

# Ecce homo sicut et Deus: Anthropologia et Theologia

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**T**heological anthropology. What is it? How many people can answer this question nowadays? Is it grave that few people know this science? To respond these questions, we shall dedicate ourselves today. This branch of human knowledge, that bounders between philosophy and faith, is an obscure branch and is scarcely known today, but, overall, it is scarcely understood. We will synthesis what this subject is about and to achieve this we will analyse the object of study of this science, given that this is what primarily distinguishes a science from another. It may be objected that the method is what distinguishes a science from another but, in fact, the method is an accidental element of it; the method ordains itself to the object studied given that reality cannot be studied with a same single method, but a reality can be studied through all the existing methods.

The theological anthropology therefore seeks to answer three questions of reality and within them the object of study is manifested: Who am I? Who is God? And, is man capable of God? Thus, we can appreciate that God, man and the relationship that these two entities keep between themselves, if such relationship exists, is studied under this science. Therefore, we will proceed to respond sequentially these three questions.

#### WHO AM I?

*Problema problematum quid est?* This question will allow us to unveil, *a posteriori* of its answer, who is man. Of course, first we need to delimit the subject because there are problems everywhere. We need to underline that this is not any problem of any aspect of life of man. This is the problem of problems. What does this mean? It means that it is the problem from which all of the rest of man's problems arise. At first glance we may be accused of being pretentious trying to reduce all of the conflicts, fights, discords, tragedies, sadness, etcetera, to a single problem; and maybe not even of being pretentious but of being naïve or too innocent. Even more, what I am about to say, may cause a scandal and I may even be more criticized for being absurd. The problem of problems of man is that he is not a man.

Let me explain. Man is not man because he has lost that which makes him be a man. It is true that ontologically we are born as a man; it is not the case that one is born being a goose and in the

end of one's life he is a human, it is that we do not act accordingly. This is possible *sine que non* because we bear liberty<sup>1</sup> and such implies that, therefore, before the range of actions that we have the possibility of choosing, we are presented with the question of opting for good or bad.

But the problem of problems of man is not his ethics because even ethics is a problem. Notwithstanding, I would highlight that the actions of man have consequences because we have liberty. On a practical level, if we act according to what we are, that is, as a man thus we shall be more of a man and in as much as we act distinctively from what we are, we shall be less of a man.

Therefore, the following question to be answered is presented to us: What is man? In order to answer this question humanity has been submerged millennia in thought trying to decipher this great enigma. However, for the purposes of this essay I am satisfied with the answer that he is a person, *rationalis naturae individua substantia*, quoting Boecio, of corporal nature or an incarnated spirit, in the words of Adame Goddard. This implicitly carries the existence of other persons, otherwise it would be absurd to specify that he is a *corporal* person. The other persons are spiritual and divine, the angels and the fallen angels, and God respectively. We shall see why the other persons are relevant in order to answer our initial question.

We have already defined man as an incarnated spirit, however, to de-fine, to place limits, to man's existence is not sufficient in order to answer our question. It is useless to define to a toddler a car as an automotive vehicle of four wheels with a capacity of no more than seven seats. In order for him to understand what a car is, we should rather tell him what it is used for, since a true definition indicates an object's purpose; therefore, we must unravel

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, liberty is the positive factor that marks out man's primacy before the other corporeal beings, as well as the risks of his existence. A positive meaning is characteristic of these risks because, by emphasizing man's responsibility for being author of his acts, they indicate that these are not merely contingent. [...] From his clearly intellectualist position, Thomas of Aquinas sustains that "*totius libertatis radix in ratione est constituta*". Within the classic approach, this maxim assures liberty from being confused with a whim without falling in Socrates' purely rationalist interpretation.

POLO, L. (2014), *Epistemología, creación y divinidad*, Eunsa, Pamplona, p. 37.

what is the sense of man's existence, in other words: for what purpose was he created? In order to do this, it is necessary to study man's creation. However, why should we complicate ourselves if we have Someone to turn to that we can ask? And, even more, He has already told it to us without us even asking him. This Someone is God. Man was created by God, and he has made us for us to be with Him; this is man; *ecce homo*.

However, because of what I have stated is why I will certainly be most criticized, and it is what I would most like to defend. I reply that that is the problem of problems. In order to better illustrate my point, I would like to briefly remember the story that the Swedish existentialist philosopher, Kierkegaard, used to describe what any person that talks about God nowadays has to go through. It tells about a circus that catches on fire and so they send a clown to the village to notify the people of the danger they are in. However, for the only reason of being a clown, the village did not believe him and accused him of making publicity of such bad taste of his circus. Eventually the flames reached the village, and everything turned into ashes. And the clown, although had the best of intentions and was telling the truth, was only frustrated because they criticized and did not take him seriously<sup>2</sup>. The people today tend to have a predetermined and even prejudiced aversion from God and religion.

Considering this I would like to resolve this problem parting from the solutions that this modern phenomenon has, rather than to reflect upon the reason of being of it, since, following such method, we will also discern its reason of being. It is necessary, therefore, to analyse reason and faith of man, which are distinct modes of wisdom. We shall start studying reason.

For my part, I have occupied myself up to this moment in making manifest the limited character of the human's mental presence due to having as a requirement the comprehension according to objectifications. The limited character of the intellectual objectification is noticed in that, in an intrinsic manner of objectification

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<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Ratzinger, J. (2013), *Introducción al cristianismo*, Sígueme, Salamanca, p. 33-34.

(sic), it does not enrich what she allows to find out about its subject, or in that it is constant and the same<sup>3</sup>.

Reason is what characterizes man from the rest of animals and what makes him alike God and the angels, as well as the will, both of which conform the spirit. However, despite of the great faculty that the reason is and the immense possibility of things that we can get to know thanks to it, reason is not sufficient to possess in our intellect everything that exists in this world, or all aspects of reality. As we have seen, it is limited in as much as which the object under its light can offer us. That is, reason, unlike will, is an abstraction, a movement from the object toward the subject and thus the main element is the object *ergo* we are limited to what is presented before us. And it is even more noticeable after modern rationalism which idealized reason and completely lost appreciation of reality in as much as it is lived.

To take up again this last mention modality of wisdom, John Henry Newman proposes an interesting solution that appears to coincide with the proposal of Leonardo Polo, however, I shall use the English Cardinal's nomination: The Illative Sense. In a few words, what it describes about thought is that man seldomly thinks in absolutes, in logic syllogisms. The majority of his thoughts and knowledge is formed by affirmations, even more certain than syllogisms, that are acquired by real and direct experience. Similar, from my point of view, to Polo's Usual Knowing<sup>4</sup>. Through these affirmations man gets to know truths of faith since these are lived through life, not their apprehension is not made to be learned through absolutes and syllogisms.

Another argument that breaks the apparent division between faith and reason, harmonizing both, is given by the Pope Emeritus in the year 2006 at Saint Peter's Square. A young man, named Giovanni, objected that reason, science and mathematics are absolutely contrary to faith. That what religion postulates about reality has been overcome and refuted by the scientific advances and that, if within the discoveries that mathematics has made God is not found among them, it is because God actually does not exist, and the world is based upon casualty and chaos. Benedict

<sup>3</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Polo, L. (2014), *Epistemologia...*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Cfr. Op. Cit.*, Polo, L. (2014), *Epistemologia...*, p. 41-43.

XVI answered that if it is true that mathematics and faith are different it is because both are different languages by means of which we get to know reality. Through reason we can discover a logical structure within the world and thanks to our objective mathematical structure, which coincides with reality, we can know and manipulate reality to our favour through technique, we become creators of our world; which only leads to reinforce the existence of a logical structure, a *logos*, as the base of the existence, that is to say, God. "Thus, we see that there is a subjective rationality and an objective rationality in matter, that coincide"<sup>5</sup>. If reality was founded upon chaos and casualty we would never be able to understand reality and would less be able to manipulate it through technique in our favour.

In this way, the barrier between the philosophic God (the Aristotelian First Motor) and the God of faith (the Christian Father) can be broken down since it is not that faith and reason contrast between themselves, but rather harmonize each other. Through the Illative Sense those affirmations we acquire through life are based upon trust, and faith is just that, to trust in what is revealed by God. This distinction, it should be mentioned, helps to understand the problem of the non-believers with faith. They qualify it as irrational, illogical, absurd, childish without understanding that faith is not a faculty or an act of reason. They are two different modalities of wisdom but do not contradict themselves and they are even less mutually exclusive. Moreover, it cannot even be stated that it is a feat of man, even though it does require his participation. It is a gift of God:

In this regard it should be noted that Christianity is distinguished from the rest of religions because in it the human initiative is preceded by that of God [...]. Besides, Christianity proposes itself primarily as a revelation and only under a derivative manner as a religion.<sup>6</sup>

I was referring to this at the beginning of this essay in saying that we have Someone that does not only know which our nature is, as well as Someone to whom we can turn to in order to resolve

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.conocereisdeverdad.org/website/index.php?id=3913>, consulted April 6th, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. Cit.*. Polo, L. (2014), *Epistemologia...*, p. 39.

our doubts, but that He has even gone ahead and has already manifested it to us. God has revealed his plan to us, he has presented his Son to us as the model of man. He is the *Ecce Homo* that the evangelists present to us. To such we should aspire to be and act accordingly.

Once man's nature has been studied, we may proceed to study the Absolute Being, God.

## WHO IS GOD?

Now we shall dedicate ourselves in studying God; to be able to discern, although minimally, the essence of God. Because of the great complexity that this feat implies, the only manner of carrying it out is by starting to recognize that no matter how deep, clear and true this effort may be, because we are talking about the absolute Being that gives meaning and existence to reality, it will always leave us profoundly disappointed in trying to achieve this great attempt. It is an extremely pretentious goal to strive to present God through an essay and it is even more to do it in an essay of these dimensions; however, we shall do our best intellectual and faithful effort in order to leave a decent representation of God here.

Before beginning with this matter, I would like to pick up the thread of my discourse that I left considered when answering the question "*problema problematum quid est?*". We sought the root problem of all the problems that threaten man and we concluded that it was the denial of accepting our nature of divine creation and, consequently, being created to be alike our Creator. Now, logically, the next question we must answer is knowing who this Creator Being is; if we were made by Him and for Him, who is He?

Another source of religious knowledge is the confrontation of man with the world, with its potentials and its mysteries. The cosmos with its beauty and its plenitude, with its dissatisfactions, horrors and tragedies, is also able to lead man to the experience



of the power that exceeds everything, the power that threatens him and that, at the same time, sustains him<sup>7</sup>.

To begin with, I would like to analyse this previous portion of the book by Cardinal Ratzinger, the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *Introduction to Christianity*. It affirms that man tends to God. Anthropological-architectonical studies have discovered that man, since its origins, has always been a religious being. This allows us to state with certainty that it's by man's own nature to tend towards that absolute power. This is perfectly understood being man created by a lover, since the latter's greatest desire shall be that we respond to Him in that love; this is how our natural inclination towards him is explained; because the one who loves is not only attracted to the loved one, but, at the same time, attracts the loved one to the lover. We shall analyse the affirmation that states that this absolute power loves further on. In the meanwhile, the certainty that such inclination is natural to us is enough.

That which differs from a religion and another, is the manifestation of our search for the supreme power. Even atheist and agnostic people answer to this inclination; they simply absolutize matter, uncertainty and chaos. But every man necessarily answers to this calling because based upon on it we comprehend our entire existence. It is a fundamental decision in our lives and not because it is natural to man but rather because, literally, they are the pillars upon which we postulate ourselves before reality. In this sense, Ratzinger states that faith is not a "know-make" relationship but rather a "stand-understand" one. By this decision we stand with a specific cosmovision of reality and through it we understand reality. It is impossible to subtract ourselves from this postulation before reality; the only thing upon which our liberty has influence is the stance we take<sup>8</sup>.

Before Christianity, giving plenitude to the Jewish religion, presented its stance before reality there already was another ancient culture that presented a cosmovision extremely well-aimed, the Greeks. The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, each in their own way, had discerned an absolute Being that governed reality.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. Cit.* Ratzinger, J. (2013), *Introducción...*, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Cfr. Ibidem*, p. 40-44 & 58-63.

It is not a novelty, because of what we have explained regarding the relationship between faith and reason, that such *paideia* can explain the phenomenon of God presented by the Christians from a point of view, not from faith, but, of course, from reason without causing the former to be avoiding. Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas of Aquinas, among various other Christian intellectuals, achieved harmonizing both stances in such a way that they proved that the Christian faith and the Greek reason are not contradictory but rather complementary.

However, at this point a great problem has arisen. Are they actually compatible? Are we extrapolating both Gods, the one of faith and the one of philosophy, to spheres completely unrecognizable to each other? His personality and his proximity to man is what characterizes the Christian God, but is God capable of such? Or maybe we should not ask ourselves if he is capable, but rather if he would be interested in being like that?

In some radically distant times, in which the Earth is insignificant in the whole universe, in which man, a tiny grain of sand, is a minute point in the immensity of the cosmos, the idea that that superior being is occupied with humans appears absurd to us<sup>9</sup>.

This kind of thought is very attractive and even more in a society that takes as a reference of truth the exact mathematical sciences. Einstein even despised the idea of a god that is a person because he thought that it would reduce his splendour as a God. Therefore, the true conception ought to be a *pantokrator* God, cosmic, governor of the universe whose main traits are his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence in a pure and absolute manner without any kind of nuance. With this kind of mentality, it is not far-fetched to think that if God is interested in man, it would be an “anthropomorphic” and selfish vision of ours. Being God so great, so wise, so powerful and the universe so extensive and infinite, it would not be difficult for us to doubt if God occupies Himself with us and, even if he did, we would feel as if he would be losing his time, given our fugacity and insignificance in this universe. God is not capable of man; his greatness does not allow him to coexist with such insignificant beings.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 122.

To refute this school of thought, I'd like to quote the end of the answer that Cardinal Ratzinger gave to the young man Giovanni at Saint Peter's Square (*vid supra*):

But it appears to me that the true modern problem against faith is the evil in the world: we ask ourselves how is evil compatible with this rationality of the Creator. And here we really need the God that was incarnated and that shows us that He is not only a mathematic reason but that this original reason is also Love. If we analyse the great options, the Christian option is also today the most rational and the most humane. Because of that, we can elaborate with confidence a philosophy, a vision of the world based on this priority of reason, on this confidence that the creative Reason is Love, and that this love is God<sup>10</sup>.

What is contrary to God is evil and sin, because his is not only and essentially *pantokrator* but also *pater*, as the Apostolic Symbol recites. He is a father, he loves. He loves his creatures as if they were more than a creation, He loves them as his own children. It hurts him to see those creatures in loneliness and sorrow in which they are engulfed because of original sin, originated by their pride. Because of this love we understand his joy caused the return of a lost sheep, of a prodigal son, of a repentant sinner. He craves, desires, dies for us to be back with Him.

#### *ECCE DEUS, A PARADOX:*

*Non coerceri maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est; "It is divine not being enclosed in the maximum and however be contained in the minimum"*<sup>11</sup>.

#### IS MAN CAPABLE OF GOD?

We have studied who we are, who is God and if God is capable of man, and we have answered affirmatively to this last question. However, this should not seem strange to us. If he could not do that, he thus would not be omnipotent, it is to say, his omnipo-

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.conocereisdeverdad.org/website/index.php?id=3913>, consultado el día 6 de abril de 2016.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. Cit.*. Ratzinger, *Introducción...*, p. 122-123

tence would be limited by his own omnipotence. He must be able to renounce to it in order to be actually omnipotent.

“The meaning of ‘omnipotence’ and ‘sovereignty’ is only visible in the manger and on the cross. [...] He assumes the radical impotence of the commitment to his diminutive creatures”<sup>12</sup>.

The same occurs to man with the Creator God, as with the God related with existence; man tends naturally to him. We can see this in various aspects of man’s life. In first place, it is manifested by the splendour of life since, when one encounters himself with it, he has nothing left but to discover his life as a gift without one’s own merit. In another manner, we discover this God in our inclination to the eternal, to the infinite, which is frustrated in our limited and finite reality that hinders us from resting within it and, ultimately, we discover Him by our loneliness. We would not be lonely if we were not called to a you, but not limited to a human you, it rather calls to a you that penetrates to the most deep of the I. By this tendency we discover that we naturally experiment the saviour God, as we experiment the creator God, the absolute Being<sup>13</sup>.

But, who is this saviour God? Is he different from the creator God? Is he the same God but manifested in a specific manner? To answer all these questions, let us seek the answer in the thought of the philosopher and theologian previously quoted, Leonardo Polo, starting from the fact that God is a person, divine, but a person (*vid supra*).

Now, as *trascendens* to the coexistence, God ought to be Originally Person. If what characterizes the human person is the absence of reply, in the Original Person that lack cannot take place. Of course, the notion of reply of the Origin constitutes a mystery: it cannot be “another origin” since it is incompatible with the identity. But neither can it be another person because it would be equivalent to understanding identity in a short sense -as own-selfness-, which is incompatible with his Original nature<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. *Op. Cit.* Ratzinger, *Introducción...*, p. 89-90.

<sup>14</sup> Polo, L. (1999) “El descubrimiento de Dios desde el hombre”, *Studia Poliana*, Pamplona, n. 1, p. 14-15.

It is necessary to explain what is understood as reply. The person is co-existence, open intimacy. It means that a solitary person is a tragedy because he lacks sense, he would be inconsistent with his way of being<sup>15</sup>. He is necessarily called to another and his reciprocity with that another is his reply. Man is alone, without meaning in this world by not replying. To this Polo refers to, although, in my humble opinion, with an unequivocal and pessimist affirmation, when he states that “what characterizes the human person is the absence of reply” but, I do agree with that nowadays there is a general absence of personal reply from man.

In this sense, it is understandable that the Spanish philosopher would state that the Divine Person lacks this reply. However, He is the perfect person, and he thus replies. But, being the Origin, He cannot reply to another Origin, so we enter a great problem: how can this Person reply without losing His Originality? The answer must be, under this approach, logically one and only one; He replies to other Persons with whom he shares the Originality. This is the mystery of the Holy Trinity: three Divine Persons in one only God. They are not different manifestations, neither are they distinct gods; they are distinct Divine Persons.

This way we can answer the question: who is this saviour God? He is a Divine Person called Christ.

Now, the question to resolve would be: how does this Divine Person save us? But, in turn, we also need to clarify from what does he save us from. We can find the answer in the birth of the world<sup>16</sup>. Men and women at the beginning of time were made by God to be with Him, and therefore they lived with Him. They were capable of God because God wanted to create them like that, in another case in which they had not been capable of God, their existence would have been absurd. And yet we ask ourselves today if we are capable of God. What happened to us to doubt it? We became incapable of God by falling in original sin, by desiring to be like God, an act of extreme pride. By this act we auto-incapacitated ourselves of God. We offended him, and the state of sin separated us from His side. The original sin’s effect was the impossibility of man to reply to God, an effect that

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<sup>15</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*, p. 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Gn. 2.

changed our original nature to a fallen nature, and it is from this that Christ saves us.

To achieve this, it would be necessary to redeem our nature. The seriousness of the offense is proportionate to the subject offended. That is, original sin has such graveness because it does not have but the same dimension of seriousness that God has of greatness because the offended by original sin is God. Therefore, only God is capable of redeeming a nature so much affected because the only being with such magnitude as God is God Himself. And it is as this that, for our good luck, God is not one but triune. A Divine Person can redeem us, and this is what Christ did. He redeemed human nature by becoming Jesus, that is, in his Incarnation and his Passion. This is how an offense to God could be repaired; by means of God's expiation.

And all of it only and exclusively because of the love that God has for man (*vid supra*). We have seen that God has no necessity of us, He is enough for Himself, but His love is such that it overflows, and seeks to share his love with another and so he creates man and, when He sees that man gets separated from Him, He gives to man the means to reconcile himself and to return to his side since only He has the capacity of repairing such offense. This is what is called God's Mercy; it is such overwhelming of love that he forgives any offense against Him, not only the original offense, in order for man to be able to return to his presence<sup>17</sup>.

The redemption of Jesus did not limit itself to restore our original nature but also dignified and divinized it by becoming a man. That is, we aren't only not fallen but we are arisen. He godified human nature. This is why the words that are pronounced by the Priest in the Liturgical Celebration "*Through Him, and with Him, and in Him*", are not a metaphor nor a representation. When we are baptised, we are an intrinsic part of Jesus and, therefore, of the Holy Trinity, becoming not only capable of Christ but a member of Him. Jesus Christ permits us to achieve what by nature we

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<sup>17</sup> Cfr. S.S. Francisco (2015) *Misericordiae vultus*, Ediciones Paulinas, México, 8-9, p. 13-16.

It should be mentioned that this is the purpose of the Jubilee of Mercy convoked by the Saint Father through the quoted apostolic letter, *Misericordiae vultus*. It seeks to remember, emphasize the purpose of the coming of Christ: the forgiveness of sins by means of the mercy of the Father.

tend to, He gives us access to the eternal, the infinite. It would be absurd to have such a tendency and not being able to satisfy it. This means that we are open to the total openness; as persons we coexist with the greatest coexistent being that transcends us: man is capable of God.

In this manner, is Theological Anthropology understood. Jesus Christ, being the answer to the third question, gives meaning and completion to the first two analysed. The three questions of Theological Anthropology, under the light of the salvific mission of Jesus Christ, are answered: man is a loved creation of God; God is one and triune, being Creator and Saviour of man; and man is not only capable of God, but he also has the same dignity as God.

Remembering the story of Kierkegaard, despite that this appears to come from a clown we should not forget the flames.