THE LIGHT OF THE GIFT IN
HOMO ABYSSUS

Marine de la Tour

"Being is the unity of creation and its mobility, its fecundity, and its life."

───────── ⸎ ─────────

The gift in the philosophy of Ferdinand Ulrich, especially in *Homo Abyssus*, is an ever-present and fundamental light. But paradoxically, it is not a phenomenon that Ulrich considers in its concrete human reality, whether personal or social. The gift will be the great explicit theme of *Gabe und Vergebung*, his last work.[1] In *Homo Abyssus*, the work that presents the metaphysical heart of Ulrich's thought, there is no phenomenology of the gift; the logic of the gift is rather the implicit logic in which the great questions of metaphysics are clarified and certain difficulties or contradictions resolved. But it is neither a model for thinking nor a total logic or idea that would grasp the totality of the real in its concept.

I will therefore not speak directly of the gift, but make a roundabout tour of what seem to me some of the most fruitful

---

1. Ferdinand Ulrich, *Gabe und Vergebung. Ein Beitrag zur biblischen Ontologie*, *Schriften V*, ed. Stefan Oster (Freiburg: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 2006) (hereafter cited as *GV*).

traits in *Homo Abyssus*, and to develop some of the ideas, distinc-
tions, or interpretations that help us to think and to live. We shall
then see that the gift is, in a way, the central light of *Homo Abys-
sus*, and that its important questions are answered on the basis of
the consent to the gift or of the refusal of the gift.

Therefore, I will first try to ask what Ulrich means when
he speaks of being, and to present some traits of his ontology.
Then this will lead us to consider the attitude of reason and the
fundamental choice it faces: dialectics or gift. Finally, we will
look at the status of negativity in Ulrich's thought.[2]

1. A LIVING METAPHYSICS

One of my professors in Munich had followed the lectures of
Ferdinand Ulrich; I believe that he partly owed his philosophical
vocation to him. As a young Jesuit of nineteen or twenty years,
he had begun his philosophy studies and was beginning to fa-
miliarize himself with its concepts, which were, for him, rather
abstract. Being and essence, the real distinction, substance and
accidents—he learned all of that the way one learns about "the
rivers of Africa from a geography map," as he told me: strange
names in an unknown territory, which one learns without any
impact or clarity on one's life and experience. Then he attended
Ferdinand Ulrich's classes. All of a sudden, these very same con-
cepts became charged with life and meaning, even charged with
existential stakes. He found once again, in a very different lan-
guage and context, what he had discovered during his novitiate
as a Jesuit. Philosophy suddenly had something to do with a way
of life; it had something to do with existence.

Philosophy *reveals*, *interprets*, and *discerns*. This is an essen-
tial characteristic of *Homo Abyssus* and the thinking expressed in

---

2. Before going on, I would like to add a preliminary remark. I chose here
the easiest way, which is to read Ulrich's interpretation of being in a realistic
way as created being. It corresponds to what Ulrich has in mind when he
writes. But the ontology of *Homo Abyssus* does not necessarily presuppose the
light of faith. It can be grounded in a transcendental reflection on the condi-
tion of the possibilities of knowledge or in a hermeneutic of existence. But it
is true that Ulrich's ontology becomes much more simple if we leave open the
theological horizon it opens itself—a horizon that gives to this ontology its
fullness of meaning and frees it from ambiguities.

it. It is a living metaphysics that avoids the dead-ends of ideology or any system because this metaphysical thinking takes place on two levels of reality, transcendence, and verification: personal existence, first of all, and even more fundamentally, the life of God.

2. . . . BECAUSE IT REFUSES THE HYPOSTASIS OF BEING

2.1. Non subsistens

It is a "living metaphysics" because it refuses what Ulrich calls "the hypostasis of being," which would be on the level of a pure logic, and as such unable to shed light on concrete existence in its reality and complexity. Ulrich keeps on repeating, quoting Thomas Aquinas, "Being denotes something complete and simple, yet nonsubsistent."[3] "To be"/being-in-itself, is not. Being which subsists in itself is God. But the being of concrete created beings does not subsist. When metaphysics, as a discourse on Being, seeks to say something about it, it thus necessarily turns to the existence of what-is.

The rigorous refusal to accord whatever reality to "to be"/being-in-itself, even as an object of thought, nevertheless does not lead Ulrich to a radical critique of metaphysics. In fact, we can speak of *being* in "ontological difference" with *what is*; it speaks of existence as a fact and in its concrete reality. It is also the name of the principle of unity and diversity of beings, the principle of the singularity of all *that is*. Being is the unity of creation and its mobility, its fecundity, and its life. Being is that which grounds the possibility of the word and of meaning.

2.2. Completum et simplex

Being denotes something nonsubsistent, but also "complete and simple," and as such "the first of created things,"[4] according to the expression of Thomas again, taken over by Ulrich. Being,

---

3. Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia*, 1, 1.

4. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 45, a. 4 ad 1 (hereafter cited as *ST*).

however, is not a "thing." This expression, ambiguous perhaps, designates the first, fundamental position of reality created in the difference from the Creator, and on the "side" of God it designates the fundamental will of the existence of the world. Being is thus one with the creative act, or one could rather say that it is the presence of this act in what is.

The being of created beings is not God. Neither is it the "ontological hinge"[5] that would link the world and the Absolute—a conception that Ulrich criticizes under the term "onto-theo-logical."[6] The being of created things is itself created. This maintains God's transcendence and opens up the possibility of a relationship. But this being is "pure mediation," Ulrich says. Being thus does not cover up, but affirms that-which-is. It signifies the affirmation and the goodness of what is.

That being is "the first of created things" and "pure mediation" also means the unity of the creative act—and therefore the unity in creation, a unity that the affirmation of the singularity of each thing does not destroy. Finally, being as the "first of created things" expresses the gift of the totality of being, and therefore also the possibility of evolution from the immanent possibilities of creation. Here especially, the light of the gift enlightens: the creative act is not the positing of being, but the gift of being. Being is really given, and this gift is fruitful.

2.3. The uncaused character of being as being

If being is "the first of created things," Ulrich immediately stresses that it is not totally marked by the character of being an effect, and is not immediately recognizable as an effect. There is here an original idea of *Homo Abyssus*, which Ulrich calls "the uncaused character of being as being" (das Gepräge des Nichtverursachtseins des Seins als Sein). What does he mean by that? He actually takes up again an affirmation of Thomas Aquinas, and deploys its existential meaning. Yet,

---

5. Cf. Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus: The Drama of the Question of Being*, trans. D.C. Schindler (Washington, DC: Humanum Academic Press, 2018), 215 (hereafter cited as *HA*).

6. For a comparison with Heidegger's use of the term, see Marine de la Tour, *Gabe im Anfang. Grundzüge des metaphysischen Denkens von Ferdinand Ulrich* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 111–12n202 (hereafter cited as *GA*).

we can ask for the cause of all beings we encounter. But "to be caused does not enter into the essence of being as such," Aquinas tells us, and Ulrich with him.[7] On the contrary, all that is, as it is, bears the mark, the "imprint," of the uncaused character of being. The being/the "to be" of created entities is not God's being—this is what the affirmation of created being as "the first of created things" preserves—but it bears the mark of an uncaused origin, because being does not mean in itself "being caused."

The uncaused character of being qua being prevents us from seeing the whole reality only as an effect. Creation is, and as such does not immediately refer to its cause. For Ulrich, this is paradoxically the great truth of which atheism reminds us. The possibility of atheism rests on the completeness of creation. And yet, this completeness—the apparent absence of the Creator—shows the dignity of creation, manifests the seriousness of the gift, we might say, and therefore reveals the Creator to whom the Creation in its substantiality resembles. And so, while manifesting the radicality of the gift, the possibility of atheism can paradoxically reveal the Creator more deeply and more truly.[8] Ulrich writes:

> This unique character of the being of the world having closure in itself, from which the hidden God has apparently withdrawn himself, the world that always presents itself to all of our questioning as a "world" that persists in self-sameness, the world that "engulfs" all the bridges to the infinite that we erect in an attempt to bring God closer to us—that is, to capture him as a piece of the world—it is this world, precisely in its tempting man to alienate himself from God because of its apparent absoluteness, that reveals the depths of the uncaused character of being qua being. This character is the ultimate seal of God's creative, loving intimacy.[9]

---

7. *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* II, 52; cf. *HA*, 124.

8. For an interpretation of this "closure" of the world from a theological perspective, cf. Romano Guardini, *Welt und Person. Versuche zur christlichen Lehre vom Menschen* (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1988), 83–102.

9. *HA*, 127.

Each being, as it is, bears the mark and likeness of the uncaused origin. And this character is precisely what is original, incommunicable, and irreducible in each being. This is what characterizes in particular, of course, the person who is substance in the full sense of the word. At this point, we cannot but think of the first catechesis of the *Theology of the Body*, where John Paul II interprets the solitude of Adam as a mark of the likeness of God, as the revelation of his own personal existence, and as a vocation to be the interlocutor of the Absolute. I think Ulrich's metaphysics helps us to think through this in a rigorous way.

Since the world in its substantiality, and each thing in its substantiality, bears this imprint of the uncaused character of being, the concrete can therefore never be reduced to being only a result, the result of the application of a logic, of a program. It is not reproducible. It bears a seal of absoluteness (by its uniqueness and substantiality), of mystery, and of fruitfulness. These characteristics of what is cannot be dialectically produced by any logic. Speculative reason cannot *produce* these characteristics because they are by definition original. Concrete beings bear this character. Dialectics tries to reproduce it—one could even say that this character constitutes the horizon of the dialectic, but a horizon that always escapes and in which only the humble reason that listens to being is already *in via*.

3. DIALECTICS OR GIFT

In order to be sure of itself and truly master its object, reason can feel responsible for reconstructing the totality of reality in a speculative process. Thus, it finds itself before the enormous responsibility of starting from scratch, of recreating everything, by the sheer force of the dialectic, without ever recovering the original force of being and its uncaused character. This dialectical reason must make itself the agent of the ontological difference. If it starts from reality seen as pure facticity, it must then deny this facticity, which is not transparent to being, in order to recover the dimension of being that unifies reality, which is the place of logos.

But the negation of the concrete makes dialectical reason posit being, "even if it is only for the moment of a reflection's

determination in the process of thinking,"[10] as something that is, which is what Ulrich calls the "hypostasis of being." Reason then immediately negates this hypostasis once more to ensure the subsistence of the concrete reality by this negation. Reason thus finds itself obliged to make itself "the executor of the contradiction."[11]

In contrast to this dialectical reason that wants, or believes itself obliged, to grasp the totality of being (of the real) in its concept, Ulrich describes a reason open to being, obedient to the "sense of being," as he says.[12] This reason, accepting the fact that being *is not*, and that it can neither take hold of it directly, consents that the concrete beginning of thought be always the subsistence of the concrete being. It does not renounce the boldness of speculative thinking that seeks to speak of being ("Daring the Question of Being" precisely translates the German subtitle of *Homo Abyssus*). In a speculative, that is to say reflexive movement, reason that is open to the sense of being that is manifested in the concrete reality discovers being as pure mediation.

The ontological difference is open in the concrete reality to the reason that accepts the "little way" of the journey among the concrete beings without reducing them to their pure facticity. Identity and difference can be thought together, because diversity does not imply the negation of a unity first posited artificially as rigid. This rigid identity would correspond to the hypostasis of being, the negation of which would break the reality into unrelated entities, "fragments of factical reality,"[13] absolute particularisms. Likewise, the essence or form does not get lost in the materiality of being, because the essence does not need to cling to itself in the ideality of a definition, or rather, we do not need to think the essence in this way. Identity does not have to preserve itself from dispersion in historicity, and so on. Being, which is the foundation of reason, but a foundation that it cannot grasp reflexively and master in an absolute logic, is manifested to

---

10. Ibid., 100 (translation modified).

11. Ibid., 35–36.

12. Cf. the entries "Listening obedience" and "Necessary sense of being" in the lexicon at the end of *HA*.

13. Ibid., 485.

it as "pure mediation" and principle of fruitfulness: mediation between identity and difference, essence and accidents, and so on.

In *Gabe und Vergebung*, Ulrich describes a scene between a child and his mother, which can illustrate the "listening obedience to being" we are talking about, here in an interpersonal context:

> We see a little child playing with blocks. He is on all fours. From time to time, he sits down and plays with both hands. Then he leans on one of his arms and builds only with the other hand. Sometimes, he lies completely on the ground, his head against the blocks. He is concentrated, immersed with all his attention in this limited space of play, a space of freedom. . . . By assembling the blocks, sometimes slowly, as reflecting, sometimes quickly, trying and starting again, he forgets himself and is completely dedicated to his play.
>
> . . . In a certain sense, the becoming of the work is the language of its own becoming. The place of the child's action is thus both outside and inside him—all the more outside, in the thing itself, that the child is engaged in his play; and the child is all the more present to himself, in a living interiority, that he is dedicated to what he does, that he forgets himself. . . .
>
> Gradually, the tower takes shape. Finally, the child calls out, as if the last attention to the work completed in his playing was at the same time the diversion of the It [the thing], to turn to the Thou: "Look mom, a tower!" The mother turns to the child and his construction and says, "Yes, a tower. It is beautiful. So high . . . and it has a gate, too. You can even pass through it with a big carriage. And who is it up there, looking out the window?"
>
> Is not the behavior of the mother strange at first sight? The mother refers to the child who built the tower, and yet she does not say a word of the builder of the tower. In a sense, she turns her gaze away from him to the "thing," to what it is all about. She "forgets," so to speak, the creative origin of the work, and she has the work itself before her eyes—the work considered for itself. And yet, she looks at the tower with the eyes of the playing child. Had not he forgotten himself while building? And, at this moment, the mother lovingly does the same with him.
>
> Does this mean that the child is of no importance to the mother?
>
> . . . Not at all, since in turning completely toward the work, the mother accomplishes with the playing child his

exit out of himself, his devoting himself to the thing. She is
with the child in . . . the place where the genitive (the work
of the child) has become visible and concrete. Through
the contemplation of the work (in an act of creative re-
enactment [. . .]), she . . . accomplishes the child's self-
forgetfulness, his commitment to the work. . . . She is
present to the child in himself, . . . the child whose inner,
objective fruitfulness is revealed in the work but is not
identical to the production of the work. . . . The mother's
attention is a living and concrete "yes" to what comes from
the child and bears . . . the traces of its origin.[14]

We see here that there is no opposition between the in-
terpersonal relationship and the material realm of things, nor
between the realm of being and the realm of doing. The child
is given and forgotten in his action, and the attitude of the mo-
ther is the one that is most adjusted to the person of the child,
reaching out to him in the place where he is present. She reaches
out to the being of the child by accomplishing with him that
movement by which he goes out of himself while remaining in
himself; he realizes his being in his action.

This movement is described by Ulrich with the verb *en-
täussern*; the child "empties himself." The reference to the mo-
vement of the Incarnation is obvious. In the preface of *Homo
Abyssus*, Ulrich writes: "The subject matter itself has transcended
ontology into anthropology, and anthropology into Christol-
ogy—and I have followed in the wake of this movement."[15] On-
tology is transcended into anthropology, because it is above all
in the person and its concrete existence that the interpretation
of being is done and decided. Ontology and anthropology are
transcended into Christology because it is in the light of the In-
carnation of the Son that the sense of being as pure mediation is
finally revealed: the Son, "who, being in the form of God, did
not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he
emptied himself . . . And for this God raised him high, and gave
him the name which is above all other names."[16] This is what Ul-

---

14. *GV*, 354–58, my translation.

15. *HA*, 1.

16. Phil 2: 6–9.

rich refers to as the "mystery of glory and poverty."[17] We find this motif of the hymn to the Philippians implicitly present in many pages of *Homo Abyssus*. The pure mediation of being is another name for the ipseity of annihilation and glorification, for the "to be" of the substance in and by the radical "gift" of itself in the otherness of matter, of the accidental.

4. THE STATUS OF NEGATIVITY

This kenotic motif is well known to idealism. One could read it in a dialectical way, seeing in it a constitutivity of the nega-tion, or even of the contradiction, in being. This invites us to clarify the place of the negative. This is one of the crucial points of *Homo Abyssus*, which Ulrich discusses closely, not only with Hegel and Heidegger, but also with Siewerth.

In an ontological context, we can speak of negativity to signify several things. Negativity can mean the constitutive finitude of beings: not to be infinite or absolute, which is not to be conceived as an external limitation but as an intrinsic defini-tion, a positive determination of finite being. Negativity can also express the "transcendence" of man capable of the mystery of being, as Heidegger says—the responsibility for being that is its essence.[18] We find this in Ulrich, too: it even explains the title *Homo Abyssus*. Finally, there is negativity, or at least a negation, in the nonsubsistence of being itself, which Ulrich affirms now and again, recognizing *as such* its convertibility with nothingness.[19]

Yet for Ulrich—and this is an essential point—the nega-tive is not constitutive of being. Nonbeing is not a moment of "to be"; it would include potentiality in its pure actuality.[20] Being

17. Ferdinand Ulrich, *Atheismus und Menschwerdung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1975), 27 (hereafter cited as *AM*).

18. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Was ist Metaphysik" and "Vom Wesen des Grundes," in *Wegmarken*, *Gesamtausgabe* vol. 9, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2004), 103–22 and 123–75.

19. However, Ulrich refuses to consider nothingness as a transcendental (cf. *HA*, 250–51). This is an important point of discussion with Siewerth, even if Siewerth is not explicitly quoted in this passage of *HA* (cf. *GA*, 128–44.)

20. Nothingness could be understood as a potential dimension in being itself, which would be the principle of the real potential dimensions of con-

would no longer be pure mediation. Composed of act and poten-
cy, it would be a kind of hypostasis, which Ulrich has constant-
ly denounced. This hypostasis, which the negation of negation
should destroy, would render impossible the original manifesta-
tion of being in the positivity of the singular existence and in the
convertibility of the transcendentals.[21] This hypostasis would also
constitute a conceptual or ideal "in-between" between God and
the world. This concept unifying being and not-being would
constitute the true principle, a place of pure indetermination,
from which only the negation of the negative would release, ei-
ther toward the positivity of the determination of finite beings,
or toward the absolute positivity of the *ipsum esse subsistens*.[22] This
"bad" ontotheology, which is necessarily implied if one accepts
the constitutivity of the negative for being, relativizes both the
createdness of the finite and the transcendence of God.

What liberates us from this dialectical ontotheology
is the humility of reason that recognizes the determination of
the concreteness of what is. But in the end, it is only the subla-
tion, *Aufhebung* (the movement of transcending that suppress-
es and preserves at once), of the gift of being in the actuality
of the trinitarian life, whose source is the gift of the Father,
which can really preserve the pure mediation of being.[23]

For Ulrich, the force that moves the gigantic specula-
tive effort of modern thought, and of idealism in particular,
is in fact the search for this powerful positivity of the princi-
ple—a power of giving that it tries to let emerge speculatively.

---

crete beings: essence and matter. The negation of this potential dimension
would signify its position in "otherness" to "to be": as mediation of concrete
subsistence. Ulrich's interpretation of concrete subsistence is very close to this,
without, however, seeing the total origin of the potential dimension of matter
and essence in being itself. This can be thought only if being itself is not seen
as the last level of origin, but even as pure mediation, rich and poor at the same
time: "first of created things" and as such complete, having the power of all
mediation to concrete subsistence, but nonsubsistent in its actuality as gift of
God, and as such "poor" and "chaste," as Ulrich often says in his later works
(cf. for example, *AM*, 26).

21. Cf. *HA*, 251.

22. Cf. ibid., 40–41.

23. For Ulrich, this is not a theological presupposition, but a philosophical
necessity.

In *Homo Abyssus*, Ulrich goes so far as to say that modern metaphysics is thus in reality a "struggle for the Father,"[24] a struggle for the "*potentia generandi Patris*,"[25] who is in person the mediation between nature and person, the absolute gift of the divine nature to the Son in the Spirit. Modern metaphysics is thus a struggle for the mystery of an eternally fruitful, free, and personal origin, an origin that is the source and power of all mediation.

The negative is not intrinsic to the principle for Ulrich, and yet existential negativity (that is, incompleteness of all kinds, possibilities of refusal, finitude, vulnerability, and death) has a very important place in his work. But even this existential negativity may be illuminated by the light of the gift. Its hermeneutical place could be situated in an essential characteristic of the gift, which Ulrich expresses with a German word that is quite difficult to translate: *Umsonst*. *Umsonst* means "for nothing," free of charge. But it is also "for nothing," in vain. A gift may not bear fruit. The one who really gives, or who gives himself really, takes the risk of having given in vain, of having lost himself in vain. In this regard, the gift is beyond logic. But only at this price is there a gift. And that is what actually makes it fruitful.

And so, the experience of meaninglessness that opposes an easy finalism, the experience of being able to lose oneself in vain, the experience of many kinds of "death" that seem sterile, even the completeness of the world of which we spoke and which seems to reject the question "why," are experiences of the "for nothing," the "in vain" of the gift of being. But this "for nothing" can also be a sign and "seal" of the gratuitousness and radicality of the gift, and at the heart of the negative there appears an absolute liberality in the principle.

The *Umsonst* (for nothing) of the gift is thus the place where the negative is saved. Negativity is assumed in the gra-

---

24. Cf. *HA*, 58. D.C. Schindler chose to translate "um den Vater ringt" as "grapples with the Father." Since the German uses the preposition "um," I think we can also understand this as a "struggle for," a struggle to recover speculatively the fatherhood of the Father.

25. Thomas Aquinas, 2 *Sent.*, 7.1.2. Cf. Ferdinand Ulrich, "Der logisierte Geist" (unpublished manuscript, 1960–61), 110.

tuitousness of love from the beginning, without being in any way neutralized or relativized. In the reality of the world, it is on the Cross that the identity between gift in vain and gratuitous love is assumed in the flesh, and that all negativity is saved in this act of free love that embraces all creation and the history of men.

Saving being from indetermination by the power of the negative, or conceiving being in the light of a radical gift: the consequences of this ontological choice are immense both for the way we think the world and things, and for the direction of our action.

CONCLUSION

The ontology of *Homo Abyssus* is open to the drama of sin and illuminates it. It presents itself as *Ontodramatik*. This book is the fruit of a kind of intuition. It was written within a mere few weeks, certainly from the inner place of the drama in question. We feel it in the vocabulary. The book is marked by an engagement in a fight. The ontological interpretations have an existential scope in which the whole being is engaged and "decided." For each question, Ulrich always takes his reader to the heart of the "crisis," where existence is decided in the consent or refusal of the sense of being. *Homo Abyssus* is thus an ontology that discerns and makes one able to discern.

It is a drama and a crisis, the expression of which is sometimes violent. And yet we discover at the heart of this drama the presence of the original gift where the crisis is already decided. This is above all what *Homo Abyssus* brings: the epiphany of a gift, original and free, which has the power to assume any refusal, which is the foundation of our being and the source of our hope.

In *The Name of God Is Mercy*, Pope Francis speaks of an elderly woman who told him: "If the Lord did not forgive everything, the world would not exist."[26] She expresses the meta-

---

26. Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy. A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli*, trans. Oonagh Stransky (New York: Random House, 2016), 25.

physical intuition that the actuality of being is forgiveness.[27] In the end, it seems to me that this is what Ulrich's ontology allows us to think.⋆   □

MARINE DE LA TOUR wrote a doctoral thesis on Ferdinand Ulrich's metaphysics, and teaches philosophy at the Lycée Marie Pila in Carpentras, France.

---

27. Following Thomas Aquinas, who recognizes in the *creatio ex nihilo* the first act of mercy, which precedes all justice (see, e.g., *ST* I, q. 21, a. 4), Ulrich writes: "The heart of the *gift* of created being as love is *forgiveness* ('pro nihilo')" (*GV*, 448n244). On this, see Marine de la Tour, "Gegenwart der Vergebung. Eine Annäherung an Ferdinand Ulrichs Interpretation des Seins als Gabe aus dem Phänomen intersubjektiver Vergebung," in *Gabe, Schuld, Vergebung. Festschrift für Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz*, ed. Susan Gottlöber and René Kaufmann (Dresden: Thelem, 2012), 443–62.

⋆ This article was presented at the conference entitled, "Being as an Image of Divine Love: Introducing Ferdinand Ulrich's *Homo Abyssus*," held on April 5–6, 2019, at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.