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Radical Orthodoxy as *Suspended Middle*[1]

Radykalna ortodoksja jako *suspended middle*

Abstract: The article addresses the central ideas of radical orthodoxy. It has been emphasised that the criticism of modern paradigms and rethinking of the Christian tradition connect with the radical return to orthodoxy. The main ideas behind the movement are presented in the form of a juxtaposition of affirmations of orthodox beliefs together with the dangerous consequences of their abandonment. The results of the departure from the concept of patricipation, which is central to radical orthodoxy, are shown with pointing to the heritage of John Duns Scotus that opens space for the misunderstood autonomy of creatures and the dangerous concept of *natura pura*. Reference was also made to the legacy of Henri de Lubac, which the supporters of the movement interpret most thoroughly and which they want to develop. The author of *Surnaturel* is also interested in the understanding of humanism and the relationship between theology and philosophy. Suspended middle, a term used by Hans Urs von Balthasar, which later became the title of John Milbanek's book on de Lubac, seems to be the best self-characteristics of the movement. At the end of the article, the author puts forward a thesis that the authors' call for radical orthodoxy towards post-conciliar Catholic theology can be compared to the contribution of the Second Council of Constantinople to Christology. In both cases, it is a matter of emphasising unity and rejecting all harmful 'Nestorian' duality.

Keywords: radical orthodoxy, John Milbank, rationalism and fideism, secularism, participatory metaphysics, Scotist rupture, *natura pura*, Henri de Lubac, relations between theology and philosophy, *suspended middle*

Abstrakt: W artykule podjęto się zaprezentowania centralnych idei radykalnej ortodoksji. Podkreślono, że radykalny powrót do ortodoksji jest związany z krytyką nowożytnych paradygmatów, a także z przemyśleniem samej tradycji chrześcijańskiej. Główne idee ruchu przedstawiono w formie zestawienia afirmacji ortodoksyjnych przekonań z niebezpiecznymi konsekwencjami ich porzucenia. Ukazano skutki odejścia od centralnej dla radykalnej ortodoksji koncepcji partycypacji, wskazując na dziedzictwo Jana Dunsa Szkota otwierające przestrzeń dla źle rozumianej autonomii stworzeń oraz niebezpiecznej koncepcji natura pura. Odniesiono się także do spuści-zny Henriego de Lubaca, którą zwolennicy ruchu odczytują w najbardziej radykalny sposób i którą chcą rozwijać. W zagadnieniu interesującym autora *Surnaturel* kryje się także problem pojmowania humanizmu oraz relacji między teologią a filozofią. Suspended middle, określenie użyte przez Hansa Ursa von Balthasara, które stało się następnie tytułem książki Johna Milbanka poświęconej de Lubacowi, wydaje się najlepszą autocharakterystyką ruchu. W zakończeniu artykułu autor stawia tezę, że wezwanie kierowane przez autorów spod znaku radykalnej ortodoksji w stronę posoborowej teologii katolickiej wolno porównać do wkładu II Soboru w Konstantynopolu w chrystologię. W obu przypadkach chodzi o akcent na jedność i odrzucenie wszelkich szkodliwych dualizmów „nestoriańskich".

Słowa kluczowe: radykalna ortodoksja, John Milbank, racjonalizm i fideizm, sekularyzm, metafizyka partycypacji, skotystyczne zerwanie, *natura pura*, Henri de Lubac, relacje teologii z filozofią, *suspended middle*

Introduction

The beginnings of radical orthodoxy (hereinafter referred to as RO) date back to the early 1990s. The following names are mentioned among the movement's inaugurators: John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward.[2] Undoubtedly, the first of them should be regarded as the *spiritus movens* of this large-scale project, which has already gained so much influence in the Anglo-World that even critics cannot ignore its significance.[3] Today, under the banner of the movement initiated by Anglican thinkers, there are also

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[2] I consciously use the term 'movement', even though the inaugurators refrain from calling RO 'school' or 'movement' and instead they propose to speak of 'theological sensibility' or 'spirit' – cf. J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy. Mapping a Post-secular Theology*, Grand Rapids 2004, p. 70.

[3] *Radical Orthodoxy: a conversation*, R. Shortt (ed.), (hereinafter: ROR-C), [in:] *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (hereinafter: ROR), J. Milbank, S. Oliver (eds.), New York 2009, p. 28; J.J. Milbank, *The grandeur of reason and the perversity of rationalism: Radical Orthodoxy's first decade* (hereinafter: ROR-A), [in:] ROR, p. 367; J. Milbank, S. Oliver, Z. Lehmann Imfeld, P. Hampson, *Interview and Conversation with John Milbank and Simon Oliver. Radical Orthodoxy and Christian psychology I – theological underpinnings* (further: ROCP), "Edification. The Transdisciplinary Journal of Christian Psychology" 6 (2012), z. 1, p. 61.

Protestants and Catholics, with those who converted to the Catholic Church under the influence of RO among them.[4]

Milbank's provocative and widely discussed publication *Theology and Social Theory*, published in 1993, is considered a foundation for the movement.[5] The author questions the idea that theology modelled on other disciplines having their research areas would move only in its proper narrow area of competence. Theology is rather a matter of the way of looking at literally everything through the prism of revelation. Social sciences, on the other hand, turn out to be adopting theological, or rather antitheological, assumptions.[6] In turn, the year 1999, in which the collective work entitled *Radical Orthodoxy. A New Theology*[7] was published, is regarded as the contractual date inaugurating the movement. In this collection of essays, one can find the kind of intellectual sensibility that will become characteristic of RO.[8]

Although RO as "international influence also increases at a rapid rate,"[9] in Poland, this movement seems to have been going almost unnoticed so far. There are single references to John Milbank,[10] and the phenomenon has been

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[4] Cf. T. Rowland, *Catholic Theology* (hereinafter: CT), London–Oxford–New York–New Delhi–Sydney 2017, p. 125.

[5] I'm using the second edition: J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason*, Oxford 2006 (further: TST).

[6] Cf. S. Oliver, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: from participation to late modernity* (hereinafter: ROR-I), [in:] ROR, p. 3; idem, *Krótki kurs radykalnej ortodoksji* (A short course in radical orthodoxy), transl. K. Kleczka, "Znak" 7–8 (2010), pp. 21–43; ROR-C, p. 30.

[7] I use the second edition: *Radical Orthodoxy. A New Theology* (hereinafter: RONT), J. Milbank, C. Pickstock, G. Ward (eds.), London–New York 2002.

[8] CT, p. 125.

[9] ROR-A, p. 367.

[10] Cf. e.g.: A. Persidok, *Paradoks w teologii według Henri de Lubaca* (Paradox in Theology by Henri de Lubac), "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 2 (2015), pp. 100–117; J. Gużyński, *Między teorią prywacyjną a teorią zła radykalnego. Johna Milbanka krytyka pozytywnej ontologii zła* (Between the theory of initiation and the theory of radical evil. John Milbank's criticism of the positive ontology of evil), "Ethos" 1 (2019), pp. 103–121; P. Mazanka, R. Tomanek, *Refleksje o „Radykalnej ortodoksji" Johna Milbanka. Sprawozdanie z konferencji „Belief and metaphysics", 15–18 September 2006, Spain, Granada* (Reflections on John Milbank's "Radical Orthodoxy". Report of the conference "Belief and Metaphysics"), "Studia Philosophiae Christianae" 2 (2007), pp. 226–233 (the same repeated in: P. Mazanka, *Refleksje o „radykalnej ortodoksji" Johna Milbanka* [Reflections on John Milbank's radical orthodoxy], "Sosnowiec Theological Studies" 8 [2007], pp. 361–367); M. Suskiewicz, *Recenzja książki: J. Milbank, Beyond Secular Order* (Book Review: J. Milbank, Beyond Secular Order), "Przegląd Tomistyczny" 20 (2014), pp. 294–303.

sacrificed in "Znak" magazine.[11] However, in strictly scientific publications, it is difficult to find articles presenting the main RO ideas.[12] Some references are likely to be found in monographs; I only came across such references in Robert J. Woźniak's book.[13] In this article, I would like to make up for this lack by presenting the basic features of RO approach and indicating the issues requiring further research. The interest in RO concept may turn out to be creative for Polish theology, especially since the representatives of the movement enter into a discussion, sometimes critical, with Catholic theologians.

Many publications under the RO label forced the limited scope of the research. Assuming that the works of the movement creator and leader will be the most representative, I use them first of all, which, due to the scale of the issues raised by the movement, still required a further narrowing of the spectrum. On the other hand, Simon Oliver, a professor at the University of Durham associated with RO, shows a talent for clear promotion of basic ideas of RO and he became a compass for me, enabling me to break through the dense, full of incredibly erudite references, hermetic style of Milbank. The *Radical Orthodoxy Reader*[14] also provides general orientation. Also, the interviews, which both professors gave, allow for catching the issues crucial for RO[15]. From the extensive material, I finally choose those issues which both reflect the character of RO thinking and are a good starting point for further research conducted by a Catholic theologian.

It should be remembered that whenever I present interpretations of source texts by such thinkers as John Duns Scotus, Thomas of Aquinas, and Henri de Lubac, they come from supporters of the movement. In the article, I abandon

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[11]   Cf. numbers: (2010) no. 7–8, (2010) no. 9 and (2011) no. 11. The first of these numbers indicates other publications that I have not been granted access yet: S. Duda, *Między Chrystusem a Antychrystem, czyli radykalny ortodoks chrześcijański spotyka lewicę* (Between Christ and Antichrist, or radical Christian Orthodoxy meets the Left) (the text was published in "Krytyka polityczna"); ibidem, *Logos pojednania* (Logos of reconciliation), [in:] *Chrześcijaństwo przed nami* (Christianity before us), J. Makowski, J. Salamon (eds.), Krakow 2008.

[12]   See: Bibliografia Nauk Teologicznych (Bibliography of Theological Sciences) FIDES, http://biblio.fides.org.pl [access: 15.09.2019].

[13]   R.J. Woźniak, *Przyszłość, teologia, społeczeństwo* (Future, theology, society), Krakow 2007 (in particular pp. 149–152).

[14]   ROR; J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy...*, op. cit. is also an in-depth introduction.

[15]   It is also worth recommending the slightly more popular RO recordings from the *Theologians in Conversation* series published by the University of Nottingham and St. Johns Timeline, available on YouTube.

critical assessment of RO's reading of philosophical and theological legacy, but it is worth adding that historians of ideas put forward severe reservations about the way of reading and interpreting the sources made by writers under the aegis of RO.[16]

Catholic orthodoxy and heresy of modernity

The common denominator of the authors under the RO sign "is a return to thinking from the depths of Christian traditions and concepts," which in turn becomes "an instrumentarium of entering a creative and inconspicuous dialogue with contemporaneity."[17] According to the movement originators, it remains faithful to the Christian tradition, with emphasis on the patristic period and the Middle Ages. RO intends to reaffirm Christianity, which has been gradually losing its importance since the Middle Ages. In this sense, the term 'orthodox' would also mean "crossing confessional boundaries" so as not to be distorted by Protestant biblicism on the one hand and post-Tridentine Catholicism on the other. Moreover, its radicalism appears in the postulated need to rethink tradition in search of its weak points, which throughout history paved the way for the collapse of the Christian tradition.[18] If only Christian orthodoxy can bring a solution to contemporary problems, then today's condition can become an opportunity to rethink the Christian faith.[19]

Catholic orthodoxy recovery

RO cannot be pigeonholed either in liberal theology or in the conservative camp. Liberal theology is criticized for using philosophical categories developed from the assumption that philosophy has its own autonomy and, regardless of faith,

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[16] There is no shortage of publications critical of proposals of RO. To name but a few: *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy. Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric and Truth*, W.J. Hankey, D. Hedley (eds.), Aldershot 2005; *The Poverty of Radical Orthodoxy*, L. Isherwood, M. Zlomislic (eds.), Eugene 2012; D.P. Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity. A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy*, Minneapolis 2014; R. Cross, *Where Angels Fear to Tread. Duns Scotus and Radical Orthodoxy*, "Antonianum" 1 (2001), pp. 7–41.

[17] R.J. Woźniak, *Radykalna ortodoksja: próba opisu* (Radical orthodoxy: an attempt at description), "Znak" 7–8 (2010), p. 16.

[18] Cf. J. Milbank, G. Ward, C. Pickstock, *Introduction. Suspending the material: the turn of radical orthodoxy* (hereinafter: RO-I), [in:] RONT, p. 2.

[19] ROR-I, p. 24.

can speak of any being, including God. However, since philosophical reason knows God only to a certain extent, the theological discourse, reserving for itself a deeper understanding of God as Creator and Redeemer, should take over from the philosophical discourse. The problem with the methodology is the use of philosophical categories, and the right to their legitimacy and adequacy evaluation is lost at the same time.[20] If the philosophy is to determine, as does it the neo-orthodox with Barth at the forefront, what it means to be or to know, then it will inevitably also specify how we can know Christ. If theology does not redefine the understanding of being and knowledge, then God's radical otherness will have to be expressed in finite human categories, which is an idolatrous reduction.[21]

By giving methodological priority or even exclusivity to the fullness of revelation in Christ, neo-orthodoxy uses in its reflection only the categories of proper theologies. In this way, however, he renounces the mission of influencing the philosophical notions of being, knowledge or action. In a sense, Barth was in favour of a modern understanding of philosophy, in opposition to which he could too hastily recognize that natural reason does not say anything significant about God. What matters is faith itself, as soon as God reveals God.[22] Barth's assumption that Post-Kant philosophy that frees theology to be genuinely theological is, therefore, a danger: "The inner truth of his theology is that by allowing legitimacy to a methodologically atheist philosophy, he finishes by construing God on the model, ironically, of man without God."[23]

Along with a misunderstanding of the role of liturgical mediation, Barth also abandons the ancient theory of analogy and participation, which is still operative and makes it possible to transcend the division between reason and faith and thus invalidate both pure rational foundations for faith and fideism.[24] Ultimately, Protestant neo-orthodoxy focused only on biblical and ecclesial discourse reduced Christian thought to a fideistic ghetto.[25]

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[20] Por. RO-I, p. 4; J. Milbank, *Knowledge. The theological critique of philosophy in Hamann and Jacobi* (hereinafter: RO-K), [in:] RONT, p. 21.

[21] RO-K, pp. 21–22.

[22] Ibidem, p. 21.

[23] Ibidem, p. 22.

[24] ROR-A, pp. 370, 372; cf. A. Skowronek, *Niedokończona symfonia*, [in:] *Leksykon wielkich teologów XX/XXI wieku* (Unfinished symphony, [in:] Lexicon of great theologians of the 20th/21st century), vol. 1, J. Majewski, J. Makowski (eds.), Warsaw 2003, p. 23.

[25] ROR-C, p. 38.

Against rationalism and fideism

RO wants to look from a different perspective, consistent with the medieval understanding of the relationship between cognition and faith. Revelation is not seen in it as a "bolt from the blue," because even if it entails a specific illumination of the mind, frequently connected with the external events of salvation history, it is still in continuity with the process of ordinary reasoning, which is in fact never separated from any form of illumination. All human knowledge is a synthesis of external and internal light, and Revelation is an intensification of human reasoning.[26]

> (…) in the Church Fathers or the early scholastics, both faith and reason are included within the more generic framework of participation in the mind of God: to reason truly one must be already illumined by God, while revelation itself is but a higher measure of such illumination, conjoined intrinsically and inseparably with a created event which symbolically discloses that transcendent reality, to which all created events to a lesser degree also point.[27]

The idea of participation enables Milbank the rejection of choice between fideism on the one hand and foundationalism of reason on the other. Both human reason and faith participate in the Divine mind so that the continuity between them ought to be recognised. In this sense, reason always needs faith, and faith goes hand in hand with the use of reason.[28] Since both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation found themselves in danger of departing from the traditionally Catholic point of view,[29] Milbank has an undisguised affection for the Protestant thinkers among the "radical pietists." Johann Georg Hamann and Franz Heinrich Jacobi, who are in question, discover in the RO creator's opinion a more traditional Catholic thought than not only Protestantism but also post-Tridentine Catholicism.[30]

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[26] ROR-C, p. 39. Unfortunately, the later theology following Suárez, having lost the framework of participation, recognised positive data in Revelation, additional in a way to human knowledge. In such manner, however, both the possibility of ungodly reason and the arbitrariness of Revelation were acknowledged – cf. RO-I, p. 5; J. Montag, *The False Legacy of Suárez*, [in:] RONT, pp. 49–58; G. O'Collins, *Revelation. Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-revelation in Jesus Christ*, Oxford 2016, p. 4.

[27] RO-K, p. 24.

[28] ROCP, p. 60.

[29] ROR-C, p. 39.

[30] RO-K, p. 25.

The search for "theological difference"

The main representatives of RO would like to recover the ontology and philosophy corresponding to Christian doctrine. Without it, theology is under threat of uncritical acceptance of philosophical or cultural knowledge burdened with secularism. Although RO has much in common with Barthian neo-orthodoxy, what differs it from Karl Barth is that it considers various forms of mediation, rejected by a Calvinist theologian focused solely on exegesis. RO as anti-liberal radical orthodoxy wants to be more mediating but less accommodating than neo-orthodoxy. It is assumed here that theology should also talk about something else and seek what can be called a theological difference in everything.[31]

As long as theology does not carry a coherent vision of the whole world, it begins to speak only of the Church and then expresses itself in what Scottish theologian and philosopher Donald MacKinnon called "ecclesial fundamentalism." Without a Christian way of reading history and acting in society, Christian faith remains unconvincing, and spirituality reduced to religious beliefs and practices corresponds to a secular perception of nature and society. Perhaps a secular phenomenon should be even seen in today's forms of pietism.[32]

While liberal theologians value the spheres glorified in the era of post-Enlightenment secularism (language, knowledge, body, sexuality, aesthetics, personality, visibility, politics), and conservatives treat them with disregard, RO sees the historical roots of celebrating these finite realities in participatory philosophy and incarnation theology.[33] Without reference to transcendence the spheres do not work well and are heading for collapse, because "only transcendence, which 'suspends' these things in the sense of interrupting them, 'suspends' them also in the other sense of upholding their relative worth over-against void."[34] Conversely, the rejection of secularism is concurrently a revision of too little "Platonic" Christianity, which until now has not sufficiently appreciated the participatory and mediating sphere on the way towards God. Therefore, RO wants to regain the world by placing within the theological framework (including trinitological, Christological, ecclesiological and Eucharistic) the perspective of those spheres in which secularism has been most strongly marked.[35]

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[31]   Ibidem, p. 23; RO-I, p. 2.
[32]   Cf. ROR-C, pp. 29–30; T.G. Connor, *The Kenotic Trajectory of the Church in Donald MacKinnon's Theology. From Galilee to Jerusalem to Galilee*, London 2011, p. 91.
[33]   An example of the creative dialogue between Christology and contemporary culture is Graham Ward's work entitled *Christ and Culture* (Oxford 2005); RO-I, p. 4.
[34]   RO-I, p. 3. Cf. J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy...*, op. cit., p. 99.
[35]   RO-I, pp. 1, 3.

Demythologisation of secularism

Milbank questions the thesis that is taken for granted today that secularism was built in a neutral territory after it had been cleared of its previous religious vision. He rejects the myth that secularism was merely a desacralisation and argues that it had to be invented as an idea, replacing the abandoned theological vision. In this way secularism, which tried to exclude God from social life, became a theology in disguise, a distortion of orthodox theology, that is to say: Christian heresy.[36]

The supporters of RO believe that the origins of secularism can be traced back to the late Middle Ages. It was then that, along with the abandonment of the concept of analogy and participation, a change in the doctrine of God was brought about, which in consequence paved the space for autonomously understood creation.[37]

The allegedly autonomous 'nature' to which modern secularism refers is a post-Christian phenomenon, incomprehensible outside the theological framework. Modernity also remains an heir to the late medieval nominalist-voluntary theology and quasi-Augustinianism of the 17th century. The Modern Era adopted the ontology that forms the basis for the political ontology and should be questioned from the point of view of Christian tradition. Furthermore, since secularism is rooted in *a theological shift*, it is only from a theological perspective that both secularism and modern philosophy can be evaluated.[38] Therefore, in Milbank's opinion: "only theology overcomes metaphysics."[39]

All this does not mean that the author of *Theology and Social Theory* has a negative attitude towards secular reason. If secular discourse is a distortion of orthodox vision, then Catholic Christianity can take over and lead to the fulfilment of all partial truths. Professor at the University of Nottingham goes even further in his statements: it is the deformations of secularism that can become an opportunity to express certain aspects of orthodoxy.[40] It is, therefore, challenging to accuse RO of nostalgic tendencies. Thus, the return

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[36] Cf. ibidem, pp. 3–6; ROR-I, p. 6; TST, XIV, pp. 3, 9; J. Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order. The representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (further: BSO), Oxford 2013, p. 5.

[37] ROR-I, pp. 12, 21, 24; ROR-C, p. 28.

[38] Cf. BSO, pp. 1, 3, 6, 28; ROR-I, p. 24; cf. M.A. Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Chicago 2008, pp. 19–43.

[39] Cf. ROR-I, p. 24; J. Milbank, *The Word Made Strange. Theology, Language, Culture* (further: WMS), Oxford 1997, chapter 2.

[40] TST, XIV, p. 3; ROR-C, p. 28.

of RO to its roots is at the same time, an attempt to interpret modernity from the theological perspective.

It is about the recovery of modernity, which is impossible without a profound transformation based on the restoration of transcendence.[41] RO aims to develop a systematic vision that enables criticism of modern culture, politics, art, science, and philosophy. This theological project can succeed thanks to the simultaneous self-awareness of the superficiality of secularism.[42] "Modernity (…) in order to have what it thinks it wants, it would have to recover the theological, because only a theological vision is capable of revealing the finite reality and thus liberate from nihilism."[43]

The metaphysics of participation and a Scotist rupture

The central framework for RO is the concept of participation, which was developed by Plato and worked through by Christianity. Its adoption safeguards the integrity of the finite reality and the rejection of the idea of participation must necessarily lead to the adoption of a vision of a territory independent of God. Milbank and Pickstock, the authors of the book *Truth in Aquinas*, see a Neoplatonic participatory ontology at the heart of the whole theology of Aquinas, who is the most crucial Medieval theologian for RO. In the RO environment, on the other hand, the view about the significant change introduced by John Duns Scotus to the Angelic Doctor is repeated like a mantra. The legacy of the Subtle Doctor was to become the source of a theological course towards the misunderstood autonomy of beings and a dangerous concept of *natura pura*. For the RO supporters, the Scotsman becomes a "black hero" because of the triple change he caused: in the understanding of the relationship between God and creation, in the model of interpreting causality, and in the way of understanding knowledge.[44] Below I will discuss the first two breakups as the most fraught with consequences for theology. Having read this criticism, one should keep in mind Milbank's view that the theological change was the foundation of modern theory and practice.

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[41] Cf. R.J. Woźniak, *Radykalna ortodoksja…*, op. cit., p. 17.

[42] RO-I, pp. 1–2.

[43] Ibidem, p. 4.

[44] Cf. ROR-I, pp. 3, 18, 21; ROR-C, pp. 29, 33, 39–40; ROCP, p. 61; J. Milbank, *The Suspended Middle. Henri de Lubac and the Renewed Split in Modern Catholic Theology* (hereinafter: SM), Grand Rapids–Cambridge 2014, p. 85.

From participation to autonomy

Participation (in Greek μέθεξις,[45] in Latin: *participatio*) was applied by the Greek philosopher to describe the relationship between the reality of becoming (changeability) and the reality of real being represented by unchangeable ideas. The first one participates in the other as if it "borrows" existence from the forms. Thereby there is only one source of existence (and thus also of truth, goodness and beauty), and this non-dualistic perspective excludes any autonomy of the world of continuous becoming, that is, of variable beings.[46] It is not something independent, when taken in isolation from the source it turns out to be nothing; it can be said to be suspended over the nihil.[47]

The concept of participation is an essential component of the theory of analogy in Thomas Aquinas' concept. Angelic Doctor saw in God the *ipsum esse*, a pure being in which the essence and the existence converge into one. The created beings (*esse commune*), composed of the essence and existence, for which the essence is not identical with the existence (they might not be, but they do exist), is present only analogously, in relation to God. Initially, "a being" is concluded only concerning God (for God is a being), and the existence of creation is possible only by the grace given by the Creator for participating in His being. It means that there is no independent existence of creation if it is neither the second "next to" God focus of being or existence nor "beyond" God.[48]

Christian theology significantly changed the Greek philosopher's thoughts. The existence of finite beings is seen as a gift of grace from the Creator, and the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is understood not as a unique initial act but as continuous creation since creation exists only by the continuous donation

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[45] It is obvious that Plato used various terms to describe participation – cf. ROR-I, p. 18; Z.J. Zdybicka, *Partycypacja bytu. Próba wyjaśnienia relacji między światem a Bogiem* (Participation in Being. Attempt to explain the relationship between the world and God), Lublin 2017, pp. 25–26.

[46] ROR-I, pp. 17–18; ROCP, p. 61; cf. J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy...*, op. cit., p. 63; Z.J. Zdybicka, op. cit., pp. 25–27, 40 and 28: "The participating world to the participated world has a relationship to each other like a non-being to being."

[47] Cf. J. Zdybicka, *Partycypacja* (Participation), [in:] *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii* (Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy), vol. 8, A. Maryniarczyk et al. (ed.), Lublin 2007, p. 31. However, the author acknowledges that Plato's theory "points to the distance between the world of ideas and the world of the matter, introduces duality between these spheres of reality" (ibidem); ROCP, p. 61.

[48] ROR-I, pp. 17, 21–22; cf. E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej w wiekach średnich* (History of Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages), transl. S. Zalewski, Warsaw 1987, p. 335.

of their being by God. Creation is real, but not autonomous – it is not given, but it is a gift. It is like an arriving gift of self-subsistent God.[49] "Since we are created, we are received, even as ourselves, before ourselves."[50] Participation in God's substantiality is therefore considered "inappropriate" for creation; participation is not specific to Him, as if the creation itself had the right to exist.[51] "Creatures, for Aquinas, beneath the level of patterns of granted relative necessity and subsistence, are radically accidental. But not thereby, of course, accidents of the divine substance; instead they subsist by participation in this substance."[52]

Participation makes it possible to dismiss the risk of perceiving areas free from God, and by denying independence to all areas, it leaves the integrity relevant to created things; it is only by referring to God that their worldliness is safeguarded. The assumption that there are such disciplines that are to be located outside God necessarily leads to nihilism. Nihilism is the last word of the *ratio pura* (*pure reason*). Therefore, RO representatives consider every discipline in a theological framework, if it is not to be founded outside of God, means on nothing. Without reference to eternal stability, everything remains in the immanent scheme (*mathesis*), meaning accepting one of the two variants. The first option is to regard the stream of phenomena as transcendent and established on nothing, and then the world structure remains an illusion resulting from emptiness. The view can also be taken that what appears to man is real, only that it does not exceed itself, and thus the intricacies of created things are removed.[53]

From analogy to univocity of being

For Aquinas, only God is a being, and created beings exist analogically through participation in the being of God. Angelic Doctor consistently recognized that metaphysics as a science of being must be referred to the higher science available through Revelation; the science of the ultimate cause of being must be God's own self-knowledge.[54] However, Duns Scotus considered that an abstract notion of being could include both the Creator and creation, thus taking the ontological difference between them into account. The accepted

49   ROR-I, p. 18; ROCP, pp. 61–62.
50   TST, XVII.
51   ROR-I, p. 18.
52   J. Milbank, C. Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, London 2001, p. 30; cf. ROR-I, p. 17.
53   RO-I, p. 3; RO-K, pp. 25–26; ROR-I, pp. 18–19; TST, XVII.
54   ROR-I, p. 21; WMS, pp. 44–47; BSO, p. 25.

univocity of being abolishes the qualitative distance between the infinite and finite in favour of the quantitative. In this way, paradoxically, God begins to appear as infinitely distant (He is separated from the creatures by the limitless sea of sameness), which at the same time leads to His marginalization and the affirmation of the secular space.[55]

Consequently, such a God can only remain an object of faith separated from reason. Thus, the previous position of incorporating both faith and reason into the horizon of participation in the mind of God is abandoned. *Doctor Subtilis*, thus juxtaposing reason and faith/revelation, becomes guilty of separating philosophy from theology. The univocity accepted by the Franciscan enables the formation of a metaphysics that subordinates being to thinking (being from the real becomes the possible one) and leads to the emergence of an ontology as a science about a being as an object of knowledge independent of any reference to the Absolute. In the long term, this will entail an ontology that is autonomous and prior to theology, culminating in the position of Francisco Suárez in the seventeenth century. The Scotist separation between the concepts of being and God lays the foundations for a reflection on nature as an autonomous and recognizable reality without reference to God.[56]

From unilateral exchange to mutual interaction

The Middle Ages saw divine causality interpreted as 'flowing in' (Latin *in--fluentia*) all levels of the cause hierarchy. Thus, the highest cause operated universally and led to – in reaction to its influence – also the activity of lower causes. In this paradoxical model, due to the unilateral gift going from top to bottom, there was neither reciprocation nor rivalry between acting synergistically but at other ontological levels divine and finite causes.[57]

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[55] Cf. WMS, pp. 44–45; ROR-I, pp. 22–23; ROR-C, p. 33; BSO, pp. 30, 50; J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy...*, op. cit., p. 99; P. Jaroszyński, *Metafizyka czy ontologia? Problem Boga a spór o rozumienie filozofii w kontekście alternatywy metafizyka czy ontologia* (Metaphysics or ontology? The problem of God and the dispute about understanding philosophy in the context of alternative metaphysics or ontology), [in:] *Metafizyka. Część II. Zarys teorii bytu* (Metaphysics. Part II. Outline of the theory of existence), S. Janeczek, A. Starościc (eds.), Lublin 2017, p. 91.

[56] ROR-I, pp. 23–24; ROR-C, p. 29; WMS, pp. 40–41; BSO, p. 30; ROCP, p. 61; cf. R.I. Woźniak, *Radykalna ortodoksja...*, op. cit., p. 19; P. Jaroszyński, *Metafizyka czy ontologia?...*, op. cit., p. 95: "Metaphysics was somehow absorbed by ontology."

[57] SM, pp. 95–97; BSO, pp. 28, 42, 44–47.

The Scotist rupture involves a change in the understanding of the operation of causes. Now the higher cause somehow descends to a lower level, hence putting it on a par with finite causes. In this way, causes that differ only quantitatively, not qualitatively, from one ontological level will have to be added, which means that they will also compete. Besides, Subtle Doctor's *concursus* model invalidates the one-sided exchange by adopting a vision of a contract between the highest and lowest causes – now each of them having its own sphere of action enters into a kind of reciprocal interaction within a zero-sum game.[58]

Scheda of the *natura pura* doctrine and the legacy of de Lubac

The connection with *nouvelle théologie* resounds in many publications on RO, but Milbank explicitly referred to Henri de Lubac – whom he considered to be one of the two (next to Sergei Bulgakov) great theologians of the 20th century – in his book *Suspended Middle*. He puts forward a thesis, which is in line with historians of philosophy and theology and against neo-scholastic interpretations, that the opinion of a Catholic theologian should be read most radically and that as such it finds his roots in the legacy of Thomas Aquinas. For the rest of his life, even after *Humani Generis*, the Jesuit maintained or even radicalised his earlier stand. In any case, the secular theologian does not confirm any possible interpretations of de Lubac's withdrawal from his earlier positions in reaction to the encyclical written by Pius XII.[59]

The most important components of de Lubac's thought include understanding the human spirit as a gift internally combined with grace and seeing grace as free while rejecting the concept of *natura pura*, because "a gift can be a gift without contrast to gift."[60] However, the meaning of *Surnaturel*[61] remains important for RO also because of the conclusions that result from the issue worked out by its author. Incorrect interpretation of supernaturalness is the reason for the emergence of modern philosophy and secularism.[62] The crucial

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[58]   SM, pp. 98–100; BSO, pp. 28, 45–48; ROR-C, pp. 33–34; cf. S. Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion*, London–New York 2006.

[59]   SM, IX, XIII, pp. 9–10, 53, 94, 109; ROR-A, p. 368.

[60]   SM, p. 94.

[61]   Cf. H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel. Études historiques*, Paris 1946.

[62]   SM, p. 11; M. Wójtowicz, *Odwaga myślenia* (Courage of Thinking), [in:] *Leksykon wielkich teologów XX/XXI wieku*, op. cit., p. 176.

question raised by de Lubac also hides a problem of understanding humanism[63] and the relationship between theology and philosophy.

The human spirit as a gift instead of *natura pura*

Thomas of Aquinas never spoke about *natura pura*, but he emphasised the ontological orientation of human nature towards spiritual fulfilment. Only Cardinal Cajetan proposed the suggestion of nature defined by purely natural terms. His solution was to protect the disinterestedness of grace that arouses the desire for supernaturalness in man. De Lubac, however, questioned the neo-scholastic reading of Thomas's works, under which the thought of Aquinas would constitute a breakthrough in the confirmation of secularism.[64]

In discussing the paradoxical relationship between grace and nature, de Lubac holds onto the *suspended middle*, rejecting the vision of autonomous nature and external grace. Grace that does not lift nature above itself has to be regarded as something emptily extrinsic, which does not open nature for participation in the Divine nature. Man's vocation to be divinized means that nature justly demands what it can come only as a gift from God.[65]

De Lubac opposed the thesis of the Pope, who in *Humani Generis* recalled the concept of *natura pura* as the guarantor of free grace, as it does not belong to human nature.[66] The Jesuit believed that such an approach to grace placed it on the same intra-worldly ontological level as nature (analogically to the acceptance of the univocity of being between God and creation). The above gave rise to the following questions: would pure nature receive grace from its own will or consent, or as something contrary to its freedom or even forcing it? In the first case, we would have to do with Pelagius', as well as Baius and Jansenius' mistakes, and in the other one – Luther and Calvin's ones. In both, grace would lose its gratuitousness.[67]

The natural desire for the supernatural is not in itself grace, because in such case it would be difficult to find anything in human nature that would urge it

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[63] Cf. H. de Lubac, *Dramat humanizmu ateistycznego* (The drama of atheistic humanism), transl. A. Ziernicki, Krakow 2005.

[64] SM, pp. 17–18, 20–21, 88–89.

[65] SM, XII, pp. 5–6, 11, 22–23, 39–40, 44.

[66] Cf. Pius XII, Encyklika *Humani generis* (Encyclical *Humani generis*), [in:] *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła* (*Breviarium fidei*. Selection of doctrinal statements of the Church), I. Bokwa (ed.), Poznań 2007, p. 406 (no. 1074).

[67] SM, pp. 47, 50–51.

towards *visio beatifica*. On the other hand, grace would not be a gift if *natura pura* demanded the beatific vision, i.e. if the natural desire for supernaturalness remained part of nature. Thus, desire is a kind of non-existent plane between two and three dimensions in geometry – it must be both nature and grace. De Lubac recognizes that the natural desire for supernaturalness is the gift of the anticipation of gift.[68]

When synthesizing Gilson's ontological difference between God and creation with *Surnaturel* doctrine, de Lubac rejected the thesis that a gift must be contrasted with a non-gift. The created human spirit is not so much the recipient of the gift as it is a gift itself. Thereby, the Jesuit inaugurated a new discourse on the human spirit which, according to the RO leader, can be more satisfying than the one juxtaposing nature and supernaturalness.[69] "Since there is no preceding recipient, the spirit is a gift to a gift and the gift of giving oneself to oneself, which is the only way consciously to live being a gift and so to be spirit."[70]

Just as creation, grace does not assume anything before it. The divinization does not have to be contrasted with *natura pura*. De Lubac argued with the opponents that the assumption of pure nature – would undermine the gratuitousness of grace. Furthermore, the innate tendency toward a blessed vision is still the divine gift in man. On the one hand, God enables and responds freely to the divinization of man, on the other, grace is created, and the divinizing transfiguration is the work of the human will. The gift of divinization is such a transgression of creation that it embraces it to the maximum extent that in the blessed vision the whole human being becomes the reception of divine light, and there is no longer a "natural" reception.[71]

Christian humanism, not secular one

For the French thinker, well understood Christianity is humanism, while secular humanism is the antithesis of the Gospel.[72]

> This, for de Lubac, was (and is) the danger of pure humanism without reference beyond humanity. On the other hand, this danger was ironically fostered by

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[68]   Ibidem, pp. 37, 43–45.
[69]   Ibidem, pp. 48, 52.
[70]   Ibidem, p. 48.
[71]   Ibidem, pp. 51–51, 97–98.
[72]   Ibidem, p. 10.

the illusory piety of a religion without humanity produced by the neoscholastic understanding of grace.[73]

The advocate of Christian humanism could not be further away from the tendency to emphasise only the ecclesiastical message of faith detached from the cultural roots.[74] He maintained that if supernaturalness could one be separated from nature, one should choose one of the two ways of its unification:

> either the supernaturalness will descend into the interior of nature to raise and transform it, to make it supernatural, or the nature will absorb and retain the supernaturalness, to lower it, to naturalise it, and then the nature will in no case be "complete" and the supernaturality will be spoiled.[75]

These words explain why "natural" humanism must not be allowed. A similar approach characterises the RO supporters: it is recognized that apart from God, no humanism is possible (unless it is sinister), while the theological discourse inevitably entails a kind of humanism, because it shows how the divinization by grace affects humanity.[76] Milbank believes that Christian theology should be not so much political theology but rather politicised metaphysics or metaphysical politics. Christianity appears to be the creator of RO not only "the most religious of religions," but also the most human of specifically human processes; hence its rejection must open "post-human" perspectives.[77]

> For even though it is true that Christianity secularised law, politics, language, science and artistic representation, it did not initially do so in the name of and autonomous secular space – this eventual upshot was only the result of the inauthentic doctrine of *natura pura*. Instead, this secularization much more implied a negative qualification of any stable claims to capture the sacred, and at the same time a relativisation of the Durkheimian sacred/profane boundary (…) with a consequent sacralisation of all nature as Creation and all culture as divinisable because human. In this way Christianity exalts and extends the

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[73] Ibidem, p. 22.

[74] Ibidem, p. 10.

[75] H. de Lubac, *Najnowsze paradoksy* (The latest paradoxes), transl. K. Dybeł, A. Ziernicki, Krakow 2012, p. 143.

[76] ROR-C, p. 45.

[77] BSO, p. 15; cf. Paweł VI, *Populorum progressio*, 44; P.M. Candler jr, *Logika chrześcijańskiego humanizmu* (The logic of Christian humanism), transl. U. Jachimczak, "Znak" 7–8 (2010), p. 57.

religious (…) precisely by making it more coincide with the human – which is also thereby elevated.[78]

Christian humanism should become an alternative to both the Reformation and modernity, which appeared as a poisoned fruit of earlier theological errors and consistently resulting ontological ones. Therefore, a change in the philosophical and theological perspective, not only in the ecclesial but also a political dimension, can restore the Christian heritage of the West and its influence on humanity.[79]

Philosophy not autonomous, but in relation to theology

The legacy of de Lubac is manifested in RO by the concept of the interconnection of theology and philosophy. Milbank claims that the author of *Surnaturel* proposed a kind of "non-ontology" – a discourse that was neither philosophical metaphysics nor speculative dogmatics. This type of reflection, resulting directly from the recognition of *suspended middle* between nature and grace, at the same time, crossed out the autonomy of philosophy and theology and bound one with the other.[80] It resembled Augustinian Christian philosophy or Thomistic sacred doctrine.

Research indicates that before 1300 there was no evident duality between the theological and philosophical reason. Even the more profound distinction between philosophy (and rationally practised theology) and *sacra doctrina* introduced by Thomas Aquinas does not necessarily entail the later invention of autonomous philosophy. It was Angelic Doctor who made a more apparent distinction between philosophy and theology so as to unite them.[81]

Rational theology and revealed theology are not, then, for Aquinas, even from a human perspective, simplistically discrete 'stages', but rather always imply each other in different degrees and with different intensities along a continuum of coming-to-know within historical time. But from a divine point of view it is Aquinas's central doctrine of divine simplicity (…) which ensures that the

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[78]   BSO, p. 15.

[79]   Ibid, p. 18; ROR-C, p. 45.

[80]   SM, pp. 3–5, 12–13, 34, 52; TST, XXIII–XXV.

[81]   BSO, pp. 23, 25, 27. Milbank previously believed that Aquinas had in some way allowed for secular autonomy; cf. TST 407; J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy...*, op. cit., p. 120.

two theologies are only aspects of a single divine knowing. For God creator and revealer is one: his emanation of created being and his call to creation and humanity to return to him are a single same eternal unchanging action.[82]

For Aquinas, as it turns out, "philosophy is not straightforwardly foundational, and neither is theology straightforwardly superior."[83] The autonomy of philosophy is established in a gradual process in which John Duns Scotus, Francisco Suárez and Domingo Báñez play key roles. Ultimately, a philosophy that has never existed before, regardless of religion or theology, is becoming an independent field abstracted from existential orientation and the question of the beatific vision, thus, paradoxically, ceasing to be theologically neutral.[84]

According to the diagnosis conducted by the RO leader, a philosophy began as secularizing immanentism, and theology, if it wants to consider the love of God and creation as a manifestation of this love again, must completely evacuate metaphysics.[85] Thus, theology, in a way, redeems its guilt since its assumptions lie at the origin of the autonomous philosophy:

> So the paradox is that the theoretically secularising gesture, which permitted the arrival of a pure, autonomous philosophy, was entirely a theological gesture, and even one which sought to conserve the transcendence of God and the priority of the supernatural, by mistakenly insisting on the sheer 'naturalness' and self-sufficiency of human beings without grace, as a backdrop of augmenting grace's sheer gratuity.[86]

It becomes understandable why Milbank refers to Hamann and Jacobi, who have developed a theological criticism of philosophy based on reason independent of faith, without succumbing to, what the author of the essay on the theological criticism of philosophy assesses, confusion of faith and reason. Paradoxically, it was precisely the focus on knowledge by faith alone associated with the Lutheran heritage that caused them to leave less autonomy to reason than the Fathers of the Church were ready to give it. The Anglican theologian convinces that only such a strong emphasis on faith can prevent the deviation introduced by John Duns Scotus. It enables discussion with philosophy and even implies some issue, which without the theology would have been incomprehensible or

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[82] Ibidem, pp. 25–26; cf. J. Milbank, C. Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, op. cit., pp. 19–59.
[83] BSO, p. 26.
[84] Ibidem, pp. 19, 27.
[85] WMS, p. 50.
[86] BSO, p. 28.

even impossible to notice. It also makes it possible to diagnose the origins of modern thought.[87]

Conclusion: radical orthodoxy as *suspended middle*

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the radical return to orthodoxy turns out to be inseparably connected with the criticism of modern paradigms, as well as with the rethinking the tradition. Leaning towards the past is accompanied by a symmetrical interest in shaping the future. That, in turn, requires a diagnosis of the present, while evaluation – Milbank's contribution *et consortes* cannot be underestimated – is made from a theological perspective. That is why the above presentation of the main ideas of RO has taken one form rather than the other: in the first two paragraphs the affirmation of traditional concepts was immediately juxtaposed with the dangerous consequences of its abandonment[88]; in the third paragraph the reverse order was proposed – de Lubac's legacy becomes a remedy for a disease inherited along with the doctrine of *pure nature*. It seems that the form adopted in the following paragraphs speaks no less than the content of the referred views.

RO creators believe that only the idea of participation protects the integrity of the created reality. The departure from it put the Western thought on the track leading to the acceptance of the notion of *natura pura*. The new approach of Jan Duns Scotus compared to the previous one in fact resulted from the change in the theological perspective that, philosophically speaking, the univocity of being is only one of the possible interpretations of the difference between God and other beings. As Milbank stresses, the affirmation of univocity is at the same time "a decision against a middle in being between identity and difference." In fact, it is more a matter of existential orientation than a conclusion drawn from argumentation. "For it is in part the result of and undergrounded decision that there can be no 'middle' in meaning between identity and difference."[89] The supporters of RO practice reflection within the framework of metaxological perspective that "is at once the mediating, the analogical and the participatory."[90]

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[87]   RO-K, pp. 22–25, 31–32.

[88]   Cf. J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy...*, op. cit., p. 90: „RO's histories tend to be narratives of (qualified) rupture and discontinuity rather than tales of continuity and progress."

[89]   BSO, pp. 50–51.

[90]   Cf. ibidem, p. 52, footnote 78; W. Desmond, *Being and the Between. Political Theory in the American Academy*, New York 1995.

In RO publications resound a strong link with *nouvelle théologie,* and de Lubac's contribution is a point of reference for drawing the most far-reaching conclusions. Hans Urs von Balthasar characterized the author of *Surnaturel* as a thinker occupying a *suspended middle* area: "De Lubac soon realized that his position moved into a suspended middle in which he could not practice any philosophy without its transcendence into theology, but also any theology without its essential inner structure of philosophy."[91] In his book on Karl Barth's theology, the Basel scholar combined Lubac's position on supernaturalness with the analogy of being (*analogia entis*) interpreted by Erich Przywara and Gustav Siewerth to reject both liberal theology and Barth's advocacy of Revelation against nature. It is precisely these two rejections that imply the *suspended middle,* which neither belongs to natural theology nor doctrine, although at the same time it encompasses both.[92]

Thus, we indirectly obtain the auto-characteristics of RO, which perceives the whole reality and the role of theology from the inside of the suspended middle. As Milbank admits, "our discourse is always situated in a kind of in-between realm, which was where de Lubac and von Balthasar often sought to operate."[93] The position of RO is an attempt to take over and further develop de Lubac's legacy interpreted in the most radical way possible, and it is this statement that may be a key to interpreting the views of the supporters of the movement.

The discourse initiated by de Lubac faces this 'middle,' which remains 'suspended' between nature and grace, and therefore does not belong to philosophy or theology. Philosophy needs a transcendent supplement in the form of theology but in the same way theology demands (inaccessible) foundations of philosophy, which appears to be an unsolvable aporia. RO, like Balthasar and de Lubac, questions the separation of faith and reason by returning to the patristic conviction that one needs God's illumination to reason truly, since just as there is no nature without grace, so there is no *ratio pura.* Trying to bridge the gap between Athens and Jerusalem, RO is more Catholic than Protestant.[94]

According to Milbank, all de Lubac's theology goes hand in hand with the Christological foundation that underlies it (in which the leader of RO

91 H.U. von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri De Lubac*, San Francisco 1991, p. 15.
92 SM, pp. 36–37; cf. CT, pp. 118–119; *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, T.J. White (ed.), Grand Rapids 2011; C. Szczęsny, *Pośrednicząca rola bytu w poznaniu Boga u Gustawa Siewertha* (Intermediate role of being in knowing God with Gustav Siewertha), Lublin 1986.
93 ROR-C, p. 45.
94 Ibidem, p. 43; SM, pp. 12, 44, 52.

sees a complete convergence with Joseph Ratzinger's theology).[95] What is more, Aaron Riches, a Catholic theologian under the banner of RO, derives de Lubac's views from Christology. At the same time, he proposes an interesting comparison that may help in demonstrating the necessity of staying in this *suspended middle*, and at the same time in indicating the direction of reading the meaning of the phrase used:

> For de Lubac, the Christological paradox entails that the Church's doctrine will be constituted by 'a comprehensive assembly of opposing aspects', and that these 'opposing aspects' are raised to signify the full depth of the mystery of truth in direct relation to the degree that 'they are mutually supported like flying buttresses (*arc-boutant*), each one braced against the other in the most extreme degrees of tension.'[96]

The structure of the mysteries of faith is compared to a system of mutually dependent buttresses used in sacred architecture. In this picture, the paradoxical character of the doctrine consisting of seemingly contradictory but in fact, mutually supportive aspects, which would result from Christology, is revealed. The Chalcedonian phrase of the unity-without-confusion used by the editor of Communio magazine to characterize Balthasar's position[97] can instead be referred to how RO practises discourse. In Milbank's opinion, the Swiss theologian, although he seems to be also involved in this *suspended middle*, compromises de Lubac's position and goes beyond it both towards Barth (e.g. when he speaks about the self-authentic Divine revelation) and Karl Rahner (too much space granting *natura pura*).[98]

If the Chalcedonian definition of 451 maintains that the Divine and human natures are united "unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably"

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[95] ROR-A, p. 372.

[96] Cited after: CT, p. 109.

[97] Cf. A.J. Walker, *Love Alone: Hans Urs von Balthasar as a Master of Theological Renewal*, "Communio: International Catholic Review" 3 (2005), p. 537: "Precisely because of his radical Christocentrism, then, Balthasar is, before anything else, a theologian of the so-called «Catholic 'and'»: of the unity-without-confusion of the «from above» and the «from below»; of grace and of nature; of philosophy and of theology; of the radical following of Christ and of passionate love for the world; of tradition and of the development of doctrine." See also: CT, p. 120.

[98] SM, p. 74; ROR-A, p. 371. It is also possible to point to other dimensions of *suspended middle*. For example, the ecclesial position of de Lubac as both radical and conservative will be set between a conservative antimodern reaction and a liberal theological *aggiornamento* (SM, p. 8).

(ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως)[99] in one person of Christ, RO wants to emphasise this unity. It is no coincidence that Riches in his book *Ecce homo. On the Divine Unity of Christ* combines de Lubac's natural desire for supernaturalness with the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria and Maximus the Confessor. He does so in the spirit of 'Nestorian' trends in Catholic Christology, calling for a more Cyrillic reading of Chalcedon.[100]

Therefore, I propose the thesis that the Second Council of Constantinople contributed to Christology is analogous to what RO calls contemporary theology. The Council of 553 presented the interpretation of Chalcedon in the spirit of the Cyrillic focus on the unity of Christ, thereby claiming that the number of natures in the Incarnate is rather a matter of theoretical division of what in His concrete existence is not divisible.[101] Similarly, RO can be an impulse for Catholic theology and calls for a reflection on whether the otherwise legitimate distinctions (nature-grace; philosophy-theology; autonomy of temporal reality-the Church) have been read from the 'Nestorian' perspective. Consequently, it should be added that the views of the representatives of the movement cannot

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[99] Sobór Chalcedoński, *Decyzja Soboru* (Chalcedonian Council, Decision of the Council), [in:] *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła* (Breviarium fidei. Selection of doctrinal statements of the Church), elaborated by S. Głowa, I. Bieda, Poznań 1998, VI.1 (no. 8). On the meaning of four adverbs in the definition of Chalcedon – cf. S. Zatwardnicki, *Chalcedońska formuła „bez zmieszania i bez rozdzielania" w świetle dokumentów Międzynarodowej Komisji Teologicznej* (The Chalcedonian formula 'without mixing or separating' in the light of the documents of the International Theological Commission), Wrocław 2017, pp. 46–50.

[100] Cf. A. Riches, *Ecce homo. On the Divine Unity of Christ*, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2016, pp. 14–16; BSO, pp. 78–79, footnote 139.

[101] Cf. Sobór konstantynopolitański II (II Council of Constantinople), *Anatematyzmy przeciwko „Trzem rozdziałom"* (Anathematisms against "Three Chapters"), anathematism VII, [in:] *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Tekst grecki, łaciński, polski, t. 1: Nicea I, Konstantynopol I, Efez, Chalcedon, Konstantynopol II, Konstantynopol III, Nicea II (325–787)* [Documents of the General Councils. Greek, Latin, Polish texts, vol. 1: Nice I, Constantinople I, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II, Constantinople III, Nice II (325–787)], composition and elaboration: A. Baron, H. Pietras, Krakow 2007, p. 293; B. Sesboüé, J. Wolinski, *Bóg zbawienia. Tradycja, reguła i Symbole wiary. Ekonomia zbawienia. Rozwój dogmatów trynitarnych i chrystologicznych* (God of salvation. Tradition, rule and symbols of faith. The economy of salvation. Development of Trinitarian and Christological dogmas), B. Sesboüé (ed.), Polish sci. ed. T. Dzidek, transl. P. Rak, Krakow 1999, pp. 372, 375; L. Perrone, *Wpływ dogmatu Chalcedońskiego na refleksję teologiczną między IV a V soborem ekumenicznym* (The influence of the Chalcedonian dogma on the theological reflection between the Fourth and Fifth Ecumenical Councils), [in:] *Historia teologii*, 1: *Epoka patrystyczna* (History of theology, 1: The patristic era), A. di Bernardino, B. Studer (eds.), transl. M. Gołębiowski et al. Krakow 2010, p. 581, footnote 1.

be accused of 'mono-physical' deviations, and that it is precisely the unity that secures the truth of the created world, human nature, and reason.[102]

If one were to stick to the adopted convention of epithetisation, 'miaphysite' inclinations in RO might be observed. In Christology, they were marked by a preference to speak not so much of the unity of the Person as of the one nature of Christ resulting from the unification "without mixing and without separating human and divine natures."[103] RO would also emphasise the broadly understood "complex unity" wherever others are tempted to emphasise differentiation. Remaining orthodox is always a radically tricky task – this is also what radical orthodoxy indirectly reminds us of, and this statement immediately implies the necessity of uncritical assimilation of the views proclaimed by the representatives of the movement.

The above summary results in further directions of research. First, the issue of the understanding of theology through RO should be addressed, within which the relation of theology to philosophy and other sciences would also be discussed more comprehensively. It would be worthwhile to ask how the authors associated under the banner of RO conduct a dialogue with the present day could not be a hint for Catholic theologians on how to take up the call of Pope Francis expressed in the Apostolic Constitution on ecclesiastical universities and faculties. In *Veritatis Gaudium*, the Holy Father expressed the expectation that ecclesial studies should become a kind of cultural laboratory, in which the interpretation of reality in accordance with the "evangelical hermeneutics" would be combined with the development of new narratives and cultural paradigms in dialogue with culture and science.[104] Then we should ask ourselves whether and how the approach of RO can provide a positive impulse for Catholic theology, especially post-conciliar one, which has indeed given too

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[102] Cf. *„Jakby spadła na mnie szafa z książkami". Z Sebastianem Dudą rozmawiają Michał Bardel i Janusz Poniewierski* ("It's like a book closet fell on me." Michał Bardel and Janusz Poniewierski talk to Sebastian Duda), "Znak" 7–8 (2010), pp. 93–94. A Catholic theologian associated with RO directly referred to the Chalcedonian formula in the description of the relationship between faith and reason when he was commenting on the unannounced speech of Benedict XVI at the University of La Sapienza – cf. P.M. Candler jr, *Logika chrześcijańskiego humanizmu* (Logic of Christian humanism), op. cit., p. 59: "The relationship between faith and reason should therefore be properly considered in the likeness of a hypostatic union: faith and reason are united in Christ, without confusion or separation."

[103] Cf. D.G. Eadie, *Chalcedon revisited*, "Journal of Ecumenical Studies" 1 (1973), no. 1, p. 143.

[104] Franciszek, *Konstytucja Apostolska "Veritatis gaudium" o uniwersytetach i wydziałach kościelnych* (Apostolic Constitution "Veritatis gaudium" on universities and ecclesiastical faculties), 3–5.

much space to the autonomy of earthly realities, thereby, perhaps, contributing to the progressive secularization.

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