, in the wake of Smith, misses no opportunity to distance himself from it:

The earlier methods [...] presumed that religion was an ahistorical phenomenon, a transcendent source of meaning from beyond human circumstances [...] For Smith, the phenomenological approach to religion was a depoliticizing analytics that, like all attempts to mask the motions of power and history, risked sinister outcomes [...] By contrast, affect theory offers resources for charting maps of power that are not limited to the plane of language. It proposes that – contrary to earlier phenomenologists of religion who saw religion as *sui generis* – phenomenology is itself political.²⁰

This school of thought, as opposed by Smith²¹ and Vasquez,²² both critical figures in Schaefer's background, could potentially offer the tools for an ontological understanding of the sacred. However, lumping these three authors together involves due differentiations that Schaefer does not feel the need to address. In the dense bibliography of references, which certainly makes this essay a point of contact for studies on the 'affect theory', Rudolf Otto is only present on three occasions, in which he essentially only emphasises how his approach to the religious is precisely *sui generis* and 'private'.²³ Based on the fact that Otto 'identified the core religious feeling as the *mysterium tremendum*, wonder combined with what he calls "tremor"', Schaefer shows very slight

²⁰ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 6–7.

²¹ See Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not territory: studies in the history of religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

²² See Manuel Vasquez, *More than belief: a materialist theory of religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²³ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 5.

convergences: ‘Affect theory allows us to reexamine this older phenomenological model of religion with a twist: where Otto saw religious emotion as transcendent and apolitical, affect theory prompts us to ask how these embodied affective potentials form and accelerate systems of power.’²⁴ In Otto the prelinguistic affect ‘was put forwards the cradle of religion as such. Affect theory turns back to those resources, but, building on the linguistic turn, radically redraws the map of theoretical engagements between religion and emotion by explicitly linking affects to frames of power.’²⁵

It is curious how, in remembering Otto, no space is given, for example, to Schleiermacher, who with full merit could be taken as an example on the subject of religious feeling, considering the importance he played in the formation of Rudolf Otto himself.²⁶ However, an in-depth acquaintance with the bibliography related to Otto is enough to be unable to accept a reductionism of this kind. Otto folds religious sentiment into an *a priori* derived from Kant, Fries, and Soderblom, but he does not limit himself to a *sui generis* and a historical position. The evolution of religion depends on factors that Philip Almond, one of Otto’s most significant interpreters, explains very clearly: ‘Only when religious feeling is purified of natural feeling is first awakened, and when it may be aroused independently of the stimulus and incitement caused by these, may religion said to be present.’²⁷

This emerges in a specific section in which Otto shows how it is not enough to consider him the theorist of ‘mystery’: ‘When the more developed elements of “awe” came upon the scene and went to shape the more elevated ideas of the demonic and the divine, sacer and sanctus, things could become “unclean” or “impure”, in the numinous sense without any substratum of “natural” impurity to serve as point of departure.’²⁸

In our view, Rudolf Otto brings the question of affect to a decisive stage in understanding the transition from the pre-linguistic to the linguistic, but what Schaefer wants to summarise as a ‘phenomenological’

²⁴ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 54.

²⁵ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 59.

²⁶ Andrew Dole, ‘Schleiermacher and Otto on Religion,’ *Religious Studies* 40, no. 4 (2004): 389–413. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20008553>.

²⁷ Philip Almond, *Rudolf Otto. An introduction to his philosophical theology* (North Carolina: The University Of North Carolina Press, 1984), 80.

²⁸ Rudolf Otto, *The idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), 80.

perspective has the defect of pandering to the anthropocentrism that has characterised the history of Western thought, failing to find a space of dignity for animal feeling. Schaefer also argues that the religiosity called into question by phenomenology is *sui generis*, i.e. it is content with a solid transcendental vocation without descending into the materiality of its manifestations. In this centrality of the material sphere of the religious, Schaefer leans towards Klassen, who argues that any theory of the religion disregards gender, race, class, and other social formative categories, ‘categories with profound effects both as cultural and individual levels – will only answer very limited questions, for a very limited audience.’²⁹

A key factor of religious materialism thus emerges: it is more important to highlight the rights and dynamics of the living beings involved in religion than to try to speculate about the ontological root of what religion is.

For Schaefer, the centrality of language in religious studies has obscured crucial religious phenomena. Foregrounding affects, which Schaefer first defines as ‘the flow of forces through bodies outside of, prior to, or underneath language’,⁵⁰ can bring such phenomena to light and make them explicit. Affect theory can explain ‘how discourses attach to bodies and get them to move; it is not “baffled” when bodies sincerely “believe” one thing and do another’.⁵¹

According to Schaefer’s theory, starting with the affective subject, it entails rejecting any idea of an autonomous self.

Appearing subjects, both human and animal, are dynamic, constantly inhabited by pre-linguistic and intersubjective energies; bodies, here, precede minds and words. Bodies are invested, individually and *en masse*, with feelings as diverse as belonging, disgust and joy: affects that function both to create communities (religious and otherwise) and to maintain and control their boundaries.

Religious Affects is essentially a book about the insufficiency of words: ‘The *I found myself* is the passive case of affect. It suggests the ways that affects and affectively organized desiders [...] surge though bodies and compose themselves in religious forms.’⁵²

²⁹ Pamela E. Klassen, ‘Ritual,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, edited by John Corrigan, 143–161 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 157.

⁵⁰ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 4.

⁵¹ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 35.

⁵² Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 117.

Regardless of how the claim of animal religion may or may not be received, *Religious Affects* is an invitation to decentralise our anthropo-centric assumptions more generally and, by appealing to human animality, to provide a provocative angle for imagining affects beyond the all-too-human parameters that usually characterise religious studies. Rather than privileging rationality and human exceptionalism, human beings should be brought back to the corporeal, the material and the animal. The primary theoretical opponent of this perspective is the ‘angelic’ view of man. Schaefer conducts a real battle: ‘understanding religion means pulling humans out of the domain of the angelic – which means out of the domain of self-determination though sovereign reason.’⁵³ Elsewhere: ‘thinking of bodies as affective animals rather than as angelic subjects expands the available dimensions to track where bodies go.’⁵⁴ However, it is in a specific passage that Schaefer deserves to be quoted in full, which highlights the need to polarise the dualism animal/angelical:

We fail to see nonhuman animal religion because we only search for religion in places where we already know we will find it. Religion, too, as Derrida suggested, may be a heterogeneous multiplicity. Animal religion calls us to look at the movements of animals differently, to hear their calls differently, to watch their interactions with their worlds and with other bodies differently. It means opening the possibility that there is a phenomenological, affective depth to these gestures [...] this means erasing the myth that we are angels.⁵⁵

Religious Affects seeks to give solidity to the material perspective of religion by focusing on experienced religious feelings.

Schaefer illustrates that studying religion affectively means imagining religion as a body: ‘Religion, viewed affectively [as] a bulging mass rather than a pristine dictionary.’⁵⁶ Studying the mass (religion) and its relations to power means tracing and mapping affects. Schaefer emphasises the debt to an apodictic definition by Pellegrini: ‘at the end of the day, the ability to win over converts or spark spiritual rededication does not rise and fall on fact checking of biblical hermeneutics. It is

⁵³ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 12.

⁵⁴ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 208.

⁵⁵ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 212.

⁵⁶ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 34.

a matter rather of affective congruences.’³⁷ Bodies must be reanimated better to understand their connections to religion, culture and politics; this is Schaefer’s view.

Finally, *Religious Affects* defends the fundamental contingency of the human-animal condition. The book offers a much more intricate look at life than rationalist evolution theorists do, who, contrarily, tend to reduce existence to a rational calculation of survival. Alternatively, Schaefer conceives religious affections as a biological accident, a product of evolutionary landscapes that do not present a linear development: ‘being itself is a junkyard, a sedimented landscape of accidents. Animality, the heterogeneous multiplicity of bodies, is a disorganized archive of ongoing play of differences in the creation of species.’³⁸ In light of this consideration bordering on ill-concealed nihilism, it is easy to understand why Schaefer’s perspective is so keen to distance itself from the essentialisms of 20th-century religious hermeneutics. The tones of rupture are unequivocal: ‘the animalist approach, by focusing on the organization of power outside of “logos”, interrupts carno-phallocentrism by separating bodies from the necessity of language for thought, cognition, sensation and movement. It extinguishes the vestigial euro-enlightenment axiom that language is necessary for depth.’³⁹

2. To Talk About Animal Religiosity, We Must Remember to Ask Ourselves What Religiosity Is

The Schaeferian proposal of animal religiosity, which is understood as an attempt to widening the scientific field of religious experience, has no antecedents in the genealogical branch of posthuman philosophy alone. Performing an acrobatic exercise, we could place this stance invoking the inclusion of the animal as a form of religious pluralism – a pluralism that not only looks at the transversality of religious denominations and spiritual traditions, but it focuses, for once, on the plurality of those who experience the religious content.

In the field of philosophy of religion, the most revealing and discussed contribution to the theory of religious pluralism is that of

³⁷ Ann Pellegrini, ‘Signaling through the Flames; hell house performance and structures of religious feeling,’ *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2007): 917.

³⁸ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 155.

³⁹ Schaefer, *Religious affects*, 202–203.

J. Hick,⁴⁰ who, considering the problems generated by exclusivism insurmountable, and the attempted solution of inclusivism unsatisfactory, believes that it is precisely the pluralist hypothesis to provide a solution to the conflict posed by each religion's claim to truth. It is based on the Kantian distinction between what is authentic and accurate according to human perception and experience. Thus, it admits that the real is universally present to humanity, but experienced and conceived differently. The two qualifying concepts are deity, or personal Real, and the absolute, or impersonal Real.

The former is typical of theistic religions, whereas the latter involves non-theistic ones. The pluralistic hypothesis differs from the solution that considers mysticism as the core of all religions and religious conflict arising from the differentiation of this core at a popular level. Religious conflict is eliminated because of the thesis, according to which, different religions are all equally manifestations of the Real, which is expressed, however, in a different manner. As Andrea Aguti puts it:

Il problema del pluralismo religioso appare produttivo in filosofia della religione quando non è percepito come un mero dato fattuale, che chiede semplicemente di essere meglio compreso nella sua effettività e arricchito nella sua fenomenologia, ma quando lo è come problema di diritto.⁴¹

For this reason, although the theoretical problems arising from Schaefer's theories do not detract from the tremendous ethical dignity they raise, on the level of interest in placing the animal on a group of importance, that is not merely objective, instrumental.

In this sense, the discourse on Animal Religion may find a highly plausible framework, which, at the same time, if also addressed to ontology, turns out to be a multiplier of problems: what deity interests the chimpanzee dancing in front of a waterfall? Can we speak of religiosity without it being the development of a series of experiences that find a name at the perturbing source? Does the 'worshipped' object, be it disturbing or surprising in the broadest sense of the term, remain in the animal an unthinking 'in itself'? Suppose the theory of affects

⁴⁰ See John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁴¹ Aguti, 'La Filosofia delle religioni,' 19. 'The problem of religious pluralism appears productive in the philosophy of religion when it is not perceived as a mere factual datum, which simply begs to be better understood in its actuality and enriched in its phenomenology, but when it is as a problem of law.' Translation by the author.

wants to call ‘religious’ an energy flow which allows the animal to break out of its behavioural routine. In that case, binding itself to the gestural apparatus alone will not be sufficient. However, such a theory will somehow have to address the link between a creature and its creatureliness, that is, whether there is, in that dance, a specific link with a god or not. Stopping at the dance of the animal creates an essentially aesthetic suggestion in man. The philosopher who looks at the dancing animal presumes to place this fascinating moment at the rank of an exquisitely human concept, and he does so through words. Thus, overcoming the ‘linguistic turn’ is a goal of philosophers such as Schaefer, to be preferred over affects. However, at the same time, such philosophy cannot relegate the vision of the affects to a specific semantic field, that of a philosophy of secular religion, which deliberately reflects on what is religious or not on the basis of non-theological critics, as opposed to environmentalist neopagan currents⁴² in which nature shows a sacred feature in the traditional sense of ‘sacred,’ thus religious. It is an ontological sacredness that transforms nature into Nature, lacking unambiguous dogmatics and inspired by different religious models, while preliminarily rejecting Christianity.⁴⁵

The religious materialism witnessed by Schaefer, on the other hand, with all the genealogical lines that we have seen in Smith, Vasquez, Gross, and Pellegrini, has no interest in posing itself as a *version* of religion, but in observing it as an external spectator, limiting itself to taking its cue from religion to constitute a political philosophy on bio-energetic (or rather zoo-energetic) bases.

The danger of religious materialism that intends to start again from the affection of the animal, without presenting a doctrine of the soul or an idea of God, is that of posing itself as an occult atheism that may not be clear about the importance of religion for the understanding of life. A theory that risks being an implicit version of Feuerbach’s approach, but with an aftertaste of a sort of ‘ontological cancel culture’. Religious sentiment is at the heart of the experience of the numinous, to return to Rudolf Otto’s language. However, rather than true sentiment in animal religiosity, it is more appropriate to speak of

⁴² See Joanne Pearson J., Richard H. Roberts, Geoffrey Samuel, *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the modern world* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

⁴⁵ See Giovanni Filoramo, *Sui sentieri del sacro. Processi di sacralizzazione nella società contemporanea* (Roma: Franco Angeli, 2022).

presentiment – a presentiment grounded in an environment in which instincts and emotions find themselves without tools in the face of astonishment.

In this framework, the traditionally understood ontology gives way to an approach devoted to evidence-based science, in a way that philosophical discourse cannot disagree with a specific language that is not too covertly scientific and atheist. The reference to biology, in Schaefer, takes up more argumentative space than a St. Bonaventure, for instance, which we, however, consider consistent with the theme, inasmuch Bonaventure placed animals in a dimension of proximity to the divine because of their sinlessness. As chance would have it, another Schaefer, a Bonaventure scholar, realised in the 1960s that, with respect to animals, ‘St. Bonaventure considers their life and death as a decoration of the universe and compares their succession and order with a most beautiful poem in which one syllable follows the other.’⁴⁴ However, there are also examples of theologies that focus on the existence, conversely, of sin in the animal realm to hold Christ’s work as redemptive and reconciling for all creaturehood. Although this is a borderline example, it is of absolute interest in understanding the complexity of the link between religion and animality.⁴⁵

The opportunities provided by theology are almost entirely unnoticed in Schaefer’s work, which gives prominence to the sphere of power. There is a widespread impression that he has chosen to emphasise the political role of the body in the spiritual sphere, even at the expense of a clear definition of spirituality itself.

The paradox ensues in the crude materialism of such a vision; by dint of searching for evidence, one falls into the irrationalism of an idea to which one attributes an arbitrary or substantially inaccurate meaning, philosophically, in our case. The study of the dancing animal provides elements of unquestionable interest in the field of neuroscience and ethology in attempting to understand the link between biological evolutionism and the animal affective sphere, in fact fostering, hopefully, growing attention and solid respect towards the mystery in which the animal kingdom consists. However, precisely as a kingdom, our

⁴⁴ Alexander Schaefer, ‘The Position and Function of Man in the Created World according to Saint Bonaventure,’ *Franciscan Studies* 21, no. 3–4 (1961): 324.

⁴⁵ See David L. Clough, *On animals*, Vol. I, *Systematic Theology* (New York: T and T Clark International, 2012).

concern is not necessarily manifested straightforwardly when we place the animal on our throne with our vestiges. Suppose it is true that man, in order to know himself better, must also thoroughly understand the animality of which he is made up. Is it not also possible that the animal is made up of a celestial offspring that does not make mere sporadic feeling necessary for him since he is enveloped in a creatureliness that is already imbued with spirit? Moreover, in front of a waterfall, does it not simply rejoice in the beauty of the divine instant without the need to venerate it? Veneration, in man, is a mental itinerary to approach with different timing, logic, and destiny towards the same spiritual source of life, of which the animal has already been a sacred inhabitant from time immemorial.

For the animal, it is home; for man, it is a return journey. Religion dwells precisely in this transit. That is why, instead of thinking of the religiosity of the animal, as if it needed rituals, it is important to focus primarily on its indefatigable sacredness, as a mysterious being pointing to cosmological complexity as a good to be preserved and as an inspiration. According to Schaefer, it also remains to be understood how the ‘effects’ of a chimpanzee would relate to that of a tick, an ostrich, a swordfish, or a rattlesnake. Even the generic container ‘animal’ might not lead to simple outcomes from this perspective if one does not go down to the phenotype level.

It is not necessarily the case that, from an ethical point of view, respect for the animal’s dignity must necessarily pass through a coercive theoretical superimposition of its way of life with ours. Would this way of categorizing not, albeit synthetically functional to a theoretical construct, also suffer from an implicit anthropocentrism? What should remain as most religious about animals is our sense of humility, responsibility, and love. These are the cornerstones by which we know the animal if we have a theology of creation as our foundation.⁴⁶

In other strands of study, we also note the occurrence of a return to philosophical schools of thought that understand nature as imbued with sacredness on an animistic or pantheistic basis, as studied in-depth by Bron Taylor in his famous *Dark Green Religion*.⁴⁷ For this, it is challenging to espouse a postmodern cause that believes it has left behind

⁴⁶ See Lucie Kolářová, ‘The Animal within Creation: Thoughts from Christian Theology,’ *AUC Theologica* 15, no. 1 (2023): 43–66. doi: 10.14712/23563398.2023.14.

⁴⁷ See Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).

any possible return of metaphysical glimpses, be they immanentist or transcendentalist, in the religious sphere. A linear reading of the history of philosophy does not do much good in the complex conceptual world that has sprung up over time between man and nature since involving the most ancestral of themes; it tends to reappear in a miscellany of past influences, translated on the basis of the demands of the present. Materialism, in this sense, betrays an uncertainty which stems from a high primacy of contingency, motivated by activistic anxiety, in part rightly dictated by environmental ethical emergencies and partly the by-product of a systemic difficulty in reading the categories of the divine will as the key to understanding the modern human.⁴⁸

Indeed, any suggestion of the richness of animal living and experiencing the world is part of our curiosity towards them, their acting, in continuity and harmony with their nature and their surroundings. However, suppose we do not place our love for the whole creatural world at the centre; in that case, we will not advance one step in the petition for change and progressive improvement in environmental ethics, either if we are proponents of a deleterious anthropocentrism or a de-spiritualised biologism. As Pope Francis stated:

It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of cruelty towards any creature is ‘contrary to human dignity’. We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality.⁴⁹

Moreover, it is precisely because of this intrinsic eternal sacredness that the animal has, over time, suggested a myriad of zoomorphic symbols to human beings, in order to motivate their religious experience in harmony with nature, while, at the same time, wanting to acknowledge themselves in their inextricable speciality, as the fascinating reality of

⁴⁸ See Paolo Costa, *La città post-secolare. Il nuovo dibattito sulla secolarizzazione* (Brescia: Queriniana 2019).

⁴⁹ Pope Francis. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*, 92. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

bestiaries teaches us.⁵⁰ Bestiaries were popularised in the Middle Ages in illustrated volumes which described a variety of animals. A moral lesson frequently followed the natural history and illustration of each animal. This reflected the belief that the world itself was the Word of God, and that every living thing had a special meaning. Here, the Word, in the theological sphere, is not just about the logical-argumentative ‘linguistic turn’, but points to the breath of life, endowed with meaning even in the most disparate creaturely recess. A medieval Jane Goodall, probably, in the impossibility of travelling as we do today, would have had to thank an illustrated bestiary for an effective form of empathy that spoke to the heart and spirit.

Conclusion

The contemporary authors we have dealt with sometimes miss the opportunity to analyse a greater diversification in stretches of the history of thought that can show both the best and worst sides of the human relationship with the animal. This is the intrinsic danger of our philosophical age, in which we rush to provide ourselves with ‘post’ (post-humanism, post-atheism, etc.) without bothering to understand the kinship with past eras. Is not this growing dislike of the multi-millennial philosophical legacy itself an argument against us being anthropocentric? What if ‘centrism’ is understood as a generalised *zeitgeist*, as the prevailing spirit of the times is much more akin to a fanaticism for our circumscribed contemporary time-spectrum?

Human inattention to the creaturely good, rather than from a religious imposture, may stem from our technocratic ambitions that allow our desire to gain more and more power over the world and history. More than the anthropocentric disproportion in religious experience, the objectively more dangerous approach to the animality of humans and non-humans is the violence that humans perpetrate on the planet. There is a constant state of ‘shame’ in man concerning his technological products, as Guenther Anders would say.⁵¹ The awareness of this shame does not need to be reviewed by a critique of a human ‘monopoly’

⁵⁰ Peter Dendle, ‘Cryptozoology in the Medieval and Modern Worlds,’ *Folklore* 117, no. 2 (2006): 190–206. doi: 10.1080/00155870600707888.

⁵¹ Christian Fuchs, ‘Günther Anders’ Undiscovered Critical Theory of Technology in the Age of Big Data Capitalism,’ *tripleC* 15, no. 2 (2017): 582–611. doi: 10.31269/tripleC.v15i2.898.

of religious sentiment but by a radical review of how far man has just dangerously deviated from his religious capacity to read the world so that he can respect it in an accomplished manner.

When we know, contextually, that we cannot treat ourselves and the world only from a utilitarian perspective, we will rediscover our animal self and our specific spiritual tension, which is contemplative.⁵² This is an exquisitely human activity that should not be read as a form of absence from the real, but as a permeation of the real in which man does not automatically long for power; this pure religious approach allows him in the first instance a capacity for attention towards the totality of meanings in which he can then, in the second instance, act ethically and spiritually.

Only by grasping the immense scope of wisdom of all human religious experience over millennia will we be able to integrate it with astonishment towards the animal, in such a way as to reactivate our sense of respect and love for nature. It will not suffice to argue with the history of thought from a revisionist perspective; we must possess the foundations of the greatest longings for wisdom that have spanned ages, philosophers, and spiritual currents. We will discover that we will not need to ‘cheer’ for any anthropocentrism, but only to study the ‘Anthropos’ in all its dignified demand for meaning. We will rediscover the preciousness of focusing on the sacred to foster a balance in our actions and design an ecologically-oriented life only if humanity learns how to cultivate beauty through knowing itself.

In conclusion, it is important to step out of the polemical pattern toward Schaefer and highlight some ethical possibilities that arise from both our essentialist position and the materialist position he advanced. To move from ontology or phenomenology to ethics as far as animals are concerned, a separate methodological step must be taken, following this order: recognising that the understanding of the being of animals is not neutral but influenced by cultural and historical biases, whether they guiltily reduce the richness of the animal or attribute uncertifiable characteristics to it; in any case, a critical analysis of the ontological categories used will always be required.

⁵² Byung-Chul Han, *Vita contemplativa: In praise of inactivity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023).

One ethical principle that should always be considered is the following: a phenomenological approach must be taken that considers the lived experience of animals by acknowledging their subjectivity and experiences as morally relevant, regardless of our feelings towards them. This will require formulating ethical principles that reflect the inherent dignity and value of animals, involving an interdisciplinary dialogue with philosophers, ethologists, biologists, and other experts. After these theoretical aspects, the obligatory and practical steps will involve translating these ethical principles into concrete practices, such as promoting laws and policies that protect animal rights, adopting more ethical husbandry and consumption practices, and educating the public about the importance of respecting animals and caring for them. What philosophy will always be about, however, is the capacity for reflection that remains open to difficulty – unafraid to begin from divergent assumptions, guided by a commitment to the good and inspired by the sacred.

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REVIEWS & NEWS

Michele Cassese, *“Dinanzi a Dio e alla comunità”. Vita liturgica, spirituale e mistica nel Protestantesimo* (Koinonia, 24), Villa Verucchio (RI): Pazzini, 2023, 240 pages, ISBN: 978-88-6257-454-9.

MARKUS KRIENKE

Se tra il '600 e l'800 furono due movimenti di rinascita teologico-spirituale (Pietismo e Risveglio) a rinnovare la vita delle comunità e delle Chiese protestanti, anche il '900 deve essere giudicato come un «secolo molto dinamico» a livello teologico-spirituale per queste realtà evangeliche. Sorge spontanea però la domanda: come si potrebbe inquadrare l'odierna crisi di fede sia confessionale sia spirituale? Una teologia come quella di Lutero e Calvino che rifiuta ogni impostazione razionale o speculativa, concentrata tutta su una definizione appropriata degli attributi di Dio o su come accedere alla conoscenza di lui, e si caratterizza invece per una radicale fiducia di incontrarlo per grazia mediante l'ascolto della Parola della Scrittura, può essere colta come offerta convincente per una ricerca esistenziale dell'uomo e della donna di oggi? «Attraverso l'annuncio evangelico si accende la fiamma della fede, che è conoscenza in Gesù Cristo di chi è Dio» (p. 23): questo messaggio viene ancora adeguatamente trasmesso ed è ancora capace di coinvolgere uomini e donne di una società sempre più secolarizzata, individualistica, con tratti di narcisismo che – grazie alle nuove tecnologie – mette a rischio la garanzia delle libertà individuali negli ambienti sociali della democrazia, dell'economia di mercato, dello spazio pubblico, della società aperta? L'annuncio e la predicazione della Parola di Dio sono ancora adatti a far nascere la fede in chi è chiamato all'ascolto? Nelle condizioni odierne, è un aiuto la convinzione protestante che soggetto della fede resta sempre Dio, il quale opera mediante Cristo, e suscita l'abbandono fiducioso dell'uomo a lui e la sua conversione? La trasformazione del credente mediante la «penitenza» – intesa come un «cambiamento di mentalità» (p. 27) – da uomo vecchio a uomo nuovo corrisponde ancora oggi a un'esigenza intima e intensa, sentita come dimensione più profonda del sé? E soprattutto, sono queste le domande giuste per cogliere la teologia e la spiritualità protestanti nella loro essenza, cui riferirsi in tutti i tempi e per tutti i tempi?

C'è nel protestantesimo una dimensione profondamente liberante dell'annuncio della Parola, una dimensione così radicale da essere per il singolo «libertà anche da sé stessi, dal proprio egoismo, dal proprio interesse e guadagno» (p. 30); dotata dunque di un potenziale di consapevolizzazione tale da

corrispondere a ciò di cui molti nostri contemporanei sono alla ricerca. Ed è in questo spirito che il protestantesimo chiama a stare non solo “dinanzi a Dio” ma anche “alla comunità”. Così si presenta il titolo del libro di Michele Cassese su cui vogliamo porre la nostra attenzione. Un volume che offre sostanzialmente sei spinte o motivi, corrispondenti ai sei capitoli, che, assieme al primo capitolo introduttivo sui fondamenti teologico-dottrinali del protestantesimo, stimolano a rintracciare una risposta ai quesiti appena delineati.

Il primo motivo riguarda un argomento oggi di non facile comprensione, ossia i sacramenti, segni visibili di una presenza invisibile. I tre sacramenti determinati da Lutero – battesimo, eucaristia e penitenza – sono infatti realizzazioni visibili del «primo e fondamentale sacramento» ossia l’annuncio della Parola di Dio (p. 43). Rinascita (in Cristo), Presenza (di Cristo) e Riconciliazione (tramite Cristo) sono oggi desideri centrali dell’individuo tardo-moderno. Essi non sono né “producibili” né tecnicamente “sostituibili”, perché avvengono senza le nostre «autovalutazioni e prestazioni» (p. 72). Le dinamiche fondamentali della nostra esperienza umana, in effetti, non sono produzioni nostre, ma dono in cui sperimentiamo una dimensione più grande della nostra.

Tale dimensione profonda – scoperta da Lutero ed espressa in seguito anche dagli altri riformatori – è frutto non di una prestazione umana ma della fede, della relazione che Dio instaura con l’uomo che gli dà credito. Essa si realizza nella liturgia protestante, come illustra l’autore nei capitoli terzo e quarto, che ci offrono il secondo e il terzo motivo di riflessione. La dimensione divina viene confermata dall’eliminazione operata da Lutero di «tutto ciò che facesse riferimento all’idea di messa come opera che l’uomo può offrire a Dio, e quindi meritoria» come prevedeva il rito romano (p. 77). Al centro del culto (“servizio divino”) invece, il riformatore di Wittenberg pone la predica o sermone, fondati sulla Parola di Dio rivolta agli uomini, intorno alla quale si costituisce la comunità «senza esclusivismi o particolarismi» (p. 83). L’ascolto della Parola innesca nel credente una nuova consapevolezza e lo innesta proprio all’interno di tale comunità. Nella liturgia e nella catechesi si esprime, afferma Michele Cassese, «la sua [di Lutero] *pedagogia*, improntata al rispetto dei principi di libertà interiore e flessibilità», secondo il «metodo della gradualità e della partecipazione attiva del soggetto» (p. 92).

Sulla linea di Lutero si pone Calvino nella sua ricerca di una maggiore autenticità nella riforma del culto: solo se le celebrazioni liturgiche si realizzano con «purezza» e sono vissute da parte di tutta la comunità «con autentico spirito di fede e rispetto di ciò che è ordinato dalla Scrittura», raggiungono il loro scopo di essere ad un tempo servizio di Dio alla comunità e servizio della comunità a Dio (*Gottesdienst*) diventando un nutrimento per il corpo e l’anima (p. 99). In questo modo il culto offre la possibilità di aprire i cuori per percepire la presenza dell’Altro, di Dio in mezzo alla comunità.

I riformatori Lutero e Calvino, nel loro apporto al “rinnovamento liturgico” nel Cinquecento, davano anche indicazioni sull’attuazione delle loro riforme

(e qui si ha il quarto argomento): esse vanno effettuate con «prudenza», perché per essere accolte efficacemente hanno bisogno di «un lento cammino di modifiche progressive» (p. 116). In questo modo, i riformatori davano una lezione anche politica: la realizzazione storica delle idee deve essere rispettata nei suoi ritmi, per non dare spazio a progetti caratterizzati da segni di violenza. Oggi spesso pensiamo a breve termine, e con statistiche del momento; pensiamo di aver compreso la realtà che invece si presenta sempre più complessa. Riscoprire la dimensione spirituale oggi significa anche adeguare i sistemi politici, economici, finanziari, amministrativi ecc. ai ritmi degli uomini e delle idee. Se al tempo dei riformatori la «vita culturale-ecclesiale si intrecciò con i ritmi della realtà quotidiana, nella scansione dei giorni, nella vita di pietà, morale e sociale» (p. 117), ed esplicitamente anche con la dimensione familiare, questo potrebbe indicare a noi oggi una «pedagogia di tutti i giorni», valida anche nella realizzazione etico-sociale delle dimensioni della spiritualità. I ritmi sociali sempre più accelerati, proprio per il potenziale delle nuove tecnologie, costituiscono pertanto una sfida non indifferente, alla quale ci si può opporre però soltanto con i «ritmi della spiritualità». Il «rinnovamento» realizzato dalla Riforma nella Chiesa attraverso il culto, oggi dovrebbe diventare una nuova proposta per i fedeli e non; e in questa proposta di contenuti e modalità di attuazione si evidenzerebbe anche l'importanza storica delle Chiese proprio nell'attuale momento di crisi culturale. Non a caso, infatti, Calvino affermò che «l'Evangelo non è una dottrina, ma una vita» (cit. p. 159).

Partendo da quest'ultima affermazione, Cassese affronta il quinto argomento, quello della spiritualità. Lo introduce affermando che per i riformatori «il cuore è il luogo in cui l'uomo fa esperienza di Dio e lo conosce» (p. 159). E cita Lutero: «La vita (spirituale) non è essere pio, ma diventare pio, non essere sano, ma diventarlo, non un essere ma un diventare, non stare in pace, ma esercitarsi. Noi non siamo ancora (pii), ma lo diventiamo. E non è fatto o divenuto già, ma è in corso d'opera e instabile. [Importante] non è il traguardo, ma il cammino. Non tutto arde e brilla ancora, tutto può migliorare» (p. 160). Si tratta di un aspetto di particolare importanza non solo per un'accettazione della fede oggi, ma anche per una riflessione più profonda sull'esistenza da offrire alla contemporaneità. L'umanità odierna, tutta presa da questioni tecniche e da aspettative economico-consumistiche, ha perso la «pazienza» per il diventare, per il cammino, per l'attesa dei frutti provenienti da una buona coltivazione: essi richiedono non fretta e ansia, ma tempi lunghi e sedimentazione. Questo è anche il motivo per cui non si produce più nulla di duraturo, ma tutto deve essere risolto in un lasso di tempo breve: sì, il «breveterminismo» è diventato un imperativo sempre più incalzante.

Potrebbe dare un'alternativa a questa ondata culturale del nostro tempo, lo sguardo che l'autore ci propone sulla varietà di espressione della spiritualità protestante, lungo i secoli, tra cui spicca la «svolta interiore» del Pietismo del Sei-Settecento con la sua ricerca della «coscienza pia» (p. 167). Essa però

è riuscita ad affermarsi solo in parte, anche se significativamente, nelle comunità protestanti luterane e calviniste, senza scalzare la supremazia dell'Ortodossia protestante, piuttosto legata alla "scolastica confessionale" e alla speculazione; cosa che influenzò anche la predicazione, la vita di pietà e la vita pratica. Tra le varie forme in cui si esprime oggi la spiritualità protestante ereditata dalla Riforma, Cassese mette in evidenza la preghiera intesa «come momento di relazione con Dio», che trova «spazio nella normalità della vita personale e sociale dei protestanti» (p. 174). Certamente, oggi le chiese sono in sofferenza, perché le forme da esse proposte per esprimere la spiritualità a livello comunitario non corrispondono più all'esperienza di vita vissuta dai più; su molti influisce anche la visione di una chiesa come istituzione, associata al "vecchio", a fronte di un'esigenza di forme nuove di spiritualità. Pertanto si fa strada sempre più la riflessione di una spiritualità vissuta nella quotidianità, nella quale il protestante rivive e attua una sua «etica della responsabilità» (p. 185): nell'ambito del lavoro, nella professione cioè, come cittadino, come padre di famiglia e altrove. Pertanto, afferma Cassese, la spiritualità protestante si esplicita come «operante» (p. 187).

Come ultimo motivo atto a considerare la proposta spirituale del protestantesimo per una realizzazione di sé, vi è la dimensione mistica, che il credente è invitato a coltivare dinanzi a Dio e alla comunità, accogliendo e vivendo intensamente quanto gli viene offerto e presentato. Per mistica il mondo protestante non intende quanto concepito nel suo significato cattolico-medievale, di sforzo del credente nell'instaurare un intenso legame con Dio, ma piuttosto un rapporto intimo che Dio stesso stabilisce con il fedele nel più profondo della sua esperienza di fede, in cui entrano in gioco anche le emozioni. Un punto fondamentale della spiritualità protestante è infatti «il coinvolgimento di tutto l'essere umano, non solo la razionalità, ma anche il cuore e le emozioni, in particolare la gioia, la sorpresa, la paura, la tristezza e anche la vergogna» (p. 192). Così gli è consentito di vivere più profondamente le relazioni sia con Dio che con gli uomini.

L'autore nelle conclusioni mette in rilievo come «la comprensione odierna della spiritualità abbraccia tutte le dimensioni della persona, spirito, anima e corpo, in un fecondo processo di rivalutazione e valorizzazione dell'espressività umana» (p. 230). Si tratta proprio di una proposta valoriale del mondo delle chiese della Riforma dettata da istanze culturali attuali, e purtroppo carente se non spesso mancante nell'esperienza di molti uomini d'oggi. Un'intensificazione dell'esperienza della fede in tale direzione, come l'autore l'ha descritta con l'ultimo motivo, quello della mistica, è stata perorata già da Karl Rahner. Il teologo gesuita ammoniva che «il cristiano di domani dovrà essere un 'mistico', uno che ha fatto esperienza di Dio nel profondo, o non sarà più un credente». Anche per il filosofo della religione di Monaco di Baviera, morto nel 2014, Eugen Biser, la mistica è una condizione interiore essenziale del cristianesimo e non può essere una caratteristica solo di pochi. Per

lui il mistico perfetto era rappresentato molto bene dall'Apostolo Paolo, che viveva la dimensione mistica come libertà, autorealizzazione ed elevazione a Dio. La dimensione personale della fede – ed ecco un messaggio importante per l'oggi – non deve essere cancellata nella spiritualità cristiana, ma guidata a trovare la sua centralità e a fare esperienza profonda al massimo delle proprie possibilità. Tutto questo non è senza difficoltà, perché è in contrasto con l'imperante consumismo e tecnicismo. I sei motivi offerti dal libro di Cassese dunque danno una direzione di percorso, proposto sul modello del protestantesimo luterano e calvinista. Tramite i sacramenti e la liturgia, come di altri elementi spirituali – preghiera personale e familiare, lettura e meditazione della Bibbia, riscoperta della Liturgia delle Ore e della confessione privata, musica e canto, silenzio e contemplazione – il credente realizza nel profondo la sua umanità come accoglienza di un dono proveniente da Dio. Viene suggerita anche una pedagogia per questo percorso: andare all'essenzialità e autenticità nei modi di esprimere tale spiritualità – anche nel culto – e viverla in forma comunitaria, perché nella realtà ecclesiale e civile si realizza la dinamica umana della vita che trova la sua più autentica espressione nella dimensione interiore, nella dimensione mistica. Si consiglia pertanto caldamente la lettura di questo ultimo libro di Michele Cassese, perché permette di conoscere l'anima della spiritualità protestante scoprendovi molteplici spunti di percorsi spirituali anche per gli uomini del nostro tempo.

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**Josef Sorett, *Black is a Church: Christianity and the Contours of African American Life*,
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023, 239 pages,
ISBN 978-0-19-061513-0.**

ONDŘEJ HAVELKA

The monograph *Black is a Church* by Josef Sorett – an American scholar of religion and race who is currently Dean of Columbia College of Columbia University – explores and reveals the ways in which the culture and identity of American blacks has been influenced and even shaped by Protestantism. The author discusses Afro-Protestantism and reveals that Protestant Christianity played an elemental role in the emergence of black literary creativity, shaping its unique identity that has permeated its way to its current form.

The history of Afro-Protestantism shows the obvious links between literature, politics and religion, especially in the late 19th century. In the book, the author looks at historical, sociological and anthropological work in the 1930s and 1940s that was crucial to the study of African American culture and continues the historical cross-section further into the present day, repeatedly considering concepts such as ‘black church’ and ‘black religion’. In general, the author argues that Black Studies has adopted a secular orthodoxy in which the analytical category of religion remains under-theorized. According to Sorett, Black Studies would certainly benefit from a rethinking of secularist assumptions, since Afro-Protestantism has long formed the very core of the tradition of Black Studies theory and practice. He treats the subject in the 239 pages of this readable monograph.

The monograph is organized into four comprehensive chapters. The first chapter, entitled ‘The Literary Beginnings of Afro-Protestantism’, explores the narratives of black slaves in a very interesting way, authentically introducing the reader to the topic presented. Through this narrative, enslaved Africans attempted to interpret the new world and settle into it. According to Sorett, the authors and the communities around them authorized a tradition of Protestantism that was something specifically black but also specifically American. The slave narratives drew the contours for a set of practices that would then define the tradition of politically engaged Afro-Protestantism in the United States. They also provided the space and platform for the emergence of ideas that gave rise to the terms ‘black church’ and ‘black religion’, the author writes. The first chapter of the monograph reveals the ways in which Afro-Protestant

orthodoxy was integrated into the fabric of black subjectivity and social life in the United States.

The second comprehensive chapter, 'Afro-Protestantism, Pluralism, and the Problem of the Color Line', examines the elemental role of Afro-Protestantism in the emergence of the genre of so-called race literature. In this chapter, the author also examines the role of Afro-Protestantism in the religious pluralism that permeated the new forms of Christianity that gave rise to Afro-Pentecostalism. The phenomena described here provided something of a platform through which African Americans could interpret and organize an increasingly heterodox black religious experience at the turn of the twentieth century. Black preachers and writers at the time, according to Sorett, aspired to a more complex form of religious expression. It also moved to delineate disciplinary boundaries and key concepts through which African American religion was represented and analyzed in the decades that followed.

The author titles the third chapter 'Afro-Protestantism and the Politics of Studying Black Life' and focuses on the period from the 1930s to the 1940s. It was then that race literature expanded beyond the existing Afro-Protestant paradigms and significantly influenced the academic and activist work of a new generation in the United States. In this chapter, the author looks at, among other things, a specific kind of religious orthodoxy that was consistent with the politics of racial authenticity and set certain conditions for the study of the black church and black religion in a broader context. In chapter three, the author also highlights other important writers and thinkers who influenced and shaped the religious life of American blacks. These writers also adhered to institutional and ethical Afro-Protestantism. Sorett presents their important works that were instrumental in the further development of the issues under study.

In the final fourth chapter, 'The Afterlives of Afro-Protestantism', the author discusses three more recent examples of Afro-Protestant modernity involving scholarship, literature, and politics. The chapter affirms the enduring power of religious and racial logic calling for the de-centering of the church, which became newly evident during the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. According to Sorett, attempts to decenter Afro-Protestantism, descriptive accounts of its decline, and polemics about its demise have often served as the very conditions of possibility for its persistence and rediscovery.

Josef Sorett's book is certainly a rewarding read not only for those interested in Black Studies in the context of religion, but certainly for cultural anthropologists, theologians, and religious studies scholars as well.

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