

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Truth and Politics: A Theological Comparison
Of Joseph Ratzinger and John Milbank

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Theology and Religious Studies
Of The Catholic University of America
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Doctor of Sacred Theology

By

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Washington, D.C.

2012

Truth and Politics: A Theological Comparison
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Joseph Ratzinger and the Anglican scholar John Milbank have written extensively on the social and political order from a theological perspective. The main aspect which distinguishes Ratzinger's theology of politics from Milbank's political theology is how each theologian orients his thought on the question of truth, and most specifically how each theologian understands and relocates Vico's claim that *verum est factum* (the truth is made). While Ratzinger is critical of Vico's account of the socially constructed nature of truth, Milbank, on the other hand, embraces Vico in a way which validates it. The political consequences which logically follow these two philosophical approaches to Vico illustrate a central difference between Ratzinger and Milbank.

As a result of these differing responses to Vico on truth, the dissertation argues that Ratzinger and Milbank take up different ways of relating socialism to the Trinitarian faith. Ratzinger's critical appreciation of socialism, but rejection of all political models as expressive of Trinitarian faith, and Milbank's promotion of socialism as integral to Trinitarian faith in practice are rooted in their reactions to Vico. In demonstrating these differences this study will show how their approaches to truth shape their philosophical and theological approaches to politics.

This dissertation by Peter Samuel Kucer fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Systematic Theology approved by Chad C. Pecknold, Ph.D., as Director, and by Brian V. Johnstone, C.S.S.R., Ph.D., and Christopher Ruddy, Ph.D. as Readers.

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Introduction

Joseph Ratzinger and the Anglican scholar John Milbank have written extensively on the social and political order from a theological perspective. Despite both having a favorable view towards democratic socialism, they differ in how they describe socialism's relationship to faith as expressed by the Church. For Ratzinger, democratic socialism, as distinct from totalitarian socialism,¹ is a legitimate political expression, yet he does not think the Church is to advocate any political model as a practical expression of theological faith. In contrast, Milbank proposes an ecclesial and democratic socialism as the political form of Christian faith in which the Church is to function as its site of origin.² His ecclesial socialism is supported by a political theology³ in which politics and theology are wedded together. Milbank's political theology differs from Ratzinger's theological concept of politics in that, according to Ratzinger's theology of politics,⁴ politics and faith are considered relevant to one another but, nonetheless, distinct.

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 28. Ratzinger distinguishes democratic socialism from totalitarian socialism. Totalitarian socialism, in contrast with democratic socialism, defines Ratzinger is "rigidly materialistic and atheistic." (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 28) The former USSR was an example of this totalitarian variant in which the state presents itself as the totality of its citizens existence. According to Ratzinger this form of socialism failed not simply because of its "false economic dogmatism" (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 29) but more fundamentally due to its "contempt for human rights" and by "their subjection of morality to the demands of the system and to their promises for the future." (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 29) By making morality subordinate to the political system of communism "man's primordial certainties about God, about himself, and about the universe" were, argues Ratzinger, lost. (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 28)

² John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 196, 228.

³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 228. He uses this term in order to distinguish his political theology from German political theology as especially represented by Johannes Baptist Metz. See Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith In History and Society: Toward a Foundational Political Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashely (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

⁴ D. Vincent Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI The Conscience of Our Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 72-73.

The key factor which distinguishes Ratzinger's theology of politics from Milbank's political theology is how each theologian orients his thought on the question of truth, and most specifically how each theologian understands and relocates Vico's claim that *verum est factum* (the truth is made). While Ratzinger is critical of Vico's account of the socially constructed nature of truth, Milbank, on the other hand, embraces Vico in a way which validates it. The political consequences which logically follow from these two approaches to Vico illustrate a central difference between Ratzinger and Milbank. As will be shown, Ratzinger's critical appreciation of socialism, but final rejection of all political ideology, as expressive of Trinitarian faith and Milbank's promotion of socialism as integral to Trinitarian faith in practice are rooted in their response to Vico which is, in turn, reflected in how each theologian understand physics, metaphysics, theology, and finally social and political reality in the light of physics, metaphysics, theology.

Their two approaches to Vico, as made evident in how each defines truth ascending from physics and descending from theology is, in turn, practically illustrated in their two conceptions of socialism in relationship to truths descending from faith. In the first chapter, accordingly, I will determine how Ratzinger's reaction to Vico's definition of truth is reflected in Ratzinger's description of man's natural, metaphysical and theological correspondence to truth. This will be followed by a chapter on how his response to Vico shapes his understanding of truth as illuminated and mediated with respect to natural, metaphysical and theological truth. In chapter three I will then turn to Milbank in order to determine how his reaction to Vico's definition of truth shapes his

view of man's correspondence to natural, metaphysical and theological truth. Then, chapter four will focus on Milbank's response to Vico with respect to truth as illuminated and mediated. Chapter five will compare Ratzinger's and Milbank's contrasting views on truth. Finally, in chapter six I will explain how their differences lead to two ways of presenting socialism, one a democratic socialism in accordance with the contemporary German model and the other an ecclesial socialism, in relationship to the faith as represented by the Church. Introducing all of these chapters, though, is a brief précis on Vico given in order to better situate Ratzinger and Milbank with respect to Vico's concept of truth.

Précis on Giovanni Battista Vico's Concept of Truth

The Italian Catholic political philosopher and historian Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744) was born in Naples, Italy in a room over his father's bookstore. His father, Antonio di Vico of Maddaloni, the son of a farmer, took up residence in Naples around 1656. Vico's mother, Candida Masullo, was Antonio's second wife and daughter of a carriage maker. Giambattista Vico was the sixth of eight children to whom his mother gave birth.⁵ He was born near the end of the Protestant reformation, commonly dated from 1517, when Martin Luther published *The Ninety-Five Theses* to 1648, the year of the Treaty of Westphalia which brought to a conclusion the series of at least semi-religious wars in Europe.⁶ As pointed out by Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin, the pillaging of monasteries and their libraries during these wars introduced many to previously little known manuscripts and documents. This newly acquired knowledge awoke a greater awareness of history especially among the Protestants who added many of the monastic books to their libraries.⁷ In opposition to the variety of explanations of history put forth by Protestants after studying these documents and manuscripts, Catholics, in their Counter Reformation, strove to correct Protestant interpretations of history with their own versions of history. This struggle over the interpretation of history, explains Fisch and Bergin, "had not yet abated in Vico's day. Indeed its finest

⁵ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1944), 216.

⁶ For an in depth discussion on to what degree the wars during the time of the Reformation can be properly defined as religious see William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 21.

fruits matured within his own lifetime in the collections of the Bollandist Fathers and the Congregation of St. Maur.”⁸

Within this historical context Vico was educated by the Jesuits, first in one of their grammar schools and then beginning with third grade privately by the Jesuit priest Antonio del Balzo, a noted nominalist philosopher of his time.⁹ After a year and a half break from studies in 1683 he returned to his philosophical education under the guidance of another Jesuit priest Giuseppe Ricci, who as described by Vico, was “a Scotist by sect but at bottom a Zenonist.”¹⁰ From Ricci, writes Vico, “he was greatly pleased to learn that ‘abstract substances’ had more reality than the ‘modes’ of the nominalist Balzo.”¹¹ However, Vico soon began to tire of Ricci’s instruction due his “[lingering] too long over explanations of being and substance in their distinctions as metaphysical degrees.”¹² As a result in 1684 he left Ricci’s instruction to study at his home the metaphysics of the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548-1617).¹³

During that year of private study he attended a lecture given by Don Felice Aquadia, the head lecturer on law at the Royal University of Studies.¹⁴ This lecture, along with the encouragement of his father, motivated Vico to devote himself to the study of law, both civil and canonical. In 1689 he graduated from the university’s school of law. During his studies of law he took an interest in poetry, in particular Horace’s *On The*

⁸ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 21.

⁹ Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 113. As explained by Fisch and Bergin, “In the Jesuit schools the ‘lower studies’ comprised three grades of grammar (chiefly Latin, with some Greek) and two of ‘humanity’ and rhetoric; the ‘higher studies’ included two or three years of philosophy (beginning with logic) and four of theology.” 216.

¹⁰ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 114.

¹¹ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 114.

¹² Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 114.

¹³ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 114.

¹⁴ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 114-115.

Art of Poetry.¹⁵ The reference to ideal truths in poetry and moral philosophy helped him, writes Vico, “to realize that the legal discipline is less than half learned by the method of study which is commonly observed.”¹⁶ This moved him to once again study metaphysics. In doing so he began to align himself more with Platonic metaphysics and less with Aristotelian metaphysics, “for”, he explains, “the metaphysics of Aristotle leads to a physical principle, which is matter, from which the particular forms are drawn.... But the metaphysics of Plato leads to a metaphysical principle, which is the eternal idea, drawing out and creating matter from itself, like a seminal spirit that forms its own egg.”¹⁷ Due to the influence of the ideal metaphysics of Plato, Vico began to develop a moral philosophy that is not primarily defined with reference to specific concrete laws but rather by “an ideal or architectonic virtue of justice.”¹⁸ This also led him “to [devote] himself to meditating an ideal commonwealth, to which he gave, in his laws, an equally ideal justice.”¹⁹

Not only did Vico align himself with Platonic idealism in opposition to Aristotle’s more concrete metaphysics; but he also, as evident in his writings, developed a science of reasoning in opposition to René Descartes’s exaltation of mathematics and the scientific observation of nature.²⁰ According to his new science the study of the historical development of language is more certain than knowledge gained through mathematics and the study of nature. In his original autobiography of 1725 Vico explicitly states his

¹⁵ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 118, 120.

¹⁶ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 121.

¹⁷ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 121.

¹⁸ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 121.

¹⁹ Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 121.

²⁰ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 1998).

opposition to Descartes method by writing, “We shall not here feign what René Descartes craftily feigned as to the method of his studies simply in order to exalt his own philosophy and mathematics and degrade all the other studies included in divine and human erudition. Rather, with the candor proper to a historian, we shall narrate plainly and step by step the entire series of Vico’s studies, in order that the proper and natural causes of his particular development as a man of letters may be known.”²¹ For man, according to Vico, historical knowledge is surer than knowledge gained through the scientific observation of nature since we only truly know that what we make. Consequently, since God made the natural world only he, and not man, really knows it. Man, however, knows his civic history since he wrote it.²²

In his book *The New Science*²³ Vico envisions a new science in which historical knowledge is privileged over scientific knowledge. In his new historically based science he presents a set of general principles which, according to Vico, when correctly

²¹ Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 113.

²² Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948) bk. I, sec. III, 331, pg. 85. “But in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never-failing light of a truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind. Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers should have bent all their energies to the study of the world of nature, which, since God made it, He alone knows; and that they should have neglected the study of the world of nations or civil world, which, since man had made it, men could hope to know.”

²³ Vico, *The First New Science*, xlii-xliv. Vico wrote multiple versions of the *The New Science*. His first version was never published and was later lost. It is currently known as *The New Science in Negative Form*. In 1725 he was able to publish a condensed version of this work. This is ordinarily referred to as *The First New Science*. In 1730 Vico then published a second version of *The New Science* which differs significantly in form and content from the previous edition. This is often referred to as *The Second New Science*. Finally, in 1743 Vico wrote a third version of *The New Science* which incorporated into *The Second New Science* his earlier work. This was published after Vico died in 1744. At times it is referred to as *The Second New Science* and at other times as *The Third New Science*. In this dissertation I will be referencing, due to its conciseness, Leon Pompa’s edition of Vico’s *First New Science* and, when there is a need for a more in depth quote, Thomas Goddard Bergin’s edition of Vico’s *The Third New Science* titled simply as *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*.

understood and applied explain recurring phases within human history.²⁴ The understanding gained through the study of human history is unlike theological, metaphysical, deductive or inductive knowledge, since, unlike the just mentioned kinds of knowledge, man knows history by having caused it himself.²⁵ By maintaining that “the criterion and rule of truth is to have made it”²⁶ Vico argues that this latter form of knowledge is greater than previous kinds, since in all the others man does not know from within (*per causas*). Consequently, in opposition to Descartes’ exaltation of knowledge gained through observation of nature, Vico asserts that, since one can only know what a dog looks like and not what it is like to be a dog, therefore this knowledge, as with all empirically based scientific data, is inferior to the knowledge of human history as expressed in language.²⁷

In describing historical knowledge gained through causing it Vico both explicitly rejects the Epicurean view that history is totally haphazard and the Stoic outlook in which history is controlled mechanically by fate.²⁸ Rather, Vico argues, this knowledge through causes is directed by providence whereby man, in freely collaborating with providence by

²⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), xx-xxi.

²⁵ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder* 24.

²⁶ Giambattista Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, trans. Jason Taylor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), chap I, 26, pg. 27.

²⁷ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap I, 26-28, pgs. 27-29.

²⁸ Giambattista Vico, *The First New Science*, trans. Leon Pompa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) bk. 1, chap. 3, 12, pg. 12. “For the Epicureans taught that chance rules blindly over human affairs; that the human soul dies with the body; that, since only body exists, the bodily senses must regulate the passions through pleasure; and that utility, which changes by the hour, is the rule of justice. The Stoics, on the contrary, decreed that everything, including human will, is dragged along by a fatal necessity... Hence, the Epicureans, with their ever-varying utility, would destroy the first and most important foundation of this science, the immutability of the natural law of the gentes [people]; and the Stoics, with their iron severity, would dismiss the benign interpretation [of law], in which interests and punishments are adjusted in accordance with the three celebrated categories of fault.”

developing his capacities, is given an ever greater comprehension of himself.²⁹ Due to Vico's conception of man as causing history while, at the same time, being directed by providence, he denies that human nature is unchangeable and that man knows it in an *apriori* manner.³⁰ Rather than viewing human nature as unalterable, Vico describes it as undergoing incremental changes as man progresses through history. These changes are not haphazard since they are directed by providence and, due to man's free will, neither are they entirely predictable. Vico, particularly in his various versions of *The New Science*, attempts to uncover the logic behind human history which is principally due neither to fate nor to self-interest, as he describes Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) maintaining,³¹ but rather to a divine spark within man which moves him to collaborate with God by transitioning from a brutish state of nature to a more civilized and cultured one.³²

²⁹ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. 1, pgs. 38-39. "We begin our principles with the idea that is the first in any work whatsoever: divine Providence, who is the architect of this world of nations....Providence disposes the things that particular men or peoples order for their own particular ends, things that would lead them principally to their own ruin, toward a universal end, beyond, and very often contrary to, their every intention; and how, through this universal end, but using these same particular ends [of men and peoples] as her means, she preserves them."

³⁰ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, section I, chap. I, 374, pg. 104. "For, as we have said above, since this world of nations has certainly been made by men, it is within these modifications that its principles should have been sought. And human nature, so far as it is like that of animals, carries with it this property, that the senses are its sole way of knowing things."

³¹ Vico, *The New Science*, bk. I, sect. III, 335, pg. 87. "And so neither the Epicureans who attribute to God body alone, and chance together with body, nor the Stoics who (in this respect Spinozists of their day) make God an infinite mind, subject to fate, in an infinite body, could reason of commonwealths or laws; and Benedict Spinoza speaks of the commonwealth as a society of shopkeepers."

³² Vico, *The New Science*, bk. I, sect. IV, 342, pgs. 90-91. "In one of its principle aspects, this Science must therefore be a rational civil theology of divine providence, which seems hitherto to have been lacking. For the philosophers have either been altogether ignorant of it, as the Stoics and the Epicureans were, the latter asserting that human affairs are agitated by a blind concourse of atoms, the former that they are drawn by a deaf [inexorable] chain of cause and effect; or they have considered it solely in the order of natural things, giving the name of natural theology to the metaphysics in which they contemplate this attribute [i.e. the providence] of God, and in which they confirm it by the physical order observed in the motions of such bodies as the spheres and the elements and in the final cause observed in other and minor natural things. But they ought to have studied it in the economy of civil things, in keeping with the full meaning of

Along with opposing the concept of a fixed human nature Vico also, in opposition to Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), John Selden (1584-1645), and Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694), denies a static presentation of natural law.³³ According to Vico, the content of natural law is dependent on how man chooses to collaborate with providence in the creation of human history. The truth of human nature and the truths contained in natural law which govern human nature, therefore for Vico, are not stationary and timeless in a metaphysical manner but rather are dynamic and change as man, directed by Providence, makes his history. Finally, Vico differentiates how natural law developed among the Hebrew people from how it developed among the Gentiles. In the following passage from *The First New Science* these elements making up his concept of natural law are succinctly stated:

[T]he natural law of the gentes is an eternal law that proceeds through time. But, just as within us lie buried a few eternal seeds of the true, which are gradually cultivated from childhood until, with age and through the various disciplines, the fully clarified notions that belong to the

applying to providence the term divinity, from *divinari*, to divine; that is, to understand what is hidden from men, the future, or what is hidden in them, their consciousness. It is this that makes up the first and principle part of the subject matter of jurisprudence, namely the divine things on which depend the human things which make up its other and complementary part.” Cf. Vico, *The New Science*, bk. II, sect. I, 378-379, pgs. 106-107.

³³ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. IV, 49, pg. 41. “As for the first, the natural law of the gentes is an eternal law that proceeds through time. But, just as within us lie buried a few eternal seeds of the true, which are gradually cultivated from childhood until, with age and through the various disciplines, the fully clarified notions that belong to the sciences arise, so within mankind, as a result of our sin, the eternal seeds of justice were buried, which, as the human mind gradually developed from the childhood of the world in accordance with its true nature, developed into demonstrated maxims of justice. But the following difference must always be preserved: that this proceeded in one, distinctive way among the people of God, and in a different, normal way among the gentile nations.” Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. VIII, 90, pg. 66. “Through the forgoing properties [48-9, 55] we have established the eternity and universality of the natural law of the nations. But since this law arose with the common customs of people, which are invariable creations of nations, and since human customs are the practices or habits of a human nature that does not change all at once but always retains an impression of some former practice or habit, this Science must provide, at one and the same time, a philosophy and a history of human customs, which are the two parts required to complete the kind of jurisprudence which is our concern, i.e. the jurisprudence of mankind.” Cf. Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. I, chaps. V-VI, 15-24, pgs. 14-20.

sciences arise, so within mankind, as a result of our sin, the eternal seeds of justice were buried, which, as the human mind gradually developed from the childhood of the world in accordance with its true nature, developed into demonstrated maxims of justice. But the following difference must always be preserved: that this proceeded in one, distinctive way among the people of God, and in a different, normal way among the gentile nations.³⁴

In the passage above Vico, by naming natural law as “the natural law of the gentes,” brings out the historical and changing aspect of natural law. He does this by contrasting evolving natural law of the people (gentes) with the supposedly, stationary, abstract “natural law of the philosophers”³⁵ as proposed by Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf who all “claim, on the basis of their systems of the natural law of the philosophers, that, from the beginning of the world, the customs of the natural law of the gentes has been constantly uniform.”³⁶

As is evident in his views on human nature and the law that governs it Vico prioritizes what is historically made over what is propositionally true. This does not mean that he completely relativizes natural law. Rather he attempts to place his view between the Epicureans who, as described by Vico, viewed the formulation of law as due to pure chance and the Stoics who, claims Vico, viewed law as unchanging.³⁷ He develops his middle position by integrating his assertion that a “few eternal seeds of the

³⁴ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. IV, 49, pg. 41.

³⁵ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. XLVII, 194, pg. 118.

³⁶ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. XLVII, 194, pg. 118.

³⁷ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. I, chap. III, 12, pg. 12. “Hence, the Epicureans, with their ever-varying utility, would destroy the first and most important foundation of this science, the immutability of the natural law of the gentes; and the Stoics, with their iron severity, would dismiss the benign interpretation [of law], in which interests and punishments are adjusted in accordance with the three celebrated categories of fault.”

true”³⁸ have been providentially buried in man with his anti-Cartesian position that “to know distinctly is a vice rather than virtue of the human mind.”³⁹ Natural law, therefore, does, according to Vico, have a universal dimension to it that, due to providence, transcends history, but man’s knowledge of this universal dimension will always be vague and indistinct.

Vico’s anti-Cartesian stance is rooted in his hylozoistic metaphysical theory. Although the term hylozoism (Greek *hylo*, matter, + *zoe*, life) originates from Ralph Cudworth⁴⁰ (1617-1688),⁴¹ the concept has its origin in early Greek philosophers most notably Heraclitus (500 BC).⁴² According to Heraclitus all material objects (*hyle*) contain a principle of life (*zoe*) which is not a constant, stable element but rather is dynamic and ever in motion. In contrast, Aristotle with his hylomorphism (Greek *hylo*, matter, + *morphe*, form) acknowledged constant, actualized stable elements within the universe in the shape of forms. For Aristotle “matter is potentiality, while form is actuality.”⁴³ Medieval philosophers, such as Aquinas, further distinguished between substantial forms and accidental forms.⁴⁴ The substantial form of man, explains Aquinas,

³⁸ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. IV, 49, pg. 41.

³⁹ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk I, chap. IV, I, 72, pg. 69. For further discussion on this see Robert Miner, *Vico, Genealogist of Modernity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 47-54.

⁴⁰ Ralph Cudworth was part of a group called the Cambridge Platonists who were associated with University of Cambridge. The Cambridge Platonists, and Cudworth in particular, have exerted a decisive influence upon the thought of John Milbank, who has sought to champion their Platonic “participationist” metaphysics against what he takes to be the nominalism of modernity. Cf. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, xxvi.

⁴¹ Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: The first part, wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted and its impossibility demonstrated*, 1678 (London: Printed for Richard Royston, 1678), n19, n20, n21, 62, 101-109, 123, 131-132, 143-146.

⁴² Burnett, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 57-63.

⁴³ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, bk. II, chap. 1, 412a. pg. 165.

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Aquinas on Being and Essence*, trans. A. A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968) 16, 17, 109, 110.

is “the intellectual principle,”⁴⁵ in other words, his soul, which subsists even apart from physical matter. An accidental form would be if a man is white or black. According to this understanding, forms, in particular substantial forms, organize matter and give it intelligibility.⁴⁶ The truth of creation that man can know, therefore, is understood as present in how various substantial forms are ordered and related to one another. The hylomorphic theory stemming from Aristotle was appropriated by Christianity and is most notably present in how the Catholic Church understands the Eucharist.⁴⁷ This manner of conceiving reality contrasts with the hylozoistic theory, stemming from Heraclitus and further developed by Vico, in which the truth man encounters is defined not by stable forms but rather by the constantly flowing energy of life present within the fundamental elements of the universe.

According to the hylozoism of Vico this active energy is made up of metaphysical points operating by a divine *conatus* (Latin for impulse, inclination, tendency, striving)

⁴⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 76, art. 1.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae q. 85, art. 4. “As stated in the First Part (q. 5, A. 5), mode, species, and order are consequent upon every created good, as such, and also upon every being. Because every being and every good as such depends on its form from which it derives its *species*. Again, any kind form, whether substantial or accidental, or anything whatever, is according to some measure, wherefore it is stated in *Metaph. viii.* that *the forms of things are like numbers*, so that a form has a certain mode corresponding to its measure. Lastly, owing to its form, each thing has a relation of *order* to something else.” Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 76, art. 1; Ia, q. 5, art. 5;

⁴⁷ Even though the Catholic Church does not officially adopt one philosophical system it does, at times, affirm certain perennial philosophical principles as non-negotiable. This is evident in the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* which states, “The sacramental re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice, crowned by the resurrection, in the Mass involves a most special presence which – in the words of Paul VI – “is called ‘real’ not as a way of excluding all other types of presence as if they were ‘not real’, but because it is a presence in the fullest sense: a substantial presence whereby Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present”. This sets forth once more the perennially valid teaching of the Council of Trent: “the consecration of the bread and wine effects the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. And the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called this change transubstantiation”. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html (accessed April 27, 2011), #15.

principle.⁴⁸ The building blocks of creation, therefore, are not understood as connected to forms, in accordance with the hylomorphism theory, but rather, in line with the hylozoistic theory, connected to ever changing, active principles. For Vico these active principles are governed by a *conatus* principle. *Conatus* is an active force in constant tension understood in accordance with Heraclitus's view "that things are constantly changing (universal flux)".⁴⁹ Cratylus of Athens, a follower of Heraclitus in the late fifth century, further developed this concept by claiming that since everything is in flux therefore there can be no knowledge of the world.⁵⁰ This radicalized expression of Heraclitus views is consistent with the hylozoism of Vico in which knowledge is ultimately not defined by forms that can be abstracted by an agent intellect but rather by man's interaction with ever evolving points of energy in constant motion.

Vico also grounds his anti-Cartesian stance, which leads him to reject a static concept of nature and law, in his simple axiom that "the true is itself made (*Verum esse ipsum factum*)"⁵¹ which is often shortened as *verum est factum*. For Vico, therefore, in contrast with Descartes, truth is not to be discovered by man in examining nature but rather through the study of his language, laws and history which he himself creates. This, as explained by José Faur, distances Vico's approach to truth from Greek philosophers

⁴⁸ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk. I, IV, I, 55, pg. 57; bk I, chap. IV, I, 66, pg. 65; bk I, chap. V, II, 75, pg. 74.

⁴⁹ Daniel W. Graham, "Heraclitus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/heraclitus/>. (accessed December 01, 2010).

⁵⁰ Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 322.

⁵¹ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, chap. I, 15, pg. 17.

who “saw the highest criterion of truth and ethics in nature.”⁵² Instead, akin to the indifference of the Romans and Hebrews to science and the study of nature, Vico maintains that the study of language and not nature is the highest standard of truth for man.⁵³ Vico’s exaltation of rhetoric over empirical sciences is also rooted in his *verum-factum* principle. As previously explained, according to Vico, since man linguistically makes language and the laws that govern his civil life, this is where he will know truth and not by reflecting, in a Greek manner, upon nature, since only God knows nature due to being its creator. Vico additionally establishes his *verum-factum* principle in God himself by identifying the generation of the second person of the Trinity as the ultimate paradigm of truth’s convertibility with the made.⁵⁴

By focusing on language and laws present in various political forms in history Vico claims to have discovered a new science that is based upon a few basic principles.

⁵² José Faur, “Vico, Religious Humanism and the Sephardic Tradition,” *Judaism* 27, issue 1 (Winter 1978): 64.

⁵³ Faur, Vico, Religious Humanism and the Sephardic Tradition, 64. For Vico’s writings on language see Giambattista Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, trans. Jason Taylor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Giambattista Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. Giorgio A. Pinton and Arthur W. Shippee (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1984); Giambattista Vico, *Universal Right*, trans. Giorgio Pinton and Margaret Diehl (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2000).

⁵⁴ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap I, 17, p. 19. “This is why, in our religion, in which we profess that the world is created out of nothing in time, there needs to be real distinction between created truth, which is convertible with what is made, and uncreated truth, which is convertible with what is begotten. In the same way, the Holy Scriptures, with truly divine eloquence, have called the wisdom of God (which contains in itself the ideas of all things, and therefore, the elements of all ideas) the *Word*, since in this Word, the true is the same as the comprehension of all elements, which composes this universe of things and can establish countless worlds, if He so wills; and from these elements, known in His divine omnipotence, there exists a word most complete and real which, because it is known by the Father from eternity, is similarly begotten by Him from eternity.” Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap. I, 28, p. 27-29. “If I might dispatch the matter in a word: the true is thus convertible with the good when the truth which is also known has its very being from the mind by which it is known, and so human science is an imitator of divine science, in which God, insofar as He knows the truth generates it *ad intra* (inwardly) from eternity, makes it *ad extra* (outwardly) in time. As for the criterion of the true, in the same way that for God, it is to have communicated goodness to His thoughts in the midst of creating – *God saw that they were good* – so for men, by comparison, it is to have effected the truths which we know. But, to better fortify this position, it must be defended against the dogmatists and the skeptics.”

In describing how social and political institutions have developed, Vico rejects the social contract theorists' view that governments arose after people in a moment of time rationally chose to bind themselves to a contract (a rejection consistent with his rejection of Cartesian rationalism).⁵⁵ According to Vico, this theory is overly simplistic since it overlooks the natural historical development of man. Instead of political institutions having their origins in a rationally chosen contract between people, Vico argues, they arose out of natural, non-rational aspects of human nature. Vico's emphasis on a non-rational component in the origins of political institutions does not mean, however, that he does not recognize any logic in the historical development of governance. Rather he attempts to steer a middle ground between two deterministic accounts of history: the Epicureans account of history as governed by chance and the Stoic account of history governed by fate.⁵⁶

In this middle position Vico establishes his science. He bases his science on one general principle and three human institutions.⁵⁷ His general principle common for all men is the belief in providence which naturally rose in the human psyche.⁵⁸ This belief in providence in turn led to the institution of normative religious beliefs. These religious beliefs influenced how man instituted the practice of marriage. Out of this second institution political forms developed and were formed around hereditary claims and the formation of clans and influential families. The third institution that Vico identifies is the

⁵⁵ Vico, *The New Science*, bk. I, sec. IV, 342, pg. 91. "Our new Science must therefore be a demonstration, so to speak, of the historical fact of providence, for it must be a history of the forms of order which, without human discernment or intent, and often against the designs of men, providence has given to this great city of the human race."

⁵⁶ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. I, chap. III, 12, pg. 12.

⁵⁷ Vico, *The First New Science* bk. II, chap. I, 74-75, pg. 53-54.

⁵⁸ Vico, *The First New Science* bk. II, chap. I, 45, pg. 38.

burial of the dead which first began out a simple revulsion of unburied bodies and was later shaped by religious beliefs.⁵⁹ The erection of monuments, the burial of the dead, and the subsequent genealogies represent, for Vico, the earliest form of historical data.⁶⁰

Vico categorizes the various forms of political expressions that arose out of the three mentioned foundational institutions in four ways. The first was simply isolated family units. These disparate family units then gradually came together as a primitive priestly society. Vico names this society *the theological or poetic age*. This first age, as explained by Vico, was based on the religious belief that in the sky is a God, Jove, who communicates to man through thunder and lightning.⁶¹ Priests ensured the continuation of this primitive political form by offering sacrifices in order to appease Jove.⁶² Eventually, though, priests lost their prestige and were replaced by the heads of aristocratic families. Vico names this age *the heroic age*.⁶³ This age was based on the belief that the aristocratic leaders and their families were of semi-divine origins. However, the aristocrats suffered a similar fate as the priests of the theological age when the lower classes no longer believed in the semi-divinity of the aristocrats. This led, explains Vico, to *the third age of men* in the form of democracies.⁶⁴ As is evident,

⁵⁹ Vico, *The First New Science* bk. I, chap. I, 10, pg. 10; bk. II, chap. VII, 75, pg. 54.

⁶⁰ Vico, *The First New Science* bk. II, chap. XXVIII, 144-145, pg. 90.

⁶¹ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. XII, 105, pg. 73.

⁶² Vico, *The New Science*, prol., 25, pg. 13; bk. I, chap. LXXII 250, pg. 71; bk. I, chap. LXXV 254, pg. 72.

⁶³ Vico, *The New Science*, bk. II, sec. V, chap. VI, 634-661, pgs. 212-222.

⁶⁴ Vico, *The New Science*, prol., 29, pg. 16. "The balance next to the purse is meant to indicate that, after the aristocratic governments, which were heroic governments, there came human governments, at first popular in character. The people had finally come to understand that the rational nature (which is the true human nature) is equal in all men. From this natural equality (by occasions conceived in the ideal eternal history and encountered exactly in Roman history) they gradually brought the heroes in civil equality in popular commonwealths."

according to Vico, as man progresses through history, more rational governing principles prevail over more superstitious ones.⁶⁵

However, this progression is not, as described by Vico, only linear but also can be cyclical. The rational democratic age of men in which “the people had finally come to understand that the rational nature (which is the true human nature) is equal in all men”⁶⁶ eventually, due to the “dissolute life”⁶⁷ of the people became depraved and irrational. Providence first remedied this by allowing monarchs to arise in order to govern the unruly people.⁶⁸ However, if, “providence does not find such a remedy within, it seeks it outside”⁶⁹ by allowing the nation “to become subject to better nations which, having conquered them by arms, preserve them as subject provinces.”⁷⁰ Finally, Vico writes, “if the peoples are rotting in this last civil illness and cannot agree upon a monarch from within, and are not conquered and preserved by better nations from without, then providence for their extreme ill has its extreme remedy at hand.”⁷¹ This extreme measure

⁶⁵ Vico, *The New Science*, prol., 31, pg. 18. In succinctly describing this progression Vico writes, “1. The age of the gods, in which the gentiles believed they lived under divine governments, and everything was commanded them by auspices and oracles, which are the oldest things in profane history. 2. The age of the heroes, in which they reigned everywhere in aristocratic commonwealths, on account of a certain superiority of nature which they held themselves to have over the plebs. 3. The age of men, in which all men recognized themselves as equal in human nature, and therefore there were established first the popular commonwealths and then the monarchies, both of which are forms of human governments, as we observed a short while ago.”

⁶⁶ Vico, *The New Science*, prol., 29, pg. 16.

⁶⁷ Vico, *The New Science*, concl., 1105, pg. 380.

⁶⁸ Vico, *The New Science*, concl., 1103, pg. 380. “It first ordains that there be found among these peoples a man like Augustus to arise and establish himself as a monarch and, by force of arms, take in hand all the orders and all the laws, which, though sprung from liberty, no longer avail to regulate and hold it within bounds. On the other hand providence ordains that the very form of the monarchic state shall confine the will of the monarchs, in spite of their unlimited sovereignty, within the natural order of keeping the peoples content and satisfied with both their religion and their natural liberty.”

⁶⁹ Vico, *The New Science*, concl., 1105, pg. 380.

⁷⁰ Vico, *The New Science*, concl., 1105, pg. 381.

⁷¹ Vico, *The New Science*, concl., 1106, pg. 381.

of providence allows the people to revert back to the first primitive age.⁷² To what extent Vico's cyclical understanding of history is fatalistic is not clear from his writings and, consequently, is debated among scholars.⁷³ It is, though, important to notice that Vico describes the cyclical nature of history contingently and conditionally (If/then).

How Vico chooses to name his three stage cyclical concept of contingent history reveals another aspect of his thought. He calls it the "ideal eternal history."⁷⁴ By this he indicates that according to his science human history follows the order of ideas in a Platonic manner. The ideas refer both to the eternal mind of God who providentially directs history and how man, in responding to providence, both non-rationally and rationally, works out eternal ideas in history.⁷⁵ For Vico, man encounters in history the eternal ideals of God in a non-Aristotelian, Platonic manner,⁷⁶ which, in accordance with Plato's cave analogy, are only perceived dimly and indistinctly.⁷⁷ This anti-Aristotelian and pro-Platonic metaphysics, explains Vico, is related to his previously explained anti-

⁷² Vico, *The New Science*, concl., 1106, pg. 381. "For such peoples, like so many beasts, have fallen into the custom of each man thinking only of his own private interests and have reached the extreme of delicacy, or better of pride, in which like wild animals they bristle and lash out at the slightest displeasure. Thus in the midst of their greatest festivities, though physically thronging together, they live like wild beasts in a deep solitude of spirit and will, scarcely any two being able to agree since each follows his own pleasure or caprice. By reason of all this, providence decrees that, through obstinate factions and desperate civil wars, they shall turn their cities into forests and the forests into dens and lairs of men. In this way, through long centuries of barbarism, rust will consume the misbegotten subtleties of malicious wits that have turned them into beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense."

⁷³ Miner, *Vico, Genealogist of Modernity*, 128-131.

⁷⁴ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. VIII, 90, pg. 66.

⁷⁵ Vico, *The First New Science*, xxviii-xxix; bk. II, chap. VIII, 90, pg. 66.

⁷⁶ Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1944), 121. "Only after he had made considerable progress did he understand why the metaphysics of Aristotle had been of no avail to him in the study of moral philosophy.... For the metaphysics of Aristotle leads to a physical principle, which is matter, from which the particular forms are drawn; and indeed makes God a potter who works at things outside himself. But the metaphysics of Plato leads to a metaphysical principle, which is the eternal idea, drawing out and creating matter from itself, like a seminal spirit that forms its own eggs."

⁷⁷ Plato, *Republic*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: The Dial Press, 1956), 265-269.

Cartesian stance. According to Vico, both Aristotle and Descartes make the error of assuming that knowing distinctly is a virtue of the mind. On the one hand, Aristotle does this by bringing “metaphysics straight down into physics.”⁷⁸ Descartes, on the other hand, achieves this by bringing “physics straight up into metaphysics.”⁷⁹ Vico argues against both these approaches by stating that “metaphysics transcends physics because it treats of powers and the infinite; physics is a part of metaphysics because it treats of forms and bounded things.”⁸⁰

Consequently, since metaphysics transcends physics and does not equal physics, whatever man knows of the eternal ideas through his senses will always be more indistinct than distinct. Vico explains this by writing:

And yet thinking itself is an admission that what you think is unformed and has no limits. And on account of this, to know distinctly is a vice rather than virtue of the human mind, for it involves knowing of the limits of things. The divine mind sees things in the sunlight of its own truth, that is to say, when it sees a thing, it knows infinite things besides the thing which it sees; the human mind, when it knows a thing distinctly, sees it at night by torchlight, and when it sees it, it loses sight of the things nearby...But, the clarity of metaphysical truth is identical to the clarity of light which we do not see distinctly except through things which are darkened: metaphysical things are illuminating because they can be confined by no limit, can be seen distinctly in nothing formed; but physical things are darkened things, by which we see distinctly the light of metaphysical things.⁸¹

Due to his Platonic metaphysics in which ideas are truly known by man only indistinctly, Vico rejects Aristotle’s universals while upholding the validity of Platonic

⁷⁸ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk I, chap. IV, I, 72, pg. 69.

⁷⁹ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk I, chap. IV, I, 72, pg. 69.

⁸⁰ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk I, chap. IV, I, 72, pg. 69.

⁸¹ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk. I, chap. IV, 72-73, pg. 69-71.

forms.⁸² Aristotle's universals are useless, according to Vico, since in an attempt to bring clarity to the human mind with abstract categories they neither do justice to particular cases from which they are abstracted from nor do justice to eternal ideas in God to which man only has vague, general access.⁸³ In contrasting Platonic forms with Aristotelian universals Vico writes:

The reason that physical matter produces the best form, regardless of the particular form it produces, is that the way that it produced that form was the only one of all. But metaphysical matter, because all particular forms are imperfect, contains the best form with respect to the genus itself, or idea. We have seen why forms are useful; now let us take up why universal are harmful. To speak in universal terms is characteristic of infants or barbarians... All errors in philosophy come from homonyms (commonly called equivocations, an equivocation being nothing other than a term common to many things), for without genera, there would be no equivocations, since men are naturally averse to homonyms. Here is proof of this: when a child is ordered, without distinction, to fetch Titus when there are two people of this name, because by nature he inclines to particulars, he will immediately ask, "Which Titus do you want me to fetch?"⁸⁴

The description given above on Vico's thought is clearly stated in his writings and is not subject to debate among most scholars when interpreting Vico. However, like many great thinkers, the more nebulous aspects of his writings have been interpreted in a variety of ways which at times contradict one another.

⁸² Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk. I, chap. II, 40-41, pg. 43. "And because forms are individual ... it follows that the more the sciences and the arts aspire to the Aristotelian rather than Platonic genera, the more they confound the forms, and that the more encompassing they become, the less useful they turn out to be. It is from this reputation that the physics of Aristotle is so little taught today, namely, that it is far too universal; while, on the other hand, the human race has been enriched with countless new truths by means of fire and machines, the instruments used by modern physics, an operative physics which produces works resembling the particular works of nature."

⁸³ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, xv; bk. I, chap. II, 38-48, pgs. 41-49.

⁸⁴ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk. I, chap. II, 44-46, pgs. 45-47.

David L. Marshall, in *The Current State of Vico Scholarship*, divides these approaches in three basic ways: scientifically, religiously and linguistically.⁸⁵ These ways can be further distinguished by whether one maintains that Vico was a supporter of the enlightenment with its emphasis on rationalism, universalism and empiricism or whether, as expressed in his opposition to Descartes, he opposed the enlightenment project.⁸⁶

Two current historians disagree on how to categorize Vico in precisely this manner. On the one hand, according to Jonathan Israel, a noted historian on the Enlightenment, Vico is situated within the Enlightenment/modern way of thought.⁸⁷ On the other hand, according to the historian Mark Lilla, Vico is an anti-modern, or in other words opposed to the enlightenment.⁸⁸ Mark Lilla's view is a further development of Isaiah Berlin's categorization of Vico as part of the Counter-Enlightenment. According to Berlin (1909-1997), a recently deceased historian and Vico scholar, the term Counter-Enlightenment refers to an 18th and early 19th century movement that arose in opposition to the 18th century Enlightenment characterized by a strong emphasis on rationality and

⁸⁵ David L. Marshall, "The Current State of Vico Scholarship," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, no. 1 (January 2011): 142.

⁸⁶ Marshall, *The Current State of Vico Scholarship*, 142.

⁸⁷ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 664–70; Marshall, *The Current State of Vico Scholarship*, 141.

⁸⁸ Mark Lilla, *G.B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) 15. "Vico was an anti-modern. He distrusted the motives of modern philosophy and feared its political teaching. Whereas the moderns saw the lamp of man's reason covered by the basket of dogma and superstition, Vico saw a fallen creature whose irrational drives would always dominate his weak reason. The moderns believed error could and must be refuted through analysis; Vico believed that certain errors were useful and should be preserved, since God used them indirectly to develop the faculties. And while the moderns distrusted all order and authority that could not be rationally justified, Vico saw in them the hand of a benevolent Father drawing his weak and fallen children back to him over time. Vico's dissent from the moderns is based on this profoundly unmodern reading of human nature, and is animated by a fear that the moderns' studied ignorance of it would unleash powerful psychological and social forces that could render man a beast to himself and to others."; Mark Lilla, "G.B. Vico: The Antimodernist," *The Wilson Quarterly* 17, issue 3 (July 1993) 32-39; Marshall, *The Current State of Vico Scholarship*, 146.

science. Berlin describes the Counter-Enlightenment movement, in which he places Vico as relativist, anti-rationalist, romantic, intuitionist, vitalist and organic.⁸⁹ According to Berlin Vico found his inspiration not from 18th century thinkers, with their emphasis on rationality and empiricism, but rather in ancient Greek and Roman thought which focused on language, law and history.⁹⁰

Since in this dissertation it will be shown that Ratzinger's and Milbank's physical, metaphysical, theological and political differences are rooted in their two approaches to Vico's *verum-factum* principle as present in both man's and God's knowledge of the truth, it will be helpful to locate their two approaches to Vico within this continuum of interpretations. In *Introduction to Christianity* Ratzinger describes Vico not as a Counter-Enlightenment thinker, but, more in accordance with Jonathan Israel, as one who brought the Enlightenment to its full development.⁹¹ He does this by dividing the basic historical attitudes to reality in three ways: magical, metaphysical and scientific.⁹² For Ratzinger, the metaphysical approach to reality was present in ancient Greek thought, notably Aristotle and Plato, which was later providentially joined with biblical faith as evident in Scripture and in the writings of the Church Fathers.⁹³

As described by Ratzinger, Vico, along with Descartes and Kant, rejected the metaphysical approach to reality and instead, after having "given up seeking the hidden

⁸⁹ Isaiah Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Despotism To Law, Common*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, vol. 2, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 101, 102, 106; Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 8-12.

⁹⁰ Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 8.

⁹¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 31.

⁹² Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 30. Ratzinger clarifies his use of scientific by writing, "'scientific' here being used in the sense in which we speak of the natural sciences."

⁹³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen* (Bonn: Paulinus, 2006), 29.

‘in-itselfness’ of things and sounding the nature of being itself,”⁹⁴ advanced a scientific manner of conceiving reality by restricting himself to what is seen and visibly evident. Vico did this, argues Ratzinger, by substituting the scholastic axiom *verum est ens* with *verum est factum*.⁹⁵ As described by Ratzinger, this led Vico to describe reality historically, after “scientifically” examining the data of language, law and culture, and not metaphysically.

In contrast with Ratzinger, Milbank, more in accordance with Berlin’s approach, describes Vico as a post-modern, counter-enlightenment thinker who did not intend to bring the modern thought to its fulfillment but rather attempted to recapture an ancient appreciation for language, rhetoric and history in opposition to Descartes’ modern fascination with mathematics and with clear and distinct universal ideas.⁹⁶ Milbank, though, distinguishes himself from Berlin and other similar readers of Vico by interpreting in a unique manner Vico’s identification of the generation of the second person of the Trinity as the ultimate paradigm of truth’s convertibility with the made. According to Milbank, when Vico’s axiom is understood in light of Nicholas Cusa’s description of the Second Person of the Trinity as the ‘Art’ of God this means that the second Person of the Trinity is the inner creation of God, thus making creation rather than being the foremost metaphysical concept.⁹⁷

As this dissertation will demonstrate, the thought of Giambattista Vico is crucial for understanding how Joseph Ratzinger’s and John Milbank’s approach to truth and

⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 30.

⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 31.

⁹⁶ John Milbank, *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico Part I The Early Metaphysics* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 48-62.

⁹⁷ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico Part I*, 22, 117-149.

politics relates to one another. While the following chapters are dedicated to the comparison of these two contemporary theologians, their distinct relationship to Vico provides a helpful backdrop for this comparative study.

Chapter One

Ratzinger on Truth as Essentially Uncreated: Correspondence and the Analogy of Being

Introduction:

As described in the précis, for Vico truth is convertible with the made. Ratzinger explicitly denies the reductionist aspects of such a claim. For Ratzinger, truth is essentially not made because God is Truth Itself, and in Him there is no inner creation. At the same time, however, Ratzinger affirms a created aspect of intra-worldly truth. Ratzinger, therefore, rejects Vico's definition of truth while acknowledging a dimension of his thought that is compatible with Christian belief. In this chapter I will demonstrate how Ratzinger attempts to rectify Vico's position on truth by utilizing a particular understanding of the analogy of being. This leads him to affirm man's capacity to correspond analogously with historically conditioned expressions of truth to uncreated divine truth. To demonstrate how Ratzinger corrects Vico we will first focus on how Ratzinger understands truth in its divine state, to which all truth accessible to man corresponds to in an imperfect way. Then we will examine how Ratzinger, by relying on the law of analogy as developed throughout the Catholic tradition, views man as corresponding to truth by participating in uncreated truth as opposed to Vico's perception of man corresponding to truth by imitating the generation of the second person of the Trinity as the ultimate paradigm of truth's convertibility with the made.⁹⁸

1. Truth in God both One and Triune:

⁹⁸ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap I, 17, p. 19; Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap. I, 28, p. 27-29.

1.1 Greek Ontology:

While not absent in his other works, the main work where Ratzinger defends the priority of the true over the made in opposition to Vico is in *Introduction to Christianity* (1968). He does this in the following manner. In accordance with his 1959 lecture *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen* Ratzinger argues that ancient Greek ontology is providentially part of a Christian concept of truth.⁹⁹ Since there are a variety of ancient Greek ontologies, it is necessary to pinpoint which aspects of the various Greek ontologies Ratzinger deems as compatible with Christianity so as to differentiate what he considers as supportive of Christian faith from what Vico, as explained in the *précis*, does. The different theories can be differentiated by how they explain constancy and stability present in reality. A few main theories describe this relationship in the following manner. According to Stoic ontology, which recognizes only material “bodies [*somata*] as genuinely existent beings [*onta*),”¹⁰⁰ God, as a material being, is present throughout the world “as its organizing principle.”¹⁰¹ As an internal activity God provides order in the world characterized by change. The divine being does this since, for the Stoics, “God is identical with one of the two ungenerated and indestructible first principles (*archai*) of the universe. One principle is matter which they regard as utterly

⁹⁹ Ratzinger *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen*, 29. „[D]ann bedeutet dies, daß die von den Kirchenvätern vollzogene Synthese des biblischen Glaubens mit dem hellenischen Geist als dem damaligen Repräsentanten des philosophischen Geistes überhaupt nicht nur legitim, sondern notwendig war, um den vollen Anspruch und den ganzen Ernst des biblischen Glaubens zum Ausdruck zu bringen...Das aber bedeutet, daß die philosophische Wahrheit in einem gewissen Sinn konstitutiv mit in den christlichen Glauben hineingehört, und dies wiederum besagt, daß die *analogia entis* eine notwendige Dimension der christlichen Wirklichkeit ist, deren Streichung zugleich die die Aughebung des eigentlichen Anspruchs wäre, den das Christentum zu stellen hat.“

¹⁰⁰ Brad Inwood, *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 210.

¹⁰¹ Inwood, *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 371.

unqualified and inert. It is that which is acted upon. God is identified with an eternal reason (*logos*, Diog. Laert. 44B) or intelligent designing fire (Aetius, 46A) which structures matter in accordance with Its plan.”¹⁰² For Parmenides (510-470 BC), the founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy, all of reality is a single being which does not admit any change even though it appears that change occurs.¹⁰³ In contrast, Heraclitus asserted that being, which resembles fire, is in a constant state of change.¹⁰⁴ Plato attempted to reach a synthesis between Parmenides and Heraclitus with his theory of forms. According to Plato there are stable, eternal forms in heaven which earthly beings faintly image.¹⁰⁵ In an effort to correct Plato’s idealism, Aristotle denies that universal forms exist apart from the individual matter which they inhabit.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, Aristotle still affirms that a constant element persists throughout the change of a being. He explains this with his hylomorphic (Greek *hylo*, matter, + *morphe*, form) theory in which the essence of the compound is the substantial form and not the ever changing matter.¹⁰⁷ We will now determine which of the above elements, according to Ratzinger, Christianity appropriated. Ratzinger’s difference in this respect with Vico will also be pointed out.

¹⁰² Baltzly, Dirk, “Stoicism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2010 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/stoicism/> (accessed February 8, 2011).

¹⁰³ Parmenides, *The Fragments of Parmenides A Critical Text* ed. A.H. Coxon, trans. Richard McKirahan (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009), 78. “Since now its limit is ultimate, Being is in a state of perfection from every viewpoint, like the volume of a spherical ball, and equally poised in every direction from its centre. For it must not be (45) either at all greater or at all smaller in one regard than in another. For neither has Not-being any being which could halt the coming together of Being, nor is Being capable of being more than Being in one regard and less in another, since it is all inviolate. For it is equal with itself from every view and encounters determination all alike.”

¹⁰⁴ Heraclitus, *Heraclitus: Fragments*, trans. T.M. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1987) 25. “<The ordered?> world, the same for all, no god or man made, but it always was, is, and will be, an everlasting fire, being kindled in measures and being put out in measures.”

¹⁰⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. David Gallop (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 68-71.

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics* trans. John H. McMahon (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1991), 156-161.

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 142. “But I mean by form the essence or very nature of each thing, and the first substance.”

As stated in the précis, Vico argues that the Christian concept of truth stands midway between an Epicurian relativistic view in which man's formulation of truth is determined by chance events in history and the Stoic static concept in which man encounters truth throughout history as determined mechanically by fate. According to Vico's middle position, man knows truth by causing it historically while being directed by providence.¹⁰⁸ Since Vico defines man's grasp of truth as determined by causing it while collaborating with providential events in history he denies the existence of an *apriori* known unchangeable human nature.¹⁰⁹ Instead of viewing human nature as unalterable, Vico maintains that human nature undergoes incremental changes as man progresses through history. These changes, asserts Vico, are neither determined by man in a haphazard manner according to chance events of history, since history is directed by providence, nor, due to man's free will, are they entirely predictable.

1.2 Essential Elements of Greek Ontology Wedded to Faith:

Ratzinger, in contrast with Vico's evolving concept of nature, maintains a more stable idea of nature. This is evident in his insistence that one Greek ontological element that is perennially valid and providentially married with faith comes from Stoicism. As described above, for the Stoics the natural order of the world is pervaded with divine reality called *logos* which provides the ever changing world with constant, unchanging truths. In this way the Stoics can be understood as prioritizing what is constantly true over that which is changed by being made. This led the Stoics to consider, writes Ratzinger in an earlier work, "the overriding moral norm to be nature; a thing was right if

¹⁰⁸ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. 1, pgs. 38-39.

¹⁰⁹ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, section I, chap. I, 374, pg. 104.

it was ‘according to nature’.”¹¹⁰ The Fathers of the Church, as described by Ratzinger, built upon this Greek concept of God’s being by relating *logos* with Christ. By so doing Christianity transformed, without eliminating, the definition of *logos* as constant unchanging truths by also seeing truth as personal and dynamic, since truth ultimately is related to the persons of the Trinity. According to Christianity, the person of Christ is the word (*logos*) spoken by the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit. As described by the Gospel of John, Christ as *logos* relates to the Father as a mission in the Holy Spirit.¹¹¹ Understanding *logos* in relationship to Trinitarian mission is the “new dimension”¹¹² of relationality that Christianity brings to the concept of *logos*, which to the Stoics simply meant “the eternal rationality of being.”¹¹³

Summarizing the relational meaning which truth acquires through Christianity Ratzinger writes, “‘*logos*’-Christology, as ‘word’-theology, is ... the opening up of being to the idea of relationship.”¹¹⁴ Because all creation exists through its participation in the being of God all of creation has, through Christ as the Word of God, relational meaning. In addition man, since he has an intellect, by being made in the image and likeness of God, “can re-think the *logos*, the meaning of being, because his own *logos*, his own reason, is *logos* of the one *logos*, thought of the original thought.”¹¹⁵ Since man’s mind is made in the image and likeness of God’s mind he has the ability “to re-think the *logos*”

¹¹⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, trans. Thomas P. Rausch (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 237.

¹¹¹ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 135.

¹¹² Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 136.

¹¹³ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 136.

¹¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 136.

¹¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

and thus intellectually grasp and, to some extent, correspond in a constant manner to truth.

Another Greek ontological element that Ratzinger sees as part and parcel with Christian faith and which distinguishes his perception of truth and nature from Vico's is the hylomorphic theory as developed by Aristotle and appropriated by Christianity.

Ratzinger describes how Christianity transformed this theory by writing:

To Aristotle it was among the 'accidents', the chance circumstances of being, which are separate from substance, the sole sustaining form of the real. The experience of the God who conducts a dialogue, of the God who is not only *logos* but also *dia-logos*, not only idea and meaning but speech and word in the reciprocal exchanges of conversation – this experience exploded the ancient division of reality into substance, the real thing, and accidents, the merely circumstantial. It now becomes clear that the dialogue, the relation, stands beside the substance as an equally primordial form of being.¹¹⁶

As explained by Ratzinger, Christianity, without doing away with the Aristotelian ontological concept of substance, which prioritizes form (*morphe*) over matter (*hylo*), placed this element of constancy amidst change equally alongside with the dynamic category of relation as ultimately present with the Trinity. That these two elements, one constant the other dynamic, are considered as "equally primordial" by Christianity is a paradox to be believed in faith and then gradually understood as the ground which provides meaning for man.¹¹⁷ Ultimately, this mystery stems from the belief in God

¹¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 131.

¹¹⁷ For further reading of the importance of paradox in faith see chapters six through nine of Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Geoffrey Chapman (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998) 101-185. De Lubac's thought had a profound influence upon Ratzinger. In *Milestones* Ratzinger acknowledged this by stating, "Never again have I found anyone with such a comprehensive theological and humanistic education as Balthasar and de Lubac, and I cannot even begin to say how much I owe to my encounter with them." Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones Memoirs 1927-1977*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 143. According to Ratzinger, "in its original nature

being one and, at the same time, Triune. Doctrinal errors result when one side of this mystery is stressed to the detriment of the other. A Christian concept of being retains both of these elements without trying to resolve them in favor of one or the other.

For Ratzinger, the scholastic thought of the Medieval age captured the synthesis between the Greek philosophical thought on being as constant and the Christian belief in being as intrinsically relational with the pithy scholastic phrase, “*Verum est ens*.”¹¹⁸ As understood by Medieval Christianity, according to this phrase truth is convertible with being, understood as both constant and in dynamic relation. Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), explains Ratzinger, broke with this understanding and instead proposed that “*Verum quia factum*.”¹¹⁹ For Ratzinger, this formula of Vico “denotes the real end of the old metaphysics and the beginning of the specifically modern attitude of mind. The revolutionary character of modern thinking in comparison with all that preceded it is here expressed with absolutely inimitable precision.”¹²⁰ This formula captures the tendency of the modern mind to define truth by what is made and not by what is constant and enduring. In other words, this formula, as understood by Ratzinger, defines truth solely according to change. Such a definition of truth is not in accordance with the hylomorphic theory as developed by Aristotle and later transformed by Christianity but rather reflects

belief or faith is no blind collection of incomprehensible paradoxes. It means, furthermore, that it is nonsense to plead the ‘mystery’, as people certainly do only too often, by way of an excuse for the failure of reason. If theology arrives at all kinds of absurdities and tries not only to excuse them, but even where possible to canonize them, by pointing to the mystery, then we are confronted with a misuse of the true idea of the ‘mystery’, the purpose of which is not to destroy reason but rather to render belief possible *as* understanding...The tool with which man is equipped to deal with the truth of being is not *knowledge* but *understanding*: understanding the meaning to which he has entrusted himself.” Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 45-46.

¹¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 31.

¹¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 31.

¹²⁰ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 31.

a hylozoistic theory (Greek *hylo*, matter, + *zoe*, life) of Heraclitus.¹²¹ According to Heraclitus, as explained in the précis, all material objects (*hyle*) contains a principle of life (*zoe*) which is not a constant, stable element but rather is dynamic and ever in motion.

Karl Marx transformed Vico's hylozoistic formula by not simply defining truth with what is made (*Verum quia factum*), but also by equating truth with that which is put into action or in the words of Ratzinger, "*verum quia faciendum*".¹²² This action is future oriented with the goal of changing the world. By being reduced to immanent making, changing, and acting, truth now has completely lost a sense of being a constant reality independent from man's activity. Instead truth is now seen as an "inconstant variable"¹²³ at the function of evolution. In contrast, according to the Christian view, as presented by Ratzinger, the truth of creation is related to what is constant since creation was first thought by the one God who is an eternally faithful reality, but not a static reality since as Trinity he defined by his relationships. In contrast, for both Vico and Marx truth is not reflective of what is one, unified and constant, as it is for the scholastics, but rather is related to an ever evolving reality in the process of becoming.¹²⁴

1.3 The Mystery of Ultimate Truth as Constant and Dynamic:

According to Ratzinger, with the advent of Vico, and subsequent thinkers such as Marx, truth began to be understood less as a stable reality and more as a created, unstable, constantly changing reality which is created. For Ratzinger conceiving truth as

¹²¹ John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, (Kila, MT Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 129-179.

¹²² Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 35.

¹²³ Paulo G. Sottopietra, *Wissen aus der Taufe : die Aporien der neuzeitlichen Vernunft und der christliche Weg im Werk von Joseph Ratzinger* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2003), 56. My translation. „Die Wahrheit besteht folglich in einer unbeständigen Variablen, sozusagen in Funktion dieser kontinuierlichen Evolution.“

¹²⁴ Sottopietra, *Wissen aus der Taufe*, 50.

created blurs the distinction between creator and the created. In addition, the mystery, accepted by faith, that in God truth is both unchanging, due to God's unity, and relational, by being defined by the Trinity, is consequently lost. This position of Ratzinger is more clearly evident in his writing *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith the Church as Communion* (2002). Here, drawing on Augustine, Ratzinger, in upholding this mystery, not only defines the Holy Spirit as the communion of the dynamic love between the Father and the Son but also as a constant truth. In describing the Holy Spirit as communion Ratzinger writes, "If he is called by what is divine about God, what is shared by Father and Son, then his nature is in fact this, being the *communion* of the Father and the Son."¹²⁵ In relating the Holy Spirit to constant truth Ratzinger, with reference to 1 John 4:16, identifies the Holy Spirit with what is constant and abiding and not ephemeral and passing.¹²⁶ This means, explains Ratzinger, that the *Pneuma* aspect of the Holy Spirit should not be understood as "discontinuous" but, rather, by being related to truth, should be understood as " 'abiding' ", as "enduring and creative faithfulness" and as a true love which "unites and draws into abiding unity."¹²⁷ Since Christ is also often identified with true love, by being the word of the Father, how, then, is Christ as truth distinguished from the Holy Spirit as truth?

Relying on Augustine once again, Ratzinger explains that the Son is distinguished from the Holy Spirit by being "begotten"¹²⁸ by the Father, as Word and Wisdom while the Holy Spirit is given. In other words, the Son comes from God as begotten truth,

¹²⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2005), 41.

¹²⁶ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45.

¹²⁷ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45.

¹²⁸ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 48.

whereas the Holy Spirit comes from God as given truth and all else comes from God as created truth: “*natus-datus-factus*”.¹²⁹ Although the term given (*datus*) is not, explains Ratzinger, “an intermediate stage between ‘begotten’ and ‘created’ (*natus* and *factus*) and by no means blurs the distinction between creature and God, but rather remains limited to the inner reality of divinity, it does represent an opening onto history and toward man.”¹³⁰

The essential difference for Ratzinger between the Holy Spirit and creation is that while the Third Person is eternally given in the immanent Trinity and, in time, given in salvation history, creation is made in time and has no place within the immanent Trinity. In this way Ratzinger, contra a certain interpretation of Vico, upholds the priority of truth over the created and made while, at the same time in partial agreement with Vico’s middle position between stoicism and epicurianism, not reducing first truth simply to a static concept of unity but rather sees truth both as one and as Triune, relational and as a result dynamic. While upholding this essential difference with the term *datus* between the Holy Spirit and creation Ratzinger also strives with this term to bring out a similarity between the human perception of truth and the truth in God while not blurring the distinction between creature and God. Ratzinger argues that the term *datus* does not lead to this error, since according to *datus* God gives (does not create) his spirit as a unmerited gift in history in order to reveal to man divine, saving truth.¹³¹

Ratzinger goes on to explain that man, through the Church,¹³² does not relate to truth solely as an ahistorical, unchanging reality but also, due to the Holy Spirit’s

¹²⁹ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 48.

¹³⁰ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 48.

¹³¹ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 49.

¹³² Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 51.

presence in the Church, relates to truth historically and personally. In this manner Ratzinger is able to both acknowledge a constant aspect in truths of faith, since truth in God is one, and a multifaceted dimension of these truths since God as Triune gives himself through the Holy Spirit in time to the Church. He avoids confusing truth in God or as understood by man as subject to constant change, as he maintains Vico does, by asserting that truth has priority over the made and the created. The dynamic element of truth is not, for Ratzinger, due to being created but rather due to being, in its ultimate state, both unchanging as one and not static by being defined by the Trinitarian relations.

2.0 Man's Correspondence to Divine Truth Within the Context of Twentieth Century Debates on the Analogy of Being:

By defending the Greek philosophical concept of truth as constant and unchanging as validly describing an aspect of God Ratzinger is then able to argue that man has a stable reality to which man can identify and correspond to. For Ratzinger, as evident in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith the Church as Communion*, man corresponds to the constant divine truth through his historical participation of truth in the Holy Spirit who opens up history to God. This is similar to Vico's idea that man knows truth by creating it in collaboration with divine providence. This similarity between Ratzinger and Vico, however, is only properly understood when Ratzinger's view of man's correspondence to truths of faith as an historical participation in the Holy Spirit is seen in light of Ratzinger's previously mentioned characteristic of the Holy Spirit as faithful "love that unites and draws into abiding unity."¹³³ The identification of the Holy Spirit with the dynamics of love indicates that doctrine can be changed through development by

¹³³ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45.

human reason's collaboration with the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the abiding truthful characteristic of the Holy Spirit, due to God's unity, indicates that there are elements in doctrine not subject to change. The Holy Spirit, as described by Ratzinger, brings out the mystery of ultimate truth as being both constant and as a loving, dynamic relation. For Ratzinger this Trinitarian mystery is reflected not only ontically but also noetically in that faith and reason in their correspondence to truth are integrated with one another but not totally. Each has its proper sphere of autonomy. Faith's autonomy is due to its correspondence to the constant fidelity of the loving relationships in the Trinity. Reason's autonomy is related to its ability to bring the mind in accordance with the constant abiding natures in creation which is reflective of the fidelity of its creator, only truly known through faith.

Although the above succinctly presents Ratzinger's teaching on correspondence, as distinguished from Vico, it does not provide a reason explaining why man can relate to ultimate truth. For Ratzinger this reason is due to the analogy of being which he sees, along with the above mentioned Greek ontological elements, as intrinsically intertwined with faith. I will, then, describe various key approaches to the analogy of being in order to locate Ratzinger's position. This will consequently shed light on how, according to Ratzinger, man corresponds to truth and how through his use of the analogy of being Ratzinger further differentiates himself from Vico.

In order to locate Ratzinger's view on the analogy of being I will present three Twentieth century Catholic theologians who had a profound influence on Ratzinger's thought: Erich Przywara (1889-1972), Gottlieb Söhngen (1892-1971), Hans Urs von

Balthasar (1905-1988). Before doing so it will be helpful to locate the concept in history in order to pinpoint the use of the term.¹³⁴ The concept is traceable to ancient Greek philosophy in particular Plato and Aristotle. In an attempt to reconcile Heraclitan “flux” of “becoming” with the Parmenidian “stasis” of “being”, both Plato and Aristotle proposed middle positions in which there is an analagous relation between the world of change and the constancy of being. According to Plato the finite world of change is related to the world of eternal forms as a faint image.¹³⁵ In contrast with Plato, Aristotle posited universal forms in particular matter and not apart from them. In this way he understood the constancy of being as manifest in many ways within the physical world.¹³⁶ The various forms of being are related to one another analogously through their mutual participation in the primary analogate of being.¹³⁷ Aquinas further developed Aristotle’s analogous concept of being, implicit within his predication, by explaining that analogy can be understood in two primary ways. In the first, as described by Aristotle, a multitude of things are analogously related by having a primary analogate (healthy medicine and healthy urine are healthy in relationship to a healthy body as the primary analogate). Aquinas also distinguished another analogy of one to another or between a primary instance and a secondary analogate¹³⁸ that is similar to the previously mentioned one. These latter two related kinds of analogy were later called by Cajetan as analogies

¹³⁴ John R. Betz, “After Barth: A New Introduction to Erich Przywara’s *Analogia Entis*,” in *The Analogy of Being*, ed. Thomas J. White (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 44-50.

¹³⁵ Plato, *Republic*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: The Dial Press, 1956), 222-223.

¹³⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, book 4, 2 1003b pg. 66.

¹³⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, book 4.1 1003a pg. 66.

¹³⁸ Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1932-34), book 3, q. 7, a. 7 c. Cf. Reinhard Hütter “Attending to the Wisdom of God” in *The Analogy of Being*, ed. Thomas J. White (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 235.

of attribution.¹³⁹ In contrast to the attributive way of analogy there is also, for Aquinas, an analogy of proportionality in which two entities are proportionally similar to two other entities (King:City as God:creation).¹⁴⁰ At around the time of Cajetan the concept of the analogy of being as described by Aquinas and present before him was made explicit in theological schools through the use of terminology that distinguished various forms of analogy.¹⁴¹

2.1 Przywara and the Analogy of Being:

Przywara, developed the analogy of being by going beyond the scholastic understanding (e.g. Cajetan) of analogy as a “theory of logic” towards seeing it as a basic ontic and noetic law, and as a “formal principle” rooted in the “original structure” of reality. Thomas F. O’Meara observes that, in Przywara’s thought, “both kinds of analogy, attribution and proportionality, point to something deeper, an exposition of the structure of created being as diverse but also as participative in God.”¹⁴² This led Przywara to claim that analogy defines the very structure of being.¹⁴³ In arguing this point Przywara first defines the word analogy in relationship to *logos* (reason pervading the universe) in two ways by stating “that *ἀνά*, grammatically speaking, simultaneously means ‘according to an orderly sequence’ *and* is also concomitant with *ἀνω*, and so

¹³⁹ Betz, *After Barth*, 47.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen: Christian Classics, 1981), Ia, q. 13, art 5.

¹⁴¹ Julio Terán-Dutari, “Die Geschichte des Terminus “Analogia entis” und das Werk Erich Przywaras,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 77 issue 1 (1970): 163-179.

¹⁴² Thomas F. O’Meara, *Erich Przywara His Theology and His World* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 80.

¹⁴³ Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis* (Freiburg:Johannes-Verlag, 1996), 210.

signifies an “up above.”¹⁴⁴ According to Przywara, this manner of understanding analogy stands between a “pure logic” concept of being as “identity from beginning to end” and a dialectical view of being as “identity in contradiction.”¹⁴⁵

In contrast, an analogical concept of being, as opposed to the logical and dialogical accounts, views being as “self ordering with a being-ordered.”¹⁴⁶ In other words being is seen not simply as a static oneness with change only apparently occurring, according to the Parmenidian account, or in a constant state of flux, as described by a Heraclitan perspective. Instead, rooted in the principle of non-contradiction,¹⁴⁷ the analogous approach sees created being as containing an order (*logos*) but not as the order itself. The order within creation as a reflection of divine order is due to creation being drawn upward towards God while maintaining its difference with the uncreated being of God.¹⁴⁸ The analogous similarity between these two orders is to be understood, writes Przywara, according to the “the classical formula for analogy from the 4th Lateran council: within every ‘similarity, however great’ is an ‘ever greater dissimilarity’ (*inter Creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda*).”¹⁴⁹ As explained by Przywara the first part of this formula on similarity refers to the analogy of attribution and the second on an “ever greater

¹⁴⁴ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 94. Translation provided by John R. Betz.

¹⁴⁵ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 95.

¹⁴⁶ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 95.

¹⁴⁷ According to Przywara, “It is thus in the principle of non-contradiction - understood as middle - that analogy establishes itself as the foundation of all thought.” Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 105. Translation provided by John R. Betz.

¹⁴⁸ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 97.

¹⁴⁹ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 135. Translation provided by Betz. See Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), 171.

dissimilarity” refers to the analogy of proportion.¹⁵⁰ Przywara argues that the analogy of attribution, which emphasizes that which can be identified, and the analogy of proportion, which points to a dissimilarity between the two different proportions, are both contained in the Catholic understanding of the analogy of being. He brings this out in his definition of analogy. In the words of Przywara, “the *analogia entis*, as a principle, stands within the unity of its *ἀνά* and *ἀνω*: the *ἀνω* of the which is ever ‘above-and-beyond’ and yet-and therefore-the *ἀνά* of its ‘inner order.’”¹⁵¹ For Przywara, the analogy of being, as a principle with element *ἀνά* in tension with *ἀνω*, is not to be understood in a merely logical manner by relying solely on the analogy of attribution as “something originally static, ‘from which’ everything else could be deduced or ‘to which’ everything else could be reduced. Instead, by also referring to an analogy of proportion, it is essentially *the* primordial dynamic as such: within it one discovers not only the oscillation of the intra-creaturely, not only that of the relation between God and creature, but that of the intra-divine itself, the hyper-transcendent expression of which is the theologoumenon that says that the intra-divine ‘relations’ (*relationes*) simply *are* the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”¹⁵²

2.2 Söhngen and the Analogy of Being:

The fundamental theologian Söhngen furthered Przywara’s defense of the analogy of being by more explicitly heeding Barth’s critique of the analogy of being. He did so by presenting the analogy of being as connected to revelation and subordinate to an

¹⁵⁰ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 136.

¹⁵¹ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 223. Translation provided by Betz.

¹⁵² Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 223. Translation provided by Betz.

analogy of faith.¹⁵³ Söhngen's approach to the analogy of being is connected to his emphasis of Bonaventurian theology over Thomistic theology. "His call", writes Schenk, "to openly shift from a Thomistic to a Bonaventurian paradigm in Catholic theology as a way to deepen the convergence not just with Reformed but with patristic theology was one that found widespread Catholic support in the years that would follow."¹⁵⁴

Bonaventure, in contrast with Aquinas, describes Markus Graulich, can be considered the "classical theologian of the analogy of faith."¹⁵⁵ According to this perspective the analogy of being is only understood within the context of faith.

This difference between Bonaventure and Aquinas is particularly evident in how each theologian conceives of wisdom. Unlike Aquinas who describes in his various works three kinds of wisdom (metaphysical, theological and mystical)¹⁵⁶ from the perspective of an immanent act within the soul which perfects man thus emphasizing some degree of created being having being in itself which is noetically reflected in a relatively autonomous ability of man to know wisdom, Bonaventure, in contrast, as particularly evident in his *Collations on the Six Day of Creation*, depicts wisdom from

¹⁵³ Gottlieb Söhngen, "Analogia fidei I: Gottähnlichkeit allein aus dem Glauben?," *Catholica* 3, (July 1934): 1-24; Gottlieb Söhngen, "Analogia fidei II: Die Einheit in der Glaubenswissenschaft," *Catholica* 3, (October 1934): 25-57.

¹⁵⁴ Richard Schenk, "Analogy as the discrimen naturae et gratiae," in *The Analogy of Being*, ed. Thomas J. White (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 183.

¹⁵⁵ Markus Graulich, *Unterwegs zu einer Theologie des Kirchenrechts: die Grundlegung des Rechts bei Gottlieb Söhngen (1892-1971) und die Konzepte der neueren Kirchenrechtswissenschaft* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), 48. „Während in der Philosophie und Theologie des Thomas von Aquin die *analogia entis* vorherrschend ist, kann Bonaventura als der klassische Theologe der *analogia fidei* bezeichnet werden.“

¹⁵⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 1, a. 6; Thomas Aquinas, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), q. 5, a. 1, c.; Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961), lect. 2, n. 46; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 1, a. 2.; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 45, a. 2.

the perspective of that which informs the soul.¹⁵⁷ By so doing he describes man's knowledge of truth primarily from the perspective as given by God. In accordance with this Bonaventurian approach, Söhngen perceives the similarities between God and creation as situated within an analogy of faith and, therefore, only given through faith. In expressing this Söhngen writes, "That we are adapted to the mysterious God and His word, and that we have therefore the word of God to hear and to be able to understand, such fortune is not from us, but due to God's spirit."¹⁵⁸ According to Söhngen, man can know truth not so much because of an immanent act within the soul, but rather because we share in God's Spirit due to the condition created by the incarnation of the Word.¹⁵⁹

Söhngen's explanation of the analogy of being so pleased Barth that, in reference to Söhngen, he asserted "As he sees it, the knowledge of the being of God is not to be superordinated, but subordinated to the knowledge of the activity of God. In theology, therefore, the *analogia entis* is to be subordinated to the *analogia fidei* If this is the Roman Catholic doctrine of *analogia entis*, then naturally I must withdraw my earlier statement that I regard the *analogia entis* as the 'invention of the ant-Christ.'"¹⁶⁰ While in seminary training Ratzinger was at least introduced to Söhngen's approach to the analogy of being, since, according to Ratzinger, in the seminary Söhngen was one of two

¹⁵⁷ Gregory LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom: The Nature of Theology according to St. Bonaventure*, (Roma: Istituto Storico Dei Cappuccini, 2005), 172-186.

¹⁵⁸ Graulich, *Unterwegs zu einer Theologie*, 49. „Daß wir dem geheimnisvollen Gott und seinem Worte angeglichen sind, und daß wir darum das Wort Gottes hören und verstehen können, solches Vermögen haben wir nicht aus uns selbst, sondern aus Gottes Geist.“ Quoting from Gottlieb Söhngen, "Analogia entis oder analogia fidei" *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 9, (1942): 91.

¹⁵⁹ Graulich, *Unterwegs zu einer Theologie*, 49.

¹⁶⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume II, The Doctrine of God*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 25-27; 79-80. Also see Richard Schenk, "Analogy as the discrimen naturae et gratiae," in *The Analogy of Being*, ed. Thomas J. White (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 180-184.

theologians “who had the greatest influence over me.”¹⁶¹ In describing Söhngen

Ratzinger writes:

Söhngen had originally wanted to be only a philosopher and had begun his career with a dissertation on Kant. He belonged to that dynamic current in Thomism that took from Thomas the passion for truth and the habit of asking unrelenting questions about the foundation and the goal of all the real...External circumstances directed Söhngen toward theology. Being the child of a mixed marriage and deeply concerned with the ecumenical question on account of his origins, Söhngen took up the debate with Karl Barth and Emil Brunner.¹⁶²

2.3 Balthasar and the Analogy of Being:

Along with Söhngen, Balthasar also had a foundational influence on Ratzinger’s thought.¹⁶³ Similar to Söhngen, Balthasar affirmed certain elements of Przywara’s account of the analogy of being while acknowledging aspects of Barth’s thought that need to be taken into serious consideration. According to Balthasar, Przywara correctly “developed his Catholic position of the analogy of being as the medial position between pantheistic naturalism on the left and theopanistic Protestantism on the right.”¹⁶⁴

Theopanism differs from pantheism in that it grants a certain distinction from God and creation by viewing creation as emanating from God, but, similar to pantheism, sees God and the creation as ultimately one. Protestants, according to Przywara and Balthasar, by rejecting the analogy of being, which at the same time affirms difference and similarity between God and his creation, fall into theopanism when they try to establish a

¹⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 55.

¹⁶² Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 55.

¹⁶³ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 143. Ratzinger, in *Milestones*, acknowledged this by stating, “[M]eeting Balthasar was for me the beginning of a lifelong friendship I can only be thankful for. Never again have I found anyone with such a comprehensive theological and humanistic education as Balthasar and de Lubac, and I cannot even begin to say how much I owe to my encounter with them.”

¹⁶⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1992) 30.

relationship between God and creation since their only option available is identity.¹⁶⁵ As described by Balthasar, Barth's Protestant position of theopanism inevitably leads "to the dialectical disintegration of the creature's own inherent being."¹⁶⁶ This is because once Protestants reject describing the relationship between God and creation as analogous, this leads to two competing options which dialectically destroy creation's "own inherent being". In the first position, rejecting analogy reduces creation to nothingness as represented by Calvin's description of creation as totally depraved. In the second opposing more modern humanist stance, similar to Ratzinger's interpretation of Vico, by perceiving truth as the created, creation is exalted as everything. In both cases the only way man can relate to God is at the loss of his identity: either the creature loses his identity from God or God loses any distinction from creation. In contrast, the Catholic position, as represented by Przywara and Balthasar, through its proposal of an analogy of being entailing similarity and difference is able to preserve a relationship between God and creation without creation's loss of identity while partaking in divine nature.¹⁶⁷

In order not to fall into the above error, Catholic theology in defending the gratuity of grace has consistently held that human nature can be at least logically be understood apart from the supernatural.¹⁶⁸ In this way, even when man's nature is understood as participating in grace, it does not lose its distinction from grace. Instead, it maintains an analogous relationship with the creator in which identity and difference co-exist. Although Balthasar, along with Przywara, accuses Barth and Protestant theology,

¹⁶⁵ Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 109.

¹⁶⁶ Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 365.

¹⁶⁷ Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 365.

¹⁶⁸ Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 142.

due to the rejection of the analogy of being, as tending towards theopanism he, nevertheless, acknowledges aspects within Barth's theology that Catholic theology should consider, in particular its christocentrism and its emphasis on "the historicity of nature and the created character of worldly truth."¹⁶⁹

When all of reality is seen as centered on Christ, whose life is not static, then nature, as related to Christ, is likewise understood in a dynamic manner and the created character of truth as formulated by man is also more readily recognized. Barth's insistence on the created character of worldly truth as different from divine truth challenges certain neo-scholastic Catholic theologians who in developing Suarez's analogy of being which highlights similarity and identity sometimes overstress the similarity between intra-worldly truth and divine truth while forgetting their much greater difference.¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, writes Balthasar, "This is something that Catholic philosophy and theology only too rarely set over against the qualities of God's eternal truth."¹⁷¹ As a counter to this tendency among certain Catholic theologians, Balthasar sets forth Söhngen, with his Christocentrism and integration of the analogy of being with the analogy of faith, as a model to follow.¹⁷² While upholding Söhngen as an example, Balthasar downplays Przywara's presentation of the analogy of being as insufficiently

¹⁶⁹ Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 383-384.

¹⁷⁰ O'Meara, *Erich Przywara His Theology*, 209. O'Meara recommends W. Bange, "Form-Einheit und Philosophie und Theologie?" *Catholica* 3 (1934): 10-20 for a "typical" neoscholastic presentation of the analogy of being. Also see Julio Terán Dutari, "Die Geschichte des Terminus 'Analogia entis' und das Werk Erich Przywara," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 77 (1970): 163-179. This work, according to O'Meara, deals "with the influence of Jesuit scholasticism and Suárez." He also recommends "for a history of analogy in treatises and manuals from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century" Bernhard Gertz, *Glaubenswelt als Analogie*, (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1969), 53-87.

¹⁷¹ Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 384.

¹⁷² Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 362; 384

Christological due to his depiction of analogy “even to the point of exaggeration”¹⁷³ as an “all-embracing law of being...”¹⁷⁴ According to Balthasar, therefore, “it is no accident that Przywara never produced a Christology.”¹⁷⁵ Balthasar does not intend that this phrase be interpreted as accusing Przywara’s theology of not being implicitly Christological since Przywara’s first book *Eucharistie und Arbeit*,¹⁷⁶ by focusing on the Eucharist, is a kind of Christology and his entire argument in *Analogie Entis* can be read christologically, as pointed out by Balthasar himself.¹⁷⁷ Rather, Balthasar is criticizing Przywara, especially in his earlier works, for not making the Christological dimension within his work more explicit.

3.0 Ratzinger’s Use of Analogy of Being, contra Vico, in Relationship to Truth as Correspondence:

In this section it will be shown how Ratzinger’s appropriation of the above ways of approaching analogy helps to explain his rejection of Vico’s equation of truth with the made. I will first focus on what Ratzinger draws from Przywara that determine his approach to Vico. Then we will examine what Ratzinger draws from Söhngen and Balthasar which also shapes his reaction to Vico.

3.1 Like Przywara Ratzinger Views Analogy as a Fundamental Law of Being:

Similar to Przywara, Ratzinger defends the analogy of being as constitutive of the structure of being. He stated this as early as 1959 in his lecture *Der Gott des Glaubens*

¹⁷³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3, *The Dramatis Personae: The Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992) 220.

¹⁷⁴ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 220.

¹⁷⁵ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 221.

¹⁷⁶ Erich Przywara, *Eucharistie und Arbeit*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1917).

¹⁷⁷ Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 257, 362.

und der Gott der Philosophen,¹⁷⁸ and most recently in his academic lecture in 2006 at the University of Regensburg lecture.¹⁷⁹ In his definition of the analogy of being he agrees with Przywara that it is “in the principle of non-contradiction understood as middle-that analogy establishes itself as the foundation of all thought.”¹⁸⁰ When this principle is denied the relationship between creator and creature, argues Przywara, becomes blurred, either in the direction of theopanism or pantheism. This, according to Ratzinger’s thought, is precisely what Vico does by equating truth with what is made. Thus it is in light of these debates concerning the law of analogy that we can see more clearly how Ratzinger views Vico’s famous “*verum esse ipsum factum*” principle.

Ratzinger indicates his dissent from Vico’s constructivist principle by differentiating between the creation of God and the making of man by writing, “for the ancient world and the Middle Ages, being itself is true, in other words apprehensible,

¹⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen*, 22. With respect to his theme in the lecture on the relationship between the God of faith the God of philosophers Ratzinger writes that, “[h]ere it is converted into a question about the essence of Christianity generally, in a question about the legitimacy of the concrete synthesis, that gives form to Christianity, of Greek and Biblical thought, in a question of the legitimacy of the coexistence of philosophy and faith, and of the legitimacy of the ‘analogy entis’ as much as a positive placement in the relationship of the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith, to be of nature and reality of grace; and finally also a decisive question between catholic and Protestant understanding of the Christianity.” My translation. „Es wird hier zur Frage nach dem Wesen des Christentums überhaupt, zur Frage nach der Legitimität der das konkrete Christentum formenden Synthese aus griechischem und biblischem Denken, damit zur Frage nach der Legitimität der Koexistenz von Philosophie und Glaube und nach der Legitimität der analogia entis als der positiven Inbeziehungsetzung von Vernunftkenntnis und Glaubenserkenntnis, von Natursein und Gnadenwirklichkeit, damit schließlich aber auch zur Entscheidungsfrage zwischen katholischem und evangelischem Verständnis des Christentums.“ In the footnote attached to this sentence Ratzinger refers to Söhngen, Balthasar and Przywara as providing a Catholic response to Barth’s and Brunner’s Protestant difficulties with the analogy of being.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, “Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg Tuesday, 12 September 2006,” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html (accessed April 26, 2011). “[T]he faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which - as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated - unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language.”

¹⁸⁰ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 105. Translation provided by Betz.

because God, pure intellect, made it, and he made it by thinking it.”¹⁸¹ Since this position could be interpreted as defining creation as an intra-mental reality for God rather than as *ex nihilo* Ratzinger, in his later work *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, clarifies his meaning. Here, as shown earlier, Ratzinger clearly denies any inner creation within God.¹⁸² God’s creative action, for Ratzinger, is purely external. When He creates, his works are caused by his thought and, consequently, reflective of the truth of his being without being equivalent. Man is different from God in that in man thought and making is not one and the same. In order for man to make he must first think by reflecting on created being as made by God. In this first step, and not in the expression of truth, is where man encounters truth since, writes Ratzinger, “being is thought and therefore thinkable, the object of thought and of knowledge, which strives after truth.”¹⁸³ The work of man which comes after his thought “on the other hand is a mixture of *logos* and the a-logical, something moreover that with the passage of time sinks away into the past. It does not admit of full comprehension for it is lacking in *logos*, in thoroughgoing meaningfulness.”¹⁸⁴

Consequently, argues Ratzinger, in opposition to Vico, “For this reason ancient and medieval philosophy took the view that the knowledge of human things could only be ‘*techne*’, manual skill, but never real perception and hence never real knowledge. Therefore in the medieval university the *artes*, the arts, remained only the first step to real

¹⁸¹ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 31.

¹⁸² Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 48.

¹⁸³ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

¹⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

knowledge, which reflects on being itself.”¹⁸⁵ It is not, therefore, in making but in reflective thinking that man encounters truth where, as an image of God, re-thinking “the thought of the original thought, of the creative spirit that permeates and governs his being.”¹⁸⁶ Man is able to receive truth through thinking because as an image of God he is capable of re-thinking “the thought of the original thought.” Since, in accordance with the principle of non-contradiction which the analogy of being is based upon, man’s thought is not the “the thought of the original thought” he cannot know the truth exactly as God does. In this way, according to Ratzinger, truth as received by man is secondarily understood as made by man, thus conceding the relative truth of Vico’s principle in a properly theological way.

In illustrating the difference between man as essentially a receiver of truth and God as truth, Ratzinger refers to one of Baron Münchhausen’s (1720-1797) fabulous stories. In this story the Baron rescues himself from a bog by grabbing onto his own hair. For Ratzinger this is as impossible as the attempt to create meaningful truth by oneself. Meaning, writes Ratzinger, as “the ground on which our existence as a totality can stand and live, cannot be made but only received.”¹⁸⁷ By describing truth as like the stable ground upon which all stand on, Ratzinger, through the use of a simile, is prioritizing truth as constant over what is created by man. He also, out of his understanding of the analogy of being as rooted in the principle of non-contradiction, is differentiating between God and man while upholding at the same time a similarity, with always a

¹⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

¹⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

¹⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 43.

greater difference, between creation and God. This is in accordance with the thought of Przywara who maintains that the inner order (ἀνά) ¹⁸⁸ of creation is always “in-and-beyond history” ¹⁸⁹ due to truth being “above and beyond.” ¹⁹⁰ As described by Ratzinger, the inner order and truth of reality is like the ground that man does not create. Although he might mold it, as Vico would argue, Ratzinger insists that man is only capable of such “making” because man himself is made and his created being is a gift given by the Creator above who supports and upholds him, and, by so doing, gives him stability.

3.2 Man’s Correspondence to the “above-beyond” Dimension of Truth:

Ratzinger identifies the inner order which man encounters in creation with natural law. The Ten Commandments, according to Ratzinger, form the basis of this law which man has natural access. In relating the inner order of the Ten Commandments with divine truth (what Przywara calls the “above-beyond” ¹⁹¹ dimension of truth) Ratzinger writes, “Since Yahweh, however, reveals what is special about him, his complete otherness, through the ‘Ten Words’, it becomes clear (and the prophets increasingly call it to mind) that Yahweh’s total otherness, his ‘holiness’, is a moral dimension; to it corresponds man’s moral action in accord with the ‘Ten Words’.” ¹⁹² By modeling his behavior on the Ten Commandments man reflects the truth of God’s “total otherness” to which man as image is to reflect.

¹⁸⁸ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 223. Translation provided by Betz.

¹⁸⁹ Przywara, *Analogia Entis* 41. Translation provided by Betz.

¹⁹⁰ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 223. Translation by Betz.

¹⁹¹ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 223. Translation by Betz.

¹⁹² Joseph Ratzinger, Heinz Schürmann, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Principles of Christian Morality*, trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 56-57.

To the objection that the Ten Commandments do not refer man to an unchanging truth unaffected by historical change since certain elements within the Ten Commandments are traceable to non-Israelite origins Ratzinger responds by writing, “Such a view can only be maintained if one assumes that there is no analogy between the nations’ reason and God’s revelation...”¹⁹³ If it is acknowledged that there is a relationship between man’s reason and God’s reason then the fact that there are elements within the Ten Commandments which echo the surrounding pagan culture does not indicate that the Ten Commandments do not reveal God. Instead these elements are a result of man’s discovery of constant, truthful elements in nature which identify their first cause (God). In affirming reason’s ability, apart from faith, for constant, transcendent moral truth Ratzinger writes, “This faith is convinced that reason is capable of embracing truth, and that, therefore, faith does not have to erect its edifice apart from the tradition of reason, but finds its language in communication with the reason of the nations through a process of reception and dialectic.”¹⁹⁴

In his approach to natural law Ratzinger also reflects Przywara’s emphasis in *Analogia Entis*, in accordance with the IV Lateran Council, of the greater dissimilarity over any similarity creation has with God. This is evident in *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (1987) where Ratzinger acknowledges that after the Church in the Middle Ages adopted Aristotle and his natural law theory it erred by “[loading] up the idea of natural law with so much Christian content that the necessary ability to compromise was lost and the state could not be accepted within the essential limits of its secularity. They fought for

¹⁹³ Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Morality*, 58.

¹⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Morality*, 71.

too much and in doing so cut themselves off from the path to what is possible and necessary.”¹⁹⁵ In this sense Ratzinger agrees with Vico who, as explained in the *précis*, although acknowledging that all men have “few eternal seeds of the true”¹⁹⁶ providentially buried in him insists that these truths can never be known with Cartesian clarity and distinction since “to know distinctly is a vice rather than virtue of the human mind.”¹⁹⁷ However, unlike Vico, Ratzinger affirms the specific content of the Ten Commandments as capable of being known by man’s reason apart from the Jewish and Christian faith. The Church in the Middle Ages, according to Ratzinger, in an effort to have greater clarity and distinction than what the Ten Commandments provide, only erred by “[loading] up the idea of natural law”¹⁹⁸ content that comes from Christian revelation and not by failing to recognize that specific elements of the Ten Commandments are also present in pagan thought. In agreement with the medieval theologians, Ratzinger defends the existence of specific aspects of natural law within non-Judeo-Christian cultures, which are also revealed in the Ten Commandments, that are reflective of ultimate truth to which reason, unaided by faith, can analogously discover and correspond to.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008) 201.

¹⁹⁶ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. IV, 49, pg. 41.

¹⁹⁷ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, bk I, chap. IV, I, 72, pg. 69. For further discussion on this see Robert Miner, *Vico, Genealogist of Modernity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 47-54.

¹⁹⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008) 201.

¹⁹⁹ Anton Rauscher, “*Benedict XVI und das natürliche Sittengesetz Auseinandersetzung mit problematischen Zeitströmungen*,” in *Joseph Ratzinger Ein Theologisches Profil*, ed. Peter Hofmann (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 136.

Does Ratzinger's later reference to natural law, and its relationship to the Ten Commandments, contradict his avoidance of this terminology in his early writings? The German Jesuit Anton Rauscher additionally asks whether this change in Ratzinger indicates that he is trying to steer theology back to the philosophical-theological system of the Scholastics which, with its understanding of a stationary society, lacked a sense of historical development, a point that Vico objected to.²⁰⁰ The critique in this questioning is not accurate, since, beginning with his first writings where he defends the analogy of being, Ratzinger has consistently tried to reconcile this Catholic approach to reality with Barth's, and other similar theologian's emphasis, of the centrality of Christology, the historicity of nature and the created character of intra-worldly truth.

Ultimately, argues Ratzinger that natural law developed out of the Christian belief that the origin of matter "was reason, and thus, truth: it brings forth man and human reason in the first place as beings capable of the truth."²⁰¹ This belief, concludes Ratzinger, against Vico's view that truth is convertible with the made, means that "man's relationship to the truth is at first essentially receptive and not productive."²⁰² Truth, according to Ratzinger, precedes and is independent of the made, for God, as the source of all truth, precedes and is independent from what he has created. As explained by Ratzinger, this contrasts not only with Vico but also with the view of materialist philosophers, such as Marx and Bloch, who start from the premise "that in the beginning was, not reason, but irrational matter."²⁰³ According to this philosophy, as understood

²⁰⁰ Rauscher, *Benedict XVI und das natürliche Sittengesetz*, 136.

²⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 155.

²⁰² Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 155.

²⁰³ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 154.

by Ratzinger, “reason is the product of the unreasonable; truth does not precede man but comes into being as his construct.”²⁰⁴

3.3 Analogy of Attribution, Przywara’s *ánvá*, and Faith:

Besides natural law, Ratzinger also identifies another order analogously reflective of the truth of God with faith. Regarding faith’s correspondence, Ratzinger, in his 1959 lecture *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen*, asserts that the divine names are not due merely to an immanently contained, primitive, anthropomorphic tendency of man²⁰⁵ but rather actually corresponds to God as he is. This is due to two reasons, in opposition to Vico, that have already been discussed. First, Ratzinger maintains that truth as constant has priority in God over the changing and the made to the degree that he denies an inner creation in God. Second, relying on an analogy of attribution which Przywara identifies with the inner order (*ánvá*)²⁰⁶ of creation which is always “in-and-beyond history”²⁰⁷, Ratzinger argues that man can specify divine truth in a way where there is a genuine correspondence with the reality.

In the *Nature and Mission of Theology* Ratzinger defends this ability of man to correspond to divine reality by insisting that “the law of analogy”²⁰⁸ is not to be understood as equivalent to metaphorical speech. According to Ratzinger, in contrast with a purely metaphorical concept of language, through language, both in reference to God and to his creation, man knows being by conforming his intellect in accordance with

²⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 154.

²⁰⁵ Ratzinger, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen*, 19.

²⁰⁶ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 223. Translated provided by Betz.

²⁰⁷ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 41. Translated provided by Betz.

²⁰⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 56.

the reality of being. For Ratzinger, therefore, due to the law of analogy man can correspond, in faith, to constant aspects of final truth. In *Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life* (1977) Ratzinger furthers his argument for constant doctrinal truths which man, can analogously identify with and correspond to in faith, by describing theology as engaging with an objective reality and not as something that man, on his own initiative, linguistically creates. In stating this Ratzinger writes, "...theology cannot thus create for itself its own object, being ever thrown as it is onto the 'essence of faith,' the faith of the Church. To penetrate and develop this essence, rather than to change or replace it, is theology's task..."²⁰⁹ According to Ratzinger, due to man's capacity to relate to God, the Magisterium of the Church, as guided by the Holy Spirit, has the role of safeguarding unchangeable aspects of doctrinal formulations that accurately reflect God.

Although defending man's ability to correspond to divine truth Ratzinger consistently avoids specifying words which are elements in the unchanging features of doctrine. According to Ratzinger the hermeneutical question is based on a deeper ontological question.²¹⁰ This is similar to Przywara who argues that the analogy of being should be understood not simply as a noetic tool but also ontologically as a fundamental structure of being. For Ratzinger, unless the deeper ontological question is addressed the hermeneutical one will not be satisfactorily answered. Ratzinger prefers, therefore, to

²⁰⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 244.

²¹⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 17.

focus on the more fundamental question rather than on “material dispute about individual Christian teachings.”²¹¹

3.4 Analogy of Being with Respect to the Analogy of Faith:

As was stated previously Söhngen defines the analogy of being within the context of the more fundamental analogy of faith, understood as referring to ontological similarities between God and creation only known by divine revelation.²¹² Despite Söhngen’s formative influence on Ratzinger, when it comes to his definition of an analogy of faith Ratzinger leans more in the direction of Przywara who more clearly distinguishes the analogy of faith from an analogy of being by defining the analogy of faith as referring to a correct reading of Scripture where scriptural passages ought always be seen in relationship to other passages in particular regarding the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament. This understanding of the analogy of faith is described in detail by Przywara in *Alter und Neuer Bund*.²¹³ In *God’s Word*, Ratzinger specifically references this work in his definition of the analogy of faith as referring to Scripture.²¹⁴ By conceiving the analogy of faith in this manner as related, but relatively distinct, from the analogy of being, Ratzinger readily affirms man’s ability to naturally know moral

²¹¹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 17. Ratzinger’s approach to truth is also akin to de Lubac’s view. As pointed out by de Lubac, in our earthly condition we need to express the one reality of truth in God into various expression of truth which “mark out the route for us.” Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Richard Arnandez (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1980), 74. However, in heaven, the goal of this earthly journey there will be not be a variety of dogmatic expressions of truth but only truth in its unity in God. De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis*, 73. As affirmed by Ratzinger, on earth man is able to identify and relate to this one truth but only analogously where similarity is acknowledged only within the awareness of the much greater difference between God and his creation.

²¹² Schenk, *Analogy as the discrimen naturae et gratiae*, 182. Here Schenk references Gottlieb Söhngen, “Analogia entis in analogia fidei,” in *Antwort, Karl Barth zum siebzigsten Geburtstag am 10. Mai 1956*, ed. E. Wolf, (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1956) 266-71; Gottlieb Söhngen, *Gottlieb Analogie und Metapher: Kleine Philosophie und Theologie der Sprache* (Freiburg: Alber, 1962), 102.

²¹³ Erich Przywara, *Alter und Neuer Bund Theologie der Stunde*, (Vienna: Herold Verlag, 1956).

²¹⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *God’s Word*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 60.

truths as shown above. This approach to the analogy of faith helps to explain his strong rejection of Vico's formulation of truth, since even with his reason apart from the context of faith man can receive universally valid truths analogously related to divine truth.

These truths are formulated in historically created expressions. These created elements are not the essence of the moral teaching. Rather, their essence resides in created being's analogous participation in divine being, which entails some degree of attribution of God's eminent perfections to creaturely perfections, and, as a result, expressed moral teaching is true since it is pre-eminently in God.

Although Ratzinger sides more with Przywara's concept of the analogy of faith he, nonetheless, agrees with Söhngen's and Balthasar's more explicit Christological presentation of the analogy of being. Ratzinger's Christological view of analogy also sheds light on his rejection of Vico's equation of truth with the created. In contrast with Vico, Ratzinger maintains that even though man has not made the natural world he can truly know it, albeit in an analogous manner, both through reason and faith.

3.5 Man's Christological Correspondence to Moral Truth.

Ratzinger describes in a Christological manner man's ability to know with his reason, due to his analogous relationship with God, moral truths of natural law. Heeding Barth's, Söhngen's and Balthasar's emphasis on the centrality of Christ, Ratzinger describes Christianity as transforming the perception of the universally valid truths accessible to man, due to his analogous ontological relationship with God, from an abstract manner, as represented by the Ten Commandments, to a more personal manner

by seeing them in relationship to Christ and, through Christ, in relationship to Trinitarian love.

This manner of understanding morality, explains Ratzinger, was particularly evident in early Christianity. For the early Christians the ultimate standard was not the Ten Commandments but rather Christ as the living fulfillment of these commandments. Christians, therefore, by bringing their lives in accordance with Christ's life at the same time correspond to the truths represented by the Ten Commandments. This approach to morality, explains Ratzinger, is reflected in how the early Church defined the name "Christian". According to early Christianity, writes Ratzinger, "the name 'Christian' implies fellowship with Christ, and hence the readiness to take upon oneself martyrdom in the cause of goodness. Christianity is a conspiracy to promote the good; the theological and moral aspects are fused inseparable, both in the word itself and deeper, in the basic concept of what Christian reality is."²¹⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, explains Ratzinger, more specifically expresses this understanding by relating the Greek word *chrestos* (good) with *Christos* (Christ). According to the Greek language, points out Ratzinger, the word *chrestos* and the word *Christos* is pronounced the same.²¹⁶ Consequently a Christian is morally good (*chrestos*) if his actions witness to the life of Christ (*Christos*), for Christ is good. The New Testament, Ratzinger further explains, supports the connection between Christ and goodness.

For Ratzinger, therefore, the goodness to be done and evil to be avoided referred to in the Ten Commandments are pre-eminently present in the life of Christ and,

²¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Morality*, 61.

²¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Morality*, 60.

consequently, the lessons of the Ten Commandments can be attributed to him not as a separate reality from Christ but as contained in him to the highest degree. Witnessing to Christ through the dynamic aspect of life does not, therefore, lead to the conclusion that the Ten Commandments and other specific moral teaching are no longer important reference points but rather that their primary instance is in the life of Christ.²¹⁷ As will be seen below, conforming oneself to the life of Christ is not about creating new expressions of truth, as Vico can be interpreted as maintaining, but witnessing in an ever greater degree, albeit secondarily and creatively, to the constant, fidelity of Christ in which truth has precedence over the made and changing.

3.6 Man's Christological Correspondence to Truth in Faith:

Secondly, in accordance with Söhngen and Balthasar, Ratzinger also provides a Christological interpretation of truths man receives and corresponds to in faith. He does this not by centering on ““material dispute about individual Christian teachings”²¹⁸ but rather by describing man's ontological capacity of relating analogously to divine truth

²¹⁷ This analogy of attribution referred to corresponds to the second kind of analogy Aquinas refers to in *On the Power of God* book 3, q. 7, a. 7 c. “We must accordingly take a different view and hold that nothing is predicated univocally of God and the creature: but that those things which are attributed to them in common are predicated not equivocally but analogically. Now this kind of predication is twofold. The first is when one thing is predicated of two with respect to a third: thus being is predicated of quantity and quality with respect to substance. The other is when a thing is predicated of two by reason of a relationship between these two: thus being is predicated of substance and quantity. In the first kind of predication the two things must be preceded by something to which each of them bears some relation: thus substance has a respect to quantity and quality: whereas in the second kind of predication this is not necessary, but one of the two must precede the other. Wherefore since nothing precedes God, but he precedes the creature, the second kind of analogical predication is applicable to him but not the first.” Cf. Hütter, *Attending to the Wisdom of God*, 234-235.

²¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 17. Ratzinger's approach to truth is also akin to de Lubac's view. As pointed out by de Lubac, in our earthly condition we need to express the one reality of truth in God into various expression of truth which “mark out the route for us.” De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis*, 74. However, in heaven, the goal of this earthly journey there will be not be a variety of dogmatic expressions of truth but only truth in its unity in God. De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis*, 73. As affirmed by Ratzinger, on earth man is able to identify and relate to this one truth but only analogously where similarity is acknowledged only within the awareness of the much greater difference between God and his creation.

from the perspective of memory which leads to conversion, and ultimately conversion in Christ. In reference to Augustine's understanding of the relationship of memory with truth, Ratzinger explains that the truth of all being is in God's memory.²¹⁹ Man, through the Christian faith, has access to this memory since faith "includes the act of remembering."²²⁰ Since in God truth is one, man, through his participation in God's memory of truth, is given access to the unity and constancy of truth and, as a result, can, through faith, comprehend the "unity of history and the unity of man."²²¹

The memory man receives in faith, through conversion, is to bring one into conformity with Christ. Although this means that man is changing as a result of his encounter with Christ this does not mean that this happens because truth itself by being generated and made, as with Vico, is an ever changing reality. Rather, for Ratzinger the Greek New Testament word *metanoia* (conversion, repentance, change of mind) which entails change is to be understood with reference to constant divine truth for, "Christian *metanoia* is, to all intents and purposes, identical with *pistis* (faith, constancy) a change that does not exclude constancy but makes it possible."²²² The change caused by *metanoia* does not mean that man's relationship to truth is always in flux, as Vico's axiom *verum est factum* can lead one to believe. Instead, since *metanoia* is defined in relationship to divine truth, understood as a faithfully constant reality, it is not conceived according to ever varying historical circumstances but rather refers to "a standing-firm in Christ, a 'standing-firm against all tendencies to change that come from below and a

²¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23.

²²⁰ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23.

²²¹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23.

²²² Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 62.

sensitive receptivity to every change that would mold us from above.”²²³ Standing firm in faith to Christ means changing, through conversion, in order to ever more accurately correspond to the one divine truth which is the standard of all its various historical representations.

Conclusion:

As has been demonstrated, Ratzinger relying on the analogy of being, understood as a providential synthesis of Hellenic ideas with biblical thought, rejects Vico’s contention that truth is convertible with the made. This is primarily based on his belief that in God there is no inner creation. Therefore, truth, defined as present in the eternally abiding Trinitarian love,²²⁴ has ultimate priority over the created and made. Drawing from the 20th century analogy of being debates, Ratzinger relies on analogy as providing an explanation for how man primarily relates to truth by not creating it but rather by analogously corresponding to final truth. Along with Przywara, Ratzinger asserts that being can only be properly understood if defined analogously. In this way the law of non-contradiction is avoided since created being is not equated with divine being but rather is seen as participating in divine being.

In addition, due to Ratzinger’s analogous approach to being, in which similarity is affirmed with a greater difference, man’s capacity to relate to God is upheld since God’s being and man’s being is not defined as totally different without any similarity. Vico’s formulation of truth as convertible with the made even in God, by being generated, falls into the first error, at least according to Ratzinger’s interpretation, by blurring, in a

²²³ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 62.

²²⁴ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45, 48.

univocal manner, the boundary between the creator and the created. According to Ratzinger, contra his understanding of Vico, God's creative action is entirely external. In addition, due to His simplicity, when He creates his works are caused *ex nihilo* by his thought and analogously resemble the truth of his being which is, at the same time, his thought. Man, in contrast, is different from God in that his making is not caused *ex nihilo* by his thought. This means that man encounters truth not in making new forms from being created by God but by contemplating created being which reveals, respecting the law of analogy, the being of God which is truth. Since the work of man, argues Ratzinger, "is a mixture of *logos* and the a-logical, something moreover that with the passage of time sinks away into the past. It does not admit of full comprehension for it is lacking in *logos*, in thoroughgoing meaningfulness."²²⁵

Through contemplation of being whose origin is "reason, and thus, truth"²²⁶ man, further asserts Ratzinger, encounters a natural law that bears resemblance to God's being.²²⁷ As is evident, contra Vico's axiom *verum est factum*, for Ratzinger man's relationship to the truth is "essentially receptive and not productive."²²⁸ Divine revelation building upon truth naturally revealed to reason gives man, according to Ratzinger, a greater encounter with truth. This means that terms of faith are not due merely to an immanently contained, primitive, anthropomorphic tendency of man²²⁹ but rather corresponds ontologically to God while, in accordance with the IV Lateran

²²⁵ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

²²⁶ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 155.

²²⁷ Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Morality*, 58.

²²⁸ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 155.

²²⁹ Ratzinger, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen*, 19.

Council, acknowledging that “between the Creator and the creature so great a likeness cannot be noted without the necessity of noting a greater dissimilarity between them.”²³⁰

While, in accordance with Przywara, Ratzinger views analogy as a law of being that allows man to receive and correspond to truth, he also heeds his seminary teacher Söhngen and his friend Balthasar by presenting man’s analogous relationship to truth in an explicitly Christological manner. He does this by relating moral truths known through reason to the constant, fidelity of Christ in which truth has precedence over the made and ever changing. In addition, he describes divine revelation received through the Church as an “act of remembering”²³¹ that allows man to more deeply participate in God’s own memory of truth, ultimately leading man to ever greater conversion by which man changes in order to correspond to the constancy of Christ.²³² In opposition to Vico’s formula that truth, at least intrawordly truth, is a result of man’s making and changing, Ratzinger, through the above explanation, defines truth received by man as entailing change, but only in order to stand more firmly in the unchanging truth of Christ.²³³ Truth, for Ratzinger therefore, whether in God or corresponded to by man is essentially prior to that which is made.

In this chapter I have demonstrated the following. Ratzinger’s rejection of Vico’s axiom “*verum esse ipsum factum*” is rooted in an analogy of being. In his analogy of being man knows truth not primarily by creating it, as Vico claims, but rather by corresponding to its uncreated eternal, abiding presence within God. Man, for Ratzinger,

²³⁰ Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 171.

²³¹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23.

²³² Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 62.

²³³ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 62.

corresponds to this uncreated, abiding truth with similarity and a much greater difference. In this way Ratzinger upholds man's capacity to relate to God without either equating man with God or God with man. In contrast, according to Ratzinger, Vico's formulation of truth as convertible with the made falls into the error of blurring the distinction between the creator and the created. According to Ratzinger, not by creating truth does man know truth, but rather man knows truth receptively by contemplating being and corresponding to it with similarity and difference. In his analogous relationship to truth man, further argues Ratzinger, is able to know stable moral truths naturally known by reason not subject to essential change. Faith aids man by bringing his mind in even greater similarity with truth by infusing in man the ability to perceive natural truth in light of Christ and the abiding truths of revelation. In the next chapter, by focusing on illumination and mediation, I will further specify how, according to Ratzinger, truth is primarily received, albeit analogously, and not actively created by man.

Chapter Two

Ratzinger on Truth as Illuminated and Mediated

Introduction:

In the previous chapter we saw that Ratzinger, drawing from the 20th century analogy of being debates, relies on analogy as providing an explanation for how man primarily relates to truth by not creating it, as Vico advocates, but rather by analogously corresponding to final truth through reception. In this chapter we will focus, contra Vico, on Ratzinger's more explicit theological treatments of truth as grounded in an analogy of being. This will be done by examining how he depicts truth as illuminated and mediated. I will first begin with truth as illuminated.

1.0 Truth as Illuminated:

In accordance with his view that man corresponds to truth as it is in God with similarity and a much greater difference, Ratzinger similarly describes man's illumination of truth as containing both identity with ultimate truth and difference. In his acknowledgement of man's, albeit limited, capacity to identify with ultimate truth with the aid of illumination Ratzinger differentiates himself with Vico's description of man as knowing only that which he creates.²³⁴ For Ratzinger this manner of illumination occurs in man in two related, but relatively autonomous ways: reason and faith. I will begin with the illumination of reason due to the ability of man to encounter "creational forms,"²³⁵ his imprint of goodness and his openness to beauty.

1.1 Illumination in Reason:

²³⁴ Vico, *The New Science*, bk. I, sec. III, 331, pg. 85.

²³⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, trans. Martha M. Matesich (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 33.

A principle work where Ratzinger treats illumination is his habilitation *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*²³⁶ (1954) which was directed by Söhngen. Bonaventure, explains Ratzinger, tried to “achieve a synthesis”²³⁷ between Aristotle’s active intellect (*intellectus agens*) and Augustine’s theory of illumination, which according to Ratzinger “in itself has no place for an *intellectus agens*.”²³⁸ In this synthesis Bonaventure joins together Aristotle’s theory that the human intellect actively makes objects intelligible by abstracting out a nature with an Augustinian illumination theory which holds for “the immediate divine illumination of the human spirit.”²³⁹

In accordance with Bonaventurian thought, Ratzinger describes man’s capacity for truth not simply according to an Aristotelian theory of truth but also by taking into account Augustine’s illumination theory. For Ratzinger, consequently, truth encountered by reason is not to be identified solely with natures that are to be abstracted by the active intellect. Ratzinger, consequently, modifies the Aristotelian neo-scholastic epistemology by coupling it with concept of revelation “as a historical action of God in which truth

²³⁶ Hofmann notes that an interesting comparison can be made between Bonaventure and Ratzinger. Similar to Bonaventure, who as Franciscan general was strict with the spiritual Franciscans and in his theological writings is calm and sober, later Ratzinger as Bishop, especially when in charge of the CDF was strict, but in his theological writings is peaceful and open to development. „Eine Parallele drängt sich auf zwischen Bonaventura und Joseph Ratzinger: Der Franziskanergeneral zeigt eine harte Hand gegenüber den Spiritualen und bleibt zugleich ein gelassener Theologe der kanonischen Schrift. Ähnlich ließe sich auch die Spannung zwischen dem cooperatores veritatis deuten, als der sich der Fundamentaltheologie und spätere Bischof Ratzinger immer verstanden hat, und seiner klaren Praxis als Präfekt der Glaubenskongregation. Ich vermute, auch hier bleibt das Vorbild Bonaventuras in vielen Einzelzügen erkennbar.“ Peter Hofmann, “Fides et Ratio: Der Glaube und seine Vernunft – Zu Joseph Ratzinger Fundamental-theologischen Ansatz,” in *Joseph Ratzinger, Ein Theologisches Profil*, ed. Peter Hofmann (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008.), 145.

²³⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989), 73.

²³⁸ Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, 73.

²³⁹ Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, 73.

becomes gradually unveiled.”²⁴⁰ According to this broad definition, revelation is not simply identified with what is “deposited in Scripture”²⁴¹ and received in faith but also refers to “something greater than what is merely written down.”²⁴² In this way Ratzinger links revelation both to illumination that man naturally receives in his reason, as truth is unveiled through creation to man, and to illumination supernaturally received in faith.

In his habilitation Ratzinger describe reason’s relationship to truth as entailing illumination by which truth is unveiled. According to Bonaventure’s assimilation of Augustine’s illumination theory, natural illumination is named uniform wisdom which, writes Ratzinger, “flashes forth in the knowledge of the eternal rules, those basic principles of all knowledge. We do not judge about these principles; rather we are capable of judging by them. At this level of wisdom, therefore, man grasps those basic truths which are simply given and which one can contradict only ‘*ad exterius rationem*.’ These rules and the wisdom corresponding to them are rooted in God and lead to God; but He is not grasped immediately with them.”²⁴³

That God “is not grasped immediately” by this wisdom is, for Ratzinger, due to man’s analogous relationship with God in which the similarities man’s mind has with the divine mind always contains a difference. In this case the difference is represented by man’s need under the light of reason to abstract out truths. Despite this difference, however, even within man’s natural manner of obtaining truth there is an analogous similarity with the universal forms abstracted from creation to truth understood by God.

²⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 104.

²⁴¹ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 109.

²⁴² Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 109.

²⁴³ Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Bonaventure*, 60.

For Ratzinger, the hylomorphic theory of Aristotle (Greek *hylo*, matter, + *morphe*, form), which affirms the presence of constant, actualized stable elements within the universe, in some way accurately reflects the faithfully true nature of God in which divine truth has priority over the made and ever changing.²⁴⁴ In contrast with Aristotle, though, Ratzinger, in accordance with Bonaventure, asserts that man is able to abstract universal forms because man's reason, as a participation in God's reason, sheds light on the world thus revealing its nature.²⁴⁵

Ratzinger affirms the validity of the hylomorphic theory as opposed to the hylozoistic theory of Vico, briefly described in the précis, by asking in his work *Principles of Catholic Theology*, "Is there a truth that *remains* true in every historical time because it *is* true?"²⁴⁶ He answers in the affirmative by stating that the multiple historical expressions of truth are ultimately grounded in the oneness of truth.²⁴⁷ God as truth in its unity, explains Ratzinger in *A New Song for the Lord*, created the world as a "crystallized idea"²⁴⁸ of himself. Consequently, the world "carries a divine message in itself..."²⁴⁹ This divine message can be encountered through the discovery of "abiding"²⁵⁰ creational forms in nature. Unfortunately, according to Ratzinger, "The gradual disappearance of the concept of creation results in our not daring to think that God's great creational forms have an abiding nature; instead we limit nature to the purely empirical

²⁴⁴ For Aristotle "matter is potentiality, while form is actuality." Aristotle, "On the Soul" in *A New Aristotle Reader* ed. J. L. Ackrill (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) Book II, Chapter 1, 412a. pg. 165.

²⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 108-109.

²⁴⁶ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 17.

²⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 17.

²⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 33.

²⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 33.

²⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 33.

on the one hand and dissolve it into history on the other... Extreme dualism between nature and human existence can only be overcome by a renewal of belief in creation.”²⁵¹

1.2 Illumination of Natural Law:

Besides abiding, creational forms that man, with the light of reason, is able to know by abstraction, Ratzinger also underlines a moral way in which man is naturally illumined by truth, thus further distinguishing his concept of truth with respect to natural law from Vico's. In referring to a moral language that is written in created being Ratzinger states, “The Church believes that in the beginning was the Logos and that therefore being itself bears the language of the Logos – not just mathematical, but also aesthetical and moral reason. This is what is meant when the Church insists that ‘nature’ has a moral expression... In the final analysis, the language of being, the language of nature, is identical with the language of conscience. But in order to hear that language, it is necessary to practice it.”²⁵² After contemplating being, reason, according to Ratzinger, has the ability to actively abstract out the language of nature. What is abstracted is then translated so as to be universally understood by reason. This is why Ratzinger equates the language of nature with the language of conscience. In a different way from mathematical and aesthetical truths, though, in order to “hear” the moral language of nature it is not sufficient to simply abstract out moral truths but, in addition, it is necessary to bring one in conformity with the moral truths which in turn will allow one to recognize with greater clarity the moral language of nature. The activity of conforming oneself to moral truth illuminates more facets of moral truth. Saint Caesarius of Arles in

²⁵¹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 33.

²⁵² Joseph Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 67.

a sermon succinctly describes good works in this manner by stating, “God too wishes that your soul be not in darkness, but that the light of good works shine in us, so that he who dwells in the heavens will be glorified.”²⁵³ In this way not only is contemplation linked with illumination but also the doing of good works is connected with enlightenment.

In his 1991 keynote address titled *Conscience and Truth*²⁵⁴ Ratzinger echoes the idea that in order for natural moral truth to be adequately known it requires both the universal diffusion of the light of truth in the mind and the light of practice which causes one not to forget what is good and what is evil. He does so with the Platonic concept of *anamnesis*, meaning remembering. In this way Ratzinger addresses the deficiencies of perceiving truth solely with the simile of light by connecting truth to memory. As pointed out by Aquinas the metaphor of light coming from Dionysius “must be understood to refer to the universality of diffusion...but it does not apply to the absence of will.”²⁵⁵ As will be shown, Ratzinger addresses the deficiency of the will with *anamnesis*. He describes this kind of remembering in the following manner. First, he agrees with the medieval tradition which separates conscience into two levels. However, he disagrees with how “mainstream scholasticism”²⁵⁶ expresses these two levels with the terms *synderesis* and *conscientia*. According to Ratzinger the term *synderesis*, which originated from the “stoic doctrine of the microcosm”²⁵⁷ and was adopted by Aquinas,²⁵⁸

²⁵³ Saint Caesarius of Arle, “Sermo 229,” in *The Liturgy of the Hours vol. IV*, trans. International Commission on English in the Liturgy (New York: Catholic Book Publishing co., 1975), 1548.

²⁵⁴ This was given in the 1991 tenth bishops’ workshop of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, on “Catholic Conscience: Foundation and Formation.”

²⁵⁵ Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, q. 3, a. 15, ad 1. Cf. de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 234.

²⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 30.

²⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 30.

is lacking a certain dimension. Therefore, in its place, he proposes “the much more clearly defined Platonic concept of anamnesis.”²⁵⁹

This term, claims Ratzinger, “is not only linguistically clearer and philosophically deeper and purer, but anamnesis above all also harmonizes with key motifs of biblical thought and the anthropology derived from it.”²⁶⁰ Plato used this term in his *Meno* and his *Phaedo*.²⁶¹ According to these two writings anamnesis refers to a recalling according to the literal meaning of the term “loss of forgetfulness”. As applied to conscience, explains Ratzinger, anamnesis is the first “so called ontological level of the phenomenon conscience.”²⁶² It functions as “an original memory of the good and the true”²⁶³ which has been implanted in man. However, writes Ratzinger, in opposition to a neo-scholastic approach to natural law, “This anamnesis of the origin, which results from the god-like constitution of our being, is not a conceptually articulated knowing, a store of retrievable contents.”²⁶⁴ Rather, conscience is more like an “echo”²⁶⁵ of the divine origin out of which man comes from. This is in accordance, states Ratzinger, with Augustine’s view that man is instilled with an understanding of what is good.²⁶⁶ Man, even without faith, is instilled with an awareness of what is good due to the intellect’s participation in the light

²⁵⁸ See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia, q. 79, art. 12, “Whether synderesis is a special power of the soul distinct from the others?”

²⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 31.

²⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 31.

²⁶¹ Plato, *Phaedo*, 66 b-d. Plato, “The Meno,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated by Benjamin Jowett (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 213-214.

²⁶² Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 32.

²⁶³ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 32.

²⁶⁴ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 32.

²⁶⁵ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 32.

²⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 32. Ratzinger quotes Augustine “We could never judge that one thing is better than another, if a basic understanding of the good had not already been instilled in us.” *De Trinitate* VIII, 3 (4), PL 42, 949.

of divine reason. One can become deaf to the echo of the divine origin and blind to man's participation in divine light by failing to do good works. If this happens then the second level of conscience which, explains Ratzinger is founded upon the more primary and ontological reality of *anamnesis*, is affected. For Ratzinger one of the most fundamental truths that every conscience is aware of on this primary level "is the right of life itself" which he adds "belong to man *by nature*."²⁶⁷ Abortion essentially contradicts this right.²⁶⁸

In defining the second level of conscience Ratzinger cites Aquinas who describes this second level as an act by which one actively recognizes, bears witness, and judges.²⁶⁹ The extent one recognizes goodness correctly, in accordance with his divine origin, depends on the will, "which can block the way to recognition or lead to it."²⁷⁰ If one chooses to ignore the original memory of the good, due to man's participation in divine light, he will bear witness to falsehood and judge erroneously by creating expressions of falsehood. Once again, Ratzinger, contra his interpretation of Vico, is defining truth, in this case moral truth, as a reality that is essentially received and then practiced and not primarily created according to how man judge's what is good within a historical context. For Ratzinger, on the level of judgment an erroneous self-created conscience binds. However, this does not excuse the individual of guilt since "guilt lies then in a different

²⁶⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006) 63-64.

²⁶⁸ Ratzinger has repeatedly voiced his opposition to abortion. Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 63- 64; Ratzinger, *Europe, Today and Tomorrow*, 65; Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 203-204,190; Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 245-247.

²⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 37.

²⁷⁰ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 37.

place, much deeper-not in the present act, not in the present judgment of conscience, but in the neglect of my being that made me deaf to the internal promptings of truth.”²⁷¹

According to this explanation of conscience, Ratzinger justifies his claim that members of the SS, Hitler and Stalin all were guilty,²⁷² even though they possibly were not aware of any guilt or wrong doing as they followed the promptings of what they perceived as their consciences.

In more recent works Ratzinger explicitly aligns himself with Augustine and Plato and distances himself, but not completely, from Aristotle and Aquinas. Regarding remembrance of truth through reason, due to natural illumination, Ratzinger describes Augustine as holding that “a basic understanding of the good is imprinted upon us.”²⁷³ In agreeing with this Augustinian, and also Platonic view, Ratzinger disagrees with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas who “contest that men have innate knowledge; for them the mind begins as pure readiness to receive. I would nuance that a bit....To a certain extent I am a Platonist. I think that a kind of memory, of recollection of God, is, as it were, etched in

²⁷¹ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 38. In a footnote, Ratzinger argues that this manner of conceiving guilt in relationship to an erroneous conscience is in accordance with Aquinas’ thought, despite other interpretations of Aquinas’ teaching on a conscience in error. Ratzinger explains this by writing: “That this precisely is also the position of St. Thomas Aquinas is shown by I. G. Belmans in his extremely enlightening study, ‘Le paradoxe de la conscience erronée d’Abélard à Karl Rahner,’ *Revue Thomiste* 90 (1990): 570-586. He shows how, with the publication of Sertillanges’ book on St. Thomas in 1942, a then widely adopted distortion of Thomas’ doctrine of conscience takes hold, which—to put it simply- consists in the fact that only the *Summa theologiae* I-II, qu. 19, a. 5 (‘Must one follow an erroneous conscience?’) is cited, and the following article, a. 6 (‘Is it sufficient to follow one’s conscience in order to act properly?’), is simply ignored. That means imputing the doctrine of Abelard to Thomas, whose goal was in fact to overcome Abelard. Abelard had taught that the crucifiers of Christ would not have sinned if they had acted from ignorance. The only way to sin consists in acting against conscience. The modern theories of the autonomy of conscience can appeal to Abelard but not to Thomas.” Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 80. For further discussion of Ratzinger’s view in relationship to Aquinas also see D. Vincent Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI The Conscience of Our Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 123.

²⁷² Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 17-22.

²⁷³ Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, trans. Brian McNeil (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 94.

man, though it needs to be awakened.”²⁷⁴ As previously stated, Ratzinger develops his disagreement with Aquinas/Aristotle and agreement with Augustine/Plato through his concept of anamnesis as applied to conscience. According to Ratzinger, anamnesis affirms “what Paul writes in his letter to the Romans (2:14-15). Ratzinger defines anamnesis not only as infused into us at the moment of our creation but also as a kind of ongoing illumination by describing “the anamnesis of our origin” as “resulting from the fact that our being is constitutively in keeping with God...It is an inner sense, a capacity for recognition, in such a way that the one addressed recognizes in himself an echo of what is said to him.”²⁷⁵

1.3 Illumination through Beauty

In *On the Way to Jesus Christ* (2004), Ratzinger, in accordance with his assertion in his address *Conscience and Truth* that the Church believes being bears not only mathematical truth but also moral and aesthetical truth,²⁷⁶ describes truth as illuminated through the beauty of being. For Ratzinger the aesthetic dimension of being radiates truth which, similar to rays of light, strikes man in a way that surpasses doctrinal instruction in truth. In defining beauty this way Ratzinger writes, “Beauty is knowledge, indeed, a higher form of knowing, because it strikes man with the truth in all its greatness.”²⁷⁷ He explains his meaning by agreeing with the Byzantine theologian Nicholas Cabasilas (1319-1391) who “distinguishes two kinds of knowledge: one is knowing through instruction, which remains second hand does not put the knower in

²⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 41.

²⁷⁵ Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 92.

²⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 67.

²⁷⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 35.

contact with reality itself. The second kind, in contrast, is knowing through personal experience, through contact with the things themselves.”²⁷⁸ Ratzinger describes the second kind of knowing in a non-linguistic manner and, similar to rays of light, as a true knowledge which is gained after being “struck by the arrow of beauty that wounds man: being touched by reality.”²⁷⁹ The knowledge gained by this second kind of knowing, according to Ratzinger, is more real and more profound than the first kind of theoretical knowledge. In describing a personal experience in which through an encounter of beauty truth was illuminated Ratzinger writes:

The encounter with beauty can become the wound of the arrow that strikes the soul and thus makes it see clearly, so that henceforth it has criteria, based on what it has experienced, and can now weigh the arguments correctly. For me an unforgettable experience was the Bach concert that Leonard Bernstein conducted in Munich after the sudden death of Karl Richter. I was sitting next to the Lutheran Bishop Hanselmann. After the last note of one of the great Thomas Kantor cantatas triumphantly faded away, we looked at each other spontaneously and just as spontaneously said: “Anyone who has heard this knows that the faith is true.” Such an extraordinary force of present reality had become audible in this music that the audience knew, no longer through deduction, but by the impact that it could not have come from nothing; it could only have been born through the power of the truth that makes itself present in the composer’s inspiration.²⁸⁰

The truth transmitted through this beauty can, as described by Ratzinger, lead even to the acceptance of transcendent truths of faith. Thus for Ratzinger the radiance of beauty reveals truth to the extent of being one of two “really effective apologia for Christianity...the *saints* the Church has produced and the *art* which has grown in her

²⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 35-36.

²⁷⁹ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 36.

²⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 36.

womb.”²⁸¹ Understood in this way, the radiance of beauty can act as an apologia by awakening “a kind of memory, of recollection of God, is, as it were, etched in man.”²⁸² Once again by stressing, through the concept of recollection awakened after an encounter with beauty, man’s primarily receptive relationship to truth Ratzinger’s difference with Vico is brought out. In contrast with Ratzinger, Vico, as has been demonstrated, while acknowledging the presence of a “few eternal seeds of the true”²⁸³ that are buried in all men, defines truth more actively by making it convertible with the made.

1.4 Illumination of Faith:

As applied to truths of faith, for Ratzinger, truth gained after being struck with the beauty of Christ is greater than the knowledge gained through theological study of books. However, Ratzinger is quick to assert, “Of course we must not underestimate the importance of theological reflection, of exact and careful theological thought; it is still absolutely necessary.”²⁸⁴ Theological knowledge gained through beauty and theological knowledge gained through reading can be mutually helpful for the following reason. Since knowledge gained in light of divine beauty is greater than knowledge gained by theological research, the former knowledge can aid a theologian by giving him, in the form of divine light, greater clarity to determine which theological views are more in accordance with truth. In a certain sense, argues Ratzinger, it is safer to trust the experience of truth given in the radiance of beauty in judging what is most representative

²⁸¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 129.

²⁸² Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 41. The full quotation is, “To a certain extent I am a Platonist. I think that a kind of memory, of recollection of God, is, as it were, etched in man, though it needs to be awakened.”

²⁸³ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. IV, 49, pg. 41.

²⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 35-36.

of theological truth than by weighing the many competing theological arguments since “reason has a wax nose: in other words, it can be turned around in any direction, if one is clever enough.”²⁸⁵

Ratzinger further explains that truth emitted by beauty does not come merely from physical beauty for in the suffering of Christ the believer “learns that the beauty of truth also involves wounds, pain and even the obscure mystery of death and this can only be found in accepting pain, not ignoring it.”²⁸⁶ The paradox that Christ in his passion, despite his physical ugliness, is beautiful, explains Ratzinger, has not eliminated the Greek aesthetic but rather has assumed and transcended this aesthetic understanding. In the Passion of Christ, writes Ratzinger, “The experience of the beautiful has received a new depth and a new realism... Whoever has perceived this beauty knows that truth after all, and not falsehood, is the ultimate authority of the world.”²⁸⁷ The beauty that shines forth through Christ’s passion and enlightens man of truth is “the beauty of love that goes ‘to the very end’ and thus proves to be mightier than falsehood and violence.”²⁸⁸

By defining man’s correspondence with transcendent truth as taking place in a loving personal encounter with Christ Ratzinger indicates his aversion of identifying divine truth directly with propositions of faith, for, writes Ratzinger “revelation is not a collection of statements – revelation is Christ himself. *He* is the Logos, the all embracing Word in which God declares himself and that we therefore call the Son of God. This one Logos, of course, has communicated himself in normative words, in which he presents to

²⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 37.

²⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 34.

²⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 39.

²⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 39.

us what is distinctively his. Yet *the Word* is always greater than *the words* and is never exhausted by the words.”²⁸⁹

Does defining man’s correspondence with divine truth more in terms of a personal experience with the Christ and less with reference to propositions, especially moral propositions, diminish, or even eliminate, the role of such propositions? Ratzinger clearly asserts that this is not the case by stating that “In the search of a christologically informed ethics, one should always keep in mind, also, that Christ is the Logos-made-man, that he therefore wants to awaken our very reason to himself. The original purpose of the Decalogue served – to remind us of the deepest part of our reason – is not abolished through the encounter with Christ; rather, it is brought to its full maturity.”²⁹⁰ This explanation of the moral statements in the Decalogue can also be applied to doctrinal statements. Christ as truth-made-man does not abolish doctrinal and moral propositions of truth or even mathematical and scientific truth but rather brings them to their full maturity by revealing the constant elements in these truths as analogous similar to the faithful, true love of Christ which precedes all that is made, including his incarnation. Here, unlike Vico who defines man’s relationship to truth more in an active manner by identifying the generation of the intra-Trinitarian Logos as the ultimate

²⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 82. Erwin Dirscherl describes Ratzinger’s concept of God’s word as present in human words as similar to Karl Rahner’s understanding who, according to Dirscherl, “maintained that theology and anthropology, the speech of God and of humans belong directly together.” My translation. „Hier steht Ratzinger wie Karl Rahner eindeutig für jene Option, die sagt, dass Theologie und Anthropologie, die Rede von Gott und dem Menschen unmittelbar zusammengehören.“ Erwin Dirscherl, “Gott und Mensch als Beziehungswesen die Theologische und Anthropologische Denkfigur Joseph Ratzingers Ausgehend von der Christologie,” in *Der Theologe Joseph Ratzinger*, ed. Frank Meier-Hamidi (Freiburg: Herder, 2007) 58.

²⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 164-165.

paradigm of truth's convertibility with the made which man is to imitate,²⁹¹ Ratzinger, in contrast, describes man's relationship with Christ as Logos more in a receptive manner as bringing man into greater correspondence through the reception of the light of faith.

1.5 Natural Light Distinguished from the Light of Faith:

In *Revelation and Tradition* (1965), with reference "to light in the Christ-event",²⁹² Ratzinger distinguishes natural light from light received in faith. He does this with reference to New Testament revelation. In accordance with his habilitation he defines New Testament revelation in terms of illumination by arguing that in the New Testament the Old Testament is understood as scripture which comes "to light in the Christ-event."²⁹³ Only after being illuminated by the Christ-event, explains Ratzinger, is scripture rendered "intelligible"²⁹⁴. As a very bright light exceeds the object it is shining upon and exceeds any other light illuminating the object, similarly does supernatural revelation exceed the natural light of reason and is greater than scripture or any creedal

²⁹¹ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap I, 17, p. 19. "This is why, in our religion, in which we profess that the world is created out of nothing in time, there needs to be real distinction between created truth, which is convertible with what is made, and uncreated truth, which is convertible with what is begotten. In the same way, the Holy Scriptures, with truly divine eloquence, have called the wisdom of God (which contains in itself the ideas of all things, and therefore, the elements of all ideas) the *Word*, since in this Word, the true is the same as the comprehension of all elements, which composes this universe of things and can establish countless worlds, if He so wills; and from these elements, known in His divine omnipotence, there exists a word most complete and real which, because it is known by the Father from eternity, is similarly begotten by Him from eternity." Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap. I, 28, p. 27-29. "If I might dispatch the matter in a word: the true is thus convertible with the good when the truth which is also known has its very being from the mind by which it is known, and so human science is an imitator of divine science, in which God, insofar as He knows the truth generates it *ad intra* (inwardly) from eternity, makes it *ad extra* (outwardly) in time. As for the criterion of the true, in the same way that for God, it is to have communicated goodness to His thoughts in the midst of creating – *God saw that they were good* – so for men, by comparison, it is to have effected the truths which know. But, to better fortify this position, it must be defended against the dogmatists and the skeptics."

²⁹² Joseph Ratzinger and Karl Rahner, *Revelation and Tradition*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 37.

²⁹³ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 37.

²⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 37.

statement which merely provides information about revelation.²⁹⁵ In order for the Christ-event to shed light, though, the reality of Christ must be received through faith, “in which the Christ-reality becomes ours.”²⁹⁶ Faith, according to Ratzinger therefore, “is equivalent to the indwelling of Christ”²⁹⁷ within the believer. In explaining how Christ dwells within the believer Ratzinger refers to Ephesians’ 3:17 expression of faith “in which the individual encounters Christ and in him enters the sphere of influence of his saving power.”²⁹⁸ (This explanation is inadequate without reference to the mediation of the Church which will be discussed later in this chapter.)

By entering into the saving power of Christ’s sphere of influence the believer then reads scripture, interprets doctrinal formulations, and perceive all of reality as illuminated by His indwelling presence. The light of Christ, which is received through faith, is the key factor which distinguishes how man, through faith, corresponds to truth and how man, through the natural light of reason, corresponds to truth. Although integrated with one another, each manner of correspondence also retains some degree of autonomy. In addition, Ratzinger, due to his prioritizing truth over the made, in using the simile of light to describe revelation is not referring to Christ as light but rather to light emitting from Christ and revealing Him to the believer. If the simile of light is confused with the person of Christ then he becomes a reference point that has no stable form for man to correspond within his changing historical circumstances. Seen in this erroneous manner truth becomes a reality that is so totally transcendent that man can not correspond to in

²⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 37.

²⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 40.

²⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 40.

²⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 41.

any identifiable way that transcends history. By construing *verum* as convertible with *factum* even in God to which man imitates by creating his own linguistic and cultural truth Vico can be understood as, at least, tending in this direction of associating Christ with formlessness, for, unlike Ratzinger, he defines man's relationship with divine generated truth primarily in active and not in receptive terms.

1.6 Ultimate Truth not to be Equated with Formless Light:

The error of equating truth with formless light is related to the Arian position. According to Ratzinger, the debate between Arius and the official Church was not only about whether Christ was fully human and fully divine but also, "at the same time about the human capacity for truth."²⁹⁹ According to Arius' theology, as interpreted by Ratzinger, man cannot recognize any truth, since God is absolutely transcendent. Arius' defense of the absolute transcendence of God led him to claim that since God, due to his transcendent nature, cannot communicate himself to man, God cannot possibly have taken on a human nature. The world, according to Arius' theology, is, therefore, essentially Godless, since God completely transcends it. In such a godless world, as described by Arius, writes Ratzinger, "we remain without truth and thus slaves."³⁰⁰ In contrast with Arius' view, Ratzinger maintains that God is not so transcendent that he is unable to communicate truth to man. For Ratzinger, Christ's ability to become incarnate and take on a full human nature, without in anyway diminishing his divine nature, attests to this teaching and supports man's capacity for the unchanging truth of God shining

²⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 22.

³⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 22.

forth both in, as Bonaventure describes, his “vestiges in the sense world”,³⁰¹ and in supernatural revelation.

Similar to Arius, Kant, and like philosophers, also deny that transcendent realities reveal themselves to man, whether through reason or through faith. In addition, Kant, along with Arius, depicts the word as essentially Godless. As interpreted by Ratzinger, the distinction that Kant made between phenomenon and noumenon means “we can never know ultimate reality in itself but only ever its appearance in the way we perceive things, seeing it through various ‘lenses.’”³⁰² Transcendent truth, according to this distinction, does not illuminate man with any universally valid truths that man can analogously correspond to, since everything that man perceives is “not actual reality as it is in itself, but a reflection corresponding to our capacities.”³⁰³ As interpreted by Ratzinger, this also reflects with Vico’s position, for, he writes, “we can truly know only what we have made ourselves, for it is only ourselves that we are familiar with. This means that the old equation of truth and being is replaced by the new one of truth and factuality; all that can be known is the “*factum*”, that which we have made ourselves. It is not the task of the human mind-nor is it within its capacity – to think about being, but about the *factum*, what has been made, man’s own particular world, for this is all we can truly understand.”³⁰⁴

2.0 Truth as Mediated:

³⁰¹ Bonaventure, *Bonaventure: The Soul’s Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978) chap. 2, 1 pg. 69.

³⁰² Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 119.

³⁰³ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 119.

³⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 33.

As previously mentioned, to adequately perceive truth as illuminated it needs to be balanced by other aspects of truth, especially truth as correspondence and, which I will now cover, truth as mediated. In opposition to Vico's active definition of truth by equating it with *factum* Ratzinger argues that through the mediation of the Church man, through the reception of ecclesial teaching, is better able to bring his mind into correspondence with the uncreated truth of God. In defining the Church Ratzinger affirms the visible dimension of the Church on earth as a necessary component in the analogous mediation of divine truth. For Ratzinger, truth is principally mediated by Christ through the visible, sacramental Church.

2.1 The Church Mediates Truth Sacramentally:

In his dissertation Ratzinger, through his reading of Augustine, defends the role of the sacramental Church in mediating truth that is then to be accepted with docility by the members. According to Ratzinger, Augustine does this by connecting the visible, Eucharistic Church with the people of God.³⁰⁵ In this way, interprets Ratzinger, Augustine maintains that the visible Church has a unique role in mediating truth. This becomes clearer in Ratzinger's discussion on various contemporary interpretations of Augustine's understanding of the two cities referred to in *De Civitate Dei*. The first contemporary and mainly Protestant interpretation, which Ratzinger describes, maintains that the two cities are not connected to any actual entities, but rather refer to ideological communities of people.³⁰⁶ This understanding of Augustine denies that the *civitas dei* is

³⁰⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*, (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 1992), 174- 175.

³⁰⁶ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 276. Those who hold this view, explains Ratzinger, are primarily Protestants. The Protestant theologians, whom Ratzinger mentions as interpreters of Augustine's two city teaching, are

referring to the people of the Church in its visible, hierarchical form on earth.³⁰⁷ Seen in this way the visible Church does not have a privileged role in mediating the divine truth of the city of God. Instead, Christ mediates this truth directly to the individual believer.

In opposition to this interpretation, which effectively denies the visible Church having a role to play in aiding the believer to correspond to divine truth, Ratzinger defends the Church's mediation of truth, since it participates in the reality of the city of God. According to Ratzinger's interpretation of Augustine, which he appropriates, the city of God is visible on earth in its colony of pilgrims, the "people of God," who, as a community of men, are united in the *caritas* of God. Their external sign of the *communio caritatis* is the *sacramentum corporis Christi*.³⁰⁸ Those who partake in the Eucharistic sign but do not participate in the love of God are only apparent members of the Church and not actual members of the city of God in its pilgrim state on earth.

Ratzinger's description of Augustine's concept of ecclesial love as "objective"³⁰⁹ is to be understood as related to the Church's role of mediating truth. This becomes evident when the divine objective love³¹⁰ of the Church is seen in God as convertible

H. Reuter, H. Scholz E. Salin, R. Frick, K. Müller and K. Holl. All of these theologians, with the exception of K. Holl, interpreted Augustine's two cities as spiritual entities while refusing to acknowledge that Augustine understood the *civitas dei* in any concrete manner. Cf. Johannes Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: a study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 123-124.

³⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 276, 123-124.

³⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 289. Cf. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1978), bk. X, 6, pg. 309-310.

³⁰⁹ Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, (London: Burns and Oates, 2007), 28. In describing Ratzinger's naming of Augustine's ecclesiological charity as an objective charity Nichols writes, "It does not betoken a subjective attitude, but rather belonging to the Church, and more specifically to that Church which itself lives in charity that is 'in the eucharistic love-relationship with (other Christians in) the world.'" Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 133- 134.

³¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 150 "... Kraft dieser Liebe, die der heilige Geist ist..." Cf., Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 138-139. Ratzinger defines Augustine's pneumatological concept of the Church as an "objective" form of love in which the Church, as a body of Christ, participates in the "power of love, which

with truth. Ratzinger, beginning with his dissertation, has consistently argued for the inseparability of love from faith and truth.³¹¹ In accordance with this logic, Ratzinger presents Augustine's divine law which the Church participates through her "objective" love as a way the Church mediates divine truth. For Augustine, only divine laws are true for only they reflect God. As explained by Ratzinger, this view of Augustine is due to his conversion in which he came to the conclusion that philosophy "provides no internal contact with the truth, but remains completely outside of the truth."³¹² (As is evident in preceding sections this is a view that Ratzinger does not share with Augustine's philosophy.)

According to Ratzinger's interpretation of Augustine, only through faith can man come in contact with truth. Thus Augustine writes, "*nisi credideritis, non intelligetis.*"³¹³ Only by accepting the authority of the Church with the deep humility of faith can the

is the Holy Spirit." The objective love of the Church, therefore, is to be understood in a Trinitarian manner. Catholics participate in love of the Holy Spirit, who is the Love between the Father and Son, through the reception of the Eucharist, which establishes the Catholics in a relationship with the Father by forming them as a body of Christ. Aidan Nichols *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI* 28. In describing Ratzinger's naming of Augustine's ecclesiological charity as an objective charity Nichols writes, as stated in a previous footnote, "It does not betoken a subjective attitude, but rather belonging to the Church, and more specifically to that Church which itself lives in charity that is 'in the eucharistic love-relationship with (other Christians in) the world.'" Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 28. Cf., Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 133- 134.

³¹¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *What it Means to Be a Christian*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 75; Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 103, 204; Joseph Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk Gottes* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1969), 355; Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Morality*, 70; Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 189; Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 27; Ratzinger, *A New Song to the Lord*, 45. According to Karl-Heinz Menke this principle of love in Ratzinger's ecclesiology, led to Walter Kasper to later accuse Ratzinger of having a Hegelian understanding of Christianity, in which truth in the form of love is understood as constantly changing according to a dialectical process. Karl-Heinz Menke, "Die theologischen Quellen der Enzyklika „Deus Caritas est," in *Joseph Ratzinger, Ein Theologisches Profil*, ed. Peter Hofmann (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008) 58. As has been made clear in the preceding chapter, and will be made clear in this chapter when I examine Ratzinger's later writings, he does not propose a Hegelian approach to truth in which there are no constants in truth besides the dialectical process in which truth is historically worked out.

³¹² Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 23.

³¹³ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 26.

people within the Church, many of whom have little or no knowledge of philosophy, come into contact with truth and law that is expressive of truth.³¹⁴ Ratzinger, in his later writings, retained and developed certain aspects of his dissertation's interpretation of Augustine's theology while rejecting other aspects. Similar to his interpretation of Augustine, Ratzinger, in his later writings, affirms the visible, historical nature of the Church as primarily formed around the visible cult of the Eucharist by which she mediates truth. Differently from his interpretation of Augustine, though, Ratzinger more clearly defines how the Church, as a body of love formed around the Eucharist, mediates truth while recognizing reason as having a relative natural degree of autonomy, apart from the Church's mediation, in its receptive relationship to truth.

2.2 Individual Indwelling of Christ and the Corporate and Hierarchical Body of Christ:

In *Revelation and Tradition*, Ratzinger affirms the Church's mediation of truth as integrated with Christ's personal illumination of the soul. According to Ratzinger the indwelling of Christ within the individual believer³¹⁵ needs to be complimented by Christ's presence in the Church. Consequently, Ratzinger states that the presence of Christ "is also hidden under the Pauline term of 'Body of Christ' which of course implies that the community of the faithful, the Church represents Christ's continued abiding in this world in order to gather men into, and make them share, his mighty presence."³¹⁶ The mediation of the visible Church prevents the subjectivization and relativization of

³¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*, 311, 313, 319, 321.

³¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 40.

³¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 41.

truth. This is because since Christ is one he will only illuminate the individual believer with truth that does not contradict his truth mediated by his sacramental, hierarchically structured body of the Church.

By focusing on ecclesiastical hierarchy in *The Episcopacy and the Primacy* (1961) Ratzinger more specifically addresses how the Church mediates truth which subsequently is to be accepted with the obedience of faith. As with his earlier writing *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood* (1960)³¹⁷ Ratzinger does not define the bishops and the papacy according to an impersonal institutional model, in which the functions of governing, teaching and sanctifying are used to define the mediating role of the bishops and the pope. Instead, Ratzinger describes the mediating role of the bishops and the papacy in a more personal manner by centering on their relationship to Christ as Word, to the Eucharist and by defining them according to the concept of communion.

In relating bishops to Christ as Word, Ratzinger states that bishops represent Christ as Word which the Church will only fully encounter in heaven. Bishops are signs of Christ's presence through their apostolic succession. This presence of Christ is similar to the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which also points to a reality which will only be fully experienced in heaven. Through both kinds of sacramental ways in which Christ is encountered, Catholics are brought into communion with one another as one body of Christ. Due to their communion with Bishops, as signs of Christ as Word, Catholics are in communion not only with the members of a local Church but also, through the episcopacy, in communion with the Pope, who, likewise, is in communion

³¹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, trans. Sheed and Ward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1966), 37-38, 50-51.

with all the members of the universal Church. According to Ratzinger, the personal concept of communion is essential for conceiving the Church correctly for “the Church by her inmost nature is *communio*, fellowship with and in the body of the Lord.”³¹⁸

Ratzinger further explains that since the communion of the Church is grounded in the Eucharistic communion with Christ who is the Incarnate Word, this means that the sacramental Church “is in turn the Church of the ‘Word’ and not merely the Church of the sacraments. Sacrament *and* word are the two pillars on which the Church stands.”³¹⁹

Ratzinger also defines the role of the Word in the Church in a personal manner by relating it to apostolic succession (*successio*).³²⁰ He points out that in the early Church the concept of *successio* was understood in relationship with the concept of *traditio*. In explaining how these terms are related to one another in a personal manner and not simply in an impersonal institutional manner he writes, “‘Tradition’ is never a simple, anonymous passing on of doctrine, but is personal, is the living word, concretely realized in the faith. And ‘succession’ is not a taking over of official powers, which then are at the disposal of their possessor, but is rather a dedication to the word, an office of bearing witness to the treasure with which one has been entrusted.”³²¹

Ratzinger refines his personal description of the episcopacy by defining the two terms of tradition and succession in relationship to Christ, the living word. The early Church, explains Ratzinger, understood the “Word” as primarily signifying the person of Christ, who is the living word, and not as first referring to the impersonal words of

³¹⁸ Joseph Ratzinger and Karl Rahner, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, trans. Kenneth Barker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), 45.

³¹⁹ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 45.

³²⁰ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 45-46.

³²¹ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 47.

Scripture. According to Ratzinger, before Christians even understood the New Testament as Scripture they “had already formulated the principle of *successio-traditio*.”³²² Succession is related to the word since it “means cleaving to the apostolic word.”³²³ Tradition is related to the word since it “means the continuance of authorized witnesses.”³²⁴ The word which succession and tradition are primarily referring to, as just mentioned, is Christ the living word and not to the written words as found in the Bible and definitely not to the Gnostic belief of secret unwritten traditions from the apostles.³²⁵ Succession and tradition, understood in this personal manner in relationship to the Word, consequently, help to define one another. As “the external form of tradition”³²⁶ the successors to the apostles, define tradition. In turn, as “the content of the succession”³²⁷ tradition, as principally expressed in New Testament Scriptures and the Creed both describing Christ the Word, defines succession.³²⁸ By being in communion with the tradition represented by the bishops a Christian is aided in his analogous correspondence to the truth of Christ.

³²² Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 49.

³²³ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 48.

³²⁴ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 48.

³²⁵ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 47.

³²⁶ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 51.

³²⁷ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 51.

³²⁸ “The Church did not appeal to the παράδοσις in order to assert unwritten apostolic doctrines as a source of revelation parallel to Scripture; but precisely in order to deny the existence of such a secret heritage. For her, παράδοσις meant that in the community of the New Covenant the ‘Scriptures’ (*i.e.*, the Old Testament) are subordinate to the living interpretation of the faith which has come down from the apostles. The central instruments of this interpretation are the New Testament Scriptures and the Creed which sums them up, but they are instruments in the service of the living faith, which has its concrete form in the διαδοχή.” Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 50-51.

Since, as the IV Lateran Council³²⁹ clearly states, any similarity of man with God is always to be understood with a greater dissimilarity, the assistance of the bishops give in mediating truth to Christians is more properly described in personal terms focused on the Christ than in “objective” impersonal terms. Consequently, the analogous access to truth that the living tradition of the Church structured by external form by the successors of the Apostles gives man is not, according to Ratzinger’s logic, given primarily in explicit “objective” formulations of truth but rather within a living tradition that provides man with certainty and guidelines in being conformed to truth, understood as the risen Christ.³³⁰ This does not mean that because man’s formulations of truth are subject to historical change that truth itself is in a state of constant becoming. For Ratzinger this is not so since, in contrast with Vico,³³¹ he does not associate intra-Trinitarian and intra-wordly truth solely with a generative or creative act but also, and, in a way more importantly, with constant, faithful, receptive, stable abidingness.³³²

A Catholic’s conformity with the living teaching of the bishops is an expression of being, in an anticipatory sense, in communion with the Incarnate Word and, through Christ, with his faithful abiding love, in the Holy Spirit, with the Father. The apostolic succession of the bishops, therefore, allows Catholics to experience, in a tangible, personal manner, some degree of actual communion on earth with God as “the living

³²⁹ Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 171.

³³⁰ This approach to tradition is similar to Przywara’s understanding. “Superhistorical truth thus has an intrahistorical course. Every step of the way is living tradition, not only measuring itself against its ‘original form,’ but by its very liveliness proclaiming that form to be something ever new.” Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 36. Translation provided by Betz.

³³¹ Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap I, 17, p. 19; Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chap. I, 28, p. 27-29.

³³² Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45, 48.

presence of the Word” which bishops witness to.³³³ Catholic’s anticipatory communion with divine truth, therefore, springs from two tangible, personal sources, communion with the sacrament of the Eucharist, as explained in *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, and communion with bishops who as apostolic successors are “essentially the living presence of the Word in the person of the witness.”³³⁴

The word “apostolic” is important to define in order to more precisely understand what Ratzinger means by communion with apostolic successors. Consistent with his thought, Ratzinger, by linking this term to the papacy, also explains this term in a personal manner. According to Ratzinger, although bishops are successors of the apostles, “the predicate *apostolicus* is reserved to the pope in a special way.”³³⁵ Again with reference to the theology of the early Church, Ratzinger explains the two uses of the term apostolic. According to the theology of the early Church, writes Ratzinger, the word “apostolic” referred to “that very limited number of sees standing in a special, verifiable, historical relation to the apostles, a relation other sees do not enjoy.”³³⁶ Those bishops who do not directly succeed apostolic sees, “succeed only by a circuitous route, *i.e.*, through an apostolic see.”³³⁷ In addition, “among the apostolic sees, there is in turn *the* apostolic see, Rome, which bears approximately the same relation to the other apostolic sees as they do to those which are not directly apostolic.”³³⁸

2.3 What and How the Church Mediates:

³³³ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 54.

³³⁴ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 54.

³³⁵ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 46.

³³⁶ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 56.

³³⁷ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 56.

³³⁸ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 57.

In describing more explicitly what constant truths the Church mediates that are to be heeded by the members and how she does this Ratzinger, in *Das Neue Volk Gottes*, differentiates the Church from a political institution. Since the Church is a community brought about by faith, Ratzinger explains, it cannot be “compared with any state system,” which is a community founded on political considerations. Instead, for Ratzinger, “the Church of Jesus Christ is defined by the Word and by the Eucharist...”³³⁹ A bishop by preaching the Word and by celebrating the Eucharistic mediates the truth of Christ. Since the bishop’s primary role is to represent Christ he does not act like a politician representing his constituents. This would be contrary to bishop’s sacramental role through which he primarily mediates the transcendent truth of Christ to the members of his diocese rather than mediating various competing interests within his diocese.

In addition to distinguishing bishops from politicians Ratzinger also distinguishes the papal office from a political office. Papal primacy, explains Ratzinger in *Das Neue Volk Gottes* (1969), is not based on the Pope’s political role of representing a State, but rather is essentially founded on the Roman See’s personal relationship to the apostles Peter and Paul³⁴⁰ and on the Pope’s “complete submission to Christ and to his radical connection to the mandate and mission of the Lord.”³⁴¹ Due to his unique personal relationship to these two apostles and to Christ the Pope has a special role in mediating truth not shared by others. Consequently, papal primacy is not to be confused with the

³³⁹ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk Gottes*, 185. . “...mit keinem Staatswesen vergleichbare Eigentümlichkeit der von Wort und Eucharistie her bestimmten Kirche Jesu Christi darstellt...” My translation.

³⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk Gottes*, 49-50.

³⁴¹ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk Gottes*, 170. “...so ist auch der Papst nicht ein absoluter Monarch im Sinne der Monarchien dieser Welt, einmal nicht auf Grund seiner völligen Unterworfenheit unter Christus, seiner radikalen Bindung an den Sendungsauftrag des Herrn...” My translation.

primacy of a political leader. The primacy of a political leader is defined by his central authority through which he mediates conflicting interests by issuing rules, regulations and judgments. In contrast, papal primacy is not determined by mediating the various interests of Christians but rather by sacramentally mediating truth to Christians. This sacramental understanding of papal papacy leads Ratzinger to reject the institutional understanding of the Pope as an absolute Monarch.³⁴²

In *Demokratie in der Kirche* (1970) Ratzinger further defends the unique manner the Church mediates truth by explaining that the term “people” used in Vatican II is not to be equated with a people of a democratic State, such as the people of the United States or the people of the Communist, Democratic People's Republic of North Korea. Rather, according to the New Testament and the Fathers of the Church, the term “people,” when used to designate the Church, is properly understood as referring to the chosen people of Israel. The New Testament assumed the concept of a “people of God” into the reality of the Church, which in Greek means assembly (*ecclesia*). According to the New Testament and to the Fathers of the Church, Catholics, through their Eucharistic assembly, are gathered as a people of God in a similar fashion as the people of Israel were gathered around Mount Sinai. However, unlike the people of Israel, Catholics are assembled as a people of God in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of the death and resurrection of the Lord.³⁴³ In this Eucharistic assembly the Christian people of God are prepared for the end of time, in which they will encounter the full reality of body of

³⁴² Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk Gottes*, 170.

³⁴³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Demokratie in der Kirche*, (Regensburg: Topos Plus, 2000), 27-29.

Christ which on earth, through the reception of the Eucharist, they sacramentally symbolize.³⁴⁴

According to Ratzinger, due to the sacramental character of Church, as particularly represented in the Eucharistic assembly, the Church does not actively determine its doctrinal truth after the model of a democratic political assembly but rather receives and mediates this truth. More specifically this means, explains Ratzinger, with reference to Acts chapter fifteen, and once again differentiating himself from Vico's more active portrayal of truth, that a Church assembly, such as a synod, should take place in public before the whole Church, but its decisions should be made only by the ordained who have the unique gift of receiving and then mediating truth as special recipients of tradition. For Ratzinger, therefore, the ordained, in particular the bishops as the "the external form of tradition"³⁴⁵ have a role in mediating divine truth in a manner not available to the laity. The hierarchical structure of the Church, therefore in the mind of Ratzinger, has a key role in transmitting truth and is not simply an accidental feature of the Church. Due to the sacramental nature of the Church, in which the various members have different roles, Ratzinger defines the hierarchical structure as constitutive of the Church. Primarily for this reason he restricts decision making within a Church synod, as representative of this substantive aspect of the Church, to the ordained.

Because of its sacramental, hierarchical character, a Church synod, in accordance with the role of bishops as explained in *Das Neue Volk Gottes*, is essentially responsible

³⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Demokratie in der Kirche*, 28. „Sie ist nicht einfach ein neues Volk neben einem alten, sondern sie besteht nur gleichsam als der beständige und nun freilich Israel überschreitende Vorgang der Sammlung und Reinigung des Volkes für das Reich.“

³⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 51.

for faithfully passing on perennially valid truth independent from majority opinion.³⁴⁶

When bishops approach a Church synod with the intention of faithfully transmitting divine truth a synod, argues Ratzinger, is prevented from becoming an instrument in the hands of politicians.³⁴⁷ In addition, such an intention prevents the faith from becoming overly identified with a current form of political reasoning. When Ratzinger revisited this work in 2000 he further addresses how truth, which the Church mediates, is not subject to a democratic, majority principle.³⁴⁸ According to Neumahr, the existence of this mediated truth is based on Ratzinger's belief that the Church's spiritual nature causes it to be "independent of the individual members."³⁴⁹ This "larger" aspect of the Church "equips its shepherds with infallibility."³⁵⁰ The shepherds, or more properly the bishops

³⁴⁶ Ratzinger, *Democratie in der Kirche*, 29-34.

³⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *Democratie in der Kirche*, 29-34.

³⁴⁸ In 2000 Ratzinger revisited *Demokratie in der Kirche*. In revisiting this work he asserts that due to the Catholic Church's sacred mission of faithfully transmitting unchanging divine truth to men the Church is not subject to a democratic majority principle. Since the Church is called to be faithful to Christ, who is eternal truth, she cannot be subject to this principle. This fidelity may require the Church to hold positions that are contrary to the current will of the majority. By resisting the will of the majority, when it is contrary to truth as attained by reason and by reason as informed by faith, the Church, in her resistance, protects the faith which is not something constructed by men, but received through revelation.

With reference to the experience of the Anglican Church, Ratzinger warns the Catholic Church against reducing the democratic principles of the Catholic Church to the majority principle. He writes, 'The crisis of the Anglican Church was triggered not by ordaining women as such, but rather by subjecting questions of faith and the tradition to majority vote.' My translation. Ratzinger, *Democratie in der Kirche*, 89. „Die Krise der Anglikanischen Kirche ist nicht durch die Frauenordination als solche ausgelöst worden, sondern dadurch, daß man gegen die bisherige Tradition auch Fragen des Glaubens der Mehrheitsabstimmung unterworfen hat.“ True democratization of the Church, further writes Ratzinger, "cannot consist of furnishing still more voting bodies, but rather consists in giving the various expressions of life in the Church more room."³⁴⁸ My translation. Ratzinger, *Democratie in der Kirche*, 92. „Demokratisierung in der Kirche - davon bin ich fest überzeugt - kann nicht darin bestehen, noch mehr Abstimmungskörperschaften einzurichten; sie besteht vielmehr darin, dem Lebendigen und seiner Vielfalt mehr Raum zu geben.“)

³⁴⁹ Uwe Neumahr, *Inquisition und Wahrheit*, (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 2005), 214.

³⁵⁰ Uwe Neumahr, *Inquisition und Wahrheit*, 214. „Für Ratzinger ist die Kirche eine geistige Wesenheit, die von der Summe der einzelnen Glieder unabhängig ist. Sie ist etwas »Größeres« und stattet ihre Hirten mit Unfehlbarkeit aus.“ Neumahr goes on to explain that Hans Küng differs from Ratzinger in that Küng defines the Church as not greater than the sum of its members but rather as equaling the sum of its present, individual members. The Church, therefore, including the bishops, is fallible since all the individuals, who constitute the Church, are fallible.

and especially the pope, have infallibility due to their unique role of analogously mediating divine truth through the living tradition of the Church.

In *The Ratzinger Report* (1985), Ratzinger refines his concept of democracy in relationship to the Church. Here Ratzinger argues that through the Church's sacramental nature man encounters truth. In describing the Church's sacramental nature, Ratzinger writes:

The Church of Christ is not a party, not an association, not a club. Her deep and permanent structure is not *democratic* but *sacramental*, consequently *hierarchical*. For the hierarchy based on the apostolic succession is the indispensable condition to arrive at the strength, the reality of the sacrament. Here authority is not based on the majority of votes; it is based on the authority of Christ himself, which he willed to pass on to men who were to be his representatives until his definitive return.³⁵¹

Due to her sacramental and, consequently, hierarchical nature, the truths which the Church mediates through her doctrines have their origin not in a created democratic consensus but in Christ himself who, as the eternal truth of God, exceeds the sum of its members. A proper understanding of the sacramental nature of the Church, further explains Ratzinger, entails a particular manner of conceiving the role of the priesthood. The priest's role "is not based on the consent of the majority but on the representation of *another* who lets a man share his authority."³⁵²

Christ is the other who allows a priest to share in his authority of proclaiming saving, eternal truth to man. What is held to be true is not, consequently, brought about

³⁵¹ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 49.

³⁵² Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 56.

by the priest acting as a coordinator of consensus,³⁵³ but instead is proclaimed by priests and bishops who, by mediating the authority of Christ, witness to eternal truth. In the compilation of essays *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (1987), Ratzinger relates the sacramental and hierarchical nature of the Church to truth by explaining that hierarchy “does not mean ‘sacred dominion’, but rather ‘sacred origin’.”³⁵⁴ Thus understood, hierarchical ministry faithfully transmits truth which, by having its origin in God who transcends this world and whose truth is prior to the made and created, is not dependent upon democratic consensus or upon the views of a strong leader.³⁵⁵

In other works from his later period Ratzinger, with reference to memory, further clarifies how and what the Church’s sacramentally mediates. In *Principles of Catholic Theology* (1982), Ratzinger describes man as participating in God’s memory through the Church which, “as memory” by being “the seat of all faith”,³⁵⁶ provides reasons to man for the meaning and unity which holds history together. Since the Church was given by

³⁵³ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 56.

³⁵⁴ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 126. In his 1996 interview *Salt of the Earth* with Peter Seewald Ratzinger further explains that “The correct translation of this term is probably not ‘sacred rule’ but ‘sacred origin’. The word *arche* can mean both things, origin and rule. But the likelier meaning is ‘sacred origin’. In other words, it communicates itself in virtue of an origin, and the power of this origin, which is sacred, as it were the ever-new beginning of every generation in the Church. It doesn’t live by the mere continuum of generations but by the presence of the ever-new source itself, which communicates itself unceasingly through the sacraments. That, I think, is an important, different way of looking at things: the category that corresponds to the priesthood is not that of rule. On the contrary, the priesthood has to be a conduit and a making present of a beginning and has to make itself available for this task. When priesthood, episcopacy, and papacy are understood essentially in terms of rule, then things are truly wrong and distorted.” Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 190-191.

³⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 126-127. “Hierarchical ministry is the safeguarding of an origin that is holy, not the making of arbitrary decrees and decisions. Hence the ecclesiastical teaching office, and ministry in the church in general, is not the kind of “leadership” exercised by an enlightened ruler who is confident that he possesses a better faculty of reason and translates it into ordinances, while counting on the obedience of his subordinates, who have to accept his reason and decisions as their divinely willed the standard. Nor does the hierarchical ministry correspond to a democratic authority in which the individuals delegate their political will to representatives and thereby declare their agreement that the majority will should be the law.”

³⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23.

Christ to mediate the presence of the Holy Spirit, “who brings remembrance”, the Church is guaranteed to be the place in which man is enlightened by truth. In *Jesus of Nazareth* (2007) Ratzinger, in describing truth given through the memory, writes, “This remembering is no mere psychological or intellectual process; it is a pneumatic event [i.e., an event imbued with the Pneuma, or the Holy Spirit]. The Church’s remembering is not merely a private affair; it transcends the sphere of our own human understanding and knowing. It is a being-led by the Holy Spirit, who shows us the connectedness of Scripture, the connection between word and reality, and, in doing that, lead us ‘into all the truth.’”³⁵⁷ The Holy Spirit, therefore, acting through the collective living memory of the Church, enlightens individual Christians with the divine truth of Christ which exceeds all sensibly based thought categories of man.

In his 1991 lecture *Conscience and Truth* Ratzinger not only describes the Church as a whole as mediating truth by remembering but also defines the specific role of the papacy in this manner. The papacy, according to Ratzinger, mediates truth by reminding man of divine memory as fulfilled in Christ. The true nature of papal teaching is not, therefore, to impose upon Catholics, in a voluntaristic manner, commandments to follow, but rather to remind man of his own memories of unchanging, universally valid dimensions of truth and goodness which are buried deep within him.³⁵⁸ In his teachings, the pope then builds upon these common memories. The pope’s teaching authority, further explains Ratzinger, “consists in his being the advocate of the Christian memory.

³⁵⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 234.

³⁵⁸ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 34.

The pope does not impose from without. Rather, he elucidates the Christian memory and defends it.”³⁵⁹

Besides the Pope, Ratzinger also singles out saints as mediating truth. Through their witness to Christ, divine truth is mediated empirically and, thereby, evokes memories in man.³⁶⁰ For Ratzinger, in the words of Nichols, the lives of the saints confirm the validity of these memories as “empirical proof”³⁶¹ of truth which comes from faith. The saints in heaven also mediate truth through their knowledge of God in which the pilgrim Church on earth shares in through faith. Similar to the knowledge that an expert electrician mediates, through instilling natural faith in those who lack this expert knowledge, saints mediate their knowledge.³⁶² For this reason, argues Ratzinger, theology is a subalternate science³⁶³ for it depends on the knowledge of the saints in heaven which is mediated through the faith of the earthly Church to believers.

As explained in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (1999), Ratzinger identifies the liturgy as the principle place where divine truth is mediated to all the members of the Church, both pilgrim and heavenly. For Ratzinger, the liturgy mediates the truth of Christ throughout the entire body of the Church. For the Fathers and for St. Paul (cf. Rom 12:1), explains Ratzinger, in the Eucharist *logos* as truth present in creation, in man, and in the Word

³⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 36.

³⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 226.

³⁶¹ Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 215.

³⁶² Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, 82.

³⁶³ Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, 109. Ratzinger uses this term with reference to Thomas Aquinas who maintained that theology is a subalternate science in that it “does not ‘see’, nor does theology itself ‘examine’ its own foundations. It depends on the ‘science of the saints’, on what they see: their act of seeing is the reference point of theological thinking and the guarantee of its legitimacy.”

made flesh “all come together.”³⁶⁴ In the celebration of the Eucharist, therefore, truth is mediated to man in its entirety. According to Ratzinger, the reception of the Eucharist, the religious art, the music³⁶⁵ and even the vestments of the priest are all liturgical ways which mediate various aspects of truth.

In particular, the reception of the Eucharist mediates uncreated truth by bringing all the recipients into greater communion with the heavenly liturgy in which truth is known and not simply believed in as in the pilgrim Church.³⁶⁶ Through the reception of

³⁶⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 50.

³⁶⁵ Ratzinger has a great love for music. He is an accomplished pianist and his brother is known for his work as conductor of the Regensburger Domspatzen, the cathedral choir of Regensburg, Germany. Ratzinger’s affinity to music moved him to write on the relationship of music to the Incarnation. In succinctly summarizing Ratzinger’s thought Nichols writes, “The Word, therefore, ‘becomes music’. In doing so, God draws to himself our pre-rational and super-rational powers as musical beings, thus uncovering for us the ‘song which lies at the foundation of all things’. The flesh becomes spirit; brass and wood become sound; what is unconscious, unsettled, turns into orderly and significant resonance. Church music must correspond to these demands of the Incarnation.” Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 154.

³⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 86-88. In describing the historical development of understanding the Eucharist as the true body of Christ, Ratzinger writes. “An important finding of Henri de Lubac has often been misunderstood. It has always been clear that the goal of the Eucharist is our own transformation, so that we become ‘one body and spirit’ with Christ (cf. I Cor 6:17). This correlation of ideas - the insight that the Eucharist is meant to transform *us*, to change humanity itself into the living temple of God, into the Body of Christ - was expressed, up to the early Middle Ages, by the twin concepts of *corpus mysticum* and *corpus verum*. In the vocabulary of the Fathers, *mysticum* did not mean ‘mystical’ in the modern sense, but rather ‘pertaining to the mystery, the sphere of the sacrament’. Thus the phrase ‘*corpus mysticum*’ was used to express the sacramental body, corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament. According to the Fathers, that Body is given to us, so that we may become the *corpus verum*, the real body of Christ. Changes in the use of language and the forms of thought resulted in the reversal of these meanings. The Sacrament was now addressed as the *corpus verum*, the ‘true body’, while the church was called the ‘*corpus mysticum*’, the ‘Mystical Body’, ‘mystical’ here meaning no longer ‘sacramental’ but ‘mysterious’. Many people have drawn the conclusion from de Lubac’s careful description of the linguistic change that hitherto unknown realism, indeed naturalism, was now forcing its way into eucharistic doctrine, and the larger views of the Fathers were giving way to a static and one-sided idea of the Real Presence.

It is true that this linguistic change also represented a spiritual development, but we should not describe it in a slanted way just mentioned. We can agree that something of the eschatological dynamism and corporate character (the sense of ‘we’) of eucharistic faith was lost or at least diminished. As we saw above, the Blessed Sacrament contains a dynamism, which has the goal of transforming mankind and the world into the New Heaven and New Earth, into the unity of the risen body. This truth was not seen so vividly as before. Again, the Eucharist is not aimed primarily at the individual. Eucharistic personalism is a drive toward union, the overcoming of the barriers between God and man, between ‘I’ and ‘thou’ in the new ‘we’ of the communion of the saints. People did not exactly forget this truth, but they were not so

the Eucharist, which knits together all the members into the body of Christ, Catholics, therefore, are able to participate in eternal truth in a collective manner. In addition, the liturgy also mediates truth in other ways. For example, for Ratzinger, the physical liturgical vestments mediate truth by reminding the priest that “what is merely private, merely individual, about him should disappear and make way for Christ.”³⁶⁷ The liturgical vestments also remind a priest to make way for Christ and to diminish his ego so that he will be brought into greater conformity with the truth of Christ.

Conclusion:

By focusing on how Ratzinger depicts truth as illuminated and mediated we saw how he grounds his approach to truth in an analogy of being rather than, as Vico maintains, in an analogy of creation/making. For Ratzinger, man’s correspondence to uncreated truth in reason and in faith is made possible by illumination and mediation. With his reason man, through a combination of natural illumination and abstraction, is able to discern “creational forms”.³⁶⁸ In addition, due to an imprint of goodness and man’s openness to beauty, he is also able to, relatively independent from faith, know truth from perspectives other than the scientific and mathematical ones. First, the imprint of goodness in his conscience coupled with the language of being which “is identical with the language of conscience”³⁶⁹ leads man to naturally remember fundamental moral

clearly aware of it as before. There were, therefore, losses in Christian awareness, and in our time we must try to make up for them, but still there were gains overall. True, the Eucharistic Body of the Lord is meant to bring us together, so that we become his ‘true Body.’ But the gift of the Eucharist can do this only because in it Lord gives us *his true Body*. Only the true Body in the Sacrament can build up the true Body of the new City of God. This insight connects the two periods and provides our starting point.”

³⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 216.

³⁶⁸ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, trans. Martha M. Matesich (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 33.

³⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 67.

truths. Due to man's fallen nature, however, in his second level of conscious in which he judges man can ignore and eventually forget these deeply rooted memories of moral truths illuminating his mind. Ratzinger argues that since these truths are constant and universally applicable to all times, simply by forgetting them does not excuse one of moral guilt. One example of a moral truth that Ratzinger has repeatedly defended as fundamental and not subject to change due to historical context, which abortion directly contradicts, is "the right of life."³⁷⁰ This right, according to Ratzinger, belongs "to man *by nature*."³⁷¹ This example of a fundamental moral truth accessible to man and imbedded universally in his nature well brings out Ratzinger's difference with Vico who, unlike Ratzinger, conceives of man's relationship to truth in an active manner, evident in how he develops his thought around the axiom *verum est factum*. In contrast, Ratzinger sees truth as essentially received by man: abstracted, illuminated, mediated, and corresponded to.

Along with scientific, mathematical and moral truth Ratzinger also asserts that man can naturally receive truth through encounters with beauty. According to Ratzinger the beautiful dimension of truth is known by man primarily "through personal experience, through contact with the things themselves"³⁷² and not abstractly by theoretical instruction. Experience of truth by the radiance of beauty can even lead one to eventual acceptance of supernatural truth and thus functions as "really effective apologia

³⁷⁰ Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Culture*, 64; cf Ratzinger, *Europe, Today and Tomorrow*, 65; Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 203-204;190, Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 245-247.

³⁷¹ Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Culture*, 64; cf Ratzinger, *Europe, Today and Tomorrow*, 65; Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 203-204;190, Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 245-247.

³⁷² Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 35-36.

for Christianity.”³⁷³ Consistent with his defense of truth as prior to the made Ratzinger describes beauty as primarily received rather than created by man. In this way he is able to present beauty as convertible with uncreated truth.

In presenting truth as illuminated in faith Ratzinger also describes it from an aesthetic perspective. For Ratzinger an aesthetic knowledge of theological truth is of more value than knowledge gained through theological study since the former is encountered through experience whereas the latter can be understood apart from experience. This does not mean the theological study is pointless. Rather, according to Ratzinger, experiential knowledge of theological truth ought to aid a theologian to better discern and correspond to truth while rejecting falsity. By describing man’s correspondence with supernatural truth as essentially taking place in a loving personal encounter with Christ Ratzinger rejects identifying divine truth directly with propositions of faith. This does not mean, though, that doctrinal and moral statements do not have value in his eyes. Instead, for Ratzinger, since Christ is logos He wants to communicate normative truths of his uncreated, abiding truth to us with words which always, though, due to the point made by the IV Lateran Council on analogy, contain a difference that exceed any similarity linguistic expression has with God.

Since man has only analogous access to truth in order to know truth as fully as possible on earth and he needs, according to Ratzinger’s thought, to be within the living tradition of the Church where truth is personally mediated. As depicted by Ratzinger, truth is mediated by the Church sacramentally, especially through the Eucharist, and

³⁷³ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 129.

hierarchically through the bishops as successors of the apostles and as the “external form”³⁷⁴ of the living tradition. The access to truth that bishops provide to man is not, according to Ratzinger’s analogous reasoning, given primarily in explicit, unchangeable “objective” formulations of truth but rather within a living tradition that provides man with certainty and guidelines in being conformed to truth.³⁷⁵ Simply because Ratzinger admits that the written expressions passed on in tradition can be modified does not mean truth itself is in a state of constant becoming, as Vico can be interpreted as maintaining. Instead, for Ratzinger, this is not so since he accords within God no internal creation³⁷⁶ and upholds man’s analogous ability to correspond with some similarity to this uncreated truth. Even though, along with Vico, he associates truth with the generation of the Second Person as Logos he, differently from Vico, also defines the Son’s relationship to the Father in the Holy Spirit with constant, faithful, receptive, stable abidingness.³⁷⁷ This allows him to define truth not simply with the term generation, which could simply imply change, but also with stability and fidelity to which man can correspond in a similar manner regardless of his particular historical context.

However, acknowledges Ratzinger, due to man’s analogous condition, faithfully abiding within the living tradition of the Church as externally structured by the bishops and the papacy will provide man with confidence but not, at times, clarity in how specifically he is to correspond with ultimate truth. For Ratzinger, remaining within this

³⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 51.

³⁷⁵ This approach to tradition is similar to Przywara’s understanding. Przywara, *Analogia Entis* 36. Translation provided by Betz. “Superhistorical truth thus has an intrahistorical course. Every step of the way is living tradition, not only measuring itself against its ‘original form,’ but by its very liveliness proclaiming that form to be something ever new.”

³⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45, 48.

³⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45, 48.

living tradition of faith entails viewing truth not, contra a possible interpretation of Vico, by creating truth through democratic consensus but rather by participating in the Catholic liturgy and heeding the hierarchy, especially the bishops and above all the pope, as uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit as successors of the Apostles in illuminating man with truth.

Chapter Three

Milbank on Truth as Created: Correspondence and the Analogy of Creation

Introduction:

For Vico, as stated in the précis, truth is convertible with *factum*. According to Milbank this claim is in accordance with Christianity. Consequently he defends Vico's assertion that truth is created both by man and by God, internally and externally. In this chapter we will examine how Milbank confirms Vico's concept of truth by first determining how Milbank perceives truth in its final divine state as convertible with the made. Then we will look at Milbank's description of how man corresponds to this truth. Milbank's view of this relationship is fundamentally based on, as with Vico, not on an analogy of being but rather an analogy of creation in which man analogously participates in the inner divine creation.

1.0 Milbank's defense of Vico:

1.1 Divine Truth is Created:

For Vico, according to Milbank, divine truth is a socially created reality since God is a triune communion of persons. In clarifying this position of Vico, Milbank explains that the knowing of God involves an "internal creation"³⁷⁸ which is the "generation of the Son."³⁷⁹ The Son as the Word generated by the Father "is then said to be the supreme locus of *verum-factum*, because it comprehends all actual and possible truth."³⁸⁰ Consequently Vico, points out Milbank, in "the first chapter of *De*

³⁷⁸ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 2, 83.

³⁷⁹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 1, 83-84.

³⁸⁰ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 1, 84.

Antiquissima, De Vero et Facto, presents the generation of the second person of the Trinity as the most perfect paradigm of *verum-factum*.³⁸¹

Furthermore, explains Milbank, the *verum-factum* principle is the first truth “of all being”³⁸² divine or created. As interpreted by Milbank, Vico’s *verum-factum* principle subverts the Platonic understanding of truth in which, “in its Christianized version, there is a prior truth in God, preceding all images and works, and human understanding, forced through its material involvement to express itself in words and images participates in the original through a dim recall of the purity of truth.”³⁸³ According to this Christianized version of Platonic thought, truth, in the form of divine ideas in God, has precedence over what is made. In contrast, according to Vico, explains Milbank, “this picture is precisely reversed: the perfection of divine understanding consists in its character as a completed work, a perfect spiritual artifact; the imperfection of human understanding consists in its relatively *theoretical* and less perfectly constructive and practical character.”³⁸⁴ By being in an eternal dialectal relationship with “the infinite *factum*”³⁸⁵ divine truth is, for Vico, created.

Vico’s schema, according to Milbank, by placing truth and the made in a dialectical relationship in which neither has precedence over the other, “upsets two usual assumptions of traditional thought.”³⁸⁶ First, “it relies on the view that God is *primordially* creative, creative in his very being, and not merely in relation to an external

³⁸¹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol 1*, 117.

³⁸² Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol 1*, 77.

³⁸³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 113.

³⁸⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 113.

³⁸⁵ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 113.

³⁸⁶ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 113.

Creation.”³⁸⁷ This means that in God ideas (*verum*) and what is made (*factum*) equally constitute the being of God. Making and creating, is not, therefore, a reality external to God, as in “traditional thought,” but constitutes his nature. Secondly, explains Milbank, Vico’s schema “denies that the ideas of making, of representation, and imaging, are necessarily connected with the corporeal or mind-body world, although for human beings this is, contingently, the case.”³⁸⁸ Since making is constitutive of God, who is pure spirit, making is not necessarily connected to physical realities. This means that “all reality” whether of God or external to God “is made or created, and for this reason is convertible with ‘truth’, which as a ‘transcendental’ can also be predicated of everything.”³⁸⁹

According to Vico’s dynamic conception of truth in which making is not only an external activity of God but is also an internal divine activity, truth does not have precedence over the made since, in God, divine ideas and the made are dialectically related one another. By defining making as constitutive of God’s nature Vico, explains Milbank, with his “immanent teleology of art” subverts the Platonic understanding and thus replaces the “priority of the true by the priority of the made.”³⁹⁰ In this view, what is made determines what is true, for God is primarily more a creator than a thinker. The created or “*Factum*” explains Milbank “is the hinge of Vico’s transcendental system; through it alone are the other transcendentals convertible with each other.”³⁹¹

Milbank, though, admits that “despite Vico's proposal of the priority of the made, it remains the case that the maker must always have a vague anticipation of what he is to

³⁸⁷ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 113.

³⁸⁸ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 113-114.

³⁸⁹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 78.

³⁹⁰ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 96.

³⁹¹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 141.

make.”³⁹² Milbank solves this apparent contradiction in Vico’s assertion of the priority of the made over the true by explaining that only in God “where *verum* and *factum* infinitely coincide”³⁹³ can the made be understood as having primacy over the true, for “the Father is exhaustively Father of the Son.”³⁹⁴ However, in human beings since “*verbum mentis* must always be accompanied by physical making”³⁹⁵ this means that “*verum* and *factum* continually transcend *each other*, in a ceaseless alternation”³⁹⁶ and, consequently, for man truth, at times, has precedence over the made.³⁹⁷ In God, however according to this logic, one can consistently claim that making causes what is known as truth. In humans, though, due to the “genuine dialectical oscillation between an indeterminate and a determinate moment”³⁹⁸ this is imperfectly true. This contention of Vico contrasts with the Platonic view which maintains that truth, both in God and received by man, causes what is made, since by being consequent to truth it reflects it in varying degrees.³⁹⁹

Milbank admits that conceiving of the second person of the Trinity as an internal creation contrasts with the dominant patristic view which holds that the son is “coincident

³⁹² Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 142.

³⁹³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 143.

³⁹⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 142.

³⁹⁵ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 143.

³⁹⁶ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 143.

³⁹⁷ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 142. “In so far as this anticipation takes any positive imagined form whatsoever, then making has in fact already commenced, *factum* has already intruded. However, Vico envisages a more spiritual anticipation which is a moment of pure metaphysical indeterminacy, a kind of ‘penumbra’ not strictly preceding but accompanying construction. It is only the knowing of concepts in a vague general way by *conscientia*, that makes the mind *fecund*, and allows it to embark on ever-renewed determinations of *scientia*. (4 ii) (In God, of course, this moment of indeterminacy coincides *without remainder* with *factum*, because the Father is exhaustively Father of the Son; but in temporal *explicatio* there is a genuine dialectical oscillation between an indeterminate and an determinate moment.)”

³⁹⁸ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 142.

³⁹⁹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 131.

with created reality at one point only, the historical person, Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰⁰ According to this patristic view, the eternal generation of the Son within the Trinity is not related to making and creating, since the Son as eternally generated “is equiprimordial with the Father-not himself the origin.”⁴⁰¹ If the internal generation of the Son is understood as a kind of making and creating this erroneously, according to the patristic perspective, sees Christ as less than the Father. Consequently, the patristic view maintained that creation is external to God and is modeled on his divine ideas as principally represented by the eternal generation of the Son.⁴⁰²

In contrast with the patristic view, Vico, by maintaining that *verum et factum* are in God convertible realities, writes Milbank, proposes “the made-is a transcendental in the same sense as *verum, bonum, esse* and *pulchrum*. The immediate implication of this is that there is nothing secondary about the made, that the artificial is fully equiprimordial reality.”⁴⁰³ According to this perspective, within the Trinity itself Christ can be understood as being created and made by the Father without lessening Christ’s equality with the Father since their relationship is not determined temporally. Vico, therefore, by identifying the generation of the Son as an internal creation within the Trinity convertible with the truth of God, grounds his *verum-factum* principle in God’s Trinitarian nature. In addition, by identifying God as creator both internally and externally, Vico gives primordial primacy to the made over the true.

1.2 Vico’s Hylozoism in Relationship to the Divine *Conatus* principle:

⁴⁰⁰ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 122.

⁴⁰¹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 121-122.

⁴⁰² Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 121-122.

⁴⁰³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 88.

Milbank grounds Vico's assertion that the made has precedence over the true in a particular Greek way of perceiving reality called hylozoism, previously described in the précis. In Vico's hylozoistic presentation of reality the truth man encounters is defined not by stable forms but instead by a constantly flowing energy of life present within the fundamental elements of the universe. For Vico this active energy is made up of metaphysical points operating by a divine *conatus* (Latin for impulse, inclination, tendency; striving) principle. The metaphysical points governed by this principle are writes Milbank "of a neo-stoic variety. The neo-stoic atoms, or *puncti metaphysici*, are not simply ultimate constituents, but intensively infinite powers and active principles. The metaphysical points generate all material beings without being themselves corporeal, and without simply pre-containing the things to be brought forth."⁴⁰⁴ The building blocks of creation, therefore, are not understood as connected to forms, in accordance with the hylomorphism theory, but rather, in line with the hylozoistic theory, connected to ever changing, active principles. These active principles are governed by a *conatus* principle which, defines Milbank interpreting Vico, "is the tensional force underlying the real world and it is embodied in the *puncti metaphysici*."⁴⁰⁵ *Conatus* is a "tensional force" since it is defined in accordance with Heraclitus's view "that things are constantly changing (universal flux)".⁴⁰⁶ In the fifth century, Cratylus of Athens, as stated in the précis, further developed this Heraclitean concept by claiming that since everything is in

⁴⁰⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 188.

⁴⁰⁵ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 209.

⁴⁰⁶ Daniel W. Graham, "Heraclitus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/heraclitus/>. (accessed December 01, 2010).

flux therefore there can be no knowledge of the world.⁴⁰⁷ This radicalized expression of Heraclitus view is consistent with the hylozoism of Vico in which knowledge is ultimately not defined by forms that can be abstracted by an agent intellect but rather by man's interaction with ever evolving points of energy in constant motion. Vico, according to Milbank, consequently sees motion (*momentum*) as "yet another word for *virtus* or *punctum metaphysicum*."⁴⁰⁸

1.3 Milbank's Development of Vico's Hylozoism:

Milbank furthers Vico's hylozoism by defining the created world as participating in the "infinite series of 'escaping' differences"⁴⁰⁹ of the Trinity. Similar to Vico's hylozoism with its metaphysical points governed by the dynamic *conatus* principle Milbank describes the elements of creation "as inherently interconnected 'qualities' which combine and re-combine in all sorts of ways (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa) and as 'seeds' or 'monads' (Eriugena) or numerical ratios (Augustine) which participate in the divine creative power/act, and themselves continuously propagate *ex nihilo*, in the sense of continuously reproviding their own 'matter' (as Eriugena affirms) through time."⁴¹⁰ These "seeds" are interconnected by "tensional *ratios* which in their 'intense' state, do not pre-contain all that they later unfold, but have an 'incorporal' power for expansion."

⁴¹¹ This is similar to Vico's *conatus* principle which, as defined in Milbank's dissertation "is the tensional force underlying the real world and it is embodied in the *puncti*

⁴⁰⁷ Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 322.

⁴⁰⁸ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol 1*, 214.

⁴⁰⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁴¹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424-425.

⁴¹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424-425.

metaphysici.”⁴¹² In this tensional state all the elements of creation participate in the creative Trinitarian act of God, by continuously self-generating ever new imitations, throughout time, of the internal, Trinitarian creation of God.⁴¹³

2.0 Man’s Correspondence to Truth:

2.1 Analogy of Creation

Milbank’s justifies man’s ability to relate to God and His truth by establishing it in an analogy of creation as described by Vico and other similar theologians. According to Milbank, Vico’s approach to analogy follows that of Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464).⁴¹⁴ Because both Cusa and Vico, explains Milbank, conceive of God as “inwardly creative” they “can present the possibility of human knowledge of God in terms of an ‘analogy of creation’ rather than an ‘analogy of being’.”⁴¹⁵ This analogy, writes Milbank, “involves a four-term comparison: God/World, Humanity/the Human World.”⁴¹⁶ According to this version of analogy man’s relationship with divine truth is based on an analogy of proportion that exists between God’s internal and external creation and man’s inner linguistic creation and his socially created world.

When man creates his language and social world in light of faith he gains “imperfect access”⁴¹⁷ to God as creator and maker of truth. Man, therefore, corresponds to divine truth by actively creating a linguistic world which provides the foundation for human relationships and cultures. This manner of correspondence is more clearly seen

⁴¹² Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 209.

⁴¹³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424-425.

⁴¹⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 34.

⁴¹⁵ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 34.

⁴¹⁶ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 34.

⁴¹⁷ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 35.

when it is understood that, writes Milbank, the “inner reality of the Creation is at the same time the presence of God himself. It is God who ‘equalizes’ things, creatively, but constituting the real identity of things within himself.”⁴¹⁸ Due to the permanent analogy existing between God’s creation and man’s creation, man, by actively creating linguistic and social structures, brings himself into unity with the true presence of God. More specifically man’s linguistic creation corresponds, differently but nonetheless actually, with the “the *opus* of the second person of the Trinity”⁴¹⁹ and his socially created realities likewise correspond to the external creation of God.

It is important to note, points out Milbank, that man’s creation is not being reduced to technology but rather is being defined by language, poesis⁴²⁰ and culture. This, explains Milbank, distinguishes Vico from the “sceptic-voluntarist-nominalist”⁴²¹ approach which defines man’s creation in a technical or instrumental manner. This way of defining man’s making, additionally explains Robert Miner, an authority on Vico, differs from our current conception of making. The modern definition of making, as elucidated by Heidegger, writes Miner, “generally construes thinking on the model of making, which it understands in technical or instrumental fashion.”⁴²² According to this definition of making when man makes he does so “for the sake of giving material

⁴¹⁸ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 213.

⁴¹⁹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 213.

⁴²⁰ *Poesis* comes from the Greek term *ποιέω* which means “to make.” Milbank uses this term according to Heidegger’s definition of *poesis*. Heidegger defines this term in reference to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, in which, in contrast with *techne*, something new is brought to human knowledge. See “The Question Concerning Technology” as it appears in Martin Heidegger *Basic Writings from Being and time (1927) to the Task of thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrell Krell, (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 1993), 307-343.

⁴²¹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 1, 48.

⁴²² Robert Miner, *Truth in the Making*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), xii. Cf. “The Question Concerning Technology” as it appears in Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 307-343.

embodiment to what is already known.”⁴²³ These instruments, consequently, do not contribute to man’s knowledge since the idea was already known before making the device. In contrast, Vico’s concept of making as creation and poesis is understood as adding to man’s knowledge. This new knowledge ultimately is a result of man, through faith, gaining access⁴²⁴ to God’s inner and external creation. Since, for Vico truth is convertible with the made, man gains access to divine truth by participating in God’s “creative comprehension of the world.”⁴²⁵ Since this participation is dependent on human creative action corresponding to divine creative action and not on mirroring “a prior truth in God, preceding all images and works”⁴²⁶ according to the Christianized version of Platonic thought, the created world, therefore, is, writes Milbank, “not for Vico knowable by human beings as a single system of meanings, but rather as an ever-fruitful and suggestive source of *human* meanings.”⁴²⁷

2.2 Analogy of Creation and Cause and Effect:

Vico, further explains Milbank, does not define truth with a “single system of meanings” since his analogy of creation leads him to have a more dynamic concept of truth. This becomes clearer when his approach to cause and effect is explained. According to Milbank, Vico, with his semi-occasionalism, overturns “the traditional priority of cause over effect, such that effects are seen to ‘transcend their causes.’”⁴²⁸ By holding that the effect is prior to the cause Vico reduces cause to an occasion since,

⁴²³ Miner, *Truth in the Making*, 2.

⁴²⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 35.

⁴²⁵ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 66.

⁴²⁶ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 113.

⁴²⁷ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 99.

⁴²⁸ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 219.

writes Milbank, “Cause only determines its character in the achievement of an effect, and the effect, far from being a mere ‘echo’ of what is contained in the cause, actually transcends the causal content. Causes are merely occasions to the extent that they do not determine the outcome of their application.”⁴²⁹

This definition of the cause-effect relationship affects Vico’s perception of man’s relationship to truth in the following way. First, man is an effect of God who is the first cause of everything. As an effect he is not simply an echo of God’s cause but rather transcends the causal contents of his reality by participating in creation. This leads Vico to describe *creatio ex nihilo* as a *creatio continua*, for “every new thing that emerges re-engages the *ex nihilo*, and the equal power of absolute creation in its transcendence of prior causality.”⁴³⁰ Human and divine creative acts, therefore, are described by Vico as concurring together.⁴³¹ The only way for man, therefore, to know and make truth is not by corresponding to it in an ahistorical manner, but rather by ever advancing new insights within the divine process of *creatio continua*.⁴³² Human creative acts performed in the light of divine creativity are, consequently, the “gateway”⁴³³ to participating in truth. Milbank explains by this by writing:

Here the human poetic establishment of a concrete, objective, cultural world is both the constitution of humanity itself, and the movement towards the divine *telos* which is none other than the generation of the *Logos* by the Father. Because *factum*, the ‘artificial’ world, is itself the site of truth, it is impossible to either subordinate *poesis* to the generative rule of an inexorably unfolding sequence (stoic dogmatism), or to understand in its combinations merely the arbitrary and coercive (sceptical

⁴²⁹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 218.

⁴³⁰ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 219.

⁴³¹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 239.

⁴³² Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 243.

⁴³³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 328.

nominalism). The emergent beauty of the *factum* (which for humans, to be sure, must partly consist in its relation to the already given) is non-prescribable but nevertheless compelling, and definitory of truth.⁴³⁴

2.3 Vico's Analogy of Creation as between skepticism and rationalism:

In order to understand the preceding quotation Milbank's description of Vico as "steering a mid-course between skepticism and rationalist dogmatism"⁴³⁵ needs to be explained. Vico's "prime example of 'dogmatism'," in which language corresponds to a specific truth, is represented by the gentiles who "because they abandon analogy for 'allegory', and construct their language as a determinate chain"⁴³⁶ anticipate stoic logic. The dogmatism of the gentiles is understood by Vico, explains Milbank, as in a "secret alliance" with skepticism for "the gentiles' chain is only necessary to contain what they take to be a meaningless wilderness. And when dogmatism collapses, in the decadence of over-civilization, the *ingens sylva* returns as pyrrhonism. Only the Hebrews are credited with avoiding these extremes. This entails an abiding by 'analogy'. Meaning is indeterminate and remains within the acute play of metaphor—of presence and absence—because we cannot ascend to the infinite point of view."⁴³⁷

Even though, according to Milbank, Vico maintains that the meaning of language, and consequently truth as linguistically expressed, "is indeterminate" this does not mean that Vico is a skeptic, since he believes that human language proceeds "from a primacy of the word, and as thereby imaging the divine Trinity."⁴³⁸ By understanding the proper creation of language as imaging the inner creation of the Trinity Vico's theory of

⁴³⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 328-329.

⁴³⁵ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 2, 90.

⁴³⁶ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 2, 90.

⁴³⁷ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 2, 90.

⁴³⁸ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 2, 88.

language is distinctly different from Jacques Derrida's skeptical concept of language and of truth. In contrast with Derrida's postmodern skepticism of truth, Vico, interprets Milbank, does hold that man has access to truth but not by mirroring truth in a rigid, dogmatic manner but rather "in the more exhaustive re-achievement of the factum."⁴³⁹

2.4 Analogy of Creation and Essence and Esse:

Another way in which Vico, according to Milbank, argues for an analogy of creation is by denying "that essence is any more proper to humanity than being is: the creature is not truly *essentia* (nor *unum*) nor truly *esse*."⁴⁴⁰ By so doing, explains Milbank, Vico is able to put "forward a mediating metaphysics that is more explicitly theological in that *Creation* itself, or *Factum* or *Verbum*, is the central term, rather than either *esse* or *unum*."⁴⁴¹ Vico's position that essence and existence are both equally proper to man contrasts with Aquinas's view. Aquinas, according to Milbank, "considered that there was a 'real difference' in every finite entity between essence and *esse*. Aquinas thought that essence belongs properly to finite creatures and was 'in potency to' being, belonging properly to God, whose essence was 'to be'. Being alone had the capacity to 'actualise', to make real, the natures of things, by which they were what they were."⁴⁴² For this Aquinas has often been understood as implicitly upholding an analogy of being.⁴⁴³ It is more certain, though, that Aquinas rejects an analogy of

⁴³⁹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol 2, 216.

⁴⁴⁰ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 128.

⁴⁴¹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 128.

⁴⁴² Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 127.

⁴⁴³ John R. Betz argues that Aquinas scholars "who claim that Thomas never had a doctrine of the analogy of being in the first place ... is highly debatable, and one is inclined to say that it is an anachronism of the first order, namely, to suggest that Aquinas was a proto-Wittgensteinian, who did not have a 'theory of analogy' or a 'metaphysics of being'. But even more so, it is beside the point. For the demise of the

creation for he explicitly maintains that creatures do not participate in creation since they are primarily in a potential state and not essentially in an actual state.⁴⁴⁴ This leads Aquinas to understand man's relationship to truth in a more Platonic manner than Vico, since, according to Aquinas, man is primarily receptive and not active in relationship to truth. For Aquinas, man receives truth by conforming his intellect to truth as a stable reality both existing in the created form and in the divine ideas of God.⁴⁴⁵ Instead of understanding man's relationship to truth from the perspective of reception, Vico, in contrast as pointed out in previous chapters, maintains that man, in participation of God's inner creation, actively creates truth.

The contention that man, contrary to Aquinas and the dominant view of the Church Fathers, participates in creation is based on Milbank's presentation of Vico's thought that the generation of the Son as Word is a creation *ad intra*. By defining the Son as an internal creation within the Trinity, Milbank, relying on Vico, is then able to argue that the generation of the Son is not only an intransitive pure act but is also a

analogy of being has had extraordinarily little to do with medieval exegesis—for what could this mean in an age that is beyond the exigency of interpretation, when fidelity to the text can be understood only as submission to the force of its own agenda, when interpretation is henceforth an arbitrary construction, a countervailing assertion of the will to power?—and everything to do with a calculated series of rhetorical associations that have proven so successful that few would think to challenge them.” John R. Betz, “Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part One),” *Modern Theology* 21, no. 3 (July 2005): 368.

⁴⁴⁴ Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, chap. 4-5.

⁴⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth Volume 1*, trans. Robert William Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), 1, 2, c, reply to obj. 1. “A natural thing, being placed between two intellects, is called true insofar as it conforms to either. It is said to be true with respect to its conformity with the divine intellect insofar as it fulfills the end to which it was ordained by the divine intellect... With respect to its conformity with a human intellect, a thing is said to be true insofar as it is such as to cause a true estimate about itself.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 16, art. 1 “The true is in the intellect in so far as it is conformed to the object understood.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 84, a. 5. “Now the unchangeable truth is contained in the eternal types. Therefore the intellectual soul knows all true things in the eternal types.”

transitive creating act outside the Trinity in which man participates in.⁴⁴⁶ This interpretation of Vico contrasts with “traditional thought” which Milbank describes as presuming that “*facere*, making, cannot achieve such a total synthesis because it operates by mediation, and by establishing a boundary or a perimeter of limited ‘completion’.

Vico’s originality is to project the mediation and the boundary or limit into the infinite itself as *verbum*.”⁴⁴⁷ In this way, Vico is able to maintain that man participates in creation, since creation is a transcendental reality which exists within the Trinity and outside the Trinity. For this reason, argues Milbank, Vico at times refers to the doctrine *creatio ex nihilo* as *creatio ex Deo*.⁴⁴⁸

2.5 Analogy of Creation and Language:

According to Milbank, Vico specifies man’s participation in creation, by describing man as creating truth principally through the medium of language. This theory of language contrasts with Plato’s in which language, writes Milbank, “is reduced to the status of an instrument, and regarded as a set of signs which simply ‘stand for’ ideas and things to which we have a pre-linguistic access.”⁴⁴⁹ In contrast, “because Vico

⁴⁴⁶ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 129. Milbank explains this in the following manner. “For Vico never considers the divine operation outside the Trinitarian context: it is not merely an intransitive *actus purus*, but always the transitive *facere*. The *Verbum* is the locus of the fullness of being, the eminent, living reality of everything, and also of the absolute *unum*, the ‘exact’ truth of everything. These circumstances express the priority of the made in God, and show that this allows a refusal of the choice between *esse* and *unum*. For in this conception (where the Father is the generation of the Son) it is impossible to conceive either a fullness of act or a complete determination of possibility in the Father alone: the achievement of the *Verbum* is simultaneously the fullness of being and the realization of the logical and forceful condition of possibility for that being. Vico later identifies the Father as *posse*, but this for Vico really means, as for Cusanus, ‘active potential’, the further possibility of a thing already in act. Thus if we imagine an impossibility, the Father existing alone, then we have to think of a simultaneously incomplete determination both of actuality and possibility.”

⁴⁴⁷ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 137.

⁴⁴⁸ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 107.

⁴⁴⁹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 23.

develops a theory of the origins of language in which *factum* has true priority”⁴⁵⁰ he is, argues Milbank, able to break from Plato’s instrumentalist understanding of language. Vico’s “conception of language as a species of *factum*” explains Milbank, “awakens him to the fact that *our* sort of language—consisting of an alphabet of sounds with visual equivalents—is not the only possible kind. Vico conceives a more concrete primitive language, based on pictorial shapes, actions and gestures.”⁴⁵¹

Instead of viewing language in a Platonic, instrumental manner, Vico conceives of language in a “non-instrumental, concrete, and irreducibly metaphorical”⁴⁵² way. This means, explains Milbank, that Vico does not understand language as representing divine ideas but instead, in accordance with his idea that the “first element of language is metaphor,” conceives language as “metaphoric *mimesis*.”⁴⁵³ Creating language in the light of faith, therefore, is the way in which man participates in God’s inner creation, convertible with truth, for linguistic development continues the creative inner reality of the Trinity. Human language is a continuation, in an analogous sense, of the inner creation of the Trinity, writes Milbank, for “just as in God there is an original word, an original relation, an original signifying, an original ‘supplement’, so also in human culture, or the ‘metaphysics of the human mind’, the origin *is* the projection of language, the already-begun development of the human future.”⁴⁵⁴

Thinking, according to Vico is also tied to language and is determined by language in that, explains Milbank, “ideas are said to be symbols of things in so far as

⁴⁵⁰ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 29.

⁴⁵¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 29.

⁴⁵² Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 29.

⁴⁵³ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 30.

⁴⁵⁴ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 21.

they ‘collect all the elements of a thing’. This is compared to reading ‘which collects all the elements of writing from which words are formed’. If the symbolization of things by ideas is equivalent to the ‘collecting of elements’, and if the former parallels the relation of words to ideas just as the latter parallels reading, then the relation of words to ideas is equivalent to the process of reading.”⁴⁵⁵ This does not mean that for Vico man can create any truth whatsoever. As explained by Milbank, for Vico man’s will “is bound to recognize the objective truth of this *factum*, but on the other hand, the *honestas* of the will (assisted by reason and power) in controlling the passions, initially helps to constitute it. *Factum* exposes in its particularity the ideality of justice or the transcendental *unum* of Plato’s *Parmenides* -which Vico considers the best statement of the Platonic position.”⁴⁵⁶ There is, therefore, created truth expressed in language that is a proper *mimesis* of the transcendent truth of the inner creation of God and created, linguistic truth that is not a proper imitation of divine truth. Vico describes the latter as a consequence of original sin by which human language became corrupted. Due to this original corruption human language at times fails in being an accurate “metaphoric *memesis*” of God’s inner creation.⁴⁵⁷ In line with this thought, Vico, as interpreted by Milbank, develops Augustine’s doctrine of the two cities by tracing religious idolatry, divination and political violence to a “particular miss-operation of language.”⁴⁵⁸ This leads him in his later writings, according to Milbank, to describe the two cities of Augustine “as two

⁴⁵⁵ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 119.

⁴⁵⁶ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 129.

⁴⁵⁷ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 231; *vol. 2*, 140.

⁴⁵⁸ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 6.

different ‘literary republics’.”⁴⁵⁹ The misuse of language in the literary republic of man can be cured, proposes Vico, through literary cultivation.⁴⁶⁰

The main reason why language, as used in the city of man, is not, according to this interpretation of Vico, reflective of the peaceful inner creation of God is due to a pagan assumption, evident in their myths, that man originates from a primal chaos. For Vico, the pagan construction of language and, consequently, of society, explains Milbank, is done “in terms of an ‘inhibition’ and a ‘re-channeling’ of a primal chaos and a primal anger.”⁴⁶¹ In contrast to this pagan view, as held in a similar way by Hobbes,⁴⁶² Vico defines the origin of man as, writes Milbank, “the spontaneous ‘will to be united with God’ (*De Uno* X, XI)....This involves no supposition of an ‘original violence’ to be restrained/released in the sign, but rather of an original word of God, of a meaning before unmeaning, of charitable provision for its own sake as the beginning of culture.”⁴⁶³

By describing language as caused by an original myth, Vico, argues Milbank, overcomes “the materialist ‘language critique’ of mythical and religious images. Vico has made the first linguistic element itself a mythical element, and so has in fact inverted the normal relationship of myth to language. Language is now situated within myth rather than vice versa. The category of ‘fiction’ (a ‘made’ narrative) is now coterminous with language itself, and poetics has assumed a wider scope than either logic or grammar: *favella* (speech) says Vico, derives from *fabula* (fable) (SNT 401).”⁴⁶⁴ Truthful

⁴⁵⁹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 113.

⁴⁶⁰ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol.1, 232

⁴⁶¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 51.

⁴⁶² Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 43.

⁴⁶³ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 83.

⁴⁶⁴ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 39.

language, therefore, requires its proper context which for Vico is the literary republic of God whose origin is the peaceful, creative relations of the Trinity.

2.6 Analogy of Creation with respect to Law and Virtue

As explained in the précis Vico views law as an element in language created by man in history. True law reflective of God's created truth, therefore, needs to be created within the linguistic republic of God. This manner of understanding law differentiates Vico's legal theory from Aristotle's, explains Milbank, in that he "dynamises"⁴⁶⁵ the Aristotelian concept of distributive justice. Milbank writes that, "in Aristotle distributive justice is relatively stable, because he does not reflect on the changing parameters of the social order. It is at this point that Vico gives more prominence to the 'poetic' role of distributive justice, and introduces a relative, historical dimension. Different societies authorize differing controlling 'fictions'."⁴⁶⁶ Vico "introduces a relative, historical dimension" since his legal theory is ultimately based on his analogy of creation in which man corresponds to God's creation by historically creating truth.

Vico's definition of distributive justice as "poetic" determines how he defines a universal, "natural law". Since Vico considers law as "primarily language" and "language as the first law" his "inquiry into 'universal law' assumes also the dimension of an inquiry into 'universal language'."⁴⁶⁷ Milbank shows how Vico's manner of perceiving a universal law differentiates him from Suarez even more than from Aristotle. Suarez, according to Milbank differs from Vico since he gives "natural law a more

⁴⁶⁵ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 127.

⁴⁶⁶ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 127.

⁴⁶⁷ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol.1, 5.

positive content, and this is primarily because he dissociates natural law from its connection with *praxis* and *prudentia*.⁴⁶⁸ Suarez, in contrast with Vico who is, writes Milbank, “both more humanist and closer to Aquinas himself,”⁴⁶⁹ maintains that natural law “is deducible from theoretical principles, and from the facts of our rational nature. This tends to give a more rationalist and even utilitarian gloss to principles like the right of self-defence.”⁴⁷⁰ Milbank further adds that, unlike Suarez, Vico “renews the underlying theological basis of the ‘natural rights’ tradition, namely human participation in divine power, creative or providential. At the same time, however, he fuses the element of active right (as opposed to a passive right ultimately resolvable into someone else’s duty) fundamental to this tradition, with a revival of natural law in an objective, transcendently orientated, Thomist sense.”⁴⁷¹ In other words, Vico hesitates to identify specific content of natural law since he, according to Milbank, connects the objective aspect of natural law to the transcendent truth of God, which, as was explained previously, is understood as an inner created reality rather than as stable divine ideas to which man’s mind is to receive and correspond to. Milbank also refers to another factor which distinguishes Vico’s perspective of natural law from Suarez’s. By identifying natural law with providence Vico historicizes it.⁴⁷² This additional factor causes Vico to further refuse to accord specific, constant elements in natural law, since the content of natural law as expressed by man’s language, is subject to change according to the

⁴⁶⁸ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 132.

⁴⁶⁹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 132.

⁴⁷⁰ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 132.

⁴⁷¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 135.

⁴⁷² Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 135.

providential designs of history.⁴⁷³

Essentially the difference, according to Milbank, which distinguishes Vico from Suarez on natural law is that Vico defends, contrary to Suarez, man's creative ability, in collaboration with providence, in defining the content of natural law within a given historical context. For Suarez, as explained by Milbank, the content of natural law is fixed and stable and, therefore, is neither determined by man's historical practice nor by man's time bound prudential judgment. Milbank further explains that for Vico man's creation of natural law, due to his cooperation with providence, is a participation in the inner creation of Trinity. According to this understanding, Vico, writes Milbank, "develops the Augustinian *Vestigium Trinitatis* into a kind of 'social image' of the Trinity."⁴⁷⁴ By "centering on language as the key to the *imago dei*"⁴⁷⁵ Vico develops a social image of the Trinity. As a result, for Vico, "the Divine Image is therefore present among men in their social mediations through language."⁴⁷⁶ However, this divine image of the Trinity is not, explains Milbank, "primarily reflected in individual human persons."⁴⁷⁷ Rather, "It is legal *dominium* that reflects the divine Son, not the dominated individual. Likewise legal tutelage reflects the Father, and legal liberty the Spirit."⁴⁷⁸

In order to understand these words of Milbank, the term *dominium* needs to be defined. Milbank defines this term as referring "to the entire human appropriation of the

⁴⁷³ Vico does, though, uphold a human common sense which "is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the whole human race." Vico, *The New Science*, bk. I, 142. With respect to the "whole human race" common sense led to three universal customs: religion, marriage and burial of the dead. See Vico, *The New Science*, bk. I, 332-3, 342, 348, 350.

⁴⁷⁴ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 137.

⁴⁷⁵ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 137.

⁴⁷⁶ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 137.

⁴⁷⁷ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 137.

⁴⁷⁸ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 137.

environment through will-power and knowledge.”⁴⁷⁹ This means that the persons of the Trinity are reflected in how man, through his will-power and knowledge, historically constructs his environment in language as particularly represented by law. Truth, according to this understanding, is socially created by man. However, at the same time, truth, as created by man, has a transcendent dimension, since man is made in the image of the Trinity which is a transcendent, reality and is not dependent on man for its existence. Man imitates this transcendent divine reality by creatively and providentially participating in divine truth. For Vico, according to Milbank’s presentation of his thought, it is difficult to pin down specific content in truth as perennially valid since God’s truth, which man participates in, is understood as being internally creative and inconstant. Consequently, man does not relate to truth by corresponding to it as an ideal, ahistorical reality but rather by creating it historically within the earthly city of God.

2.7 Analogy of Creation and Virtue

Vico, as described by Milbank, perceives the truth of human virtue in a similar manner as he understands the truth of law. Unlike Suarez, as described by Milbank, Vico, by connecting law and virtue to man’s providential participation in creation, “does not ‘ethicize’ Christianity.”⁴⁸⁰ This is particularly evident in how Vico understands virtue. Vico connects virtue to the “infinite virtue”⁴⁸¹ of Adam which, explains Milbank, he understood as “irretrievably lost in Adam.”⁴⁸² Due to this loss, writes Milbank:

The incarnation is demanded as the only possible means whereby this infinite perspective can be restored in its first integrity (*De Const.* IIV,

⁴⁷⁹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 136.

⁴⁸⁰ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 174.

⁴⁸¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 174.

⁴⁸² Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 174.

12/13). This new supernatural truth cannot be realized by ‘arguments’, but only by faith: ‘a single mental virtue’. Christ actually realized in his life the lost ‘infinite charity’, and in this consisted his redemptive action which reached its culmination on the cross when, being God, he was able to undergo the infinite suffering which Adam as finite was unable to experience, but which alone brings about a full *consciousness* of the character of Adam’s sin, and so restores the human mind to the possibility of its original created condition.”⁴⁸³

Christian virtue cannot, according to this interpretation of Vico, ever be adequately captured in a formulation. Instead virtue consists in historically creating particular virtuous actions and words within the context of faith. As explained by Milbank, “if the concrete example of Christ is needed to restore the human race, and in particular to make possible the secure city based upon charity, then this means that the true order of the infinite to the finite cannot be known abstractly, but has to be concretely presented in some particular finite arrangement. Thus Christ (the eternal *verbum* or *certum*) proposes to human beings a *heroic law*, that is (we have every reason to say in consequence of Vico’s general usage) a *concrete, poetic law*, which is none other than the enacted narrative of his life.”⁴⁸⁴ In other words, the specific content of virtue is subject to change throughout history, since it “cannot be known abstractly, but has to be concretely presented in some particular finite arrangement.”⁴⁸⁵ Even though Vico, as interpreted by Milbank, connects the truth of virtue to history, this does not mean that for Vico truth in virtue is completely a relative term since according to him virtue can only be true if created in the light of the “single mental virtue”⁴⁸⁶ of faith. The specific content of virtue

⁴⁸³ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 174.

⁴⁸⁴ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 174.

⁴⁸⁵ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 174.

⁴⁸⁶ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 174.

is difficult to define, since, due to man's ever changing, providential historical situations, Christian virtue is a non-identical imitation of Christ's actions.

In brief, Vico, explains Milbank, agrees with Suarez and like thinkers that "universal" truth in language, law and virtue are not arbitrary generalizations. However, Vico, as interpreted by Milbank, disagrees with Suarez and similar thinkers in that he maintains that "universal" truth is not based on "*a priori* certainties, nor fully determinate understandings" but rather is "something more akin to the rules of a 'language game'."⁴⁸⁷ These rules are subject to change as humans create language which structures history. However, as rules of a game they need to be respected and changed not arbitrarily but in light of Trinitarian faith and the providential arrangements of history.

3.0 Milbank's Development of the Analogy of Creation in *Theology and Social Theory* (1990):

In this work Milbank further develops an analogy of creation as first defended in his dissertation on Vico. He does this principally by defining being within the context of an analogy of creation. This leads him to reject a version of the correspondence theory in which truth is defined in an idealist manner as "a representation of things"⁴⁸⁸ that transcends history. In place of this theory Milbank describes truth as formed in relation "to events" and as an "action upon events."⁴⁸⁹ I will demonstrate this by first showing how, with reference to Johannes Scotus Eriugena (815-877) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), Milbank furthers an analogy of creation as first discussed in his dissertation on

⁴⁸⁷ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 222. This interpretation of Vico is similar to George A. Lindbeck's understanding of language and truth as presented in *The Nature of Doctrine*. Milbank later will specifically refer to Lindbeck's concept of truth in his book *Theology and Social Theory*.

⁴⁸⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 426.

⁴⁸⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 426.

Vico. He refines his understanding of the analogous relationship of God and creatures by defining all reality from the perspective of difference. This leads Milbank to reject an ahistorical representational correspondence theory of truth and instead argues that man corresponds to suprahistorical truth by historically creating it in the light of faith.

3.1 Eriugena's and Nicholas of Cusa's Analogy of Creation:

Eriugena, similar to Vico, writes Milbank “affirmed, ‘making’, in the sense of a spontaneous development (unlike causality) is, for Christianity, a transcendental reality located in the infinite, and God acts and knows because he internally ‘makes’ or ‘creates’.”⁴⁹⁰ God, according to this perspective, knows and acts upon his creation “insofar as he creates them, and there is no question of ‘before’ and ‘after’ here.”⁴⁹¹ The created world, according to Eriugena, participates in God’s creative action by being the differentiation that God brings about. This differentiation “is finitely ‘explicated’, rather than infinitely ‘complicated’.”⁴⁹² In other words creation by participating in God’s creation unfolds creation through its differentiation by, in line with Milbank’s interpretation of Vico, continuing creation *ex nihilo*. From this perspective creation is not seen as “infinitely complicated” but rather as in a state of continuously opening up creation begun by God. By being understood as in a state of continual unfolding, creation is perceived by Eriugena, explains Milbank, as analogously similar to God who is “not a ‘substance’, because he is nothing fundamental underlying anything else, so also there are no substances in creation, no underlying matter, and no discrete and inviolable

⁴⁹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁴⁹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁴⁹² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

‘things’.”⁴⁹³

Unfortunately, according to Milbank, “the great thirteenth-century theologians, Aquinas and Scotus (here following Augustine), denied participation in creation by creatures.”⁴⁹⁴ They made this erroneous conclusion for two reasons. First they assumed, as influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, that making is “merely a modification of existing forms, not as the inauguration of radically new ‘types’ of thing.”⁴⁹⁵ Second, “they supposed that co-creation implied an ‘assistance’ to God in the act of creation, whereas, of course, for Christianity only God is commensurate with the bringing about of Being from nothing, in the absolute sense of a ‘first’ creation, impossible for creatures.”⁴⁹⁶ This sentence is clarified by Milbank’s distinction made in his dissertation on Vico between *creatio ex nihilo*, which is only proper to God and is described as “original creation”,⁴⁹⁷ from *creatio continua*, which creatures participate in.⁴⁹⁸ The latter conclusion of Aquinas and Scotus is due to their mutual failure to “conceive God as internally creative, or as power-act, and therefore failed to see that a creature is *not* primarily something which is, but primarily something which is creative.”⁴⁹⁹

According to Milbank, due to Aquinas’ and Scotus’ erroneous conclusions stemming from their excessive dependence on Aristotelian philosophy, “Eriugena’s

⁴⁹³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁴⁹⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁴⁹⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁴⁹⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁴⁹⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 58.

⁴⁹⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁴⁹⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425. Milbank continues, “Seeds *do* cause creatures to be, human beings *do* cause houses, bridges, novels to be, for where are these in nature? A novel does not *exist* simply as a particular set of marks on thin pieces of wood. It is only the infinity of Being, and a new being without precursors, that creatures do not make. Yet in creating things, creatures do not assist God, for *all* this power/act of a finite creation is created by God.”

ontology, based on God as internally ‘maker’ and then on different degrees of participation in creation, is therefore more profoundly Christian.”⁵⁰⁰ Eriugena, though, claims Milbank, understood the internal creative operation of the mind in a subjective idealist manner and, consequently, did “not arrive at the notion that the mind only has ideas in what it makes, and so in the contingent products of culture.”⁵⁰¹ In contrast with Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa did not define the internal creative operation of the mind in such a manner. He realized “that contingent ‘making’ should naturally be conceived by Christianity as the site of our participation in divine understanding — for this is also a making, combined with the ‘reception’ of what is made by the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁰²

3.2 Analogy of Creation Defined with Respect to Difference:

By describing, in line with Eriugena and as a development of Vico’s thought, creation as a kind of differentiation Milbank further refines his analogy of creation. For Milbank, creation is related to God through its participation in the creative differentiation of God which is ultimately located in the Trinitarian relations where difference coexists in harmony and unity. Starting with the Trinitarian relations, Milbank develops an analogy between Creator and creation that by beginning with difference does not stress identity at the expense of difference. By seriously taking into account difference, this perspective, according to Milbank, does greater justice to analogy than the “traditional presentation of analogy”⁵⁰³ which he describes as defining analogy in a one sided manner by over emphasizing identity through its concept of substance and like terms. In

⁵⁰⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁵⁰¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁵⁰² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁵⁰³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 304.

contention with this position Milbank argues that analogy “does not imply ‘identity’, but identity and difference at once, and this radical sense can be liberated if one jettisons the genera/species/individuals hierarchy and recognizes, *with* the nihilists, only mixtures, *continua*, overlaps and disjunctions, all subject in principle to limitless transformation.”⁵⁰⁴

Consequently, Milbank proposes that the Aristotelian category of substance, and like categories which define being through identity at the expense of difference,⁵⁰⁵ be abandoned in order to see “analogy as all-pervasive, as governing every unity and diversity of the organized world.”⁵⁰⁶ As applied to the analogous relationship between beings and God as the divine Being “such a mode of analogy” explains Milbank “would be divorced from *pros hen* predication, in so far as this gives priority to substance, because God would no longer be the subject of the ‘proper’, literal application of the analogical quality, but simply the infinite realization of this quality in all the diversity and unity of its actual/possible instances.”⁵⁰⁷ *Pros hen* (from Greek - in relation to one) predication refers to an analogy of attribution and is ordinarily associated with Aristotle.⁵⁰⁸ According to Aristotle, various forms of being are related to one another analogously through their mutual participation in the primary analogate of being.⁵⁰⁹ Milbank rejects the *pros hen* analogy of attribution since it reduces God to a substance inferior to the

⁵⁰⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 304.

⁵⁰⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk 4.2. “Now, entity is spoken in various senses, indeed, but in reference to one, and to one certain nature, and not equivocally; but, in like manner, also, as everything conducive to health is termed in reference to health... Thus, however, is entity, also, spoken of in various ways indeed; but every entity in reference to one cause; but others, because they are a way to substance....”

⁵⁰⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 304.

⁵⁰⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 304.

⁵⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk. 4.2 1003b.

⁵⁰⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk. 4.1 1003a.

greater category of being. Therefore, he proposes an analogy in which creation is seen as a secondary analogate and God as the infinite instance of all possibilities of a certain quality. In order to more fully grasp Milbank's description of God as an "infinite realization" of all qualities "in all the diversity and unity of its actual/possible instances"⁵¹⁰ his notion of how difference and unity harmoniously coexist as an internal creative reality in God needs to be more fully explained. This explanation will then help to elucidate how, for Milbank, created beings analogously relate to God and to one another through ever changing differences and not by commonly held stable similarities.

3.3 Difference within God:

In further developing the analogy of creation stemming from Vico, Milbank describes God as "the infinite series of differences and what he knows is the infinity of differences; as Maximus the Confessor said, God is 'the distinction of the different'."⁵¹¹ Since God is an infinite series of differences defining him as pure act does not adequately describe him for "no actualization, even an infinite one, exhausts God's power, for this would render it finite after all. The pre-Thomist intimation in Dionysius of a kind of surplus to actuality in God is therefore correct, but one needs to state clearly that no priority can be given to either pure *actus* or pure *virtus*. Infinite realized act and infinite unrealized power mysteriously coincide in God, and it must be this that supports the circular 'life', that is more than *stasis*, of the Trinity."⁵¹²

Divine pure act and divine "unrealized power"⁵¹³ generating differences is

⁵¹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 304.

⁵¹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 423.

⁵¹² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 423.

⁵¹³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 423.

present in the Trinitarian relations. The first Trinitarian difference, explains Milbank, is the Son, the second difference is Holy Spirit who is “constituted as an equally pure relation to the Father, but ‘through’ the Son.”⁵¹⁴ The difference of the Holy Spirit is a response to the unity of the “Son causing ‘backwards’ the Father.”⁵¹⁵ This response to the unity between the Father and the Son is different since it is “more than unity.”⁵¹⁶ Consequently, “the harmony of the Trinity is therefore not the harmony of a finished totality but a ‘musical’ harmony of infinity. Just as an infinite God must be power-act, so the doctrine of the Trinity discovers the infinite God to include a radically ‘external’ relationality.”⁵¹⁷ An expression of this external Trinitarian relationality is the Incarnation of the Son. Through the Incarnate Word creation is brought into relationship with God and participates in the Trinitarian relationships distinguished by divine differentiation, which for Milbank is another way expressing the intra-divine creation he locates in Vico’s thought.⁵¹⁸

3.4 Difference within Creation in Relationship to God:

Since, explains Milbank, Augustine and Dionysius transformed Greek philosophy by redefining divine Being “as itself that which is different”⁵¹⁹ the created world relates to God, defined through his Trinitarian differences, in a rhetorical manner that “*ceases to be anything to do with ‘truth’*”, or, in other words with the relation of reality to

⁵¹⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁵¹⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁵¹⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁵¹⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁵¹⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁵¹⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 429.

appearance.”⁵²⁰ With these words Milbank does not mean to deny that creation relates to God. Instead he intends to reject the neo-Platonic notion that creation relates as an appearance containing a “mixture of truth and untruth”⁵²¹ to God as the fullness of reality and the similar scholastic-Aristotelian concept of creation relating to God through a “hierarchy of identities.”⁵²² Instead, creation corresponds to the truth of God as a continuation of God’s *ex nihilo* creation, an idea as mentioned previously, Milbank locates in Vico’s thought.⁵²³ Milbank furthers his interpretation of Vico by describing this correspondence as taking place in occurrences of “differential reality in time.”⁵²⁴ Man, consequently, corresponds to God not by identifying with specific ahistorical truths in God but rather by creating truth historically through language and social realities that participate in God’s inner Trinitarian creativity in which differences are harmonized.⁵²⁵

3.5 Differences within Created Beings in Relationship to One Another:

Through the concept of difference Milbank further develops the analogy of creation present in Vico’s metaphysics by asserting that created beings analogously relate not only to God but also to one another through ever changing differences. Proper relating after the example of the Trinity brings about aesthetic truth similar to music where different notes are harmonized through their differences and not because of a common identity.⁵²⁶ As explained by Milbank this means that “temporal ontological arrangement would have to be grasped in aesthetic terms: x and y may be different, yet

⁵²⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

⁵²¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

⁵²² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

⁵²³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 219; 239; 243.

⁵²⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

⁵²⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

⁵²⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 354, 417, 429.

they belong together in their difference in a specific ‘exemplary’ ordering, and this ‘belonging together’ means a certain sort of convergence, a certain commonality.”⁵²⁷ In contrast with the Aristotelian categories of genus and species, which Milbank rejects along with substance, he defines the analogous relationships existing among beings as contingent, since they are constantly being created in participation of the inner divine creation and “not fixed once and for all.”⁵²⁸ Since the nature of being is defined as contingent and in a constant state of creation this means that there are no fixed essences and natures for the mind to correspond to. Instead as long as created reality is seen, understood and made in light of the Trinitarian relations in which through their differences the persons live in harmony then there are a vast variety of ways for man to know and create truth which correspond to the dynamic, created truth of the Trinity.

According to Milbank, the ordering of created beings in a truthful manner after the harmony of the Trinity is based on understanding difference in existence as positive and not purely negative. A positive conception of difference leads to “the question of the possibility of living together in mutual agreement, and the question of whether there can be a charitable act, therefore turn out to be conjointly the question of whether there can be an ‘analogy’ or a ‘common measure’ between differences which does not reduce differences to mere instances of a common essence or genus. In other words a likeness that only maintains itself through the differences, and not despite nor in addition to them.”⁵²⁹ When answered in the light of Christian Trinitarian faith this question is

⁵²⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 304.

⁵²⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 305.

⁵²⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 289.

answered affirmatively. Faith in the Trinity instructs man that difference need not be based on an ontology of violence but, after the example of the Trinity, can lead to a “different ontology, which denies that mediation is necessarily violent. Such an ontology alone can support an alternative, peaceable, historical practice.”⁵³⁰

3.6 A Christian Alternative Version of Postmodern Ontology:

An ontology that depicts differences among beings as necessarily entailing violence is promoted by radically nihilistic versions of postmodernism that, as Milbank argues in his dissertation, Vico’s analogy of creation is a better alternative to while sharing much in common.⁵³¹ By advocating a Christian metanarrative stemming from the Trinity in which the three person live in harmony through their differences Milbank, in contrast with Heidegger⁵³² and Lyotard, who explicitly rejects all metanarratives,⁵³³ is

⁵³⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 306.

⁵³¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 269. Vico’s postmodernism is not nihilistic as is Derrida’s and Jean-François Lyotard, argues Milbank, since it reconciles the Christian metanarrative with the anti-foundationalism of postmodernism. Vico advances a Christian metanarrative, while being consistent to an anti-foundational concept of truth, by tracing religious idolatry, divination and political violence, present within the city of man, to a “particular mis-operation of language.” (Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 6.) This leads Vico, in his later writings argues Milbank, to describe the two cities of Augustine “as two different ‘literary republics’.” (Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 113.) The misuse of language in the city of man can be cured, proposes Vico, through literary cultivation within the Christian metanarrative. (Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 232) By coupling the anti-foundationalism of postmodernism with the Christian metanarrative Milbank develops a postmodernism that is not according to the nihilistic anti-metanarrative version of Jean-François Lyotard.

⁵³² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 298.

⁵³³ Jean-François Lyotard in rejecting metanarratives states, “Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable.” Jean-François Lyotard, *The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

able to defend the possibility of saying “how things are in general.”⁵³⁴ By joining together a Christian metanarrative with the anti-foundationalism of postmodernism Milbank is able to reject the notion that concealment of Being leads to “overtones of dissimulation, of violence, of necessary suppression.”⁵³⁵ As is evident, Milbank, in his rejection of concepts such as substance and nature, agrees that the specifics of being remains concealed. However, he argues, in the light of faith we learn the general principle that Trinitarian peace occurs through the differences among the beings of the three divine persons.⁵³⁶ Due to creation’s participation in the Trinity differences among beings, therefore, can coexist in peace.

Milbank describes man’s participation in being as “the analogizing process”⁵³⁷ which is similar to “Heidegger’s temporalizing of Being”⁵³⁸ but understood as entailing a participation “in the divine creativity which reveals itself as ever-new through time.”⁵³⁹ Milbank traces the main error of Heidegger’s temporalizing of Being to Duns Scotus who “was the inventor of a fundamental ontology”⁵⁴⁰ that was essentially univocal and thus leading to the premise that difference among beings necessarily entails violence and competition since differences among being are always in tension with the more

⁵³⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 298.

⁵³⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 300.

⁵³⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 306. “I am not, like Emmanuel Levinas, claiming that ontology as such is complicit with violence. If one follows this path, then one still tends to read the historical time of cultural exchange which is ‘Being’ as inevitably violent, and too long for an impossibly pure encounter of mutually exterior subjects without mediation across a common domain, which is always doomed to infect and coerce the genuinely responding will. By contrast, I am suggesting the possibility of a *different* ontology, which denies that mediation is necessarily violent. Such an ontology alone can support an alternative, peaceable, historical practice.”

⁵³⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 305.

⁵³⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 305.

⁵³⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 305.

⁵⁴⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 302.

fundamental unity and identity of all being.⁵⁴¹ In contrast, Milbank's "analogizing process"⁵⁴² implies "identity and difference at once, and this radical sense can be liberated if one jettisons the genera/species/individuals hierarchy and recognizes, *with* the nihilists, only mixtures, *continua*, overlaps and disjunctions, all subject in principle to limitless transformation."⁵⁴³

3.7 A Correspondence Theory in which Truth is Created and not Mirrored:

As the above quoted sentence implies, since Milbank, in further developing Vico's anti-Cartesian stance as described in the précis, defines reality in a nihilistic manner consisting of "mixtures" and unpredictable "limitless transformation" man does not correspond to truth by mirroring it in an ahistorical, idealistic manner. Milbank makes this more explicit by asserting that in Christianity there is no "truth or falsity."⁵⁴⁴ This is because there is nothing in reality that is stable and enduring to which the mind can, without consideration to historical change, conform itself to. Since, according to Milbank's nihilistic Christian approach to reality, "no positive non-being is posited, as by Platonism, and no pure material potency, as in Aristotelianism, nothing that is, can be in any sense wrong. There can be no more illusions, and no unmaskings: instead, there are *deficiencies*."⁵⁴⁵

Milbank is not rejecting the concept of truth altogether by making it into a purely redundant term. Rather, what he is rejecting is conceiving truth as corresponding to a static, unchanging reality. For Milbank, since truth, above all in the Trinity, is

⁵⁴¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 302-306.

⁵⁴² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 305.

⁵⁴³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 304.

⁵⁴⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

⁵⁴⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

convertible with the created, and the made has precedence over the true, this means that truth itself is a made, dynamic, ever changing reality. Therefore, man principally knows truth by creating it in time. In rejecting specific ahistorical truth which transcends time and man can correspond to Milbank states:

If time were only a pure flow, then one would have only a seamless continuum; not only would nothing be known about, nothing would actually *happen*. For an event to ‘occur’ at all, it must pass into an intentional, or what the stoics called an ‘incorporeal’ state: a state of affairs, or a connection must *remain* although it has in fact also already passed away.⁵⁴⁶

At first glance, this might appear that Milbank is arguing that, once deconstructed, the concept of truth corresponds to nothing. However, upon more careful reading of Milbank it becomes evident that he does see truth as corresponding to a reality but one that is “essentially an aesthetic matter”⁵⁴⁷ which is a “relation to events, and an action upon events.”⁵⁴⁸ In further explaining this Milbank rejects a particular kind of correspondence theory by writing “We recognize beauty or not, and the measure of truth is likeness to the form of the divine beauty of which our soul has some recollection. Augustine is basically right: truth, for Christianity, is not correspondence, but rather *participation* of the beautiful in the beauty of God. However, abandoning Platonic recollection, one should re-conceive the mind’s kinship to beauty as the capacity of a

⁵⁴⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 426. Milbank illustrates this by stating, “Hence, for example, the window of a house simply does not ‘occur’ except as an idea, as a particular ‘section’ out of a really *moving continuum*, which because it is ‘frozen’, we can then immediately conceive as larger or smaller, or even as not surrounded by bricks, like the grin that remains after the Cheshire cat has vanished in *Alice in Wonderland* (to use Deleuze’s example).”

⁵⁴⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 427.

⁵⁴⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 426.

particularly strong ‘intensity’ to become the fulcrum for events, and to shape events in an ‘honest’ and ‘decorous’ fashion.”⁵⁴⁹

Conclusion:

In summary, Milbank validates Vico’s claim that truth is convertible with the made in the following manner. In accordance with Vico, he maintains that the “generation of the Son”⁵⁵⁰ is God’s “internal creation.”⁵⁵¹ This means “that God is *primordially* creative... and not merely in relation to an external Creation.”⁵⁵²

Understood in this way the made in God has precedence over the true since the Father who generates the internal creation of the Son “is exhaustively Father of the Son.”⁵⁵³

Milbank argues that simply because Vico maintains that the made (the Father’s generating activity) is prior to the true (the Son) does not mean that Son is subordinate to the Father since their relationship is not determined temporally.

In describing how, for Vico, creation reflects the divine truth’s equality with the made Milbank turns to hylozoism. According to hylozoism all matter (*hyle*) contains a principle of life (*zoe*) which is dynamic and ever in motion. Ultimately this life has its origin in the life of God in whom “the made-is a transcendental in the same sense as

⁵⁴⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 427. For further discussion on truth as correspondence see Milbank’s later work *Truth in Aquinas*. Here Milbank turns to Aquinas in order “to meet the problems arising from the seeming insupportability of a correspondence theory of truth.” John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, (London: Routledge, 2001) 1. He admits that “this might appear to be an inquiry doomed from the outset, since Aquinas is himself a proponent of just such a theory.” (Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 1) By re-interpreting Aquinas Milbank is able to fashion a correspondence theory of truth that has been purged of aspects that are incompatible with a post-modern antifoundationalist view. He does this by situating Aquinas’s thought on truth within an analogy of creation. (Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21, 23, 85)

⁵⁵⁰ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 83-84.

⁵⁵¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 83.

⁵⁵² Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 113.

⁵⁵³ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 142.

verum...”⁵⁵⁴ In Vico’s hylozoism, as explained by Milbank, the principle of life in matter is an active energy “made up of metaphysical points operating by a divine *conatus* (Latin for impulse, inclination, tendency; striving) principle.”⁵⁵⁵ Due to the dynamism of divine *conatus*, creation does not contain ahistorical forms that man can know by abstraction. Rather, man knows creation through his own creative interaction with ever evolving points of energy in a constant state of motion.

In further advancing Vico’s hylozoism Milbank defines the created world as participating in the Trinitarian “infinite series of ‘escaping’ differences.”⁵⁵⁶ In this way, according to Milbank, all of creation participates in the creative Trinitarian act of God by continuously self-generating ever new imitations, throughout time, of the intra-Trinitarian creation.⁵⁵⁷ This understanding of creation’s relationship with God leads Milbank, in support of Vico, to advocate a correspondence theory of truth that is grounded in an analogy of creation. Because Vico, writes Milbank, conceives of God as “inwardly creative” he “can present the possibility of human knowledge of God in terms of an ‘analogy of creation’ rather than an ‘analogy of being’.”⁵⁵⁸ Milbank describes the analogy of creation as being an analogy of proportion: “God/World, Humanity/the Human World.”⁵⁵⁹ Within this analogy of proportion man, in making his human world, participates in the inner creation of God and God’s creation of the world. Through his active participation man is brought into correspondence with God’s inner dynamic truth.

⁵⁵⁴ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 88.

⁵⁵⁵ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 188.

⁵⁵⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁵⁵⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424-425.

⁵⁵⁸ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 34.

⁵⁵⁹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 34.

Man's linguistic inner creation, therefore, corresponds in a different but similar manner with the "the *opus* of the second person of the Trinity."⁵⁶⁰ Additionally, the world man constructs out of his language also analogously corresponds to the external creation of God.

Milbank's promotion of an analogy of creation leads him to the following practical conclusions. First, language is not seen by him as having the instrumental⁵⁶¹ purpose of mirroring stable, constant divine ideas but rather is to metaphorically imitate the inner language of the second person of the Trinity, who is eternally created and is in ceaseless harmony with the Father and Holy Spirit through their differences.⁵⁶² A human language imitative of God's language of difference in peace is created within its proper context, the Christian literary republic.⁵⁶³ Due to the creative character of divine truth to which man corresponds to aesthetically⁵⁶⁴ through his own historical creation, specifics of natural law and virtue are not possible to formulate as universally applicable. However, Milbank insists, this does not mean that man arbitrarily creates any truth he pleases since man's truth is to resemble in some fashion Trinitarian truth in which differences are not in conflict but rather are at peace in a similar way as in a musical chord different musical notes are in harmony.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁰ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol.1, 213.

⁵⁶¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 23.

⁵⁶² Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 30.

⁵⁶³ Milbank, *Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 113.

⁵⁶⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 427.

⁵⁶⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 354, 417, 429, 424.

Chapter Four

Milbank on Truth as Illuminated and Mediated

Introduction:

In the previous chapter we saw that Milbank, building upon his interpretation of Vico, relies on an analogy of creation as the fundamental explanation for man's correspondence to truth. In this chapter we will focus on how he furthers his appropriation of Vico by focusing on Milbank's more explicit theological treatments of truth as grounded in an analogy of creation. This will be done by determining how for Milbank truth is illuminated and mediated. I will begin with truth as illuminated.

1.0 Truth as Illuminated:

In furthering Vico's axiom that truth is convertible with *factum* Milbank maintains that man creates truth only by being illuminated by faith within the literary republic of the city of God. Consequently, for Milbank, creative correspondence to truth occurs exclusively in the light of faith under which man is to shape and transform the world. Outside of faith man is in total darkness, a condition that makes it impossible for him to create truth. I will demonstrate this view of Milbank by beginning with his dissertation and then by showing how he further develops his interpretation of Vico on truth as illuminated.

1.1 Vico and Illumination:

According to the hylozoism of Vico, as explained in the previous chapter, creation is made up of metaphysical points which operate by a divine *conatus* principle.⁵⁶⁶ This

⁵⁶⁶ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 209.

principle is a “tensional force”⁵⁶⁷ between everything since, in accordance with Heraclitus’s view, “things are constantly changing (universal flux)”.⁵⁶⁸ In accordance with this approach to reality, in the fifth century Cratylus of Athens, as stated previously, further developed this concept by claiming that since everything is in flux therefore there can be no knowledge of the world.⁵⁶⁹ In agreement with Cratylus Vico maintains that man can have no knowledge of the world of nature. His reasoning stems from the *verum-factum* premise. According to this premise one only knows what he makes. Therefore, God only knows the natural world since he made it, and man is limited to knowing the civil world which he creates linguistically, socially and politically.⁵⁷⁰

Even though Vico, in agreement with Cratylus, denies man knowledge of the natural world he does, though, hold that man can know the world he creates and this world is in accordance with final truth as long as it is created under light of God’s truth. Vico, argues Milbank, is able to hold this since for him the ultimate location of *conatus* (Latin for impulse, inclination, tendency; striving) is God.⁵⁷¹ Therefore, writes Milbank, “Because all things stem from God, he alone determines their precise reality in the moment of their origination which is also the moment of their infinite coordination with everything else. Things are ‘fully true’, and ‘fully made’ from the perspective of an infinite inauguration. Thus we can only grasp what little we know and make of the reality of things if our minds are in some unfathomable fashion illumined by the *lux*

⁵⁶⁷ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 209.

⁵⁶⁸ Daniel, *Heraclitus*, accessed 12/01/2010.

⁵⁶⁹ Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 322.

⁵⁷⁰ Vico, *The New Science*, no. 349, 374, 376, pg. 93, 104, 105; Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, chap. I, 1, 28, p. 27-29.

⁵⁷¹ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 212. See the previous chapter’s section on *conatus*.

metaphysica of God's creative knowledge.”⁵⁷² In the same vein of thought Milbank further writes, “Because all things stem from God, he alone determines their precise reality in the moment of their origination which is also the moment of their infinite coordination with everything else. Things are ‘fully true’, and ‘fully made’ from the perspective of an infinite inauguration. Thus we can only grasp what little we know and make of the reality of things if our minds are in some unfathomable fashion illumined by the *lux metaphysica* of God's creative knowledge.”⁵⁷³ This means that only if man is illumined by God can he create and know truth.

So far it is not clear whether this divine light refers to a light given only in faith or if this is a light all men can participate in regardless of faith. However, upon closer examination of Milbank’s dissertation, it becomes evident that he interprets Vico as maintaining the former. This is because, according to Milbank, Vico asserts that man makes truth, in participation of his creator in whom truth is convertible with the made, only in the “Judeo-Christian tradition.”⁵⁷⁴ Vico defines man’s making truth, in imitation of his creator, as taking place within a linguistic city of God. This city is Vico’s version of Augustine’s City of God.⁵⁷⁵ Since only men with some degree of faith belong to the linguistic city of God, therefore only those who are illuminated by the light of faith can create truth.

1.2 Illumination as Further Developed by Milbank:

⁵⁷² Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 241.

⁵⁷³ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol.1*, 241.

⁵⁷⁴ Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 6.

⁵⁷⁵ Vico develops Augustine’s doctrine of the two cities by tracing religious idolatry, divination and political violence to a “particular mis-operation of language.” (Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 6.) Vico, therefore, at least in his later writings, according to Milbank, describes the two cities of Augustine “as two different ‘literary republics’.” (Milbank, *Religious Dimension vol. 2*, 113.)

1.2.1 Truth is Created within the City of God:

In his work *Theology and Social Theory* (1990) Milbank appropriates Vico's thought on illumination as his own while drawing out its implications. In accordance with Vico, Milbank describes the dynamic metaphysical points making up creation as perceived truthfully only if they are formed in the light of faith given in the City of God, depicted as a literary republic. Outside this City of God, in other words apart from faith, man has no access to truth.

In accordance with his dissertation, Milbank describes the Church as an evolving literary republic representing the City of God on earth.⁵⁷⁶ As a literary republic, Christianity theologically narrates "an ultimate narrative ... because the situation of oneself within such a continuing narrative is what it means to belong to the Church, to be a Christian."⁵⁷⁷ The metanarrative proclaimed by Christianity is based on faith and not on "a reason which seeks foundations."⁵⁷⁸ For Milbank, therefore, only in the light of faith does reason relate to truth and then only in a non-specific, historically contingent sense. In agreement with the antifoundationalism of postmodernism, Milbank argues that truth cannot be specified and nailed down in an ahistorical manner because the narrative role of the Church is not concerned with rational reasons that justify its beliefs. The narration of Christianity, writes Milbank, is not "concerned with universal laws, nor universal truths of the spirit."⁵⁷⁹ Even though Milbank holds that narration of the literary

⁵⁷⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 389-434.

⁵⁷⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 249.

⁵⁷⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 249.

⁵⁷⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 267.

republic of God is “ultimately unfounded”⁵⁸⁰ he insists that it is different from Derrida’s nihilism,⁵⁸¹ as explained in his dissertation on Vico, and Nietzsche’s nihilism,⁵⁸² both of which are founded upon an ontology of violence.⁵⁸³ In contrast, the Christian narration, created in the light of the Trinity in which difference coexists in harmony, is grounded in an ontology of peace.

1.2.2 Outside the City of God There is No Truth

Milbank clearly asserts that only within the literary republic of Christianity under the light of faith can truth be known and created. He does not affirm any autonomous ability of reason to know and create truth outside of this city’s metanarrative. In describing the Christian life as taking place within a metanarrative in which reality is truthfully interpreted and created Milbank writes, “For the Christian the world is situated within the stories. They define for us what reality is, and they function as a ‘metanarrative’, not in the sense of the story based on, or unfolding foundational reason (Lyotard’s sense) but in the sense of the story privilege by faith, and seen as the key to the interpretation and regulation of all other stories.”⁵⁸⁴ Therefore, only under the light of faith and within the narrative of Christianity is the world interpreted truthfully.

Participation in this narrative occurs through faith since the Christian narrative is based

⁵⁸⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 279.

⁵⁸¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 376.

⁵⁸² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 279.

⁵⁸³ In stating this Milbank writes, Christianity “recognizes no original violence. It construes the infinite not as chaos, but as a harmonic peace which is yet beyond the circumscribing power of any totalizing reason... It is Christianity which exposes the non-necessity of supposing, like the Nietzscheans, that difference, non-totalization and indeterminacy of meaning *necessarily* imply arbitrariness and violence.” Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 5.

⁵⁸⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 385-386.

on faith and not on “a reason which seeks foundation.”⁵⁸⁵ All other narratives, according to Milbank, lack the divine light of the faith based metanarrative by which man knows and creates truth. Other narratives, which Milbank also calls mythos, are “not a simulacrum, not a bad copy of a real thing, nor even a mistaken combination, but rather a pure negation.”⁵⁸⁶ Due to the absence of illumination given in faith, thinking and creating within these narratives necessarily produces falsehood. Milbank attributes this reasoning, which he endorses, to Augustine and Dionysius.⁵⁸⁷

Milbank also appeals to the reasoning of Thomas Aquinas, interpreted as within the Augustinian/Dionysian tradition, in order to further substantiate his claim that outside the faith based city of God there is no truth. In so doing he writes, “The distinction between ‘revealed’ and ‘natural’ knowledge is really located by Aquinas in a much more fundamental framework of the participation of all human rationality in divine reason. (So *all* knowledge implies faith in God for Aquinas.)”⁵⁸⁸ According to Milbank’s interpretation of Aquinas, only if reason is integrated with faith will it encounter truth for apart from the “light of revelation”⁵⁸⁹ there is no knowledge, in other words, no truth.

Christianity therefore must “oppose all secular reason, all secular social theory”⁵⁹⁰ for they are devoid of truth. When these various forms of secular reason return back to the *Civitas Dei* then, within the light of this city of faith, will they contain and produce

⁵⁸⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 249.

⁵⁸⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 375.

⁵⁸⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 375.

⁵⁸⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 248.

⁵⁸⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 248.

⁵⁹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 321.

truth of a true secular age.⁵⁹¹ When it is understood that Milbank uses the word secular in two different ways then the above sentence representing his thought is correctly understood. For Milbank, there is a modern and a medieval way of defining secular. According to the modern definition, influenced by Weberian social theory,⁵⁹² secular refers to social activity that is not related to the religious. Weber, explains Milbank, defines the secular in this manner because he “makes religion, in its essence, to be an extra-social affair.”⁵⁹³ In contrast, the medieval age understood religion as the essential core of what is social. Consequently, the medieval age defined the secular (*saeculum*) not as “a space, a domain, but a time – the interval between fall and *eschaton* where coercive justice, private property and impaired natural reason must make a shift to cope with the unredeemed effects of sinful humanity.”⁵⁹⁴ Consequently, if the modern concept of secular reasoning is transformed by returning to the narrative of the City of God, only then will there be truth within the secular for what is secular will then fall within the confines of the faith based and divinely illuminated narrative.

In *The Word Made Strange* (1997) with reference to the George Berkeley’s⁵⁹⁵ theory of light, Milbank further defends his position, stemming from Vico, that man is illuminated by truth only in the City of God. Berkeley, according to Milbank, maintains that a beautiful light radiating from Christ’s transfiguration and the divine glory “holds in unity the heterogeneous....”⁵⁹⁶ In this way, argues Milbank, Berkeley “is able to prevent

⁵⁹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 321.

⁵⁹² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 87-92.

⁵⁹³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 87.

⁵⁹⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 9.

⁵⁹⁵ George Berkeley was an Anglo-Irish philosopher who lived from 1685-1753.

⁵⁹⁶ John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 103.

the loss of substance leading to a skeptical dissolution, or else to determinism, or again recourse to an arbitrary will acting behind the heterogeneous signs to hold them all together.”⁵⁹⁷

In order to understand what Milbank is referring to by “loss of substance” substance also needs to be defined. This concept has its origin in Greek philosophy most notably in Aristotle and is related to the hylomorphic (in Greek *hylo-*, matter + *morphē*, form) theory. Howard Robinson explains that “the philosophical term ‘substance’ corresponds to the Greek *ousia*, which means ‘being’, transmitted via the Latin *substantia*, which means ‘something that stands under or grounds things’.”⁵⁹⁸ Aristotle’s concept of substance, therefore, is distinct from an object’s properties since the substance is what stands under the properties and unites them.⁵⁹⁹ For Aristotle, there is a plurality of substances in the world instead of, according to the Monist view,⁶⁰⁰ one substance, such as God or being, out of which all else emanates from. According to Aristotle, man,

⁵⁹⁷ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 103.

⁵⁹⁸ Howard Robinson, “Substance”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2009 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/substance/> (accessed December 04, 2010). Cf. Mary Louise Gill, *Aristotle on Substance: The Paradox of Unity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 86-90.

⁵⁹⁹ Aristotle, *The Categories*, section one, part four, The Internet Classics Archive, trans. E. M. Edghill <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/categories.html> accessed 12/04/2010 (accessed December 04, 2010). “Expressions which are in no way composite signify substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action, or affection. To sketch my meaning roughly, examples of substance are ‘man’ or ‘the horse’, of quantity, such terms as ‘two cubits long’ or ‘three cubits long’, of quality, such attributes as ‘white’, ‘grammatical’. ‘Double’, ‘half’, ‘greater’, fall under the category of relation; ‘in a the market place’, ‘in the Lyceum’, under that of place; ‘yesterday’, ‘last year’, under that of time. ‘Lying’, ‘sitting’, are terms indicating position, ‘shod’, ‘armed’, state; ‘to lance’, ‘to cauterize’, action; ‘to be lanced’, ‘to be cauterized’, affection.”

⁶⁰⁰ William Turner. “Monism,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 10, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911) <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10483a.htm> (accessed December, 04, 2010).

by relying on the agent intellect,⁶⁰¹ can know a substance after abstracting out the universal form from the object.

This explanation of knowing contrasts with Berkeley's view, advanced by Milbank, which maintains that the various elements are held in unity not by an underlying substance, that remains stable despite accidental change, but rather are united by the dynamic concept of light. Since Berkeley defines this light with the "divine glory and the light of Christ's transfiguration" he, claims Milbank, "is able to prevent the loss of substance leading to a skeptical dissolution, or else to determinism, or again recourse to an arbitrary will acting behind the heterogeneous signs to hold them all together."⁶⁰²

In opposition to Aristotle's hylomorphic theory and concept of substance as further

⁶⁰¹ The idea of the an agent intellect has its origins in Aristotle's explanation of the soul in *De Anima* in which he distinguishes between active intellect (agent intellect) and the passive intellect. (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, bk. 3, chap. 5) The agent intellect actively abstracts knowledge received by the passive intellect. (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, bk. 3, chap. 5) Aquinas interprets this vague passage as acknowledging the presence within each human intellect of an agent intellect. Furthermore, Aquinas interprets Augustine's reference to illumination as referring to the agent intellect. According to John C. Cavadini, while Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle may be correct his interpretation of Augustine "conflicts with the fact that Augustine's philosophical heritage was Platonism, not Aristotelianism. There is no room in Augustine's thought for any theory of abstraction; indeed, for Augustine, there is no universal phantasm to be abstracted." (John C. Cavadini, *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999) 438.) Nonetheless, in the Medieval age as theologians were introduced to the Latin translation of Aristotle's works there were different attempts made in integrating Augustine's theory of illumination with Aristotle's concept of an agent intellect. Bonaventure, explains Cavadini, differs from Aquinas' attempt of reconciling Augustine with Aristotle by "ascribing the function of the agent intellect to God. The divine illumination is found chiefly in God's production, infusion, or impression of the divine forms upon the human mind. These infused forms then become the norms by which humans judge experience." (Cavadini, *Augustine Through the Ages*, 439.) As Bonaventure writes "For certain knowledge, the eternal reason is necessarily involved as the regulative and motivating principle, but certainly not as the sole principle nor in its full clarity. But along with the created reason, it is constituted by us in part as is fitting in this life." (Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ* q.4, concl. Hayes, trans., 134.) According to this understanding God illuminates the mind with forms bit-by-bit and the human intellect then abstracts intelligible species from these forms. For Aquinas, in contrast, since each man has an agent intellect the human mind itself with its natural light of reason, given all at once at the age of reason, illuminates the human mind with forms and the human intellect then abstracts intelligible species from these forms.

⁶⁰² Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 103.

developed by the scholastics⁶⁰³ Berkeley's position, adopted by Milbank, maintains that man knows truth only by being divinely illuminated. This means that because metaphysics has no autonomy from the objects of faith, in particular divine glory and the light of Christ's transfiguration, man has no access to truth apart from faith.

As described by Milbank metaphysics is "a theological ontology, not an ontology independent of a divinely illumined access to the divine."⁶⁰⁴ In his chapter two section "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics" he explains what he means by a theological ontology in place of an independent ontology.⁶⁰⁵ Essentially, according to Milbank's theological ontology, metaphysics, philosophy and ontology is accorded no independence from theology. Only by operating under the light given in the narrative of faith, which theology provides, can these intellectual disciplines be reflective of truth. Milbank starkly asserts this by writing that theology "must entirely evacuate philosophy, which is metaphysics, leaving it nothing (outside imaginary worlds, logical implications or the isolation of *aporias*) to either do or see, which is not - manifestly, I judge - malicious."⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ Bernard Wuellner, *Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1955), 119.

⁶⁰⁴ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 100.

⁶⁰⁵ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 49-50. "Philosophy as spiritual discipline, oriented to, (an always in any case implicit) abstract reflection on the 'context' of our ascent, can indeed be embraced and consummated in a Christian version by theology. In this sense theology can still have recourse to *theoria* and *logos*, and if the latter constitute metaphysics, then talk of its overcoming is absurd. But philosophy as autonomous, as 'about' anything independently of its creaturely status *is* metaphysics or ontology in the most precisely technical sense. Philosophy in fact *began* as a secularizing immanentism, an attempt to regard a *cosmos* independently of a preformed reception of the poetic word. The pre-Socratics forgot both Being and the gift, while (*contra* Heidegger) the later Plato made some attempt to recover the extra-cosmic vatic *logos*. Theology has always resumed this inheritance, along with that of the Bible, and if it wishes to think again God's love, I think creation as the manifestation of that love, then it must entirely evacuate philosophy, which is metaphysics, leaving it nothing (outside imaginary worlds, logical implications or the isolation of *aporias*) to either do or see, which is not - manifestly, I judge - malicious."

⁶⁰⁶ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 50.

In his essay *The Conflict of the Faculties: Theology and the Economy of the Sciences* (2000) Milbank even more explicitly asserts that only in the light of faith provided by the Christian metanarrative is there any truth. In indicating this Milbank states that unless intellectual disciplines are “explicitly ordered to theology (assuming that this means participation in God’s self-knowledge, as in the Augustinian tradition) they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth...”⁶⁰⁷ Milbank defends this claim by arguing that the “Augustinian-Dionysian-Thomist structure of analogy of being and participation in being”⁶⁰⁸ rejects the concept of a “non-theological mode of knowledge.”⁶⁰⁹ If non-theological disciplines are not ordered to theology, writes Milbank, “the redundancy theorists of truth are right; ‘truth’ is an eliminable term since it only means that what is ‘is,’ and ‘is’ in this context must mean that which appears to us (in terms of both nature and culture) to be, the world as we either pragmatically or conventionally reckon with it.”⁶¹⁰ For Milbank, truth, as an ever

⁶⁰⁷ Milbank, *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology*, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009), 306.

⁶⁰⁸ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 308.

⁶⁰⁹ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 307. Milbank asserts that theology is rooted in an analogy of creation by which man participates in the inner creation of God. “For theology, indeed, truth is an adequation or correspondence of knowledge with the real, since the one entirely real reality, God, is itself both infinitely actual and infinitely knowing. As real, he is also manifest and self-aware, or truthful. For us to express a truth means that to a degree we correspond in our being to God via an awareness of aspects of the creation to whose lesser reality we also correspond, since the creation is rooted in God, and its being is entirely from God. From this theological perspective alone it makes sense to say that knowing corresponds to being even though we have no access to being other than via knowing, and thus a claim that our knowledge “corresponds” can never be checked up. We cannot compare what is known with the knowledge of it, since what is known is not available other than through knowledge. Hence a claim to know truly, a claim to know at all, does indeed, as Plato argued, only make sense within the framework of *me-thexis* (participation), for it amounts to a faith that what one shows or expresses in knowledge radiates mysteriously, and in a limited measure, yet not deceptively, from a plenitudinous origin that is both the source of all things and the genuine depth of all things.” Milbank, *Future of Love*, 304.

⁶¹⁰ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 304.

changing reality, can only remain a meaningful term if it is seen, through theology, in relationship to God, who, in his inner creation, provides man with ultimate meaning.⁶¹¹

Unfortunately, Milbank laments, this manner of understanding theology in relationship to truth was lost when theology was conceived in terms of “secondary reflection upon, *data*, whether of scripture or tradition.”⁶¹² Theological truth, according to this perspective, is connected, according to Milbank, to “an entirely *superstitious* and *contemptible* notion of an arbitrary and blind faith in certain supposedly revealed facts.”⁶¹³ For Milbank, the main people who were responsible for this shift in thinking were “Duns Scotus and his successors through Suarez and Descartes to Kant.”⁶¹⁴ These thinkers, explains Milbank, “elaborated the notion that it was possible adequately to think of Being as such apart from its instantiation as the infinite actuality of God. In consequence, it became legitimate to think of the being of a creature *apart from* its creature-hood. But this alters altogether the meaning of contingency.”⁶¹⁵ When being is conceived as possible to think about apart from its relationship to God then the idea of participation and the resulting understanding of all truth as being grounded in God is lost sight of. Not recognizing that man relates to truth by participating in God’s creative truth led, argues Milbank, in accordance with Vico’s anti-Cartesian stance, to focusing on that which appears clear and distinct to our minds both in theological and non-theological disciplines. Previously, according to Milbank, since man’s knowledge of truth was

⁶¹¹ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 309. Theology, explains Milbank, “concerns the gradually renewed disclosure of God himself through creatures which makes use of the ceaseless becoming of creation in time.”

⁶¹² Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 309.

⁶¹³ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 309.

⁶¹⁴ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 307.

⁶¹⁵ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 307.

viewed as a participation in God it was not perceived as something that is clear and distinct to the mind but only as a reality which gradually discloses itself to man as history unfolds. According to this understanding, explains Milbank, truth is not precisely defined knowledge but rather is akin to a formless light which radiates from its source. As stated by Milbank truth “amounts to a faith that what one shows or expresses in knowledge radiates mysteriously, and in a limited measure, yet not deceptively, from a plenitudinous origin that is both the source of all things and the genuine depth of all things.”⁶¹⁶

1.2.3 Faith is Reason and Reason is Faith:

In *Truth in Aquinas* (2001) Milbank further defends his position that outside of the light of faith there is no truth. He does this by conceiving faith and reason as not parallel realities “but phases within a single extension.”⁶¹⁷ Thus he is able to state, as he does above, that truth amounts to faith since it is known within the context of the single extension that contains throughout, in varying degrees, the light of faith. This explains his assertion that unless intellectual disciplines are “explicitly ordered to theology (assuming that this means participation in God’s self-knowledge, as in the Augustinian tradition) they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth....”⁶¹⁸ If intellectual disciplines are not ordered to theology then they do not partake in the reason-faith single extension and thus not only do they lack the light of faith but they also lack the light of reason which cannot be separated out from faith.

⁶¹⁶ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 304.

⁶¹⁷ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21.

⁶¹⁸ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 306.

In describing the successive phases of this single extension Milbank writes that they are “always qualitatively the same. That is to say, always conjoining inner illumination of the active intellect by God with formation of the passive intellect by species received from creatures, whose being, equally with our intellect, is formed and measured by participation in the divine understanding.”⁶¹⁹ In this way Milbank reads Aquinas as integrating an Augustinian/neoplatonic theory of illumination with an Aristotelian concept of the agent intellect.⁶²⁰

In explaining how Aquinas integrates these two different epistemological theories Milbank states that when the intellect actively receives “into itself the species of the material substances it knows, it does not know them in the manner of an arraignment of inert facts.”⁶²¹ Instead, further writes Milbank, “it must always *judge* or *discern* whether they are true to themselves.”⁶²² In order to judge whether the object is true to itself the mind must judge whether the object is “according to the mind's divine inner light of illumination. By doing this, the mind discerns or grasps an analogical proportion of things to God, and finds here a manifestation of the invisible in the visible. Thus, what it finds here is beauty which ‘pleases’ the sight, and delights the judgment.”⁶²³

This manner of interpreting Aquinas contrasts with the a moderately dualistic reading of Aquinas, in which reason, due to the agent intellect, does not share a single

⁶¹⁹ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 24.

⁶²⁰ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 23. “In the case of the operation of reason, we have seen in the first chapter that Aquinas's continued Augustinian and neoplatonic construal of truth as inner *illuminatio* can nonetheless incorporate (as it could already in Augustine, Proclus, and Dionysius, if not Plotinus) an essential Aristotelian detour through the truth embodied in finite creatures and conveyed to us only via the senses.”

⁶²¹ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 11.

⁶²² Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 11. Milbank references, Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Q. 1 a. 3 resp; a. 4 resp.; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia. q. 12, art. 11 ad. 3; Ia, q. 79, art. 9.

⁶²³ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 11.

extension with faith but rather enjoys a certain degree of autonomy from faith with respect to truth. Milbank admits that Aquinas does appear to clearly espouse “an autonomous reason and philosophical theology.”⁶²⁴ However, asserts Milbank, upon closer examination this avowal is only apparent since it “cannot be rendered consistent with certain other crucial passages in his writings and therefore must be reinterpreted.”⁶²⁵ According to his reinterpretation of Aquinas, “reason and faith in Aquinas represent only different degrees of intensity of participation in the divine light of illumination and different measures of absolute vision.”⁶²⁶ Furthermore, Milbank argues that an accurate reading of Aquinas leads to the conclusion “that reason itself requires faith because it already presupposes the operation of grace, while, inversely, faith still demands discursive argumentation and is only higher than reason because it enjoys a deeper participation in the divine reason which is direct intuition or pure intellectual vision.”⁶²⁷ In other words, reason’s existence depends on being within the single extension which in all its phases contains some degree of faith. Whatever is made and conceived of outside of this extension may appear to be reasonable but actually is irrational and totally lacking in truth.

2.0 Truth as Mediated:

As has been shown, according to Milbank’s further development of truth’s convertibility with the factum, as asserted by Vico, in the light of faith man creates truth by imitating in a non-identical manner the inner created truth of the Trinity in which the

⁶²⁴ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21.

⁶²⁵ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21.

⁶²⁶ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, xiii.

⁶²⁷ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, xiii.

three persons live in harmony through their differences. In this way man actively, through his participation in divine creativity under the light of faith, corresponds to truth. Man does not, consequently in this perspective, relate to truth by receptively mirroring ideal divine truths. This presentation of Milbank's understanding of truth would be incomplete, however, if the medium through which the light that gives man the ability to create truth is not discussed. As a further development of Vico's convertibility of truth with *factum*, for Milbank the light of truth is mediated through Christ and through the Church as a social space based on reconciliation which leads to just economic interactions. I will begin with how Milbank depicts Christ as mediator.

2.1 Mediation of Christ:

Before focusing on Milbank's understanding of Christ as mediator it is necessary to determine how he defines Christ. In defining Christ Milbank objects to the Council of Nicea's definition of Christ as the same substance with the Father (*homoousion*). According to Milbank the use of this term by the Council does not mean "that 'substance' is integral to the Christian definition of orthodoxy."⁶²⁸ Rather, argues Milbank, "it is much more the case that orthodoxy presses against substance; the *homoousion* is really redundant, once the principle of substantive relation is established, and the more the 'personal' union of divinity and humanity in Jesus is reduced to a 'subsistent' one, then the more it is seen as a kind of Nestorian 'aggregation', as Gilbert de la Porree pointed out in the twelfth century."⁶²⁹ Gilbert de la Porree (1070-1154), continues Milbank, "removed the Greek 'hypostatic' connotations of the Trinitarian *persona* by redefining

⁶²⁸ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 110.

⁶²⁹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 110.

the person as ‘an incommunicable form’, whose positional difference ensures that its individuality cannot be *composed* with other forms, according to its very mode of being, instead of the Boethian ‘individual rational substance.’”⁶³⁰

Gilbert de la Porree’s definition of person as ‘an incommunicable form’ contrasts with Aquinas’ who held that “person signifies what is most perfect in all nature – that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature.”⁶³¹ This teaching of Aquinas reflects the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon (451) which defines Christ’s divine person by his two rational natures, “we all teach that with one accord we confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in human nature, true God and true man, the same with a rational soul and a body, consubstantial with the Father according to divine nature.”⁶³² For Gilbert de la Porree, however as described by Milbank, what is persistent in the identity of a person including Christ’s

⁶³⁰ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 110. Cf. G. R. Evans, *The Medieval Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Medieval Period*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001), 120. “The pivotal point of Gilbert’s deliberations on the nature of the divine persons is the conviction that the word ‘person’ retains a major part of its signification when applied to the divine persons. In the world of creatures, according to Gilbert, the word ‘person’ designates an object that has proper being in the sense that it cannot be composed with anything else, i.e., enter into composition with something else and become part of a more comprehensive totality. This is true of the object itself as well as of its ontological principles, which is to say its inherent forms that endow the object with being and make the thing into what it is. That an object is a person and has this special kind of singularity is, as Gilbert explains, revealed by the so-called externally affixed accidents. Accidents of this kind do not endow the object with being in the proper sense of the word, i.e., they are not inherent formal principles, but are the circumstances in which the object is situated. Exemplifying this, one may say that Socrates’ being a father or living in particular house in Athens are external in comparison to Socrates’ ontological constitution, inasmuch as they do not make Socrates into an object of a particular kind; they merely describe Socrates’ position in the world. Nonetheless, these external accidents are indicative of Socrates’ being person inasmuch as they demonstrate that Socrates is unique in the sense that no other object is situated in precisely the same circumstances as Socrates or relate to other things in the world in the very same way. For this reason it is true to say of created persons that they are person because of their inherent being that is singular and individual or incommunicable.” For a more in depth exposition of Gilbert’s thought see, Lauge Olaf Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Gilbert Porreta's Thinking and the Theological Expositions of the Doctrine of the Incarnation During the Period 1130-1180*, (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1982).

⁶³¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia., q. 29, art. 4.

⁶³² Denzinger, *The Sources*, 60-61.

“does not proceed from any ‘subsistent’ dimension within the individual... Instead, it resides purely on the ‘surface’ of a series of events which exhibit a certain pattern and coherence. It is, paradoxically, the unique singularity and incommunicability of this pattern (as opposed to the transferability of an accident from substance to substance) which makes it ‘repeatable’ and further definable beyond the confines of its possession by a single ‘individual’.”⁶³³ For this reason when Milbank refers to Jesus Christ he is not directing our attention to the subsistent dimension within Christ’s individuality as especially made manifest to us through his rational human nature but rather to “the ‘place’ in which all true identities are located.”⁶³⁴ This means that Jesus’s identity, writes Milbank “does not actually relate to his ‘character’, but rather to his universal significance for which his particularity stands, almost, as a mere cipher.”⁶³⁵

Milbank, following Vico’s axiom applied to Christology, explains that as almost a non-entity “[Jesus] cannot be given any particular content” instead “all we can do is to identify him with the general norms”⁶³⁶ of a new practice which he founded. Even though the gospels appear to give specific details about Jesus, for Milbank they are to be “read, not as the story of Jesus, but as the story of the (re)foundation of a new city, a new kind of human community, Israel-become-the-Church”.⁶³⁷ In this same place Milbank claims he supports the doctrine that Christ’s human nature was assumed and not absorbed by his divinity by writing “it is indeed true that incarnation cannot be by the absorbing of

⁶³³ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 157.

⁶³⁴ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 158.

⁶³⁵ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 149.

⁶³⁶ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 152.

⁶³⁷ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 150.

divinity into humanity, but only by the assumption of humanity into divinity.”⁶³⁸ For Milbank, “[a]ll that survives that is particular in this assumption is the proper name ‘Jesus’.”⁶³⁹ This name Jesus does not refer to a particular human nature but rather to the beginning of a new practice. What, therefore is assumed? Milbank continues by writing, “It is certainly the case that by telling stories about a character on earth called ‘Jesus’, and by putting words into his mouth, the gospels minimally indicate reference to a ‘reality’ that is independent of their narration. But the use of the proper name does not *show* us this reality.”⁶⁴⁰

The reality of Jesus that is independent from a specific person can, for Milbank, “only be finally specified as the entire content and process of every human life, in so far as it *is* genuinely human life, according to the formal specifications of the gospel narratives and metaphors.”⁶⁴¹ This does not mean that Jesus as specific person has absolutely no value. Rather, explains Milbank, “the universal repeatability of Jesus is made possible *by* his specific historic occurrence, and this is never ‘dispensable’ in specifying the conditions of our salvation....”⁶⁴² For Milbank, Jesus’ death is of particular importance as a “specific historic occurrence” which is to be universally repeated. His death has the importance, asserts Milbank, of inaugurating “the ‘political’ practice of forgiveness; forgiveness as a mode of ‘government’ and social being.”⁶⁴³ Through this political practice of forgiveness first initiated by the death of Jesus,

⁶³⁸ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 150.

⁶³⁹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 150.

⁶⁴⁰ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 150.

⁶⁴¹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 156.

⁶⁴² Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 158.

⁶⁴³ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 161.

atonement, claims Milbank, is historically continued.⁶⁴⁴ The truth, therefore, that Jesus mediates is “a new way of life founded upon non-rivalry, non-retaliation and mutual sharing”⁶⁴⁵ that is especially manifested through the ecclesial body in which this new life is made historically present by way of consensus in which differences are blended not despite but through the differences.⁶⁴⁶

2.2 Mediation of the Church:

Not only does Milbank develop Vico’s convertibility of truth with factum as it applies to Christology but also as it applies to ecclesiology. For Milbank the reality, or nature assumed into the divinity, is defined by the Church. In this way, points out Bauerschmidt, he posits “a logical (and even temporal...) priority of the ecclesial body over the natural.”⁶⁴⁷ According to Milbank, prioritizing the natural body of Christ over the ecclesial body is an “extrinsicism”⁶⁴⁸ that is to be avoided. This error is overcome, argues Milbank, by seeing ecclesiology as what essentially defines Christology. In such an ecclesiology “The most concrete elements in the gospels” are not the specific actions of Christ but rather “are the general injunctions and examples regarding Christian practice. Only here do we ‘identify’ God incarnate, and this identification should be fleshed out in the later history and contemporary life of the Church.”⁶⁴⁹

Milbank’s prioritizing of the ecclesial, as developed in history, over the concrete human nature of Christ, Bauerschmidt observes, is “a priority that is of a piece with the

⁶⁴⁴ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 161.

⁶⁴⁵ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 146

⁶⁴⁶ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 155.

⁶⁴⁷ Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, “The Word Made Speculative? John Milbank’s Christological Poetics,” *Modern Theology* 15, no. 4 (October, 1999): 424.

⁶⁴⁸ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 165.

⁶⁴⁹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 165.

priority of connotation over denotation in language.”⁶⁵⁰ As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, according to Milbank following Vico’s hylozoistic metaphysics where all is in flux and there are no stable natures, words are not primarily understood as denoting a specific nature but rather as referring to an infinite number of possible connotations associated with the word. Therefore, in Milbank’s mind, the word Jesus does not refer to a specific nature but rather to all practices which represent/connote the new practice established by Jesus. This leads Milbank to focus “more upon the Kingdom [the new practice begun by Jesus] than upon [the person of] Jesus.”⁶⁵¹

The Kingdom is established on earth through the Church, as Jesus, mediating grace and truth. This raises the question as to what, for Milbank, constitutes the Church? Bauerschmidt demonstrates that in Milbank’s ecclesiology “[b]oth Christian institutions and Christian morality suffer the same evacuation of content as the name of ‘Jesus’.

Indeed, it seems that apart from a more robust account of the human particularity of Jesus, the church that is his body, and its mode of life in the world, is condemned merely to float above the messy world of ecclesiastical institutions and laws. Or, perhaps put better, its identity is subject to the same ‘flux’ as personal identity.”⁶⁵² Does Milbank warrant Bauerschmidt’s harsh critique? After all, Milbank defines the church as “‘doubly exceeding body’ of Christ, the Other Space of our history.”⁶⁵³ What, therefore, constitutes the body and the space he is referring to through which truth is mediated?

2.3 The Church is Democratic, Aristocratic and Monarchic:

⁶⁵⁰ Bauerschmidt, *The Word Made Speculative?*, 424.

⁶⁵¹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 148.

⁶⁵² Bauerschmidt, *The Word Made Speculative*, 4.

⁶⁵³ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 285.

In describing the constitution of the Church Milbank writes that it is “ ‘a nomad city’ (one might say) for it does not have a site, or walls or gates.”⁶⁵⁴ It might appear that within this nomadic space there does not exist a privileged way of mediating truth and grace since, as described by Milbank, the Church has no enduring structural components. In addition, Milbank does not acknowledge any one site in the Church as having precedence over another for he claims that the mediation of the Church as Christ is “an endless series of new mediations.”⁶⁵⁵ However, he does affirm general characteristics of the Church which are necessary in providing her with a shape that is patterned throughout history. This pattern, which Milbank describes as jointly political and ecclesial, “remains classically democratic/aristocratic/monarchic.”⁶⁵⁶

The element which is most prevalent is democratic since the aim of the Church, writes Milbank, “is that all should love, and trust, all should become virtuous.”⁶⁵⁷ However, this does not mean that the democratic element is to prevail “in all circumstances, nor [does it accord] any validity in the notion that the will of the majority should always prevail.”⁶⁵⁸ Instead, explains Milbank, the Church’s “reasons for favoring democracy are rather that the entire truth of Christianity exists in harmonious dispersal amongst the body of Christ (eschatologically the entire human race and the entire cosmos) and that agreement in the truth requires ideally a free consensus.”⁶⁵⁹ Furthermore, adds Milbank, the democratic element in the Church is characterized by

⁶⁵⁴ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 392.

⁶⁵⁵ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 406.

⁶⁵⁶ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, xiv.

⁶⁵⁷ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, xiv.

⁶⁵⁸ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, xiv.

⁶⁵⁹ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, xiv.

participation and not so much by representation⁶⁶⁰ since “as Newman pointed out, the ‘correctness’ of doctrine must finally be tested in practice by the assent of all. For Christian truth abides more fundamentally in the entirety of liturgical and pastoral life than it does in abstract reflection.”⁶⁶¹ This is in accordance with Vico’s association of truth with praxis rather than with theory.

At the same time, though, Milbank asserts that “*a purely participatory democracy, without representation, is surely an illusion under any conditions, ancient or modern. For prior to the complex decisions made for itself by the multitude lie always persuasions by the Few and the many ‘ones,’ while the execution of these sovereignly autonomous decisions involves once again heteronomous interventions by the One and the Few, since all cannot attend to the business of all, for all of the time.*”⁶⁶² In order for democracy not to be illusory, therefore, there is a need for aristocratic (the few) and monarchic (the one) elements which shape the Church’s participatory democracy. For Milbank, by educating the majority these aristocratic and monarchic elements help to mediate truth.⁶⁶³

2.4 What is Taught:

It is easier to specify what Milbank rejects as part of the education mediated hierarchically by the Church than what is positively taught. For Milbank the Church does not hierarchically mediate truth by teaching people specifics of morality since, “as resurrection cancels death, and appears to render murder non-serious, it restores no moral

⁶⁶⁰ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, xv.

⁶⁶¹ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, xv.

⁶⁶² Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 259.

⁶⁶³ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 259.

order, but absolutely ruins the possibility of *any* moral order whatsoever.”⁶⁶⁴ Milbank further denies the Church as having a role in mediating a moral order by insisting that “[t]he Christian man is not a moral man, not a man of good *conscience*, who acts *with* what he *knows* of death, scarcity and duty to totalities. He has a bad conscience, but a good *confidence*: for he acts with what he does not know but has faith in. In absolute trust he gives up trying to be good, to sustain a right order of government within himself...Instead to be good as first receiving from the all-sufficiency of God, and acting excessively out of this excess.”⁶⁶⁵

If the Church is not to teach any moral order then what does its education, besides basic doctrinal teaching, that is passed on from one generation to the other consist in? According to Milbank, claiming to represent de Lubac’s thought, this consists in the mediation of reconciliation, both “with one’s fellow human beings, and reconciliation with God. Both mediations occur in the Church, so that the Church is not primarily the means of salvation, but rather the goal of salvation, because it is the community of the reconciled.”⁶⁶⁶ The reconciliation that Milbank is referring to is not to be confused with the “reconciliation” brought about by the sacrament of reconciliation. According to Milbank, the private system of confessional practice that largely emerged in the tenth to the twelfth centuries is a distortion of reconciliation since “[i]n the earlier time, open confession to a bishop, rather than private confession to God, had not been concerned with the subtle shifting of desire at all, but rather the violation of certain quite specific

⁶⁶⁴ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 229.

⁶⁶⁵ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 231.

⁶⁶⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 226.

norms, and the committing of obviously public crimes. Penitence was normally undertaken once in a lifetime, and it permanently transferred the penitent to a semi-religious state of life. Thus the new legalistic regulation of everyday sins and the inner life emerged within the Church as a great anomaly, and was much protested at.”⁶⁶⁷

The reconciliation, therefore according to Milbank again following Vico’s axiom, the Church is to mediate is not to be found in a privatized system but rather in a corporate manner in which the Church as a “society of friends” helps to bring about a specific practice of truth represented by political socialism.⁶⁶⁸ The morality, consequently, that the Church teaches does not consist of specific, universally valid norms of behavior but rather is “a new *ethos* ... a new kind of community, the *ecclesia*.”⁶⁶⁹ Furthermore, the handed down fundamental ethical traits of the Church as a community brought about through reconciliation is, argues Milbank, “itself a ‘political’ reality.”⁶⁷⁰ As an ecclesial-political reality the Church mediates the divine truth of three persons eternally reconciled through their differences. This truth is to be a “unique and distinctive structural logic for human society”⁶⁷¹ which Milbank states “is what ecclesiology is really all about.”⁶⁷² Trinitarian truth is mediated within the unique and new structural logic of the Church which is an ecclesial space “(a space whose boundaries are properly ill-defined) where truly just economic exchanges occur, in the sense that the equivalents of value are

⁶⁶⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 292.

⁶⁶⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 244.

⁶⁶⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 399.

⁶⁷⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 403.

⁶⁷¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

⁶⁷² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

established between product and product, service and service, just as a sense emerges of ‘equivalent restitution for moral fault.’⁶⁷³

Along with mediating Trinitarian truth through just economic exchanges the Church is also to mediate it socially by seeking “to be an asylum, a house of refuge from its operations, a social space where a different, forgiving and restitutionary practice is pursued.”⁶⁷⁴ Conceived of in this way the Church, “rather than the sovereign state,” Milbank writes echoing the 19th century French socialist Pierre Buchez, is “the site of a new social order.”⁶⁷⁵ According to Milbank, in contrast with R.A Markus,⁶⁷⁶ this definition of the Church is what Augustine means by his city of God, for Augustine sees the institutional elements of the Church as constitutive of the Church and not merely “secondary and incidental matter.”⁶⁷⁷

2.5 The Church is Political:

As the site of a new social order the Church, writes Milbank, relocates “all ‘political’ theory...as thought about the Church.”⁶⁷⁸ When the Church is understood in this way it is not possible to delineate it from a political ‘state’ since the Church is to be

⁶⁷³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

⁶⁷⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

⁶⁷⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 196.

⁶⁷⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 402. According to Milbank Markus mistakenly tried “to play down Augustine’s explicit identification of the visible, institutional Church with the ‘city of God on pilgrimage through this world.’ Markus argues that Augustine progressively drew away from the general tendency of African Christianity to define clearly a visible and separate Christian community, in favor of a purely eschatological separation by God of the elect from all ages. However, while Augustine is certainly at pains to stress that many true members of the city of God lie outside the bounds of the institutional Church, just as many of the baptized are not true members at all, this does not mean that he regards institutional adherence as a secondary and incidental matter.” See R.A. Markus, *Saeculum, History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 178-186 esp. 180.

⁶⁷⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 402.

⁶⁷⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

the origin of the political. In accordance with his interpretation of Augustine, Milbank instead distinguishes the Church as *civitas dei*, with constitutive institutional, political elements, from the *civitas terrena*. In this relationship, the city of man is differentiated from the Church not by supposed ‘secular activities’ but rather solely by its “use of a coercive force that is inherently arbitrary or excessive, in the sense that it goes beyond the ‘disciplinary’ purposes envisaged by love, and involves some elements of *dominium*, self-assertion, and the love of power over others for its own sake.”⁶⁷⁹ Understood in this way political, liturgical and sacramental activities are all seen as proper to the sphere of the Church as long as they do not entail arbitrary or excessive coercive force. Accordingly, the Church, for Milbank, is not “narrowly defined as a cure of souls.”⁶⁸⁰ Equating the Church with the care of souls, in Milbank’s thought, is a distorted ecclesiology since it exaggerates one aspect of the Church while denying its political and social aspects.

Milbank in expressing his broad ecclesiology in opposition to the narrower kind described above writes, “Better, then, that the bounds between Church and state be extremely hazy, so that a ‘social’ existence of many complex and interlocking powers may emerge, and forestall either a sovereign state, or a hierarchical Church.”⁶⁸¹ As we have seen in defining the city of man by a mode of activity, excessive and arbitrary use of

⁶⁷⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406. Milbank agrees with Augustine that some degree of coercion is necessary and allowed in the city of God, “because freedom of the will in itself is not the goal, and sometimes people can be temporarily blind and will only be prevented from permanent self-damage when they are forced into some course of action, or prevented from another. Such coercive action remains in itself dangerous, as it risks promoting resentment, but this risk is offset by the possibility that the recipient can later come to understand and retrospectively consent to the means taken. Such action may not be ‘peaceable’, yet can still be ‘redeemed’ by retrospective acceptance, and so contribute to the final goal of peace.”

⁶⁸⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 408.

⁶⁸¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 408.

force, and not by specific activities themselves a sovereign state is prevented from being perceived. A hierarchical Church which “mimics the procedures of political sovereignty”⁶⁸² is also forestalled from being envisioned for no longer is the Church seen as separate from the political. In rejecting a hierarchical Church Milbank does not intend, as has been previously shown, to deny the Church aristocratic and monarchic elements. Instead he means to eliminate from the Church a “fixed hierarchy” by conceiving the Church “as an infinite serial emanation”⁶⁸³ in which “every ‘position’ it establishes is of equal importance, and of equal necessity to all the other positions, even if there remain inequalities of ability and necessary inequalities of function.”⁶⁸⁴ There is, therefore in Milbank’s political ecclesiology, for the purpose of education, a hierarchical aspect made up of aristocratic and monarchic elements. However, this aspect is not to remain fixed through time since, “Unlike the antique ethics of the city, the ethics of the *ecclesia* is able to accord only a *qualified* value to particular, historical formations.”⁶⁸⁵

For Milbank this ecclesial hierarchy in a constant state of becoming is baroque in the sense that “every detail (as Deleuze points out) is a ‘fold’ within an overall design, but the design itself is but a continuous unfolding, which reaches out ecstatically beyond its frame towards its supporting structure.”⁶⁸⁶ The baroque aspect of Church structure is understood by Milbank both architecturally and musically. Understood architecturally the ecclesial aristocratic and monarchic elements are in a constant state of historical unfolding that draw us upward towards God. Musically conceived, the non-fixed,

⁶⁸² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 408.

⁶⁸³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 416.

⁶⁸⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 416.

⁶⁸⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 416.

⁶⁸⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 428-429.

baroque hierarchy of the Church is like individual musical lines which “become increasingly distinct and individually ornamented; there is an increasing ‘delay’ of resolutions, and an increasing generation of new developments out of temporary resolutions.”⁶⁸⁷

The similarity that is being brought out here between baroque music and Church life is dissonance (differences) being continually resolved in ever new and unpredictable ways. For Milbank the continual harmonization of differences defines the Church who in order “to be the Church, must seek to extend the sphere of socially aesthetic harmony.”⁶⁸⁸ According to Milbank the harmonization of Trinitarian differences is the truth the Church mediates. This aesthetic Trinitarian truth is made visible in the multi-faceted dimension of ecclesial relationships. As Milbank states, “The goal of the *ecclesia*, the city of God, is not collective glory, as if the city were itself a hero, any more than it is the production of heroic individuals. Instead, it really has no *telos* properly speaking, but continuously *is* the differential sequence which has the goal beyond goal of generating new relationships, which themselves situate and define ‘persons’.”⁶⁸⁹

So far, Milbank description of the Church appears extremely vague since nothing can be considered as non-ecclesial except coercive force that does not bring about reconciliation by harmonizing differences. Ecclesial reconciliation, though, is specified by Milbank in three previously mentioned ways. First, reconciliation occurs in the Church as the locus of a new social-political-economic space. The new space created by

⁶⁸⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 429.

⁶⁸⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

⁶⁸⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 405.

the Church is situated in the Christian metanarrative brought about by the Church's "narrative relationship to Jesus and the gospels."⁶⁹⁰ As a metanarrative, Christianity subsumes Jesus, the gospels and the Church within its story.⁶⁹¹ This, explains Milbank, "must be the case, because no *historical* story is ever 'over and done with'. Furthermore, the New Testament itself does not preach any denial of historicity, or any disappearance of our own personalities into the monistic truth of Christ."⁶⁹²

The second way in which reconciliation is brought about within the Church is described by Milbank more specifically. According to this way the Church is to be an economic space where just and charitable exchanges to occur. The third way is by the Church mediating a social-political space where men are reconciled and learn to live in harmony after the example of the Trinity in which the three persons live in peace through their differences. These ways in which ecclesial truth is mediated to the world shape the "new practice"⁶⁹³ founded by the person Jesus.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, by focusing on truth as illumination and as mediated, Milbank's more explicit theological treatment of truth as grounded in an analogy of creation

⁶⁹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 387.

⁶⁹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 387.

⁶⁹² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 387. Milbank continues, "Quite to the contrary, Jesus's mission is seen as inseparable from his preaching of the kingdom, and inauguration of a new sort of community, the Church. Salvation is available for us after Christ, because we can be incorporated into the community which he founded, and the response of this community to Christ is made possible by the response of the divine Spirit to the divine Son, from whom it receives the love that flows between Son and Father. The association of the Church with the response of the Spirit which arises 'after' the Son, and yet is fully divine, shows that the new community belongs from the beginning within the new narrative manifestation of God. Hence the metanarrative is *not* just the story of Jesus, it is the continuing story of the Church, already realized in a finally exemplary way by Christ, yet still to be realized universally, in harmony with Christ, and yet *differently*, by all generations of Christians."

⁶⁹³ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 152.

appropriated from Vico's metaphysics was examined. According to Milbank, only in the divine light of faith provided by the literary republic of the city of God can man create truth. Outside of this city, in other words outside of faith, man has no access to truth. This approach to truth as illuminated is rooted in Vico's hylozoism according to which everything is in flux. Despite the universal flux of reality there is a tendency (Vico's *conatus* principle) within everything to be directed to God. Man participates in the divine *conatus* principle by creating in the light of faith his civil world. As long as every activity (political, economic and social) within this civil world is directed theologically to God they all make up the city of God and specify how man corresponds to truth.

In his works subsequent to his dissertation on Vico Milbank further draws out the implications of Vico's principle that truth is convertible with *factum*. In *Theology and Social Theory* he does this by describing Vico's literary republic as subsumed, along with Jesus, in the Christian metanarrative. The metanarrative of Christianity, he clearly states, is based on faith and not on "a reason which seeks foundations."⁶⁹⁴ Outside of this metanarrative, consequently, there is no truth. The truth that is present in the Christian story is not, for Milbank, "concerned with universal laws, nor universal truths of the spirit."⁶⁹⁵ However, he argues, simply because there is no substantive truth in the city of God, does not mean that he is promoting the nihilism of Derrida or Nietzsche. This is because, unlike certain versions of postmodernism which are founded on an ontology of violence, the Christian metanarrative is grounded in an ontology of the peaceful Trinitarian relations where difference lives in harmony.

⁶⁹⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 249.

⁶⁹⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 267.

Milbank in his later works also more clearly rejects an autonomous ability of reason to create and thereby know truth apart from the light of faith. For Milbank, therefore, there is only one context in which truth can be created and this context is the metanarrative of Christianity. All other overarching explanations of reality are, asserts Milbank, “not a simulacrum, not a bad copy of a real thing, nor even a mistaken combination, but rather a pure negation.”⁶⁹⁶ In backing up his assertion he refers to Aquinas who held, according to Milbank, that “*all knowledge implies faith in God.*”⁶⁹⁷ In *Truth in Aquinas* Milbank visually describes this supposedly Thomistic teaching by depicting faith and reason as not parallel realities “but phases within a single extension.”⁶⁹⁸

In addition to using Aquinas’s reasoning to further his thought grounded in Vico’s metaphysics and concept of truth Milbank also appeals to Berkeley. Berkeley, in Milbank’s interpretation, rejects the presence of truth outside of the light of faith with his theory that light radiating from Christ’s transfiguration and the divine glory “holds in unity the heterogeneous....”⁶⁹⁹ This light is only radiated by objects of faith. Since Berkeley, along with Milbank, rejects substances as providing knowable form to the dissimilar, outside of this light there can be no knowledge or formation of truth since only divine light brings together dissimilar aspects of reality. When reality is thus understood this means that metaphysics, along with reason, has no autonomy from faith. Rather, according to Milbank, metaphysics is “a theological ontology, not an ontology

⁶⁹⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 375.

⁶⁹⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 248.

⁶⁹⁸ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21.

⁶⁹⁹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 103.

independent of a divinely illumined access to the divine.”⁷⁰⁰ This position of Milbank leads him to claim that unless intellectual disciplines are “explicitly ordered to theology (assuming that this means participation in God’s self-knowledge, as in the Augustinian tradition) they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth...”⁷⁰¹ By defining truth with faith means that truth cannot be precisely defined since man only knows truth by creating his world in the light of the relatively formless light radiating from its Trinitarian source.

Milbank’s theory of illumination stemming from his assimilation of Vico is inadequately presented if the medium through which truth is illuminated to man is not discussed. According to Milbank, truth is mediated actively and jointly through Christ and through the Church. In defining Christ as mediator Milbank rejects Aquinas’s definition of person as “a subsistent individual of a rational nature.”⁷⁰² Instead he advocates Gilbert de la Porree’s definition of person as “an incommunicable form.”⁷⁰³ In this way Milbank is able to define Christ as mediator not in reference to a subsistent dimension within Christ’s individuality, which Milbank rejects, but rather to “the ‘place’ in which all true identities are located.”⁷⁰⁴ This leads Milbank to prioritize the Church as body of Christ over Christ’s natural body. [By prioritizing the historical Church as body of Christ over Christ’s natural body Christ is not accorded any particular content by Milbank, but instead is identified “with the general norms”⁷⁰⁵ of a new practice which

⁷⁰⁰ John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 100.

⁷⁰¹ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 306.

⁷⁰² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia q. 29, art. 4.

⁷⁰³ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 110.

⁷⁰⁴ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 158.

⁷⁰⁵ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 152.

Christ founded.] Here Milbank is concretizing, as it applies to Christ and Ecclesiology, Vico's primary association of truth with praxis rather than with theory. The vague above mentioned norms are the truth mediated by the Church as Christ's body extended through time. These norms were begun at Christ's death whereby "the 'political' practice of forgiveness; forgiveness as a mode of 'government' and social being"⁷⁰⁶ were introduced into the world. The truth that the Church mediates, therefore, is essentially "a new way of life founded upon non-rivalry, non-retaliation and mutual sharing"⁷⁰⁷ made historically present by way of consensus in which differences are blended not despite but through the differences.⁷⁰⁸

Even though Milbank refuses to accord any specific truth and thereby specific shape to the Church as mediator he does give it general characteristics that last through time. According to Milbank, in order that the general peaceful norms of behavior inaugurated by Christ's death are faithfully passed on, the predominantly democratic aspect of the Church is moderated by aristocratic and monarchic elements. The truth that is hierarchically taught is the new political system begun by Christ, mediating Trinitarian truth, where differences harmoniously co-exist. The truth mediated by the Church, therefore, amounts to a "unique and distinctive structural logic for human society."⁷⁰⁹ Within this structural logic a new social-political order sprang up with the Church as the locus. In this new order Trinitarian truth is represented on earth by practices within the ecclesial social-political space where men are reconciled with one another and where just

⁷⁰⁶ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 161.

⁷⁰⁷ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 146

⁷⁰⁸ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 155.

⁷⁰⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

and charitable exchanges occur. In chapter six, it will be discussed in greater detail how Milbank equates these new truthful practices with socialism thus effectively reducing the Church to a political system⁷¹⁰ based on reconciliation which is to displace the dominant, capitalistic, political system rooted in containing violence by mediating self-interest.⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 402. Here Milbank, in interpreting Augustine, writes, “And as a *civitas*, the Church is, for Augustine, itself a ‘political’ reality. However, as a city measured more by endurance through time than by extension through space, it also has a strongly ‘tribal’ aspect to it, which the pagan *polis* or *civitas* tended to negate. What matters is not the cultivation of excellence in the heroic present, which cyclically appears and disappears, but rather the ever-renewed transmission of the signs of love and the bringing to birth of new members from the womb of baptism.”

⁷¹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 432-434.

Chapter Five

Ratzinger and Milbank Compared

Introduction:

In this chapter, beginning with correspondence, I will compare, in relationship to Vico's thought, Ratzinger's threefold approach to truth with Milbank's. As was demonstrated, Ratzinger in his account of truth negates the validity of Vico's claims. Milbank, in contrast, validates Vico's claims. Drawing on the previous chapters and Ratzinger's and Milbank's most current writings in which they further clarify and qualify their thought, I will compare the two theologians in the following manner. First, the differences and similarities between the two theologians on truth in its divine state will be examined. Secondly, Ratzinger and Milbank will be compared on how they depict man's correspondence to truth. Thirdly, the two will be compared on how they describe truth as illuminated and mediated. Finally, in order to transition to the final chapter on their differing political conclusions we will examine how their differences in their accounts of truth are all located in two perceptions of the nature-grace relationship. This theological relationship will provide a bridge to the related noetic relationship between faith and reason when discussing political reason with respect to faith in the final chapter.

1.0 Ratzinger and Milbank on Truth:

Ratzinger, in opposition to Vico, denies any inner creation to God.⁷¹² Milbank, in contrast, defends this claim as orthodox.⁷¹³ This disagreement among the two theologians is rooted in what aspects of ancient Greek ontology each sees as

⁷¹² Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 48.

⁷¹³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 83.

providentially married to Christian faith. Most recently Milbank in his 2011 Stanton lectures agreed with Ratzinger's contention⁷¹⁴ that certain elements of Hellenic philosophy are inseparable from Christian faith by stating, "Christian tradition has for long centuries proved the marriage between Greek Socratic reason and Biblical faith."⁷¹⁵ The two differ, however, in what elements of Greek thought they see as constitutive of faith.

Ratzinger sees the stoic concept of *logos* pervading the universe⁷¹⁶ and the Aristotelianhylomorphic theory as two essential elements joined with Christian faith. Milbank, in contrast, while affirming the stoic concept of *logos* as part and parcel with Christianity,⁷¹⁷ disagrees with Ratzinger by arguing that the hylozoistic theory stemming from Heraclitus and present in Vico's metaphysics is proper to Christianity. According to a Christian faith joined with hylozoism, as advanced by Vico, since there are no stable forms in reality for man to know, he can only know truth by participating in God's inner creative activity. As the ultimate Creator, only God knows what he chooses to make within a reality governed by a state of flux. Since Ratzinger, on the other hand, affirms not the hylozoism adopted by Vico but hylomorphism as a Greek element taken up into Christianity he does not see God and creation as essentially in a constant state of motion, but, rather, as containing stable abiding truth which is prior to and is determinative of the made. Therefore, in accordance with his view that God is eternally abiding and not eternally evolving, for Ratzinger there is no inner creation in God. God's abiding truth,

⁷¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen*, 29.

⁷¹⁵ John Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 1: The Return of Metaphysics in the 21st Century*, 19 of January 2011, 2 <http://theologyphilosophycentre.co.uk/> (accessed March 19, 2011).

⁷¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 237; Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 135-136.

⁷¹⁷ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 55-80.

argues Ratzinger, is represented most especially by the fidelity of the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit.⁷¹⁸

In addition, according to Ratzinger, the positing of an inner creation in God blurs the distinction between the Creator and the created⁷¹⁹ thus, in accordance with the principle of non-contradiction, leads to theopanism. Milbank, however, by asserting “that there is nothing secondary about the made, that the artificial is fully equiprimordial reality” with the other transcendentals, is able to present Vico’s identification of the inner divine creation with the Second Person of the Trinity as not subordinating the Son to the Father. His explanation does not, though, explain how the inner creation in God is distinct from the external creation. In attempting to address this Milbank distinguishes between *creatio nihilo* as original to God⁷²⁰ and *creatio continua* in which human and divine creative acts concur.⁷²¹ Milbank also explicitly states that for Vico “Creation *ex nihilo* is *creatio continua*” for “every new thing that emerges re-engages the *ex nihilo*, and the equal power of absolute creation in its transcendence of prior causality.”⁷²² In *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank reiterates this by writing, “Creation is therefore not a finished product in space, but is continuously generated *ex nihilo* in time.”⁷²³ Is it contradictory to maintain at the same time that God creates out of nothing and that the creatures created *ex nihilo* also participate in the *ex nihilo* creation of God? It appears that Ratzinger’s rejection of an inner creation in God is merited, since it necessarily

⁷¹⁸ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 41, 45.

⁷¹⁹ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 48.

⁷²⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

⁷²¹ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 239.

⁷²² Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 219.

⁷²³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 425.

eliminates an essential difference between God and creation. In addition, perceiving creatures as participating in *creatio ex nihilo* effectively renders *creatio nihilo* meaningless thus blurring the distinction between the Creator and the created.

2.0 Analogy of Being vs. Analogy of Creation:

In accordance with his affirmation of Vico's inner divine creation Milbank bases man's relationship with God in an analogy of creation. This contrasts with Ratzinger who roots the man-God relationship in an analogy of being. Milbank further distinguishes himself from Ratzinger by describing man's correspondence to truth, occurring in his participation in creation, as primarily active. This active correspondence takes place within man's inner linguistic world and within his socially created world that is analogously similar to God's inner creation and God's *ex nihilo*, external creation.⁷²⁴ According to Ratzinger, however, it is not by making that man knows truth but rather in reflection on being. Instead of siding with Vico, therefore, Ratzinger prefers to align himself with what he identifies as ancient and medieval philosophy. This philosophy, as described by Ratzinger "took the view that the knowledge of human things could only be '*techne*', manual skill, but never real perception and hence never real knowledge. Therefore in the medieval university the *artes*, the arts, remained only the first step to real knowledge, which reflects on being itself."⁷²⁵ It is not completely fair to simplify ancient and medieval philosophy in these terms since, as Milbank does with reference to Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Eriugena,⁷²⁶ it is possible to interpret the philosophy from these

⁷²⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 34-36.

⁷²⁵ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

⁷²⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424-425.

periods as containing elements of an analogy of creation which Cusanus and Vico, in the Renaissance, later more explicitly developed.

In line with this generalization of the early and medieval eras Ratzinger argues that man primarily receives and does not create truth due to his capacity to re-think “the thought of the original thought.”⁷²⁷ For Ratzinger, the original thought of God, as discussed in my first chapter, is not an inwardly dynamic creation but rather is abiding, faithful, uncreated being, to which man, with difference, participates in through his created being. According to this perception, truth as received by man is only secondarily understood as made by man since man’s created being out of which his thoughts are formulated is similar, through his analogous participation, but not equivalent to God’s uncreated being and uncreated thought. God’s uncreated being and uncreated thought is the stable ground, according to Ratzinger, upon which man is to establish his expressions of truth upon.

For Milbank, in contrast, a prime characteristic of divine truth is not stability but rather, in line with is appropriation of Vico’s axiom *verum est factum*, creation. Consequently, in accordance with his post-modern, anti-foundationalism, there is no stable truth for man to receive since ultimate truth itself is created and in flux. In a recent Stanton lecture Milbank more explicitly distinguishes himself from Ratzinger’s thought by criticizing the association of stability with truth.⁷²⁸ He prefers instead to describe truth as created within a process.⁷²⁹ Nonetheless, despite this preference and despite explicitly

⁷²⁷ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 32.

⁷²⁸ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 3: Immanence and Number*, 1.

⁷²⁹ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 3 Immanence and Number*, 5, 6, 30, 32

stating in *Theology and Social Theory* there is nothing substantive in God “because he is nothing fundamental underlying anything else”⁷³⁰ and that likewise there are also “no substances in creation, no underlying matter, and no discrete and inviolable ‘things’,”⁷³¹ in his last Stanton lecture he modifies his position.

In lecture eight he acknowledges that in order to uphold relationships some degree of substance needs to be affirmed otherwise all of reality is either seen as a single, undifferentiated Parmenidean reality in which there are no distinct subjects to relate to each other,⁷³² or as comprising a Heraclitean universe where there are no relationships but only chaotic flux. Echoing the French Philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941) Milbank modifies the Heraclitean element in his thought by stating that time in the universe does not negate substance “since duration is never sheer Heraclitean flux, but rather the constant generation of forms which fall into consistent hierarchical and narrative patterns, albeit ones that are dynamic and open-ended.”⁷³³ Consequently, for Milbank, the Trinitarian persons and creation both need to have some substantive stability which gives them identity in order for dynamic relating to be possible.⁷³⁴

In these lectures Milbank clearly recognizes that in order for there to be relations in his Heraclitan hylozoism, as first evident in his dissertation on Vico, it needs to be somehow integrated with concepts that indicate constancy such as substance and forms. Otherwise, if there are no stable reference points for the mind to lay hold of how can there be any knowledge of anything other than oneself? Consequently, writes Milbank,

⁷³⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁷³¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

⁷³² Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 8: The Surprise of the Imagined*, 23.

⁷³³ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 2: Immanence and Life*, 20.

⁷³⁴ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 8: The Surprise of the Imagined*, 23-24.

“[T]he word ‘substance’ records our awareness that there is persistence and holding together of a thing despite change, such that some properties prove more essential to a thing than others. Without this circumstance the world would simply be incoherent, because there would be no points of stability for the mind to latch onto.”⁷³⁵ This modification of his thought regarding the importance of substance also can be understood as a revising of his analogy of creation with an analogy of being and its consequent aspects of stable truths (Przywara’s inner order (ἀνά) ⁷³⁶ of creation which is always “in-and-beyond history”⁷³⁷) the mind can analogously identify and conform to. To what degree Milbank will continue moving in this direction will only be known in the future.

2.1 Ratzinger and Milbank on Man’s Analogous Correspondence to Truth:

Ratzinger’s and Milbank’s differences in relationship to Vico are more clearly seen when the two theologians’ views on how man specifically corresponds to truth are compared. According to Ratzinger, in opposition to the hylozoism of Vico, there is a stable inner order of creation that transcends history which man can correspond to. Within this inner order there are, for Ratzinger, universally valid moral truths, as represented by the Ten Commandments, that man can with his reason correspond to.⁷³⁸ Ratzinger grounds the existence of naturally knowable moral truths in the Christian belief that the origin of matter “was reason, and thus, truth: it brings forth man and human reason in the first place as beings capable of the truth.”⁷³⁹ As was mentioned earlier for Ratzinger divine reason, which human reason participates in, is characterized by abiding

⁷³⁵ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 8: The Surprise of the Imagined*, 22.

⁷³⁶ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 223. Translation provided by Betz.

⁷³⁷ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 41. Translation provided by Betz.

⁷³⁸ Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Morality*, 56-57.

⁷³⁹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 155.

constancy which is not inwardly creative. As applied to moral truths this means that, contra Vico's formulation of truth, man primarily receives moral truths instead of creating them.⁷⁴⁰

In addition to natural law, Ratzinger also describes a faith based order that analogously allows man to correspond to revealed truths. Due to conceiving truth within an analogy of being in which truth, both ultimate and intra-worldly, is defined by constancy and as prior to the created, he denies that divine names are simply due to a immanently contained, creative anthropomorphic tendency of man,⁷⁴¹ but, rather, actually correspond, with greater difference, to God as he is. Furthermore, the Magisterium, as assisted by the Holy Spirit, helps to guarantee that man's formulations of truth correspond to the constant, uncreated divine truth.⁷⁴²

Following Vico, Milbank, in contrast with Ratzinger, refuses to accord universally valid content to morality, other than reconciliation, and rejects historically transcendent doctrinal content, other than Trinitarian difference in harmony, since, as defined by Vico, man participates in the inner created Trinitarian truth of God by historically creating expressions in collaboration with God providentially working in time.⁷⁴³ Virtue and doctrine are thus understood not with reference to stable ahistorical teachings but rather as historically created within the context of faith through the construction of political, social and economic aspects of the city of God in which

⁷⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 155.

⁷⁴¹ Ratzinger, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen*, 19; Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, 244.

⁷⁴² Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, 244-245.

⁷⁴³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 2, 135.

differences are reconciled.⁷⁴⁴ For Milbank, doctrines expressed in language do not have an instrumental⁷⁴⁵ purpose of mirroring stable, constant divine ideas, but, rather, are to metaphorically imitate the peaceful inner language of Triune God in which differences are eternally reconciled through their differences and not despite them.⁷⁴⁶ As described by Milbank, human language corresponds to the reconciling truth of the Trinity aesthetically⁷⁴⁷ by aiding in the historical construction of political and social aspect of Christianity in which differences co-exist peacefully. Even though Milbank resists specifying universal aspects in moral and doctrinal teaching, due to the aesthetic character of man's moral correspondence to divine truth, he does not view man's creation of truth as purely arbitrary since it must, in some way, be imitative of Trinitarian difference in harmony.⁷⁴⁸

When the above description of Milbank's views on doctrine and morality is viewed in light of his recent Stanton lectures, however, there appears to be room in his current thought that could lead to acknowledging more than difference in harmony as comprising the universal truth of Christianity. His present awareness of the need to define reality not simply in terms of flux but also in terms of constant elements indicated by substance and form and "constitutive relations"⁷⁴⁹ may eventually lead him to acknowledge, along with Ratzinger, specific doctrinal and moral teachings that are constant and stable despite historical change to which man corresponds more in a

⁷⁴⁴ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension*, vol. 2, 174; Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430.

⁷⁴⁵ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension*, vol. 2, 23.

⁷⁴⁶ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension*, vol. 2, 30; Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 289, 306.

⁷⁴⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 427.

⁷⁴⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 354, 417, 429, 424.

⁷⁴⁹ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 8: The Surprise of the Imagined*, 21.

receptive rather than in an active manner. Now that we have compared Ratzinger and Milbank on truth as correspondence I will turn our attention to comparing the two theologians, with respect to Vico, on truth as illuminated and mediated.

3.0 Ratzinger and Milbank on Truth as Illuminated:

In contrast with Vico's analogy of creation, according to Ratzinger's approach to truth as grounded in an analogy of being consisting of abiding forms, man is illuminated with truth in reason and faith in relatively independent ways. As explained by Ratzinger, through a combination of natural illumination and abstraction, man knows "creational forms"⁷⁵⁰ which are foundational for mathematical and scientific knowledge. For Ratzinger, though, this functional kind of knowledge is "not the whole language"⁷⁵¹ of truth. There is non-functional truth that also informs man about "who he is, where he comes from, what he should do, what is right, what is wrong..."⁷⁵² Due to an imprint of goodness on his soul, argues Ratzinger, man is able to discover this truth of "identity and purpose"⁷⁵³ relatively independent from faith. The imprint of goodness, reflecting the language of being,⁷⁵⁴ reminds man naturally of basic moral truths. However, as a result of his sinful nature, man, in what Ratzinger calls the second level of conscience,⁷⁵⁵ can decide to ignore this fundamental moral memory. Relying on a hylomorphic theory, in contrast with Vico's hylozoism, as coupled with man's natural light of reason as a

⁷⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 33.

⁷⁵¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week from the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 193.

⁷⁵² Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 193.

⁷⁵³ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 193.

⁷⁵⁴ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 67.

⁷⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 36.

participation in God's reason,⁷⁵⁶ Ratzinger asserts that since there are constant, universal moral truths expressive of God, simply by forgetting them does not excuse one of moral guilt. One constant moral truth that Ratzinger has repeatedly defended is "the right of life"⁷⁵⁷ which abortion directly violates. This right, for Ratzinger, belongs "to man *by nature*."⁷⁵⁸ This fundamental moral truth that is within the memory of all men and is further reinforced through the discovery of abiding forms⁷⁵⁹ in being brings out Ratzinger's difference with Milbank's appropriation of Vico who associates truth primarily with action. In contrast, Ratzinger sees truth as essentially received and corresponded to by man, after a combination of abstraction, illumination and mediation.

Besides functional and moral truths that illuminate man through creation and in the depths of his soul Ratzinger also maintains that aesthetic truth, known "through personal experience"⁷⁶⁰ and not abstractly by theoretical instruction, also naturally illuminates man. According to Ratzinger the truthful radiance of beauty can even be a preparatory stage for eventual acceptance of supernatural truth.⁷⁶¹ This way in which aesthetic truth is illuminated, along with functional and moral truth, is also described by Ratzinger, contra Vico, as essentially received and not made by man.

In contrast with Ratzinger, Milbank, in line with Vico's metaphysics, describes the illumination of truth according to an analogy of creation. This leads him to reject,

⁷⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 108-109.

⁷⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Culture*, 64; cf Ratzinger, *Europe, Today and Tomorrow*, 65; Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 203-204;190, Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 245-247.

⁷⁵⁸ Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Culture*, 64; cf Ratzinger, *Europe, Today and Tomorrow*, 65; Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 203-204;190, Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 245-247.

⁷⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 33.

⁷⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 35-36.

⁷⁶¹ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 129.

any autonomy of reason from faith, and any sense of naturally knowable universal moral truths.⁷⁶² According to Milbank, man only creates truth in the divine light of faith provided by the literary republic of the city of God. Outside of this city founded on faith man has no access to truth, since only in the light “of God’s creative knowledge,”⁷⁶³ provided by the Christian metanarrative, does man interpret reality truthfully.⁷⁶⁴ As explained in *Truth in Aquinas* all light that illuminates truth only comes from faith since faith and reason are not parallel related realities, each with some degree of independence, “but phases within a single extension.”⁷⁶⁵ Truth, for Milbank therefore, is faith since it is exclusively known and made within a single extension that in all its phases contains the light of faith.⁷⁶⁶ Consequently, unless an intellectual discipline is “explicitly ordered to theology (assuming that this means participation in God’s self-knowledge, as in the Augustinian tradition) they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth...”⁷⁶⁷ They are null and void of truth since, according to Milbank’s version of Vico’s hylozoism, only God can provide meaning to a world of flux in which “there are no substances ... no underlying matter, and no discrete and inviolable ‘things’.”⁷⁶⁸

In his Stanton lectures, however, Milbank modifies his position regarding substances and stable forms, and consequently his development of Vico’s thought, by stating that flux of the existence is not in a “sheer Heraclitean flux” but rather is given

⁷⁶² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 430; Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 231.

⁷⁶³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension* vol. 1, 241.

⁷⁶⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 249.

⁷⁶⁵ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21.

⁷⁶⁶ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 304.

⁷⁶⁷ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 306.

⁷⁶⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

definition by “constant generation of forms.”⁷⁶⁹ By describing forms as in a constant state of generation and as “dynamic and open-ended”⁷⁷⁰ Milbank differs from Ratzinger who insists that “God’s great creational forms have an abiding nature.”⁷⁷¹ Nonetheless, by acknowledging forms in existence, albeit dynamic and open ended instead of abiding, and by recognizing that the term substance accurately points to a “persistence and holding together of a thing despite change”⁷⁷² Milbank has moved closer to Ratzinger’s position. The difference would be that Ratzinger, in defining truth, prioritizes stability over change, while in Milbank, due to his appropriation of Vico’s axiom that *verum est factum* sees neither one as having priority over the other and even, at least in his dissertation, describes the made as determining the true.⁷⁷³

Nonetheless by explicitly affirming in his Stanton lectures the need to incorporate stability, signified by the terms substance and form, the question remains as to whether Milbank, as influenced by Vico, is open to qualifying his rejection of the ability of man, relatively independently from faith, to bring his mind into correspondence with stable elements in creation. It seems unlikely, since he describes these forms as in a constant state of generation implying that “the points of stability for the mind to latch onto”⁷⁷⁴ are ever shifting. Nonetheless, this does not rule out the possibility that Milbank may eventually acknowledge an element with the generation of forms that does provide man with a stable reference point regardless of historical change. If he does come to this point

⁷⁶⁹ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 2: Immanence and Life*, 20.

⁷⁷⁰ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 2: Immanence and Life*, 20.

⁷⁷¹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 33.

⁷⁷² Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 8: The Surprise of the Imagined*, 22.

⁷⁷³ Milbank, *The Religious Dimension vol. 1*, 96, 141.

⁷⁷⁴ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 8: The Surprise of the Imagined*, 22.

this may lead him modify what he appropriates from Vico and to agree with Ratzinger that truth, as defined by what is abiding, has priority over what is made and changed and that man's correspondence to truth rests not on an analogy of creation but rather on an analogy of being.

If these hypothetical shifts were to occur in Milbank's thought this would also modify his hegemony of theology over all other intellectual disciplines. As stated by Milbank, unless an intellectual discipline is "explicitly ordered to theology"⁷⁷⁵ it lacks all truth. However, once it is affirmed that there are stable points of reference in the world that the mind can lay hold of could not this ability of the mind, as Ratzinger maintains, be due to man abstracting out essential forms in the light of reason, which is not seen as a result of the light of faith, but rather is a consequence of man's innate ability as image of God to reason even if he wills not to believe? If the stability of these reference points was accorded priority over the change that they historically undergo would not this mean that there are both scientific, which Ratzinger refers to as functional truth, and moral truths that can be universally known by man?

Unless Milbank takes the above suggested steps that could follow from his reasoning in the Stanton lectures, a key factor that distinguishes his thought from Ratzinger's is whereas Milbank refuses to distinguish between natural illumination and illumination by faith Ratzinger, although describing them as related, does make such a distinction. In describing the illumination given in faith Ratzinger accords a certain autonomy to reason that is not superseded by faith. He does this by describing faith as an

⁷⁷⁵ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 306.

indwelling of Christ “in which the Christ-reality becomes ours.”⁷⁷⁶ When the Christ-reality becomes ours through the assent of the will and the intellect, the believer then reads scripture, interprets doctrinal formulations, and perceives all of reality as illuminated by Christ’s indwelling presence. In interpreting all of reality in light of a personal relationship with Christ, which is the light of faith, truth, such as expressed by the Decalogue, is not understood as “abolished through the encounter with Christ; rather, it is brought to its full maturity.”⁷⁷⁷ Ratzinger, therefore, does not see the light of faith and the light of reason as phases within a single extension but rather, by upholding the unique integrity of both, sees them more as like two parallel lights which are interrelated by their mutual radiation of light on one another while, at the same time, retaining their respective forms.⁷⁷⁸

4.0 Ratzinger and Milbank on Truth as Mediated:

Ratzinger’s and Milbank’s view on truth is more specifically distinguished when they are compared on truth as mediated. According to Ratzinger’s association of truth with reception, in contrast with Vico’s convertibility of truth with *factum*, even though man individually can know truth through abstraction under the natural light of reason, truths of revelation are only known as mediated by Christ through the living tradition of the Church. As described by Ratzinger, the Church mediates truth sacramentally through

⁷⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 40.

⁷⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 164-165.

⁷⁷⁸ Although this simile is not used by Ratzinger it can be seen as representing his thought on how faith and reason mutually purify one another rather than either one exclusively determining the existence of the other. (Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 43.) “I would speak of a necessary correlation between reason and faith, reason and religion, which are called to purify and heal one another. They need each other, and they must acknowledge one another’s validity.” Cf. Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 61-85, esp. 83.

the Eucharist and through the bishops as successors of the apostles. The successors of the Apostles, the bishops, as the “external form”⁷⁷⁹ of a living tradition guard and pass on its content⁷⁸⁰ as principally expressed in the New Testament Scriptures and the Creed, derived from Scripture and key to its proper interpretation.⁷⁸¹ By being in receptive communion with the living tradition represented by the bishops, a Christian is aided in analogously corresponding to truth. The assistance that bishops provide, in order to aid man in his correspondence to truth, is not, for Ratzinger, essentially located within explicit, “objective” statements formulated by the bishops, but rather within a living tradition, structured by apostolic succession which provides man with greater certainty of being conformed to truth.⁷⁸² That doctrinal statements are modified through time with the bishops’ approval does not mean, for Ratzinger, that truth is in a state of becoming with no stable points of reference. This is evident since Ratzinger, who insists in opposition to Vico that there is no internal creation in God,⁷⁸³ defines truth as abiding and stable, and upholds man’s analogous ability to correspond to uncreated truth. According to Ratzinger, remaining within the living tradition of the Church, participating in the Catholic liturgy, and heeding the mediation of truth through the bishops in communion with the Pope provides man with greater certainty but not, at times, greater clarity, that he is more fully corresponding to abiding divine truth.

⁷⁷⁹ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 51.

⁷⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, 51.

⁷⁸¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 99.

⁷⁸² This approach to tradition is similar to Przywara’s understanding. (Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 36. Translation provided by Betz.) “Superhistorical truth thus has an intrahistorical course. Every step of the way is living tradition, not only measuring itself against its ‘original form,’ but by its very liveliness proclaiming that form to be something ever new.”

⁷⁸³ Ratzinger, *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45, 48.

Milbank, like Ratzinger, also affirms the important role of the Church in mediating truth. However, he does this, along with Vico, by associating truth more with action than with reception. Similar to Ratzinger's emphasis on the role of the bishops and the pope in mediating truth, Milbank acknowledges hierarchical aristocratic and monarchic elements of the Church which, by educating the majority, mediate truth.⁷⁸⁴ Different from Ratzinger, however, is how Milbank defines this hierarchically mediated truth. For Milbank it consists in a "unique and distinctive structural logic for human society"⁷⁸⁵ after the example of the Trinitarian difference in harmony. Within this structural logic a new social-political order is to be actively encouraged by the Church in which men are reconciled with one another and where just and charitable exchanges to occur.

Milbank's and Ratzinger's difference regarding what is hierarchically mediated by the Church is rooted in how each theologian defines Christ's relationship with the Church. Milbank, in presenting this relationship as described in chapter four, prioritizes the Church as body of Christ over the person of Christ which he defines, in accordance with Gilbert de la Porree and by applying Vico's hylozoism to theology, as "an incommunicable form."⁷⁸⁶ In this way Milbank defines Christ's mediation not in reference to a subsistent dimension within Christ's individuality as person but rather to "the 'place' in which all true identities are located."⁷⁸⁷ This 'place', for Milbank is the Church. Understood in this way truths of Christ are not accorded any particular content

⁷⁸⁴ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 259.

⁷⁸⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

⁷⁸⁶ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 110.

⁷⁸⁷ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 158.

by Milbank, but instead are identified “with the general norms”⁷⁸⁸ of a new practice initiated by Christ and continued by the Church. As defined by Milbank these norms, mediated by the Church, are “the ‘political’ practice of forgiveness; forgiveness as a mode of ‘government’ and social being.”⁷⁸⁹

According to Ratzinger, however, in accordance with his hylomorphism as applied to theology, the human nature of Christ as expressive of his divine person has precedence over the corporate body of the Church. Ratzinger, therefore, defines Christ’s mediation not in reference to a place but rather in reference to a specific person. In contrast with Milbank’s vague definition of person, Ratzinger defines person specifically, including Christ’s divine person, more in accordance with Aquinas’s definition⁷⁹⁰ as a “unification round a personal center, for mind is not just an undefined something or other; where it exists in its own specific nature it subsists as individuality, as person.”⁷⁹¹ Consequently, the person of Christ takes precedence over an “idea of Christianity”⁷⁹² as located in an ever shifting place. Ratzinger’s prioritizing of person, according to the Aquinas’s definition, over general ideas and norms of behavior was recently explicitly expressed in the second volume of *Jesus of Nazareth* where he writes, “The New Testament message is not simply an idea; essential to it is the fact that these events actually occurred in the history of this world: biblical faith does not recount stories as symbols of meta-historical truths; rather, it bases itself upon history that unfolded upon

⁷⁸⁸ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 152.

⁷⁸⁹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 161.

⁷⁹⁰ “A subsistent individual of a rational nature.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 29, art. 4.

⁷⁹¹ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 246.

⁷⁹² Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 247.

this earth.”⁷⁹³ This contrasts starkly with Milbank who views the message of the New Testament as essentially a theological narration of the general meta-historical truth of peaceful reconciliation of differences which “subsume”⁷⁹⁴ the events of Jesus and his Church.⁷⁹⁵

For Ratzinger, however, the truth of Christ that the Church mediates does not consist primarily of ideas but rather of salvific events which define the Scriptural narratives. The words describing Christ, further explains Ratzinger, which give rise to the idea of Christ are to be understood as both “equally original.”⁷⁹⁶ This means that the words which describe the events of Christ life correspond to actual occurrences in history. If the words do not correspond to history then a dualism exists between the words and the events. Such a dualism, writes Ratzinger, “which banishes the event into wordlessness, that is meaningless, would rob the word of its power to convey meaning as well, for it would then stand in a world without meaning. It also leads to a docetic Christology in which the reality, that is the concrete fleshly existence of Christ and especially of man, is removed from the realm of meaning.”⁷⁹⁷ Ratzinger firmly rejects this kind of dualism. For Ratzinger, in order for man to accurately correspond to the truth of the words describing the birth, death and resurrection of Christ, he must, in accordance with the constant, abiding truth of the Holy Spirit, accept these as historically happening in the life of the Incarnate Word and not see them, as Milbank does, as secondary features

⁷⁹³ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 103-104.

⁷⁹⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 387.

⁷⁹⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 385-387; Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 150.

⁷⁹⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 20.

⁷⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, 20.

of the Christian story whose essential theological message is social and political reconciliation after the example of the Trinitarian relations.

Ratzinger identifies the main originator of this theological logic that is similar to Milbank's with Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) who wrote his exegesis from the fundamental presupposition that, "the word generates the scene. All events, therefore, are already secondary, mythological developments."⁷⁹⁸ This means that all miraculous and supernatural events, including the resurrection of Christ and Christ's claim to be the actual Son of God in flesh, are only "secondary, mythological developments" and take second place to the theological message of the Christian story. For Bultmann, consequently, the words describing the events have epistemic priority over the events. According to this perspective, truth is contained in the words describing the events and not in the event itself. In addition, the truthfulness of words do not depend on their correspondence to historical events as "equally original" but rather are sufficient in themselves in conveying truth to man. In contrast with Ratzinger's position, Bultmann maintains that man can correspond to the truths of faith whether or not he accepts that events of Christ's life historically took place in the incarnate person of Christ.⁷⁹⁹ Bultmann's position is reflected in Milbank's definition of the resurrection. According to Milbank, Christ's resurrection is not so much about the actual resurrection of the body that we believe in and participate in through the reception of faith in Christ but rather, in accordance with Vico's association truth with activity, is "a 'political' act: for it is the

⁷⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, 9. Rudolf Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984), 14, 41-42.

⁷⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, 15-16.

ultimate refusal of all denials of community. The return of all the dead in reconciliation-the innocent, the guilty, the oppressed, and the oppressors-is looked for (Peukert).”⁸⁰⁰

It has now been shown how Ratzinger’s and Milbank’s different theological positions on truth (as correspondence and as illuminated and mediated) are interwoven with two different ontologies, analogy of being vs. analogy of creation, which develop out of two different approaches to Vico’s axiom *verum est factum*. Their different approaches to truth, as intertwined in how each interrelates a particular ontology with theology, is in turn reflected on the noetic relationship between faith and political reason. Since in the subsequent chapter we will focus on Ratzinger’s and Milbank’s differences and similarities regarding political reason with respect to faith as determined by their different approaches to Vico, I will now demonstrate how all the similarities and differences between Ratzinger’s and Milbank’s perspectives on truth are located in two different accounts of the grace-nature theological relationship that lead to two different concepts of the faith-reason noetic relationship. The nature-grace relationship will, therefore, act as a bridge between their theories of truth, as influenced by two approaches to Vico, and their approaches to faith and political reason.

5.0 Ratzinger and Milbank in Light of the Twentieth Century Nature and Grace Debates:

Ratzinger’s and Milbank’s views on the nature and grace debates were both developed out of the Twentieth century nature and grace debates as centered around the

⁸⁰⁰ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 346.

ideas of Henri de Lubac.⁸⁰¹ In order to understand how their theological truth claims are rooted in their two perceptions of the nature-grace relationship it is necessary to first briefly provide a historical context. Then, I will present a few modern reactions to de Lubac. Finally, I will locate Ratzinger's and Milbank's positions while showing how each theologian's perspectives on truth, in relationship to Vico, are contained in their two presentations of the nature-grace relationship.

5.1 Henri de Lubac:

With the publication of *Surnatural* in 1946, the French theologian de Lubac helped to spark the nature and grace controversies of the Twentieth century.⁸⁰² De Lubac wrote this work out of his concern that Christianity was becoming increasingly irrelevant to the current culture.⁸⁰³ He traced the main reason for Christianity's irrelevancy to a theory, developed during the scholastic age, of a state of pure human nature which is not supernaturally destined but rather is fulfilled apart from grace. For de Lubac, this theory was "in large part responsible for the evil of a 'separated theology,' from which we still suffer greatly today[.]"⁸⁰⁴ In *Surnatural*, de Lubac rejects this theory. According to de Lubac, up until the 16th century the possibility of a purely natural destiny for man apart from the beatific vision was never considered. Instead, only one order was conceived in

⁸⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 98, 143; John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005).

⁸⁰² Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992). Here de Lubac describes the historical context in which he wrote this work and the controversy that it caused.

⁸⁰³ De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 184-185.

⁸⁰⁴ De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 184.

which man by being created in the image of God desires the vision of God. Aquinas appears to affirm this by stating that man's "understanding has been made to see God."⁸⁰⁵

As described by de Lubac, in the 16th century Cajetan interpreted this passage and other similar passages as being written by Aquinas as a theologian and not as a philosopher.⁸⁰⁶ In the 19th century, building upon Cajetan's interpretation of Aquinas, it was proposed that there are two orders, a natural order, open to philosophers, that can be satisfied naturally and a supernatural order, open to believers that is fulfilled by grace. Finally in the 20th century it was considered necessary to affirm the theory of a pure natural order in order to uphold the gratuity of grace and the supernatural. In contrast to Cajetan and the theological tradition that followed him, de Lubac argues that Aquinas never advanced either explicitly or implicitly a theory of a state of pure nature. Rather, according to de Lubac, Aquinas paradoxically kept in balance the doctrine that man has a natural desire for the beatific vision with the doctrine that heaven is completely beyond man's natural powers.

De Lubac went further by not only questioning the theory of a state of pure nature but also by questioning the whole concept of nature itself which he traces back to Aristotle.⁸⁰⁷ For de Lubac, within the Christian version of this Aristotelian concept, as proposed by Aquinas, there "always subsists, like every baptism of profane philosophers,

⁸⁰⁵ Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth: Volume 2*, trans. James V. McGlynn, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953), q. 10, a. 11 ad 7: "intellectus noster quamvis factus ad videndum deum." Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles III*, trans. by the English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1934) 25; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 3. A. 8.

⁸⁰⁶ De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 218. Cf. Caietanus de Vio, Thomas Card, *Commentary on Summa theologiae: In Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia, Leonine edition, vol. 4*, (Rome, 1888-1906) I, q 12, a.1, n.10.

⁸⁰⁷ De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 47.

traces of sin.”⁸⁰⁸ Due to the “persistence of grave difficulties”⁸⁰⁹ in Aristotelian pagan philosophy which was not developed under the light of faith, de Lubac describes a tension in Aquinas’ writings between the biblical and patristic “image of God” and the Aristotelian term “nature.”⁸¹⁰ As succinctly explained by Joseph Komonchak, “De Lubac’s argument here is not that St. Thomas was incorrect in rooting the desire to see God in human nature, but that his use of Aristotle to explain the operations of the latter provided the opening for later thinkers to reduce the desires of nature to what can be accounted for in an Aristotelian nature.”⁸¹¹ Subsequent theologians, from Cajetan to the present century, further diminished the desires of nature to an Aristotelian conception of nature that, according to de Lubac, they ended up losing sight of the sacredness of human life, since with the concept of nature these theologians strictly separated natural activities from graced activities. In opposition to this compartmentalization, de Lubac, in *Surnaturel* and as further developed in his subsequent works,⁸¹² aimed at re-integrating supposedly natural acts with graced acts in accordance with the doctrine that man in his entirety is made in the image of God.

5.2 Early Debates Over de Lubac’s Nature-Grace Position:

The Dominican Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964) was a principle opponent of de Lubac’s integration of nature and grace. Similar to Descoqs, Garrigou-

⁸⁰⁸ Henri De Lubac, *Surnatural*, (Paris: Descleé de Brouwer, 1991) 259. “Le baptême des philosophies profanes, comme tout baptême, laisse toujours subsister des traces du péché.”

⁸⁰⁹ “difficultés si graves” Henri de Lubac, *Surnatural*, 259.

⁸¹⁰ De Lubac, *Surnatural*, 434-435.

⁸¹¹ Joseph Komonchak, “Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac,” *Theological Studies* 51 (December 1990) 588.

⁸¹² See especially, Henri de Lubac, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company New York, 2000); De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*. In both of these books, originally published in 1965, de Lubac refines his views put forth in *Surnatural* (1946).

Lagrange supported a two order theory in which nature is not intrinsically ordered to the supernatural but instead contains an obediential potency which he defines as meaning, “no more than non-repugnance.”⁸¹³ This extrinsicism of Garrigou-Lagrange, in which there are two separate orders that are only related by a divine extrinsic decree, sharply contrasts with de Lubac’s integration of nature and grace. According to de Lubac’s interpretation of Aquinas the term obediential potency is used with reference to the miraculous which is understood only generically in the nature-supernatural relationship. Therefore, simply because Aquinas used this term in describing this relationship does not mean that he held that nature is not intrinsically ordered to the supernatural, since broadly understood everything that God can do is miraculous.⁸¹⁴

5.3 Contemporary Debates Over De Lubac’s Nature and Grace Position:

In our present day the debate between Garrigou-Lagrange and de Lubac continues. In describing the contemporary debates on the relationship between nature and grace, I will only provide an overview in order to latter situate Milbank’s position. As described by de Lubac’s supporter Nicholas J. Healy, “Since the publication of *Surnatural* in 1946, the sharpest and most significant criticisms of de Lubac’s theological anthropology have been articulated by Thomists who fear that he has compromised the

⁸¹³ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality a Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, trans. Patrick Cummins (S.I.: Ex Fontibus Co., 2009), 47. “In the supernatural order we find still another consequence from the idea of potency, namely, obediential potency, that is, the aptitude of created nature, either to receive a supernatural gift or to be elevated to produce a supernatural effect. This potency St. Thomas conceives as the nature itself, of the soul, say, as far as that nature is suited for elevation to a superior order. This suitability means no more than non-repugnance, since God can do in us anything in us that is not self-contradictory.”

⁸¹⁴ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 140-142.

gratuity of grace.”⁸¹⁵ A number of influential Neo-Thomists have taken Garrigou’s place in criticizing de Lubac’s position. Three from the English speaking world deserve particular consideration: Lawrence Feingold, Reinhard Hütter and Steven Long. I will first briefly examine Feingold’s argument, since Hütter and Long both build their views on Feingold’s research.

5.3.1 Lawrence Feingold on Nature and Grace:

In *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, Feingold depicts de Lubac’s position as threatening the gratuity of grace. In addition, he argues that de Lubac misinterprets Aquinas on how nature and grace relate to one another. According to Feingold, “The great difficulty with the notion of an innate, absolute desire to see God lies in showing how grace and the beatific vision would not be *due* to a nature endowed with such a desire.”⁸¹⁶ According to Feingold a state of pure nature, which de Lubac rejects, “serves to defend the gratuitousness of grace if one assumes that a given intellectual *nature* — human or angelic — is the same, whether or not God has destined it to a supernatural end. In other words, it is necessary to show that a supernatural end is gratuitous also with respect to the nature as it has *actually* been created. The key question, therefore, is whether God’s eternal decree to elevate human nature to a supernatural end necessarily changes or essentially modifies the nature in its very constitution, making it intrinsically determined to a unique final end which is

⁸¹⁵ Nicholas J. Healy, “Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace: A Note on Some Recent Contributions to the Debate,” *Communio* 35 (Winter 2008): 536.

⁸¹⁶ Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, (Naples: Sapientia Press, 2010) xxxii.

supernatural.”⁸¹⁷ According to de Lubac, prior to man’s reception of grace, God’s intention to elevate nature to a supernatural level determines the nature to such an extent that it is completely different from any purely hypothetical construct of a nature not destined to a supernatural end.⁸¹⁸

Feingold, in contrast, argues that God’s intention to elevate nature to the supernatural does not make a hypothetical pure nature oriented to a supernatural end irrelevant. In proving his point he refers to Aquinas who affirms, according to Feingold’s interpretation, “that both our ordination to the vision of God, and our effective inclination to that end, come *not from our nature*, but only from sanctifying grace and the theological virtues. Therefore, the natural desire to see God spoken of by St. Thomas cannot be understood to indicate the underlying finality of rational nature itself.”⁸¹⁹ For Feingold, therefore, there are two orders, a natural one ordered to a natural finality and a supernatural one ordered to a supernatural end. God’s intention of the latter order does not supersede the former order. Feingold goes further to claim that de Lubac’s position, which proposes that nature without grace is, nonetheless, still ordered to a supernatural end, “is ultimately contradictory”⁸²⁰ since, “if this were the case, our nature itself would be supernatural or divine, for every nature is defined by its end. *A nature with a divine end can only be the divine nature.*”⁸²¹ Feingold then argues that, “A creature can be intrinsically ordered to a supernatural end only by receiving –above nature- a

⁸¹⁷ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 387.

⁸¹⁸ De Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 59-60.

⁸¹⁹ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 91.

⁸²⁰ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 321.

⁸²¹ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 321-322.

supernatural principle of being, which is sanctifying grace.”⁸²² According to Feingold, sanctifying grace keeps intact the relative autonomy of nature and its natural end since it is “‘super-added’ to our nature only insofar as it renders us properly disposed and capable of achieving the end which was already somehow inscribed in our nature prior to the gift of grace.”⁸²³ Through the addition of sanctifying grace man’s being is inscribed with a supernatural end.⁸²⁴

Feingold’s interpretation of Aquinas leads him to reject de Lubac’s view that God imprints a supernatural finality upon human nature prior to the reception of grace.⁸²⁵ According to Feingold this teaching contradicts de Lubac’s denial that man’s nature is ordered to the vision of God prior to grace.⁸²⁶ De Lubac maintains the latter position in order to safeguard the gratuity of grace. However, according to Feingold, these two positions are in contradiction with each other. In describing how they are incompatible Feingold writes:

The first fundamental problem with this position is reconciling the denial that our nature is *ordered* to the vision of God prior to grace, as seen above, with his repeated assertion that a supernatural finality has been imprinted on our nature, prior to grace. Being ordered to an end and having a finality imprinted on one’s nature seem to be equivalent notions. It appears therefore that de Lubac’s position entails an unresolved tension or contradiction, and that he must logically choose between (1) his repeated affirmation that our nature itself is intrinsically determined by having received a supernatural finality (also referred to as an “essential finality”), prior to the reception of grace, and (2) his clear avowal—following St. Thomas—that our nature itself is *not intrinsically ordered* to a supernatural end without sanctifying grace.⁸²⁷

⁸²² Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 322.

⁸²³ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 323.

⁸²⁴ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 324. Feingold refers to Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 110, a. 3.

⁸²⁵ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 76.

⁸²⁶ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 80-81.

⁸²⁷ Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, 523-524.

Furthermore, Feingold argues, since for Aquinas “everything is directed to a suitable end in proportion to its form”⁸²⁸ this means that human nature in itself without grace could not possibly be conceived by Aquinas as naturally ordered to an end that is above human nature.⁸²⁹ This leads Feingold to interpret Aquinas, in contrast with de Lubac, as holding that “the natural inclination of our will is directed to the end that is *proportionate* to our nature (loving contemplation of God through the mirror of creation), and not to the *actual* end to which God has destined us, which is supernatural.”⁸³⁰ Therefore, since the new form received by grace which orientates man to a supernatural end “is above our nature (and given to us in Baptism), then this supernatural finality cannot be said to be ‘imprinted on our nature itself.’”⁸³¹

5.3.2 Reinhard Hütter’s Development of Feingold’s position:

Hütter agrees with Feingold in that while Aquinas never conceived of a *de facto* state of pure nature nonetheless he did maintain a “*hypothetical state of pure nature*, hypothetical because under the present order of providence such a state clearly never [was] obtained.”⁸³² This hypothetical state of pure nature is not considered by Aquinas, argues Hütter, as a mere abstraction since the integrity of this nature is preserved in both orders, the hypothetical one and the actual one, under the current order of providence. As Hütter explains, “the state of graced nature presupposes an anterior created nature, the

⁸²⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, c. 150, n. 5.

⁸²⁹ Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, 318.

⁸³⁰ Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, 326.

⁸³¹ Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, 321.

⁸³² Reinhard Hütter, “Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei— Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas: Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold’s and John Milbank’s Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God,” *Nova et Verera English Edition* 5, no. 1 (2007): 100.

latter never *de facto* obtaining without the former, however being an ontological principle with its own integrity, the two being related to each other by way of a supreme fittingness, but without any intrinsic continuity between each other.”⁸³³ In this way, Hütter defends the reality of two orders, natural and supernatural, each with their own integrity and end.

In further interpreting Aquinas, Hütter describes these two orders from the perspective of gift. The natural order corresponds to God’s gift of creation. Similarly, the supernatural order corresponds to the economy of salvation which receives its “comprehensive realization”⁸³⁴ in beatitude. This second gift, writes Hütter, does not cancel “out the connatural, proportionate end that comes with the prior gift, created human nature.”⁸³⁵ According to Hütter, “the clear and categorical distinction between the first gift of creation and the grace of elevation is rooted deeply in Aquinas’ doctrine of God, and especially in his Trinitarian reflections.”⁸³⁶ This distinction is so clear that the human intellect has access to a “principle of nature-and hence a hypothetical state of pure nature-with its own relative but proper integrity as an entailment of creation that ontologically obtains it.”⁸³⁷

When these two orders corresponding to two gifts are not carefully differentiated from one another, argues Hütter, then the danger is that everything becomes supernaturalized. “Where everything is grace all way down in one and the same way”,

⁸³³ Hütter, *Desiderium Naturale*, 100-101.

⁸³⁴ Hütter, *Desiderium Naturale*, 102.

⁸³⁵ Hütter, *Desiderium Naturale*, 103. Here he refers to Aquinas’ commentaries on the Pauline corpus of letters: 2 Corinthians 5:5-10.

⁸³⁶ Hütter, *Desiderium Naturale*, 112; cf. 114. Hütter references Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 43, art. 3.

⁸³⁷ Hütter, *Desiderium Naturale*, 117.

writes Hütter, “albeit of infinitely differing intensity, everything that has been brought into being, must have its end in God, by necessary ontological entailment.”⁸³⁸ This though, asserts Hütter, is contrary to both Scripture and to Church teaching which does not hold that ultimately all will necessarily be saved.⁸³⁹

5.3.3 Steven A. Long’s Development of Feingold’s Position:

Long, as with Hütter, agrees with Feingold by interpreting Aquinas as holding that “human nature is defined in its species in relation to the natural and proximate end as distinct from the supernatural beatific end”⁸⁴⁰ and that this position accurately reflects reality. According to Long, de Lubac does not adequately balance Aquinas’ teaching that there is a natural desire for God with his “clear teaching that human nature is defined by its natural and proximate end, *which he says is distinct* from the supernatural *finis ultimus*.”⁸⁴¹ According to Long, the natural desire for God, which Aquinas refers to, is not equivalent to “a desire for intrinsically supernatural beatitude.”⁸⁴² Consequently, Aquinas’ reference to man’s natural desire for God does not mean that he fails to distinguish a natural end from a supernatural end.

According to Long, the natural desire for God “reaches God only as cause of finite nature and under a formality infinitely inferior to supernatural beatitude.”⁸⁴³ Thus understood, the natural desire of God “as cause of the world is strictly speaking not truly

⁸³⁸ Hütter, *Desiderium Naturale*, 131.

⁸³⁹ Hütter, *Desiderium Naturale*, 131.

⁸⁴⁰ Steven A. Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature as a Theonomic Principle: Reflections on the Nature/Grace Controversy,” *Nova et Vetera* vol. 5, no. 1 (2007): 135.

⁸⁴¹ Long, *On the Loss*, 141. Long refers to Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 75, a. 7, ad 1 and Thomas Aquinas, *Questions on the Soul*, trans. James H. Robb (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984) a. 7, ad 10.

⁸⁴² Long, *On the Loss*, 151.

⁸⁴³ Long, *On the Loss*, 145.

to desire *God*, who is infinitely more than cause of the world.”⁸⁴⁴ Long defines Aquinas’ obediential potency in light of these distinctions. For Long, obediential potency is not, as de Lubac claims,⁸⁴⁵ only in reference to susceptibility to the miraculous “but represents what a nature is capable of *with the assistance of the active power of God*.”⁸⁴⁶ By defining obediential potency in this manner, Long claims that Aquinas clearly differentiates human nature from grace.

When human nature is not distinctly perceived as have an integrity apart from grace, then, argues Long, the doctrine of Nicea does not make sense, since it then can no longer be understood that the Second Person assumed anything by taking on human nature.⁸⁴⁷ The emptying of nature from any definable meaning in distinction from grace, continues Long, has a devastating effect on morality. This is because such a vague conception of nature “no longer yields connatural certitudes but merely more or less provisional ‘points of view.’”⁸⁴⁸

5.3.4 Nicholas J. Healy’s Defense of de Lubac:

Nicholas J. Healey in a fairly recent article in *Communio* defends de Lubac by countering Feingold, Hütter and Long. First, Healey explains that de Lubac agrees with his neo-Thomistic critics in that there is a “‘twofold gift’ from God and thus an abiding distinction between nature and grace.”⁸⁴⁹ The existence of this two-fold gift is not the point of contention but rather, points out Healey, “the relationship between these two

⁸⁴⁴ Long, *On the Loss*, 149.

⁸⁴⁵ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 140-143.

⁸⁴⁶ Long, *On the Loss*, 150.

⁸⁴⁷ Long, *On the Loss*, 151.

⁸⁴⁸ Long, *On the Loss*, 181.

⁸⁴⁹ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 76.

gifts in the concrete order – more technically, the debate concerns the status of what Thomas Aquinas calls the ‘natural desire for the vision of God.’”⁸⁵⁰ As previously shown, according to de Lubac in the actual providential order God has created human nature with a natural desire for eternal beatitude that only can be satisfied through the second gift of sanctifying grace. De Lubac’s position is, writes Healy, “summed up by the phrase ‘natural desire for the supernatural’ – provided that one acknowledges that the desire is truly natural and the ultimate end is truly supernatural.”⁸⁵¹ This manner of interrelating the supernatural with the natural distinguishes de Lubac from his critics since, unlike the previously discussed Neo-Thomists, he roots both the end of natural beatitude and supernatural beatitude in human nature itself. This leads de Lubac to propose only one order for nature ordered to the one final end of the beatific vision.

As explained in the preceding sections, for Feingold, Hütter and Long it is contradictory to maintain at the same time that apart from grace human nature is determined to a supernatural end and that the supernatural end is gratuitously given. Healy points out that the premise that underlies their argument “is that the final end of nature must be proportionate to nature.”⁸⁵² I would add that their premise is also related to the Aristotelian ontological principle that “for the same thing to be present and not be present at the same time in the same subject, and according to the same, is impossible.”⁸⁵³ Once one accepts the principle that the final end of nature must be proportionate to a particular nature then de Lubac’s description of nature necessarily breaks the law of

⁸⁵⁰ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 541.

⁸⁵¹ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 550.

⁸⁵² Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 543.

⁸⁵³ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1005b p. 72.

contradiction, for de Lubac in order to be consistent would have to be affirm that the reality of the supernatural end, in the same respect, exists in human nature and does not exist in human nature. As explained by Healy, de Lubac does not maintain that that the final end of nature exists in the same respect in a graced state and in a non-graced state since he denies that the end must be proportionate to nature. This allows him to avoid breaking the principle of non-contradiction for he is then able to posit the supernatural end in human nature in a different respect from its reality when nature is graced. In support of de Lubac's position, Healy argues that "Aquinas explicitly and repeatedly" rejects the principle that the final end of a nature must be proportionate to the nature when applied "to the question of the final end of human nature."⁸⁵⁴

In concluding his defense of de Lubac Healy attempts to bridge differences between de Lubac's neo-Thomistic critics and de Lubac's position. In doing so Healy describes de Lubac as maintaining that "there is there is a *penultimate* end, proportionate to our natural capabilities, albeit 'imperfect beatitude,' and one *final* end, which is *supernatural*."⁸⁵⁵ This might at first appear to be quite consistent with the Feingold's, Hütter's and Long's position. However, it quickly becomes apparent it is not when it is pointed out that for de Lubac, writes Healy "in the present providential economy God places in created intellectual nature a natural basis for his call"⁸⁵⁶ to the supernatural end. This is a position that Feingold, Hütter and Long all deny due to their position that an end

⁸⁵⁴ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 560. He references Aquinas, *The Division and Methods*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 5, a. 5; q. 91, a. 4 ad 3; q. 109, a. 4 ad 2; Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, q. 8, a. 3 ad 12; q. 24 a. 10 ad 1; Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), q. 5, a. 1.

⁸⁵⁵ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 562.

⁸⁵⁶ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 562.

must be proportionate to the nature. Nonetheless, Healy tries to bridge this difference and the concerns of the Neo-Thomists by stating the following:

A point that has been implicit in the foregoing account of de Lubac's doctrine concerning the penultimate end of man is that the "imperfection" of this *finis penultima* does not rob it of a certain relative perfection in its own order. Although it would take us too far afield, I think it could be shown that de Lubac's teaching, rightly understood, actually requires the affirmation of such a relative perfection or consistency. In this sense, Lubacians have good grounds for making common cause with Neo-Thomists in defense of a robust concept of nature, of natural law, and of an action theory grounded in a hylemorphic account of the constitution of the moral object.⁸⁵⁷

A common criticism of the Neo-Thomists is that since de Lubac's position denies perfection in the order of nature it leads to the dismissal of natural law and the hylomorphic theory which gives objectivity to the moral order. For Healy, though, de Lubac's position need not be interpreted in this manner if one cedes a relative perfection to the natural order.

6.0 Milbank and Ratzinger on Nature and Grace:

6.1 Nature and Grace as Radically Integrated:

As will be shown, Milbank, like Healy, supports de Lubac's position but, unlike Healy, and in accordance his marked tendency towards hylozoism, first evident in his dissertation on Vico, and reflected in his threefold approach to truth radicalizes this position so that natural law and the hylomorphic theory are seen incompatible with de Lubac's true intentions. In his work *The Suspended Middle*, Milbank argues that de Lubac chose not to have a more explicitly radicalized version of his position due to his fear of being corrected by the Church. As Milbank states, "Henri de Lubac's core belief

⁸⁵⁷ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 562.

[is]...stated clearly here in private correspondence, but almost never so distinctly in his published writings – namely that there *is* no spiritual, intelligent being (angelic or human) that is not ordered by grace to the beatific vision.”⁸⁵⁸ This position of de Lubac, according to Milbank, was condemned by Pius XII in *Humani Generis* which stated, “Others destroy the gratuity of the supernatural order, since God, they say, cannot create intellectual beings without ordering and calling them to the beatific vision.”⁸⁵⁹

In claiming to draw out de Lubac’s implicit rejection of this teaching of *Humani Generis* Milbank defines de Lubac’s position in three ways: “first, spirit as intrinsically linked to grace; second, the entire cosmos as drawn through humanity to beatitude; third, grace as gratuitous because a gift can be a gift without contrast to gift.”⁸⁶⁰ In the third way Milbank is countering *Humani Generis*’ contention that if it is held that intellectual beings are ordered to the beatific vision in their natures then this necessarily destroys the gratuity of the supernatural order. According to Milbank, supposedly representing de Lubac’s hidden position, grace still can be a total gift to man’s nature without the need for a contrasting reality of pure nature with its own end whether imperfectly or perfectly defined. In the second way, Milbank argues that when de Lubac’s position is carried to its logical conclusion it leads to Origin’s position of *apocatastasis* which he describes as “the universal Christological salvation of spirits and through this, the eternal re-establishment of all things.”⁸⁶¹ In the first way, Milbank, by intrinsically linking a

⁸⁵⁸ Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, ix-x.

⁸⁵⁹ Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 1950 #26.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis_en.html (accessed January 08, 2011).

⁸⁶⁰ Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, 88.

⁸⁶¹ Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, 108.

natural spirit to grace, essentially does away altogether with the notion of a pure state of nature. By doing so, Milbank rejects of even a “relative perfection”⁸⁶² of nature within its own order as advocated by Healy’s more moderate interpretation of de Lubac.

Milbank’s radical integration of nature and grace stems from his previously discussed approach to truth. First, in accordance with Vico, by conceiving of creation being internal and external to God and man’s correspondence as a participation in God’s internal creation he integrates the divine with the created world. Second, his presentation of the illumination of reason and the illumination of faith as not in any way parallel to one another but rather as “phases within a single extension”⁸⁶³ is also a way in which he radically integrates the natural with the divine. This is evident in his assertion that unless an intellectual discipline is “explicitly ordered to theology ... they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth...”⁸⁶⁴ Third, Milbank’s integration of nature and grace without clear distinction is evident in his integration of the Church with Christ even to the extent of prioritizing the “place”⁸⁶⁵ of the Church over the person of Christ.

Despite Milbank’s radical integration of nature and grace there is a possibility, as evident in his Stanton lectures, that he is currently in the process of modifying his position since in the Stanton lectures he modifies his hylozoism appropriated from Vico, in which all is in flux, by affirming the presence of some “persistence and holding together of a thing despite change” since without this substantive presence in creation

⁸⁶² Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 562.

⁸⁶³ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21.

⁸⁶⁴ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 306.

⁸⁶⁵ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 158.

giving it distinctive forms “the world would simply be incoherent, because there would be no points of stability for the mind to latch onto.”⁸⁶⁶ It is not clear, though, that Milbank grants man’s nature any independent ability to know these points of stability apart from the illumination given by faith, since in his Stanton lectures he describes them as in a constant state of generation according to “the constant consistent hierarchical and narrative patterns...that are dynamic and open-ended.”⁸⁶⁷ Still this shift in Milbank’s thought may indicate that in the future he will assert that there are constant points of reference other than general narrative ones which man can know outside of what Milbank calls the Christian metanarrative. This would indicate that he sees the faith-reason relationship and the grace-nature relationship as not simply phases on a single extension with faith and grace giving the extension its character but rather, more in accordance with Ratzinger’s thought, as related parallel realities each with its own proper integrity.

6.2 Nature and Grace as Relatively Autonomous:

As shown previously, unlike Milbank’s development of Vico’s thought, Ratzinger rejects conceiving of creation as being internal and external to God and man’s correspondence as a participation in God’s internal creation. In order to maintain that creation is a reality only external to God Ratzinger resists attempts, like Milbank’s, to integrate the divine with the created world. According to Ratzinger, the anti-dualistic presentation of the relationship of the divine to the natural, as advocated by theological positions similar to Milbank’s, was noticeably present after the Second Vatican Council. In describing this Ratzinger writes:

⁸⁶⁶ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 8: The Surprise of the Imagined*, 22.

⁸⁶⁷ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 2: Immanence and Life*, 20.

The feeling that, in reality, there were no longer any walls between Church and world, that every “dualism”: body-soul, Church-world, grace-nature and, in the last analysis, even God-world, was evil—this feeling became more and more a force that gave direction to the whole. In such a rejection of all “dualism”, the optimistic mood that seemed actually to have been canonized by the words *Gaudium et spes* was heightened into the certainty of attaining perfect unity with the present world and so into a transport of adaptation that had sooner or later to be followed by disenchantment.⁸⁶⁸

In resisting this tendency Ratzinger argues that the council’s concept of the Church in *Lumen Gentium* as a sacrament⁸⁶⁹ does not mean that the Church replaces politics, nor, as Milbank contends, that the Church’s role is to establish man in “secular, political unity.”⁸⁷⁰ Rather, for Ratzinger, the Church as a sacrament of unity is essentially about “God’s community with men in Christ and hence the community of men with one another.”⁸⁷¹ This communion is not, therefore, directly concerned with political realities but rather with God who transcends “the boundaries of love of fellowman.”⁸⁷² Similar to Feingold, Ratzinger argues that man’s union with God is not due to “all people, whether baptized or not”⁸⁷³ but rather is given through sanctifying grace at baptism. In this way Ratzinger defends the gratuitousness of grace without entering into the debate on a state of “pure nature.” However, as evident in his affirmation of man’s ability to naturally correspond to truth,⁸⁷⁴ his distinction between natural and supernatural illumination, and his differentiation of Christ from the Church and the Church from the political world he

⁸⁶⁸ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 383.

⁸⁶⁹ Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1975), *Lumen Gentium* 1, p. 350.

⁸⁷⁰ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 54.

⁸⁷¹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 53.

⁸⁷² Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 53.

⁸⁷³ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 197. cf. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 48-55. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 98, 239.

⁸⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 67.

does at least maintain, as Healy does in his interpretation of de Lubac,⁸⁷⁵ that there is a “certain relative perfection” present in the order of nature. This perfection within the order of nature allows it some degree of autonomy from the order of grace.

Conclusion:

Ratzinger’s and Milbank’s divergent views with respect to Vico are reflected in their differences on divine truth and is rooted in their explanations for how man analogously relates to ultimate truth as grounded in two differing ontologies: hyломorphism and hylozoism. While Ratzinger denies any inner creation in God Milbank, in accordance with Vico, affirms such an intra-divine reality. Following upon his conception of truth in God as abiding and stable Ratzinger argues that man’s analogous relationship with God is rooted in an analogy of being. In contrast, Milbank, in line with his definition of final truth as created and dynamic, describes man’s analogous relationship with God as grounded in an analogy of creation.

Recently, in his Stanton lectures, Milbank has moved closer to Ratzinger’s approach to truth by acknowledging the presence of stable reference points in truth. However, it is unclear what he means by this since he describes them in a constant state of generation according to “consistent hierarchical and narrative patterns.”⁸⁷⁶ Still, by not defining reality as in a total state of flux, as he appears to in *Theology and Social Theory* *Social Theory*,⁸⁷⁷ Milbank has refined his thinking in the direction of Ratzinger’s association of truth with stability. Perhaps he will further develop his thought so as to

⁸⁷⁵ Healy, *Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace*, 562.

⁸⁷⁶ Milbank, *Stanton Lecture 2 Immanence and Life*, 20.

⁸⁷⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 424.

accord man the ability to know stable truth (scientific, aesthetic and moral) outside of the illumination given by faith and as mediated by the Church that is not simply equated with his vague Christian, Trinitarian narrative pattern of difference in harmony.

In contrast with Milbank's acceptance of Vico's hylozoism, Ratzinger, following the hylomorphic theory as assumed by Christianity, maintains that outside of the illumination of faith and the mediation of the Church man, as image of God, can, under the natural light of reason as a participation in God's reason, abstract out and know scientific, aesthetic and moral truths. Revelatory truth given in light of faith and hierarchically mediated by the Church gives man both greater certainty and greater depth in his correspondence with truth that reason alone can never obtain. Milbank, in his account of truth as illuminated by faith and mediated by the Church, does not deny that truth is hierarchically mediated by the Church but, unlike Ratzinger, he only describes this truth as taking place primarily in an active manner within the narrative story of reconciliation in which the Church, as an ever shifting historical place for Trinitarian reconciliation to occur, has precedence over Christ as person and over specific truths associated with Christ.

Ratzinger's and Milbank's contrasting approaches to truth form their two ways of defining the nature-grace relationship. While Milbank, out of his hylozoism stemming from Vico, advocates a radical integration of nature and grace, in contrast Ratzinger, in accordance with his hylomorphism, argues for a more moderate integration of nature and grace which respects the relative autonomy of each order. In the next chapter on the related noetic relationship between faith and political reason the practical effects of their

two conceptions of the nature-grace relationship, as grounded in their different accounts of truth in relationship to Vico, will be explicated.

Chapter Six

Ratzinger's Theology of Politics and Milbank's Political Theology

Introduction:

In the previous chapter it was shown how both theologians' three fold perspectives on truth in relationship to Vico leads to two different conceptions of the nature-grace relationship. On the one hand while Ratzinger upholds that nature and grace are related he, nonetheless, defends the integrity of the natural order as is evident in his approach to scientific truth, aesthetic truth and moral truth as defined by natural law. Milbank, on the other hand, advocates a radical integration of nature and grace to such an extent as to practically reject any degree of autonomy of a natural order from a supernatural one. For Milbank, in accordance with his theory of truth, the natural order and the graced order occur in one single extension with the grace of faith defining all stages of the continuum. In contrast, for Ratzinger the natural order and the graced order are related but not in the sense of a continuum. Instead for him the natural order, with respect to sanctifying grace and the gift of faith, maintains at least a relative perfection even when not explicitly ordered to faith, a position that Milbank denies.⁸⁷⁸

In this chapter we will focus our attention on the related noetic faith-reason relationship. It will become quickly apparent how when their two conceptions of the nature and grace relationship as determined by their explanations of truth are reflected in the faith-political reason relationship two very different political visions result. While Ratzinger, in accordance with his defense of a relative autonomy of a natural order from

⁸⁷⁸ Milbank, *Future of Love*, 306. "[U]nless other disciplines are explicitly ordered to theology (assuming that this means participation in God's self-knowledge, as in the Augustinian tradition) they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth..."

the supernatural one, clearly distinguishes the political order from the ecclesial order. Milbank, on the other hand, radically integrates the two. This leads Ratzinger to develop what his former doctoral student Vincent Twomey calls a “theology of politics”⁸⁷⁹ in which faith and political reason are accorded a certain degree of autonomy from one another. This term was coined by Twomey “to contrast with ‘political theology,’ a concept that Ratzinger rejects, namely, any theology, such as that of J.B. Metz or the classical forms of liberation theology, that involves the instrumentalization of either the Church or the faith for political purposes or the attribution of sacral or salvific significance to politics.”⁸⁸⁰ In contrast with Ratzinger, Milbank, out of his radical integration of nature and grace grounded in his active concept of truth in accordance with Vico’s equation of truth with *factum*, develops a political theology in which faith is wedded to one particular political expression, socialism. In presenting their contrasting views I will begin with Ratzinger.

1.0 Faith and Political Reason According to Ratzinger:

1.1 De Lubac’s Views on Nature and Grace Does Not Lead to Political Theology:

In defending the relative autonomy of faith from reason, in accordance with his moderate integration of nature and grace and definition of truth in relationship to reception, Ratzinger disagrees with theologians who after Vatican Council II “transformed de Lubac’s theology of Catholicity into a political theology that sought to put Christianity to practical use as a catalyst for achieving political unity.”⁸⁸¹ According

⁸⁷⁹ Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 72-73.

⁸⁸⁰ Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 72-73.

⁸⁸¹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 51. According to Ratzinger, for de Lubac Catholicity, understood in a collective sense, and not individuality is essential for conceiving Christianity correctly. In

to Ratzinger this transformation does not follow de Lubac's thought "to its logical conclusion."⁸⁸² Rejecting this transformation of de Lubac's thought does not mean, argues Ratzinger, that he is advocating an individualistic manner of perceiving Christianity in which grace mediated by the Church only has relevance for the individual soul and not also for man as a whole.

Rather, Ratzinger contends, by conceiving salvation as not only a matter concerning the individual soul but also as drawing people into communion with God and one another, de Lubac was not referring to the political but to Church, considered as a sacrament.⁸⁸³ De Lubac's depiction of the Church as a sacrament does not, insists Ratzinger "directly establish man's secular, political unity; the sacrament does not replace politics; and theocracy, whatever its form, is a misunderstanding."⁸⁸⁴ For Ratzinger, it is erroneous to view the Church as a sacrament of unity in political terms since her unity is not due to her communion with men but to "God's community with

explaining this Ratzinger writes, "What is being expressed here is, first of all, a collective view of Christianity to replace the individual or purely institutional manner of thinking. It was in this framework that Henri de Lubac's designation of the church as a sacrament made its appearance in the 1930s... The concept of a Christianity concerned only with *my* soul, in which I seek only *my* justification before God, *my* saving grace, *my* entrance into heaven, is for de Lubac that caricature of Christianity that, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, made possible the rise of atheism. The concept of sacraments as a means of the grace that I received like a supernatural medicine in order, as it were, to ensure only my private eternal health is *the* supreme misunderstanding of what the sacrament truly is. De Lubac, for his part, is convinced that Christianity is, by its very nature, a mystery of union. The essence of original sin is the split into individuality, which knows only itself. The essence of redemption is the mending of the shattered image of God, the union of the human race through and in the One who stands for all and in whom, as Paul says (Gal 3:28), all are one: Jesus Christ. On this premise, the word *Catholic* became for de Lubac the main theme of all his theological speculation: to be a Christian means to be a Catholic, means to be on one's way to an all-embracing unity." Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 49.

⁸⁸² Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 52-53.

⁸⁸³ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 12, 61, 76, 93.

⁸⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 54.

men in Christ and hence the communing of men with one another.”⁸⁸⁵ This communion refers principally to the celebration of the Eucharist. Consequently, “the Church”, writes Ratzinger explaining de Lubac’s thought, “is the celebration of the Eucharist; the Eucharist is the Church; they do not simply stand side by side, they are one and the same.”⁸⁸⁶

Through the Eucharist the Church draws men together into a community of faith which, describes Ratzinger, “is different from that of every club, every political party...”⁸⁸⁷ When the Church loses her identity by surrendering to politics,⁸⁸⁸ it then loses her “political interest because no spiritual force emanates from her.”⁸⁸⁹ This force, according to Ratzinger, can only be retained by maintaining a clear distinction between both her eschatological truths of faith and her Eucharistic sacramental identity from political goals and political reasoning. According to Ratzinger, truths of faith which the Church, as an eschatological sign, has sacramental access to cannot be constructed politically by reason on earth.⁸⁹⁰ Similarly, the Church cannot identify a political system as best representing these truths of faith. This does not mean that the Church is to avoid engagement with the world. Rather the Church, in accordance with Ratzinger’s interpretation of Augustine, is to engage in the world by addressing spiritual and physical needs of man. Addressing the needs of man should not, though, lead the Church to

⁸⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 53.

⁸⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 53.

⁸⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 83.

⁸⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 116.

⁸⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 116.

⁸⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk*, 185.

formulate in a political theology an ideal political system which is supposedly best suited to meet these needs.

Consequently, Ratzinger strongly rejects the political theologies of both Alfons Auer and Johann Baptist Metz.⁸⁹¹ These two theologians confused truths of faith with truths which reason is capable of adequately grasping by proposing, writes Ratzinger, the “ecclesialization of everything.”⁸⁹² Auer and Metz, therefore, integrate faith and reason in their common relationship to truth to an extent that Ratzinger does not. In contrast with Auer and Metz, Ratzinger maintains that even though salvation begins in this world it is not to be politicized for it is primarily directed beyond this earthly world to the heavenly world, where reason will encounter divine truth without the mediation of faith.⁸⁹³ According to Ratzinger, such political theologies attempt to replace the role of the Church of evangelizing the world with truths of faith to be received and which transcend the world with the role of “liberating the world within its worldliness”⁸⁹⁴ by actively making truth, in accordance with Vico’s axiom, on earth.

In *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger argues that the politicization of theology is contrary to the Christian faith in the Trinity. In order to understand his reasoning his concept of ontological truth as defined by consciousness, love and freedom needs further explanation. Ratzinger describes truth in this manner by writing, “if the *logos* of all

⁸⁹¹ Johannes Baptist Metz, *Christianity and Socialism*, (New York: Crossroad) 1977; Johannes Baptist Metz, *Unterbrechungen: Theologisch-politische Perspektiven und Profile*, (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1981); Alfons Auer, *Utopie, Technologie, Lebensqualität*, (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1976).

⁸⁹² Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk*, 297. My translation. “Kirchliche Weltzuwendung hingegen kann nicht ebenso auf eine Verkirchlichung des Alls, auf eine Verkirchlichung der ganzen Welt und aller ihrer Bereiche abzielen.”

⁸⁹³ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk*, 297.

⁸⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk*, 316. My translation. „... sondern vielmehr die Freisetzung der Welt in ihre Weltlichkeit hinein...”

being, the being that bears up and encompasses everything, is consciousness, freedom and love, then it follows automatically that the supreme factor in the world is not cosmic necessity but freedom.”⁸⁹⁵ After defining “the supreme factor in the world” as a rational love which necessarily entails freedom and unpredictability Ratzinger then concludes that “if the supreme point in the world’s designs is a freedom which bears up, wills, knows and loves the whole world as freedom, then this means that together with freedom the incalculability implicit in it is an essential part of the world.”⁸⁹⁶

The above reasoning leads Ratzinger to reject political theology as principally defined by Hegel since Hegelian political theology, according to Ratzinger, ignores freedom as constitutive to the world including its politics.⁸⁹⁷ Similarly, while not explicitly stating so, Ratzinger, by rejecting Hegelian idealism also rejects Vico’s “ideal eternal history.”⁸⁹⁸ As explained in the précis, according to Vico’s new science political processes follow a set ideal pattern in which man progresses from anarchy to monarchy to aristocracy to democracy and finally regresses back to monarchy followed by anarchy. In addition to rejecting an idealism that is taken up into political theology, Ratzinger also rejects Marx’s supposedly scientific, political theory which is similar to Hegel’s and Vico’s thought without the theological and spiritual aspect of Hegelian dialectics and Vico’s concept of providence. Present, therefore, within his rejection of Hegelian political theology is also a dismissal of Vico’s and Marx’s approach to politics. He spells out his rejection of Hegelian political theology in the following manner. According to

⁸⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 112.

⁸⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 112.

⁸⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 120-121.

⁸⁹⁸ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. VIII, 90, pg. 66.

Ratzinger, Hegel rejects love as constitutive of God since, as explained by Ratzinger, Hegel views the Triune nature of God as only “the expression of the historical side of God and therefore of the way in which God appears in history.”⁸⁹⁹ Hegel, therefore concludes Ratzinger, is a Monarchist since the description of God as three persons in one divine nature “are regarded as only masks of God which tell us something about ourselves but nothing about God himself.”⁹⁰⁰

Ratzinger relates the Monarchism of Hegel and its early versions to political theology by writing:

Even in its early Christian form and then again in its revival by Hegel and Marx it has a decidedly political tinge; it is “political theology”. In the ancient Church it served the attempt to give the imperial monarchy a theological foundation; in Hegel it becomes the apotheosis of the Prussian state, and in Marx a program of action to secure a sound future for humanity. Conversely, it could be shown how in the old Church the victory of belief in the Trinity over Monarchianism signified a victory over the political abuse of theology: the ecclesiastical belief in the Trinity shattered the politically usable moulds, destroyed the potentialities of theology as a political myth, and disowned the misuse of the Gospel to justify a political situation.⁹⁰¹

According to Ratzinger, such a political theology is contrary to Christian faith⁹⁰² since, according to orthodox Christianity, God is truly triune in himself and not simply as manifested to man in history. By being triune, therefore, the truth of God is convertible with love, since the dynamic of love requires the presence of more than one person. In

⁸⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 120.

⁹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 119.

⁹⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 121. Most likely, with the term monarchianism (*mono*, “one” + *arche*, “ruler”), Ratzinger is referring to Constantius’ promotion of Arianism in order to unify the empire and indirectly to Justinian’s similar political aim in his adoption of monophysism both in theology and in politics (*monos*, “one, alone” + *physis* “nature”). Cf. Hugo Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity*, trans. Leo Donald Davis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992) 39-79, 185-203.

⁹⁰² Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 121.

addition, in order for love to be true it must be free from compulsion. It follows that since the world is reflective of the truth of its creator it is “a world defined by the structure of freedom”⁹⁰³ and, to a certain extent, shares in the incomprehensibility of God. Due to the freedom and incomprehensibility of the world, argues Ratzinger, no one political system can be promoted, in a Hegelian or Marxist sense, as definitive.⁹⁰⁴ It follows, similarly, that Ratzinger also implicitly rejects Vico’s “scientific” presentation of the history of political systems since, even though crediting providence with a role in history, nonetheless, with his “ideal eternal history”⁹⁰⁵ Vico, for Ratzinger, excessively diminishes the freedom and incomprehensibility of the world. Ratzinger, cautiously following Arnold Toynbee’s rejection of Oswald Spengler’s biologicistic thesis of history and in contrast with Vico, brings out the freedom and incomprehensibility of the political processes by proposing more of a “voluntaristic view that places its bets on the powers of creative minorities and on exceptional individuals.”⁹⁰⁶

Since he asserts that exceptional individuals, in particular the saints, rather than an ideal political system, is how Christianity transforms the political Ratzinger, therefore, insists that the eschatological Kingdom of God as proposed by faith is not in itself “a *political* norm of political activity.”⁹⁰⁷ In rejecting faith as a political norm for political activity he writes, “The Kingdom of God which Christ promises does not consist in a

⁹⁰³ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 112.

⁹⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 112.

⁹⁰⁵ Vico, *The First New Science*, bk. II, chap. VIII, 90, pg. 66.

⁹⁰⁶ Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 25. Ratzinger indicates his preference for Toynbee over Spengler by stating, “We do not know how things will go in Europe in the future. The Charter of Fundamental Rights [of the European Union] may be a first step, a sign that Europe is consciously looking again for its soul. In this regard we must say that Toynbee was correct, that the destiny of a society always depends on creative minorities. Believing Christians should think of themselves as one such creative minority...” Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 34.

⁹⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, 59-60.

modification of our earthly circumstances ... That Kingdom is found in those persons whom the finger of God has touched and who have allowed themselves to be made God's sons and daughters. Clearly, such a transformation can only take place through death. For this reason, the Kingdom of God, salvation in its fullness, cannot be deprived of its connection with dying."⁹⁰⁸

This view of Ratzinger is in accordance with his manner of defining truth as ultimately a personal reality and not as located in a general, ideal practice, such as a particular political ideology. By being personal, therefore, truths of faith are primarily relevant for causing conversions in individuals through their transformation in Christ and not in bringing about a structural political change. This ultimate transformation will only occur after one dies where the Christian will encounter, along with the community of the saints, the Triune God in his fullness.

1.2 The Church Preaches Moral Norms not a Political Norm:

No matter how much Ratzinger desires the Church to be distinct from the political since she is, according to Ratzinger interpretation of Augustine, in a "painful 'between'"⁹⁰⁹ state she still must relate in some fashion with the political. This manner of relating, though, must not threaten the essentially non-political nature of faith. In his most recent book, *Jesus of Nazareth* volume two, Ratzinger explicitly argues that the essence of the Church is non-political since the "essence of his [Christ's] new path" is having "actually achieved a separation of the religious from the political."⁹¹⁰ The

⁹⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life*, 62.

⁹⁰⁹ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk*, 167. " ...das bedeutet das schmerzliche „Zwischen“, in dem die Kirche einstweilen noch steht."

⁹¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 169.

Church, according to Ratzinger, is to continue on this new path by bringing into fruition the “non-political Messianic kingdom”⁹¹¹ inaugurated by Jesus who “[detached] these two hitherto inseparable realities from one another.”⁹¹² Ratzinger locates the moment in Jesus’ ministry when the separation of faith from political reasoning occurred at the crucifixion. In stating this Ratzinger, “But this separation-essential to Jesus’ message-of politics from faith, of God’s people from politics, was ultimately possible only through the Cross. Only through the total loss of all external power, through the radical stripping away that led to the Cross, could this new world come into being. Only through faith in the Crucified One, in him who was robbed of all worldly power and thereby exalted, does the new community arise, the new manner of God’s dominion in the world.”⁹¹³

In accordance with this logic, Ratzinger, in *Faith and the Future*, describes Christ as principally having taken on flesh in order “interiorly to share in the passion of mankind”⁹¹⁴ and “not as a *deus ex machina* to set everything externally in order.”⁹¹⁵ Consequently, in participation of Christ’s mission the essential task of Christians is “to share in the passion of mankind from within, to extend the sphere of human being so that it will find room for the presence of God”⁹¹⁶ and not attempt to politically construct the Kingdom of God on earth. The Kingdom of God, explains Ratzinger will eventually “be

⁹¹¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 170.

⁹¹² Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 170.

⁹¹³ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 170-171.

⁹¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Faith and Future*, 96.

⁹¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Faith and Future*, 96.

⁹¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Faith and Future*, 97.

the city of man.”⁹¹⁷ However, this only will come about in heaven after “man has run and suffered the whole course of his human existence to the limits of his capacities.”⁹¹⁸

In her present “painful ‘between’”⁹¹⁹ state on earth the Church shares in the suffering of mankind “from within” by relating to the world non-politically. She does so, asserts Ratzinger, by offering moral norms for politics and not by presenting herself as an ideal “*political* norm of political activity.”⁹²⁰ For Ratzinger the fundamental moral norm to be defended by the Church within the political arena is the right to life. The killing of the innocent, which includes abortion, “cannot”, declares Ratzinger, “be made right by any law.”⁹²¹ While, for Ratzinger, the Church, as principally represented by the bishops,⁹²² is to be a moral authority in the world she is not to address specific political/economic issues or advocate any one political ideology. In doing so the Church, writes Ratzinger, maintains her non-political identity as “an open space of reconciliation among the parties”⁹²³ while avoiding “becoming a party herself.”⁹²⁴ Even though Ratzinger does not want the Church to officially advocate any one ideology he does not intend this to be interpreted that individuals, including bishops, are not permitted to express their private opinions in this matter. Ratzinger, in expressing his personal opinion, not to be confused with ecclesial faith, states, “In many respects democratic

⁹¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 98.

⁹¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 99.

⁹¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Das Neue Volk Gottes*, 167. “...das bedeutet das schmerzliche „Zwischen“, in dem die Kirche einstweilen noch steht.“

⁹²⁰ Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, 59-60.

⁹²¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, trans. Adrian Walker. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996). Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 102. Cf. Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, 63; Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 247.

⁹²² Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 102.

⁹²³ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 100.

⁹²⁴ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 100.

socialism was and is close to Catholic social doctrine; in any case, it contributed toward the formation of a social consciousness.”⁹²⁵

1.3 Ratzinger’s Concept of Democratic Socialism:

A slight digression needs to be taken in order to understand what Ratzinger means by his personal preference for Democratic Socialism. This is important to briefly describe since socialism, as with other broad political terms, can be defined in multiple ways.⁹²⁶ Ratzinger’s understanding of socialism, especially its democratic variant, is influenced by how socialism developed in Germany. In 1869, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht founded the German Marxist Socialist party. In 1875, it merged with the first German organized workers’ party founded in the 1860’s by Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864).⁹²⁷ Lassalle was a German Jew and one of Germany’s first socialist political activists. After the Marxist Socialist party merged with the Lassalleans it was renamed in the 1890’s as the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Germany. In 1919 a left-

⁹²⁵ Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 28. Ratzinger distinguishes democratic socialism from totalitarian socialism. Totalitarian socialism, in contrast with democratic socialism, defines Ratzinger, is “rigidly materialistic and atheistic.” (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 28) The former USSR was an example of this totalitarian variant in which the state presents itself as the totality of its citizens existence. According to Ratzinger this form of socialism failed not simply because of its “false economic dogmatism” (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 29) but, more fundamentally, due to its “contempt for human rights” and by “their subjection of morality to the demands of the system and to their promises for the future.” (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 29) By making morality subordinate to the political system of communism “man’s primordial certainties about God, about himself, and about the universe” were, argues Ratzinger, lost. (Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 28)

⁹²⁶ For a general understanding of the term socialism and its many variations see Anthony Wright, *Socialisms: Why Socialists Disagree - and What They Disagree About* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For an in depth account of European Socialism see Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

⁹²⁷ David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz, *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840-1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 3.

radical splint off from the SPD formed themselves into the official Communist Party of Germany (KPD).⁹²⁸

The KPD, unlike the SPD, was a strict, centrally organized political party whose leadership was intent on implementing the political directives of the USSR's Communist International (Comintern).⁹²⁹ As the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) became Stalinized the KPD did likewise. As it was Stalinized the KPD became a hostile opponent to the SPD. As described by Beatrix Herlemann, "The strong stance against the hostile 'brother' – social democracy – would run like a red thread through the entire history of the KPD. Only twice – in the context of the popular front policy of 1935 to 1936 and in the forced unification of the KPD and SPD in 1946 – did it retreat from this position, and then only for short periods and because of strategic considerations."⁹³⁰ In the same year of the formation of the KPD, the SPD began to substantially participate in the formation of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), especially with respect to the Weimar's welfare system. During the years of the Weimar Republic, its welfare system, writes David F. Crew, "[became] a bitterly contested terrain where Social Democrats and Communists battled one another for the support of the German working class."⁹³¹

Adolf Hitler's coming into power in 1933 signaled both the end of the Weimar Republic and its welfare system and the beginning of the German Reich which lasted

⁹²⁸ Beatrix Herlemann, "Communist Resistance Between Comintern Directives and Nazi Terror," in *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840-1990* ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 357.

⁹²⁹ Herlemann, "Communist Resistance," 357.

⁹³⁰ Herlemann, "Communist Resistance," 358.

⁹³¹ David F. Crew, "A Social Republic? Social Democrats, Communists, and the Weimar Welfare State, 1919 to 1933," in *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840-1990* ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 224.

from 1933 to 1943. During the time of the German Reich, Hitler violently suppressed both the SPD and the KPD. In addition, he set out, with the aid of his National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP) otherwise known in English as the Nazi Party, to transform, according to racist ideology, the inherited Weimar welfare system. According to Hitler, the racially inferior did not have the right to care under the German welfare system but rather ought to be sterilized, euthanized and even exterminated.⁹³² The SPD courageously resisted the Nazis' aim of completely recasting the welfare state according to racist ideology. This was best witnessed to by the chairman of the SPD from 1946-1952 Kurt Schumacher (1895-1952). Because of his resistance to the Nazi party Schumacher spent ten years in a Nazi concentration camp.⁹³³

After WWII and the subsequent fall of the Nazis from power the SPD emerged, describes Hanna Schissler, "with immense moral authority."⁹³⁴ This is because unlike many of the other political parties under the Nazis who, states Schissler, "had been severely compromised by their collaboration with the Nazis...[t]he SPD, in contrast, could claim a stance of unbridled and untainted opposition to National Socialism."⁹³⁵ In the 1950's, the SPD gained even greater appeal by abandoning its identification with the working class, as influenced by its Marxist's origins, and instead became a party for all people. This decision led to significant electoral victories for the SPD in the 1960's and

⁹³² Crew, "A Social Republic?," 240-242.

⁹³³ Hanna Schissler, "Social Democratic Gender Policies, the Working-Class Milieu, and the Culture of Domesticity in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s," in *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840-1990* ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 507.

⁹³⁴ Schissler, "Social Democratic Gender Policies," 507.

⁹³⁵ Schissler, "Social Democratic Gender Policies," 507.

in the 1970's.⁹³⁶ During this self-transformation the SPD also, out of fear of the Nazi and Stalinist abuse of centralized state power, ceased advocating for state ownership of the means of production. However, they did retain their goal of implementing, in a democratic manner, a European planned economy. This goal was thwarted by the US Marshall Plan which supported free enterprise in Western Europe rather than large-scale socialization.⁹³⁷

The SPD, as presently known by Ratzinger, is a messy democratic political party that is not highly structured and centralized as was the KPD and the Nazi party but rather, as described by Peter Lösche, “is decentralized, fragmented, and flexible. Local party organizations of various kinds...enjoy a high degree of autonomy, while organizations at the regional (*Bezirk*) or state (*Land*) level have their own, very considerable weight. The party Executive (*Parteivorstand*) and the party Presidium do not stand at the summit of a centralized, pyramid-like structure; rather, they tend to function separately from the rest of the party.”⁹³⁸ It advocates a moderate, welfare state and, in a non-totalitarian manner, a planned economy. When Ratzinger refers to Democratic Socialism his primary point of reference is the SPD as distinguished especially from the KPD and the NSDAP, also known as the Nazi party.

Despite Ratzinger's personal preference for democratic socialism, as primarily understood in reference to the German SPD party, he makes, as demonstrated previously,

⁹³⁶ Barclay, *Between Reform and Revolution*, 7.

⁹³⁷ Dietrich Orlow, “German Social Democracy and European Unification, 1945 to 1955,” in *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840-1990* ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 473.

⁹³⁸ Peter Lösche, “Is the SPD Still a Labor Party?,” in *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840-1990* ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 535.

a clear distinction between political opinion and ecclesial faith. This distinction follows from his moderate integration of the nature-grace and reason-faith relations as rooted in his distinction between natural knowledge and truths of faith. According to Ratzinger the papacy is to be especially respectful of this distinction by taking care in not siding with any one political party. In this way, he writes, the pope as an apolitical center “can be effective against the drift into dependence on political systems or the pressures emanating from our civilization.”⁹³⁹ “[O]nly by having such a center” argues Ratzinger “can the faith of Christians secure a clear voice in the confusion of ideologies.”⁹⁴⁰ This clear voice, for Ratzinger as previously shown, is defined by stable, unchanging truths, both moral and doctrinal.

1.4 The Primacy of Individual Conversion Over Structural Change:

The clear vocation of Christianity with its, as described by Ratzinger, claims of stable, abiding truths calls man primarily to individual conversion by bringing himself, with the aid of grace, into correspondence with these truths. It is an illusion, he declares, to hold “that a new man and a new world can be created, not by calling each individual to conversion, but only by changing the social and economic structures, for it is precisely personal sin that is in reality at the root of unjust social structures. Those who really desire a more human society need to begin with the root, not with the trunk and branches, of the tree of injustice.”⁹⁴¹ According to Ratzinger the root cause of unjust political and economic structures are not to be found in the structures themselves but rather in

⁹³⁹ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 47.

⁹⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 47.

⁹⁴¹ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 190.

individuals who personally choose to sin while ignoring their vocation as image of God to correspond with abiding truth. Therefore, Ratzinger stresses individual conversions, which may indirectly lead to lasting political and economic reform, over structural changes. The Church, for Ratzinger, has the role of effecting these individual conversions and not the role of directly bringing about structural changes. The later, maintains Ratzinger, is only proper to the political order and not to the ecclesial.

By addressing the call of conversion to individuals rather than to economic and political structures Christianity remains faithful to her origin since, writes Ratzinger, “from the beginning it has insisted on leaving politics in the sphere of rationality and ethics. It has taught mankind to accept the imperfect and has made this possible.”⁹⁴² Therefore, Christianity, in accordance with New Testament theology, further explains Ratzinger, proposes ethics for politicians to follow and not a structural model, based on truths of faiths, for politicians to implement.⁹⁴³ The constant, universally valid ethical norms which the Church witnesses to gives stability to man since a political system, according to Ratzinger, is always in the process of being “built anew again and again starting from conscience, which is the only way of securing it.”⁹⁴⁴

Her truth claims, therefore according to Ratzinger, are what distinguish the Church from the political realm. “If the Church” writes Ratzinger, abandons her claim, based on faith, of having a special relationship to truth, “she no longer accomplishes for the state what it needs from her. Yet if the state accepts this claim, it abolishes its own

⁹⁴² Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 204.

⁹⁴³ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 204.

⁹⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 205.

pluralistic character and thus both Church and state are lost.”⁹⁴⁵ (This raises an interesting question. Does Ratzinger mean with this sentence that the state, in order to retain its proper identity, cannot acknowledge the Church’s claim to have truth? Most likely Ratzinger means that the state, in order to retain its identity, cannot formally accept the Church’s truth claims, but can at implicitly and non-formally do so.) As explained by Ratzinger, throughout history two extremes threaten this delicate moderately integrated relationship between the Church and the political realm. This first danger is a radical dualism, in which the Church is viewed as having no relevance for politics. The second is radical integralism, in which the Church and the state form a theocracy. The danger of theocracy, according to Ratzinger, “is minimal.”⁹⁴⁶ However, this extreme does appear “where the misalliance between Christianity and Marxism brings about a pre-figuration of the kingdom of God that is supposed to be created politically.”⁹⁴⁷

When either extreme occurs the truths of the Christian faith, which call man to transcendence, become obscured. When this happens, writes Ratzinger, “the myth of the divine state rises again, because man cannot do without the totality of hope.”⁹⁴⁸ This myth can be resurrected by either extreme. When it is brought to life by a theocracy the kingdom of God is considered “the outcome of politics” and faith is twisted “into the universal primacy of the political.”⁹⁴⁹ According to Ratzinger, this blatantly contradicts the Christian faith which “destroyed the myth of the divine state, the myth of the earthly paradise or utopian state and of a society without rule. In its place it put the objectivity of

⁹⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 206.

⁹⁴⁶ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 206.

⁹⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 206-207.

⁹⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 144.

⁹⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 144.

reason.”⁹⁵⁰ In other words, the Christian faith claims that the reason of all men, regardless of political affiliation, has the ability to know universal truth.

1.5 Individual Conversion Leads to the Formation of a Supra-National Ethic:

In his early work *Die Einheit der Nationen* (1971) Ratzinger shows how individual conversion and the ecclesial preaching of constant truths can bring about a supranational ethic. Mona Müry-Leitner summarizes Ratzinger thought in this short work by writing, “After the example of Origen and Augustine Ratzinger shows how...Christianity, in its universal sense, could inspire a supranational ethics, which cannot be justified only from the political and economic realms.”⁹⁵¹ Ratzinger, in describing the early Church’s attitude towards the political realm, writes that Christian did not aim at “a political, but an ethical revolution, on the change of humans, not on the change of conditions.”⁹⁵² This moral revolution which early Christians intended to bring about, argues Ratzinger, was fundamentally based on their conviction that salvation does not come from earthly politics but comes from outside of this temporal realm. According to the Roman world salvation comes from within Roman empire since the whole universe, including mankind, was considered as united as the body of Zeus. This “hidden divine unity of the word” writes Ratzinger “was converted by the Roman rulers into a

⁹⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 146.

⁹⁵¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen*, (Munich: Universitätsverlag Anton Pustet, 1971), 6. My translation. „Am Beispiel der christlichen Denker Origenes und Augustinus zeigt Ratzinger...Dabei könnte das Christentum, im universellen Sinn begriffen, gerade jene supranationale Ethik inspirieren, die aus der Sphäre des Politischen und Ökonomischen allein nicht zu begründen ist.“

⁹⁵² Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen*, 14. My translation. „Diese Haltung einer inneren Freiheit dem Staat gegenüber, die nicht auf eine politische, sondern auf eine ethische Revolution abzielt, auf die Änderung des Menschen.“

political reality”⁹⁵³ represented at the time of Christ by the *pax romana* of Caesar Augustus.⁹⁵⁴ The Romans made this connection since they understood God in a pantheistic sense. Therefore, one can only experience salvation in this world, since there is nothing that goes beyond this world, including the divinity himself. In contrast, according to the theism of the early Christians, as explained by Ratzinger, on earth the salvation of man, and the related reality of the unity of man, are not tasks for man in this world but are part of an eschatological hope that will only be fulfilled in heaven.⁹⁵⁵

The early Christians, continues Ratzinger, not only differentiated their theology from the political theology of the Romans but also theologically distinguished themselves from Gnostic theology. In contrast with Roman theology, which maintained that the created world is God and man is saved in this world, the Gnostics maintained that the divine creator of the earthly world and the world itself are completely evil. Only through the secret knowledge provided by the Gnostics, can man be saved from this evil creation.⁹⁵⁶ In contrast with Gnostic theology, the early Christians held, writes Ratzinger, that “the present order of the world, although it is passing, possessed nevertheless a relative right. Therefore, they respected that which worked within this relative framework and only rejected what established itself as absolute.”⁹⁵⁷ This perspective,

⁹⁵³ Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen*, 16. My translation. „Demgegenüber war Rom an der Idee der Einheit interessiert; die ganze Welt ist (wie gesagt) der Leib des Zeus; diese verborgene göttliche Einheit der Welt wird vom römischen princeps in politische Wirklichkeit umgesetzt.“

⁹⁵⁴ Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen*, 18-24.

⁹⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen*, 21.

⁹⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen*, 26.

⁹⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen* 28. My translation. „Deshalb fiel es ihnen auch nicht schwer, einzusehen, daß die gegenwärtige Ordnung der Welt, obgleich sie vergänglich war, dennoch ein relatives Recht besaß, also auch in ihrem Rahmen Respekt verdiente und lediglich dann abzulehnen war, wenn sie diesen ihren Rahmen verließ und sich absolut setzte.“ The early Christians, Ratzinger explains, understood the following texts as supporting this view of the world. Mk. 12: 17; 1 Pet. 2: 13-17; Rom. 13: 1-7.

reflective of Ratzinger's analogy of being, stands midway between the univocal Roman view and the equivocal Gnostic view, for it neither sees the world and the political affairs of man as a divine end in itself, and, at the same time, by recognizing creation's relative value, does not reject the entire cosmos as evil and unrelated to God.

According to this Christian view, faith and reason are moderately integrated with one another through their common association with truth. Political reason, as long as it does not make itself absolute, is true, relative to the world, and can be integrated with faith if it is seen as preparing man for the coming absolute heavenly Kingdom. Faith, in contrast, bears absolute, eternal truths, and relates to political reason by reminding man's reason of an ethic, based on God as man's common Father, that transcends all national and political boundaries. This concept of the relationship of faith and reason is opposed to both the early Roman pantheistic view, in which faith is at the total service of political reason, and the Gnostic excessively mystical view, in which reason, when it lacks the aid of secret truths of faith, is denied as even having relative value.

1.6 A Supranational Ethic Fostered by the Faith Upholds Freedom and Resists Tyranny:

Ratzinger furthers his moderate presentation of faith's relationship with political reason by arguing that the political goal of emancipating man from any authority other than reason leads to the loss of freedom and not to the increase of freedom. He asserts that the Church and her faith, as an authority other than reason that inspires a supranational ethic, can aid in the liberation of man from tyrannical regimes, such as

especially expressed after the French Revolution and by Marxism.⁹⁵⁸ Faith encourages such an internationally shared ethic by teaching that freedom, including economic freedom,⁹⁵⁹ is always to be understood as shared since it is rooted in God and, therefore, not something that is totally without form or content. By understanding freedom in the context of being responsible and accountable to another gives form and content to freedom, even when understood politically and economically.

The very nature of God and the nature of man, by being made in the image of God, supports this concept of freedom since, according to Christianity, writes Ratzinger, “The real God is by his very nature entirely being-for (Father), being-from (Son), and being-with (Holy Spirit).”⁹⁶⁰ Since according to faith man is created in God’s image Man, “ ‘from,’ ‘with,’ and ‘for’ constitute the fundamental anthropological pattern.”⁹⁶¹ Ratzinger’s concept of freedom as shared and, therefore, a reality that all can participate in whether religious or not is slightly different from Brian Tierney’s understanding of

⁹⁵⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, “Truth and Freedom,” *Communio International Catholic Review* 23 (Spring, 1996) 23.

⁹⁵⁹ Ratzinger rejects the economic reasoning that maintains “the market is incompatible with ethics because voluntary ‘moral’ actions contradict market rules and drive the moralizing entrepreneur out of the game.” (Joseph Ratzinger, “Church and Economy: Responsibility for the Future of the World Economy,” *Communio International Catholic Review* 13 (Fall, 1986): 200.) According to this logic the market operates out of “efficiency and not on morality.” (Ratzinger, *Church and Economy*, 200.) Ratzinger criticizes this theory for two philosophical presuppositions. The first is determinism for “it presupposes that the free play of market forces can operate in *one* direction only, given the constitution of man and the world, namely, toward the self-regulation of supply and demand, and toward economic efficiency and progress.” (Ratzinger, *Church and Economy*, 200.) The second “even more astounding presupposition” is “that the natural laws of the market are in essence good...and necessarily work for the good, whatever may be true of the morality of individuals.” (Ratzinger, *Church and Economy*, 200.) In contrast with this determinism Ratzinger argues that man’s freedom invalidates such a claim. Ignoring this spiritual power, asserts Ratzinger, is detrimental for a well-functioning market. For Ratzinger, therefore, markets can function properly only be taking into account this spiritual power. By so doing man is lead to agree upon a moral consensus. This moral consensus provides man with a common norm to guide and peacefully coordinate their economic choices by. Without such a norm man can easily use his freedom not even for greater efficiency but rather irrationally and destructively.

⁹⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *Truth and Freedom*, 28.

⁹⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Truth and Freedom*, 28.

freedom in relationship to church and state. In expressing his view Tierney writes, “The very existence of two power structures [church and state] competing for men’s allegiance instead of only one compelling obedience greatly enhanced the possibilities for human freedom.”⁹⁶² In contrast with Tierney, Ratzinger presents the church-state relationship as reflective of the faith-reason one as promoting freedom not because they are in conflict but rather since they both mutually share in freedom’s reality while respecting each other’s identity.

For Ratzinger, Christianity’s belief in a relational God in which freedom is understood as shared and its belief that man is made in His image enlighten man with a truth that, although transcendent of reason, is, nevertheless, very much relevant to the proper functioning of reason, including political reason. This transcendent truth teaches that positive laws and human rights are not antithetical to freedom, “but rather its condition, indeed, a constitutive element of freedom itself.”⁹⁶³ Positive laws and human rights upheld by a political system are constitutive of freedom itself, because the freedom of God, in whose image man is made in, can only be conceived properly as a shared freedom in harmony and not an individualistic freedom in endless competition with the freedom of others and their claimed rights. When man tries to free himself from the image he is made in by excluding any influence faith has upon reason, and, as a result, denies that the Church ought to have influence on the political world, he is not on the “way to divinity, but to dehumanization, to the destruction of being itself through the

⁹⁶² Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 2.

⁹⁶³ Ratzinger, *Truth and Freedom*, 28.

destruction of the truth.”⁹⁶⁴ Because Christians have the privilege of experiencing, through their faith, truth which transcends all political entities, writes Ratzinger, “they always have a Lord, a task, a standard, that transcends the party and its norms.”⁹⁶⁵ Due to the special relationship of faith with truth, Christianity entails, asserts Ratzinger, “the necessity of resisting all totalitarianism—a logical consequence of faith.”⁹⁶⁶

In addition to faith in Christ, who transcends all political platforms, and the Trinitarian nature of God, which instructs man that freedom is a shared reality, Ratzinger also points to Marian devotion as an effective antidote to totalitarian regimes. Marian devotion, which stresses contemplation over action, in contrast with Vico’s axiom which does the reverse, explains Ratzinger, shields the Church against a “masculinized model that views her as an instrument for a program of social-political action. In Mary, as figure and archetype, the Church again finds her own visage as Mother and cannot degenerate into the complexity of a party, an organization or a pressure group in the service of human interests, even the noblest. If Mary no longer finds a place in many theologies and ecclesiologies, the reason is obvious: they have reduced faith to an abstraction. And an abstraction does not need a Mother.”⁹⁶⁷ The Marian nature of the Church along with the Church’s faith and Catholicity, which transcends all political systems, has led the Church to be, asserts Ratzinger, “a bastion against totalitarian derangement.”⁹⁶⁸ For Ratzinger, these two dimensions of the Church explain why

⁹⁶⁴ Ratzinger, *Truth and Freedom*, 29.

⁹⁶⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, trans. Franciscan Herald Press, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 56.

⁹⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 56.

⁹⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 108.

⁹⁶⁸ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 168.

German “Catholics found it easier to stand firm in opposition to Hitler’s doctrines”⁹⁶⁹ than Protestants who were overly attached to a particular nation and its political structure.

2.0 Faith and Political Reason According to Milbank:

2.1 De Lubac’s Views on Nature and Grace Lead to Political Theology:

In *Theology and Social Theory*, rooted in his hylozoism taken from Vico, Milbank argues for a politicized version of de Lubac’s nature-grace relationship. In presenting this he contrasts de Lubac’s French integralism, as it relates to politics, with a German integralism,⁹⁷⁰ as most notably represented by Karl Rahner and as expressed politically in political theology and liberation theology. In order to grasp these two positions the term integralism needs to be defined. Unfortunately, writes Peter J Bernardi, integralism is “notoriously difficult to define.”⁹⁷¹ Quoting from the noted expert on the history of integralism, Emile Poulat, Bernardi defines the 19th-20th century understanding of integralism as resting “on two principles: religion is the foundation of the social order [and] Catholic doctrine is the truth of religion.”⁹⁷² In the early 20th century there arose in France two ways of integrating the social order with the religious order. On the one hand, there were intransigent Catholics who, in their strict adherence to the *Syllabus of Errors*, pledged to root out heretics and who, at the same time, politically collaborated with the monarchical, ultramontane political organization run by the agnostic Charles Maurras (1868-1952). Maurras’s *Action Française* advocated a restoration of the

⁹⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 168.

⁹⁷⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 207.

⁹⁷¹ Peter J. Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française*, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 65.

⁹⁷² Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism*, 66.

traditional alliance between monarchy and the Church.⁹⁷³ On the other hand, there were those, principally inspired by Blondel, who supported a more democratic form of government transformed by a Christianization of the social order.⁹⁷⁴ Both groups claimed that they represented the correct integration of politics and faith as expressive of the nature-grace relationship. Milbank belongs to the latter group.

As an integralist, as Blondel defines it, Milbank not only opposes the version of integralism advanced by French traditionalists but also rejects a German form of integralism as principally inspired by Karl Rahner. In contrasting the French integralism of Blondel with German integralism Milbank points to “a difference that can be crudely indicated and misleadingly summarized by saying that whereas the French version ‘supernaturalizes the natural’, the German version ‘naturalizes the supernatural’.”⁹⁷⁵ According to German integralism, as explained by Milbank, theology is mediated by an autonomous secular order.⁹⁷⁶ This autonomous secular order proposed by Rahner is a variation of the concept of a pure state of nature developed by Suarez and Neo-Thomists. As defined by Milbank, such an integralism views the social order as an “autonomous sphere which does not need to turn to theology for its self-understanding, and yet it is already a grace-imbued sphere, and therefore it is *upon* pre-theological sociology ... that

⁹⁷³ For further description of Charles Maurras see: Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism*, 95-118. For an account of Descoqs’ restorationist approach see: Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism*, 253-254.

⁹⁷⁴ Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism*, 255-258.

⁹⁷⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 207.

⁹⁷⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 248. Milbank explicitly rejects a theology mediated by social science by asserting, “Theology, then, does not *require* the mediation of social science, in Boff’s sense that social science presents theology with the social object perfectly described and perfectly explained.”

theology must be founded.”⁹⁷⁷ As expressed in liberation theology this autonomous “pre-theological” sociology is Marxism. In contrast, French integralism, as presented by Milbank, “refuses even to ‘formally distinguish’ a realm of pure nature in concrete humanity.”⁹⁷⁸ An encounter with grace occurs not, as with the Rahnerian version, “at the margins of every individual's knowing ... but rather in the confrontation with certain historical texts and images which have no permanent ‘place’ whatsoever, save that of their original occurrence as events and their protracted repetition through the force of ecclesial allegiance. No social theory can set limits to the capacity of these events to become ‘fundamental’ for human history, any more than it can in the case of any other events.”⁹⁷⁹ This version of integralism, continues Milbank:

...which ‘supernaturalizes the natural’ is, therefore, also the more historicist in character, because it does not identity with the supernatural as any permanent ‘area’ of human life. But neither does it locate ‘nature’ in the supernatural. Where the supernatural impinges as the cultural recurrence of an event, it is at once recognizable as ‘different’, and, at the same time, limitlessly capable of transforming all other cultural phenomena. One can conclude that in avoiding any hypostasization of human nature, in stressing the historical, by insisting that the later and ‘basic’, the French version of integralism points in a ‘postmodern’ direction which has more contemporary relevance than the view of Rahner.”⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁷⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 208.

⁹⁷⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 208.

⁹⁷⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 208-209. Milbank is referring here to Rahner’s “supernatural existential” which is placed by God in the creation of man’s nature and is conceptually different from nature. See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1978) 126-33. Also, see de Lubac’s response to Rahner: De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, xxiii.

⁹⁸⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 209.

It is upon this French integralism that Milbank fashions a political theology as a better alternative to liberation theology and its precursor the political theology which began in Germany.

Milbank further develops French integralism in a more radical direction by broadening the concept of salvation as socially understood. Following the insights of his mentor Blondel, de Lubac, in *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, sought to integrate the social order with the salvific order by demonstrating that salvation is necessarily social. In contrast with the German integralism, as present in liberation theology and Germanic political theology, salvation for de Lubac is not, explains Milbank, dualistically divided into individual salvation and a salvation of social structures but rather entails a salvation mediated by the Church in which man is reconciled with God and with one another.⁹⁸¹ However, criticizes Milbank, de Lubac “does appear finally to insulate ecclesial history from secular and political history in general.”⁹⁸² According to Milbank this leads to an insufficient integration of the social and religious realms which, in turn causes the religious realm to be insufficiently relevant to the social realm. In pointing out where de Lubac errs in this manner Milbank writes:

In the final chapter of *Catholicism*, entitled ‘transcendence’, de Lubac imperils his conclusions hitherto by asserting: ‘There is in man an eternal element, a “germ of eternity”, which always breathes the upper air, and which always, *hic et nunc*, evades the temporal society. The truth of his being transcends his being itself. When talking about the *Church* de Lubac is careful to avoid what I define as ‘the sociological illusion’ of making society and the individual spatially external to each other, and yet this care is forgotten when it comes to distinguishing the Church from secular concerns. Here, de Lubac rediscovers the evasive spark of

⁹⁸¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 226.

⁹⁸² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 226.

Platonic life, and makes the contrast of Church/secular society in terms of the contrast individual/social, despite the fact that the preceding chapters had argued that the Church is *also* a society. In this light, Marx's supposed 'dissolution of the human being into the social being' ought to be an entirely illusory spectre, yet, for de Lubac, this is what must be, above all, exorcized. By invoking this spectre, de Lubac actually implies - like Weberian sociology - that there *is* a realm which is merely 'social' and which the individual might stand outside. Furthermore, this realm is an autonomous realm which the Church, as Church, should not interfere with, even in terms of advice, except at points where social actions impinge on the ethical and religious sphere, which now appears especially 'individual'. It does, however, have to be said that it was difficult for thinkers of this era to define a field of autonomy and free action for the *laity*, without also placing self-denying ordinances on the Church, which they still automatically identified with the clerical hierarchy.⁹⁸³

By completing eliminating any concept of a social order having some degree of autonomy from the supernatural order as mediated by the Church Milbank radicalizes de Lubac's integralism. This way of understanding the integration of nature and grace, in accordance with his hylozoistic metaphysics which defines reality by flux while practically diminishing the role of boundaries, leads him to integrate politics with faith to the extent that the Church is seen as a political norm.

2.2 The Church as a Political Norm:

With reference to the nineteenth century French Socialist Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez⁹⁸⁴ Milbank conceives "of the Church (thought of as an amalgam of voluntary associations), rather than the sovereign state, as the site of a new social

⁹⁸³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 226.

⁹⁸⁴ Milbank states that Buchez first name is Pierre. However, the actual name of the prominent French socialist of the nineteenth century is Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez (1796–1865). See Michael C. Behrent. "The Mystical Body of Society: Religion and Association in Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69, no. 2 (April 2008) 219-243; Michael Reardon, "The Reconciliation of Christianity with Progress: Philippe Buchez," *The Review of Politics* 33, no. 4 (October 1971): 512-537.

order.”⁹⁸⁵ This manner of conceiving a theology with “the Church itself as the ultimate location of the just society”⁹⁸⁶ is, argues Milbank, in accordance with de Lubac’s supernaturalizing the natural. In Milbank’s “post-political theology”⁹⁸⁷ “the project of the Church “is the establishment of a new, universal society, a new *civitas*...”⁹⁸⁸

As explained in the previous section, Milbank distinguishes his post-political theology from political theology, as represented by Metz, and from various forms of Latin American liberation theology by grounding his version of political theology not in a Rahnerian form of integralism but rather in de Lubac’s French integralism. By refusing to acknowledge any clear boundary between the religious, in which grace is bestowed, and the social order,⁹⁸⁹ Milbank conceives the Church, in accordance with his interpretation of Augustine, “itself a ‘political’ reality.”⁹⁹⁰ Understood in this way, the Church relates to the political by actively creating truth, in accordance with Vico’s axiom *verum est factum*, through the provision of “a unique and distinctive structural logic for human society.”⁹⁹¹ Since the Church is to be the norm of politics, Milbank asserts that “all ‘political theory’, in the antique sense, is to be relocated by Christianity as thought about the Church.”⁹⁹² When all political theory is conceived of as thought about the

⁹⁸⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 196.

⁹⁸⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 228.

⁹⁸⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 228. He uses this term in order to distinguish his political theology from German political theology as especially represented by Johannes Baptist Metz. Cf. Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Foundational Political Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

⁹⁸⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 228.

⁹⁸⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 408. “Better, then, that the bounds between Church and state be extremely hazy, so that a ‘social’ existence of many complex and interlocking powers may emerge, and forestall either a sovereign state, or a hierarchical Church.”

⁹⁹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 403.

⁹⁹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

⁹⁹² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

Church then, claims Milbank, a social/political reality will emerge characterized by forgiveness where “truly just economic exchanges occur.”⁹⁹³ In order for “the Church, to be the Church”⁹⁹⁴ she must not attempt to contain this social/political space of reconciliation within herself but rather, asserts Milbank, “must seek to extend the sphere of socially aesthetic harmony within the state where this is possible.”⁹⁹⁵

2.3 The Church is not to Encourage a Supra-National Ethic shaped by Specific Moral Laws but Rather is to Promote such an Ethic Determined by the Practice of Ecclesial Socialism:

As stated in chapter four, according to Milbank, in accordance with Vico’s active manner of defining truth, on the cross Jesus inaugurated a new politics of harmony shaped by the concrete, “‘practice of forgiveness; forgiveness as a mode of ‘government’ and social being.”⁹⁹⁶ Since we are historically “situated on the far side of the cross”, writes Milbank, “no return to law...remains possible.”⁹⁹⁷ What Milbank means by this phrase is that the Christian faith is not to instruct political reason with specific moral laws understood as ahistorically universal, an approach to natural law that Vico, as explained in the précis, associated Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf with and opposed. Rather, the faith, in the form of a new practice convertible with truth in the Church established through Christ’s death on the cross, is to be the site and norm for a new political practice to emerge based on non-violence and the “blending of differences”⁹⁹⁸ and emerges “by

⁹⁹³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

⁹⁹⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

⁹⁹⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

⁹⁹⁶ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 161.

⁹⁹⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 433.

⁹⁹⁸ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 155.

means of these differences, not despite them.”⁹⁹⁹ The harmonization of difference in a non-violent manner occurs, according to Milbank, through ecclesial consensus. In explaining this he writes, “[T]he consensus sought by the Church is not a consensus in the abstract, concerning a list of the desirable individual virtues. And if it *has* an abstractly specifiable goal, this is now consensus itself, meaning a society without violence and unjust domination.”¹⁰⁰⁰

The consensus reached by the Church, as understood by Milbank, is not, therefore, based on universally valid moral laws but rather upon the practice of reconciliation and the appreciation of difference. Furthermore, according to Milbank, the Church is to oppose an approach to morality defined by ahistorical moral laws. This is because, argues Milbank:

[Christianity] refuses to treat reason and morality as ahistorical universals, but instead asks, like Hegel, how has Christianity affected human reason and human practice? Abandoning all scholastic attempts to graft faith onto a universal base of reason, it instead turns to the Church Fathers, and indeed goes beyond them, in seeking to elaborate a Christian *logos*, or a reason that bears the marks of the incarnation and pentecost. At the same time, it seeks to define a Christian *Sittlichkeit*, a moral practice embedded in the historical emergence of a new and unique community. Both tasks, indeed, are in turn situated in the re-narration of Christian emergence, a story which only constitutes itself as a story by re-narrating previous stories, both of past history, and of the relation of creation to Godhead.¹⁰⁰¹

Even though it is the explicit mission of the Church to extend the Christian “story” of a different moral political practice of forgiveness established by Christ death on the cross she has, claims Milbank, often failed to do so. In imitation of the political practice before

⁹⁹⁹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 155.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 155.

¹⁰⁰¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 381.

the cross, asserts Milbank “Christianity has helped to unleash a more ‘naked’ violence.”¹⁰⁰² This, describes Milbank, began in the middle ages when “the attempts of people to rule directly over people in small communities, without recourse to an elaborate formal mechanism of law, gradually failed.”¹⁰⁰³ Instead of seeking new ways to extend the anti-nomos (Greek: exempt from law) political practice of reconciliation the Church instead betrayed its mission by failing to displace the old political practice and “as a result” writes Milbank “politics returned, yet in a virulent form unknown to antiquity.”¹⁰⁰⁴ In promoting the return of ancient politics in a more virulent form the Church no longer encouraged political entities to be held together by “sacramental and charitable bonds,”¹⁰⁰⁵ but rather encouraged the multiplication of “new legal forms”¹⁰⁰⁶ to bind together a people. According to Milbank, this was particularly noticeable in the late middle ages. In describing this Milbank writes:

Hence the later middle ages engendered a newly rationalistic and formalized approach to law, from the twelfth century onwards. Law now dealt in ‘pure’ possession and control, in the regulation and balancing of power. Hence, too, the theorists of papal absolutism pressed further than antiquity towards a doctrine of unlimited sovereignty, progress was made towards a liberal conception of property rights, and relationships between ‘corporate’ bodies came to be conceived on a contractualist basis.¹⁰⁰⁷

2.4 Milbank’s Ecclesial Socialism:

In an effort to regain the original political mission of the Church established by Christ which determines truth through specific practices Milbank encourages the Church

¹⁰⁰² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 432.

¹⁰⁰³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 432.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 432-3.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 433.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 433.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 433.

to embrace ecclesial socialism as its proper political form in contrast with the prior political forms based on law and the containment of violence.¹⁰⁰⁸ He carefully distinguishes Catholic socialism from Marxism which he describes as “[standing] almost alone in the nineteenth century as a ‘modernist’, Enlightenment variant of socialism, which in the final vision of the *Grundrisse* envisages social cooperation in a purely utilitarian fashion, and subordinates this to the single value of a full realization of individual liberty.”¹⁰⁰⁹ In Milbank’s Catholic socialism individual liberty is always conceived within the context of “sacramental and charitable bonds”¹⁰¹⁰ as founded on Trinitarian freedom in eternal loving, creative relationship.

Milbank further differentiates his ecclesial socialism from a centrally planned socialism as most notably present in Stalinism.¹⁰¹¹ In so doing he even agrees with the capitalist Friedrich Hayek’s¹⁰¹² (1899-1992) rejection of central planning. According to Milbank, “Central state planning, regarded as the main vehicle for socialism (although certain essential enterprises should surely still be run by state or pan-state-instituted corporations) has clearly failed, and in any case the project is an archetypal spatializing *mathesis* doomed always to misrepresent and distort temporal and unmappable processes (Hayek was right about this).”¹⁰¹³ Milbank, however, disagrees with Hayek’s capitalistic solution and instead proposes a de-centralized socialism that relies on “syndicalism or co-

¹⁰⁰⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 27-45; Milbank, *Future of Love*, 113.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 196. The *Grundrisse* refers to Karl Marx’s *Grundrisse Der Kritik Der Politischen Ökonomie*. In this work Marx critiques the politics and economics of capitalism.

¹⁰¹⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 433.

¹⁰¹¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 196.

¹⁰¹² Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

¹⁰¹³ John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 185.

operativism,”¹⁰¹⁴ in imitation of the medieval guilds, which would encourage a professional ethos that upholds a standard of quality for all practitioners to reach. In such a socialism products are to be manufactured not only for profit but also, and principally, made in order to maintain a degree of quality. This allows the made item to take on the aspect of a gift. Socialism conceived in this non-centralized manner with the central role of upholding values other than profit Milbank writes, “is not (at least primarily) to ‘limit’ the market, but rather to reconstrue exchange according to the protocols of a universal gift-exchange: that is to say, in every negotiated transaction, something other than profit and loss must be at issue.”¹⁰¹⁵

In the *Future of Love* Milbank describes this conservation of quality as taking place within a “self-cancelling hierarchy.”¹⁰¹⁶ The importance of a hierarchical element in socialism, Milbank claims, is “so often ignored by socialists.”¹⁰¹⁷ Milbank continues, “only where there is an agreed hierarchy of values, sustained by the constantly self-cancelling hierarchy of education, can there actually be an equal sharing (according to a continuous social judgment as to who will most benefit from such and such a gift, etc.) of

¹⁰¹⁴ Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 185. Cf. Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 271-2. Syndicalism is neither capitalism or state socialism but rather is based upon federations of trade unions and industrial unions thus creating what Milbank calls a “complex social space” (Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 272.) that respects the Catholic principle of subsidiarity. Cf. Milbank, *The Future of Love*, xvii; Howard J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Comparative Politics*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1997), 64–66, 124, 156.

¹⁰¹⁵ Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 186. Milbank continues “Without doubt these no longer purely ‘economic’ exchanges, though encouraged by every inner syndicalist ethos, require also to be overseen not only by professional guilds, but also by co-operative banks and financial courts (consisting of both business and local or central government representatives) ... Naturally, this is idealistic, but not Utopian, since it is grounded on the notion of education into virtue extended into guild regulation, which we know, historically, can be a partial success (and partiality is all we can hope for in fallen time). Moreover, many more mitigated capitalisms all over the world already sustain certain small degrees of the features I have enunciated. Pure, naked capitalism is still not yet quite the rule, or is even forever impossible. Hence the ideal politics of time which I propose - a renewed socialism, on a liturgical basis - is also a matter of small incremental gains worth pursuing, and small resistances to a total eclipse.”

¹⁰¹⁶ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 248.

¹⁰¹⁷ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 259.

what is agreed to be valuable.”¹⁰¹⁸ If such a consensus on quality is not brought about by guilds and like associations then within any political system, including socialism in its centralized planning form, Milbank adds, “there can only be market mediation of an anarchy of desires—of course ensuring the triumph of a hierarchy of sheer power and the secret commanding of peoples desires by manipulation.”¹⁰¹⁹

Conclusion:

Ratzinger, in reflecting upon politics, develops a theology of politics that, while recognizing some overlap of faith with political reason, also maintains a certain degree of integrity of each realm. In accordance with his moderate view of the integration of nature and grace as rooted in a hylomorphic metaphysics and as grounded in his threefold account of truth as stable and abiding, in contrast with Vico’s hylozoism and equation of the truth with *factum*, Ratzinger asserts that the site where truths of faith overlap political reason is solely concerned with specific moral teaching such as the intrinsic evil of abortion, a truth that is received by man through his reason and affirmed by the hierarchy of the Church. In this moral sense faith as lived out by the Church is normative for politics but its normative dimension stops here. Rejecting Vico’s active manner of defining truth as it relates to faith, faith is not, contends Ratzinger, to be seen as “a *political* norm of political activity.”¹⁰²⁰ The transformation that faith is directly concerned with in the political arena, therefore, is with personal conversion and not with structural change. This does not mean, however, that believers are not individually

¹⁰¹⁸ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 259.

¹⁰¹⁹ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 259.

¹⁰²⁰ Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, 59-60.

entitled to express political views or are forbidden to adopt a particular ideology. After all, Ratzinger himself indicates his preference for democratic socialism over other political forms.¹⁰²¹ According to Ratzinger, this maintenance of clear and not hazy boundaries between political reasoning and truths of faith, in particular doctrinal truths such as the Trinity, is ultimately beneficial to politics since it allows the Church to be “an open space of reconciliation among the parties”¹⁰²² and, as a result, grants to Catholics the interior freedom to judge a political party they may adopt according to the supranational ethics encouraged by the Church. The moral supranational ethics of the Church founded in universal truths encourages Catholics to transcend their political party especially if it tends towards totalitarianism.¹⁰²³

In contrast, Milbank, in reflecting upon politics develops a political theology, which he calls post-political theology¹⁰²⁴ to distinguish it from its German variants that integrate faith with political reason to the extent, in accordance with his hylozoism stemming from Vico, of deliberating presenting the boundaries of the Church and state as “extremely hazy.”¹⁰²⁵ In accordance with his radical integration of nature and grace as rooted in his three fold account of truth as created following Vico’s axiom *verum est factum*, Milbank sees the role of the Church with respect to the political as not preaching unchanging moral truths but rather as being a political norm for political activity, a position Ratzinger explicitly denies.¹⁰²⁶ Faith, according to Milbank in contrast with

¹⁰²¹ Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow*, 28.

¹⁰²² Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 100.

¹⁰²³ Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 56.

¹⁰²⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 228.

¹⁰²⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 408.

¹⁰²⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, 59-60.

Ratzinger, consequently, is to transform the political not by upholding specific, abiding moral truths but rather by forming a site of ecclesial socialism that encourages a complex, non-centrist and non-Marxist socialism based upon the social aspects of the Trinitarian persons in harmony through their differences and not despite them.¹⁰²⁷

While the differences between Ratzinger's theology of politics and Milbank's political theology are quite noticeable their similarities should be highlighted. Both Ratzinger and Milbank do affirm the relevancy of faith for the political. They differ, though, on the degree that this is to be held. In addition, both also praise the political system of socialism. This is an important point since Milbank criticizes the Catholic Church as having taken "fright at socialism" after the European revolutions of 1848.¹⁰²⁸ Clearly Ratzinger does not fall into this category of Catholics who are irrationally frightened by the prospect of socialism. What Ratzinger refuses to do is to identify any political ideology, including socialism, as constitutive of the faith. Perhaps the common ground that Ratzinger holds with Milbank, in particular the relevancy of the faith with the political and the goodness of democratic socialism, could encourage Milbank to be more open in areas, rooted in his appropriation of Vico's equating truth with *factum*, where he strongly disagrees with Ratzinger thus moving Milbank closer to the Catholic Church.

¹⁰²⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 289.

¹⁰²⁸ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 273. The European Revolutions of 1848 began with the virulently anti-clerical French Revolution which soon spread throughout the rest of Europe. Milbank contends that "Before 1848 most French socialism had a religious, sometimes even an orthodox Catholic character: the primacy of association was connected with the idea of a mystical, religious bonding that would correct the one-sidedness and secularity of enlightenment individualism." Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 272-273.

Conclusion

Ratzinger's and Milbank's different theological approaches to politics, as influenced by two reactions to Vico, essentially are derived from two distinct responses to Pilate's question to Jesus, "What is truth?"¹⁰²⁹ While Ratzinger perceives truth as abiding and one, Milbank tends to describe truth by highlighting multiplicity and change. This is reflected in the two theologians' view of man's ascent in knowledge from physics to metaphysics and to theology. It is also reflected in their two explanations of man's descending knowledge after encountering theological truth to the political.

Due to his adoption of Vico's axiom *verum est factum* Milbank describes truth not as a stable, unchanging reality but rather, by emphasizing the many over the one, depicts truth as a created and dynamic. With respect to physics this leads him to reject hylomorphism with its stable forms by opting to conceive of the visible world from a hylozoistic standpoint, where, similar to Heraclitus, tangible reality is seen as in a constant state of historical flux. Similarly, Milbank maintains that the object of metaphysics is not stable being but rather creation itself. This leads him to develop an analogy of creation which forms the basis for his explanation of man's ability to relate to God. In his analogy of creation he posits an inner creation within God identified principally with the Son. As is evident, it is very difficult, due to Milbank's prioritizing of the many/change over the one/stability including in the Trinity, to see how man can know any lasting truth in his ascent to the knowledge of God. For Milbank, man can only know truth after his descent from theological knowledge given in faith. Milbank

¹⁰²⁹ John 18:38 New American Bible.

indicates this by explicitly stating that unless intellectual disciplines are “explicitly ordered to theology ... they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth...”¹⁰³⁰ In addition he writes, that theology “must entirely evacuate philosophy, which is metaphysics, leaving it nothing (outside imaginary worlds, logical implications or the isolation of *aporias*) to either do or see, which is not - manifestly, I judge – malicious.”¹⁰³¹

In his depiction of man’s knowledge after descending from an encounter in faith with the Triune God, Milbank affirms man’s ability to create and know truth after the pattern of the Trinity of difference in harmony or the many in unity. According to Milbank, only with knowledge as graced by faith can man know any truth in created nature. In this logic, therefore, only in man’s descent from theological knowledge does he encounter truth in nature. This explains why Milbank asserts that unless intellectual disciplines are “explicitly ordered to theology ... they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth...”¹⁰³² Apart from grace, therefore, nature, such as studied by physics or biology, is meaningless and has no integrity since it is in a state of Heraclitean flux. Its meaning only is discovered in its graced relationship with the supernatural. His radical integration of grace with nature is reflected in his description of faith and reason as one single extension which is defined by the light of faith at all its stages.¹⁰³³ This leads him to also radically integrate political reason with faith. Politics, for Milbank, like his depiction of physics, nature and intellectual disciplines lacks truth

¹⁰³⁰ Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 306.

¹⁰³¹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 50.

¹⁰³² Milbank, *The Future of Love*, 306.

¹⁰³³ Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas*, 21.

unless it is ordered to the Trinitarian truth of difference in eternal harmony. This leads Milbank to refuse “to treat reason and morality as ahistorical universals, but instead asks, like Hegel, how has Christianity affected human reason and human practice?”¹⁰³⁴ The Church, therefore, is to relate to the political not by upholding universal moral laws, that are received naturally by reason and affirmed by faith, but rather by acting as the site of a new political practice of reconciliation established by Christ’s death on the cross as a manifestation of the Trinitarian truth of difference living in peace as opposed to the political practice of relying on law and coercion in order for difference to live in relative peace. Milbank identifies this new practice with a non-centrist, non-Marxist, ecclesial socialism.

In contrast with Milbank, Ratzinger in his description of man’s ascending and descending knowledge, affirms that both in his ascent to God and his descent from God to the created world man can know truth. This position of Ratzinger is ultimately due to his rejection of Vico’s equating truth with the made, and is due to Ratzinger’s perception that truth is a stable and abiding reality that man can know both naturally and supernaturally with the aid of faith. Consequently in describing physics Ratzinger, unlike Milbank, advocates hylomorphism as a way to affirm stable elements within nature knowable by man. In addition, when describing metaphysics Ratzinger sees the object of metaphysics as stable being. His metaphysics leads him to develop an analogy of being in which man and all of created being participates with difference in the one being of God. As is evident, unlike Milbank, Ratzinger, with form and being, is stressing oneness

¹⁰³⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 381.

over multiplicity. This is also evident in his description of God where he forthrightly rejects an inner divine creation. For Ratzinger this would blur the boundary between God and creation and could also jeopardize the unity of God by either subordinating the Son to the Father or seeing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as different natures and not of one divine nature.

In his description of man's descending knowledge, after encountering in faith the Triune God, Ratzinger does not maintain that this graced knowledge totally evacuates natural knowledge of all content. Rather, he maintains that truths of faith build upon truths of reason known by man due to his ability to abstract out stable forms as naturally illuminated in his intellect made in the image of God. This leads Ratzinger to uphold some degree of integrity of nature apart from grace. In addition, he similarly describes reason and faith as integrated and related but at the same time respectful of a degree of autonomy within each realm. Consequently, he rejects theological attempts to so integrate faith with political reason to the extent that the two are indiscernible from each other. Marrying any political ideology to faith, such as socialism or capitalism, would, according to Ratzinger, abolish, at the loss of both faith and politics, the vital distinction between faith and politics. Faith suffers in such a scheme since, at the price of being immanent, by being totally integrated with one political system, it loses its transcendence. Politics likewise suffers in this system since it would no longer be accountable to a reality that is distinct from it, thus greatly increasing the possibility of political regimes veering into totalitarianism. According to Ratzinger, by maintaining a clear distinction from any one political system faith is better able to come to aid of all political systems. It does so

by defending truths that are naturally known within the political realm but often are either ignored or forgotten. If the Church were to wed itself to one political system, argues Ratzinger, by ending faith's political neutrality, the marriage would greatly weaken faith's ability, as represented by the Church, to resist totalitarianism.

It might appear that Ratzinger's and Milbank's views are irreconcilable. To demonstrate this, though, has not been my intent in this dissertation. Rather I hope, by highlighting Milbank's recent shift in his thinking in the 2011 Stanton lectures and consequent modification of his appropriation of Vico, that I have shown signs within his most recent thought, where he recognizes more clearly truth's relationship with stability, form and unity, which indicate he is more open to Ratzinger's approach to truth and its relationship with physics, metaphysics, theology and politics. In addition, by showing that Ratzinger views socialism, in its democratic non-totalitarian form, in a positive light, as long as it is not seen as the one acceptable political form of Christianity, I hope the reader will also recognize his appreciation of socialism as, in a way, compatible with Milbank's. Possibly in the future Milbank, by being influenced by Ratzinger and other similar Catholic theologians, will gradually moderate his radical stance on the relationship between truth and action, especially as it applies to faith, while Catholics will seriously consider his de-centralized socialism as a viable political approach that can moderate certain tendencies to radical individualism and self-gain noticeable in today's political and economic realms. Finally, although Milbank's identification of socialism as the political expression of Christianity appears to directly contradict Ratzinger's rejection of any one ideology as best expressive of Christian faith his promotion of the Church in

fostering a complex social space between the citizen and his government¹⁰³⁵ is in accordance with Ratzinger's thought, reflecting one of "the most constant"¹⁰³⁶ Catholic social teaching of subsidiarity. Milbank's extensive reflection on how the Church can aid in the development of such a complex social space to counteract the excessively simple space of modern times between the individual and the governing state can aid Catholics to understand that social ills such as poverty, hunger and even adequate universal access to health care be addressed not simply with technocratic solutions by lobbying the state but also, in the words of William Cavanaugh, echoing Milbank's thought, by "the creation by the church itself of authentically common spaces among the haves and have nots."¹⁰³⁷

In addition, rather than seeing Milbank's support of socialism as the political expression of Christianity as directly contradicting Ratzinger's rejection of ideologies a more charitable interpretation can be given. This is because, as stated previously, Milbank defines his socialism as specifically ecclesial and not according to the dominant Marxist versions.¹⁰³⁸ What Ratzinger objects to is correlating theology and its vision, in

¹⁰³⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 408, 289.

¹⁰³⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: USSCB Publishing, 2004), no. 185 pg. 81. "Subsidiarity is among the most constant and characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine and has been present since the first great social encyclical. It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth. This is the realm of *civil society*, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings, which are the first relationships to arise and which come about thanks to "the creative subjectivity of the citizen". This network of relationships strengthens the social fabric and constitutes the basis of a true community of persons, making possible the recognition of higher forms of social activity."

¹⁰³⁷ William T. Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 44.

¹⁰³⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 27-45; Milbank, *Future of Love*, 113.

particular its eschatological concept of community, with a particular political ideology that has been formulated in the secular state and civil society. It can be argued that Milbank is not doing this since he locates his version of socialism in the Church itself. He, consequently, correlates theology's view of community and the political within the Church itself.¹⁰³⁹ This is because he identifies a particular way of envisioning community life, in other words political ordering of community, with the ecclesial structures brought about by Christian theology.

The difference between Ratzinger and Milbank, therefore, need not be contrasted simply between one theologian who rejects all ideologies as inadequate expressions of faith in contrast with the other who proposes an ideology as the concrete expression of faith, but, rather as a difference between Ratzinger's understanding of the Church as indirectly, principally through witnessing to natural law, relating to the political order and Milbank's argument that the Church, by being social and political in nature herself, directly engages in politics.¹⁰⁴⁰ In addition, if one recognizes that Ratzinger's typical use of politics is in reference only to statecraft and Milbank's use of the same term is defined much broadly by including all ordering of structural power, including ecclesial, in the organization of a community great or small, as political¹⁰⁴¹ then it is possible to reconcile

¹⁰³⁹ Daniel M. Bell, "State and Civil Society," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 433, 435-437.

¹⁰⁴⁰ For a further explanation of direct political engagement vs. indirect political engagement see the following. William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998). William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008). William T. Cavanaugh, "Church," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 393-407.

¹⁰⁴¹ For this broad definition of the political see the following. William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Scott, "Introduction," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* eds. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, 1.

certain apparent contrasts in their views of the relationship between theology/Church and the political.

Due to their substantial differences, it is not possible to advocate both of their views without diminishing each of their ways of conceiving truth in theology in relationship to politics. However, it is possible to amplify Ratzinger's presentation of truth in relationship to politics with certain elements of Milbank's thought. Ratzinger's upholding of natural law, in particular the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, as the indirect way the Church offers truth to the political, defined as statecraft, can be seen as compatible with Milbank's argument that the Church in her visible "political" structures, not to be confused with the politics of city of man, contains truth that is also relevant to the politics of statecraft. However, since Milbank chooses to use the term socialism in describing the truth embedded in the Church's primarily non-coercive and love based manner of organizing its members into a community this intent of his can be easily obscured. In order that Milbank's vision of ecclesial truth as directly relevant to politics is more clearly understood, and as a result seen as complimentary to Ratzinger's more indirect conception, I encourage Milbank to drop the term socialism and instead simply refer, in a similar manner as Augustine does,¹⁰⁴² to the truthful politics within the Church as Body of Christ that is distinct from all other forms of politics. In this way Milbank's argument that the Church's truthful politics, visibly present in the very manner of how members in the Body of Christ relate to one another, is directly relevant to politics is brought out more clearly and is then conceived as not contradictory in every

¹⁰⁴² Augustine, *City of God*, Book I, Chapter 21, pgs. 61-63.

aspect to Ratzinger's refusal of the Church becoming instrumental to a political ideology that has been formulated by a non-ecclesial entity.

Thus understood Ratzinger's take on truth in relationship to politics can be amplified without contradicting his thought by maintaining that the Church witnesses to truth in relationship to the political both directly, in her own communal structures, and indirectly by preaching truths of natural law to those involved in political statecraft. Furthermore, in this way the Church's political activity, embedded within her structures, is perceived as distinct from the political activity of the temporal world. Her politics are distinct, but analogously related, from the politics associated with statecraft because in this present, passing world the "politics of God",¹⁰⁴³ witnessed to by the Church, only serves as a heavenly inspiration, of which the Church is a sign of for temporal politics but not a "*political* norm of political activity."¹⁰⁴⁴ This is because heaven can only be anticipated by the Church but not constructed by her on earth. In addition, this manner of broadly defining the political by de-coupling it from statecraft can be perceived as consistent with Ratzinger's contention that "essence of his [Christ's] new path" is having "achieved a separation of the religious from the political."¹⁰⁴⁵ When politics is broadly defined as the ordering of members within any community, the term religious in the above sentence implies that the Church is political since she orders her members around the Eucharist which in turn brings her into relationship with the heavenly order and

¹⁰⁴³ Bernd Wannenwetsch, "Liturgy," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 393-40787. Cf. Robert W. Jenson, "Eschatology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 412, 417.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, 59-60.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 169.

relationships of the saints and angels. Finally, when politics is broadly defined, the term political, in the above quoted sentence from Ratzinger, is understood not in the broad sense, which includes the Church, but in a more narrow sense meaning how a temporal government orders its relationship with respect to power, influence and conflict.

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