

Human Freedom and Truth According to the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*

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Reason and will/freedom are . . . involved in the origin of knowledge itself, because being becomes manifest only in giving itself. Judgment and justice are therefore a “hendiadys” for “truth,” and faith is the radical critical form of reason; there can be no extrinsic relation between them.

I. The Encyclical Fides et Ratio: The End or a Beginning?

The evil that has marked this “brief century” has led to talk of the “death of God” and of “God’s silence.” Notwithstanding the radical difference between these two formulae—the Nietzschean *death of God* has the flavor of a somewhat contrived metaphor,¹ whereas the

¹E. L. Fackenheim brings this out nicely in *La presenza di Dio nella storia* (Brescia, 1977), 67. For Fackenheim, the two formulae are not comparable because the Nietzschean “death” of God has a “degree of truth” that does not go much beyond the slogan (*ibid.*, 72–73).

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phrase *God's silence* cannot be definitive²—both have been proposed as a key to reading the tragic experiences that have marked the most recent decades of our history.³ But is there a thread that can unite in some way the Nietzschean interpretation and that of Jewish thinkers after Auschwitz? Perhaps it is to be found in a subject that anguished Augustine, a subject from which the logic of *Fides et Ratio* does not shrink: why are the effects of the Redemption not visible if the crucified and risen Lord has vanquished evil? “*Post Christum nihil in melius, omnia in peius, mutata sunt?*” (After Christ, things have not changed for the better, but for the worse).⁴ Does not history document the persistence of the cross of the Nazarene as the experience, no matter how sad and common, of human failure? In the great theater of the world, does not evil, in all of its forms, continue to occupy the limelight? The Leibnizian theme of theodicy remains the crux, which in any case cannot extinguish the question of questions. In the words of Leibniz himself, “*Why is there not nothingness?*” Would it not therefore be prudent to stick to a sensible agnosticism? Does not such an agnosticism, while steering away from every theoretical atheism (which is always dogmatic, even when pursued with the most sophisticated conceptual instruments), venture presumptuously “objective” claims about reality, reason, faith, and the relation between them, or in a word, in claims about the truth?

²“*As intolerable as its memory must seem, Auschwitz is ephemeral with respect to the covenant, the contract whereby God reassures his persecuted people*” (G. Steiner, *Errata. Una vita sotto esame* [Milan, 1998], 63). For the theme of the silence of God at Auschwitz, see the recent anthology of M. Giuliani, *Auschwitz nel pensiero ebraico. Frammenti della teologia dell'Olocausto* (Brescia, 1998) where the positions of the major Jewish contemporary thinkers on God after Auschwitz are presented. Among the most significant, other than Fackenheim, are R. Rubenstein, Maybaum, E. Wiesel, Berkovits, Jacobovits, Jonas, K. Shapiro.

³Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (=FR), 91.

⁴In an informal interview given in 1993, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger attempted to respond to this question: “*Iterum atque iterum meditando hanc quaestionem mihi visum est, responionem solummodo in notione libertatis recte cogitata inveniri posse. Donum libertatis solummodo libere accipi potest. Qua de causa redemptio nullo modo factum quoddam empiricum praecedens libertatem nostram fieri potest*” (As I reflected again and again on this problem, I realized that only the notion of freedom, rightly understood, can provide an answer. The gift of freedom has to be freely accepted. It is for this reason that redemption cannot become a kind of empirical fact preceding our freedom).

As can be seen from more than a few specialists—whose criticisms against *Fides et Ratio* were hidden behind expressions of real satisfaction at the relaunching of philosophy favored by John Paul II with the publication of his encyclical⁵—there is no doubt that the thinking (*pensiero*) dominant today tends to assume the end of Christianity, and offers a reading of postmodernity as the liquidation of the “victory” of Jesus Christ over evil and death.⁶ As *Fides et Ratio* suggests, the reasons for this decision are complex, and are, from the beginning, intimately tied to the history of the relation between philosophy and theology in the modern era.⁷ Notwithstanding this, in the end such reasons lead to the conviction that the victory of Jesus Christ is historically inefficacious. Moreover, in the ambit of exegesis and theology itself, the dogma of the Resurrection of the Nazarene in his true body—a decisive proof of his being efficaciously at work in history through the sacramental witness of his believers—is not infrequently muted.⁸

In order to respond to this radical objection, it is not sufficient to opt for so called “weak thought” (*pensiero debole*) as a convenient shortcut, better suited to the proposal of the event of Jesus Christ.⁹ In any case *Fides et Ratio*, with frank *parrhesia*, challenges this approach.¹⁰ Jesus Christ in fact is not a God of the gaps, inasmuch as *he is not in himself*—except in formal and

⁵Cf. R. Righetto, “I laici contro l’enciclica,” *Avvenire*, 27 November 1998, where the positions of Paolo Flores d’Arcais, Eugenio Scalfari, Gianni Vattimo, Emanuele Severino, Carlo Bernardini, Salvatore Natoli, Giulio Giorello, Luc Ferry, Alain Finkielkraut, and Jean-Luc Marion are cited.

⁶Concerning postmodernity, the encyclical affirms: “In their destructive critique of every certitude, several authors have failed to make crucial distinctions and have called into question the certitudes of faith” (*FR*, 91).

⁷Cf. *FR*, 46.

⁸Heinrich Schlier responded concisely to this temptation in contemporary exegesis in his volume *La risurrezione di Gesù* (Brescia, 1994). More recent studies include: C. M. Martini, *Il problema della Risurrezione negli studi recenti* (Rome, 1959); G. Ghiberti, *I racconti pasquali del cap. 20 di Giovanni, confrontati con le altre traduzioni neotestamentarie* (Brescia, 1982). An up-to-date bibliography can be found in: S. Davis, D. Kendall, G. O’Collins, eds., *The Resurrection* (Oxford, 1997).

⁹A presentation of this position is found in: D. Antiseri, *Le sfide del secolarismo e l’avvenire della fede* (Vatican City, 1996); id., *Teoria della razionalità e ragioni della fede* (Cinisello Balsamo, 1994).

¹⁰“It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating” (*FR*, 48).

negative terms, but not positively and substantively—the answer to the unresolved questions of man, or the object of his desire for fulfillment (happiness). Nor is man, insofar as he is free, properly speaking a *product* of God from nothing. When reflection takes this route it cannot avoid those *aporiae* for which, not without reason, a thinking (*pensiero*) considered “too strong,” received criticism for its confusion of the unavoidable necessity of passing from “*phenomenon to foundation*”¹¹ with the naturalistic claim that the truth—starting from the basic level of *adequatio intellectus et rei* (the adequation of the intellect and reality)—leads to the consideration of reality as an *object within the immediate reach* of reason and, therefore, as something that reason can immediately deduce like a simple predicate.¹²

Within the objective limits of a precise awareness of the difference between the “discourse” of the magisterium and that of the philosopher and the theologian, *Fides et Ratio* notes that “the Church has no philosophy of her own, nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others” (no. 49), and even goes on to affirm that indicating Thomas as guide of theological studies does not mean “to take a position on properly philosophical questions nor to demand adherence to particular theses” (no. 78). Thus, when he speaks of the need for “a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical range*” (no. 83), John Paul II specifies that he does not mean hereby to refer to “a specific school or a particular historical current of thought” (no. 83) so much as to affirm that “the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge” (no. 85) founded in its turn upon “the human capacity to *know the truth*” (no. 82).

¹¹FR, 83.

¹²One can see this problem treated from diverse but convergent points of view in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *La mia opera ed epilogo* (Milan, 1994), 115–41, which responds to Heidegger, and J. Seifert, *Back to Things in Themselves* (New York, 1987), 1–215, which “integrates” Husserl. Two useful books for understanding the theme in modern and contemporary philosophy are: J. L. Marion, *L'idole et la distance* (Paris, 1979), and *God without Being* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). For the relevance of the theme in theology, see G. Colombo, *La ragione teologica* (Milan, 1995); A. Bertuletti, “La ‘Ragione teologica’ di Giuseppe Colombo,” *Teologia* 21 (1996): 18–39; id., “Sapere e libertà,” in G. Angelini, and others, eds., *L'evidenza e la fede* (Milan, 1988), 444–65.

The non-negotiable *appeal to truth* is announced with clarity, and with it the “concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness,”¹³ but the prerogative of finding the path to attain to the objective is acknowledged as proper to free reflection. In fact, the magisterium commits itself, once again, to the invaluable critical task of making evident, in a negative way, the philosophical attitudes that jeopardize this freedom, because they arbitrarily preclude the possibility of elaborating the unavoidable “move from *phenomenon* to *foundation*, a step as necessary as it is urgent”¹⁴ (the appeal to truth). Hence the synthetic but effective critique of the “isms”—eclecticism,¹⁵ historicism,¹⁶ scientism,¹⁷ pragmatism,¹⁸ nihilism,¹⁹ from which rationalism and fideism cannot be separated²⁰—which indicates a concern not, certainly, to shackle thought with preestablished theses, but rather to clear the field of every acritical attack against the properly human capacity for truth.

Already the *critical* part of *Fides et Ratio* reveals itself to be compatible with the more significant achievement of modern and contemporary thought: the affirmation of the unsurpassability of the *ontological difference*. Without treating the categories of “truth,” “foundation,” and “ontology” as synonyms, this claim—which, when it is rightly interpreted, guarantees the *theological difference* inherent in the creaturely nature of man itself—has been taken up with exactness by even the most cautious of contemporary theologians. Against

¹³FR, 4. In fact, the same encyclical, speaking of the tasks of fundamental theology, recalls that in the light of knowledge by faith emerge “certain truths which reason, from its own independent enquiry, already perceives. . . . Consider, for example, the natural knowledge of God, the possibility of distinguishing divine revelation from other phenomena or the recognition of its credibility, the capacity of human language to speak in a true and meaningful way even of things which transcend all human experience” (FR, 67).

¹⁴FR, 83.

¹⁵Cf. FR, 86

¹⁶Cf. FR, 87.

¹⁷Cf. FR, 88.

¹⁸Cf. FR, 89.

¹⁹FR, 90.

²⁰Cf. FR, 52, 55.

Heidegger, who sees in the ontological difference what thinking (*pensiero*) is all about, maintaining it in this way in an indefinite oscillation between Being (*essere*) and beings (*ente*), one can—with an adequate method and beyond the “weak “ drift of certain postmodern currents—arrive at a thinking (*pensiero*) of truth.²¹

But even the *constructive* part of the encyclical opens the way to the positive work of the philosopher and of the theologian in view of the rigorous elaboration of the passage from phenomenon to foundation. In fact, as one may read in *Fides et Ratio*: “philosophical inquiry can help greatly to clarify the relationship between truth and life, between event and doctrinal truth, and above all between transcendent truth and humanly comprehensible language” (no. 99). Nor does the encyclical lack positive hints of a valorization of certain aspects of contemporary philosophy (such as linguistics, the rediscovery of praxis, scientific discourse) to the extent that they do not renounce truth.²² Elsewhere, the importance of the ethical dimension (tied to the concrete exercise of human freedom) in the search for the foundation itself is underlined.²³ And this in confirmation of the fact that the original structure of truth, in its human and Christian integrity, requires a *re-cognition* that it is impossible without a *decision*.

Certainly the encyclical of John Paul II, in actualizing for today the great tradition of the magisterium, opens up a *new beginning* for reflection on the relation between philosophy and revealed truth, and on the relations associated with it (faith-reason, philosophy-theology). This is confirmed, albeit in an extrinsic way, by the extraordinarily positive welcome that the encyclical received precisely among non-believers, even from those who distanced themselves from certain of its claims. However that may be, this new beginning was made possible precisely by the capacity for *ressourcement* displayed throughout the history of the Church in the more significant interventions of the

²¹Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *La mia opera*, 146–47.

²²Cf. *FR*, 48, 91.

²³Cf. *FR*, 98. On this question cf. T. Styczen, “Un filosofo cristiano legge la ‘*Fides et ratio*,’” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 9 January 1999. [All citations from *L’Osservatore Romano* in this text are from the Italian edition, unless otherwise noted.—Ed.]

magisterium. By *ressourcement*, I mean a return to the originary sources of the *traditio catholica*, and above all, to Holy Scripture.²⁴

John Paul II with *Fides et Ratio*, far from wanting to fix limits and, in some way, to bring a close to the inquiry, has cleared the field for genuine philosophical and theological research. The encyclical *Fides et Ratio* does not represent an end, but a beginning. We would like, from this perspective, to list in synthetic fashion three central themes of the encyclical, in which the pope, (who is here particularly involved with the philosophical charism proper to Karol Wojtyła), has summed up his frank and heartfelt invitation to a sapiential renewal of the activity of thinking (*pensiero*).²⁵ An undertaking that is always at the same time philosophical and religious,²⁶ and therefore, in a Christian sphere, entrusted to philosophers, theologians and—why not?—to men and women of science.²⁷

After specifying the critical and constructive terms in which *Fides et Ratio* proposes an adequate relation between faith and reason (section II), we would like to say something about necessity and history in Christian revelation (section III), so as to conclude with some concise points about the relation between Jesus Christ and man in search of the truth (section IV).

II. Reason and Faith: Overcoming Extrinsicism

One of the characteristics proper to our time, which the pope often recalls throughout the encyclical,²⁸ is a sort of retreat of reason towards the performance of “merely accessory functions” (*FR*, 81). This orientation is indicative of the “cultural transfor-

²⁴It is enough to cite as examples the recent constitutions *Lumen gentium* and *Dei Verbum* of Vatican II.

²⁵Cf. *FR*, 81.

²⁶Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *La mia opera*, 88.

²⁷Cf. *FR*, 105–106.

²⁸*FR*, 47: “These forms of rationality are directed not towards the contemplation of truth and the search for the ultimate goal and meaning of life; but instead, as ‘instrumental reason,’ they are directed—actually or potentially—towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment or power.” Other references to this technocratic logic can be found in *FR*, nos. 5, 15, 46, 81, 88–89.

mation” that has in turn “obscured the true dignity of reason” (no. 47) marked by a “crisis of meaning” (cf. no. 81).

In order to understand this latest development of Western philosophy, one must go back to the “drama of the separation between faith and reason”²⁹ as emblematic of the period marked by the collapse of the medieval synthesis.³⁰ In a concise statement, John Paul II helps us pinpoint the original core of this drama in the late Middle Ages:

As a result of the exaggerated rationalism of certain thinkers, positions grew more radical and there emerged eventually a philosophy which was separate from and absolutely independent of the contents of faith. Another of the many consequences of this separation was an ever deeper mistrust with regard to reason itself. In a spirit both skeptical and agnostic, some began to voice a general mistrust, which led some to focus more on faith and others to deny its rationality altogether. In short, what for Patristic and Medieval thought was in both theory and practice a profound unity, producing knowledge capable of reaching the highest forms of speculation, was destroyed by systems which espoused the cause of rational knowledge sundered from faith and meant to take the place of faith. (*FR*, 45)

The encyclical next sketches, in rapid outline, the historical development of this process.³¹ Here we are interested in the theoretical heart of the problem spanning the whole of modernity, reaching even to so-called postmodernity (the term is by no means self-evident).³² Faith and reason are conceived as two extrinsically related realities, when not presented as being in competition or even in open opposition.³³

The dogmatic and acritical presupposition of such a conception stems from an idea of reason as *absolute* —because at

²⁹Cf. *FR*, 45ff.; G. Sala, “Il dramma della separazione tra fede e ragione,” *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21 November 1998.

³⁰Cf. *FR*, 45: “From the late Medieval period onwards . . . the legitimate distinction between the two forms of learning became more and more a fateful separation”; cf. also P Gilbert, “La ricchezza della scolastica,” *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18 November 1998.

³¹Cf. *FR*, 45–48.

³²Cf. *FR*, 91.

³³Cf. A. Scola, “La forma testimoniale del progetto culturale,” in AA. VV., *Fede, liberta, intelligenza* (Casale Monferrato, 1998), 107–114.

the same time *separated* and *totalizing*.³⁴ In the name of the clarity and distinctness of the “idea,” reason is above all separated from the articulated act by which consciousness “intends” reality. In the second place, a totalizing force is attributed to this reason, separated and conceived as the self-evident measure of the real. Reason is conceived as the complete horizon of all knowledge.

One can see how faith comes to be considered as in itself “outside of” the world of reason and, therefore, as incapable of being known in an adequate way. And the logic does not change by altering the values in the reason-faith relation. Sometimes faith is presented as *a*-rational, that is as *another thing* with respect to reason or as *above* reason and, therefore, *beyond* human reason; or it is presented as *ir*-rational and, on this basis, in itself contradictory to reason. In any case, one must conclude that one is dealing here with a reality that is by its very nature *extrinsic*.

Such an acritical dogmatism in the conception of reason—largely received, even if often unconsciously, by ecclesial practice and by theological thought—reduces faith to a pure *superadditum*. A man who wants to live according to reason must do without this “superadded” dimension.

The implications of this position for theology are evident: the extrinsicist view of the reason-faith relation shuts theologians up into a sort of “reservation,” making them outsiders to a fruitful relation with philosophy.³⁵ And one cannot obviate this situation with a logically rigorous apologetic that attempts to justify rationally the super-rationality of faith, since in the dialectical relation with the interlocutor, this apologetic has assumed the other’s logic, allowing this logic to determine even its methodological presuppositions relative precisely to the conception of reason, faith, and their relation.

Theological discourse remains structurally heterogeneous to rational discourse as such. It will therefore be necessary to spell out its religious contents in terms of “reason alone.” To speak instead of theological reason—as does *Fides et Ratio*³⁶—becomes

³⁴On this matter cf. G. Colombo, “La ragione teologica,” 191ff.; G. Angelini, ed., *L’evidenza e la fede*, 444–65.

³⁵*FR*, 61: “I cannot fail to note with surprise and displeasure that this lack of interest in the study of philosophy is shared by not a few theologians.”

³⁶Cf. *FR*, 86.

impossible, just as it will be very difficult to avoid a deep extraneity between philosophy and theology.³⁷

The paradoxical consequence of this process whereby modern reason is absolutized is accurately pinpointed by *Fides et Ratio* in the “ever deeper mistrust with regard to reason itself.”³⁸ Elsewhere I have spoken of *unsatisfied enlightenment* as a way of referring precisely to this historic result of modernity.³⁹ In effect, having identified the evidence of a separated and absolute reason with the fullness of evidence, modernity has demanded too much from reason and, disappointed by the result of this violence inflicted upon the truth, has ended up diffident about what reason can in fact do.⁴⁰ The end of the trajectory of modernity is the weakening of reason, which has led Western thought to exhaust itself in a skepticism that looks ever more nihilistic.⁴¹

How can we respond to the drama of the separation between faith and reason? The magisterium does not mean “to direct theologians to particular methods” (*FR*, 64), but rather to urge them in their theological work to take up, in a thoroughgoing way, the exigencies derived from revelation. Among these is the recovery of the foundation of truth (*fondamento veritativo*). It is that foundation which *Fides et Ratio* calls the “metaphysical dimension” of reality.⁴² “I want only to state”—the pope says—“that reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical, and to vindicate the human being’s capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical” (*FR*, 83). There is no lack of valuable suggestions inviting us to revisit classical realism, taking up the significant modern contributions in anthropology⁴³

³⁷Cf. *FR*, 69.

³⁸*FR*, 45.

³⁹Cf. my, “Ragioni per credere,” *Nuntium* 1 (1997): 42–45.

⁴⁰Cf. *FR*, 84.

⁴¹Cf. *FR*, 90. One can see the influence of this outcome of the trajectory of modernity modern on Christian experience and theology in the diffusion of a certain fideism, the extreme opposite of Enlightenment rationalism: cf. A. Leonard, “L’uomo in cammino verso la fede. Credenza e fede,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 7 November 1998.

⁴²*FR*, 83. Cf. M. Sanchez Sorondo, “Per una istanza metafisica aperta alla fede,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 16 December 1998.

⁴³Cf. *FR*, 83.

and history,⁴⁴ without renouncing “necessity.” *Fides et Ratio* opens, in a certain sense, the way to the elaboration of an *anthropological ontology*,⁴⁵ capable of taking into account the character of historical event proper to the truth, which intrinsically includes (factual) freedom.⁴⁶

In order to pursue such a task it will be necessary to overcome the pernicious extrinsicism between faith and reason. They must no longer be considered in an extrinsic competition with one another, but as two dimensions arising from the same knowing energy, respecting fully the gratuitous element proper to the Christian faith. In particular, it must be shown how faith, without being confused with reason, is reason’s critical foundation and, how the construction of *theological reason*⁴⁷ is autonomous vis-à-vis philosophical reason, and this without in any way diminishing the necessary exchange between philosophy and theology. Perhaps recourse to the spousal analogy, already suggested by Scheeben,⁴⁸ would be able better to illumine the faith–reason relation as well—insofar as it is capable of maintaining difference without rupturing unity. Such recourse can find full legitimization in the original teaching of John Paul II (and even earlier, in Karol Wojtyła, the philosopher) on man and woman.⁴⁹

Besides reformulating the categories of reason and of faith, *Fides et Ratio* pushes philosophers and theologians to redefine decisive notions such as truth, event, revelation, necessity, history, and freedom in the unitary perspective of that “metaphysical dimension” which permits the passage “from phenomenon to foundation.”

III. *The Truth as Event*

⁴⁴Cf. *FR* 95.

⁴⁵The expression is found also in G. Colombo, *La ragione teologica*, 56.

⁴⁶A provisional and schematic attempt to propose synthetically just such an anthropology, with reference to the authors to whom he is openly indebted, can be found in my, *Questioni di Antropologia Teologica* (Rome, 1997), 163–66.

⁴⁷This highly instructive expression, as we have already seen, is explicitly employed in *FR*, 86.

⁴⁸Cf. M.J. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*.

⁴⁹Cf. my, *Il mistero nuziale. L'uomo-donna* (Rome, 1998).

Fides et Ratio, in strict harmony with the rethinking of the faith–reason relation as an implication of the necessary “reflection on truth”⁵⁰ (demanded by the history of thought since modernity), takes up the task of inquiry about the truth in terms of dual unity.⁵¹ And it does so without starting on “neutral” ground, so to speak, as if one had to obtain for truth a non-existent intermediate space between philosophical and theological inquiry. Rather, the encyclical claims for faith the character of cognition,⁵² for the *intellectus fidei*⁵³ that of knowledge, and for theology, that of a critical and systematic science.⁵⁴ The nature of “theological reason” is thus proposed with clarity. In the second place, theological reason is understood to be in meaningful dialogue with philosophical reason insofar as it is connected to the very root of thought.⁵⁵ The encyclical cites Augustine: “Believers are also thinkers: in believing, they think and in thinking, they believe. . . . If faith does not think, it is nothing.”⁵⁶ Finally, the description, treated with particular precision, of the different states of philosophy⁵⁷ in itself and in relation to theology, plows the ground as it were on which *Fides et Ratio* elaborates its deepening of the concept of truth, referring directly to Vatican Council II’s constitution *Dei Verbum*.

⁵⁰FR, 6. Cardinal Ratzinger, in his presentation of the encyclical, affirms: “The central question of *Fides et Ratio* is the question of truth. But this question is not just one among the many and various questions that man has to face. Rather, it is the fundamental and ineliminable question, the question that runs through all times and periods of human life and history” (*L’Osservatore Romano*, 16 October 1998).

⁵¹The expression “dual unity” goes back to John Paul II (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6). For a discussion of this theme in anthropological terms cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Theodrama*, vol. 2, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 335–94.

⁵²FR, 15: “the truth made known to us by revelation is neither the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason. It appears instead as something gratuitous, which itself stirs thought and seeks acceptance as an expression of love.”

⁵³Cf. FR, 66.

⁵⁴Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁵Cf. FR, 66.

⁵⁶FR, 79. The Augustinian affirmation is found in *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, 2,5: PL 44, 963.

⁵⁷Cf. FR, 75–79.

The progress that the conciliar document proposes, in continuity with *Dei Filius*, is noteworthy:⁵⁸ together with the universality of the truth,⁵⁹ its salvific import and its historical character⁶⁰ were recognized. At the heart of *Dei Verbum*'s conception of truth is the consideration of the mystery of Jesus Christ.⁶¹ Cardinal de Lubac describes this precisely when he affirms that *Dei Verbum* substitutes an

idea of abstract truth with the idea of a truth that is as concrete as possible: the idea, that is, of personal truth, who appeared in history, and operates in history and, from the very heart of history, is capable of supporting all of history; the idea of this truth in person which is Jesus of Nazareth, fullness of revelation.⁶²

To understand better the development of the conception of truth in *Dei Verbum*, which is taken up by *Fides et Ratio*, the category of *event* is central. This category—if we are not mistaken, it appears nine times throughout the magisterial text⁶³—is recognized as central above all for Christian revelation.⁶⁴ It is, in

⁵⁸Both *Dei Filius* and *Dei Verbum* appear often in the text of the encyclical. On their relation cf. R. Fisichella, "Revelation, Faith, and Reason," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition), 13 January 1999.

⁵⁹This characteristic is forcefully recalled in *Fides et Ratio*, in particular, as concerns the contents of the faith (cf. *FR*, 69).

⁶⁰On this question U. Betti affirms: "as to revelation, the basic doctrinal teaching, upon which everything depends, is that it is an historic event, that is situated in time, just as philosophical reflection was born and developed in time. Revelation in fact, comes together in the event of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ who, from eternity also became man, forever bringing together indissolubly, in this manner, the eternity of God with the temporality of man" (U. Betti, "A Reflection on the Encyclical '*Fides et Ratio*,'" *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition], 25 November 1998).

⁶¹*Dei Verbum*, 4.

⁶²H. de Lubac, *La rivelazione divina e il senso dell'uomo. Opera omnia* 14 (Milan, 1985), 49.

⁶³In fact, so as to describe the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the premise of revelation, the pope asserts: "two thousand years later, I feel bound to restate forcefully that 'in Christianity time has a fundamental importance'" (*FR*, 11). Other references to the category of event, used in various ways, are found in *FR*, nos. 10, 16, 22, 23, 71, 76, 94, 99.

⁶⁴Cf. *FR*, 76: "In more recent times, there has been the discovery that history as event—so central to Christian revelation—is important for philosophy as well."

fact, presented as theologically adequate for specifying the fact of Jesus Christ, the fullness of revelation,⁶⁵ in its triple import of historic,⁶⁶ salvific,⁶⁷ and universal⁶⁸ event. Before briefly describing the nature of the event-truth that is Jesus Christ, through a rapid examination of these three properties, it will be useful to bring out the philosophical weight of the category of event. This will confirm, among other things, how *Fides et Ratio*, overcoming the extrinsicism between faith-reason and without losing sight of the necessary distinction between, and autonomy proper to, the two dimensions, invites all to pursue an integral conception of truth. Moreover the encyclical itself calls for such an undertaking when it affirms

In the Incarnation of the Son of God we see forged the enduring and definitive synthesis which the human mind of itself could not even have imagined: the Eternal enters time, the Whole lies hidden in the part, God takes on a human face. The truth communicated in Christ's revelation is therefore no longer confined to a particular place or culture, but is offered to every man and woman who would welcome it as the word which is the absolutely valid source of meaning for human life. (*FR*, 12)

If, as has been pointedly said,⁶⁹ Jesus Christ is the response preceding the question constitutive of the enigma of man who finds himself thrown into being, then one can grasp the profound correspondence between reality (being) in its natural status and Christ as the fullness of reality.⁷⁰ And this without in the slightest way diminishing the absolute gratuitousness of the event of Christ, which can never be deduced from anything else.

Being cannot be grasped immediately by a human concept. This does not mean that the act of awareness that intends reality does not attain reality itself, but only that this act is complex. Knowledge in its original form is not conceptual, but is a

⁶⁵Cf. *Dei Verbum*, 4; and *FR*, 11.

⁶⁶Cf. *FR*, 9.

⁶⁷Cf. *FR*, 94

⁶⁸Cf. *FR*, 92.

⁶⁹Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 25–53 ; A. Scola, *Questioni di Antropologia*, 29–41

⁷⁰Cf. Col 2:17.

prepredicative intuition of a symbolic nature in the Kantian sense! When the concept intervenes (predicative intellection) it always finds itself preceded by a knowledge that is not itself reflexive, but that makes reflection possible. It is not possible to overcome this dialectic by recourse to a superior concept capable of equaling its object. Judgment understands its object through *another object* that to this extent functions as a *sign*. Only this *other object*, which anticipates the original object, is immediate.⁷¹ One sees why the foundation is event (*e-venio*), which is given and shown only in giving itself, causing, at the same time, the “subject” to exist.⁷² Through the sign (which is a real and, in a certain sense, sacramental sign)⁷³ being gives itself, immediately calling into play the subject, giving consistency to its liberty, which cannot be reduced to any type of a priori rational justification or to any transcendental self-positing of subjectivity. Reason and will/freedom are therefore involved in the origin of knowledge itself, because being becomes manifest only in giving itself. Judgment and justice are therefore a “hendiadys” for “truth,” and faith is the radical critical form of reason; there can be no extrinsic relation between them. When it arises by grace, Christian faith reveals the deep sense of truth as event: it teaches, in fact, that in order to adhere to the foundation (Trinity) which freely beckons, one must opt to follow the event that realizes historically the (symbolic) evidence of the foundation itself: Jesus Christ. We can thus see the deep correspondence—to which reason has no right—between the nature of reality and revelation and, therefore, between reason itself and faith as the basis of a critical knowledge of the faith (theology). The affirmation of Colossians, “but the substance belongs to Christ,”⁷⁴ or the perspective of Corinthians, “God all in all,”⁷⁵ far from removing from the real its own consistency, reveals it in all of its positivity. Against every fideism, but also

⁷¹Cf. A. Bertuletti, “Sapere e libertà”: 448.

⁷²Jean Luc Marion goes so far as to say that the subject never possesses the center of the stage, “since his function consists only in receiving that which is given” (J. L. Marion, *Étant donné* [Paris, 1997], 442).

⁷³One should note here that the encyclical itself speaks of a sacramental logic (cf. *FR*, 13). For the notion of sign employed here see S. Ubbiali, *Il segno sacro* (Milan, 1992).

⁷⁴Cf. Col 2:17.

⁷⁵Cf. 1 Cor 15:28.

against rationalism⁷⁶—the Scylla and Charybdis that have always turned up in the history of Christianity—the truth-event brings all of its weight to bear. An ontology of the *real sign* saves classical realism to the core, while it recognizes the dramatic ability and obligation of finite freedom: to decide for the foundation that institutes it as such, that is, as a freedom that is truly free. This is immediately demanded by “knowing,” precisely because being is shown as given. The *aporiae* tied to necessity and historicity, or those consequent upon the claim to deduce the ontological difference, can find solutions without falling into skepticism or relativism, which make it difficult for man to reach the solid ground of the thing in itself.

Here is not the place, obviously, to ask ourselves whether *Fides et Ratio* authorizes such a foundation of the concept of truth. This is not its job! An attempt such as this must rely only on its capacity rigorously to exhibit the reasons. It does not seem that the encyclical excludes this conception! In any event, having put forward this hypothesis (it can only be such!) we should now briefly illustrate what the encyclical says about Jesus Christ as event, through a brief description of the characteristics that *Fides et Ratio* attribute to him.

The category of “event” puts in first place the importance of history (space and time). Numbers 11 and 12 of *Fides et Ratio* look at this with particular vigor. History, for Christian thought, is a fundamental factor for two reasons. In the first place, if *truth* can ultimately be identified with a historic event, then this event possesses a definitive character. This is the case with the event of Jesus Christ.⁷⁷ In the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, in fact, the truth was offered to man once for all: one cannot await a further revelation. Every quest for the truth is objectively destined to a comparison with the historic event of Jesus Christ:⁷⁸ only in the Paschal Mystery of Christ is it possible to know the truth in its fullness.⁷⁹ On the other hand, it is in history that this event

⁷⁶Cf. *FR*, 55.

⁷⁷Cf. *FR*, 93.

⁷⁸Cf. *FR*, 80.

⁷⁹*FR*, 99: “Proclamation or kerygma is a call to conversion, announcing the truth of Christ, which reaches its summit in his Paschal Mystery: for only in Christ is it possible to know the fullness of the truth which saves (cf. Acts 4:12; 1 Tm 2:4–6).” Cf. also *FR*, 22.

remains and encounters every man in every age: the category of event indicates a fact that begins in the past and reaches today, making itself present here and now.⁸⁰ The encyclical proposes, implicitly, the contemporaneity of the event when it speaks of the offering that Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, makes of himself to man in terms of *encounter*⁸¹: one can encounter reality only if it is, in some way, present. Theological reflection is called to deepen the nature of this double historicity characteristic of the event, which occurred in the past and yet remains present. The magisterial text offers us two suggestions for this question: in the first place, when it mentions the significant theme of the “logic of the Incarnation,”⁸² so as to speak, in the second place, about the “sacramental horizon of revelation.”⁸³

The historical character of the event also sheds light on its universal nature. Against the objection of Lessing,⁸⁴ the encyclical can firmly establish the possibility that this truth, which happened in history, is the concrete universal Truth: “The mystery of the Incarnation will always remain the central point of reference for an understanding of the enigma of human existence, the created

⁸⁰In this sense Ratzinger has spoken of revelation as an “event that happened in the past which continues to happen in faith, the event of a new relation between God and man,” (J. Ratzinger, *Natura e compito della teologia* [Milan, 1993], 13). [For an English translation see, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Essays to Orient Theology in Today's Debates* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995)]

⁸¹FR, 32: “The martyrs know they have found the truth about life in the encounter with Jesus Christ, and nothing and no one could ever take this certainty from them.” Cf. also FR, 7, 38, 41.

⁸²Cf. FR, 94.

⁸³Cf. FR, 13. On these two themes one can find some preliminary remarks in my, *La realtà dei movimenti nella Chiesa universale e nella Chiesa locale*, proceedings of the International Congress on ecclesial movements (27–29 May 1998), forthcoming; my, *Logica dell'incarnazione come logica sacramentale: avvenimento ecclesiale e libertà umana*, in AA. VV., *Hans Urs von Balthasar. Wer ist die Kirche?*, proceedings of the Symposium in Fribourg Switzerland (16–18 September 1998), forthcoming.

⁸⁴“Contingent truths of a historical kind can never become the proof of necessary truths of a rational kind. . . . This, precisely is the damnable wide hole which I am unable to get around” (G. E. Lessing, *Sopra la prova dello Spirito e della forza*). [For an English translation see, *On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power*, in *Lessing's Theological Writings* (Stanford University Press, 1956)]

world and God himself.”⁸⁵ Warning of the danger of historicism,⁸⁶ the encyclical indicates the way to overcoming the pernicious objection of Lessing, which still spreads skepticism among Christians themselves. The consideration of the truth as event, to which we referred earlier, can provide a further reason for the rigor and relevance of this response.

The third character of the event to which the encyclical points is that of the salvific weight of the truth occurring in history. Affirming that Jesus Christ, the truth in person, is contemporaneous with every man of every age suggests its salvific character. The continual search for meaning, that is, for answers to the fundamental questions that characterize man as one who searches for the truth,⁸⁷ is advanced in the prelude to *Fides et Ratio*: “the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing.” The answer to the question about meaning constitutes the one guarantee of a life lived in a human way⁸⁸ and, therefore, when by grace man encounters this answer, he encounters salvation. Truth as event, which, as we said, “institutes” freedom, finds in Jesus Christ, through the grace of revelation, its full name: He is the merciful communication of the Three who are the one original Love.⁸⁹

At this point a difficulty could arise (above all if we consider the vicissitudes of theology after Vatican II). Does not the presentation of revealed truth as “event” risk (jeopardizing), in fact, rigorous dogmatic formulations? Has not the criticism of intellectualism, conceptualism, and doctrinism—implicit in the thesis of truth as event—led to a (grave) weakening of reference

⁸⁵FR, 80. Cf. also A. Vanhoye, “Il discorso nell’Areopago e l’universalità della verità,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 4 November 1998.

⁸⁶Cf. FR, 87.

⁸⁷Cf. FR, 16, 28. Cf. F. Viola, “L’uomo come esploratore della verità,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 12 December 1998.

⁸⁸Cf. FR, 26 where the fundamental questions about personal existence are brought into relief.

⁸⁹Cf. FR, 33: “Christian faith comes to meet them, offering the concrete possibility of reaching the goal which they seek. Moving beyond the stage of simple believing, Christian faith immerses human beings in the order of grace, which enables them to share in the mystery of Christ, which in turn offers them a true and coherent knowledge of the Triune God.”

to the dogmatic formulation of the truths of faith? The response of *Fides et Ratio* is clear: “the divine Truth ‘proposed to us in the Sacred Scriptures and rightly interpreted by the Church’s teaching,’ enjoys an innate intelligibility, so logically consistent that it stands as an authentic body of knowledge” (no. 66). One can, then, in no way legitimate an “anti-intellectualistic” position that denies the necessity of “concepts formulated in a critical and universally communicable way” (*FR*, 66), the eminent example of which is dogma.⁹⁰ One cannot, thus, cast doubt upon “the enduring validity of the conceptual language used in conciliar definitions” (*FR*, 96).

To the unequivocal affirmations by which the encyclical intends, among other things, to signal its continuity with the preceding magisterium and with *Dei Filius* above all,⁹¹ it suffices to add a simple observation. The theoretical trajectory suggested does not negate the value of predicative language; it merely requires that we respect the fact that it is necessarily articulated on the basis of pre-predicative intellection (we are always dealing with intellection!). In fact, in this perspective—in which reason, will, faith, and freedom are called simultaneously into play—the cognitive character of the faith emerges forcefully and also the eminently critical character of theological reason.

In connection with this, it is opportune to refer to a precise expression of the encyclical: “As a work of critical reason in the light of faith, theology presupposes and requires in all its research a reason formed and educated to concept and argument.”⁹² The function of theological reason is to exhibit the reasons proper to the faith. This is the *medium quo* through which theology elaborates the pre-critical knowledge of the faith into a systematic and critical knowledge. The *scientia fidei*⁹³ is, therefore, the systematic and critical knowledge of the faith, arrived at through theological reason.⁹⁴

⁹⁰H. de Lubac himself avoided this erroneous interpretation in his commentary on *Dei Verbum* (cf. H. de Lubac, *La rivelazione divina*, 31).

⁹¹But also with *Aeterni Patris* and *Humani generis*.

⁹²*FR*, 77. Elsewhere the encyclical speaks of “theological wisdom” (cf. *FR*, 44).

⁹³Cf. *FR*, 65–66.

⁹⁴Cf. J. McDermott, “La teologia dogmatica ha bisogno della filosofia,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 28 November 1998. We cannot here demonstrate how the method we suggested concerning inquiry into the foundation offers a more adequate

 IV. Sacramental Gesture and Act of Freedom

“In Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, faith recognizes the ultimate appeal to humanity, an appeal made in order that what we experience as desire and nostalgia may come to its fulfillment” (FR, 33). This text of the encyclical, which suggests themes that recur throughout the whole text, puts in a nutshell the whole drama that is man. The insuppressible questions, which are the stuff of the human “heart,”⁹⁵ express the desire for fulfillment, which man, as *capax Dei*, carries within himself without being able to provide the exhaustive answer. For this reason desire takes on the features of nostalgia: a nostalgia not only for “something” lost—on the theme of sin and the wearisome burden it places upon the quest for truth, the encyclical dedicates some brief but lucid remarks⁹⁶—but, above all, a nostalgia for “someone” to *entrust oneself* to as to that fount of “true and coherent knowledge” (no. 33) in which “is to be found the satisfying answer to every question as yet unanswered” (no. 17).

Taking on the burden of man’s drama is thus shown to be the aim of the whole encyclical, which, as a loving expression of the Petrine magisterium, can never fail to speak about the salvific nature of the truth. Thus, by considering a specific as well as a technical theme, namely, faith and reason, to which the theme of the truth is tied, the teaching of John Paul II comes face to face with the central question in the dispute about the *humanum* that is at the heart of the contemporary debate.⁹⁷

The strong invitation to overcome every form of extrinsicism between faith and reason, as well as the concern to grasp the truth in its differentiated unity as universal, historic, and

understanding of the themes characteristic of so-called fundamental theology. An attempt to do just this is provided by P. Sequeri, who develops the themes, which have by now become classic, of the articulate research of the theological faculty of Milan (P. Sequeri, *Il Dio affidabile. Saggio di teologia fondamentale* [Brescia, 1996]).

⁹⁵Cf FR 1: “They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart.”

⁹⁶Cf. FR, 22.

⁹⁷Cf. John Paul II, “In occasione dell’apertura del nuovo Anno Accademico della Pontificia Università Lateranense,” *Nuntium*, no. 1 (1997): 15.

salvific, shows, indirectly, what is for *Fides et Ratio* the true countenance of man as a mystery of grace and freedom.

As a conclusion it will suffice here to mention a few salient features of this countenance, limiting ourselves to a list, or a table of contents as it were.

The first feature implied in the anthropology of *Fides et Ratio* is strictly Wojtylian and echoes, in a most particular way, *Redemptor Hominis*.⁹⁸ One could, perhaps, sum it up in the following claim: “Where might the human being seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death, if not in the light streaming from the mystery of Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection?”⁹⁹ This question is preceded by a return to the central affirmation of *Gaudium et Spes* (“through this revelation, men and women are offered the ultimate truth about their own life and about the goal of history”¹⁰⁰), accompanied by the significant gloss, “seen in any other terms, the mystery of personal existence remains an insoluble riddle” (*FR*, 12). Enigma and drama, two quite distinct yet intimately related categories, are employed by the Holy Father so as to penetrate the mystery of man. When man attains self-consciousness he realizes that he exists, but that he does not have within himself his own foundation. How can the *enigma* of man not be seen in this? It is thus inevitable that this enigma mark the living of everyday life which “shows well enough how each one of us is preoccupied by the pressure of a few fundamental questions and how in the soul of each of us there is at least an outline of the answers” (*FR*, 29). This is how the *dramatic* nature of human existence stands out!

Is there an exhaustive answer to the enigma? And if there is an answer, what becomes of man’s drama? Does it remain, or is it dissolved? What are the consequences of one or the other hypothesis?

The encyclical, pursuing these questions—and always insofar as they are related to the theme of the truth and of the knowledge of truth through faith and reason—indicates the second feature of an adequate anthropology: the reaffirmation—in the

⁹⁸Cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 19.

⁹⁹*FR*, 12

¹⁰⁰*Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

wake of the celebrated texts of *Gaudium et Spes* (nos. 14 and 22),¹⁰¹ which appear in all of the central documents of John Paul II—of its christocentric nature.

Hence, Jesus Christ himself appears on the scene as the protagonist, as man in the full and proper sense. The narrative of the Gospels attests to this: he proposes himself to his own as the fullness of all that is human. In so doing, he provokes freedom to faith—to a knowledge full of trust and affectivity—that arouses within hearts the *sequela Christi*.¹⁰² Christ offers himself therefore as the *way* to the foundation of truth, in the very moment in which he reveals its face. He, the crucified and risen One, brings about a perfect correspondence (analogy) between the Trinity (foundation) and finite freedom. In the “*propter nos homines*,” that is, “in the total offering of himself in his true body, the sacrament of his unique person,”¹⁰³ Jesus brings about the effectual fulfillment of created freedom, whose nature consists in *being-for-another*. In the reality of finite freedom, we see the enigmatic nature of man is proven. Man’s freedom, in fact, although always determined historically, is irreducible and—even though it be destined to *be-for-another*—it needs an event of freedom/truth to fulfill it. Through grace, the event of Christ resolves the enigma of man by proposing itself as the way.¹⁰⁴

And now we come to the third distinctive feature of the anthropology developed by *Fides et Ratio*: “Only within this

¹⁰¹*Gaudium et Spes*, 14: “Man is not deceived when he regards himself as superior to bodily things and as more than just a speck of nature or a nameless unit in the city of man. For by his power to know himself in the depths of his being he rises above the whole universe of mere objects. When he is drawn to think about his real self he turns to those deep recesses of his being where God who probes the heart awaits him, and where he himself decides his own destiny.” *Gaudium et Spes*, 22: “In reality, it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear.”

¹⁰²*FR*, 7: “At the origin of our life of faith there is an encounter, unique in kind, which discloses a mystery hidden for long ages. . . . As the source of love, God desires to make himself known; and knowledge which the human being has of God perfects all that the human mind can know of the meaning of life.”

¹⁰³Cf. my, *Logica dell’incarnazione come logica sacramentale*. The christological and anthropological connection is also developed in my, *Questioni di Antropologia*, 19–41. Cf. also N. Reali, *La ragione e la forma. Il sacramento nella teologia di Hans urs von Balthasar*, forthcoming.

¹⁰⁴Cf. *FR*, 34.

horizon of truth will people understand their freedom in its fullness and their call to know and love God as the supreme realization of their true self” (no. 107). One can offer a commentary on this final passage of the encyclical, which again takes up the theme of the relation between truth and freedom,¹⁰⁵ by employing a famous expression of von Balthasar: Jesus Christ resolves the enigma of man, but he does not decide the human drama in advance.¹⁰⁶ Against the risk of reifying the truth, which would inevitably kill the great dignity of human freedom, but also against the temptation of making freedom hang by its own thread by denying it access to the foundation of truth,¹⁰⁷ *Fides et Ratio* calmly opens a sound path: “to see” (by faith) in the vicarious substitution of Christ the offering to man of a truly liberated freedom. But how? In the sacramental mediation (a supremely objective expression of the intrinsic *medium* that is the Church) in which Jesus Christ concentrates Holy Thursday—the memorial of his passion, cross, and Resurrection—man is objectively given the possibility of performing an act of free correspondence to the (Trinitarian) foundation of truth.

One can see plainly why the encyclical introduces the theme of “the sacramental horizon of revelation” and, in particular, of the eucharistic sign¹⁰⁸ and goes so far as to speak of the “logic of the Incarnation.”¹⁰⁹ Only thus, in fact, can one see how the human enigma is resolved in Christ at the same time in which the inevitably dramatic character of freedom—emblem of the whole of man and expression of his insuppressible yearning for the foundation of truth—is maintained.

In such a way, an adequate anthropology cries out, without being able to demand it, for the christological event as manifesta-

¹⁰⁵Cf. *FR*, 90: “Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery.” Cf. also *FR*, nos. 5, 75, 89, 98.

¹⁰⁶Cf. *FR*, 12. Balthasar developed this thematic in *Theo-Drama*, vol. 3, 25–53.

¹⁰⁷This is the cause of more than a few errors fraught with consequences for humanity, above all in the modern and contemporary period (the image of Auschwitz and of the Gulag reappears, but also, on quite another level, the urgent need for interreligious dialogue, of which the ecumenical dialogue constitutes a methodological condition that cannot be disregarded.) On the interreligious dialogue, cf. my, *Questioni di Antropologia*, 155–73.

¹⁰⁸Cf. *FR*, 13.

¹⁰⁹Cf. *FR*, 94.

tion of the Trinity. This event, in turn, points to ecclesiology realized in the sacrament (as the heart of the *traditio catholica* that is referred objectively to the Scriptures as authentically interpreted by the magisterium), as the path which can effectively fulfill freedom. The *ecclesial event* (understood according to the logic of the Incarnation as the existential warp and woof of circumstances and of relations, of which the Eucharist is the form in the proper sense) and the *act of human freedom* (always historically determined and, therefore, in itself inalienable in disposing itself for the obedience of faith)¹¹⁰ describe the high dignity of man. Thus, we can see how, in the light of Christianity, every fiber of the human being is exalted, and above all the irrepressible search for the truth. For this reason, *Fides et Ratio* is a new beginning, confident in the capacity of man—of his reason and freedom—to accede to the foundation of truth.

At the same time, the encyclical exhorts us to have the courage to be constructive. Far from setting itself against “critique,” this exhortation exalts its positive value. The proponents of the most felicitous demands of contemporary philosophy will find there fertile ground for dialogue.

Will theologians know how to make use of all of its riches?— *Translated by Margaret Harper McCarthy.* □

¹¹⁰Cf. *FR*, 13: “This is why the Church has always considered the act of entrusting oneself to God to be a moment of fundamental decision which engages the whole person. In that act, the intellect and the will display their spiritual nature, enabling the subject to act in a way which realizes personal freedom to the full. It is not just that freedom is part of the act of faith: it is absolutely required. Indeed, it is faith that allows individuals to give consummate expression to their own freedom. Put differently, freedom is not realized in decisions made against God. For how could it be an exercise of true freedom to refuse to be open to the very reality which enables our self-realization? Men and women can accomplish no more important act in their lives than the act of faith; it is here that freedom reaches the certainty of truth and chooses to live in that truth.”