



## Philosophical Underpinnings of Benedict XVI's Notion of Development<sup>1</sup>

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In the midst of the global economic meltdown towards the end of the first decade of this century, Pope Benedict XVI issued an encyclical letter, *Caritas in veritate*<sup>2</sup>, on the theme of integral human development. Notwithstanding the mixed reactions that greeted the appearance of the encyclical, one notable fact about it was the striking theological-anthropological grounding of Benedict's doctrine on development<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is developed from parts of my doctoral dissertation titled *Benedict XVI in Dialogue with Amartya Sen in Search of the True Meaning of Development*. I am indebted to Prof. Aldo Vendemiati and Prof. Lorella Congiunti for their corrections and insightful contributions which brought it to the present state.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 29 June 2009, in *AAS* 101 (2009), 641-709. The encyclical falls within the trajectory of the tradition of the Church's Social Teaching (CST). Catholic Social Teaching or Doctrine refers to a complex of principles and norms with which the Catholic Church intervenes in social questions, offering directives to the actions of the faithful and of all men of good will. It was historically configured as an autonomous "magisterium" in 1891 Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter, *Rerum novarum*. Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 74. Further references to *Caritas in veritate* will be incorporated into the text in parenthesis indicating just the paragraph number, for example (n. 1).

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Coleman was explicit in maintaining that "by almost any reckoning of papal social encyclicals, *Caritas in veritate* provides the best-developed theological argument for the grounding of Catholic social teaching": J.A. COLEMAN, "Development in Benedict's Thinking",

And perhaps, given its evidently theological tenor, some might think that its significance is restricted to theological or even only to Christian circles. But it may also be important to inquire if there are also strong philosophical foundations on which Benedict's conception of development is constructed. Does his teaching also possess validity and coherence on the philosophical plane, or is its value confined to the theological ambient? Such inquiry, we think, seems really pertinent, especially insofar as the then Roman Pontiff himself does not seem to explicitly acknowledge the philosophical precedents of his thoughts<sup>4</sup>, and one is tempted to think that his doctrine is only theologically grounded. But if it is shown that his thoughts are also arguable from the point of view of natural reason, and thus philosophically grounded, then it will be seen that they can as well be shared by those who do not hold the Christian faith, and thus their relevance is not restricted only to theological circle.

This essay is an attempt at systematically investigating the philosophical foundations of Pope Benedict's contribution to the development debate. We argue that Benedict XVI's conception of development, beyond its theological appeal, also has very solid philosophical foundation. His encyclical draws inspiration not only from the Gospel and Tradition of the Church, but also from a rich philosophical heritage, and so, has enduring and universal philosophical significance. This fact becomes more evident, especially when we consider Benedict's distinctive intellectual style and his constant appeal to metaphysics in articulating his convictions about integral human development<sup>5</sup>.

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in D.K. Finn (ed.), *The Moral Dynamics of Economic Life*, Oxford University Press, New York 2012, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Apart from a few isolated references – to Heraclitus (n. 48), to St Augustine (n. 34), to Thomas Aquinas (n. 53), and perhaps to John Paul II's *Fides et ratio* which is itself a magisterial document (n. 31) – there are no other direct references to strictly philosophical authors or works. All other references are to the Christian scriptures, earlier Church's magisterium or some other theological works.

<sup>5</sup> In fact, maintaining that "The Church's social doctrine (...) allows faith, theology, metaphysics and science to come together in a collaborative effort in the service of humanity", he contends that "the rejection of metaphysics by the human sciences, the difficulties encountered by dialogue between science and theology are damaging not only to the development of knowledge, but also to the development of peoples" (n. 31). For Benedict, "a metaphysical understanding of the relations between persons is therefore of great benefit for development" (n. 51). Cf. D. CHRISTIANSEN, "Metaphysics and Society: A Commentary on *Caritas in veritate*", *Theological Studies* 71 (2010), 3.

Aware of the really broad approach adopted by Benedict in his attempt to offer a holistic vision of development<sup>6</sup>, we shall limit ourselves to exploring only some of those philosophical elements which, in our estimation, undergird his perspective on human development. We shall first consider the solid theistic-anthropological foundation of Benedict's notion of development. This provides a good context for understanding Benedict's transcendent vision of the human person. His theistic anthropology also provides an ideal background for appreciating other features of his conception of development such as the intimate link he establishes between charity and truth, the light he sheds on the relationship between charity and justice, his urging that economics necessarily requires an ethical foundation, and his defence of the ultimate value of the natural moral norms. We shall explore these issues as spelled out in *Caritas in veritate*, hoping that they would suffice to demonstrate the solid philosophical grounding of Pope Benedict's notion of development.

### **Theistic Anthropoloical Foundation**

The adequate starting point for reflections on the philosophical underpinnings of Pope Benedict's thinking on development is a consideration of the theistic-anthropological foundation of his teaching. A theistic anthropology urges that there is a common nature essential to all human beings; that man has a transcendent origin and destiny, he proceeds from God and is directed towards God; his freedom is oriented to doing the will of God, since his dignity derives from his responding to God in love<sup>7</sup>. Of course, reflections on human nature seem coeval with philosophy, and through the ages and from different traditions, numerous theories have emerged, purporting to give explanation to man's nature. There have even been theories which entirely deny the existence of common human nature. We should however think that delving into discussions on the philosophical debate surrounding human nature lies

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. A.E. OROBATOR, "Caritas in veritate and Africa's Burden of (under)development", *Theological Studies*, 71 (2010), 322.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. S.C. ILO, *The Church and Development in Africa*, Pickwick Publications, Eugene, OR 2011, 13-14.

outside the scope of our present undertaking<sup>8</sup>. Suffice it nevertheless to note that the various theories of human nature may generally be classified into two dominant currents: the divine spark theories and the biological theories. In their various expressions, the divine spark theories, which seem to be the oldest, are united in their understanding of human beings as limited beings endowed with something of the divine which enables them transcend and dominate the rest of nature and enter into conscious relationship with the divine<sup>9</sup>. The *imago dei* doctrine of the human person, inspired by the Judeo-Christian tradition, seems the most succinct statement of the divine spark theories. The biological theories, on the other hand, are more recent, even though they still have their ancient precursors. Best represented by the doctrines of evolution, especially as found in the Darwinian tradition, the biological theories consider human beings not as little gods but as higher animals. For them, human beings are not little less than angels but only little more than other higher primates like monkeys and apes; they are not created in the image of God, but are products of chance, perhaps in the image of monkeys and apes.

Pope Benedict's vision of the human nature falls in the line of the divine spark theories. His is a theistic anthropology which underlines man's transcendent dimension. He not only affirms that man has an essential transcendent dimension, but rather makes it the foundation and cornerstone of any authentic human development. However, it is important to understand what type of transcendence the Pope espouses, since though a common notion found both in the philosophical and religious or theological circles, not all are agreed on what it actually entails. Etymologically, "Transcendence" is derived from the Latin verb

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<sup>8</sup> For philosophical discussions on the theories of human nature, cf. J.J. KUPPERMAN, *Theories of Human Nature*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Ind. 2010; P. LOPTSON, *Theories of Human Nature*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ont. – Orchard Park, NY 2006; F. SPARSHOTT, "Philosophical Theories of Human Nature", in *Philosophical Exchange* XIX (1988) 1, 89-104; M. STENMARK, "Theories of Human Nature: Key Issues", in *Philosophical Compass* VII (2012) 8, 543-558.

<sup>9</sup> The divine spark theories can be found in different traditions, like among the ancient Egyptians expressed in their concept of *ka*, among the Hindus with their doctrine of *Atman*, among the Jews with their notion of the image of God, among the ancient Greeks with their concept of *nuos*, among the medieval Christian philosophers with their teaching on *ratio*, and also in various African religious traditions, like the concept of *mmuo* among the Igbos of Nigeria, or the notion of *okra* among the Akan of Ghana.

*transcendere*, meaning to step or climb over, to surpass, to exceed, to go or get beyond. The substantive refers to either the act, the state or the fact of going beyond, surpassing, exceeding or stepping over. From the etymological perspective, therefore, transcendence expresses the notion of going beyond in the sense of transcending every limit<sup>10</sup>. With regard to man, it is often expressed in terms of self-transcendence, by which is meant that connatural inner tendency in man, or that interior movement with which he constantly and systematically goes beyond himself to open up to an infinite horizon. Such phenomenon seems so self-evident and obvious in man that the question is not whether man has the capacity of self-transcendence, but rather about the direction of man's self-transcendence. Like every other philosophical question, philosophers have not arrived at a consensus regarding the nature of man's transcendence or about its direction<sup>11</sup>.

Benedict's vision, however, seems to follow a long line of philosophers ranging from Aristotle, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas to more recent thinkers like Scheler, Lonergan, Reinhold Niebuhr and Joseph De Finance, who have sustained a theocentric interpretation of man's self-transcendence. According to this interpretation, man constantly goes out of himself, moving beyond the limits of his proper reality because he is driven by a superior will, God. Man does not go beyond himself to sink into nothing, rather, he goes out of himself to plunge himself in God, the only being capable of bringing him to the perfect and permanent perfection of himself. As Joseph De Finance perspicuously affirms, "What is necessary to recognize is that the impetus towards the ideal is not possible and has no meaning if not on account of the presence of the attractive and inspiring presence of the subsistent Ideal and, to give him the name with which the religious consciousness

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. G.I. ONAH, *Self-Transcendence and Human History in Wolfhart Pannenberg*, Disseratio ad Doctoratum in Facultate Philosophiae, Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana, Romae 1994, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Battista Mondin identifies three principal currents of thought in the interpretation of man's self-transcendence – the egocentric, the philanthropic and the theocentric interpretations: cf. B. MONDIN, "Autotranscendenza e Religione", in E. BARBOTIN, *Humanité de l'homme*, Aubier, Paris 1970, 54-70; ID., *L'uomo. Chi è?*, 2nd ed., Massimo, Milano 1977; R. LUCAS LUCAS, *L'uomo. Spirito incarnato*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1993, 278-286.

invokes him, of God”<sup>12</sup>. Benedict’s conception of development is solidly founded on a similar theistic anthropology which locates the truth about man in the truth about God. For Benedict, man’s transcendent nature enables him to recognize his dependence on a superior principle, that is, on God who is the author and architect of his existence. Man “is not a lost atom in a random universe: he is God’s creature” (n. 29).

It might be objected that proponents of a theocentric interpretation of transcendence, like Benedict, take the reality of God for granted, whereas it is common knowledge that there are many currents of thought as well as philosophers who maintain that God is neither known nor knowable, and that the idea of God is only a hypostatization of the needs and ideals of man. Battista Mondin would argue, in response to such objection, that the theocentric interpretation of the movement of self-transcendence does not in any way presuppose a proof of the existence of God. On the contrary, it makes evident the fact that it is precisely this movement which stands out as a clear index in favour of the reality of God<sup>13</sup>. The issue of theism and the existence of God, of course, has occupied the philosophic mind all through the ages. While a detailed account of the arguments for or against theism and God’s existence would require a separate study, it may be sufficient to allude to a contemporary thinker, Richard Swinburne, who has indefatigably directed enormous intellectual energy to rigorously defending the rationality of theism from the point of view of philosophy<sup>14</sup>. In his *The Existence of God*, Swinburne offers a cumulative argument in support of the existence of God, insisting that considering the weight of arguments for and against God’s existence, as well as evidence from religious experience and miracles, it is on balance more probable that there is a God than that there is not<sup>15</sup>.

In Benedict’s thinking, what really makes man a person is the fact of his transcendence, that is, his openness to others, and especially to God to whom he owes the ultimate meaning and sense of his existence.

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph De Finance affirms that: J. DE FINANCE, *Essai sur l’agir humain*, Gregoriana, Roma 1962, 191 (trans. is mine).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. B. MONDIN, “Autotrascendenza e religione”, 59-60.

<sup>14</sup> His trilogy of books, *The Coherence of Theism*, *The Existence of God*, and *Faith and Reason* were specifically dedicated to the defence of theism.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. R. SWINBURNE, *The Existence of God*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1979.

Benedict upholds the *Imago Dei* doctrine of the human person, which inspired by the Judeo-Christian tradition, has been strongly defended especially in the medieval period by both Augustine and Aquinas. Constituting the central theme of his *De Trinitate*, Augustine offers a personalistic, existential and psychological explanation of the image of God in man. In his thinking, God's image in the human person has a Trinitarian structure, and reflects either the threefold aspect of the human soul, that is, spirit, self-consciousness and love, or the tripartite structure of the human psyche, that is, memory, intelligence and will. For Augustine, it is God's image in man that orients him to God in knowledge, vocation and love<sup>16</sup>. Aquinas, on the other hand, rejecting substantialist understanding of the mind, and adopting the Aristotelian ontology of powers, offers an account of man's creation in the image of God which, rather than possessing a static and ahistorical character, has rather a fundamentally active, dynamic and historical quality. According to him, there are three moments in the image of God in man: the *imago creationis (naturae)*, the *imago recreationis (gratiae)* and the *similitudines (gloriae)*<sup>17</sup>. In the thinking of Aquinas, God's image in man is principally realized in the intellect's contemplation of God, since in that consists the highest good and happiness of the human person<sup>18</sup>.

According to Benedict, it is precisely by virtue of man's creation in the image of God that he is endowed with a transcendent dimension, and so, he is able to go beyond himself to the truth, to others and particularly to God. Created in the image of God, man is endowed with intellect and will. He is thus able to attain self-determination, so that he can understand himself and his place in the world; self-possession, so that he is able to master his own actions; and self-realization, so that he can

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Augustine, *The Works of St. Augustine, A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Trinity*, trans. by Edmund Hill, New City, New York 1991, 117-118; L. Kennedy et al., *Images of the Human: The Philosophy of the Human Person in the Religious Context*, Loyola Press, Chicago 1995, 115.

<sup>17</sup> "Wherefore we see that the image of God is in man in three ways. First, inasmuch as man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Secondly, inasmuch as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Thirdly, inasmuch as man knows and loves God perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of glory": THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica* I, 93, 4. Cf. also S. ILO, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 14-15.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, 93, 4- 7.



make plans for himself and successfully accomplish them. However, for Benedict, to say that man is a “person” is more than just being endowed with these qualities; he is not pure egotism; he is more than the Cartesian self-thinking solitary “*cogito ergo sum*”, that is, the conscious self which is alienated and isolated from corporeal connection with both its personal wholeness and its place in the cosmos<sup>19</sup>. For Benedict, man is a being in relation; with his intellect and will, he is able to transcend himself and move out to fellow beings, and especially to God<sup>20</sup>.

In fact, decades before he became pope, Joseph Ratzinger had argued that “there is no such thing as person in the categorical singular”<sup>21</sup>. Going back to its etymological derivation, he observed that the Greek and Latin antecedents of the English word “person” have connotations of relatedness. The Greek term *prosopon* means to “look toward”, while the Latin *persona* signifies “sounding through”. Thus, each of them “includes the notion of relatedness as an integral part of itself”<sup>22</sup>. Elsewhere, he maintained that man’s being as a person has the “anthropological shape” of “being *for* others, and being *with* others – the relations of love, communication and knowledge”<sup>23</sup>. For Ratzinger, “being a man means being a fellow man in every aspect”<sup>24</sup>. This seems a re-echo of Martin Buber’s famous tenet that man is able to realize himself only through relation with the other, and especially with the Absolute Other<sup>25</sup>. This is an insight also traceable to the Christian personalism of Jacques Maritain who, advancing the thoughts of St Thomas, maintained that

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<sup>19</sup> As testified by Walter Percy, “The self since the time of Descartes has been stranded, split off from everything else in the Cosmos, a mind which professes to understand bodies and galaxies but is by the very act of understanding marooned in the Cosmos, with which it has no connection”: W. PERCY, *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*, Washington Square Press, Washington 1984, 47.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. J.M. BREEN, “Love, Truth, and Economy...”, 999.

<sup>21</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2004 (1968), 180.

<sup>22</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 180.

<sup>23</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2004, 248.

<sup>24</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 247.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. M. BUBER, *I and Thou*, trans. R.G. Smith, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1987<sup>3</sup>. Aldo Vendemiati expresses a similar idea: “quanto più si cresce nello scambio col prossimo, nel dialogo cosciente con gli altri, nella relazione reciproca, tanto più si arricchisce e si sviluppa la propria identità personale. Solo nell’incontro interpersonale, infatti, possono emergere e prendere corpo valori umani essenziali come l’amore, la gratitudine, il dono, il rispetto”: A.



“To say that a man is a person is to say that in the depth of his being he is more a whole than a part”<sup>26</sup>. For Maritain, man is an “open whole” in the sense that he is connaturally able to relate and unite with others. It is in the very nature of the person to tend towards relationship and communion which find their ultimate fulfilment only in God. To lose sight of the human person’s relational character would be horrendous; just as it would be the greatest contradiction to think of a person that is alone. Benedict subscribes to this view, and argues that it is the lack of appreciation of this relational character of the human person that has ended up in “retarding or even obstructing authentic human development” (n. 55). Man’s “tragic tendency to close in on himself” (n. 53) constitutes “a rebellion against being human itself” and “leads people – as Sartre percipiently observed – into a self-contradictory existence that we call hell”<sup>27</sup>. This is the root of poverty, since every form of poverty is “born from isolation, from not being loved or from difficulties in being able to love” (n. 53).

It is in this light that Pope Benedict appropriates his predecessor, Paul VI’s notion of human development as a vocation<sup>28</sup>. According to him, “to regard *development as a vocation* is to recognize, on the one hand, that it derives from a transcendent call, and on the other hand that it is incapable, on its own, of supplying its ultimate meaning” (n. 16). A fundamental message Benedict XVI wants to communicate to humanity is that God has priority in human development. Against the misguided anthropocentrism inherent in many contemporary views on development, he unequivocally maintains that “*God is the guarantor of man’s true development*” (n. 29). What this means is “that the human good, or the definition of human flourishing, is not left to human beings alone. The human good, what it means to live well, finds its origin in God, the Absolute Truth”<sup>29</sup>. Thus, development does not just lie in the hands of man, he always has to make reference to God to whom he owes

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VENDEMIATI, *In comunità. Fondamenti di etica sociale*, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2013, 26.

<sup>26</sup> J. MARITAIN, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. by Doris C. Anson, G. Bles, The Centenary Press, London 1945, 5.

<sup>27</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance*, 248.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, *Populorum progressio*, 26 March 1967, n. 15.

<sup>29</sup> S. DENEULIN, “Human Development: Benedict XVI vs. Amartya Sen”, *Revista Cultura Economica*, 27 (2009) 75/76, 117.

his very existence. It is true that development is for man and his flourishing, but man is not the source of his existence; his life is from God and is directed towards God. Though man is the end of development, he is not its ultimate end; his ultimate end is found in God.

The question of man's ultimate end is particularly significant for appreciating the contribution Benedict makes to the development debate. An end has been defined as that towards which an action tends, the purpose of an action. According to Aquinas, "the end is that on account of which a thing is"<sup>30</sup>; in the order of causes, "the end is the cause of causes"<sup>31</sup>. Following Aristotle, he affirms that "it belongs to man to do everything for an end (...). Therefore all human actions must be for an end"<sup>32</sup>. But there are different types of ends: there is the proximate end which is the immediate end on account of which an action is immediately undertaken; there is the intermediate or subordinate end which is an end sought in view of another end; and there is then the ultimate end which is that on account of which all other ends and means are sought. Inasmuch as the end is the good which each person seeks, it is yet important to distinguish between real good and apparent good. Whereas real good is something really good in itself, an apparent good is only apparently good; it is a real evil in the cloak of the good. There is also a difference between perfect good and imperfect good. Whereas an imperfect good is anything that satisfies either man's inferior appetites or his superior powers, a perfect good is that which satisfies human nature perfectly and completely to the highest degree without leaving anything to be desired. This is man's ultimate end. According to Thomas, the ultimate end is "the end for the sake of which all other things are desired, and which is not itself desired for the sake of anything else"; "the last end is the first beginning of being"<sup>33</sup>. Man's ultimate end is that on account of which man is, the purpose for which man exists on earth. Evidently, man's existence on earth is neither fortuitous nor left to blind chance, it has a direction, it has a purpose.

So, what is the purpose of man's life? What is man here for? Where is he going? What is man's ultimate destiny? As pointed out by Dherse

<sup>30</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 33,4.

<sup>31</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, 5,2.

<sup>32</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 1,1.

<sup>33</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 2,5.3.

and Minguet, “In order to live, which implies finding some meaning in one’s life, one must understand why and for what he or she exists, and in what way he or she can have a real importance – what it is that makes each of us unique”<sup>34</sup>. Philosophers have through the ages proffered different answers to these questions. Aquinas, following Aristotle and Augustine, sees man’s ultimate goal as happiness which can be found in God alone. In his *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle convinced that there exists some ultimate end or good toward which, in the final analysis, every human action is aimed, had argued that this ultimate aim is happiness, in Greek “*Eudaimonia*” which may also be translated as “blessedness or beatitude or good living”<sup>35</sup>. In the same light, Augustine concluded in his *De Trinitate* that happiness or blessedness is what every man desires<sup>36</sup>. Endorsing their opinions, Aquinas sought to specify in what happiness consists. For him, it neither consists in wealth, honour, fame, power nor any bodily good. It does not as well consist in the good of the soul, for “happiness is something belonging to the soul; but that which constitutes happiness is something outside the soul”<sup>37</sup>. According to Aquinas,

It is impossible for any created good to constitute man’s happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e., of man’s appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man’s will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man (...). Therefore God alone constitutes man’s happiness<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> J.L. DHERSE – D.H. MINGUET, *Ethics or Chaos: Business, the Individual and the Common Good*, trans. by R.N. MacKenzie, Original French version: *L’éthique ou le chaos?*, Presses de la Renaissance, Paris 1998, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nichomachean Ethics*, I, 1, 1094a, 1-3; 1,6, 1097b, 1-5; I, 7, 1098a, 15-20.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. ST AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, XIII, 3.

<sup>37</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 2,7.

<sup>38</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 2,8.

Benedict's position follows this line of thought. According to the Holy Father, "Man is not a lost atom in a random universe: he is God's creature, whom God chose to endow with an immortal soul and whom he has always loved" (n. 29). He argues that "If man were merely the fruit of either chance or necessity, or if he had to lower his aspirations to the limited horizon of the world in which he lives, if all reality were merely history and culture, and man did not possess a nature destined to transcend itself in the supernatural life, then one could speak of growth, or evolution, but not development" (n. 29). With Aquinas, he insists that man finds his ultimate end in God. This is why Benedict calls a humanism without God and *inhuman humanism*<sup>39</sup>, because, even though it purports to promote man's good, it ends up working against man. For Benedict, "development requires a transcendent vision of the person, it needs God" (n. 11). Only God is the authentic guarantor of true human development.

### Charity-Truth Interrelationship

The foregoing elucidation provides an adequate background for understanding Pope Benedict's foundation of authentic human development on charity and truth, and the inalienable synergy he underscores between them. Charity and truth constitute the two preponderant terms in Benedict's encyclical; they constitute the twin pillars upon which the

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<sup>39</sup> Benedict borrows this expression from Paul VI who wrote that "The ultimate goal (of development) is a full-bodied humanism. And does this not mean the fulfilment of the whole man and of every man? A narrow humanism, closed in on itself and not open to the values of the spirit and to God who is their source, could achieve apparent success, for man can set about organizing terrestrial realities without God. But 'closed off from God, they will end up being directed against man. A humanism closed off from other realities becomes inhuman'. True humanism points the way toward God and acknowledges the task to which we are called, the task which offers us the real meaning of human life. Man is not the ultimate measure of man. Man becomes truly man only by passing beyond himself. In the words of Pascal: 'Man infinitely surpasses man'". Apart from the insightful expression of Blaise Pascal cited here, Paul VI also makes reference here to Jacques Maritain's "full-bodied" humanism, which, in a nutshell implies that authentic humanism can only be achieved when man does not exclude that which surpasses him, that is, when he is not closed to the transcendence, because as Aristotle maintained, proposing only the human to man without reference to that which surpasses him would be akin to betraying man and seeking his unhappiness: cf. J. MARITAIN, *L'humanisme intégral*, Aubier, Paris 1936.

entire edifice of development is to be constructed, and they are inextricably intertwined: “charity in truth is (...) the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity” (n. 1). But why is it important for the Holy Father to emphasize this correlation between charity and truth? He considers it relevant because “charity has been and continues to be misconstrued and emptied of meaning, with the consequent risk of being misinterpreted, detached from ethical living and, in any event, undervalued” (n. 2). This is something which, in the contemporary society, we encounter in our everyday experience. People do not usually get the whole picture of reality, nor do they grasp things in the totality of their extensions and diversities. Charity is not just mere act or disposition of generosity or benevolence towards another person, neither can it be reduced to mere philanthropy or social welfare. Rather, it has a transcendent meaning, it has its origin in God.

Charity is a theological virtue. And perhaps, a recourse to Aquinas will help us understand better how a theological virtue comes into play here<sup>40</sup>. Aquinas adopted Aristotle's eudaimonism, but at the service of his own theological purposes. He not only agrees with Aristotle that all men seek happiness, but he is also in agreement with him on the necessity of virtues for the achievement of happiness. However, ultimate happiness does not mean exactly the same thing for both of them. Aquinas conceives man's final end, as we have seen, in terms of what he called *beatitudo*, or supernatural union with God<sup>41</sup>. In his thinking, man cannot through his personal virtuous efforts attain beatitude. Aquinas argues that happiness can either be complete or incomplete: whereas man can achieve incomplete happiness through his natural aptitudes, complete or perfect happiness is beyond what he can achieve on his own. Whereas man can through his natural aptitudes cultivate a limited measure of virtue and thus attain some level of happiness, Thomas maintains that “it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness, even as he is directed to his connatural end, by means of his natural principles, albeit not without the Divine assistance”<sup>42</sup>. The principles

<sup>40</sup> Cf. S.D. FLOYD, “Aquinas's Moral Philosophy”, in J. FIESER – B. DOWDEN (eds.), *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, University of Tennessee, Martin 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, IaIIae, 17, 7; 23, 3; 23, 7.

<sup>42</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, IaIIae, 62, 1.

or habits he intends here are the “infused” or theological virtues which include faith, hope and charity. They are graciously given to man by God and direct man’s “final and perfect good” just as the moral virtues direct man to a limited happiness realized through the exercise of his natural capacities<sup>43</sup>. Charity, for Aquinas, is the virtue whereby man loves God for God’s own sake. Echoing St. Augustine, he considers charity an appetitive state whereby man’s appetites are uniformly directed to God<sup>44</sup>. It inclines man to love God, the perfect, unchanging and eternal source of perfect happiness. It is important to note that perhaps for Aquinas, love of God also includes love of neighbour, since our neighbour being the natural image of God, it would be impossible to love God without also loving our neighbour<sup>45</sup>. The importance of charity for the moral virtues, in the thinking of Aquinas, cannot be overemphasized, since it provides the form of the virtues, it transforms them. This it does by determining the end at which they aim, since “in morals, the form of an act is taken chiefly from the end”<sup>46</sup>.

Benedict’s thought seems to follow the same line. In his first Encyclical Letter, he was specific that “*Deus caritas Est*” (God is love). This love is mysteriously and generously offered to man by God<sup>47</sup>. It is in the same light that he underscores in *Caritas in veritate* that “Charity is everything because (...) *everything has its origin in God’s love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it*” (n. 2). However, to avoid a sentimental or marginal interpretation of charity, he insists on linking it intrinsically to truth, arguing that in the absence of truth, charity “would be more or less interchangeable with a pool of good sentiments, helpful for social cohesion, but of little relevance” (n. 4). According to Pope Benedict, “Truth needs to be sought, found and expressed within the ‘economy’ of charity, but charity in its turn needs to be understood, confirmed and practised in the light of truth” (n. 2). Truth moves human beings beyond their subjective perspective and makes them capable of authentic communication, dialogue

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, IaIIae, 62., 3

<sup>44</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, IIaIIae, 23, 3 *sed contra*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, IIaIIae, 25, 1 and 44, 7.

<sup>46</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, IIaIIae, 23, 8.

<sup>47</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 26 Dec. 2005, n. 2.

and communion<sup>48</sup>. In the thinking of Benedict, charity is a value whose meaning is specific. Consequently, its meaning cannot be extended infinitely, rather, it is specified by the truth about God, about the human person, and about the human destiny<sup>49</sup>.

Perhaps, St. Thomas helps us also here to grasp this link between charity and truth. For St Thomas, truth is the highest of values, since it is what grounds and orients the end proper to all human actions. In his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, the Angelic Doctor furnishes a preliminary understanding of what is meant by truth. In his words, “The ultimate end of the universe must, therefore, be the good of the intellect. This good is Truth. Truth must consequently be the ultimate end of the universe, and the consideration of the wise man aims principally at truth”<sup>50</sup>. As Ilo points out, Pope Benedict by linking charity with truth strikes at “the most appropriate way of showing the intimate connection between the two highest aspirations of the human person, that of the intellect (truth), and that of the heart (charity)”<sup>51</sup>. The charity-truth correlation is therefore not only necessary but unassailable; they have to complete and complement each other. As Benedict maintains, “*Only in truth does charity shine forth*, only in truth can charity be authentically lived. Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity” (n. 3). In the thinking of Benedict, being two sides of the same coin, neither charity nor truth can effectively operate in isolation of the other.

By insisting on the indispensability of truth in integral human development, Benedict wanted, on the one hand, to rescue the Church's social teaching from collapsing into a sort of *Gesinnungsethik*, that is, a morality of feeling or sentimentalism; and on the other hand, to strengthen the Church's position in the face of relativistic postures which are in ample supply from the wider culture<sup>52</sup>. As he argues, “Without truth, it is easy to fall into an empiricist and sceptical view of life, incapable of rising to the level of praxis because of a lack of interest in grasping the values – sometimes even the meanings – with which to judge and direct

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. D. CHRISTIANSEN, “Metaphysics and Society”, 10.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. S. ILO, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1/1:2, eng. trans. by A.C. Pegis, Hanover House, New York 1955-57.

<sup>51</sup> S. ILO, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 3, note 1.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. D. CHRISTIANSEN, “Metaphysics and Society”, 10.



it” (n. 9). However, “truth, by enabling men and women to let go of their subjective opinions and impressions, allows them to move beyond cultural and historical limitations and come together in the assessment of the value and substance of things” (n. 4). This truth, in the thinking of Benedict, has its source in God, the “Eternal love and Absolute Truth” (n. 1), and is accessible to man on account of his transcendent dimension. The human person, by virtue of his transcendence, is able to go beyond himself and grasp the truth about himself, the world around him, and God. The truth of things known by man and the truth of his own very being all derive from God, the Absolute Truth. Thus, for Benedict, it is only within the dynamics of charity in truth that the process of building a just society will be effectively and unambiguously realized.

### **Justice-Charity Correlation And The Logic Of Gift**

In both religious and secular literature, the issue of the correct relationship between charity and justice seems to have been engulfed in some cloud of confusion. While to some, they have to be regarded as identical virtues, some others tend to place a large distance between them. There are yet others who have considered them parallel virtues in the sense that even though they may lie side by side, no point of intersection exists between them<sup>53</sup>. Within the framework of his theistic anthropology, Benedict provides an invaluable clarity in the midst of the prevailing shadow, and sheds fresh light on the understanding of social justice and on how to genuinely live it in the entirety of its dimensions. Western classical tradition of moral philosophy has usually conceived justice in terms of the personal virtue and quality of act whereby a person renders to the other that which as a due belongs to him or her<sup>54</sup>. Thomas Aquinas defines justice as “a habit whereby a man renders to

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. N. WOLSTERSTORFF, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, Princeton University Press, Oxfordshire 2008, 1; A. VENDEMIATI, *In comunità*, 179-186.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. M. RYAN, *Percorsi di etica sociale. Che cosa è la giustizia? Come realizzarla qui ed ora?*, Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, Roma 2006, 105-120; A. VENDEMIATI, *In comunità*, 166.

each one his due by a constant and perpetual will”<sup>55</sup>. Consequently, justice is usually presented in terms of a debt owed to another person. As Joseph Pieper would put it, “to be just means (...) to owe something and to pay the debt”<sup>56</sup>, notwithstanding the subjective feelings of the one who does so. On the contrary, love has the structure of a gift, one goes freely and there is no obligation, there is no debt which one is bound to pay. In the thinking of Pieper, love means the grateful acknowledgement of the other’s presence, being able to say to the other: “it’s good that you exist; it’s good that you are in this world”<sup>57</sup>. It is a pure act of the will; it can neither be earned nor promoted, it is ultimately a gift<sup>58</sup>. However, this distinction does not mean they are mutually exclusive, rather there exists between them a mutual interrelationship. It is precisely the nature and extent of this interrelationship that Benedict brings to limelight in his encyclical.

In the thinking of Pope Benedict, justice is implicit in the logic of charity: they are inseparable but not co-extensive virtues. In order to love somebody, one first of all has to be just to him/her. Justice is “intrinsic” to love, but love surpasses justice. According to Benedict,

Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is “mine” to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is “his”, what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. I cannot “give” what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. (*CV*, n. 6).

What this means is that charity and justice cannot be regarded as mutually exclusive, but they are not interchangeable. Justice is implicit

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<sup>55</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 58, art. 1, eng. trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benziger Bros., New York 1948.

<sup>56</sup> J. PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, fortitude, Temperance*, trans. by Richard Winston et al, Brace and World, Harcourt 1965 (1954), 57.

<sup>57</sup> J. PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 164.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. J. PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 179.

in logic of charity, but charity exceeds justice. For Benedict, justice is a fundamental requirement of love, it is “the primary way” (n. 6), or “minimum measure”<sup>59</sup> of charity. He argues that you cannot authentically love the other without first of all being just to the other, giving the other what is his/her due. However, justice is not a substitute for charity, rather “charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving” (n. 6).

The above understanding of the relationship between charity and justice leads Benedict to an issue of really outstanding innovative potency in his teaching on development. It is his introduction of what he calls “*the principle of gratuitousness* and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity” (n. 36). Benedict, as earlier highlighted, sees the entire creation as God’s free gift; everything that exists is a fruit of his gratuitous act of love. The idea of gift thus lies at the bedrock of every human life and existence; it suffuses the human person’s entire existence in its ingress, progress and egress. For Benedict, the very fact of man’s existence is a kind of gift, since “the truth of ourselves, of our personal conscience, is first of all *given* to us” (n. 34). In fact, “we all know that we are a gift, not something self-generated” (n. 68). Not only at the origin of man’s existence is the logic of gift made present, it accompanies man all through life and in every aspect of his existence. In the logic of gift is revealed not only the human person’s origin but also his final end since “that which is prior to us and constitutes us – subsistent love and Truth – shows us what goodness is, and in what our true happiness consists” (n. 52).

In Benedict’s thinking, the logic of gift is not opposed to rationality; in fact, it is itself a kind of rationality, a kind of logic, a *logos*. It does not contradict social justice, but rather transcends and completes it; in fact, one has to recognize the priority of gift. What this means is that justice requires the acceptance of the truth of the human person, that is, the fact that one’s personhood is not an outcome of one’s own making, but rather, is *a given*. Justice demands that the human person be recognized as one “whom God chose to endow with an immortal soul and whom he has always loved” (n. 29); that the human person is entirely

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<sup>59</sup> PAUL VI, “Address for the Day of Development”, 23 August 1968, in *AAS* 60 (1968), 626-627.

a gift. Indeed, we are constitutively a gift and we are aimed to be gift for others. Thomas Aquinas had taught that “a gift is literally a giving that can have no return (...) it is not given with the intention of being repaid”<sup>60</sup>. In the same light, Benedict observes that unlike in exchange where parity and reciprocity is the rule, and each expects to receive something in return from the other, gratuitousness means that the giver does not expect anything in return. The hallmark of gift is freedom, there is no external obligation imposed on the one who gives: “a gift is an outward expression of one’s innermost freedom”<sup>61</sup>. A gift is truly so only when it is freely given, when it is given selflessly without any intention of being recovered or repaid.

It is true Benedict does not explicitly acknowledge the philosophical precedents of the logic of gift in his encyclical. However, it is a thesis that can be found, albeit from different perspectives, in a good number of thinkers<sup>62</sup>. The French Philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, for instance, had made a distinction between the logic of justice and the logic of charity. Analysing some scriptural passages, he observed a double movement. First of all, in the negative injunction like “don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you”, is expressed the logic of justice, that is, the logic of equivalence; whereas the positive injunction like “do unto others what you want them to do to you” bespeaks the logic of charity, that is, the logic of overabundance. Ricoeur contends that the recognition of the fact that each person is first of all a recipient of some gift prior to any other action of one’s own imposes on each person the moral obligation to equally give freely, having received freely. In the reckoning of Ricoeur, whereas the first logic appeals to ethics, the second is in the sphere of superethics. His aim in underlining this distinction was to stress the importance of ensuring an effective interplay of charity and justice within human institutions. He contends that the domain of the logic of overabundance is beyond the dimension of rational calculation of duties of reciprocity between groups and individuals. It is within the

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<sup>60</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 38, art. 2, c.

<sup>61</sup> J.M. GREEN, “Love, Truth, and the Economy”, 1017.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. J.F. SHERRY, “Gift Giving in Anthropological Perspective”, *Journal of Consumer research*, 10 (1983), 157-168; J.D. CAPUTO – M.J. SCANLON, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis 2000; J.T. GODBOUT, *Le don, la dette et l’indébité. Homo donator vs homo oeconomicus*, La Découverte, Paris 2000.

perspective of superethics, that is, the logic of gift, overabundance, and forgiveness that the transcendence of the human person is made visible. Ricoeur therefore urges the integration of this perspective in every legal system<sup>63</sup>. Benedict's doctrine, however, does not of course subscribe to the distinction between ethics and superethics; he rather insists on the "natural and supernatural truth of charity", supernatural in the sense that charity, as we have earlier highlighted, is offered to man by God. It is understood in terms of "gift, acceptance, and communion, and attained through the light of reason and faith" (n. 3).

The thoughts of Benedict also find some proximity with those of Marcel Mauss, who, in his essay, *The Gift*, maintained that the practice of gift and generous exchange constitutes a fundamental tenet of primitive societies, but as a result of certain ideologies, it has not survived in our societies. In the thinking of Mauss, man is not a calculating machine, but is made for gift and gains fulfilment only when he is able to give himself. Mauss contends that though in many social activities, exchange is the common denominator, in primitive societies, these exchanges are not financial, but are rather continuous exchanges which give value to and permit the symbolization of group life. Far from dividing and separating the members of a group, these exchanges have rather the value of entrenching cohesion among the members of the society. In traditional societies, according to Mauss, this type of exchange imposes three obligations on the subjects: to give, to receive, and to return or reciprocate. However, in contrast to commercial exchange, there is no logic of equivalence between what is given and what is reciprocated; neither is it directed towards the expansion of wealth. What is crucial in gift giving is not the use of what is given or reciprocated, but rather the symbolic value and the social relationship it inspires and establishes. For Mauss, the reciprocal exchange of gifts is a social asset, constituting the basis of sociability since it inserts people in an intricate system or network of social relationships<sup>64</sup>. Even though this perspective of Mauss transcends the logic of equivalent exchange, it nonetheless imposes the

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. P. RICOEUR, "The Golden Rule: Exegetical and Theological Perspectives", *New Testament Studies*, 36 (1990), 392-394.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. M. MAUSS, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Routledge, London 1990 (1923).

obligation of reciprocity<sup>65</sup>. This is precisely where Pope Benedict transcends Mauss and presents a broader perspective.

In the thinking of Benedict, gratuitousness does not have to impose the obligation of reciprocity on the receiver<sup>66</sup>. An unequivocal distinction exists between actions of gratuitousness and gifts offered with the intention of receiving back; in fact, “solidarity” and “actions of gratuitousness” all “stand in contrast with giving in order to acquire (the logic of exchange) and giving through duty (the logic of public obligation, imposed by State law)” (n. 39). For the Pope, “we are gift”; the human person is a gift not only by existence, but also by essence. Both existence and nature are offered to man as gifts; he can neither lay claims to his existence nor his nature; he finds himself existing; or as Jean-Luc Marion would put it, “being given” (étant *donné*). In the opinion of Marion, “the gift arises from itself without being inscribed in the economic circle where exchange would in advance orient it, and consume it. The singular appearing of gift must therefore be described such as it shows itself of itself insofar as it gives itself”<sup>67</sup>. Marion thinks that the logic of gift has two meanings: first, it describes the act itself of giving; secondly, the gift is constituted by what has been given. The idea of gift expresses generosity, not just a generosity with some strings attached, but a generosity whose sole objective is the generation of generosity: “It consists in giving more than we receive, in overcoming the logic of calculation or of reciprocity. The gift shows concern for the other person, an interest in the other person”<sup>68</sup>. What is meant is “existential gift”, that is, giving “with no strings attached”<sup>69</sup>. The principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift, in the teaching of Benedict, transform the understanding of justice. Justice is no longer to be understood merely from

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. F. TORRALBA – C. PALAZZI, “Broader Rationality and the ‘Logic of Gift’ in Economics”, in D. MELÉ – C. DIERKSMEIER (eds.), *Human Development in Business*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire – New York 2012, 93.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. S. ZAMAGNI, “Fraternity, Gift and Reciprocity in *Caritas in veritate*”, in *Revista Cultura Economica*, 27 (2009) 75, 20-21.

<sup>67</sup> J.L. MARION, *Étant donné: essai d’un phénoménologie de la donation*, PUF, Paris 1998, 83.

<sup>68</sup> F. TORRALBA – C. Palazzi, “Broader Rationality and the Logic of Gift’ in Economics, 94.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. S. FRÉMEAUX – G. MICHELSON, “‘No Strings Attached’: Welcoming the Existential Gift in Business”, in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 99 (2011), 63-75.

the point of view of equity, but rather as establishing and creating the minimum conditions that favour the application of gift. Love and gift do not oppose or deny justice and equity, they rather transcend and complete them (cf. n. 38).

### **Ethical Foundation Of Economic Activity**

Pope Benedict's theistic anthropology also provides comprehensible background for his reflection on the meaning of the economy and its goals. Considering the grandeur of the human person, and of the imperative of placing him at the centre of development and development discourses, Benedict sought in his encyclical to chart a path towards a new ethical economy, insisting that the greatest tragedy of the economy is its separation from ethical considerations. He discountenances the prevalent mechanistic economic paradigm and the physicalism of neoclassical economic theory, advocating the enthronement of a genuinely humanistic economic paradigm, "a new humanistic synthesis", which will recover and restore the intrinsic social purpose the economy is meant to serve<sup>70</sup>. Intrinsically, both the economy and finance are good, but only as "instruments" and never as "ends". Being instruments, their goodness cannot always be assured since they "can be used badly when those at the helm are motivated by purely selfish ends. Instruments that are good in themselves can thereby be transformed into harmful ones" (n. 36). Hence the imperative for financiers to "rediscover the genuinely ethical foundation of their activity" (n. 65).

These thoughts seem to go back to Aristotle who had argued that economics cannot be considered an end in itself; it is merely a means to further ends which are extra-economic. What in modern times we call economics is what Aristotle called *crematistike* (*chrematistike*), or the acquisition of material goods. *Crematistike* is a necessary, but not sufficient means or instrument for attaining a good life; its nature is functional and not finalistic. For Aristotle, what is of interest is "human

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. C. DIERKSMEIER, "Deconstructing the Neoclassical Economic Paradigm", in D. MELÉ – C. DIERKSMEIER, *Human Development in Business*, Palgrave Macmillan, London – New York 2012, 22.



flourishing”, what he calls *Eudaimonia*, and good life<sup>71</sup>. The human good, that is, the good which is proper to the human being, according to him, is defined by human flourishing or *Eudaimonia*. Though good life cannot be achieved without the possession of material goods, it does not exhaust itself in material acquisitions; a plurality of human dimensions must also necessarily be brought to bear. Hence, Aristotle states that wealth is “a set of instruments”<sup>72</sup>, and retains its value “only if it is ‘useful’, that is, in function of something else”<sup>73</sup>. In his thinking, crematistics is “according to nature” only insofar as its aim is that of obtaining “the goods necessary to live and useful to the community of the State or the family”<sup>74</sup>. When it goes beyond the limit of necessity and becomes an end in itself, it degenerates into unnatural crematistics. Consequently, the acquisition of material goods (crematistics) retains its significance only to the extent that they do not go beyond their functional nature. When it is assumed as an end in itself, it becomes “against nature”<sup>75</sup>.

Following Aristotle, the renowned Indian economist and philosopher, Amartya Sen has also advanced a similar thesis. Without denying the importance of economic growth, he insists that “an adequate conception of development must go much beyond the accumulation of wealth and growth of gross national product and other income variables”<sup>76</sup>. He contends that while income can be an important means to well-being, it can at most serve as a rough proxy for that which intrinsically is necessary, that is, the capabilities of persons<sup>77</sup>. In line with Aristotle, Sen underlines the difference between the idea of being “well-off” and having “well-being”. Whereas the former conveys the idea of opulence and had to do with one’s command over exterior things, the

<sup>71</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, I, 9, 1257b, 40-1258a, 2, eng. trans. in R. Mckeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Modern Library Paperback Edition, New York 2001, 1127-136.

<sup>72</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, I, 8, 1256b, 37-38.

<sup>73</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 5, 1096a, 5-7, eng. trans. in R. McKeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, 935-1112.

<sup>74</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, I, 8, 1256b, 29-30.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. B. GIOVANOLA, “Re-Thinking the Anthropological and Ethical Foundation of Economics and Business: Human Richness and Capabilities Enhancement”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88 (2009), 435.

<sup>76</sup> A. SEN, *Development as Freedom*, Anchor Books, New York 2000, 14.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. I. ROBEYNS, “Understanding Sen’s Capability Approach”, Wolfson College, Cambridge 2001, 4.

latter refers to something that is in a person that he or she achieves<sup>78</sup>. It is in the second case that we can appropriately say that a person is flourishing, and it is on it that the evaluation of development really has to focus, that is the internal qualitative richness of human beings and not on their quantitative economical opulence<sup>79</sup>. Consequently, Sen sustains that “economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy”<sup>80</sup>.

In the thinking of Benedict, human well-being and development cannot be equated with “having more” or with greater consumption; authentic development has to do with “being more”. Hence, he insists that the overriding purpose of the economy is neither power nor profit but the human person in the integrity of his well-being. Lamenting the monstrous adulation of profit in business practices, he insists that “profit is useful if it serves as a means towards an end that provides a sense both of how to produce it and how to make good use of it” (n. 21). For him, profit maximization cannot be an end in itself; it cannot even be the ultimate purpose or the highest aim of economic activity. In fact, in the thinking of Benedict, the entire economic activities of man – production, market, labour, consumption – are never ends in themselves but merely means to attaining some other end. Though economic buoyancy is important for the development of peoples, this is only as “*means*” and not as “*ends*” of development<sup>81</sup>.

In advocating a restoration of the ethical dimension of the economic life, Benedict is not just seeking that ethics be appended to economic considerations in terms of an external force, or as “a kind of *deus*

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. A. SEN, “Well-Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984”, in *Journal of Philosophy*, 82 (1985) 4, 169-221.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. B. GIOVANOLA, “Re-Thinking the Anthropological and Ethical Foundation...”, 437

<sup>80</sup> A. SEN, *Development as Freedom*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> “Often the development of peoples is considered a matter of financial engineering, the freeing up of markets, the removal of tariffs, investment in production, and institutional reforms – in other words, a purely technical matter. All these factors are of great importance, but (...). Development will never be fully guaranteed through automatic and impersonal forces, whether they derive from the market or from international politics (...). When technology is allowed to take over, the result is confusion between ends and means, such that the sole criterion for action in business is thought to be maximization of profit, in politics the consolidation of power, and in science the findings of research. Often, underneath the intricacies of economic, financial and political interconnections, there remain misunderstandings, hardships and injustice” (n. 71).

*ex machina* that enters the scene *ex post*, to correct negative externalities”<sup>82</sup>. Rather, his intention is that of situating economics within the broader framework of moral philosophy so that it assumes its pristine place as an integral branch of moral philosophy<sup>83</sup>. Thus, he maintains that the financial world must be ethical “not merely by virtue of an external label, but by its respect for requirements intrinsic to its very nature” (n. 45). He is nevertheless conscious of the fact that even the term “ethics”, especially within business circles, has been woefully bastardized. For him, what is needed is “not any ethics whatsoever, but an ethics which is people-centred” (ibid.). Benedict does not specifically mention which ethical systems are suspect, and are thus to be avoided. However, from a speech he made shortly before the appearance of *Caritas in veritate*, we can decipher that his reservations are particularly directed to ethical rationalism and ethical relativism<sup>84</sup>.

In the said speech, Pope Benedict maintained that whereas in the past one and half century, the world of ethics was held hostage by a sort of “dictatorship of rationalism”, the demon of the contemporary epoch is a kind of “dictatorship of relativism”. A brainchild of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the fundamental tenet of ethical rationalism is the view that “ethics should be based on aprioristic principles of morality provided by human reason”<sup>85</sup>. Since they are considered knowable *a priori*, that is, independently of experience or empirical evidence, these principles are independent of any contributions from the senses. Immanuel Kant, with his categorical imperative, stands out as the foremost representative of this current. Notwithstanding its empirical evaluation of the consequences of an action, especially in terms of pleasurable satisfaction, Utilitarianism also draws its inspiration from

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<sup>82</sup> B. GIOVANOLA, “Re-Thinking the Anthropological and Ethical Foundation of Economics and Business”, 431.

<sup>83</sup> In fact, Benedict envisages the return of economics to “the original context from which it emerged as a discipline – back to the time before it was understood as a discipline of scientific technique divorced from moral concerns, back to when it went by the name ‘political economy’ and was understood as a branch of moral philosophy”: J.M. BREEN, “Love, Truth and the Economy”, 997.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, “General Audience”, Castelgandolfo, August 5, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> D. MELÉ, “Foundations for Business Ethics: Exploring *Caritas in Veritate*”, in D. MELÉ – C. DIERKSMEIER (eds.), *Human Development in Business*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire – New York 2012, 63.

an aprioristic principle, that is, the principle of the greater happiness for the greater number. The same is true of the “Integrative Social Contract Theory”, which is basically founded on the aprioristic assumption that morality has its basis on social contract. Benedict disparages rationalism, arguing that it “was inadequate because it failed to take into account human limitations and claims to make reason alone the criterion of things, transforming it into a goddess”<sup>86</sup>.

According to Benedict, the mantle of dominion has in our time been ceded to a perhaps more insidious current, “Ethical relativism”. In his view, reason suffers untold humiliation in the face of contemporary relativism, since “it arrives de facto at affirming that human being can know nothing with certainty outside the positive scientific field”<sup>87</sup>. Traditionally, relativism refers to the position that the individual or the society, as the case may be, is the source and measure of morality. When the criterion of evaluation is centred on the individual, it becomes subjectivism, but when it is each given society that is the determinant of its values, it is called cultural relativism. But in addition to these, there has emerged in the field of business ethics another form of relativism which has its source in “the variety of normative theories of ethics which compete to serve as theoretical support for business ethics (...) and the lack of sound criterion of truth for a sound discernment among them. These theories are presented as a matter of a pure subjective choice”<sup>88</sup>. This usually constitutes a mayhem, since “when there is no objective reference it is not difficult to arrive at a relativist posture – you can use any theory – and even positions of scepticism as regards business ethics”<sup>89</sup>. Thus, both ethical relativism and ethical rationalism “seem inadequate responses to the human being’s justifiable request to use his reason as a distinctive and constitutive element of his own identity”<sup>90</sup>.

What Benedict actually opts for is an ethics that is “people-centred”, that is “person friendly”. By a person-friendly ethics, he implies an ethics fundamentally directed to meeting “the deepest moral needs of the person” as well as “the authentic human good” (n. 200). As highlighted

<sup>86</sup> BENEDICT XVI, “General Audience”, Castelgandolfo, August 5, 2009.

<sup>87</sup> BENEDICT XVI, “General Audience”, Castelgandolfo, August 5, 2009.

<sup>88</sup> D. MELÉ, “Foundations for Business Ethics...”, 68.

<sup>89</sup> D. MELÉ, “Foundations for Business Ethics...”, 68.

<sup>90</sup> BENEDICT XVI, “General Audience”, Castelgandolfo, August 5, 2009.

by M. Mauri, “a person-friendly type of ethics is an ethics which aids personal growth, which accompanies the human being on the individual and shared journey of life, which charts the path that runs between possibility and excellence”<sup>91</sup>. What this implies is that “any attempt to govern the human life by norms which are contrary to human nature, or which overlooks human nature, in part or completely, cannot be called person-friendly ethics”<sup>92</sup>. The same applies to any ethics “whose norms only aspire to regulate the co-existence of human beings and ignore personal and social moral development”<sup>93</sup>. Benedict argues that having an advertising slogan that makes use of the term “ethics” is not just enough to qualify a business as ethical in the true sense. Whereas some ethics are truly and authentically so, others, though bearing the label or slogan of ethics, are to be regarded as false ethics (cf. n. 45)<sup>94</sup>. Business ethics is authentically so only when it is erected on the formidable pillars of the inviolable dignity of the human person and the transcendent value of natural moral law. We have already elaborated on Benedict’s transcendent view of the human person from which derives his inviolable dignity. To the question of natural moral norm, we now turn.

### Transcendent Value Of Natural Moral Norm

His staunch conviction about man’s transcendent dimension inexorably leads Benedict to subscribe to the transcendent value of natural moral norm. The problem of the natural moral norm is about the possibility of finding “in human nature certain tendencies whose end can be apprehended as a human good by the human reason”<sup>95</sup>. Against ethical relativism, protagonists of Natural moral law sustain the thesis that

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<sup>91</sup> M. MAURI, “Hacia una recuperación de la ley moral como ética común”, in D. MELÉ – J.M. CASTELLA (eds.), *El Desarrollo Humano Integral. Comentarios Interdisciplinarios a la encíclica ‘Caritas in veritate’ de Benedicto XVI*, Ite, Barcelona 2010, 95.

<sup>92</sup> M. MAURI, “Hacia una recuperación de la ley moral como ética común”, 95.

<sup>93</sup> M. MAURI, “Hacia una recuperación de la ley moral como ética común”, 95.

<sup>94</sup> It is in this sense that Benedict’s successor, Pope Francis observes in his Encyclical Letter, *Laudato si* (24 May 2015) that we can “have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics” (n. 105), and laments the “mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty” (n. 229).

<sup>95</sup> D. MELÉ, “Foundations for Business Ethics...”, 73.

“persons and human communities are capable, in the light of reason, of discerning the fundamental orientations of moral action in conformity with the very nature of the human subject and of expressing these orientations in a normative fashion in the form of precepts and commandments”<sup>96</sup>. Since these laws are innate in man, “their authority can be attributed to the ultimate author of human nature, God, the Creator”<sup>97</sup>. Already, in the pre-Christian world, the idea of “an unwritten law which surpasses positive laws” is reflected in the thoughts of such outstanding authors as Sophocles and Cicero<sup>98</sup>. In fact, consciousness of the existence of the universal natural law seems a common heritage of mankind. This is especially manifested in what has been termed the “Golden Rule”, which compels everyone to put him/herself in the shoes of the other, and eschew doing to others what one would not want others to do to oneself. This is a maxim common to different religious and cultural traditions.

At the vanguard of the defence of the Moral Natural Law within the Christian philosophical tradition has been Thomas Aquinas<sup>99</sup>. He holds the fundamental presupposition that there exists in every human person a certain natural capacity for discerning between good and bad by grasping the moral message inherent in human nature, as well as the imperative to act in accordance with this moral dictate. It is in this light that Thomas affirms the first precept of the natural law: “good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided”. For him, this principle is self-evident, since it is immediately grasped by human reason. And from it emerge other basic human goods necessary for man’s development such as life, procreation and education of offspring, search for truth, love, benevolence etc. The natural law is, therefore, inherent

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<sup>96</sup> INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *The Search for a Universal Ethics: A New Look at Natural Law*, Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, London 2016, n. 9.

<sup>97</sup> D. MELÉ, *Foundations for Business Ethics...*, 73-74.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. SOPHOCLES, *Antigona*, vv. 563ff, eng. trans. by F. Storr, William Heinemann Ltd – The Macmillan Company, London – New York 1921; CICERO, *De re publica*, III, 22, 33, eng. trans. by C.W. Keyes, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1928.

<sup>99</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 94. In a recent work which offers an in-depth articulation of the thoughts of St Thomas on the Natural Law, Aldo Vendemiati argues that Aquinas’ thought on the natural law is the most promising for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially on account of his realism, his capacity of considering man integrally as well as his ability to reconcile the necessities of man’s intellectuality and concreteness. Cf. A. VENDEMIATI, *San Tommaso e la legge naturale*, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2011, 39.

in the human person and is not imposed from outside; it forms part of a person's very being. Following Thomas Aquinas, Benedict's immediate predecessor, John Paul II, advanced similar ideas. In his Encyclical, *Veritatis splendor*, in a spirited defence of the natural moral law against the objections of physicalism and naturalism which have accused natural law of presenting what are merely biological laws as moral laws<sup>100</sup>, John Paul II clarified what he considered the true meaning of natural law. According to him, "it refers to man's proper and primordial nature, the 'nature of the human person', which is *the person himself in the unity of soul and body*, in the unity of his spiritual and biological inclinations and of all the other specific characteristics necessary for the pursuit of his end"<sup>101</sup>. In an address to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, he reminded them that the Moral Natural Law "belongs to the great heritage of human wisdom (...). Natural law, in itself accessible to every rational creature, points to the first essential norms of moral life"<sup>102</sup>.

Benedict XVI follows this line of thought with renewed vigour. In fact, even before becoming Pope, he had expressed the conviction that "Natural law reveals that nature also contains a moral message. The spiritual content in the creation is not only of mechanic-mathematic nature (...), but there is also a bonus of spirit, of 'natural laws' (...), which remains printed in it and reveals an inner order"<sup>103</sup>. Upon becoming Pope, the defence of the natural law became one of the principal pillars of his magisterium. Recognizing the first and foremost precept of the natural law, "do good and avoid evil", he reaffirms that other more particular precepts governing ethical judgment over people's rights and duties sprout from this first principle. In an Address to

<sup>100</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Veritatis splendor*, 6 August 1993, n. 47.

<sup>101</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Veritatis splendor*, n. 50. He cites an earlier document by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith which had taught that "The natural moral law expresses and lays down the purposes, rights and duties which are based upon the bodily and spiritual nature of the human person. Therefore this law cannot be thought of as simply a set of norms on the biological level; rather it must be defined as the rational order whereby man is called by the Creator to direct and regulate his life and actions and in particular to make use of his own body": CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation Donum Vitae* (February 22, 1987), Introduction, 3.

<sup>102</sup> JOHN PAUL II, "Address to the Participants in the Biannual Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith", Vatican City, 6 February, 2004, n. 5.

<sup>103</sup> J. RATZINGER, *God and the World*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2001, 142.



the General Assembly of the United Nations, maintaining that “respect for human rights is principally rooted in unchanging justice”, he argued that “Since rights and the resulting duties follow naturally from human interaction, it is easy to forget that they are the fruit of a commonly held sense of justice built primarily upon solidarity among the members of society, and hence valid at all times and for all peoples”. He recalls that St Augustine had expressed a similar intuition when he “taught that the saying: *Do not do to others what you would not want done to you* ‘cannot in any way vary according to the different understandings that have arisen in the world’ (*De Doctrina Christiana*, III, 4)”<sup>104</sup>. In *Caritas in veritate*, Benedict advocates that “*the decisive issue is the overall moral tenor of society*”, insisting that we have to look to the “book of nature” which “is one and indivisible” (n. 51). Not only does Benedict favour natural moral law, more than that, he insists on the imperative of instituting it as a common ethics, since its truth is common to all men<sup>105</sup>.

Benedict’s submissions in his encyclical are to be read in the light of the document issued around the same time by the International Theological Commission, *The Search for a Universal Ethics: A New Look at Natural Law*, which we have earlier cited. A really dense document, it represents a balanced and comprehensive presentation of the natural law tradition for our time, especially in the face of calls from different quarters for the exploration of the possibilities for universal ethics. It urges that “we should reach the point of saying, behind our religious convictions and the diversity of our cultural presuppositions, what are the fundamental values for our common humanity, in a manner to work together to promote comprehension, reciprocal recognition and peaceful cooperation between all the members of the human

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<sup>104</sup> BENEDICT XVI, “Address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization”, New York, Friday, 18 April 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Serge-Thomas Bonino observes that for the Holy Father, “natural law was the flipside of his denunciation of ethical relativism, which he perceived as a radical threat to civilization. For ethical relativism undermines the bases of respect for human dignity”: “An Introduction to the Document *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law*”, in J. BERKMAN – W.C. MATTISON III, *Searching for a Universal Ethic: Multidisciplinary, Ecumenical, and Inter-faith Responses to the Catholic Natural Law Tradition*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – Cambridge 2014, 96.

family”<sup>106</sup>. But one interesting thing about the document, which is also shared by Benedict, is that it situates the role of the natural law not so much in its specific moral norms as in its task of defending the human person’s transcendent dimensions against the absolutization of any created good, especially the state. It was explicit that “If God and every transcendence were to be excluded from the political horizon, nothing would remain but the authority of man over man”<sup>107</sup>. As Benedict argued on another occasion, “A society in which God is absent will not find the necessary consensus on moral values or the strength to live according to the model of these values, even when they are in conflict with private interests”<sup>108</sup>. Benedict’s argument is comprehensible, especially from the perspective of his theistic anthropology. God is the ultimate metaphysical foundation of the natural moral law. When God is absent, man becomes the measure of all things, and relativism is inevitably enthroned. By underscoring man’s essential orientation towards God, he overcomes the relativism into which the absence or denial of God is apt to plunge humanity.

## Conclusion

The burden of this essay, far from being a critical scrutiny of Pope Benedict’s teaching, has been a modest endeavour at appraising the philosophical significance of his contribution to the development question. Benedict’s doctrine, as we have tried to show, is grounded on a theistic anthropology which unequivocally acknowledges man’s transcendent dimension, that is, man’s essential openness, not only to his fellow creatures, but especially to God. Being God’s creature, authentic development cannot be realized single-handedly by man; development needs God. It is on the basis of this pivotal element that Benedict underscores an intrinsic correlation between charity and truth, and insists on their fundamentality for authentic human development. Charity and

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<sup>106</sup> INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *The Search for a Universal Ethics*, n. 116.

<sup>107</sup> INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *The Search for a Universal Ethics*, n. 97.

<sup>108</sup> BENEDICT XVI, “Address at the Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean”, 13 May 2007.

truth constitute the driving principles of any authentic development, and both have their origin in God, the Eternal Charity and Absolute Truth. It is in the light of the same theistic anthropology that Benedict sheds fresh light on the relationship between charity and justice. What charity adds to justice is the dimension of gift, and authentic human development, without neglecting the demands of justice, has to go beyond justice to embrace the logic of gift and gratuitousness. It is against the same backdrop of a theistic anthropology which exalts man's transcendent dignity that Benedict builds his conviction that economics, being as it were concerned with man, necessarily has to be founded on ethics, and not just any type of ethics, but a people-centred ethics. By a people-centred ethics, he means one which flows from a recognition of man's transcendent dignity and the ultimate value of the natural moral norms. Benedict therefore reaffirms the natural law as foundational not just for human rights, but also for an authentic economic system and a just social order. These explorations we have attempted, without pretending to be exhaustive, bear witness to the strong philosophical foundations and significance of Benedict's doctrine. The insights he brings into his conception of development are as philosophically cogent and appealing as they are they are theologically orthodox and refreshing, and they provide a mine of resources for viable, integral and authentic human development.

**Summary:** Beyond the evident theological appeal of Benedict XVI's *Caritas in veritate* dedicated to integral human development, this social encyclical is also impregnated with very rich and deep, philosophical significance. This article systematically investigates the philosophical foundations of Benedict's perspective on the question of development. Beginning from an appraisal and enunciation of the solid theistic-anthropological grounding of the encyclical, it explores key philosophical elements which undergird Benedict's notion of development and which combine to render his encyclical not only theologically orthodox and refreshing but also philosophically cogent and persuasive.

**Key Words:** Benedict XVI, human development, charity, truth, justice, ethics, faith, reason, theistic anthropology, transcendence.

**Parole chiave:** Benedetto XVI, sviluppo umano, carità, verità, giustizia, etica, fede, ragione, antropologia teistica, trascendenza.