

SUMMARY

Logos as a hermeneutic principle in theological reflection on New Atheism

The cult of reason, science, the techniques of instrumentalization of the natural sciences and the manipulation of scientific facts have become the weapon of the so-called new atheism. Although new atheism itself has not brought anything new to the old atheistic doctrine, it has nevertheless become a new and significant cultural fact. It is a journalistic phenomenon, and therefore has its missionary dimension. Since it assumes that it is in possession of the only true knowledge about the world, it reluctantly undertakes or even negates any dialogue, treating all religions as superstition, as relics of the past, as poison and the tool of oppression. Instead, it values the scientific process and rationalism based solely on naturalism. Although it fundamentally denies all religions as such, it strikes hardest against the Christian religion, trying to ridicule, mock, banalize and in consequence to show the world its caricatural image. Criticizing the dogmatism of religion and all fundamentalism, the representatives of new atheism, led by Dawkins, themselves promote a totally dogmatic belief in the correctness of their arguments, and in the certainty and truth of their reasoning, which does not require further research, is not subject to verification and needs no defense. Paradoxically, in this way they fall into fundamentalism. They represent intellectual arrogance and often ignorance, while avoiding the proper and serious undertaking of religious matters, masking their ignorance or lack of evidence and arguments by virtue of a well-constructed rhetoric. They utilize a seemingly logical, but in reality devious and consequently ridiculous argumentation, conceptual manipulation, sophisms and unclear formulas, to place God before the tribunal of science, in an effort to show that the hypothesis of God has lost, that it is no longer defensible, and that science has proven atheism.

The leading representative of the new atheism, Richard Dawkins, assumes that the problem of the existence or rather non-existence of God can be solved on the basis of science, and that everything, the whole of reality, can be explained without reference to the hypothesis of God. Therefore, he concludes, religion has no right to exist in the modern world. His atheistic manifesto, in the form of an "imaginary God", is part of the so-called the denunciatory current of new atheism, which theists consider to be dark, foolish, naïve, gullible, devoid of thinking, manipulative and spiritually disadvantaged. He believes that believers are sick people. Dawkins rightly points out how significant faith is to people because it exerts an extremely important impact on our lives, imprinting the way we think and perceive the world. Therefore, it is important to subject faith to critical research and rational reflection, since all delusions associated with it should be finally extricated, revealed and then irrevocably removed once and for all. For this reason this type of atheism, in its syncretic, aggressive, radical form, first and foremost demands a reaction, which demonstrates that the rationality of faith is not a kind of sophistry, but rather the result of intellectual effort towards deepening and better understanding faith.

For this reason, J. Ratzinger put forward the demand for logic and rationalization, both as a scientist, professor and Cardinal, and finally as the Pope. Christianity, as the religion of the *Logos*, the Divine Meaning, the rational basis of all being, demands the engagement of thinking.

This work is a comparison of Ratzinger's study centered on the *Logos* with Dawkins' accomplishments which are based, as he claims, solely on *ratio*. The selection of these two

personalities is not accidental: both figures are unquestionable authorities in their field, have considerable scientific achievements, live and work in the same period of time, have equal access to research and results developed in past eras, together with the ability to choose methods, tools and resources available to the world of science of the 21st century. In addition, Ratzinger was the head of the Church, the shepherd and spiritual leader for billions of believers. Dawkins in turn has stated correctly that if the new atheism were somehow institutionalized, he would undoubtedly be the highest in its hierarchy. In addition, both undertake rational reflection on a similar topic: God, the world, man, sin, death, morality and the sense of life. Both play the role of doctors trying to diagnose society and propose a specific remedy for the diagnosed disease. While Dawkins diagnoses believers as suffering from delusion, Ratzinger, in examining modern people of science, perceives diseases of the mind, and pathologies of contemporary reason, which he describes as dormancy, blindness, tragic cataracts, deafness or poisoning.

The question thus arises which posed the purpose of this study: What is the reason that these figures have come to diametrically different, sometimes contradictory and mutually exclusive conclusions based on rational reflection on the same world? Answers should be sought primarily in the different approach each professor takes to the concept of rationality, and consequently the application of various methodological principles, which are reflected in the formulation of hypotheses, research and explanation of the world, and in the conduct of scientific discourse.

Ratzinger bases his reasoning on the foundation of the *Logos*. He believes that humans do not comprehend existence through knowledge, but rather through understanding the meaning that has been entrusted to them. Knowledge based on technical and environmental thought informs people about the functionality of the world but does not guarantee understanding the world and being. Understanding can arise only from faith, which is reliance in meaning and a safe ground on which one can depend. Faith and understanding are therefore inseparable.

Dawkins, on the other hand, refuses theology the status of science, considering the practice of theology as an infantile thing, as intellectual suicide. According to the methodological principle he adopts, questions about the cause, as well as about the purpose, meaning or future of reality lie beyond the reach of empirical sciences.

According to Dawkins science and religion, rationalism and irrational beliefs, knowledge and superstition, are constantly clashing and fighting among themselves, and the result of this conflict is already predetermined; science will triumph while faith and religiosity will soon disappear from the face of the earth. The hermeneutics of competition between knowledge and faith practiced by Dawkins negate the possibility of their coexistence and any dependence or complementarity between them.

The originality of the subject of this dissertation is precisely that it does not consider the problem of new atheism in the context of the crisis of faith. On the contrary, it deals with atheism as a peculiar *locus teologicus* that provokes the need to rethink, discover and present a credible apology of the truths of faith, of factual, logical and substantively correct arguments, in order to authenticate faith. It examines the consequences of founding one's world view on the basis of *ratio*, and of basing it on the foundation of *Logos*.

In opposition to Dawkins' well-known work entitled *The Imaginary God*, polemical positions are taken which attempt to show the author's incompetence and to undermine his arguments point by point. To this end, his opponents use specific examples and justifications cited by Dawkins, question them and undermine them, and then present reliable and scientific

counter-arguments. Nevertheless, there is a lack of theological reflection on the new atheism, which presents the rational, limited, fragmentary, incoherent and incomplete vision of the world presented by new atheists against the background of equally rational reflection, but whose result is a complete, coherent and logical knowledge of the world, showing at the same time depth, dynamics and sense, and thereby giving a real opportunity to understand it. Missing is a comparison of worldviews which presuppose relativism, emptiness, and nonsense to one that shows truth, meaning and leads to fullness. If we juxtapose *ratio* and *Logos* as two methods of contemporary rationality and apply them to reflection on the new atheism, dressed up in the garments of naturalism and humanism, mankind has two paths to choose from:

First, by remaining on the basis of the *ratio*, to assume that by chance or luck mankind has found itself in a senseless, absurd and grotesque world, and that its existence boils down to pure biology, without purpose, without a future, without hope. In this world one must seek meaning by placing faith in science, rationality, mathematical calculations, while claiming that everything is irrational, accidental, absurd, anarchic, devoid of purpose and ultimately incomprehensible. The universe is perceived as something impersonal, indifferent to humanity and ruled by randomness and coincidence.

The alternative is to accept the *Logos* as a principle and a tool, which results in a completely different understanding of the world and humanity. In this case the world is understood as thoroughly personal, so that everything that is, that was, and that will be endures in the presence of God, a Person who understands and chooses everything; everything that exists is intended, desired and called into existence by him.

Recognizing the role of intellect and rational thinking in the area of faith is obvious. The acceptance of the *Logos* does not take anything from the mind, on the contrary, it creates a space in which believers can be intelligent, educated, outstanding in some field, and in which scientists can admit that they are believers, and thus can open and broaden the horizon of their thinking. Thanks to this, both believers and scientists will be able to fully realize their humanity.