



Article

The Relationship between Philosophy and Theology in Inter-War German Catholic Scholarship

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Abstract: This paper provides an introduction to the thought of four German Catholic philosophers of the inter-war era described by Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI as the most influential on his generation of seminariars. The focus of the article is on how they understood the relationship between theology and philosophy.

Keywords: sacred tradition; philosophy; theology; Romano Guardini; Josef Pieper; Peter Wust and Theodor Haecker

1. Introduction

In the autobiographical work Milestones, Joseph Ratzinger, who became Benedict XVI, remarked that the philosophical voices that moved his generation of seminarians most directly were those of Romano Guardini, Josef Pieper, Theodor Haecker, and Peter Wust (Ratzinger 1988, pp. 42–43). Each one of these scholars was riding on the crest of a wave of disillusionment with German Idealism. They opposed the sharp separation of philosophy from the theology fostered by Immanuel Kant and those who followed the tradition of Kant. This paper offers a window into the attitudes of this inter-war generation of German Catholic scholars. In each case, the members of this quartet acknowledged the distinction between theology and philosophy but thought that the two should be integrated and not separated into silos. In taking this position, they ran counter not only to the prescriptions of Immanuel Kant and others in the tradition of German Idealism but to the practices in universities world-wide where philosophy and theology are studied in separate departments and rarely brought into relationship with one another.

Since this special edition of Religious is focused on the relationship between Theology and Continental Philosophy, this paper will showcase the ideas of this quartet, not because they influenced the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict, but because they represent a particular tradition within the European ideas of the twentieth century that challenged the Kantian paradigm of how philosophy and theology ought to be related, or indeed, not related.

2. Roman Guardini (1885-1968)

The refusal to abide by the sharp separation of the disciplines was strongest in the work of Guardini who accordingly held professorial chairs, neither in philosophy, nor in theology, but in the Catholic Weltanschausug (at the University of Berlin from 1923–1939) and in the Christian Weltanschausug (at the University of Munich from 1948–1962). These titles allowed him to integrate the disciplines into a "world-view". Ratzinger remarked that 'Kantianism had shattered [Guardini's] childhood faith into pieces' and thus 'his conversion developed into an overcoming of Kant'. (Ratzinger 2013, p. 392).

This orientation ran parallel to movements in French Catholic thought of the time, above all to Maurice Blondel's criticism of 'extrinsicism', that is, the intellectual habit of drawing sharp separations between nature and grace, faith and reason, the secular and the sacred. Henri de Lubac, following Blondel, criticised "two-tiered thinking", the idea that grace is merely a "top up" for nature while faith is merely a "top up" for reason.



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The Present Relations Between Philosophy And Theology

AW Rasmussen

The Present Relations Between Philosophy And Theology:

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