

## Theological Definitions of the Word *Believe / Faith*

**Abstract.** The problem of meaning in the theological research (that soberness of throwing pearls to the swine – 7.6 Mt: “Do not give the holy things to dogs and do not throw pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, then turn and rend you”) has nothing to do with the fragmentation of our “smart” thinking into linguistic and spiritual shades that easily provide the indicative synthesis for nowadays people, be they religious, priests or bishops. If we leave the theological language and we repetitively introduce “nuanced” words, we will not discern the divine charisms from the influences of the human faculties, purely natural, or even demonic. Therefore, where will the discernment of spirits be? Faith defends philosophy, it does not destroy it. Why would theology do such thing? We are masters in miming the Christian identity, even Oscar candidates. It is therefore essential, as a remedy, to look only to the mirror of our sacramental life of faith. In this central point of life – our life of faith – to install the difference between faith and religion, between the divine and the human, between sacred and profane. This is the hermeneutical key of reading the sacred texts where we can then discover the words of Jesus Christ in the spiritual perfection of creation, plus the love that leads us to knowledge. To discover / rediscover God is love, we must return to the root of our life to creation, where we discover / rediscover that we lost the significance of purpose. In the philosophical language love is defined as the desire to rule good forever, striving to become immortal. That will further outline the methodological remarks, i.e. assuming the scientific condition of being researcher of theology. In this regard we relate to the text of the Bible, the Word of God made flesh, as to everything is original, spontaneous, real in our life of faith, and we radically delineate the aphoristic texts. Thus, in this paper, we develop the following lines of research about faith: intellectual act at St. Thomas Aquinas, to stop later to faith, the act of the heart as taught by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI.

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## 1. Thomas Aquinas

The intellect is represented by the system and the intelligence by the acquired faculties. Wisdom belongs to God. Here we ask a hermeneutic break to radically separate us from the *religious illusion* of the dogmatic wisdom of the *priesthood scholars*, who induce us *the religious illusion of the exclusion and replacement of God* (De Lubac 2007) with a “prove how logical it is to believe.” So to ease understanding the concept and the anthropological reality of the *intellect* and to exit the sequentiality of *Summa Theologica* that is to be analyzed we propose to reading and deepening an excerpt from another Thomistic work that will facilitate our understanding and acceptance of *credere est actus intellectus* only as the *Angelic doctor* was able to show us in the spiritual perfection of creation, separating the philosophical-theological discourse from the metaphysical one. Here is the excerpt:

“But any bodily organ has a particular sensitive nature, while the intellect, by which we understand, is able to know all the sensitive natures. Therefore, it is impossible for his operation, which is understanding, to be achieved through a body organ, and thus it is clear that the intellect is itself an operation where the body does not participate. Indeed, those who have a being in themselves carry out their operation itself, and those not having a being in themselves cannot perform the operation itself (for heat itself does not heat, but the thing that is warm). It is clear so that the intellectual principle by which man understands has got a being above the body and is not dependent on the body. It is obvious that such an intellectual principle is not something composed of matter and form, as it receives the species in an absolutely immaterial way. This is also seen in the fact that the intellect has got universals as its object that are understood by abstraction from matter and material condition. Wherefore the intellectual principle by which the man is meant to be a form that has its own being and, therefore, it is necessary for him to be incorruptible. And this is said by the Philosopher: *the intellect is something divine and eternal*” (Thomas Aquinas 2006, 215-216).

Coming back we focus on a translation error (no. 271 from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Romanian), which essentially changes the perception of man’s Creator. Here the fragment in question:

The Divine Omnipotence is in no way arbitrary: “In God, power and essence, will and intelligence, wisdom and justice are one and the same, so that nothing can exist in the divine power that cannot exist in God’s right will or in His wise judgment.”

For the trueness and precision of the scientific research, we quote the text of St. Thomas Aquinas:

“Sed in Deo est idem potentia et essentia et voluntas et intellectus et sapientia et iustitia” (Thomas Aquinas 1988).

And to enlighten us, if this were the case, we compared it with the translation of Polirom edition:

“But in God the potency, essence, will, intellect, wisdom and justice are the same” (Thomas Aquinas 2009).

We are convinced, here, that there is no linguistic confusion in St. Thomas Aquinas (intellect – intelligence) because there was no confusion between *act* and *potency*. Let us explain: the fundamental theological books, by their expressed doctrinal content (in our case *CCC*), do not have the editorial space required for complex citations, thus resuming the essence of citations (e.g.: no. 271 of *CCC* cites “St. Thomas Aq., *S.Th. I, 25, 5, ad 1.*”). But to succeed to capture the subtlety of the Thomistic argument we have to linger, at all, the text in question. In *Summa Theologica I, 25, 5*, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches us *about God’s potency*. By default we find precise reference to the potency (strength) *introduced into things*. Let’s go through the passage carefully:

“However, the order brought in things by the divine wisdom, an order where there is the justice of reason, as stated above, is not equivalent to divine wisdom, so that the divine wisdom to be limited to this order. For it is clear that the entire reason of order, to which the wise requires to the things he commits, is assumed by the purpose. So when the order is proportionate to the things made for the purpose, the wisdom of the one who acts is limited to a certain determined order” (Thomas Aquinas 2009).

At this point we carefully draw your attention to: the *order of divine justice* is what we call, *divine wisdom*, while the *wisdom of acting [...] in a certain determined order*, will be called with the word *intelligence*. Hence the statement that I mentioned above namely, *that we cannot anthropomorphize the Creator*. But St. Thomas Aquinas does not stop here and in *Summa Theologica Q. 79, Art. 10* he develops this problem: *if intelligence is a faculty other than intellect*. We will not reiterate the whole text, but we will stop at Boethius (*On the Consolation of Philosophy, V, 4*) quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas. We confess that Boethius’s argument favors us as we shorten the story, but we are not Thomas Aquinas. So:

“Then, in *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, V, Boethius says that *meaning, imagination, reason and intelligence regards man differently*” (Thomas Aquinas 2009).

And a few lines below St. Thomas Aquinas replies Boethius, quoting him (*On the Consolation of Philosophy*, V, 5.) But what Toma cites in *Summa Theologiae* differs from what Polirom translation says in Romanian. We will note with – A – which St. Thomas Aquinas says, with – B – the Polirom translation and – C – Boethius’ text.

A. “Unde ibidem dicit quod *ratio tantum humani generis est, sicut intelligentia sola divini: proprium enim Dei [...]*”<sup>1</sup>

So we can see that the citation is exemplified by the *Italic* handwriting, from *ratio* to *divine*. What Thomas said after *divini* are his own words that the Romanian edition assigns Boethius, quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas. Here is the excerpt:

B. “So it is said that the *reason is only the human race, as intelligence is only God: for it is proper for God to understand everything without any research*” (Thomas Aquinas 2009).

C. “Ratio vero humani tantum generis est, sicuti intelligentia sola divini: quo fit ut ea notitia caeteris praestet, quae suapte natura non modo proprium, sed caeterarum quoque notitiarum subjecta cognoscit” (Boethius 1847).

For this fragment of Boethius we offer two translations into Romanian, as follows:

1. “The rationale but belongs only to the human species, as the intelligence only belongs to the divine. It follows that by its nature that knowledge surpasses the others, it knows not only what is proper to it but also the topics of other knowledge” (Boethius 2011, 297).
2. “The reason belongs to the human race and the intelligence is the exclusive prerogative of the Deity; it thus results that this latter form of knowledge is superior to all others, because by its nature not only knows its proper reality, but corresponds to other intellectual functions” (Boethius 1992, 166).

Final clarification comes, of course, from St. Thomas Aquinas as well. The key phrase in the passage cited above (*Summa Theologica*, I, q. 79, a. 10 ad. II), which we are sure that you have noticed it is *sola divine*,

<sup>1</sup> Sanctus Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 79, a. 10, ad II.

translated *only to the divine / exclusive of divinity*. So the question is justified: *in the spiritual perfection of creation*, who belongs to *sola divine, just the divine*, who is exclusively of *the deity*? Attention!: the *separate substances*! Here is the excerpt:

“RESPONDEO dicendum quod hoc nomen *intelligentia* proprie significat ipsum actum intellectus qui est intelligere. In quibusdam tamen libris de arabico translatis substantiae separatae quas nos angelos dicimus, Intelligentiae vocantur; forte propter hoc, quod huiusmodi substantiae semper actu intelligunt. In libris tamen de graeco translatis, dicuntur Intellectus seu Mentis. Sic ergo intelligentia ab intellectu non distinguitur sicut potentia a potentia; sed sicut actus a potentia. Invenitur enim talis divisio etiam a philosophis”<sup>2</sup>.

In the Romanian edition:

“*I answer*: must be said that this name *intelligence* designates the act of the intellect itself, which is to understand. However in some books translated from Arabic, the separate substances, which we call them *angels* are called *intelligence*, perhaps because such substances always understand the act. Instead, the books translated from Greek they call them *intellects* and *minds*. Therefore, intelligence and intellect does not differ one from another as one faculty from another one, but the act of potency; indeed, such a division is indicated by the philosophers” (Thomas Aquinas 2009).

Thus we come to understand the difference of essence between intelligence and wisdom and even though the Bible says: “Jesus told them: ‘It is not written in your law: *I said, are you gods?*’ (Jn 10, 34)”, we must remember and distinguish the act and the potency. Faith compels us to the subsidiary reverence towards the Creator and public confession of love for God and our neighbors through the authentication of the phrase, as we will immediately capture the *worthiness to stand before thee*. Thus, we will call *the order of divine justice* as the *divine wisdom*, while *wisdom of acting [...] in a certain determined order*, will be called with the word *intelligence*. Hence the statement that I mentioned above that *we cannot anthropomorphize the Creator* applying our intellectual faculties order. And will we eventually succeed to get rid of our intelligence sin of pride? It is very difficult. We need that *fear* of God, which requires respect for the Creator, respect that disappeared from contemporary “secular” culture. We stay faithful! There is only one

<sup>2</sup> Sanctus Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 79, a. 10, Resp.

answer and we can find it in rediscovering the primacy of spirituality. The world needs Christian saints not faithful laymen, it needs the humanism of the divine wisdom as an antidote to the humanism of the body intelligence. The word of faith must authentically resonate in the context of the contemporary “mass” culture. It must be the word of faith, not of the human science and technology intelligence. It is one thing needful way of conversion to Jesus Christ – the beginning of the end of ages (Pope John Paul II Karol Wojtyła 2015, 479-547).

## 2. Faith as an Act of the Heart

Going back, we will analyze how Pope Benedict XVI emeritus valuing the concept of St. Paul’s from the *Epistle to the Romans* (10: 9) calls faith as an *act of the heart*, not as an abstract idea but as an expression of a concrete, real action. Neither intellect nor intelligence nor intellectual lucidity, but solely heart<sup>3</sup>. Just like the dancing dervishes.<sup>4</sup> Let’s go through the first Pauline fragment and then the text of one of the most penetrating theologians of late modernity.

“Indeed, if you confess the Lord Jesus with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (*Romans* 10: 9).”

And:

“Faith is an orientation of our existence as a whole. [...] It is not just a mental event, it is not just an event of will or just an emotional event, it is all of these together, an act of the whole I, of all the people, as an assumed unit.” (Marga 2010, 292).

This faith, as an act of the heart, strength of our life should be profoundly lived according to the Scriptures and with all the openness to *current times* and to *God*. Thus, this profound reality is discerned by the same Benedict XVI, who speaks in everybody’s language. Here is the excerpt:

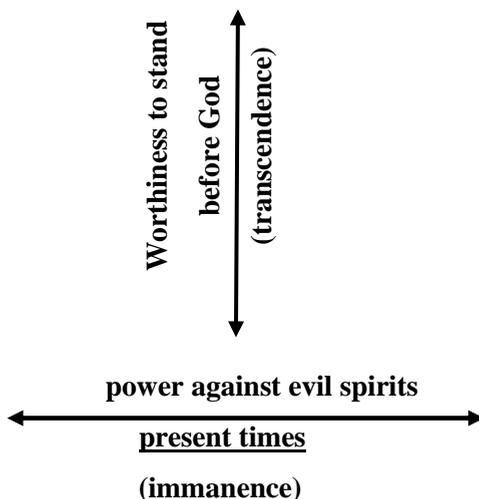
“A faith lived profoundly and with all its openness to all current times, but also with all its openness to God unites two aspects: the respect for otherness and newness as well as the continuity of our being, the

<sup>3</sup> In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* the mirror of Erised is described, unprecedented, ceiling-high with golden frame, and resting on two legs, with claws. The inscription at the top is: *I show you not your face but your heart’s desire*.

<sup>4</sup> “The dervishes were dressed with some colored, heavy, supple dresses. A drum was heard. Then the monks turned into spinning. [...] The swirl, revolve around their heart, which is the place of God’s presence. It’s like a prayer” (Schmitt 2013, 66).

communicability between people and times.” (Pope Benedict XVI 2010, 21-22).

A simple graphic can help our understanding that will connect the new eternal otherness with the continuity communicability of our being, thus to harness the depth of our faith to God with all dignity and strength to our times. Faith thus becomes the transcendent truth of our life living: profoundly and with all our openness to *God*. On the vertical level of life (transcendence), the faith is called by the liturgical text with the words: “...*worthiness to stand before Him*, [...] not for our merits but from the abundance of His mercy.” This is the great humility before the redemptive work of Christ. And lingered on the liturgical text we discover with joy that we are invited to transcendence. Something transcends time and space“ – Let’s have our hearts up!” and we promptly respond “We have them to our Lord!”. No logic, no intelligence, no intellectual lucidity, but the heart. But the profound faith is coming from behind and with all its openness to *current times*. On the horizontal level of life (immanence) faith means nothing but power and fight *against the evil spirit*.



These clarifications are not random and singular. They are deeply rooted in the theology expressed by faith that gave life to the Church from the earliest moments of public confession of faith in Jesus Christ, dead and risen for our salvation. And Benedict XVI<sup>5</sup> fully knows the teachings

<sup>5</sup> “How to reach faith” is the title of the interview given by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to the Jesuit theologian Jacques Servais, published on Thursday, March 17, 2016, in the Vatican Daily, *L’Osservatore Romano*. The interview written in German by Pope

of his predecessor, St. John-Paul II who spoke about the need for permanent renewal of theology, change the language with Christian identity preservation. Only then, our faith becomes *supernatural knowledge*. Here is the text:

“Faith is the substance of the supernatural: *participation* in the knowledge that God alone knows. We must pray for such participation, for what it is the gift of the Person to person.” (Pope John Paul II Karol Wojtyla 2015, 90).

Thus, through *participation*, St John-Paul II keeps Saint Thomas Aquinas as that “eternal novelty of thinking”, which linked us with the ontical space of knowledge whose dynamic principle is the Being. The climax of this state shall be the time of acceptance of the truth that will cause that vital necessity to metaphysics. Through his writings, St. Thomas helps our present culture to better understand the extent of the miracle gift that God gave us by giving us the use of reason. For St. Thomas the lights of faith and intellect could not contradict. He wrote this sublime sentence: any uttered truth, no matter by whom, comes from the Holy Spirit. A beautiful lesson of the spirit of openness, respect for the people! In the same time his thinking strongly emphasizes the supernatural dimension of the biblical faith and the value of rationality. Intellectual density of Thomism in conversation with the Greek philosophy leads us to deepen our participation problem as it appears in the philosophy of St. Thomas. The “basic principles” of metaphysics – as method, the principles of science are those that respond better to the

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Emeritus was entrusted to the Archbishop Georg Gänswein and read in the context of a symposium held in Rome, at the Rectorate of the Society of Jesus, entitled: “Through faith. The doctrine of justification and the experience of God’s presence in preaching the Spiritual Exercises”. In the interview, starting from the issue of justification and the question of the meaning of *faith* and how to reach *believing*, Pope Emeritus explains: *On the one hand, faith is a very personal connection with God, “which, while related to community brothers and sisters. In fact, the encounter with God helps us open, we snatch of “closed loneliness” to be welcomed “in the living community of the Church”. A community does not create alone, not a mere gathering of people with certain ideas in common, they want to spread them. The church was not built herself but it was created by God, being continually formed by Him; the Church does not come through a bureaucratic act but thanks to a Sacrament. This does not mean that being a Christian is like having a special ticket to enter eternal happiness, but a vocation to build together a vocation of the whole... We, together with the Lord, whom we met, should go to others to try to make God present in Jesus visible to their eyes.* Source: Vatican Radio, <http://www.catholica.ro/>.

demands and nature of the Thomistic research. For St. Thomas the subject of metaphysics is the Being. So, the basic principles of metaphysics can only be the principles that direct and are immediately concerned with the being – absolute and fundamental perfection, the basic source of all other perfections and the ultimate goal of any action. For their formulation St. Thomas uses the language of the formulas in use of his time, from the language of Plato and Aristotle. When referring to the principle of causality St. Thomas uses three expressions that connote three different functions of the cause and illustrates the ontological density effective to its own cause. These three expressions are: creation, communication, participation. Here (with the participation) we can speak of real, concrete metaphysical experience. Participation by compounding, pure formal participation has only one parent: Plato, the parent of participation. The solution to the participation problem developed by St. Thomas is the final result of many distinctions. The problem of unity and multiplicity following transcendentals, the issue of beings composition and the possibility of awarding, the problem of re-attaching the beings to the Absolute Being, the question of similarity and distinction between finite beings and initial being possessed by participating, each of these problems get an appropriate solution. A coherent synthesis, accurate in each of the constituents, is born from the competition of these particular solutions. At the same time, it is free from the rigid and unequivocal unit that we like to see the perfection of a philosophy. More than a particular system St. Thomas sees in participation a general attitude of the spirit, separating the necessary from the contingent. For the religious soul, the participation substantiates adoration and respect. To philosophically substantiate this union means to humbly recognize the similarity that despite the infinite distance it maintains a real link between the Absolute and the creature, where the creature appears mostly as a glow broke out from an infinite fire and that aspires to return there.

### **3. Conclusion**

Being a large number of truths that take a long time for research and never missing a journey of errors, we will address only to the *scientific theology* in the future. This clearly means that this “our” consciousness go through natural reason and therefore through philosophy. Within the theological work philosophical demonstrations come into being so that their foundation to be recognized in the principles of reason. No reference will be made *to* philosophy, but it will be developed into a system that

does not belong to. The theology will follow its own *ordo disciplinae* which is determined from the divine perspective, insofar as it will be perceived as a revelation. This is why we have to resort to the services of philosophy; and theology argued itself in a completely philosophical way when faced with enemies of the faith. Naturally it could not prove the truth of faith that misses human consciousness, thus leading to a rational demonstration whose syllogistic arguments opposed it. Starting from here we can say that theology became dependent on philosophy and that „ancilla theologiae” was justifying itself only for the poetic discourse registers. At this point we see that philosophy practiced by the believer is, in fact, neither faithful nor Christian, nor unbelief, nor unchristian. What is taken into consideration strictly refers to the *rational objectivity* of the supernatural principles of faith. The limit of that *ordo disciplinae* carried out within the theological and philosophical discourse cannot be defined as a “system” of law. This limit will stay exactly in the synthesis of the two speeches, pushed up to the border with faith and reason together. This border inside the “synthesis” therefore does not lay between faith and conscience, assuming that the first was based on subjective religious certainty and the second on objective rationality. Theology is, itself, a rational science that is based on principles that were given only revelation that cannot be understood only in faith. But the *principles* can be known through the *revelation* of God and His saints. This doctrine of “subordinating” theology of God’s knowledge justifies the subjective orientation and this makes possible to link philosophy in the form of a perfect “synthesis”.

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