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Pope Benedict XVI on Faith and Reason

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THE MOST widely noted aspect of Pope Benedict's speech at the University of Regensburg in September of 2006 has been his quotation of a brief passage from an otherwise obscure text that, with "startling brusqueness," speaks ill of Islam.[1] The Holy Father stated that he found this brusqueness "unacceptable," but, evidently, not so unacceptable as to preclude his quoting it. His willingness to use the text has been judged still more unacceptable by large numbers of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. And this reaction in its various forms has diverted attention from and nearly overwhelmed the central message of the speech. That message focuses on the adequacy of human reason for coming to know God. According to Benedict's text, the quotation that has received so much attention serves merely as a starting-point for his reflections on the relation of faith and reason. He begins with Islam as one foil against which he presents the harmony of faith and reason. The second and main foil is not Islam, but what he calls "modern reason," "positivistic reason," or reason under a self-imposed limitation. Against a faith that denies God's reasonableness and against a rationality that denies faith's reasonableness, Benedict articulates the harmony of faith and reason.[2] The present essay

[1] Pope Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections" (University of Regensburg, 12 September 2006), ¶3. The translation is taken from www.vatican.va and will be cited parenthetically in the text as "Faith" along with the paragraph number. The German text is available from the same source and retains the same paragraph divisions.

[2] James Schall emphasizes the significance of Benedict's speech for reinvigorating the proper understanding of the university as the proper place for the cultivation of this harmony. See his *The Regensburg Lecture* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), especially 18–40.

examines Benedict's argument for this harmony and then turns to the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* for illustrative examples of various kinds of harmonious co-operation between faith and reason.[3]

Introductory Remarks

It is helpful to begin with an initial sketch of a few distinctions that are operative in Benedict's speech. The title, "Faith, Reason, and the University: Memories and Reflections," announces the main theme of faith and reason. Benedict uses each of these terms in multiple senses. The most prominent senses of "faith" distinguished in the speech are Christianity and Islam. In addition to these opposed forms of faith, of course, there also are opposed forms of Christianity. Similarly, "reason" has multiple, opposed meanings in the speech. One form of reason is modern scientific reason and another form is philosophical reason. Again, philosophical reason, too, appears in multiple and opposed forms. When Benedict goes on to speak of harmony between faith and reason, not all forms of reason are equally harmonious with all forms of faith. Indeed, it seems that one of the goals of the speech is to show that, despite the distinction between faith and reason, Christian faith and philosophical reason may have more or more important things in common with one another than either has with Islam or with modern rationalism. Benedict's portrayal of possible harmony between faith and reason makes intelligible the activity of theology, understood as rational inquiry that begins with the acceptance of the deposit of faith.[4]

In addition to developed or sophisticated rational activities like theology, philosophy, and science, Benedict also draws our attention to the ordinary human rationality that is presupposed by each of them. We must recognize that human rationality does not originate in the form of science or philosophy. Ordinary experience and the effort to understand the world precede the appearance of philosophy, which comes on the scene as part of the human effort to remedy and correct the fallibility and error ingredient to ordinary opinion. Philosophy is originally the attempt to perfect our rationality, which we first exercise in ordinary experience.

[3] *Encyclical Letter* Deus Caritas Est *of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, Men and Women Religious, and All the Lay Faithful, On Christian Love* (25 December 2005). The translation is taken from www.vatican.va and will be cited parenthetically in the text as DCE along with the section number.

[4] Benedict speaks of theologians "inquiring about the reasonableness of faith" ("Faith," ¶1) and, using almost the same formulation, he refers to theology "precisely as theology, as inquiry into the rationality of faith" (*als eigentliche Theologie, als Frage nach der Vernunft des Glaubens*) (ibid., ¶15). He also says, "theologians seek to correlate [faith] with reason as a whole" (ibid., ¶1).

Whereas modern science tends to depreciate the epistemic significance of the ordinary grasp of the world and to prefer the results of science as the decisive or final truth, Benedict wants to appeal to our common rationality that precedes science and to defend philosophy and theology as belonging to "the right use of reason" ("Faith," ¶1). Our common rationality needs his support because human confidence in ordinary rationality comes under tremendous pressure both from some theological views (Christian and non-Christian in origin) and from some scientific views. In this speech Benedict emphasizes the way in which Islam can be used to stress divine transcendence to such a degree that all trust in human reason is voided. Also, he emphasizes the way in which the power of modern science, as the authoritative form of human knowing, leads us to dismiss as false or unreliable our ordinary grasp of the world. According to the positivistic view of reason Benedict criticizes, the sorts of questions that animate philosophy and theology—because they cannot be addressed in scientific ways—must be set aside as meaningless or nonrational. Benedict aims to separate faith and theology from the irrationalism of some forms of Islam and to separate reason and philosophy from the truncated form of modern scientific rationalism. This opens the door to the harmony of faith and reason.

The preceding sketch provides some indication of the analysis of Benedict's argument that follows below. The first two sections of this essay deal with the two parts of the Regensburg speech. The first part of Benedict's speech is especially devoted to articulating the rationality or reasonableness of God and God's actions in contrast to claims that God's ways are so far beyond human reason as to be unintelligible to us. And the first section of this essay explains how Benedict presents the accessibility of God to human reason. The second part of Benedict's speech analyzes the effort to dehellenize Christianity as an attempt to replace the Greek conception of rationality with the modern scientific conception. The second section of this essay explains Benedict's argument that reason must extend more broadly than the modern scientific form of reason, at least insofar as we must recognize the rational legitimacy of philosophy and theology. The two parts of Benedict's speech together can be understood to create the space for the harmony of faith and reason because in them Benedict shows how the recovery of a broadened understanding of reason makes it possible for us to recognize the intelligibility of God. The third section of this essay turns to *Deus Caritas Est* in order to show how Benedict has displayed there three distinct modes of the harmonious cooperation of reason and faith.

Reason and God

The pope began his speech at Regensburg by telling a joke about atheism. More precisely, Pope Benedict repeated a former colleague's gibe that pokes fun at professors and at believers. Believers amuse because they are sometimes naive and professors amuse because they are sometimes, at least from the point of view of common sense, senseless in their pursuit of rationality. This sort of joke has such a long pedigree that it deserves to be considered with some seriousness.[5] The originator of Pope Benedict's joke made professors who are believers the target of his ridicule: "a colleague had said there was something odd about our university: it had two faculties devoted to something that did not exist: God" ("Faith," ¶4). The surface of the joke ribs the academics and their penchant for pointless investigations and tedious repetition. The heart of the joke is the declaration of atheism. The heart of the joke divides people into those who "know" there is no God and those who, nevertheless, continue to investigate or seek or speak about him. The character of the "knowing" here is not specialized, academic, insider's knowledge, as if this were a joke that only economists or physicists could find funny. The knowing mentioned is ordinary, everyday knowledge, and the joke is about the persistence of what might be called superstition.[6] The charge of persistent superstition is softened and made friendly by its being covered over with an image of academic buffoonery, as if theism were nothing more than a charming eccentricity.

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[5] Seriously rational men have been entertaining Thracian maids and others at least since Thales. See Plato, *Theaetetus* 174a–b. Diogenes Laertius records a slightly different version (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* I, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 34). For a modern appreciation, see Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?* trans. W. B. Barton and Vera Deutsch (South Bend, Ind.: Regnery/Gateway, 1967), 2–4. Heidegger draws attention to Socrates's claim in Plato's version: "This jest also fits all those who become involved in philosophy." Socrates himself has always been associated with awareness of the conditions presupposed by his own activity. For a modern image of senseless rationality in its scientific form, see Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Leech," in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 248–51. This version could easily be turned against Benedict's former colleague.

[6] See "Faith," ¶12, where Benedict asserts that the modern concept of reason and the standard imposed by modern scientific method causes the question of God to appear "unscientific or pre-scientific." Faith appears to be identical with credulousness, that is, naive, uneducated opinion. For a contemporary articulation of the distinction between theological faith and ordinary opinion, see Robert Sokolowski, "Philosophy and the Christian Act of Faith," in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 25–37.

Because this simple joke arises from and reflects the modern form of reason Benedict wants to discuss, it serves to introduce the central theme of the speech. The joke characterizes Christian faith as superstition and atheism as comparatively respectable. To some extent, the plausibility of these views is itself an expression of the popular influence of the successful part of the modern form of reason: modern natural science. The prominence of science in contemporary life exerts tremendous influence as the authoritative form of knowing. What is not known or not yet known according to scientific methods or procedures is ordinarily regarded as not genuinely known, but only believed. To cling with faith to what is not scientifically known or not scientifically knowable is, in the presence of science as the standard of knowledge, hard to distinguish from superstition or what Pope Benedict calls "the realm of the subjective" ("Faith," ¶13). Common sense itself has become informed by science. More precisely, it has become informed by a popular and somewhat superficial appreciation of the power of science. Especially (but not exclusively) through the pervasiveness of technology in our lives, modern scientific reason dominates our world and comes to shape our thinking to the point that awareness of sophisticated, rationalist atheism becomes a component of common opinion. Even if we do not hold atheistic opinions, we remain aware of the modern tendency to regard Christianity as unscientific and as belonging to the past. These matters are so thoroughly a part of our thinking that when a pope repeats a German professor's fifty-year-old joke, without explanation, everybody gets it. We are aware that we live peaceably, side-by-side with atheists, many of whom base their atheism on modern science (or claim to do so). The Christian and the atheist agree on the reliability of the science that enables them both to conceive of the earth as a planet orbiting the sun and to travel by airplane or communicate by telephone.[7] Science unites us, even if our moral and religious beliefs, which we are accustomed to regard as personal or private, remain fundamentally opposed.[8] Our reliance on technology is only the most obvious way in which modernity shapes our common life. People who consider themselves un-modern or even anti-modern often do not realize the extent to

[7] Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, §30a: "Today the means of mass communication have made our planet smaller." It is not insignificant when a pope uses an astronomical term to designate the earth.

[8] It is not quite true to say this of some manifestations of Islam, which do seem to want to reject modern science and its manipulation of nature. But it does remain true that the contemporary Islamic opponents of the West acknowledge that there is no effective substitute for Western technology when they learn how to use and become reliant upon, for example, airplanes, the Internet, and plastic explosives detonated by cell phones.

which modernity, especially through common opinion, has shaped them before they have begun to reject it. The unreflective way in which very many people resort to modern understandings of rights or culture or history are simple manifestations of this. It goes without saying that ideas are not bad or false because they are modern any more than they are true or good because they are old. The point is that these ideas dominate our common discourse and thus tend to shape our thinking without our awareness. For all of us, taking critical distance from modernity in order to understand it is a matter of learning and of un-learning habits of mind. In a sense, then, the rationalist professor's joke is on all of us who get it. We are the ones who are under the sway, more or less, of the modern form of reason and we are more or less aware of that fact.

To return, now, from these matters to the Holy Father's use of this joke, we note that he seems to have taken no offense from it. He does not respond with a joke of his own at the expense of atheists.[9] Instead, he appropriates the joke to make an observation about the role of reason for believer and unbeliever alike: despite the serious and fundamental division between atheism and faith and despite the ridicule contained in the joke, the "profound sense of coherence within the universe of reason was not troubled" ("Faith," ¶1).[10] Precisely because believers and unbelievers can share laughter about the silly manner in which some pursue rationality we see that reason itself unites the believers and the atheists. Indeed, reason makes them the same. Reason is what they share and the medium in which they communicate with and understand one another, despite their profound differences. The sense of reason at issue here is more fundamental than the highly specialized form of scientific reason. One of the main goals of Benedict's speech is to recover some respect for this

[9] One could say that Benedict gently turns the lesson of the joke against people like its author. If the point of the joke is that those who exercise reason must not forget the condition of the possibility of the exercise of reason (lest they fall in a well, as it were), Benedict's concluding remarks issue the same cautionary warning without the mockery: "The West has long been endangered by this aversion to the questions which underlie its rationality, and can only suffer great harm thereby" ("Faith," ¶16). Virgil Nemoianu notes the same pastoral gentleness in Cardinal Ratzinger's exchange with Habermas. Cf. Nemoianu, "The Church and the Secular Establishment," *Logos* 9 (Spring 2006): 36–38.

[10] Pope Benedict interprets the joke generously and, since he was there and he knows the original speaker of these words, one must concede to him that no serious attack on the theology faculties lies within the joke. Nevertheless, in light of what the Holy Father goes on to say about the second stage of dehellenization ("Faith," ¶11–13 and ¶15–16), one must also recognize that some serious members of the "universe of reason" may in fact look forward to the withering away of theology from the university.

more basic sense of reason. Human beings are rational not only when we are scientific; we are rational also in the pre-scientific and ordinary use of reason. The Holy Father needs to appeal to this more fundamental level in order to indicate the path to overcoming the division between an Islamic extremist, a Christian believer, and a rationalist atheist.[11] Reasonableness makes all of us the same as one another. Moreover, as he argues in the first half of the speech, reasonableness makes us one with God. Benedict's argument requires the recovery of ordinary rationality and of the rational grasp of God.

The joke's role in this argument is ambiguous. As originally delivered, the joke appeals to common sense as informed by the specialized rationality of modern science. It both relies upon ordinary reason and exhibits the scientific depreciation of ordinary reason. As appropriated by the Holy Father, the joke serves a different purpose. Whereas the professor meant to disparage ordinary reason, the pope means to rehabilitate it as part of an attempt to rehabilitate the rationality of other non-scientific forms of reason, namely, philosophy and theology.[12] The first half of the speech is especially devoted to articulating the coherence of faith and philosophical rationality; the second half of the speech is especially devoted to showing that even modern science requires a philosophical form of reason. All of this is folded into the joke. Because of the way the joke implies the incompatibility of faith and reason, it serves to introduce each of the central ideas of the whole speech. We must admire the complexity Benedict has incorporated into such a simple joke.

Let us return once more to the speech itself and see how Benedict enters into the topic treated in the first half. He mentions this joke in the process of recollecting certain aspects of his days at the University of Bonn. It is not the experience of being at Regensburg and of being once again in the university atmosphere that calls up these recollections. The joke is not merely an amusing anecdote, marginally related to the central

[11] In his reply to this speech—"Ein Bewusstsein von dem, was fehlt über Glauben und Wissen und den Defaitismus der modernen Vernunft," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 10 February 2007—Jürgen Habermas disagrees with Benedict regarding what constitutes "common reason," but he agrees that that is the focal point: "Fides quaerens intellectum—so begrüssenswert die Suche nach der Vernünftigkeit des Glaubens ist, so wenig hilfreich scheint es mir zu sein, jene drei Enthellenisierungsschübe, die zum modernen Selbstverständnis der säkularen Vernunft beigetragen haben, aus der Genealogie der 'gemeinsamen Vernunft' von Gläubigen, Ungläubigen und Andersgläubigen auszublenden."

[12] See, for example, Benedict, "Faith," ¶15: "The intention here is not one of retrenchment or negative criticism, but of broadening our concept of reason and its application."

theme of the speech. Instead, he says, the recollections (including the joke) are called to mind by his reading of Professor Theodore Khoury's edition of a fourteenth-century dialogue, between a Byzantine emperor and an educated Persian, treating, among other matters, the relation between three laws (corresponding to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). The pope selects one point from the dialogue to begin his reflections on faith and reason: "[H]ere I would like to discuss only one point—which, in the context of the issue of 'faith and reason', I found interesting and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue" ("Faith," ¶2). The reflections concern the issue of faith and reason. The reflections take as their starting-point a remark by the emperor about the attempt to spread faith through violence. "Not acting reasonably (σὺν λόγῳ is contrary to God's nature. . . . Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats. . . . To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind."[13]

As a preliminary observation, it should be noted that, despite their being made in the context of the use of violence by members of a particular religious tradition, these claims are non-sectarian. Any religious attempt to use violence would serve the essential purpose here.[14] It should also be noted that the joke is equally non-sectarian. The joke could be made in the context of any theology faculty. The form of reasoning that ends in the joke begins with the dismissal of all faith as superstition. At this point, these considerations make it seem that the joke and the emperor's remarks contribute more or less equally to the identification of the theme of Benedict's reflections. Whereas the joke presents a modern form of tension between faith and reason, the emperor's words evoke the problem in a different way, which precedes modernity and yet remains with us today. Against the conception of God as utterly transcendent and unintelligible in his power, the Holy Father affirms the "profound harmony" ("Faith," ¶5) of the God of faith with human reason. At the same time, the Holy Father affirms the legitimacy of inquiry into God as a proper exercise of human reason, over against those

[13] The words quoted are those of the emperor. They appear in paragraph 3 of Benedict's speech. Benedict cites this source: Theodore Khoury, ed., "Manuel II Paléologue, Entretiens avec un Musulman. 7e Controverse," *Sources Chrétiennes*, n. 115, (Paris, 1966).

[14] It seems that for the pope's essential point about the relation of God, soul, faith, reason, and violence, the specific case of Islam is accidental. He might have chosen a different example to make the same point. That said, it does not seem to be accidental that, in present circumstances, he chose Islam.

who view all speech about God as belonging to myth ("Faith," ¶6) and as a failure to be rational.[15] He navigates between two poles, one that locates God far above human reason and one that locates God beneath. The focal point is the articulation of reason (1) against those who agree that God has revealed himself, but claim that God's revelation squelches rationality, and (2) against those who agree that human reason reveals to us the world, but claim that it reveals a world without God. The same focus on the proper grasp of reason can be framed negatively: (1) on the one hand, if reason genuinely were only the modern, shrunken form of reason, it might deserve condemnation in the name of God; (2) on the other hand, if God were understood as God is presented by those who use violence to spread belief, reason suggests or supports atheism.[16]

To address the substance of the emperor's claims, we note that Benedict uses two formulas to express the focal point, one negative and one positive. Negatively, he returns again and again to the thesis that "not acting reasonably" or "not acting with *logos*" is contrary to God's nature. Positively, Benedict asserts that God has revealed himself as *logos*. The conviction that acting unreasonably contradicts God's nature is, Benedict says, a Greek idea. The opening of the Gospel of John ("In the beginning was the *logos*"), Benedict says, pronounces "the final word on the biblical concept of God" ("Faith," ¶5). In view of the title and central assertion of his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, this is an extraordinary statement from Benedict. James Schall points in this direction when he writes, "Thus as the Pope's first Encyclical might be called 'Deus est *agape*,' so this lecture is 'Deus est *logos*.'"[17] Indeed, where the Regensburg speech tends to make the biblical and Greek view of God sound almost the same, the encyclical tends to emphasize the fact that the biblical or Christian view transcends the philosophical view: "The world of the Bible presents us with a new image of God" (*DCE*, §9).[18] Saying that God is love is not the same as saying that God is *logos*, even if it is true that God is both *logos*

[15] See Benedict, "Faith," ¶6. Benedict presents the biblical revelation of God as a challenge, analogous to the Socratic challenge, to mythical presentations of the divine. For the Socratic challenge see, for example, Plato's *Republic* 377e–391e.

[16] Compare Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. Florian Schuller, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 64–66.

[17] James Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture*, 123.

[18] Also in *Deus Caritas Est*, §11, Benedict writes, "The first novelty of biblical faith consists, as we have seen, in its image of God." Additionally, Benedict refers to Aristotle's thought as "the height of Greek philosophy," but notes that his view of God falls short of the biblical view precisely on the understanding of whether God is the object of love or himself a personal lover (ibid., §9).

and love. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict writes: "God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being; but this universal principle of creation—the *Logos*, primordial reason—is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love" (*DCE*, §10). Also, "The ancient world had dimly perceived that man's real food—what truly nourishes him as man—is ultimately the *Logos*, eternal wisdom: this same *Logos* now truly becomes food for us—as love" (*DCE*, §13). The thesis that God is good in himself and the thesis that God is benevolent toward human beings, whether taken separately or in combination, obviously are not equivalent to the thesis that God, in himself, is love. It has been revealed that God is love; this does not seem to be the sort of thing that might have been discerned by reason. It seems, rather, to require revelation (like the doctrine of the Trinity), since it concerns the inner life of God. The encyclical unambiguously preserves the difference between the pagan and the biblical understandings of God. This helps us avoid misreading the speech as if its emphasis on the congruity of philosophy and theology implied identical understandings of God. Perhaps when Benedict calls this the final word on the biblical concept of God, he understands *logos* as Word and as implying the doctrine of the Trinity. Obviously, if this is the case, the theological or biblical sense of *logos* exceeds the philosophical sense and yet Benedict can still assert that agreement obtains between the philosophical and theological understandings.

Thus Benedict is able to declare, "From the very heart of the Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: Not to act 'with *logos*' is contrary to God's nature" ("Faith," ¶6).[19] The careful formulation Benedict uses here preserves Greek thought and Christian faith as two distinct elements; it does not collapse their difference and fuse them into an identity, even when both faith and reason use the same formula to speak about God. Preserving the duality of Christian faith and Greek thought suggests that philosophy and theology coincide or agree in this thesis and yet it underscores the fact that they assert this thesis in two distinct ways. The Socratic critique of the irrationality of myth "stands in close analogy" to the biblical revelation and its "new understanding of God," which "separates this God from all other divinities" ("Faith," ¶6). Whereas the Socratic critique rejects the ignobility of the mythical gods from the standpoint of rationality, the biblical revelation goes deeper than the philosophical grasp of

[19] "Manuel II. hat wirklich aus dem inneren Wesen des christlichen Glaubens heraus und zugleich aus dem Wesen des Griechischen, das sich mit dem Glauben verschmolzen hatte, sagen können: Nicht 'mit dem Logos' handeln, ist dem Wesen Gottes zuwider."

the divine and yet confirms, in a way, the philosophical view that God is not against reason. Philosophic reason recognizes that irrationality is not worthy of God and yet does not and cannot attain to the content of revelation. God alone reveals himself as *logos* in a way that transcends every mythical presentation of the divine, every man-made idol, and even the divine nature grasped by the philosophers. Benedict speaks of a harmony here between the Greek philosophical idea and the biblical revelation that begins in the Old Testament and culminates in John's thesis. Philosophy and philosophy's distinctive manner of grasping this thesis are not simply absorbed into theology and the theological mode of grasping the divine with faith. "Harmony" between philosophy and theology requires them to remain distinct from one another. Philosophy retains its autonomy and integrity and, thus, its distinctive understanding, as a genuine achievement of reason.[20]

Reason and Science

The first eight paragraphs of the Regensburg speech are devoted mainly to this encounter of the Greek and biblical understandings of the divine. In the remaining eight paragraphs of the speech, the Holy Father traces the relation of Christian faith and human reason from what he identifies as an initial consonance in the recognition of the reasonableness of God and God's ways to the rejection of this integration and the effort to dehellenize Christianity. Benedict identifies three waves or stages in the project of dehellenization. He characterizes the first stage as part of the Reformation-era attempt to bypass philosophy and to eliminate rational metaphysics in order to return to faith rooted solely in Scripture ("Faith," ¶10). He gives only a brief mention of the contemporary, third stage of dehellenization, which he characterizes as the attempt to separate the Hellenistic culture surrounding the early Church from the simple and

[20] For a complete discussion of the distinction summarized here between the Christian sense of the divine and the sense of the divine evident to pagan philosophers and theologians, see Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), especially chapters 5 and 10, and *Christian Faith and Human Understanding*, especially chapters 1 through 4. Sokolowski emphasizes the "shift" in human thought that is required once we come to understand the sense of the divine required in Christian belief. Christian faith does not simply add to the understanding of God that is achieved by reason; Christian faith presents a new understanding of the divine, which, as a matter of historical fact, was simply not achieved apart from revelation (see *Deus Caritas Est*, §9). The achievements of reason independent of revelation are not negated, but appreciated anew in the context of a deeper understanding.

prior and presumably universal New Testament message ("Faith," ¶14). Benedict devotes by far the greater part of his remarks to the second stage of the dehellenizing process. To illustrate this stage, he singles out as its "outstanding representative" Adolf von Harnack, whose "goal was to bring Christianity back into harmony with modern reason, liberating it, that is to say, from seemingly philosophical and theological elements, such as faith in Christ's divinity and the triune God" ("Faith," ¶11). He meant to set theology in its rightful place within the university shaped by modern scientific reason. The "harmony" between faith and reason that would be the goal of this project mimics the harmony between faith and reason that emerged from the original and, in Benedict's view, providential encounter between the biblical message and Greek thinking ("Faith," ¶5). The original harmony obtained when a philosophically purified understanding of the divine nature was coordinated with the elevating message of Christian revelation; the new harmony attempts to rid theology of those elements that cannot be drawn down to a "self-limitation" (*Selbstbeschränkung*) ("Faith," ¶11) and "reduction" (*Verkürzung*) ("Faith," ¶12) of reason. The critique of this modern concept of reason is the Holy Father's target in the whole speech (see especially "Faith," ¶15). Modernity constricts reason, and then the second stage of dehellenization attempts to constrict faith to the standards laid down by the constricted form of reason. These standards are, according to Pope Benedict, Cartesianism (which he identifies as a form of Platonism) and empiricism ("Faith," ¶11).

The story of modernity remains complex and controversial; doubtless, there will be criticisms brought against his claim concerning the synthesis of these two poles of thought. There is need for a much fuller development of Benedict's understanding of the synthesis of Cartesianism and empiricism. At the present time, it is useful to add a few comments about modernity, even if they must remain brief and incomplete. Cartesianism, or Platonism, "presupposes the mathematical structure of matter, its intrinsic rationality, which makes it possible to understand how matter works and use it efficiently" ("Faith," ¶11). The empirical component is "nature's capacity to be exploited for our purposes, and here only the possibility of verification or falsification through experimentation can yield decisive certainty" ("Faith," ¶11). In these formulations, Cartesianism and empiricism are essentially epistemological in their focus. They express the relation between the soul, or mind, and nature, or matter. In order to understand the synthesis of these two elements, we note that their point of contact is the use or manipulation of nature. Modernity comes to light, then, as a search for certain knowledge of nature for the

sake of mastery. Benedict does not expressly say so, but it is possible to understand the synthesis of Cartesianism and empiricism in terms of this overarching goal of mastery. In this understanding, the mathematical conception of nature is not accidentally related to the goal of mastery. Instead, we recognize that the drive to master nature effectively requires that nature be conceived mathematically. The modern concept of nature, in Hans Jonas's memorable phrase, contains "manipulability at its theoretical core."[21] As Cartesianism and empiricism agree in the understanding of nature, so they agree in the concept correlative to nature: soul, or mind. Rationalists like Descartes and empiricists like John Locke, whatever else their differences, share to a certain extent what may be called the modern doctrine of the soul. According to this view, the soul is the principle of human knowledge, but it is not the form of the body and not the source of motion in the living body. Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, and Thomas Aquinas, to name a few important representatives of the premodern tradition, understood the soul to be the principle of human knowledge, but also the principle of vital motion in the body. The modern approach, by contrast, conceives *soul* essentially as a mind or ego or self, which remains problematically related to the human body.[22] The human body is understood to be one part of the larger material whole, called nature, the manipulable object of modern science.[23] Thus, the epistemological standards of modern thought (expressed in Cartesianism/Platonism and empiricism) can be understood to be intimately related to the modern goal of the mastery of nature.[24] Mastery of nature is pursued for the relief and benefit of man's estate, that is, with a humanitarian

[21] Hans Jonas, "Seventeenth Century and After: The Meaning of the Scientific and Technological Revolution," in *Philosophical Essays* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 48. The significance of the new concept of nature is stressed by Ratzinger in his dialogue with Habermas. See Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, 69–71. The separation of reason from nature is another way of expressing the distinction of soul, or mind, from body, or nature.

[22] This conception of soul explains why, in *Deus Caritas Est* (§5), Benedict finds it necessary to correct a prevalent misunderstanding and emphasize the union of soul and body in order to articulate the proper understanding of human erotic love.

[23] Cf. Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, 65.

[24] See Jacob Klein, "Modern Rationalism," *Lectures and Essays*, ed. Robert B. Williamson and Elliott Zuckerman (Annapolis, Md.: St. John's College Press, 1985), 53–64; Richard Kennington, "The 'Teaching of Nature' in Descartes's Soul Doctrine," *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1972): 86–117; Richard Kennington, "Descartes and Mastery of Nature," in *Organism, Medicine, and Metaphysics*, ed. Stuart F. Spicker (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1978), 201–23.

intention. And, according to the founders of modern thought, it is this beneficence, more than anything else, that distinguishes the modern form of reason from the pre-modern form.[25] The goal is to solve, through human agency, the troubles besetting human life. This humanitarianism arises in the image and likeness of the service of charity, but it is not charity. It is a this-worldly solution to this world's problems. It substitutes for the theological solution to original sin. At its heart, it is the modern origin of what, in *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict calls "social assistance." It is thus also unsurprising to see that the attempt to conform Christian revelation to modern scientific reason "would end up reducing Christianity to a mere fragment of its former self" ("Faith," ¶13).

Against this constriction of faith to a shrunken reason, Benedict proposes that faith and reason must come together "in a new way" ("Faith," ¶15). He deems it not enough to return to previous formulations and to repeat what was once adequate. It is not sufficient to declare that "truth does not contradict truth" and pronounce a blessing on modern science with naive optimism that, in the end, all it shows will prove to be in harmony with one's catechism. Modern science is a form of reason, but a constricted form. The second stage of dehellenization shows that some advocates of modern science do not rest content with coexistence alongside Christian faith. The second stage asserts or presupposes the illegitimacy of faith in the face of that form of reason. In this conflict, modern scientific reason, owing especially to its apparent confirmation in our reliance on the technology science generates ("Faith," ¶11), has tremendous rhetorical superiority over Christian faith for most people. Science is the authority we acknowledge in common by the way we live. Naive optimism that truth does not contradict truth is, in this context, akin to laying down one's arms and giving away the store, so to speak. Benedict himself takes up metaphorical (as opposed to real) arms to stake out and defend a broadened grasp of the role of reason in human life. The scientific form of reason must be given its due, but the broader claims of a more complete sense of reason must also be advanced.

> Consequently, we are faced with a reduction of the radius of science and reason, one which needs to be questioned.
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> . . . If science as a whole is this and this alone, then it is man himself who ends up being reduced, for the specifically human questions about our origin and destiny, the questions raised by religion and ethics, then have no place within the purview of collective reason as defined by

[25] See Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. G. W. Kitchin (London and Melbourne: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1973), 34–35.

> "science," so understood, and must thus be relegated to the realm of the subjective. ("Faith," ¶12–13)

Benedict's "critique of modern reason from within" (*Selbstkritik der modernen Vernunft*) ("Faith," ¶15), then, aims at the reinvigoration of a broader sense of human reason. The proper exercise of human reason does not begin with and is not to be identified with modern science. He wants to reassert the use of reason that precedes science and that helps us discover the need for science and establish the goals and methods of science. In our pre-scientific or extra-scientific lives, we properly exercise reason in non-scientific ways. As Robert Sokolowski has argued, we exert our rationality not only in traditional logical functions of judgment and inference, but also and most broadly in the introduction of syntax into our experience.[26] Reason is at work in all intelligent perception and in the formation of opinion. These sorts of exercises of reason prepare for the specialized form that is science, which never completely replaces the need for the original, intelligent encounter with the world. Pope Benedict is not only reminding us that modern science presupposes pre-scientific experience in the world. He is more fundamentally defending philosophy and theology as the proper forms of reason for addressing essential human questions, which arise necessarily from ordinary experience. He is defending them as proper forms of rational inquiry.

Theology, as "inquiry into the rationality of faith" ("Faith," ¶15), and philosophy, as inquiry into the rationality of ordinary human experience, belong in the university alongside modern science.[27] The rationality of philosophy and theology needs to be rearticulated in the context of modern science, over against the tendency to reduce all that precedes science and all that is not science to mere opinion, prejudice, or superstition ("Faith," ¶13). Descartes provides the paradigmatic expression of the attitude animating this tendency when he formulates his methodical doubt as the dismissal, as utterly false, of all opinions that can in the least be doubted. His subsequent re-admission of some of these opinions occurs on the terms of his rational method, which he brings forward as the sole arbiter of

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[26] See Sokolowski, "The Autonomy of Philosophy in *Fides et Ratio*," chapter 1 in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding*. See also his book *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[27] Again, it is important to preserve philosophy and theology as two forms of rational inquiry. The two may even consider the very same experiences as starting points, but they do so in different ways. "For philosophy and, *albeit in a different way*, for theology, listening to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular, is a source of knowledge" ("Faith," ¶16) [emphasis added].

truth and falsity.[28] It is undeniable, however, that Descartes's method and the argument he makes for its superiority to "the speculative philosophy of the schools" are themselves the fruit of a philosophical exercise of reason and not the fruit of scientific reason.[29] Science is a derivative form of human reason and we suffer great harm if we acquiesce to the widespread aversion to the non-scientific thinking that underlies scientific rationality ("Faith," ¶16). Benedict pursues this line of argument in his concluding paragraph. He locates the necessary origins of modern scientific reason in uses of reason more fundamental than science itself. Moreover, ultimate questions belong to "other modes and planes of thought—to philosophy and theology" ("Faith," ¶16). This kind of argument opens the way for those who are formed by modern science and respect its achievements to catch sight of the fact that science is not self-sufficient and cannot be exclusively the perfection of human reason.

Thus Benedict's speech is primarily philosophical. More precisely, in the name of theology he calls for the completion of what is essentially a philosophical task: "The courage to engage the whole breadth of reason, and not the denial of its grandeur—this is the programme with which a theology grounded in Biblical faith enters into the debates of our time" ("Faith," ¶16). His "self-critique of modern reason" ("Faith," ¶15) points to the need to draw in the claim of modern scientific reason to hold exclusive power to determine the true and the false and the need to expand our recognition of the range of reason's activities. Benedict's speech does not reject modern reason, but rationally displays that it represents a "reduction of the radius of science and reason" ("Faith," ¶12). He calls for us to re-create the logical space necessary for the philosophical exercise of reason, which space is closed off whenever the positivistic interpretation of reason dominates. This philosophical achievement also makes room for a genuinely rational theology. The completion of Benedict's proposal, then, requires us to articulate the proper character of philosophical reason such that it may be brought together with faith "in a new way" ("Faith," ¶15). The model for the new harmony is the original harmony identified by Benedict earlier in his speech ("Faith," ¶5–8). The new harmony cannot, however, be a simple repetition of old formulas. The old formulas will not hold the same power until we reinvigorate the philosophical exercise of reason in the contemporary context. The new way of bringing faith and reason together, consequently, also requires us to articulate a broadened concept of human reason that can acknowl-

[28] Compare Descartes's "First Meditation" with his "Sixth Meditation" in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

[29] Consider the first, second, and sixth parts of Descartes's *Discourse on Method*.

edge the achievement of modern science without being overwhelmed by the constriction of reason that has characterized the dominant interpretation of modern science.

Reason and Faith in Harmony

In the Regensburg speech Pope Benedict articulates the possibility of the harmonious interaction of faith and reason. In the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, he displays the harmonious exercise of faith and reason in the contemporary context. In the speech, Benedict carves out the space for theology and philosophy between an Islamic form of anti-reason and a scientific form of self-constrained reason. The emphasis in the speech falls on the poles against which he distinguishes the common and broader form of reason. In the encyclical, Benedict displays the co-operative relationship between philosophical and theological uses of reason. The final section of this essay draws attention to three ways in which our reason in its ordinary and its philosophical forms can function in harmony with Christian faith. What follows does not provide a summary or analysis of the doctrine of the entire encyclical, but only illustrates the relation of reason and faith discernible within it.

Reason as Preparatory for Faith

Just as the Regensburg speech concludes with the necessity of recognizing the activity of reason that precedes science, so the encyclical recognizes that reason operates prior to one's encounter with revelation. Indeed, the necessary exercise of reason and of philosophy prior to the emergence of science has a kind of parallel in the uses of reason that are presupposed by revelation and theology. Faith does not do away with the need for the natural and rational grasp of things. Instead, any effort to make the faith known must appeal to and draw upon the natural exercise of reason in order to make its content accessible. In the words of the Byzantine emperor, "Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats" ("Faith," ¶3). The soul's reasonableness precedes acceptance of the faith, and the one who spreads the faith must respect and appeal to this reasonableness. Without drawing explicit attention to it, Benedict carefully displays his awareness of this rhetorical situation.

One illustration, then, of harmony between reason and faith arises because our natural experience of the world and our understanding of that experience provide the basis for our understanding the content of divine revelation. As Benedict puts it, Christianity is not "detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence" and not "cut off from the

complex fabric of human life"; he goes so far as to say that philosophical reflections on that experience can bring us to the threshold of faith (*DCE*, §7). Our natural understanding of the world, especially as it is perfected in philosophical reasoning, can be preparatory for faith. If we cannot ascend by our own powers from ordinary experience to faith, revelation must descend to our level and be expressed with reference to that ordinary experience.[30] Thus, when it is revealed or when we are told, for example, that God is our father, we already have experience of and understanding of what fatherhood is. Whether our personal experience of fathers is good or bad, skewed or insightful, we know that there are good and bad fathers and we know something of what constitutes the excellence of a good father. This cognitive grasp of fatherhood precedes and conditions our access to what faith proposes about God as father. We understand, at first, the meaning of the revelation of God as father in light of our natural understanding of fatherhood and—apart from direct and miraculous illumination by God—our grasp of this revelation is limited by the imperfections of our knowledge of the natural meaning of fatherhood. The newly revealed theological teaching becomes accessible because of what we already know about fathers.

A similar thing happens when we try to understand the mystery of God's love and the statement that God is love. The explication of the theological meaning of love requires preliminary attention to the ordinary understanding of love: "we cannot simply prescind from the meaning of the word in the different cultures and in present-day usage" (*DCE*, §2). Thus, in the first part of the encyclical, the Holy Father emphasizes that the word *love* has many different meanings in human discourse, and he begins from this multiplicity of meanings (*DCE*, §2). About these multiple meanings, he asks essentially a philosophical question—whether love is one in form or many. Benedict tries to show that "the message of love proclaimed to us by the Bible and the Church's Tradition has some points of contact with the common human experience of love" (*DCE*, §7). God's revelation about love does not confront us with something wholly new, something completely alien from our experience, and Benedict emphasizes the "intrinsic link" between God's love and human love (*DCE*, §1). In addition to the human experience of love, there are whole schools of thought about what love is or means and what God is, and it is in this context that

[30] In the first paragraph of the encyclical, Benedict quotes the First Letter of John (4:16): "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us." In the very next sentence he writes, "*We have come to believe in God's love*: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life." The decision is necessarily preceded by some knowledge or understanding of what is to be accepted in faith.

God's revelation about love and about God as love appears. The Holy Father appeals not only to experience but especially to the authoritative opinions and thoughtful appropriations of that experience.[31] Revelation does not obliterate human reason and it does not teach something so unprecedented that we have to abandon what we already know about the world and human nature. Instead, revelation first draws from and then transcends our ordinary understanding of love and the philosophical reflections on that ordinary understanding.[32] Faith preserves the sphere in which natural human reason must be cultivated and perfected. In revelation we find the completion of reason, and we find unanticipated truths that are intelligible in their difference from what reason has disclosed already about nature. Just as our appreciation of divine paternity as first in itself never allows us to dispense with the understanding of the fatherhood that is first for us, so our understanding that God is love requires our thoughtful grasp of love as we meet with it naturally and as we grasp its several forms through reason and experience. This is one way in which philosophy assists theology; it helps prepare our understanding of the distinctively Christian as something that confirms reason and goes beyond it.

Reason as Self-Critical

Sometimes, instead of preparing us to grasp the content of revelation, our natural grasp of things becomes an obstacle to our acceptance of the faith. We have seen a prominent example of this in the Regensburg speech. The modern form of scientific reason presents a formidable obstacle to faith. Benedict's response to this is a "critique of modern reason from within" (*Selbstkritik der modernen Vernunft*) ("Faith," ¶15). As pope, as a religious leader, he advances an argument that takes part in the self-correction of reason. He does not simply condemn positivistic science in the name of faith. Instead, he makes a rational argument about the proper use of reason.[33] In the encyclical, we see another illustration in Benedict's recounting of an objection against Church teaching on charity. The objec-

[31] The very first footnote in the encyclical is to a text of Nietzsche, in which Nietzsche declares that Christianity has corrupted the natural understanding of *eros* (*Deus Caritas Est*, §3). Benedict appeals to a philosopher to make revelation clear.

[32] When Benedict presents the biblical view of God as both *logos* and love (discussed above), he adds: "*Eros* is thus supremely ennobled, yet at the same time it is so purified as to become one with *agape*" (*Deus Caritas Est*, §10).

[33] James Schall emphasizes this in his introduction to *The Regensburg Lecture* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2007): "We are not asked to 'believe' the Pope in some theologically technical sense of that noble word. We are asked rather to grasp his argument" (10). Again, "Thus, this whole lecture is based upon a sustained argument about reason" (16).

tion is raised in the name of justice as understood in Marxism (*DCE*, §26). Benedict introduces Marxism as insisting that the Church's charitable activity participates in the preservation of an unjust social order. Through the construction of a just society, Marxism aims to eliminate the need for charity, which, to the Marxist, seems to be an ineffective or deplorable substitute for justice. Benedict says, "There is admittedly some truth to this argument, but also much that is mistaken" (*DCE*, §26). He goes on to say both that Marxist claims about the solution to social problems have proven to be illusory and that there must be "dialogue with all those seriously concerned for humanity and for the world in which we live" (*DCE*, §27). The correction of the illusions of Marxist thought can be made authoritatively on the basis of revelation, but it is also important that this take place at the level of practical reason and political philosophy.[34] Benedict refers to the illusions, but the responsibility for achieving justice in the political order remains with practical reason and political philosophy. It does not become the responsibility of the Church's charitable activity to produce a just social order. In light of the faith, the pope urges a corrected exercise of practical reason.

This correction of reason does not involve replacing reason with something else. Faith does not supplant reason in any of its forms, as if faith could render mathematics or medicine or political thought unnecessary. The pursuit of justice as properly the function of practical reason is emphatically reaffirmed by the encyclical (*DCE*, §28). One could go so far as to say that the encyclical enjoins on us the rational pursuit of the question that animates Plato's *Republic*:

> The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now. But this presupposes an even more radical question: what is justice? The problem is one of practical reason; but if reason is to be exercised properly, it must undergo constant purification, since it can never be completely free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests.
>
> Here politics and faith meet. Faith by its specific nature is an encounter with the living God—an encounter opening up new horizons extending beyond the sphere of reason. But it is also a purifying

[34] Virgil Nemoianu ("The Church and the Secular Establishment," 17–42) makes a similar point in regard to Cardinal Ratzinger's approach to Habermas in their dialogue held in January 2004 and published, in English, as *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. Nemoianu writes: "Thus it appears that Joseph Ratzinger was wise to accept a sociohistorical level of reference, rather than to withdraw haughtily into the domain of dogmatic theology as had been often done in the past. Such a withdrawal inevitably closes a number of doors and raises perhaps insuperable difficulties to a genuine dialog" (34).

> force for reason itself. From God's standpoint, faith liberates reason from its blind spots and therefore helps it to be ever more fully itself. Faith enables reason to do its work more effectively and to see its proper object more clearly. (*DCE*, §28a)

This purification of reason urges that reason be reason. It does not add missing insights that are in principle inaccessible to reason. There are cases where revelation opens up an understanding of God or of love that does not appear to natural human reason. There, revelation takes us "beyond the sphere of reason." Here, Benedict claims that faith helps reason accomplish better the activities that are proper to the realm of human reason.[35] The inquiry into what justice is and the attempt to achieve justice in deed are tasks that belong to the secular realm ("the State"), and Benedict denies that the Church or religious leaders should usurp this function. The Church's role is limited to encouraging and assisting the political agents in their own proper activities. This means, among other things, that Benedict and the Church urge the pursuit of political life precisely as the achievement of practical reason and political philosophy, not as expressions of faith or the work of the Church. Political movements and forms of political thought like Marxism require a reasoned, philosophical response, not simply a theological one. The Church is not indifferent to the character of the political order, but she recognizes that the care of the political order does not belong to her, but requires the cultivation of reason.[36]

Much of the encyclical appeals to this self-critical form of reason. Just as we have seen that a central goal of the second part is to purify the desire for justice from its corruption into Marxism, it seems true to say that a central goal of the first part is to purify eros from its corruption into bodily eroticism. For example, in his response to the objection made by Nietzsche (that Christianity had poisoned eros) (*DCE*, §3), Benedict repeatedly emphasizes that the Christian confirmation of the goodness of the body is an attempt to heal and purify eros. He says that the merely

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[35] This is what was meant when we concluded the second section of this essay by saying that Benedict's Regensburg speech is primarily philosophical. It primarily aims to correct reason's grasp of reason's proper activity.

[36] There is need for additional reflection on the relation of the political community to the message of the Gospel. In particular, such reflection may help to explain why the Holy Father refers to God's wish to make all of humanity "a single family" (*Deus Caritas Est*, §19). In order to understand why he says it should be a single family—as distinct from, for example, a single political community—we require an intelligent grasp of the distinctions among forms of human association.

bodily or "biological" indulgence in *eros*, its reduction to "pure 'sex,'" amounts to a dehumanized and degraded manifestation of erotic love (*DCE*, §§4 and 5 *et passim*). The Christian approach is to "restore" *eros* to its proper and "authentic grandeur" (*DCE*, §5). It is not the theological meaning of eros that is at issue here, but the natural meaning of human sexual love. The restoration occurs when human beings recognize their nature as a union of body and soul and reject misinterpretations of their nature as either pure spirit or pure body. Benedict uses a brief anecdote concerning the philosopher Descartes and the scientist Gassendi to illustrate these mistaken views (*DCE*, §5). We note that the anecdote illustrates the modern doctrine of the soul discussed above. In the re-assertion of body-soul unity, Christian faith confirms and reinforces what natural reason first shows us about ourselves and urges that philosophy continue to do its own proper work. While it is possible to condemn bodily eroticism and materialist Marxism from the superior vantage point of divine revelation, it is also true that the proper exercise of reason can show the way to overcoming the defects of each of these misunderstandings of human nature. Benedict displays his understanding of the role of faith in facilitating just this corrected or purified exercise of reason.[37]

Reason as Preserving Distinctions

We saw that the first way in which philosophy harmonizes with faith involved preparing for the reception of the understanding revealed by God. In this third way, philosophy helps preserve the distinctiveness of what is revealed. It helps us recognize that faith really is different from what reason shows us. For example, a clear understanding of pagan accounts of divinity

[37] In addition to the examples discussed in this paragraph, it is worth noting that certain formulations in the encyclical suggest Benedict is pointing subtly to various philosophical errors. For example, he writes, "When we consider the immensity of others' needs, we can, on the one hand, be driven towards an ideology that would aim at doing what God's governance of the world apparently cannot: fully resolving every problem" (*Deus Caritas Est*, §36). Contrast John Stuart Mill: "Yet no one whose opinion deserves a moment's consideration can doubt that most of the great positive evils of the world are in themselves removable, and will, if human affairs continue to improve, be in the end reduced within narrow limits. Poverty, in any sense implying suffering, may be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society combined with the good sense and providence of individuals." Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979), 14. In another case, it would be interesting to investigate whether Benedict's treatment of the possibility of a commandment to love (see *Deus Caritas Est*, §§14 and 16–18) is or is not meant to correct Kant's thesis: "Love as an inclination cannot be commanded." Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis White Beck (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1997), 15.

permits us to appreciate what is distinctive in the Christian sense of God. However similar Greek philosophical accounts might seem to the Christian account, the God who freely creates out of nothing is genuinely different from any understanding of God arrived at by the philosophers. Recognizing these differences helps us to see that Christian faith is not just one more religion alongside the others (*DCE*, §§9 and 11).[38] In the first way, then, reason or philosophy prepares for theology by helping us to understand natures before we articulate the Incarnation, by helping us to understand opinion before we articulate faith, and by helping us to understand signs before we articulate the sacraments as effective signs of grace. In the third way, we use philosophical understanding to prevent the misunderstanding of the Incarnation as a kind of hybridization, of faith as just another opinion, or of the sacraments as ordinary reminders or symbols of absent things. Philosophy helps preserve the distinction and resist the reduction of Christian mysteries to simpler, natural understandings. Unless we resist it, our grasp of the natural order inclines us to reinterpret divine things in a merely natural way. This pull toward the earth and earthly meanings continues to exist even for believers. As we become familiar with Christianity we are liable to forget how strange it is and how much it requires us to transcend our ordinary grasp of things. The robust exercise of philosophical reason can preserve the otherness of faith to reason.

One important example of this tendency and its correction on display in the encyclical has already been touched upon to some extent. The preference for earthly justice to divine charity may be traced at least as far back as Judas, when he objected to the anointing of the Lord's feet (John 12:4–5). This objection, that there is nothing more important than the elimination of worldly sorrows, has never really and finally gone away. The urge toward an idealized, material equality as justice seems to belong to human nature. At any rate, it is repeatedly necessary to avoid confusing Christian charity, understood as service, especially to the poor, with its look-alike, mere humanitarianism or "social assistance" (*DCE*, §31) or humanitarianism. The possibility of this mistake is evidenced by Julian the Apostate. He tried to initiate a pagan "equivalent" to the Christian service of charity (*DCE*, §24). One can perhaps produce, in parallel to the Church's charity, a secular system of "social assistance" such that the two operations yield identical material results. Both activities would be recognizably good, but Christian charitable activity is always something more

[38] Additionally, this awareness of the contrast between the Christian and the pagan senses of divinity helps us to think about the emperor's rejection of the God of Islam. To speak of a God that exceeds *logos* is to speak of a different God. This insight helps us recognize that not every form of faith is faith in the same sense.

than its material manifestation. The service of charity is always for the sake of something beyond the worldly good it accomplishes. Its meaning is not limited to and its success is not defined by the degree to which it eliminates worldly evils. The inability to understand this sort of distinction leads to a corruption of charity.[39] Even some Christians seem to believe that charity is nothing more than faith-based "social assistance" (*DCE*, §31). They allow their natural desire to eliminate human suffering (see *DCE*, §20) to overwhelm their understanding of the full good of human beings. This leads to the inability to recognize that there are evils worse than bodily suffering, with the result that they come to think the proper Christian attitude is to eliminate all forms of suffering by any available means. The practical consequences of this confusion appear when people come to think that the Church must advocate condom use in response to AIDS or that physician-assisted suicide provides genuine relief of suffering. Often we take it for granted that Christian faith must agree with what makes sense to us rationally. Sometimes, however, as was articulated in the previous section, the faith points to a correction of reason. On other occasions, the faith also requires us to transcend reason and to recognize something higher. Thus Christian faith articulates an understanding of the role of suffering that goes beyond philosophical reason. Clear recognition of the difference between "social assistance" and charity preserves the distinctiveness of the Christian response to suffering.

The key to exercising reason in this role is attending to and preserving what may appear to be small differences between the faith and our natural understanding. In the Regensburg speech, one such small difference comes to light through what appears to be a misquotation or mistaken paraphrase of Plato's *Phaedo*. The apparent impossibility of removing controversy and disagreement from philosophical arguments has always led some to want to dismiss philosophy altogether. Plato's dialogue presents characters frustrated with confusion by the arguments they are considering. Benedict attributes the following statement to Socrates ("Faith," ¶16):

> It would be easily understandable if someone became so annoyed at all these false notions that for the rest of his life he despised and mocked all talk about being, but in this way he would be deprived of the truth of existence and would suffer a great loss.

[39] See Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 4–8 and 34–35. Bacon articulates a kind of scientific humanitarianism that preserves the use of the word "charity," but not the meaning. Once again, because of the connection to mastery of nature, the humanitarian goal of modern philosophy is of tremendous significance for the Regensburg speech.

A more literal and complete translation of the text runs as follows:

> "Then, Phaedo," he said, "his condition would be a pitiable one if, when there was in fact some argument that was true and stable and capable of being detected, somebody—through his associating with the very sort of arguments that sometimes seem to be true and sometimes not—should not blame himself or his own artlessness but should end up in his distress being only too pleased to push the blame off himself and onto the arguments, and from that moment on should finish out the rest of his life hating and reviling arguments and should be robbed of the truth and knowledge of the things that *are*."[40]

Plato places in the mouth of Socrates an exhortation to avoid the error of misology; the exhortation borders on accusing those who hate philosophical discourse of embracing a great evil.[41] It is a sin that consists in ignorance and the rejection of the means to its remedy. Benedict recasts Socrates's statement as an exculpation and almost as an expression of forgiveness. As Benedict sees it, there is forgiveness for those who fail in this serious task. When the horizon of faith transcends the boundaries of reason, the work of reason itself must be re-appraised in this new light.

In *Deus Caritas Est*, another instance of this sort of contrast between natural understanding and Christian faith comes to light when we attend to the fact that Benedict singles out eros as the form of love that is most suitable for expressing the teaching that God is love. Erotic or sexual love is the first form of human love that Benedict speaks of at length (*DCE*, §3). He highlights it as the form that is especially useful for bringing out the meaning of divine love. It is not the only form he might have chosen. The example of Aquinas alone is enough to show that friendship might have been used to explicate charity. Benedict himself points to the importance of friendship in the following way. Near the end of section 12, he identifies the contemplation of the pierced side of Christ as the way to understand the truth that God is love, which is the starting-point of the encyclical and, he says, the point from which to begin defining love. But, as we learn in §19, the character of this love is *friendship*, which

[40] The translation is from Plato's *Phaedo*, trans. Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Newburyport, Mass.: Focus Classical Library, 1998), 68 (at 90c8–d7). In this translation, the four uses of "argument" correspond to four uses of forms of λόγος. For the Greek original, see Plato's *Phaedo*, ed. John Burnet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911). Benedict's citation runs as follows: "Cf. 90 c–d. For this text, cf. also R. Guardini, *Der Tod des Sokrates*, 5th edition, Mainz-Paderborn 1987, pp. 218–21."

[41] "'[F]or it's not possible,' he said, 'for anybody to experience a greater evil than hating arguments.'" Plato's *Phaedo*, trans. Eva Brann, 67 (at 89d2–3)).

is identified by the reference in this passage to John 15:13: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." It is not that Christ was slain that is indicated by the pierced side, but that he had laid down his life for friends. Friendship is central for Benedict. This forces the question upon us: why does Benedict not devote more attention to friendship?

The answer to this question appears from a consideration of what Benedict does say about friendship. He mentions "love between friends" among the initial senses of the meaning of the word, but it "fades" from prominence, along with "love of work" and "love of one's profession," in comparison to "the very epitome of love," that between man and woman (*DCE*, §2). It does not seem to be accidental that friendship recedes into the background. Benedict appeals to three New Testament words for love: *eros*, *philia* (the love of friendship), and *agape* (*DCE*, §3). In the next few pages, Benedict reduces these three to "two fundamental words: *eros*, as a term to indicate 'worldly' love and *agape*, referring to love grounded in and shaped by faith" (*DCE*, §7). Indeed, the title of the section in which he identifies the three New Testament terms for love mentions only *eros* and *agape*. Articulating the proper unity of these *two* dimensions in the one reality of love (see *DCE*, §§7, 8, and 10) is the focus of the first part of the encyclical. What happened to friendship? It has not been simply excluded, but invested with a new meaning. Benedict points out that the love obtaining between Jesus and the disciples is friendship, but it is friendship "with added depth of meaning" (*DCE*, §3). The pierced side of Christ (*DCE*, §12) shows us that Christ's love for his disciples is expressed in an act of self-oblation and the Eucharist draws us into this act (*DCE*, §13). "This sacramental 'mysticism' is social in character, for in sacramental communion I become one with the Lord, like all the other communicants. . . . Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself" (*DCE*, §14). The result is that the commandment to love others is "now universalized" and embraces all mankind as neighbors (*DCE*, §15). "The parable of the Good Samaritan remains as a standard which imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter 'by chance' (cf. Lk 10:31), whoever they may be" (*DCE*, §25b). In this light, Jesus' love for his disciples comes to be, not the singling out of his preferred companions, but a few instances of Jesus' universal love for all mankind. Needless to say, such universal love is not something Aristotle, at least, understood among the many forms of friendship. In Benedict's presentation of the commandment to love all human beings, there is little or no room for the selectivity of the ordinary form of human friendship. Benedict seems to assert as much in the paragraph concluding the first part of the encyclical.

> Love of neighbour is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed by the Bible, by Jesus. It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend. (*DCE*, §18)

This does not seem to be a rejection of the natural phenomenon of friendship, but the addition of a new sense of friendship that far transcends the ordinary meaning. Benedict does not begin with ordinary friendship and extend to this new meaning. He begins with erotic love and articulates only this highest and universal friendship. It would be interesting to see this account of friendship developed more fully and related to the ordinary understanding of friendship, which Benedict mentioned at the beginning. We are left wondering what place remains for ordinary friendship within the context of the universal command of love. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the manner in which Benedict uses the word "friendship" in this encyclical often has this theological or universal meaning, but only our awareness of the natural or philosophical understanding helps us recognize the distinctiveness of Benedict's sense of friendship, which seems to be what he means when he refers to the "added depth of meaning" belonging to this term in John's Gospel (*DCE*, §3).

Conclusion

The three modes of reason operating in harmony with faith should not be conceived as rigorously separate from one another. We separate them mostly in order to be able to clarify the complexity of the harmonious co-operation between faith and reason, but it is hard to imagine that any one of them could operate in full independence of the others. The important claim is that our reason is necessarily active when we encounter the faith for the first time or when we try to deepen our grasp of it and that faith calls for "the right use of reason" ("Faith," ¶1). In the best case, reason or philosophy makes familiar to us the natural realities in relation to which the propagation of the faith takes place. In another case, faith urges the correction of reason in order to eliminate philosophical errors that stand as competitors against faith. In a third case, the philosophical use of reason helps to prevent the distinctiveness of faith from sinking back into a merely natural account of things.

In light of the Regensburg speech, a corrected understanding of reason itself seems to be what Benedict thinks we need most urgently. Whereas

dependence on the natural exercise of reason and on ordinary opinion had been recognized by philosophical reason at least since Socrates, modern science begins with a rejection of ordinary opinion and of the non-scientific exercise of reason. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this posture toward ordinary, non-scientific human intelligence. The dominance of science as the authoritative and sole proper use of reason tends to exclude other forms of reason as illegitimate and extra-scientific questions as unanswerable or meaningless. In this way, science tends to exclude the possibility of philosophy and theology and faith itself. From another direction, some conceptions of God as beyond human reason tend to exclude the possibility of any solid reliance on our reason. Benedict's speech aims to recover the significance of the ordinary form of reason as the unifying element that underlies all developed forms of reason: theology and philosophy as well as science. Benedict's speech presents an argument that some forms of faith or theology on the one hand and some forms of modern scientific rationalism on the other can be recognized as deficient by reference to the ordinary form of reason and its philosophical exercise. This is possible only if we take ordinary human rationality seriously. Consequently, the goal of the speech is to reinvigorate this sense of rationality in order to pave the way for the harmonious interaction of reason with faith. Pope Benedict, then, attempts to defend a broadened understanding of reason against both Islam and modern scientific rationalism, with a view to making intelligible the harmony of faith and reason. NV