



*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)
Pioneer and model in the open process
of rethinking Christianity
from the perspectives of philosophy
and science*

EDITORIAL

**SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY,
AND RELIGION:
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
FOR PROFOUND QUESTIONS**

CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIAL COHESION FOR A HARMONIOUS CO-EXISTENCE
IN AN IDEAL COMMUNITY

The journal PENSAMIENTO publishes this first issue of a new series entitled «Science, Philosophy, and Religion» (Special Series, no. 1, year 2007). We hope to publish annually an issue belonging to this series, in addition to the journal's three ordinary issues that have been dedicated up to the present to general philosophical investigation. The current issue, and the new series, have been possible due to the collaboration of PENSAMIENTO with the *Science, Technology, and Religion Chair* (or *Cátedra CTR*, in Spanish), under the auspices of the program *Science, Technology, and Social Ethics* of the Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería (ICAI) of Universidad Comillas, and of the project *Sophia Iberia in Europe* (pertaining to the *Cátedra CTR*), with the support of Templeton Foundation.

The new series focuses on a new area of reflection that is essential to the history of human thought. *Religions* are absolutely the oldest manifestation of cosmovisional thinking, and of the human and social experience of a relation with the ultimate personal ground of the universe. Nowadays, religions continue to exist and to represent an immense majority of humanity. Beginning from the

Greek thinkers, *philosophy* was born with the objective of reviewing the religious myth by means of the critical use of reason. It was the historical transition from *myth to logos*, in the classical expression of W. Nestle. But philosophy, for its part, did not reject religion's logos, but on the contrary, integrated it as an inevitable element of its discourse. In the course of the centuries, the problem of God—and the problem of religions and their theologies—has been and is presently one of the essential problems of philosophy, dealt with in the light of theism, atheism, or religious/non-religious agnosticism. Finally, *science* broke into history as the most rigorous enterprise aimed at producing a rational knowledge of the universe. Science did not seek to engage in philosophy, but it could not be doubted that rigorous scientific knowledge referred (and continues to do so today) to the same reality of the universe that philosophy and religion speak to us about. Thus, it would be impossible to do philosophy and theology without heeding science's image of the universe, life, and the human being.

After the history of the last centuries, science, philosophy, and religion have currently become the three essential reference themes in the human search for the «meaning of existence». Other aspects of our life depend on them: culture in its entire amplitude, society, harmonious co-existence, political ideals, etc. Thus, within a strict conception of the link between theory and praxis, the three central reference themes—science, philosophy, and religion—stand out as the fundamental theoretical support that gives meaning to human, personal, and collective lives.

But why are science, philosophy, and religion very important for human life? The response seems to be as follows: because the human person seeks to live life authentically by being integrated in the «truth» of the universe, and the best guide «to live in the truth» is found in science, philosophy, and religion. For this reason, persons and human groups have been installing themselves in the «experience of the truth» obtained from science, from philosophy, and from religion.

However, an essential aspiration of our biological make-up is to live in communion with others: to live fraternally «within» our species. It is the oldest aspiration for solidarity in inter-human existence that resounded, resounds, and continues to resound as a universal human yearning. And here arises a grave problem: how does one live in solidarity when humanity is divided by opposing and mutually exclusive ideologies because of science, philosophy, and religion? What does one do when these ideologies not only do not allow harmonious co-existence, but also produce contempt, confrontation, and even violence among groups?

We are not just referring to innumerable past and present wars, struggles, persecutions, and violence arising from opposing interests, ideologies, and religions. In present modern society we observe ongoing tensions that break human solidarity. Religions sometimes believe that they possess the absolute truth, and they criticize unbelief and atheism with extraordinary harshness.

On some occasions, atheism is also dogmatic and they do not only criticize religions from a supposedly scientific ground, but they also look down on and make fun of them. One finds even in more developed countries ideological tensions and aggressions among groups, with the seed of violence becoming manifest in different public demonstrations of any kind. A society where groups make fun of and morally scorn each other is far from having reached the ideals of modernity.

What has to be done when ideologies—with scientific, philosophical, or religious basis—break harmonious co-existence? The response is to act in order to make unity or inter-human solidarity possible. It seems that contributory to this action, in principle, will be every type of initiative promoting three values that are more necessary than ever:

1) *Tolerance*. Modern epistemology has contributed to the idea of an «enlightened» and «critical» society. We should realize that the universe is not a screen that imposes evident truths on us, but presents a profound cognitive, existential, and social enigma. Not only should we «tolerate», but we should also respectfully «recognize» that history has produced diverse and rich scientific, philosophical, and religious cosmovisions addressing the universe's enigma. This tolerance is not relativism, since every human group and every person can remain firm in their convictions. To tolerate and to respect (to admit the epistemological obscurity of the universe) is not necessarily fragility.

2) *Com-passion*. Compassion is a value that presupposes tolerance, but goes much beyond it. To be compassionate with other human beings means to desire «to feel-with-them»: it is to desire to «re-live» the meaning of their ideas, emotions, and sentiments. The hermeneutical way brings us to «feel with the rest» the «passion in their lives».

3) *Inter-human communication*. One arrives at inter-human unity, i.e., at existential «communion», by means of «communication». «To communicate» is to establish a common ground of existence among human beings. There can be no «com-passion» or tolerance without communication. Communication, i.e., inter-communication, does not take away our right to situate our life's meaning wherever we freely decide. But it allows us to come closer to the cognitive and emotion-filled discourse of others in order to be «com-compassionate» and «tolerant». Communication, compassion, and tolerance enrich our life: they are the way that leads us to learn «harmonious co-existence».

Life as «harmonious co-existence» born of communication, compassion, and tolerance is very close to the ideal of modernity that arose in Europe, the realization of which was attempted in the New World. Undoubtedly, communication and harmonious co-existence are the road towards enriching our life, enabling us to maintain what is proper and to discover hermeneutically the «meaning» of the rest.

The *first article* of the present issue of PENSAMIENTO, authored by Jesús Conill, makes use of the ideas of Jürgen Habermas about the confluence of science, philosophy, and religion in the future. A philosopher like Habermas, above

any suspicion, who in his early years underestimated the role of religion, reformulated his analysis of history to show the importance of the convergence of science, philosophy, and religion with a view to «ideal citizenship», coinciding with the analysis that we have just presented.

The *Cátedra CTR*, based in the Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería of Universidad Comillas, with the support of the program *Science, Technology, and Social Ethics*, and as a development of the project *Sophia Iberia in Europe on Human Evolution*, hopes to create an atmosphere of communication, compassion, and tolerance among science, philosophy, and religion. It does not seek, then, to demonstrate, impose, or convince, but only to communicate, to be compassionate with, and to tolerate in a complex and enigmatic world where human beings freely construct their «meanings». There is no doubt that a world where agnostics, atheists, believers, non-believers, Christians belonging to diverse branches, Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems, etc., do not scorn one another, but on the contrary, communicate multi-directionally, are compassionate with one another, and tolerate one another will be a better world. This hoped-for ambience of communication is a precarious platform, and the means to sustain it are scarce. But it is a modest contribution to a cause that many should promote and strengthen on the international level.

RETHINKING THE THEOLOGICAL LOGOS OF RELIGION FROM PHILOSOPHY'S AND MODERN SCIENCE'S REASON

To obtain a «communicative society», Habermas considers it necessary for religions to be capable of reformulating their «meaning» in the light of philosophy's and modern science's reason. This first issue of *PENSAMIENTO*, belonging to the special series «Science, Philosophy, and Religion», focuses on religion. The Catholic Christian perspective is given preference in the treatment of the topic, although we hope that, through our public call for papers, the succeeding issues of this special series would be enriched by other scientific, philosophical, and religious perspectives.

Is religion meaningful? Is it congruent with reality? Is religiosity possible given the image of the universe in philosophy and science? Religions respond in the affirmative, but there are many religions and their responses can be diverse. For this reason, if religions want to contribute to the creation of a «harmoniously co-existing society», i.e., of a communicative, com-compassionate, and tolerant society, they should exert every effort to communicate their own «experience of meaning». Only by doing so will communication, com-compassion, and tolerance become possible in other religions and ideologies within the framework of science, philosophy, and religion.

1) Teilhard de Chardin's thought was the first step in the reformulation of Christian theology in the light of modern science. The article written by Agustín Udías studies cosmic christology as the principal theme of Teilhard's

theology. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholic thought adhered to Greco-scholastic philosophy and offered a static image of reality. Teilhard started to think of Christianity in the context of a dynamic, energetic, and evolving universe. Beginning from a germinal Alpha Point, this universe constituted the «divine milieu», evolving towards a final Omega Point and converging in the divine-human person of Christ as the saving eschatological pleroma, the culmination of the cosmic process. Although certain aspects of Teilhard's approach may not be easily acceptable today, we believe that the new congruent vision about the religious in the modern world should not lose the profound cosmico-theological, holistic, poetic, and mystical intuitions of Teilhard, which can be reconciled with other more current viewpoints. We do not doubt, then, the suitability of Teilhard's approach as a framework for the process of evolution. Such approach should be meaningful for today's theistic philosophy-theology.

2) Teilhard's thought was very influential in the 1960s. Catholic philosophy-theology of that time showed its willingness to integrate Teilhard's vision of a cosmos in a process of evolution. One of the influential schools then in Central Europe was «transcendental thomism», with Karl Rahner as one of its more important representatives. To explain the human being, this philosophy-theology integrated Kant's a priorism into classical thomistic ontology (which was still dualistic in some way), thereby also allowing it to explain Christianity. The article of Manuel G. Doncel studies how Rahner's thought opened an image of the evolving universe, reconciling it with the presuppositions of transcendental thomism by means of Rahner's theory about the self-overcoming of being. The same intuition introduced by Teilhard concerning «creation by evolution» was assumed and reinterpreted not only by Rahner, but also by other authors like Karl Schmitz-Moormann (1977) and Denis Edwards (2004). Manuel G. Doncel will continue to study the positions of these authors, serving as proposals for a theological reading of the «cosmico-biological evolution» that constitutes our own «mega-history».

3) Alfred North Whitehead's theological interpretation of philosophy, known as process philosophy-theology, was consolidated in America also in the 1960s. The process school has played since then an important role in the development of what can be called a *theology of kénosis*. Authors like Hartshorne, Cobb, Vanstone, and Griffin have contributed to this theology from the perspective of Whitehead's «process». But not every *theology of kénosis* belongs to the process school. Moltmann, Barbour, Peacocke, Polkinghorne, and Ellis—who are among the authors discussed in the work edited by Polkinghorne entitled *The Work of Love: Creation as Kénosis*—have also contributed to this line of thought from specific perspectives. In Spain, Javier Monserrat also defended years ago a *theology of kénosis*. His article in this issue of PENSAMIENTO explains his interpretation of the *theology of kénosis* as a theology of science, in the sense of what he calls as an *epistemological kénosis*. Tomeu Estelrich's study of Simone Weil, relatively unknown, also presents an interesting approach very close to the

theology of kénosis. Finally, we can also assess the significance of George Ellis' ideas about the kénosis of the Divinity in the cosmos, as presented in his Christian anthropic principle in the *Profiles* section of this issue.

4) The remaining articles in this issue of PENSAMIENTO are about the mysteric roots of religious experience. The article of José A. Rojo and Leandro Sequeiros studies Einstein's mysteric experience of the universe. Einstein was not «religious» in the ordinary sense, nor did he consider himself a practicing member of any religion, not even of Judaism. However, Einstein was a man overwhelmed by the enigma of the harmony and rational beauty of a deterministic universe described by science during his time. He felt immersed in the evolving enigma of the rational construction of the universe, and excitedly lived his life recognizing and admiring this mystery. Einstein's sympathy for Buddhism allows us to relate with the article of Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti about science and philosophy in Buddhism. Aside from its philosophical doctrines and connections with Hinduism, we should find in Buddhism a profound state of being bound (religion) to a mysteric future (which is not explicitly identified in a theistic sense), to an enigmatic *Nirvana* that has a soteriological (salvific) value for humanity and history. Buddhism is not theistic because of the dramatic experience of suffering, but *Nirvana* is an absolute mysteric enigma that actually excludes nothing. The commentary on the book of the Dalai Lama about the universe (in the *Profiles* section) also allows us to enter deeply into Buddhist religiosity from the world of science. Between Einstein's experience and the Buddhist experience, there are very exact existential coincidences: the trusting, emotional openness before an enigmatic and mysteric future which in Buddhism acquires undoubtedly religious, although not theistic, tones.

5) The two articles dealing with numbers and mathematics also provide an approximation of the experience of mystery. The article of Óscar Castro analyzes how the experience of the numerico-geometrical construction of the universe was already felt as a sacral experience from the beginning of history. But such experience does not provide a clear and exact idea of divinity, but only a mysteric approximation of the ultimate dimension to which one had access when contemplating the esoteric numeric mysteries of the universe. Many years after the end of the ancient and Greco-roman world, the present formal sciences, as explained by Javier Leach in his article, constructed new systems in abstract form, aided by an exclusive property of the human mind, the capacity for pure imagination (capacity to conceive abstract forms). If the Greco-roman mysteries sought to discover the numeric «secrets» of the physical cosmos, the new formal sciences seek absolutely consistent systems that provide a closed understanding of the universe. Is absolute mathematical consistency possible? Is mathematics related to reality? Before these questions, the philosophy of mathematics and Gödel's theorem are the chief protagonists in the discussion.

6) Finally, the *Profiles* section of this issue of PENSAMIENTO also contains two articles referring to two internationally current themes: the critique of the religious by Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. Their mode of approaching

the analysis and critique of the religious can serve as an example of what should not be, to our mind, a consideration of the religious from the perspective of atheism. Their position is not only atheistic (a position that we unreservedly respect and consider possible), but is belligerently anti-religious, since it is aggressive, contemptuous, and offensive, among others. Today's educated theism does not treat atheism in a manner similar to how these authors treat religion. Their position does not make possible the creation of a «communicative and reconciled society» with a critical, tolerant, and compassionate atmosphere, but only encourages the maintenance of an increasingly tension-filled society with latent seeds of violence.

As we have said before, this issue of PENSAMIENTO does not cover everything. It is not encyclopedic, but is only a first approximation of certain science-philosophy-religion topics for reflection. We hope that our *call for papers* would amplify the scientific, philosophical, and theological perspectives in the next issues, thus continually elevating the relevance and quality of the articles and collaborations.

If we review this first issue of the «Science, Philosophy, and Religion» special series, certain principles stand out that we would like to emphasize.

On the one hand, there is the experience of the universe as a mysteric enigma that does not impose a dogmatic truth on us. Precisely for being enigmatic, the universe does not impose a single explicative model. Atheism is possible, but so too is theism. In attempting to offer the best exposition of their explicative model, religions should simultaneously face the task of re-thinking their traditions, making them converge with the new image of the world in science (Teilhard, Rahner). But religions should also take the risk of reformulating directly the Christian understanding from the perspective of modern science, which does not show a «dogmatic» universe, but only a universe where «God creates freedom by not imposing himself» (*theology of kénosis*). On the other hand, the scientific paradigm with reference to which can be created a new understanding of the religious should be an evolutive paradigm in the context of a psycho-bio-physical monism that shows the holistic coherence of the universe.

The efforts to look for the proper «logos» and to formulate it profoundly from the viewpoints of science, philosophy, and religion (theology) should make atheists, agnostics, believers, unbelievers, religious and non-religious come out of a state of ideological confrontation and contempt in order to enter gradually in a «communicative society» that is open, critical, tolerant, respectful, and compassionate—a plural and mature society that ultimately is an «enlightened» and «critical» society.

Communication among religions plays a principal role in this multi-directional communication process. Each religion has its own «logos» and these logos should become «communicative». We will discover in this issue of PENSAMIENTO that the actual progress towards a holistic-evolutive image of the universe favors many points of encounter between Christianity and Hinduism, and between Christianity and Buddhism. For Buddhism, its fundamental reli-

gious experience is the drama of suffering that does not allow speech about God, but nevertheless does not prevent the religious-emotional ascent to a transcendent, enigmatic, mysteric, and salvific *Nirvana*. Christianity can fully assume the dramatic Buddhist experience of suffering and its emotional access to the mysteric *Nirvana*. But Christianity also adds something else: that the acceptance of the divine message in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection (*theology of kénosis*) makes possible the hope that the mysteric *Nirvana* eschatologically reveals the salvific presence of a personal God.