



Faith and reason in the unity of truth in the thought of st. Thomas Aquinas and John Paul II. On the XXV anniversary of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*¹

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Abstract: Both St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John Paul II regarded man's pursuit of truth as his vocation. He encouraged a bold trust in the use of reason in theology and a clear awareness of the limitations of reason. The fact that reason cannot prove faith does not render it powerless; on the contrary, Thomas provides evidence for unwavering confidence in the capacity of the believing reason. The call to seek faith and reason in unity with truth is not easy, as culture has seen deficiencies and errors regarding the truth about man, his faith, and the possibilities of knowledge that reach down to the very foundation. There is a continuous need to rediscover the meaning and purpose of human life and its values, through the belief in the possibility of truth attained through reason and through reasonable faith. Following in the footsteps of Thomas, John Paul II, in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, aims to inspire human love for the embrace of truth, which is not purely a theoretical goal but is essential for guiding one's life. The purpose of this article is to highlight various difficulties and solutions in the search for coherence between faith and reason and briefly signal the necessity of prior knowledge and application of metaphysical and anthropological theology. To achieve this goal, the thoughts of Saint Thomas, whose work constitutes a fundamental part of the Church's teaching, are presented, and for the reinforcement of Thomistic arguments, the content of Pope John Paul II's contemporary encyclical *Fides et Ratio* is utilized, which points to the writings of Thomas as helpful in the maturation of human knowledge toward full human wisdom. Another important message of the article is a better understanding of the issues discussed, which, when reinterpreted and from the abundance of content, appropriately justified, can regain their lost power. The structure of the article facilitates the analysis of the presented issue in the context of understanding integral anthropology.

Keywords: faith, reason, truth, unity, integrity.

1. Contemporary Background of Reflections on the Relationship between Faith and Science

Aquinas taught about the harmony of the unity of faith and reason but was aware of the threats regarding the relationship between faith and natural knowledge and the consequences of erroneous reasoning. Thomas Aquinas is also esteemed as a theologian and apologist of Christianity, seeking a rational connection to revealed truths based on Sacred Scripture. His thoughts on the relationship between faith and reason were acknowledged by St. John Paul II in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Following in the footsteps of Thomas,

John Paul II analyzed the connections between faith and reason, faith and science, encouraging people of science to creatively interpret and understand St. Thomas and his apologetic message. John Paul II, promoting creative, diligent scientific work, recognized the two most common anthropological errors, awareness and understanding of which can be helpful in interpreting various philosophical trends related to man and his actions. The first is emphasizing the self-sufficiency and creativity of man even in the realm of truth and goodness, and the second is depriving man of his most human faculties—knowledge of truth and discernment between good and evil (Zdybicka, 1995, p. 192).

¹ Article in polish language: Wiara i rozum w jedności prawdy w myśli św. Tomasza z Akwinu i św. Jana Pawła II. W XXV rocznicę ogłoszenia encykliki *Fides et Ratio*, https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2023_4Groc.pdf

Modern times are characterized by a specific attitude towards science, where empirical approaches and factual scientific evidence are highly valued. This overemphasis on scientific evidence comes at the expense of other ways of knowledge and can lead to errors. There are truths accepted only through testimony that can be questioned scientifically and philosophically, but that doesn't make them less valuable. Debates questioning non-empirical methods influence thinking about the relationship between faith and reason. Religion is attributed to the heart, but it's surprising that the spiritual struggle concerns the mind. The belief that dogmas confine themselves to prejudices, while science leads to higher levels of knowledge, can give rise to numerous questions and objections regarding the conflict between faith and reason, faith and science. Reason is commonly reduced to science, based on experiments, thereby narrowing the concept of truth. Truth is increasingly associated with facts or information scientifically verified. In the minds of many, there is a conviction that an equal sign can be placed between reason and science. Similar opinions pertain to truth, often equated by many with a proposition verified by science. It is therefore worth pausing at Thomas's interpretation of truth, who, like Aristotle, linked truth to the act of cognition and agreement (adequacy), but the conclusions were reversed. For Aristotle, truth resulted from cognition, while for Thomas, cognition is the result of a truth inherent in things (Thomas, 2018, p. 168). According to Aquinas, truth is not a derivative of thought and cognition, but permeates and determines the entirety of being and is given to humans along with things. The being of things precedes the concept of truth, and knowledge is the result of some truth contained in things (Ibid., p. 284-285).²

The reduction of reason to science and scientific thinking and the perception of truth as what science says about the world represent a kind of ideology of scientism. Overrating science makes it an inaccurate

interpreter in many cases and affects the organization of the world according to an excessive, imposed scheme that leads to rationalization. In such a case, where is the place for Christian faith, which, according to Thomas and John Paul II, should be reasonable? "The rationality of Christian faith fundamentally differs primarily from the rationality inherent in the sciences. While the latter is exclusively theoretical and epistemological in nature, the rationality of faith also encompasses practical aspects. Christian faith does not serve to satisfy human cognitive curiosity; rather, it is a way of being, aimed at attaining eschatological fulfillment" (Krokos, 2009, p. 55).

Continuing in this spirit, attention should be drawn to two fundamental points worth considering. Firstly, science is one thing, scientism is another. Visible trends of recent centuries develop a new understanding of the world, with knowledge supported by evidence. Science continually progresses, bringing benefits and insights into the natural world, but it is essential to remember its limitations. Scientific methods are not meant to understand everything; they answer specific questions in specific fields. Neither individual sciences nor all together can encompass everything. Modern science cannot answer whether God exists or what characteristics He has, what the meaning and purpose of life are because it is tailored to resolve issues in the natural world. Science doesn't provide ultimate moral resolutions; it may assist in constructing weapons but not in deciding when to use them. Many, especially young scientists, lean towards subjectivism as a good solution for the direction of scientific research. The secularization of education causes many researchers to be immersed in scientism without realizing that science is not the proper compass but one of the cognitive forms (Legge, 2016).

Secondly, reason is not identical to science, and truth is not confirmed solely by scientific means. There is a broader and deeper understanding of reason available to humans. According to Thomas, every person has the same nature and the ability to use the

2 St. Thomas writes about truth in the Disputed Questions on Truth: "Truth is found in the human or divine intellect (...) in other things, truth is found by reason of their relation to the intellect (...). Therefore, truth is in the divine intellect in a proper and primary sense, while in the human intellect, though in a proper sense, it is secondary. In things, truth is in an improper and secondary sense, as it exists only in relation to one of those two truths. Thus, the truth in the divine intellect is only one, and from it, numerous truths originate in the human intellect. The truths in things are numerous, just as the being of things" (Thomas Aquinas 2018, p. 51-52).

gift of reason. Man also has access to certain parts of God's light—"Blessed is the man who is exercised in wisdom and who reflects on her ways in his heart, and ponders her secrets" (Sirach 14:20-21) (John Paul II, 1998, [16]).

"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." People can learn to contemplate the truth using both "wings" of faith and reason. However, contemporary culture proposes their separation (John Paul II, 1998, [1]). There is a growing belief that one must choose between living as a fervent believer or as an intelligent and enlightened person. Narrowing the thinking about faith to a purely epistemological fact, accepting only what is evident, distorts the perception of reality and impoverishes spiritual life (Giertych 2012, s. 23). In the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II argues that reality analyzed through reason should be perceived and analyzed in a way that faith is not excluded from this process. Faith does not deprive man of autonomy but makes him aware that God reveals and acts in the events studied (Ibid, [16]).

As John Paul II wrote, St. Thomas was distinguished by the courage of truth, freedom of spirit, and intellectual honesty. It is crucial to remember a significant insight emphasized by John Paul II in the encyclical—the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of maturing human knowledge into full wisdom (Ibid, [43]). Despite the intuition emphasizing the wisdom descending from above, he reminded of other complementary forms of wisdom—philosophical wisdom based on the capacities of reason and theological wisdom that uses Revelation to explore the contents of faith to reach the mystery of God Himself (Ibid, [44]). According to John Paul II, the contemporary world and the Church need integral anthropology, which involves synthesizing philosophical truth with the truth of God's Revelation. In the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, he speaks of man's vocation to seek truth that surpasses human understanding (John Paul II, 1998, [5]). Only the full truth about man can serve as the basis for the harmonious development of human morality (Zdybicka, 1999, p. 191-208).

2. Anthropology of St. Thomas Aquinas

Many theological concepts examining the Trinitarian God question the compatibility of the truth of Holy Scripture with metaphysical knowledge. If we accept this assumption, metaphysical analysis would complicate the theological understanding of God (Levering, 2016, p. 11). Levering, in his analysis of the alleged opposition between biblical and metaphysical ways of reflection, concludes, based on studies of the thought of St. Thomas, that conflict may arise when "theologians cease to recognize contemplation as the legitimate goal of Trinitarian theology. In such a case, metaphysics loses its role in contemplative union with the living God revealed in Holy Scripture" (ibid., p. 13).

For Thomas, anthropology stems from theology (*sacra doctrina*—sacred doctrine)³ and is rooted in it. Any discourse on Christian faith by Aquinas always leads in the context of anthropological exposition. His anthropology is primarily based on explaining the faculties of the mind. In the discussion of faith and its reasonable acceptance, Thomas tends to refrain from turning only towards one's "self." Before delving into Thomas's specific concept of man, it is worthwhile to mention a few assumptions from metaphysics (philosophy of being) to better understand what and who man is according to Aquinas and what actions result from it. In his teachings on man, Thomas emphasized the importance of metaphysical knowledge. He believed that understanding and accepting the full truth about man is a necessary condition for understanding the existing being and the surrounding reality (John Paul II, 1998, [83]).

Thomas understands that the internal structure of all things is hidden from sensory experience but can be understood and explained through philosophical reflection on reality. According to St. Thomas, every being, regardless of human cognitive efforts, is characterized by the composition of essence and existence. Essence and existence are two aspects or facets of the same object, the same thing. Existence indicates

³ *Sacra Doctrina* – according to Thomas, *sacra doctrina* is *scientia*. Thomas understands this term as similar to today's understanding of the concept of science (Thomas Aquinas, 1960, STh I, q.1, a3, corp, s.32).

whether a thing exists or is, while essence pertains to what it is, what something is, and its nature. Furthermore, every real being, both material and immaterial, is characterized by the composition of potency⁴ (*potentia*) and actualization (*actus*). Potency and actualization are two constitutive factors of every being, both corporeal and spiritual. In this composition, essence fulfills the role of potency, and existence fulfills the role of actualization. While this reality cannot be experienced directly due to its internal complexity, it is derived from reflection on reality—a profound attempt to understand and explain what truly lies within things (Swieżawski, 1995, p.45). Thomas summarized that existence is the actualization of all actualizations, meaning that existence actualizes potencies, and potencies are actualized through existences. “Everything that is done, fulfilled in each thing is such thanks to existence” (ibid).

Only God is free from such composition; His essence is identical to existence. Everything outside of God is compounded of potency (the essence of a given thing) and the actualization of that potency – existence belonging to a given thing. All bodily and spiritual beings (except for God) are composed of essence and existence, but there is a difference in the composition of spiritual and bodily beings. In spiritual beings (angels), the essence is simple and uncompounded. In bodily beings, the essence is composed of potency (matter) and actualization (form). Thomas accepted such composition to justify the existence of diverse things and to demonstrate the difference between real things and creations of the human mind (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 42-45). Thus, in knowable sensory bodily beings, there is a double complexity⁵. The first is the complexity of essence and existence, and the second, within essence, is the complexity of potency (matter) and actualization (form). Potency requires a brief explanation, as it is a kind of potentiality to be a body (extended thing) that will occupy space, be quantitatively determined, and composed of elements. The concept of matter

as potentiality in Thomas’s time had nothing to do with matter as a substance or a physical thing. Potency is something that cannot exist on its own and is in potentiality to be an extended thing (e.g., a body). What can actualize potency, give it shape, is referred to in metaphysical language as form. Matter and form are thus the constitutive elements of the essence of material beings, including, of course, humans (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 82-83).

Metaphysical considerations may seem challenging, but it is worth undertaking them to understand the fundamental foundations of Thomas’s concept of man. None of the bodily beings can be pure matter or pure form; rather, they are a composition of these two elements, forming a distinct unity and whole, each being a separate substance. Thomas lists five degrees of perfection for all beings, with humans situated at the highest level. In the real world, all living entities can be divided into two kingdoms: the kingdom of natural beings and the products (Thomas, 1986, p. 13). Apart from this division, there is nothing in the material world. When you look closely, there are not many natural beings; rather, there are creations. The unity that characterizes creations is bestowed by living organisms (from animals to humans), so it does not arise from the nature of things. Thomas emphasizes the existence of natural beings and points out that even the smallest of them, displaying even primitive life, unquestionably has greater value than entire masses of manufactured matter. Similarly, Thomas emphasizes that the manifestation of sensory knowledge surpasses biological organisms that do not exhibit such cognition. Furthermore, even one act of intellectual knowledge and the act of free will that characterize humans are infinitely more valuable than everything that occurs at lower levels. This line of reasoning leads Thomas to the consideration of the supernatural and the order of grace. “One act performed in a state of grace is infinitely more valuable than everything that takes place in the order of nature” (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 87).

4 In every, even the smallest child, there is the potentiality (*potentia*) to develop into an adult, according to Thomas; it is the actual power inherent in things, a real possibility of becoming something that one is not yet. This potentiality actualizes itself in stages (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 43).

5 Thomas of Aquinas, in addition to the compositions of being from matter and form, substance and accident, adds the composition of essence and existence (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 42-43).

Moving on to the explanation of man, it must be emphasized once again that there are only beings composed of matter and form, and matter cannot be actualized without form. There is no bodily being that is pure matter or pure form. All composite beings create some separate unity; however, Thomas emphasizes that true unity is only in God, and all other beings are increasingly less perfect and of varying degrees of perfection, indicating some lack. Yet, all beings reflect the perfection of God⁶ (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 84).

After this introduction, it is necessary to emphasize that Thomas's thesis stating the presence of one shaping form in each natural substance has its translation into the concept of man. Therefore, this metaphysical introduction was essential to better understand the Christian understanding of God and the world. In every being (substance), there is one substantial form (actualization) shaping potency (matter). According to Aquinas, "the actualization is determined by what each thing is in each case. Each specific thing is not pure actualization, but actualization of a particular kind" (Sokolowski, 2015, p. 83).

In living beings and, of course, in man, the substantial form is called the soul⁷. "The human soul is a spiritual substance, but being a spiritual substance, it is also the form of the human body" (Thomas, 1998, p. 75). According to Thomas, wherever there is life, there is a soul shaping a specific being⁸. The soul is the principle of life, admittedly diversified at different levels, but it always serves as the form shaping the entire being. The human soul is primarily spiritual

and rational. The soul is not a person; the whole human is a person. Thomas presents the human soul, which is the form of the body, as an indestructible intellect. "After the destruction of the body, what makes it a form is not destroyed in the soul, but it only ceases to be in act" (Thomas, 2023, p. 221).

In an existing being, the essence of truth is formally actualized. Therefore, truth gives the being the conformity of things with the intellect, and only from this proportionality results the knowledge of things (Thomas, 2018, p. 285).

3. Faith as a theological and intellectual virtue

Thomas delved deeply into revealed truths, recognizing the complementarity of "philosophical wisdom, based on reason's ability to investigate reality within the limits set by its nature, and theological wisdom, based on revelation, examining the contents of faith and reaching the mystery of God himself" (John Paul II, 1998, [44]). Aquinas emphasizes the necessity of theology (*sacra doctrina*) alongside philosophy. It is crucial for reason to maintain the rationality of faith. The object of faith is God, and a science based on God's revelation leads to the salvation of man. Philosophical inquiry cannot solve the mystery of salvation because the truths necessary for salvation surpass the cognitive abilities of reason, and some, although knowable, require arduous efforts and the adaptation of thinkers' minds to such inquiries⁹ (Thomas Aquinas, 1960, ST I, q.1, a.1).

6 Thomas Aquinas enumerates five fundamental types of material beings existing in and around our world. Although these degrees correspond to the contemporary level of physical and natural knowledge, they may still express degrees of perfection among material beings. According to Thomas, these degrees of perfection are: 1. The smallest, invisible, imperceptible particles (*corpora elementaria*). 2. Bodies formed from these smallest elements in the inanimate world. Such beings, inorganic compounds that constitute a self-contained whole and are the basis of their specific properties, Aristotle called substances. 3. The next degrees are living bodies. These are plants. 4. Animals begin where sensory cognition appears (it is worth noting, and Thomas also emphasizes this, that the boundary between the plant and animal worlds is often difficult to establish). 5. The fifth degree of material beings in the living world is humans (Swieżawski, 1995, pp. 84-85).

7 This is an important thesis of Thomas, as it explains that it is not as commonly thought, that the form adds itself to the already shaped substance (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 88).

8 It is worth emphasizing again that the soul is not a substance that descends into the body at some point. Thomas explicitly highlights that the soul constitutes the body (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 89).

9 At this point, one could consider the distinctions between *revelata* and *revelabilia*. Among the revealed truths necessary for salvation, some can be reached through natural reason, but it is beneficial that they have been revealed—these truths Thomas calls *revelabilia* (from *revelare*—to reveal). These are truths, as Thomas confirms, that should be but are not necessarily revealed. On the other hand, *revelata* refers to truths that cannot be reached without revelation, such as the Incarnation, the Holy Trinity, and others (Swieżawski 1995, p.35)..

Faith, as a supernatural gift of God, is simultaneously a conscious and free human act (CCC 179, 180). Thomas connects faith with two gifts of the Holy Spirit—understanding and knowledge. Appealing to faith is an attempt to understand what God says, especially about revealed reality. Faith is the proper understanding of God’s revelation. As Thomas claims, it is the first necessary thing for a Christian, a personal form of knowing God. “It is a spiritual place where human ignorance connects with divine knowledge” (Torrell, 2003, p. 21). The truth of Christian faith surpasses the powers of reason, but truths known by natural reason must be in agreement with revealed truths. Thomas argues that any statement derived from the natural abilities of reason that contradicts revealed truth can be considered true. The emergence of contradiction indicates erroneously drawn conclusions (Thomas Aquinas, 2003, ScG I, p. 31). According to Aquinas, “faith is a power of the mind that kindles eternal life in us and makes the intellect assent to what is not obvious” (Thomas Aquinas, 1960, STh II-II, q.4, a.1).

St. Thomas affirms the reasonableness of faith and presents it as an act of reason, which, under the influence of the will and moved by God’s grace, adheres to the conviction of God’s truth (Thomas Aquinas, 1960, STh II, q.2, a.9). In examining faith, which is based on God’s truthfulness as a convincing motive and is a way of understanding Him, Thomas enumerated its elements worth recalling: the object of faith (the object of faith is what we believe; we can distinguish the formal level—trust and the material level—*credo*. Trust in God is the common denominator), the act of faith, and the effectiveness of faith (Thomas Aquinas, 1960, STh II, q.1, a.1, co).

4. Reason and intellect – the cognitive faculties of man

All humans have the desire to know the truth about the world. In the Middle Ages, during Thomas’s time, two opposing tendencies related to knowledge and action emerged. The first is the revival of the desire to understand the Gospel, and the second is the realization of the research passion of the human mind (Włodek, 2007, p. 6).

Human faculties are recognizable in the actions of humans. St. Thomas’s anthropology largely relies on explaining the actions of man—both cognitive and appetitive.

As a being in a body, capable of quantitative determination and composed of parts, man can transition from images to concepts. This transition occurs through abstraction, by abstracting images from the representations residing in sensory memory. “The active intellect, as Aquinas terms it, is the agent responsible for these transformations, and the potential intellect, according to St. Thomas, generates the concept” (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 142). The active intellect transforms sensory images into concepts. An image is a tool, a product of sensory knowledge taken over by the potential intellect. The illuminating factor, the inner light that acts like everything thanks to God’s light, is the tiny light of the active intellect (*parvum lumen*) (Swieżawski, 1995, p. 141). Aquinas believes that both the potential and active intellects are given to man as clean slates (*tabula rasa*) to be utilized.

5. The Unity of Truth in the Harmony of Faith and Reason – Collaboration between Faith and Science

Is faith irrational, or is there tension between faith and reason? Thomas dedicates significant attention to this issue and identifies three fundamental errors in understanding the relationship between faith and reason.

- Skepticism, which claims that faith is inherently irrational and opposes reason, argues that it cannot be proven, and religion has been debunked by science.
- Fideism mirrors skepticism. Fideists agree that faith contradicts reason, asserting that the Bible is the foundation of truth, and science can be disregarded.
- Subjectivism advocates for a personal, internal, subjective approach.

- Thomas Aquinas contends that faith and reason are not in conflict because there exists a fundamental unity of truth derived from the order of reality. There cannot be something true according to faith that is untrue in the order of science. Truth is not purely subjective or personal; it arises from something external to reason and, therefore, from reality. Thomas emphasizes that since God is the source of reality, He is also the supreme source of the light of reason, Revelation, and the light of faith. Both faith and reason originate from God, and since Truth is one, it is certain that faith and reason will never contradict each other because truth cannot contradict truth.

What if something seems contradictory between faith and reason? Thomas responds that in such cases, the reasoning process contains an error or is based on a misunderstanding of truths of faith, leading to the apparent contradiction. Thomas's view on Christian faith emphasizes its rationality and common sense. Similar to everyday experiences accepted as opinions, reports, and thoughts from others, in faith, humans place trust in God, whom they accept as Truth. In Tradition, such evidence is called signs of the Church's credibility, providing a rational guarantee for Christian faith claims, such as the miracles of Christ confirmed by witnesses or the two-thousand-year coherence of Church teachings. Although the mysteries of faith remain hidden, the human mind cannot comprehend them and may not believe in them, the signs of faith confirm their truth. Confirmation of the Divinity of Christ, the presence of the Holy Trinity, cannot be proven by natural reason. Therefore, Thomas emphasizes the role of supernatural light of faith, accepting their truth without hesitation or reservation as God attests to them (Legge, 2016).

It often appears that faith and reason are in conflict, requiring people to learn how these two ways of contemplating truth can cooperate.

Christian theology assumes the compatibility of reason with faith. Reason seeks the unity of truth, as argued by Aristotle, presenting the principle of non-contradiction. Faith involves non-empirical knowledge (Krapiec, 2023).

Thomas posed a question that also troubled the Fathers of the Church: Can faith be reconciled with reason (philosophical reflection)? According to St. Augustine, faith can be harmonized with philosophy, and religion with reason. However, Thomas sought to complement this statement more fully, arguing that faith and knowledge (science) are different yet complementary fields that cooperate with each other. Thomas clearly differentiated between faith and knowledge, reason and Revelation. However, this distinction does not equate to the mutual contradiction of faith and reason. Reason contributes to direct knowledge of the world using the senses, but Thomas also highlights another type of metaphysical knowledge (beyond experiential) available to rational understanding.

Science allows discovering new possibilities in all aspects of human life. Successes may lead to viewing science as the only valuable method of acquiring knowledge. Scientific methods have proven effective in understanding the material world, but they are not the sole source of knowledge.

Faith and reason remain in harmony, cooperating with each other. Thomas presents this harmony in seven principles, emphasizing the need for integrity in each¹⁰.

- Principle of Consistency – The laws of faith and right reason are logically consistent with each other. True faith frees from errors and misunderstandings. Right reason safeguards the truths of faith from misinterpretations. What right reason knows, free from errors, is truth. Although faith and right reason may seem contradictory at times, deeper and careful investigation in natural sciences can help resolve the apparent conflict. The claim that people can be resurrected is true, provided it

¹⁰ Beauty of Righteousness in Thomas Aquinas—Thomas pointed to the model of beauty, which is Christ, as the beauty of justice and truth. The first humans (Adam and Eve) possessed the gift of original righteousness and justice at the moment of creation. A righteous person is one who recognizes the truth, consciously chooses it, and acts accordingly. A righteous person chooses the solution closest to the truth. Jesus, as a human, was free from all errors and mistakes, full of truth, immediately recognizing every truth, both divine and human. Jesus' righteousness also made Him perfectly just. Christ recognized the truth and acted according to it. As the embodiment of truth, Christ did not cater to human errors but openly proclaimed the truth to all (Gałuszka, 2021, p. 284).

is not achieved through their own natural powers. No one asserts that Jesus rose from the dead by natural means. Jesus rose from the dead by the power of God, and this is entirely possible, a belief held by Christians and consistent.

- Principle of Support (Sustaining) – The intellect employing reason can inquire about God and His attributes. Philosophical disciplines provide many robust arguments for the existence of God. Sound historical research, even conducted by agnostics, supports the historical fact of Jesus’s existence, His death, and the empty tomb.
- Principle of Defense – Right reason can reject objections raised against things accepted by faith. Arguments against Catholic faith can be counterbalanced by right reason, which can point out weaknesses and inconsistencies in these arguments. A simple example: doubts about the Holy Trinity can be illustrated by the objection that $1+1+1$ equals 3. However, the response does not concern mathematical interpretation because for a faithful, right Catholic, it is essential not to confuse categories. What matters more is that the persons of the Holy Trinity are Divine and not created, so they are not subject to mathematical interpretations or limitations.
- Principle of Subsidiarity (servitude) – Right reason is in agreement with what is revealed. Over centuries, humanity has discovered many principles aiding in the understanding of God’s Revelation.
- Principle of Correction – Right faith serves to correct errors of reason. Materialism is a clear error. An honest and intelligent philosopher will present solid counterarguments, but when a believer hears this error, faith immediately corrects it. After all, God revealed that there is much more than just the material, and humans possess a spiritual, immortal soul. Faith uncovers this error, while reason slowly and laboriously reaches the truth.

- Principle of Wisdom – Right faith helps see all things in relation to God. When someone believes that God created the world and governs everything according to His Providence, the possibility for contemplation in the light of God opens up.
- Principle of Fulfillment – Right faith provides answers to some questions posed by reason, thanks to Revelation.

6. Message from Thomas Aquinas and John Paul II regarding the relationship between faith and reason, faith and science

Faith consolidates, integrates, and enlightens the heritage of truth acquired by human reason. Thomas Aquinas, an interpreter of the Holy Scripture who practiced theology using philosophy, demonstrated the compatibility between Christian faith and reason. In the era when two cultures clashed, the Greek and the Western Latin, and when it was expected that faith should yield to reason, St. Thomas proved that Christian faith and reason cooperate. What appeared to reason as incompatible with faith was not reason, and what seemed like faith but contradicted true rationality was not faith (Benedict XVI, 2010).

John Paul II considered Thomas’s statement about the natural harmony of truth between Christian faith and reason so crucial that he pointed to St. Thomas as a master of thinking and a model for proper theology in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (John Paul II, 1998, [43]). In the encyclical, he calls on people of science and the Church to rationally defend faith, revealing accurate intuitions present in the Holy Scriptures regarding the profound connection between the knowledge of faith and reasoned knowledge (Ibid., [16]).

It is also the Church’s task¹¹ to continually integrate faith and reason, a teaching consistently emphasized by the Church. The Second Vatican

¹¹ Benedict XVI, in one of his sermons, emphatically stated that “the Church is not a self-service store, where everyone chooses what they like, what they consider suitable for our times and acceptable in their own lives. Sacred Scripture is not a supermarket from which you can pick a few items that you like and reject the rest; it is the Revelation of God, through which He points out our way. If we create Christianity according to our own ideas, we lose its essential nature, which determines that it is worth being and enduring in the Church.” (Ratzinger, 2015, p. 81).

Council in the Decree on Priestly Training states, “students, following St. Thomas as a master, should learn to penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of salvation, delving into and discerning the connection among them through speculative knowledge” (Decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam Totius*, 1965 [16]).

The supernatural source of the Church is the belief in the divine origin of the Church and its continuous connection with its founder and invisible head, Christ. The Christian vision of the person provides answers to the most important questions of contemporary humanity: the meaning of life, the origin of man, and the goal towards which he is heading. Therefore, it is essential to deepen the understanding of the nature of reason. Reason can be shaped to be more open to reality and its truth, i.e., to connect reason with wisdom. An intellect open to wisdom, which seeks truth and goodness, leads to love and ultimately to the goal of Salvation. Wisdom consists of understanding the laws of the natural world in the light of ultimate truths and becomes the task of a believing Christian (Decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam Totius*, 1965 [16]).

For Christian development, it is crucial to connect the challenges of the natural world with morality and customs. The reduction of reason to science described earlier has left many people without moral and spiritual support, without a pursuit of righteousness. If reason limits itself to science and truth to scientifically confirmed facts, then true or rationally verifiable answers regarding God, morality, and the ultimate meaning of life cannot be found (Decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam Totius*, 1965 [16]).

The issue of the relationship between religious faith and theology and philosophy dates back to ancient Greek philosophy. It is important to note that the discussion on this topic considers the priority of the mystery of faith over exaggerating the role of philosophy and various scientific conclusions. Chrostowski listed several threats to religious faith that may arise in numerous discussions (Chrostowski, 2003, p. 217-220):

- Intellectual manipulation resulting from neglecting the dignity of reason, claiming that it is incapable of knowing the truth.

- Improper use of good philosophy, not just using the bad one, then using it only when philosophy claims the final word, while in faith, reason must acknowledge God as its master. The position of philosophy in relation to faith is relative, meaning there is a need for humility of reason. Faith is not unreasonable, but reason does not exhaust everything that faith is and what it is capable of (Ibid.).

St. Thomas, at a time when it seemed that faith should yield to reason, pointed out that rationalizing faith inevitably leads to its loss. But the loss of faith also leads to its irrationality, for irrational faith is simply inhuman and must be rejected by humans. St. Thomas showed that faith and reason need each other because what seemed reasonable but inconsistent with faith is not reasonable, and what seemed like faith conflicting with true rationality is not faith (Benedict XVI, 2010). Therefore, not *credo, quia absurdum* (I believe because it is absurd), but *credo ut intelligam* (I believe to understand), complemented by *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding), indicates a way of being a believing Christian that corresponds to human nature (Krokos, 2009, p. 55). This balance allows preserving and developing reason and faith with all their possibilities. The intellect is skeptical, while faith tends to expose emotions. Man needs both these aspects because they are important in considering the mutual relations of faith and reason.

Aquinas sought confirmation of the possibility of knowledge within his intellect. The human intellect, as a value given to man, is tasked with transcending “unreasonable matter. However, the human intellect is weak in making judgments and penetrating ideas into intellectual knowledge” (Thomas Aquinas, 2003, ScG I, p.27). Many falsehoods mix with human reasoning. Arrogance, as pointed out by St. Thomas, is one of the causes of error. The arrogant claim that they can examine the world intellectually and present as the truth what seems true to them. “To free the human spirit from this arrogance so that it could humbly seek the truth, God had to give man certain truths that completely surpass his intellect” (Thomas Aquinas, 2003, ScG I, p. 28). The true nature of man

is the beginning of interpretation, but even imperfect human knowledge contributes to the intense joy that envelops the listener. The truth of Christian faith surpasses the powers of reason, but truths known by natural reason must be consistent with revealed truths. Thomas argues that any statement based on the natural abilities of reason that contradicts revealed truth cannot be considered true. The emerging contradiction indicates mistakenly derived conclusions (Thomas Aquinas, 2003, ScG I, p. 31).

This article aims to show the still underestimated and commonly misunderstood legacy of the theologian and philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas, specifically regarding human intellectual faculties (reasoning, intellectual), on which the acceptance and understanding of faith depend. It must be mentioned that Aquinas recognized the undeniable role of the senses in providing stimuli for the entire process of thinking, reasoning, and consequently discerning. G.K. Chesterton did not hesitate to say that “I do not believe that God requires man to develop only that peculiar, lofty, and abstract kind of intellect that you are fortunate to possess; but I believe that there is an intermediate field of phenomena provided by the senses for this purpose, to become the subject of reason, and that in this field reason has the right to rule as the representative of God in man” (Chesterton, 1959, p. 24). Thomas’s call to use reason and

the power of the senses is a call to shape intellectual and moral virtues, which are the fruit of mature, reasoned faith. Thomas thus reconciled faith with reason, trusting reason, which is so eager to turn to empirical science, but thanks to enlightening grace and God’s law of using the truth of reality, it can arrive at the truth about God, man, and the world (Chesterton, 1959, p. 23)

In conclusion, it is worth addressing one more important point in Aquinas’s considerations; he wrote about the calling of some to wisdom, about the order of cognition, about the method of cognition, and about those who seek true wisdom. He called such people Christian sages and attributed to them the role of understanding the relationship between faith and reason and teaching the truths they had learned. “Truths available through the natural light of reason and those revealed by the sage revelation constitute the content of Thomas’s considerations” presented in the article (Przanowski, 2015, p. 29). Saint John Paul II encouraged following the path indicated by Thomas, thereby recognizing him as an enduring, still relevant authority for today’s times.

Abbreviations list:

- KKK**–Catechism of the Catholic Church;
- STh**–summa theologica;
- ScG**–summa contra gentiles

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