STUDIA NAUK TEOLOGICZNYCH
TOM 20 (2025)

DOI: 10.24425/snt.2025.154890

Received: FEB 24, 2025
Accepted: JUN 22, 2025
Published: OCT 1, 2025

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KNOWING TRUTH

> For truth is neither more nor less than that character of a proposition which consists in this, that belief in the proposition would, with sufficient experience and reflection, lead us to such conduct as would tend to satisfy the desires we should then have. To say that truth means more than this is to say that it has no meaning at all. (Peirce, The Fixation of Belief 1965, 232)

PEIRCE AND THE SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE

The great American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, had painstakingly worked through the logic of scientific inquiry and in doing so had developed an account of the development of the human mind in general as it strives to know truth. Beginning with experience of any kind, the human being can, by well-defined logical processes of deduction, induction, and hypothesis, arrive at a mental grasp of how things are. The mind can come to a knowledge of reality. This knowledge can be expressed symbolically using terms (expressing general ideas), propositions (expressing facts and relations among things), and arguments (expressing relations among facts). For Peirce, reality is full of meanings, and the mind can grasp those meanings.

Truth can be represented by propositions and arguments. Furthermore, propositions, which are representations of the mind, can guide behavior. Indeed, it is one's habitual behavior that ultimately interprets his propositions (Peirce 1965a,

326–27; 1965c). This means that if a person's beliefs accord with reality, he will be able to act successfully in situations that correspond to those propositions. This is how the positive sciences work. The scientist proposes a model, generally mathematical, of reality and then experiments. If the experiment fails, then some aspect of his model is wrong. For example, Benjamin Thompson, (Count Rumford) thought *heat* to be a kind of substance that is communicated by fire. Therefore, he expected things to have greater mass when heated than when cool. His experiment would then be carefully to weigh some object, perhaps an iron bar, when cool and then again after having heated it significantly. He will then find that the bar has gained no mass. So, he concluded that whatever heat is, it is not a substance with mass, and he will suspect that it is not a substance at all. This conclusion was further confirmed when he observed that when brass cannon barrels were bored, the process of boring made them extremely hot. He concluded that heat could not be a substance and began to suspect that heat involved the vibration of tiny particles in the brass. This hypothesis turned out to be right. The "caloric" or heat-substance theory of heat was shown false.

There remains another problem, however. Although the crucial experiment serves well to discredit a false hypothesis, it is not at all clear that any experiment can prove that the hypothesis is true. Scientific inquiry is by its very nature always open to further inquiry. Isaac Newton developed an account of planetary orbits that disproved the Ptolemaic account of the solar system as geocentric. His mathematically expressed laws of gravity and force and motion provided an exact account of planetary and lunar motions. Indeed, the successes of the Twentieth Century space programs, including the successful voyage to the moon, confirmed Newton's formulae. Nevertheless, the conceptions of space, time, and gravity, which are foundational for Newtonian mechanics, have been overturned by Einstein's general theory of relativity. Useful as it continues to be, Newton's theory has been shown to be false. The Newtonian thinker may be able to make it to the moon, but he can no longer claim to understand exactly how it was possible.

From this account, it follows that knowledge inheres not so much in the individual knower, but in the community of inquiry. This is especially evident in the empirical sciences, where every new claim must undergo testing and analysis by the community before it is accepted. Anyone making a new claim or advance must provide a sufficiently precise justification of his claim according to the accepted canons of science and show the procedure by which that claim can be tested. The reasons are straightforward. The individual researcher's experience – the data she has to work with – is necessarily limited, and more importantly, the individual may well have missed something in his analysis. Much as we may admire the intrepid pioneer, we rely ultimately on the results that have been checked and verified. On this, Peirce provocatively remarks, "He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is illogical in all

his inferences, collectively. This is the social principle rooted intrinsically in logic" (Peirce 1965b, 220–21).

What holds in the philosophy of science seems to hold also in everyday experience, in which we do check and correct ourselves by conversing with our fellows. To be sure, this process is much less formal and precise than that of the sciences. How often does it happen that "what everybody knows" is mere prejudice, uniformed by facts? Nevertheless, we all recognize that in most instances no one knows the full story about everything, and we do learn from our family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and complete strangers who talk to us on television. As we hear or read things from others we evaluate them according to a variety of rational criteria – trustworthiness of the source, consistency of the information with other things we know, plausibility, and even the 'cost' of accepting the information. (It is easier to accept that the dinosaurs were killed in an atmospheric cataclysm 65,000,000 years ago than that the manager of the bank where my money is kept is suspected of fraud).

The conception of truth advocated by Peirce in the text cited above, as well as those by Locke (1996, 166), James (1991, 90), Popper (1968, 251ff), Hempel (1965, 217–22), and others amounts to the claim that truth consists in the capacity to form propositions that can generally enable human beings to attain their ends. Truth so conceived is about propositions and one's readiness to act on them. Furthermore, important as some truths may be, we acknowledge that our grasp of truths is fallible. How many people have discovered only as they moved into adulthood that their "Mom" and "Dad" are not their biological parents, that they were adopted? We know that even with the best of care, we cannot attain certainty about the truths we accept and act on. Without embracing Descartes's universal doubt, we all live with some uncertainty about even those matters most important to our survival.

There is, however, a richer understanding of truth. The contributions of Peirce and his successors, especially to the philosophy of science, have provided a good, accurate, and useful account of scientific knowledge. If we pay even closer attention to these arguments, we find the notion of *truth* to be unnecessary. What we want from science are results and useful ideas that enable us to further advance the sciences. However, there is the further question of *truth*, which necessarily has a metaphysical aspect.

ST THOMAS AQUINAS

St Thomas's Aquinas characterizes truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, the conformity of intellect and thing (Thomas Aquinas 1952, 1954, q, 1, a.1; 1952, Ia q. 16, aa.1, 3). That is, truth is in the mind, not only as a 'mental event,' but as

something that forms the intellect. Indeed, those of us who teach, as well as the institutions where we teach, see our mission as the *forming of minds*. The young man, intrigued by the beauty and movements of the stars, finds a program at the university where he can *become* an astronomer. The young woman who lives with a peaceful dog finds wolves fascinating; she wants to *become* a zoologist or perhaps a veterinarian. This capacity of the mind to be formed is why Aquinas, following Aristotle, can say that the mind is "in a way, all things" (Aristoteles 1951, Bk III, ch 4–5). What a person holds to be true forms his mind. Hence, it follows that truth is constituted by more than a set of propositions. Truth conforms the mind – that is, the intellect – to the object known. This is why the student of biology *becomes* a biologist.

We see this negatively in contrast with *ideology*. Ideological systems mimic truth and make practical claims identical to those of truth. Concerning the Communist ideology in his native Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel writes,

> [Ideology] offers a ready answer to any question whatsoever; it can scarcely be accepted only in part, and accepting it has profound implications for human life. In an era when metaphysical and existential certainties are in a state of crisis when people are being uprooted and alienated and are losing their sense of what this world means, this ideology inevitably has a certain hypnotic charm. To wandering humankind it offers an immediately available home: all one has to do is accept it, and suddenly everything becomes clear once more, life takes on new meaning, and all mysteries, unanswered questions, anxiety, and loneliness vanish.

Such an intellectual home is precisely what an understanding of the truth is to provide.

> Of course, one pays dearly for this low-rent home: the price is an abdication of one's reason, conscience, and responsibility, for an essential aspect of this ideology is the consignment of reason and conscience to a higher authority. (Havel 1991, 129–30)

The ideology offers a system of beliefs that are dictated by the higher power. In Havel's case, this was the Communist Party, which was controlled by the nation's overseers in Moscow. Acceptance of the ideology is imposed upon the citizenry to form their lives. Havel's essay continues, "The principle involved here is that the center of power is identical with the center of truth." The intended effect of this is that the citizens' minds are formed by the ideology. They will utter propositions that logically follow from that 'truth,' and their actions will similarly proceed. Within the ideological system, one cannot possibly argue against any particular claim by the authorities because the system is logically self-contained. Hence, Havel argues that the *power* of the *powerless* is to live according to truth and not by lies.

The significance of truth as conformity with the object known is evident in Thomas Aquinas's account of the perfect happiness of man, which can consist

only in the vision of the Divine Essence, that is, of God himself. Because the natural appetite of the intellect, which is called wonder, is to know the essence of a thing, its fulfillment must know the causes of things. Without knowing the cause in its essence, the intellect remains unsatisfied. St Thomas continues:

> If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect knows no more of God than "that He is," the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach simply the First Cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. Wherefore it is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness, the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists, as stated above. (Thomas Aquinas 1952, Ia–IIae q.3, a. 8)

For this vision of the Divine Essence, the human intellect must be conformed not to an intellectual grasp of the species of the Divine Essence, which is beyond the power of any created intellect, but to the Divine Essence itself, which becomes the intelligible form by which the created intellect sees God. The intellect itself becomes "deiform" (Thomas Aquinas 1952, Ia q. 12, a.5). In other words, what belongs to the intellect in its ultimate end is the perfection of the power that belongs to it in this life. The intellect itself is formed by what it knows. In glory, it is formed by God.

An interesting consequence is that those who are in glory know God directly in a way that nothing can be known in this life, where things are known by the intellect's abstraction of the form of the thing. This knowledge by abstraction is similar to what our modern philosophers cited above describe in their epistemology. By the power of his agent intellect, the knower forms the species of the object to be known. This species is in the intellect just as the form is in the object known. But the species need not necessarily be identical with that form. We might say, therefore, that even St Thomas can agree that in this life the human mind cannot know the truth *if* this means knowing for certain that the intellect conforms to the thing known.

Up to this point, Aquinas seems not to help us to achieve the certainty that Descartes and his successors sought. There remains, however, a further aspect, a metaphysical (rather than epistemological) aspect to consider. The human intellect is not alone. It is not a bare instrument of thought. Rather, it participates in the divine intellect. In the preface to the Second Part of his *Summa Theologiae*, St Thomas writes,

> Since, as Damascene states (De Fide Orthod. II, 12), man is said to be made to God's image, in so far as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free-will and self-movement, […] it remains for us to treat of His image, i.e., man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions. (Thomas Aquinas 1952, Ia, IIae Prologue)

And further,

> Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end. (Thomas Aquinas 1952, Ia, IIaae q. 91, a. 2)

What this means is that the created intellect – and hence the thinking human being – acts in a way that resembles the divine intellect. Therefore, we may speak of our human thinking as one side of a dialogue with the Creator. This conception of our participation in the divine mind with whom we are in a kind of dialogue provides a warrant for our confidence in the truth. We may be wrong in our understanding of some features of the natural world – Aristotle thought thunder to be a quenching of fire in the clouds (Aristoteles 1952, 93b 8–14) – without being condemned to permanent error. Even if we need 2,200 more years after Aristotle to learn that thunder results from a massive discharge of static electricity, our dialogue with the Creator is within the context of truth. This grounding of our thought in truth does not guarantee more accurate science. However, as we shall see shortly, it means that our knowledge can be true. Before passing on to St John Paul II's analysis of truth, let us briefly consider the relationship between truth and the good.

In his discussion of the good, St Thomas asks whether the good in its essential character is before the true. His answer is subtle, involving the distinction between the order of perfections, on the one hand, and the things perfected on the other. He writes,

> If the true and good are considered in themselves, then the true is prior in meaning to good since the true perfects something specifically, whereas good perfects not only specifically but also according to the existence which the thing has in reality. (Thomas Aquinas 1952, 1954, q. 21, a. 3)

What this means is that the intellect of the rational being is perfected by the true insofar as it possesses the true. This says more than that knowledge enables the thinker to plan more effectively and develop his scientific theories. Indeed, such knowledge is secondary to the perfection of the mind. The intellect is not perfected by its knowledge of sensible things insofar as they are sensible but only by virtue of something higher than sensible things and their principles such as the intelligible light (Thomas Aquinas 1952, Ia, IIae q. 3, a. 6).

For a deeper understanding of this, we turn to Pope St John Paul II.

JOHN PAUL II

Truth is central to the thought of Karol Wojtyła/ Pope John Paul II. He frequently cites the Scriptural text, "You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). His important encyclical on moral theology titled *Veritatis Splendor*, begins, "The splendor of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Gen* 1:26). Truth enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord" (John Paul II 1993, Prologue). In this encyclical and *Fides et Ratio* he emphasizes the human mind's capacity to know truth. Furthermore, he insists that the person can know the truth with certainty (John Paul II 1998, no. 5, 8, 13, 21, 26, 32, et passim). We note immediately that this position – that truth can be known with certainty – conflicts with contemporary conceptions of truth as outlined above. For instance, the most fundamental religious truth, that God exists, is widely contested even among the most intelligent and educated members of our society. Arguments for the existence of God, whether the ontological arguments of Anselm or Descartes, the metaphysical proofs of Aquinas, or Paley's cosmological arguments, hardly meet with widespread acceptance among scholars. In any case, arguments often fail to move minds and hearts. And yet, Pope John Paul II insists on the certainty of some of these truths.

Throughout his pre-papal career, Karol Wojtyła worked as a philosophy professor, holding the Chair of Ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin, attending conferences where he delivered scholarly papers, and writing books. He was well aware of the controversies and theories of truth in the philosophical community. Indeed, he alludes to these in *Fides et Ratio*. Why then does he so confidently refer to and even insist upon the certainty of some truths? The answer arises from his personalism.

Repeatedly throughout *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II frames his discussion in terms of meaning and especially the meaning of life (John Paul II 1998, no. 3, 5–7, 12–13, 23, 26–27, 30, 33, 38, 47–48, 56, 76, 80–81, 91, 94, 102, and 107). The empirical sciences do not concern themselves with *meaning*, except indirectly. Although the astronomer will say that the darkening of the sun means that the earth is passing through the moon's shadow, the meaning in such cases is merely an indication based on physical causation. An eclipse does not mean that an angry god has sent a dragon to eat the sun or anything of that sort. This importance of this is clear in his discussion of the sexual drive in his *Love and Responsibility*. This drive is found in all the higher mammals and is directly related to the biology of reproduction, the laws governing the reproduction of the species. For the human person, however, more is involved in the drive than simply the outworking of biological laws (Wojtyła 2013, 31–42). The human

sexual drive is something that happens in the person which suggests, as it were, a course of action that the person may take. However, the acts consequent upon the impulses of this drive need not occur. Rather, if pursued they are chosen by the acting person according to values that he has embraced, even implicitly. The person's acts take place within a nexus of values among which the person may choose according to his knowledge and embrace of the authentic good (Wojtyła 2021, 325–29, 340–42). Therefore, the coming to be of a new human being is not simply the result of biological laws, but the choice of human persons according to their conception of the good. To be sure, such a choice may not reflect the authentic good, as persons may well yield to their impulses and the apparent good that these represent. A person may very well irresponsibly choose the acts for which he is responsible. Nevertheless, the human act is a meaningful event, chosen by the person within a context that the person finds meaningful.

Let us note here that when a person finds nothing meaningful in his world or his life prospects, he will quickly fall into depression and anomy. This is why John Paul II insists that man is and must be in search of meaning.

> It is the nature of the human being to seek the truth. […] Their search looks toward an ulterior truth which would explain the meaning of life. And it is, therefore, a search which can reach its end only in reaching the absolute. […] Such a truth – vital and necessary as it is for life – is attained not only by way of reason but also through trusting acquiescence to other persons who can guarantee the authenticity and certainty of the truth itself. (John Paul II 1993, no. 33)

We note that John Paul II insists on the necessity for "trusting acquiescence" to other persons. We do well to trace the line of reasoning by which he gets to this point. He begins by referring to truths that depend on immediate evidence or experimental confirmation, the mode of truth proper to everyday life and scientific research. Beyond these are religious and philosophical truths. Religious truths themselves are grounded in philosophy, at least to an extent. Furthermore, philosophy, so maintains John Paul II, is not restricted only to "the sometimes ephemeral teachings of professional philosophers. All men and women, as I have noted, are in some sense philosophers and have their philosophical conceptions with which they direct their lives" (John Paul II 1998, no. 30). An important point. If philosophy is the study of the most general characteristics of reality: being, truth, goodness, and beauty, then every human being is necessarily concerned about philosophical themes.

Nevertheless, most people do not think clearly about philosophical ideas. Perhaps the first to discover this was Socrates, who made it his business to find someone in Athens wiser than himself. (Plato 1961) As he questioned those who were reputedly wise, he found that none could explain clearly the nature of temperance, justice, piety, and the other virtues. There is, to be sure, a certain air of intellectual arrogance with Socrates. He (and Plato who interprets his

words) identified virtue with intellectual knowledge in such a way that one could not have the virtue of, for instance, temperance if he could not define it. Nevertheless, Socrates was onto an important truth. His famous 'Socratic method' was a disciplined way of inquiry into important ideas to clarify their meaning. Indeed, the reason that most of Plato's writings are dialogues is that this ancient author maintained that a true understanding of anything important is grasped only through argument with others. Very much like Peirce in the 20th century, Socrates (and his disciple, Plato) believed the acquisition of knowledge to be inherently social.

From a quite different perspective, a perspective formed expressly by the Christian faith, we can cite the authority of St John of the Cross.

> Whoever wants to stand alone without the support of a master and guide will be like a tree that stands alone in a field without a proprietor. No matter how much the tree bears, passers-by will pick the fruit before it ripens. […]
>
> The virtuous soul that is alone and without a master is like a lone burning coal; it will grow colder rather than hotter.
>
> Those who fall alone remain alone in their fall, and they value their soul little since they entrust it to themselves alone. (John of the Cross 2017, 86)

One might expect St John of the Cross, the Spanish mystic and author of *Dark Night of the Soul*, to emphasize the solitary encounter with God, independent of human intervention. We know that this great saint was imprisoned by brothers of his own religious order, from which prison he had to make a bold escape. However, he maintains that the consecrated religious needs a master to advance safely in the spiritual life.

For his part, Pope John Paul II recognizes this social principle, writing,

> Human beings are not made to live alone. […] From birth, therefore, they are immersed in traditions which give them not only a language and a cultural formation but also a range of truths in which they believe almost instinctively. (John Paul II 1998, no. 31)

Some may well maintain that to depend on believing others is a weakness and that by its powers the human mind should be able to attain any truth. John Paul II acknowledges a certain tension here. Indeed, one must often advance beyond mere belief by making his own the beliefs of others. This kind of passage from belief into rationally founded knowledge is a common human experience, as the adolescent or young person questions or even doubts what his parents have taught him and only after searching for evidence on his own does he accept what his parents had taught. He may reject it, or in his search for truth, he may even come to surpass his parents' knowledge. In any case, we must note two things about this process. First, the testing of beliefs received from another is itself a kind of

dialogue, often interior but often carried on explicitly. Secondly, the passing on of beliefs from one generation to the next or within a society and its networks is immensely rich. One cannot question, much less repudiate *all* familial, much less social beliefs, simply because they are so many and so interconnected. None of us is truly an independent freethinker, autonomously reasoning to the truth on his own.

John Paul II carries this analysis yet a step further, observing that belief "involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring." He continues,

> Rather, what is sought is the truth of the person – what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within. Human perfection, then, consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving with others. (John Paul II 1998, no. 32)

Of course, not everyone in a person's life is a trustworthy witness to the truth. Even children must (and do) learn that others may lie or simply speak from ignorance; they cannot believe everything they hear in the schoolyard. Sometimes even those who love a person will lie or misrepresent the truth. We need only think about family secrets concerning an uncle or grandparent who was imprisoned for some crime. Parents or older siblings will hide the truth from younger children. But even this need not undermine the truth. John Paul II writes,

> At the same time, however, knowledge through belief, grounded as it is on trust between persons, is linked to truth: in the act of believing, men and women entrust themselves to the truth which the other declares to them. (John Paul II 1998, no. 32)

The central question, therefore, becomes that of trust. Whom can the person trust to lead him to the truth? St John Paul II directs our attention to the martyrs who have sacrificed their own lives for the sake of truth. Even the witness that falls short of the martyr's dramatic testimony can be compelling. We form our conceptions of good and evil dialectically in dialogue, as it were, with others, a dialogue that is marked not only by communication via words and symbols but also by actions. We can read the truthfulness of another's words by the visible consistency of words and acts. And the question of the good is central. What is good? What is worth having? And what is worth doing? This is the question to which John Paul II constantly returns as the question of the meaning of life. "This search looks not only to the attainment of truths which are partial, empirical, or scientific; nor is it only in individual acts of decision-making that people seek the true good" (John Paul II 1998, no. 33). The good that is sought is the absolute. If this is to be founded on belief in another, then the trust in that other must be

absolute. But is such trust even conceivable? Agreeing with Plato, John Paul II maintains that the only way that the best context for sound philosophy is in friendship. He continues,

> From all that I have said to this point, it emerges that men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable – a search for truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves. (John Paul II 1998, 33)

Of course, the person to whom one most securely entrusts himself is Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word.

At this point, we do well to consider another of John Paul II's writings. In his theology of the body, John Paul II turns his attention to an apparent oddity in the Scriptures. In Genesis 4:1 we read, "Now Adam *knew* Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain." Many modern translations render the Hebrew word *yada* as "united himself with' or something similar, but the literal meaning of the Hebrew word is "knew." This act that is characterized as knowledge is physical and not a proposition. Having known his wife, Adam was not logically entitled to deduce any further conclusions. St John Paul II addresses this odd usage.

> When it speaks of "knowledge" here, even if only because of the poverty of its language, the Bible indicates the deepest essence of shared married life. … Thus, with that biblical "knew", […], we find ourselves face to face with, on the one hand, the direct expression of human intentionality (because it is proper to knowledge) and, on the other hand, the whole reality of conjugal life and conjugal union, in which man and woman become "one flesh." […]
>
> Thus, they reveal themselves to one another with that specific depth of their human "I," which precisely reveals itself also through their sex, masculinity and femininity. (John Paul II 2006, 207)

If truth, or even knowledge of truth, were only a matter of forming symbolic representations of a state of affairs, then this application of *knowledge* to sexual intercourse would be nonsense. However, if the truth is the *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, the correspondence of the thing and understanding, then this biblical use of *knowledge* makes sense. As noted above, John Paul II wrote about the truth gained in an interpersonal relationship, "what is sought is the truth of the person – what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within" (John Paul II 1998, no. 32). The *knowledge* by which Eve conceived her son Cain was not simply the performance of a bodily act, but it is the core of the relationship she had with her husband. The marriage relationship, as St John Paul II understands it, is constituted by the total gift of self between husband and wife the mutual relationship of entrustment each to the other. (John Paul II 2006, 431, 439, 633)

The constant theme of *Fides et Ratio* is that the human search for truth is inextricably related to the search for meaning and in particular for the ultimate meaning of life.

> From all that I have said to this point, it emerges that men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable – a search for truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves. (John Paul II 1998, no. 33)

The marriage relationship is the realization of a search for a person to whom one might commit himself. Indeed, it is a commitment of self. This knowledge of one's spouse amounts to a reinterpretation of one's life, which interpretation is realized in the procreation of another human being like themselves.

> In this "knowledge," in which they give rise to a being similar to themselves […], the man and the woman are "carried off" together, as it were, both taken into possession by the very humanity which they, in union and reciprocal "knowledge" want to express anew and take possession of anew… (John Paul II 2006, 215)

The truth of this knowledge is possible because the body, as male and female, has a meaning, specifically a *spousal* meaning. Man and woman "'communicate' based on the communion of persons in which they become a mutual gift for each other, through femininity and masculinity. […] We will call this meaning [of the body] "spousal" (John Paul II 2006, 178). The body in its femininity and masculinity constitutes a meaningful element of a *language* which John Paul II expressly refers to as the "language of the body" (John Paul II 2006, 532ff.), by which the man and woman express their unity. Just as we can use the English (or Polish or French) language to tell the truth or to mislead, by this language of the body the man and woman can express themselves truthfully or falsely. From the earliest days of human existence, we have misused this language of our bodies to mislead, seduce, and abuse each other. The realization of the conjugal union is often imperfect, and truth is not always in the knowledge created by the conjugal act.

John Paul II does not leave his discussion of the interpersonal character of truth at the level of relationships between persons, but he takes it directly to "the truth, which God reveals to us in Jesus Christ. […] He is the *eternal Word* in whom all things were created, and he is the *incarnate word*, who in his entire person reveals the Father" (John Paul II 1998, no. 34). At this point we are reminded of the text so important to Pope John Paul II from the Second Vatican Council, "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light" (Second Vatican Council 1965, no. 22). In this same section of *Fides et Ratio*, this truth revealed in Jesus Christ is not at all opposed to scientific or philosophical truth. Although most cosmologists believe

that the universe is 13.8 billion years old, some have argued that its age is 26 billion years. Having faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, sheds no light on this discussion. Christians believe that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, but our faith says nothing about the fact that the tyrannosaurus rex is a distant ancestor of the modern chicken.

CONCLUSION

The issue confronting us at the outset of this paper is that of the nature of truth and the status of our knowledge. In his *Meditations*, René Descartes sought certainty of knowledge, a basis of knowing beyond all doubt (Descartes 1993). He found his answer first in the absolute certainty of his existence and in "clear and distinct ideas," which are found in mathematics. From the certainty of his existence – "I am a thinking thing, a thing that thinks" – and the idea of infinity, which he understands (or claims to understand) clearly and distinctly, he reasons to the existence of a good God who will not let him be deceived concerning the objects of his experience. He infers, therefore, that with the reality of his experience guaranteed by God, he can apply mathematical tools to the objects of experience and attain the knowledge that he seeks. Using the system of Cartesian coordinates in three dimensions, the location of every object in space and its movement can be determined and described mathematically. Within a century, Isaac Newton had applied Descartes's analytic geometry to the structure of the solar system and the motions of falling bodies, and shortly after that, the vision of the universe as a three-dimensional structure occupied by particles of matter governed by mathematical laws dominated the worlds of science and, indeed, philosophy.

At first glance, Descartes shows himself to have inverted the question of truth. Where Thomas Aquinas argues from experience – "It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion" – to show that God exists (Aquinas 1952, Ia q. 2 a.3), Descartes maintains that he must first show that God exists to rely on his senses. Without this Divine guarantee, he has no assurance or even warrant to apply mathematics to the physical world. Descartes appeals to God simply to connect his mathematics with the real world. Once this is done, he has no further need of God.[1] Nevertheless, we can find an important element of truth in Descartes's turn to God.

The account of truth at the opening of this paper is an accurate account of the nature of scientific inquiry. Such disciplined inquiry can indeed bring us closer to

[1] This is not to besmirch the French philosopher's reputation. He was, for all I know, a faithful, practicing Catholic – when he was not writing philosophy.

the truth insofar as it enables us to conform our minds to a model of reality that enables us to engage successfully with the object of our inquiry and to formulate theories that will tend more accurately to express the form of that reality. However, the object of empirical science is only one aspect of what is real. Karol Wojtyła makes this clear in his discussion of the biological order, in the context of which we can understand the workings of the human reproductive system. He writes,

> The "biological order," as a work of the human mind separating some elements of this order from what exists, has man as its immediate author. […] The case is different with the "order of nature." It constitutes a group of cosmic relations that occur among beings that exist. It is thus the order of existence, and the whole order present in existence finds its basis in the one who is the unceasing source of this existence, in God the Creator. (Wojtyła 2013, 41)

Wojtyła does not deny the legitimacy of the biological sciences or the accuracy of their results. What he does deny is that biology can yield the entire truth about the human body and its procreative powers. This explains a remarkable passage in Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body where he discusses Adam's exclamation upon first seeing Eve, "flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones." This expression:

> […] takes on precisely this meaning: the body reveals man. This concise formula already contains all that human science will ever be able to say about the structure of the body as an organism, about its vitality, about its particular sexual physiology, etc. (John Paul II 2006, 164)

"The body reveals the man."[2] Although this phrase does not mention the inner workings of the body and its systems, John Paul II remarkably says that it tells all that science can say. What can he mean by this? We note first that this comment interprets the text, "This one at last is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones" (Genesis 2:23). Before this, God had presented man with the various animals to see if there was among them a suitable partner. The man named them, showing his intellectual superiority over them, but did not find a suitable partner. It was only when he first saw the woman that he pronounced these words, recognizing that here at last was one like him, a person with intelligence and a suitable helpmate. John Paul II's text continues,

> In this first expression of the man, "flesh from my flesh" contains also a reference to that by which the body is authentically human and thus to that which determines man as a person, that is, as a being that is, also in all its bodiliness, "similar" to God.

[2] The original Italian text reads "il corpo rivela l'uomo." Unlike the English text, the Italian includes the article before "uomo" (John Paul II 1985, 60).

From this point on and until the end of the work, John Paul II speaks of the meaning of the body, which is not simply a sophisticated mammalian organism. The body has a meaning, and in its masculinity or femininity, it speaks a language in truth or falsehood (John Paul II 2006, 183, 205, 221, 410, 441, 538). As an image of God, the human being able to represent God, albeit imperfectly. By his power of reason, he participates in the divine mind. And as a corporeal being, composed of body and soul, the body is that by which this representation takes place. Similarly, if God loves completely and perfectly, so can the human person love disinterestedly and generously.

Consequently, John Paul II can later argue that the first two chapters of Genesis, which are not scientific treatises, enable us to find the basis of an "adequate anthropology, which seeks to understand and interpret man in what is essentially human" (John Paul II 2006, 178). In a footnote, he comments further, "It [adequate anthropology] is opposed to the reductionism of the 'naturalistic' kind, which often goes hand in hand with the theory of evolution about man's beginnings." Therefore, the man who exclaimed "flesh from my flesh and bone from my bone" can *know* his wife in the sense that no physician or biologist could know her. In that knowledge he and she can construct and mutually interpret their inter-personal communion and do so in truth.

"[T]he body reveals man." This proposition does not intend to replace all that biological science can say. Rather, it addresses the foundational reality about the nature of the human being, which is not merely an object in the world but also a personal subject. It is only as a personal being that the human being can be understood. Unlike non-rational beings, the person – *individua substantia rationalis naturae* (Wojtyła 2013, 4) – is known not by analysis of his essence as a rational animal, but ethically, as a moral being who in virtue of his rational nature can determine himself as good or evil. The person can love, that is, give herself unselfishly for the good of another.

The human person finds himself in a world created by God, who is a Trinity of Persons. This world was made by and through God for us. He has given us intelligent minds so that we can make our way in the world by study and experimentation to improve our ability to survive well. These works of science are never perfect, but they can bring remarkable results. Appendicitis no longer needs to be a fatal affliction. It is concerning such workings of intelligence that C. S. Peirce is right. However, as spiritual beings, we are destined for more. Human intelligence is enlightened by and shares in the divine intelligence, even if only imperfectly. Therefore, the project of coming to know the world is analogous to a dialogue with its Creator. Truth is anchored in the truthfulness of the One who planned the universe and brought it into being. It is for us to know and understand this world he has given us so that we may search for him and know him more perfectly. This project of understanding is the search for truth.

POZNANIE PRAWDY

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł proponuje wyjaśnienie pojęcia prawdy wobec trudności, które pojawiają się we współczesnej filozofii nauki. Wielu współczesnych filozofów redukuje pojęcie prawdy do weryfikowalności i praktycznej stosowalności twierdzeń. Taka koncepcja adekwatnie tłumaczy wyniki badań naukowych, ale nie tłumaczy natury prawdy jako takiej. Tomasz z Akwinu zdefiniował prawdę nie tylko w kategoriach twierdzeń, ale jako *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. Pojęcie to głęboko wpływa na Tomaszową koncepcję błogosławieństwa jako intelektualnej wizji Boga jako najwyższej Prawdy. Intelekt w tym życiu antycypuje tę wizję poprzez uczestnictwo w Boskim Intelekcie. W *Fides et Ratio* papież Jan Paweł II podkreśla centralne znaczenie prawdy w poszukiwaniu przez człowieka sensu życia; poszukiwaniu, w którym częściowe odpowiedzi nie są wystarczające. Poszukując sensu, człowiek opiera się nie tylko na własnych badaniach, ale także na przekonaniach otrzymanych od innych. W istocie wierzyć, oznacza powierzyć się innym. Paradygmatycznym tego przykładem jest akt wiary w Jezusa Chrystusa. W swojej teologii ciała Jan Paweł II wskazuje również na poznanie męża i żony w ich zjednoczeniu seksualnym, dzięki któremu może powstać nowy człowiek. Sens tego zjednoczenia mężczyzny i kobiety opiera się na oblubieńczym znaczeniu ciała. Dlatego prawdę można znaleźć w osobistej komunikacji między jego rozumnymi stworzeniami, komunikacji opartej ostatecznie na dialogu ze Stwórcą.

S ł o w a k l u c z o w e : wiedza, wiara, sens, prawda, teologia ciała, filozofia nauki.

KNOWING TRUTH

Abstract

This article proposes to elucidate the concept of truth before difficulties that arise in contemporary philosophy of science. Many modern philosophers reduce the conception of truth to verifiability and the practical applicability of propositions. Such a conception adequately accounts for the results of scientific research but fails to account for the nature of truth as such. Thomas Aquinas defined truth not simply in terms of propositions but as adaequatio intellectus et rei. This notion profoundly affects Thomas's conception of beatitude as the intellectual vision of God as supreme Truth. The intellect in this life anticipates that vision by participating in the Divine Intellect. In Fides et Ratio, Pope St. John Paul II emphasizes the centrality of truth in the human person's search for the meaning of life, a search in which partial answers do not suffice. In his search for meaning, the person relies not only on his own research but also on beliefs received from others. Indeed, to believe is to entrust oneself to another. The paradigmatic instance of this is the act of belief in Jesus Christ. In his Theology of the Body, John Paul II points also to the knowledge of husband and wife in their sexual union by which a new person

may come into existence. The meaningfulness of this union of man and woman is founded on the spousal meaning of the body. Hence, truth is to be found in the personal intercommunications among his rational creatures, a communication founded ultimately upon dialogue with the Creator.

K e y w o r d s : knowledge, belief, meaning, truth, theology of the body, philosophy of science.

DIE ERKENNTNIS DER WAHRHEIT

Abstrakt

Dieser Artikel schlägt eine Erklärung des Begriffs der Wahrheit angesichts der Schwierigkeiten vor, die in der modernen Wissenschaftsphilosophie auftreten. Viele zeitgenössische Philosophen reduzieren den Begriff der Wahrheit auf die Überprüfbarkeit und praktische Anwendbarkeit von Aussagen. Ein solches Konzept erklärt die Ergebnisse wissenschaftlicher Forschung adäquat, erklärt aber nicht die Natur der Wahrheit als solche. Thomas von Aquin definierte Wahrheit nicht nur in Bezug auf Aussagen, sondern als *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. Dieser Begriff beeinflusst tiefgreifend das Thomas' Konzept der Glückseligkeit als höchste Wahrheit der intellektuellen Vision Gottes. Der Intellekt in diesem Leben antizipiert diese Vision durch Teilhabe am Göttlichen Intellekt. In „Fides et Ratio" betont Papst Johannes Paul II. die zentrale Bedeutung der Wahrheit in der Suche des Menschen nach dem Sinn des Lebens, einer Suche, bei der Teilantworten nicht ausreichen. Bei der Suche nach Sinn stützt sich der Mensch nicht nur auf die eigene Forschung, sondern auch auf Überzeugungen, die er von anderen erhalten hat. In der Tat bedeutet Glauben, sich anderen anzuvertrauen. Das paradigmatische Beispiel dafür ist der Glaubensakt an Jesus Christus. In seiner „Theologie des Leibes" weist Johannes Paul II. auch auf die Erkenntnis von Mann und Frau in ihrer sexuellen Vereinigung hin, durch die ein neuer Mensch entstehen kann. Der Sinn dieser Vereinigung von Mann und Frau basiert auf der bräutlichen Bedeutung des Körpers. Daher kann die Wahrheit in der persönlichen Kommunikation zwischen seinen vernünftigen Geschöpfen gefunden werden, einer Kommunikation, die letztendlich auf dem Dialog mit dem Schöpfer basiert.

S c h l ü s s e l w ö r t e r : Wissen, Glaube, Sinn, Wahrheit, Theologie des Leibes, Wissenschaftsphilosophie.

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