

# INTRODUCTION: COMMEMORATING *FIDES ET RATIO*



The Fall 2023 issue of *Communio: International Catholic Review* is dedicated to “Commemorating *Fides et ratio*,” in recognition of the 25th anniversary of Pope St. John Paul II’s landmark encyclical. Reflecting on man’s inborn desire to understand the whole of reality, and thereby to know himself, this document attests in its introductory paragraphs that “the Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be” (2). In accord with John Paul II’s magisterial exhortation to recover and preserve philosophy at the service of the Church’s own mission to communicate salvation in Christ to all mankind, the authors included here address the foundations and fulfillment of the philosophical act, as well as its openness to enrichment by the revealed truths pondered by the theologian.

**Rudi A. te Velde**, in “The Sacramental Character of Truth,” affirms the natural readiness of the human person for the appeal that truth makes upon him, which is one basic reason why revelation cannot but be meaningful for man. Universal truth invites and supports its free reception in human life, which for its part receives its own full significance through the person’s assent to what is. Moreover, since created reality sacramentally directs the knower to the God who transcends it, it is fitting that *Fides et ratio* could advocate for the safeguarding of philosophy as among the vital concerns of religion. “The encyclical suggests that the divine self-gift of truth in and through Christ, accepted and lived

in faith, places human reason in a properly philosophical relationship with truth, that is, a relationship that assumes truth to be a presence that cannot be fully mastered and appropriated.”

In “Philosophizing in Mary: The Test Case of Anselm’s Argument,” **Michaël Bauwens** considers how Mary’s three relations to God—daughter, spouse, and mother—disclose her relevance for the philosopher’s task of knowing God, which St. Anselm undertakes in his *Proslogion*. Bauwens argues that Anselm’s naming of God as “that greater than which nothing can be thought” is best understood in view of Mary’s filial dependence upon, bridal intimacy with, and maternal bearing of divine truth. Her mission therefore provides a model and measure for the philosopher, as John Paul II proposes in *Fides et ratio*, so that Bauwens can even raise the provocative question, “What if the mind of modern philosophy is restless, and its rest is found in Mary?”

**Chad Engelland** unfolds the foundations of thinking implied in philosophical discourse in “With What Must We Begin?” While much of modern thought brings into question the basic evidence of what we perceive by the senses, Engelland counters, taking up the insights of phenomenology, that the public character of conversation rests upon both the natural intelligibility of appearances for us and the common availability of experience. Ultimately, our engagement with fellow persons provides the horizon within which we come to know the truth of things, and therefore remains a standard and starting place for all philosophical reflection. “The faces of others light up, revealing their thoughts. My face is shown to me only through the look of others’ responses.”

In “The Delivering Word: Dialogue as Coauthorship of Reality,” **Erik van Versendaal** reflects on why the event of dialogue is the natural locus in which human persons arrive at their understanding of reality. If, as Ferdinand Ulrich holds, human naming enables things to present and to realize what they are most perfectly, the philosophical exchange of words where naming takes place is, at its best, an exemplary act in which persons in communion are most at home as themselves by taking radical responsibility with God, in grateful obedience to God, for his own giving of being. Contemplatively enjoying and offering the world together through meaningful, loving, bodily speech,

persons thereby cocreatively reenact and so inhabit being's very meaning as love. "Dialogue is, in other words, the end of knowing."

In "A Modern Genealogy of the Metaphysics of Information," **Marco Stango** brings to light how the digital age conceives of being in a way that radicalizes modernity's attempt to render all meaning and desire purely immanent. Examining the Enlightenment and Romanticism, he shows how these two modes of modernism, despite their apparent conflict, agree in their aspiration "to remove any reference to transcendence from the horizon of history." The tension these movements represent between a naturalization of man and divinization of nature are resolved, he argues, in the reduction of reality to information that is universally available for manipulation, and therefore no longer issues a call upon man to wonder. "The 'intelligence' or information of everything is originally 'locked up,' but it is ready to be liberated in order to fulfill . . . the highest aspirations of man: the reconciliation of man and nature/history."

"No one can see the world through my eyes. If someone could, he would be identical with me. Jesus sees the world with the eyes of God." The late German philosopher **Robert Spaemann**, in "On Psalm 45," dwells on how creaturely life, in imitation of God's own triune vitality, is ordered to festive communion, and above all to the wedding between heaven and earth that is consummated through the death of Christ, "the fairest of the sons of men" (Ps 45:2), on behalf of his bridal Church. This excerpt is taken from a two-part commentary composed by Spaemann in the last years of his life, in which the author's philosophical acumen is joined to a sensitive biblical exegesis that is manifestly animated by prayer grounded in the liturgical life of the Church.

In *Retrieving the Tradition*, we publish **Maurice Blondel's** "The Latent Resources in St. Augustine's Thought," which was originally published in 1930. Weighing a series of contradictory objections against Augustine—that he stands for reason *or* for faith, for freedom *or* for predestination, for creation *or* for God—Blondel endeavors to rediscover the unifying standpoint in light of which the integrity of Augustine's diverse worldview can be grasped, and thereby to defend his conviction that "St. Augustine has more to give us than he has yet done." Transcending the

seeming oppositions yielded by partial readings of Augustine, Blondel reminds us that “man has not the power to content himself by remaining simply man: either, with the help of grace, he ascends to where his reason and will tended, even unconsciously, or, by the abuse of grace, he sinks below himself, without the possibility of there being any separate wisdom closed to those divine horizons.” □

—The Editors