CHAPTER 5

CLAIMS OF TRUTH AND OBJECTIVITY IN A POST-MODERN WORLD?
ON PROPOSING 'OBJECTIVE VALUES' OF THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION AT THE START OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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> "'For this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.
> Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice".
> Pilate said to him: "What is truth?"'" (Jn 18:37b-38)

Introduction

Pilate's question gives voice to the scepticism of any age or individual before the substantial claims of truth. Some truth assumptions, however, are even part of scepticism. Evaluation is an indispensable part of human choice, of human decision-making, and of human acting. There is no value-free human acting.[1] Are there values and guidelines of behaviour which can legitimately be claimed to be universally valid (and what would be the foundation of this claim)? Roman Catholic moral theology leaves no doubt in its teaching that there are acts which should never be committed (*intrinsece malum*);[2] the Christian tradition of discernment of spirits explicitly distinguishes between what is good and what is evil, and, in a second step, between what is truly good and what is only apparently good in a given situation of choice.[3] In sharp contrast, at the beginning of

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[1] Human acting is defined as acting by a human subject in which the reason and the will of the acting person are actively involved. On the classical concept of human acts and its complex understanding – both in its best scholastic tradition as well as in the light of an interdisciplinary dialogue with the findings of depth psychology, cf. K. Baumann, *Das Unbewußte in der Freiheit*, Editrice PUG, Roma 1996; Id., 'The Concept of Human Acts Revisited', in *Gregorianum* 80(1999), 147-171.

[2] Cf. John Paul II., Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, 06/08/1993.

[3] Cf. L.M. Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation, I: Interdisciplinary bases*, Gregorian UP, Rome 1986 (from here on *ACV I*). Readers who are familiar with *ACV I*, will recognize the

the 21st century, there is a widespread crisis, if not denial, of truth and objectivity[4] especially in the spheres of modern living, morals and values, frequently coined as relativism which is a characteristic of a post-modern (secularized, western) world. This crisis of truth and objectivity of values can be identified on different levels: philosophical, ethical, practical, and anthropological. How can the Christian faith and vocation be reasonably held and proposed as true in this post-modern context – in public discourse as well as more specifically in the personal encounters of psychotherapeutic processes? The following reflections are to be considered as an attempt to deal reasonably with this question and to stimulate further reflection and discussion.

As a first step, let us take a more precise look at the meanings of 'postmodernity'. Secondly, the Christian vocation will be proposed as an anthropological reality and confronted with postmodern trends. Thirdly, the process of growing towards one's personal truth with the help of psychotherapy is conceived of and spelled out in the light of different theories of truth and of depth-psychology reflections.

1. Characteristic Traits of 'Postmodernity'

In a very brief sketch I wish to characterize 'postmodernity' by some of its specific traits first: philosophical, ethical, practical, and anthropological.

Philosophically, postmodernity is a critical reflection on the philosophical program of the Enlightenment ('modernity') which focussed on the human subject and which reduced the human person to rational thinking. This led to a unitary anthropology which reduced the plurality and difference of human subjects. In the critique of this abstract reduction, post-modern philosophy emphasizes plurality and difference, rejects the ideas of an ultimate foundation and origin, of an ultimate goal of being and of an autonomous or free subject. Post-modern authors (e.g. Lyotard, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida) speak of an 'end of the big narratives' which before had provided for a (culturally constructed) sense and unity and which had served those in positions of power; in contrast, post-modern philosophers give prominence to difference, plurality and otherness.

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translation of these Thomistic and Ignatian categories into the logic of the 1st and 2nd dimension, respectively.

   [4] The terms 'objective' and 'objectivity' can be used with very different meanings. In our context, it bears the connotation of being universally valid or true. This includes and is more than 'objectivity' in empirical sciences (according to Karl R. Popper), in which 'objective' is what can be intersubjectively tested and agreed to. Cf. W. Brugger (ed.), *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, Herder, Freiburg [17]1985, 272f. As to 'objective values' according to Rulla see below.

Accordingly in *ethics*, the post-modern approach rejects 'the typically modern ways of going about its moral problems (that is, responding to moral challenges with coercive normative regulation in political practice, and the philosophical search for absolutes, universals and foundations in theory)'.[5] Rooted in an anthropology which reduced the human person to thinking and reason, 'the moral thought and practice of modernity was animated by the belief in the possibility of a non-ambivalent, non-aporetic ethical code'.[6]

Like post-modern philosophy, post-modern ethics no longer expect to find the all-embracing, total and ultimate formula of life without ambiguity, risk, danger and error, and is deeply suspicious of any voice that promises otherwise.[7] Post-modern ethics considers humans as morally ambivalent, moral phenomena as inherently non-rational and aporetic. In consequence, morality is non universalizable and, 'from the perspective of the "rational order", morality is and is bound to remain irrational'.[8] This ought not to mean an end of morality, however, but the contrary. In his study on post-modern ethics, Zygmunt Bauman asserts: 'one must assume that moral responsibility – being *for* the Other before one can be *with* the Other – is the first reality of the self, a starting point rather than a product of society'.[9] Therefore, he states, the 'post-modern perspective on moral phenomena *does not reveal the relativism* of morality. Neither must it call for, or obliquely recommend, a "nothing we can do about it" disarmament in the face of an apparently irreducible variety of ethical codes. The contrary is the case'.[10] He assumes that at the far end of the long march of 'enlightened reason', moral nihilism is waiting, which means the loss of the ability to be moral;[11] whereas post-modern wisdom of the moral self might make it 'a bit more moral'.[12]

These assertions are necessary due to their contrast to several *practical* traits or *cultural* characteristics of post-modernity. These traits are – among others – individualization, multiplication of options of choice, pluralisation of lifestyles, differentiation and segmentation of spheres of life, reduction and loss of security, of shared norms, and of institutional bonds. Individuals are forced to find their way and to construct their living by continuously choosing and deciding – the results of which may be questioned and revised at any moment. Actually,

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[5] Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Blackwell, Oxford (UK) – Cambridge (USA) 1993, 4.

[6] Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 9.

[7] Cf. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 245.

[8] Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 13.

[9] Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 13.

[10] Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 14 (italics given in the original text).

[11] Cf. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 248.

[12] Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 15.

in post-modern societies, there seems to dominate a pragmatic relativism of morality, an irreducible variety of ethical codes and modes of conduct and various attitudes of 'we can do nothing about it'.

Anthropologically, these post-modern characteristics and opinions have relevant and ambivalent consequences which should not be dismissed in the context of these reflections. The *philosophical* critique of the modern reduction of the human person to reason helps to regain what is not rational, but biographic, bodily, sensitive, emotional, and symbolic for a more integral anthropology. On the other hand, post-modern scepticism which doubts or even denies the capacity of the human spirit to know truth only because the human person is intrinsically conditioned by his situation in time and space is bound to claim that the human desire for knowledge and truth is in vain. Simultaneously and ironically, this same scepticism cannot claim to be true itself.[13]

For post-modern *ethics* morality is more than and very different from practical reason: 'what makes the self moral: that unfounded, non-rational, un-arguable, no-excuses-given and non-calculable urge to stretch towards the other, to caress, to be for, to live for, happen what may'.[14] This implies on the one hand the firm assumption that there *is* an innate 'ought to' in every human person; and on the other it implies that bodily sensations, pre- and unconscious emotions, memories and representations as well as self-transcending relations in human acting should be considered as to their role and contribution in human acting.

Everyday *post-modern living and culture*, with its multi-optionality, fragmentation and insecurity, means an increase of alternatives and implies liberations from coercions for the individuals on the one hand. On the other hand, there is a considerable reduction of external and internal psycho-social stability; there are higher demands in terms of costs and consequences of one's choices; this implies an increase in average psychic stress and less favourable conditions for the development of mature psychic structures (i.e. of identity integration). Post-modern living is prone to a sub-clinical syndrome of stable instability reflected in the oscillation of a growing number of persons among many options and short-term ethical decisions or interpersonal commitments. At the same time, the values of stable family bonds and interpersonal faithfulness are gaining highest priorities among the proclaimed and desired values of those in their teens and twenties reflecting their precarious needs in the midst of these stable instabilities in post-modern living.

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[13] Cf. G. Cottier, 'La crise de la vérité', in *Revue Thomiste* 104(2004), 11-26.
[14] Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 247.

2. Speaking of the Christian Vocation as an Anthropological Reality – Anachronism or Affirmation of Identity?

In its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council has used the heading 'The Church and Man's Calling' for the first part of the document and first of all addresses the question 'What does the Church think of man?' (*GS* 11). In the following first chapter, it exposes the Christian understanding of the dignity of the human person to which the concept of 'call' or 'vocation' is intrinsically related:

'The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator' (*GS* 19). This Christian understanding of every human person as being called to communion with God from the very moment of his or her coming into existence, has been affirmed by the Council in the face of many forms of modern atheism which deny – philosophically or practically – the truth of the living God and, consequently, 'this intimate and vital link with God' (*GS* 19) of every human being.

In the late 1960s through to the 1990s, these affirmations of the Council might have sounded anachronistic to many critics. In the meantime, even agnostic, 'post-metaphysical' philosophers, who had for long expected the end of the Church and of religion in a modern (enlightened) world, now recognize the devastating derailments of 20th century's *modernity* and start to appreciate, in post-modern contexts of fragmentation, insecurity and scepticism, the analytic sensitivity of Christian faith to describe lives led astray, social pathologies, the failure of individual life-projects and the deformations of biographies.[15]

The clear and explicit link between every human person and God, as expressed in the notions of 'being created in the image of God' (*GS* 12) and of being called to loving communion with God, is not just an affirmation of Christian conviction and identity, but also a prophetic message into post-modern and post-secular times. It proclaims as a universally valid anthropological reality that every human person, female or male, is created in the image of God – with an inherent dynamic towards Jesus Christ who is the *perfect* image of God and by whom only 'does the mystery of man take on light' (*GS* 22).

After initial empirical surveys of distinctive motivational processes in persons who enter, leave, or persevere in a Christian choice of life (leading to his PhD in 1968) and after both psychological systematizations and interpretations of

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[15] Cf. J. Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion. Philosophische Aufsätze*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 2005.

further empirical findings,[16] L.M. Rulla became aware of an impasse in his induc-
tive approach which he could only overcome by an intrinsically theological
understanding of the Christian vocation.[17] He took up the basic anthropologi-
cal message of the Christian faith and worked for its interdisciplinary mediation
on a philosophical platform, in order to gain a *deeper* understanding of various
psycho-dynamic processes called consistencies and inconsistencies between intra-
psychic structures called the Ideal-Self and the Actual-Self. The impasse con-
sisted in the lack of an 'objective' point of reference of what is consistent and
inconsistent not *only* subjectively or *only* psycho-socially but also in reference to
the truth of what and who the human person is called to be. Rulla operational-
ized the basic human thrust to theocentric self-transcendence – as both a teleo-
logical *and* axiological reality in man and woman created in the image of God
– which is activated in the meeting with reality.[18] For the philosophical media-
tion, he especially used Joseph de Finance's differentiation of values as natural
and self-transcendent (both ethical and religious). The encounter of the human
person with reality always means a confrontation with natural and self-tran-
scendent values inherent in reality. In addition, values can be internal, psychic
realities of the person, i.e. *subjective* values. As Rulla himself put this distinction:
'Values can be considered as having two aspects, objective and subjective. Objec-
tive values are those aspects of a person or a thing whose intrinsic importance is
the object of the human response; such aspects are not the product of human
thought. Subjective values are the norms of conduct, more or less internalized,
by which the person, in his jud[g]ments and actions, responds to the intrinsic
importance of objects (persons or things)'.[19]

Rulla underlined the correlation of these objective values presented by and
inherent to (external) reality with (internal) subjective values and needs as psy-
chic realities of the human person and with different ways of self-transcendence.

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[16] Cf. L.M. Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation. A psycho-social perspective*, Loyola UP, Chicago
1971; L.M. Rulla – J. Ridick – F. Imoda, *Entering and Leaving Vocation. Intrapsychic Dynamics*,
Loyola UP, Chicago 1976.

[17] Cf. K. Baumann, 'Interdisciplinary Dialogue between Theology and Psychology: Principles
and Promising Steps', in *Melita Theologica* 52(2001), 135-153; here: 147-150.

[18] L. Friedman, 'Why is Reality a Troubling Concept?', in *The Journal of the American Psy-
choanalytic Association* 47(1999), 401-425. Asking 'what it can mean to say that someone is real-
istic in regard to the world of human values, roles, and relationships' (*ibid.*, 401), Lawrence Fried-
man interestingly concludes: 'we need not doubt that meanings have reference to a real world and
that "human" meanings have reference to an objectively real "human" world. In fact, human mean-
ings are part of the objectively real world' (*ibid.*, 422).

[19] *ACV I*, 158. Cf. the distinction of subjectivity and objectivity of H.F. Smith, 'Subjectivity
and Objectivity in Analytic Listening', in *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*
47(1999), 465-484.

As responses of the person to the objective values met, subjective values and needs differ meaningfully: 'Values are innate tendencies to respond to objects as important in themselves; while needs are innate tendencies related to objects as important for oneself'.[20]

The specific link between corresponding objective and subjective values is the *freedom* of the person *to transcend oneself for the sake of the objective value*, or intrinsic importance, of the reality met. 'Therefore the notion of an *objective* self-transcendent value implies a relationship of this objective value to the freedom of the subject. Indeed, this value becomes *subjective* only when the subject in fact chooses it freely and thus makes it his own. [...] Objective self-transcendent values which are in reality outside the person receive their ultimate determination as self-transcendent values from the fact that the freedom of the person finds in them a norm, the "you ought" of his own theocentric self-transcendence'.[21]

The concept of freedom to transcend oneself theocentrically is not a matter of all or nothing (essential freedom), but a matter of degrees and limitations, of more or less, of increase and decrease as determined in the course of one's biographical bodily and relational experience and in the course of the exercise of one's (effective) freedom. In other words, the effective freedom of the person to transcend herself for objective values is significantly limited by her dynamic psychological unconscious which exerts its influence on the person's perceiving, understanding, evaluating and deciding to act.[22] The result of these limitations may be, and in many cases are, significant distortions of objective values by the person who encounters them or even their increasing oversight and denial. This had become the central concern of Rulla's *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, as he expressed from the outset that there are 'concrete examples of such oversights. [...] Theocentric self-transcendence, in which the person is called to an "ought to" live according to objective moral and religious values, may be replaced by a claim to retaining the right to determine values and norms a-prioristically, to establish for oneself that which is good and that which is evil. Objective values are thus subjectified, and become mere projections of the needs of the individual (conscious or unconscious in varying degrees)'.[23]

Two comments should be added here to reconnect with what has been described above. First, the philosophical concept of objective values of theocentric self-transcendence should be understood and can be substituted theologically by the person of Jesus Christ or by living in communion with the triune God.

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[20] *ACV I*, 133.
[21] *ACV I*, 189.
[22] Cf. *ACV I*, 196, figure 1.
[23] *ACV I*, 13f.

The living God as He has revealed Himself is the ultimate objective value to which the thrust of theocentric self-transcendence innate to every human person corresponds both teleologically and axiologically. This is the claim of truth intrinsic to the understanding of every human being created in the image of God who is Jesus Christ.

Secondly, in many regards, this understanding of the human person and of human freedom is compatible with many aspects of post-modern thinking – with the central exception of its denial and scepticism as to an ultimate goal and claim of truth.[24] *Philosophically* (and psychologically), both positions criticize the 'modern' reduction of the human person to rational thinking and willing. The *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* and the respect for the mystery of *Human Development*[25] emphasize the plurality, difference and otherness of individuals without, however, denying the dignity of human freedom and autonomy notwithstanding its manifold effective limitations. *Anthropologically*, Rulla and Imoda, like post-modernity, regain for a more integral anthropology what is not rational, but biographic, bodily, sensitive, emotional, relational, and symbolic. They do not deny, however, the capacity of the human spirit to know truth only because the human person is intrinsically co-determined by his or her biography and situation in time and space. *Ethically*, like post-modern ethics, they recall the ambivalence and ambiguity of moral agents and they emphasize that bodily sensations, pre- and unconscious emotions, memories and representations as well as self-transcending relations in human acting should be considered as to their role and contribution in human acting. In addition, they share the firm assumption along with post-modern ethics that there is an innate 'ought to' in every human person; they certainly go beyond post-modern ethics in founding and specifying this 'ought to' theocentrically (and not only egocentrically or philanthropically).

Christian faith and, in its tradition, the interdisciplinary work of Rulla and Imoda are thus offering both existential and scientific help in the midst of manifold post-modern *cultural* reductions of external and internal psycho-social stability of individuals, families and groups in their (post-modern) living. They seek to favour and catalyze growth in stable and dynamic commitments of freedom for self-transcendent love of individuals and groups, modelled according to the Gospel, as an ultimate goal of human life. To this end, Rulla and Imoda have

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[24] This implies a stronger version of 'postmodern realism' than Kirshner's position; cf. L.A. Kirshner, 'Toward a Postmodern Realism for Psychoanalysis', in *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 47(1999), 445-463.

[25] F. Imoda, *Human Development: psychology and mystery*, Peeters, Leuven 1998. Note especially his systematic elaboration and use of the three parameters of 'otherness, temporality, stages' (Ch. III) and the developmental perspective for the whole of human existence and Christian vocation.

urgently proposed and specifically modified the use of psychotherapeutic and pedagogic methods in order to favour and catalyze, with God's help, growth and more resilient stability in freedom and self-transcendent love. Psychotherapeutic processes in this perspective can become journeys towards the 'objective truth' of one's being created in the image of God who is Jesus Christ.

In the next step, let me sketch the logic of this journey towards truth (which ultimately is a person, Jesus Christ) in a constant dialogue both with philosophical theories of truth and with secular psychotherapy/psychoanalysis.

3. Growing towards One's Truth in Psychotherapy

3.1. Philosophical Theories of Truth

Within contemporary philosophy the discussion of theories of truth has according to Lorenz Bruno Puntel[26] two characteristics: *on the one hand* different theories of truth are proposed, while *on the other hand* these theories can be divided into two basic types, namely, in substantial and deflationist or minimalist theories of truth. According to many of these substantial theories truth has a positive conceptual content. The concept of the human being as image of God maintains a theological-anthropological claim to truth in a substantial sense. This claim is *by no means* minimalist, as for example in the sense of purely semantic non-contradiction or in a formally logical or discursive-procedural sense.

In the paragraphs which follow, different substantial theories of truth will be used to indicate different dynamic, interrelated aspects of growth towards personal truth in psychotherapy.

These are the theory of correspondence, the theory of consistency as well as the hermeneutical theory of truth with which psychoanalytic concepts will be related.

3.2. Psychoanalytic Reflections on Truth

The German psychoanalyst Heinz Henseler in his essays on the critique of religion presents meaning and truth in opposition to one another and he criticises as a 'calamity of religiosity' that its understanding of meaning must be connected 'with the claim to truth, i.e. with the claim to knowledge of a reality which exists

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[26] L.B. Puntel, 'Wahrheit', in *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe (Studienausgabe)*, 6 vols., Kösel, München 1974, VI, 1649-1668; Id., *Wahrheitstheorien in der neueren Philosophie*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1993; Id., 'Wahrheit I. Begriff', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vols. 11, Herder, Freiburg i.B. et al. ³2001, X, 926-929.

outside of ourselves'.[27] For Henseler the understanding of meaning means rather to abandon the claim to truth and acknowledge that religious ideas are 'pure thought models, virtual images, vague emotions, games with possibilities, loose ideas of assignment of meaning and hope [...] ideas and experiences for which it is not worth fighting, because they can also clearly be mistaken'.[28] This would be for him then a school of practical wisdom, but not a religion.

This opposition of truth and meaning which is both peculiar and at the same time quite common in post-modern thinking, would not have been shared by Wolfgang Loch, Henseler's predecessor as professor of psychoanalysis at the University of Tübingen.[29] In his article 'Psychoanalyse und Wahrheit'[30] he distinguishes two concepts of truth: theoretical-scientific truth and existential truth. The former should be 'understood as a correct grasp, as identity with its object, as a historical fact, whereby it is presupposed that such a truth has always and ever existed, and we only had to formulate it'.[31] In contrast, existential truth would be 'truth as meaning, i.e. as something that develops, inasmuch as the process of an interaction assumes a shape which, once established, permits one thereafter to rely on it and to continue one's life as a subject within this meaning which has been found. [...] Truth is understood here as a noun e.g. rock, it is the ground on which one can stand. In this sense one may speak of a truth which sustains existence'.[32] Loch understands truth of meaning as an existential of *Dasein* (being) which psychoanalytic therapy seeks to serve.

Do these psychoanalytic reflections of Loch succeed in 'saving' the *truth of faith* as *truth of meaning* with a claim to validity, in contrast to Henseler's critique? What can be said about S. Freud's thesis that religion is an illusion, nothing more than an expression of a child's wish?

The Catholic psychoanalyst and physician Albert Görres clearly indicates how strong unconscious motives may also be at work in the life of faith.[33] But he does

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[27] Cf. H. Henseler, *Religion – Illusion?*, Steidl, Göttingen 1995, 141.

[28] Cf. H. Henseler, 'Gedanken zum Fundamentalismus', in M. Bassler (ed.), *Psychoanalyse und Religion. Versuch einer Vermittlung*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart et al. 2000, 17-31, here: p. 30.

[29] As a matter of fact, S. Freud himself would not have accepted to renounce to the search for truth. Rachel Blass criticizes this renunciation which can be found in many interdisciplinary dialogues between psychoanalysis and theology. Cf. R.B. Blass, 'Beyond Illusion: Psychoanalysis and the Question of Religious Truth', in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 85(2004), 615-634.

[30] W. Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, Hirzel, Stuttgart 1986, 181-211.

[31] Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 184f.

[32] Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 185. Cf. J. de Vries – L.B. Puntel, 'Wahrheit', in W. Brugger (ed.), *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, Herder, Freiburg [17]1985, 447-450, esp. p. 448: Freedom of meaning is free truth.

[33] Cf. A. Görres, *Kennt die Psychologie den Menschen? Fragen zwischen Psychotherapie, Anthropologie und Christentum. Überarbeitete Neuausgabe*, Piper, München [2]1986, 109f.

not agree with Henseler's conclusion that this other fact of an ongoing wish with possible roots in childhood rules out the existence of an object which corresponds to this wish – perhaps in a form quite different to what was wished, but that is another question. The denial of the existence of God is equally metaphysically laden as is its affirmation. Neither affirmation can be proved or disproved philosophically.

Psychoanalytic meta-psychology proves therefore to be a sort of metaphysics with claims to truth. Here it is necessary to distinguish clearly. For the critique of religion made by psychoanalysis or depth psychology contains something true and good which should be preserved – precisely when one does not share the metaphysical denial of God made by some, but rather opposes it. The question of God and of the 'Yes' of faith appeals to the freedom of the human person – just as values appeal to human freedom. *Truth of meaning is free truth*. In a striking way Pope John Paul II expresses this in his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace on 1.1.2002:

> Instead, even when the truth has been reached – and this can happen only in a limited and imperfect way – it can never be imposed. Respect for a person's conscience, where the image of God himself is reflected (cf. Gen 1:26-27), means that we can only propose the truth to others, who are then responsible for accepting it. To try to impose on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offence against human dignity, and ultimately an offence against God whose image that person bears. For this reason, what is usually referred to as fundamentalism is an attitude radically opposed to belief in God. *Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God:* it ends by making him an idol to be used for one's own purposes.[34]

These remarks of John Paul II can be easily applied to the context of psychotherapy, in which they are valid especially for the psychotherapist who might assume to know what is true for his or her client. In considering the question, the discovery and the claims of truth in the context of psychotherapeutic processes, let us start with a first fundamental aspect and premise involving both therapists and clients.

3.3. The Dynamic Journey towards Truth in Psychotherapeutic Processes

a) Premise: Love of truth

Before psychotherapists are permitted to practice they themselves have to undergo a psychotherapeutic process. This maxim corresponds to the inscription

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[34] Cf. John Paul II, Message for the celebration of the XXXV World Day of Peace *No Peace without justice. No justice without Peace*, n. 6 (01/01/2002).

on the temple of Apollo at Delphi 'Know thyself'. Regarding such self-know-
ledge the epistemological formulation of Thomas Aquinas in his *Quaestiones De
veritate* is still valid: *Intelligo quia volo* (*De ver* 6) – I understand because I want
to. If someone is *unwilling* to undergo a (didactic-)therapeutic process in order
to better know oneself in one's own psyche and in one's behaviour, he will make
little or no progress in growing in personal truth. Anna Freud, the daughter of
Sigmund, who developed her father's approach particularly for the treatment of
children, was once asked for an opinion by a 14-year old boy who wrote to her.
He was unable to decide whether to become a psychoanalyst like his father. She
wrote in reply:
Dear John,

> You asked me what I consider personal qualities in a future psychoanalyst. The
> answer is comparatively simple. If you want to be a real psychoanalyst you have
> to have a great love of the truth, scientific truth as well as personal truth, and you
> have to place this appreciation of truth higher than any discomfort at meeting
> unpleasant facts, whether they belong to the world outside or to your own inner
> person.
> Further, I think that a psychoanalyst should have [...] interests [...] beyond the
> limits of the medical field [...] in facts that belong to sociology, religion, litera-
> ture, (and) history [...] (otherwise) his outlook on [...] his patient will remain
> too narrow.[35]

'You must have a great love for the truth' – both in the sense of scientific as well
as personal truth, whether convenient or inconvenient. This plea for love of the
truth appeals not only to those who wish to become psychoanalysts – one need
only think of the philosopher and religious nun Edith Stein –, but is essential
for all therapists and all who truly want to know themselves better through a psy-
chotherapeutic process. The philosophically and religiously open psychoanalyst
Wilfred R. Bion says: 'By definition and by the tradition of scientific discipline
the psychoanalytic movement is committed to the truth as a central aim'[36] and
Loch defines: 'Truth: the goal of psychoanalytic investigation'.[37]

*b) Truth as recognition of a fact (the correspondence theory of truth): the dynamic
unconscious and the* principle of multiple function

All further efforts to define truth refer to the correspondence theory of truth.
Its classical formulation is to be found in Thomas Aquinas: *veritas est adaequa-*

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[35] Quoted according to H. Kohut, 'The Evaluation of Applicants for Psychoanalytic Training',
in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49(1968), 548-553, here: 553.

[36] W.R. Bion, *Attention and Interpretation*, London 1970, 99; quoted according to Loch, *Psy-
choanalytische Perspektiven*, 187.

[37] Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 186.

tio rei et intellectus.[38] This correspondence formula is practical for living: truth has essentially to do with *reality*. If things really are as they are presented or explained, one can trust such presentations, and one can – and one should – orient one's thinking and behaviour accordingly, relying on them, and reckoning with them.

Truth in the sense of the *adaequatio* theory 'does not demand, that thinking reflects the being in all its aspects and in this sense constitutes *adequate knowledge*; rather, an *inadequate* knowledge is sufficient, if only those aspects which are thought of and expressed are to be found in that which is'.[39] In this first step towards using philosophical theories of truth to describe aspects of the dynamic journey towards truth in psychotherapeutic processes, we are interested in knowing about characteristics of a being or a person and his/her expressions of life in the sense of scientific truth.[40] At the same time, in the sense of a personal, existential truth, we are interested in these characteristics as becoming part of the person's self-knowledge in the process of depth-psychological psychotherapy – namely the 'truth content'[41] of a foundation pillar of depth psychology, the doctrine of repression and the dynamic unconscious. More precisely, this first step aims at the scientific and existential recognition of this 'depth psychological knowledge' as corresponding to reality.

A common basic thesis of depth psychology (not only of psychoanalysis) may be formulated as follows: 'Unconscious emotional processes, which reflect bodily and relational experiences in a person's life, always *co*-determine conscious thought, feeling and behaviour in multiple ways, which are *not always* pathological'.[42] This fundamental thesis contains the so-called *principle of multiple function*,[43] whereby every conscious act of a person always represents an attempt, simultaneously to accomplish different tasks. These tasks arise anew and differently in each situation – first from the claims of the person's psychic structure and from the *context in conscions and unconscions form* and, secondly, in the

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[38] Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* q. 1, a. 1; cf. Puntel, 'Wahrheit', 1651; T. Kobusch, 'Adaequatio rei et intellectus. Die Erläuterung der Korrespondenztheorie der Wahrheit in der Zeit nach Thomas von Aquin', in M. Enders – J. Szaif (eds.), *Die Geschichte des philosophischen Begriffs der Wahrheit*, de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2006, 149-166.

[39] de Vries – Puntel, 'Wahrheit', 448.

[40] Scientific truth is open for everyone who has received the necessary formation – cf. de Vries – Puntel, 'Wahrheit', 448. Yet, one can refuse to accept it – out of non-rational reasons – and rationalize about this.

[41] Cf. Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 187.

[42] K. Baumann, 'Psyche', in A. Franz – W. Baum – K. Kreutzer (eds.), *Lexikon philosophischer Grundbegriffe der Theologie*, Herder, Freiburg 2003, 331-333; here: 332.

[43] R. Waelder, 'The Principle of Multiple Function: observations on overdetermination', in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 5(1936). The German original was published in 1930. The first and classical formulation of this principle uses the psychoanalytic terms of Freud's structural model.

attempts by which the person's self responds to the structural and contextual claims, again both consciously and unconsciously.

In other words, in his conscious behaviour the person strives at the same time unconsciously to achieve one or more further goals for himself. These motivations are present, even though it would be rather disagreeable or unacceptable for the person consciously to acknowledge these goals and wishes as one's own.

Examples may help to make it clearer: a washing obsession, e.g., can be co-motivated by the desire to avoid one's wishes for intimacy; an eating disorder such as anorexia in an adolescent girl can unconsciously *also* represent an attempt to destroy oneself, so as not to have to express openly her aggression directly against her mother and her being a woman. Submissive obedience towards Church authorities can be unconsciously co-motivated by a fear of one's own wish for autonomy. A first task for dynamic psychotherapy consists in helping the person recognize step by step such unconscious elements and in that way to make them (more) manageable. The first two examples refer mainly to the area of neurotic conflicts and psychopathological disorders (of the 'Third Dimension'), the example concerning obedience belongs mainly to the field of psychosocial consistencies and inconsistencies (the 'Second Dimension') which can coexist with both psychic health and disorder.

Albert Görres was able to express this reality of multiple functions in view of his Christian faith without any difficulty, when he acknowledged, that Freud was correct 'when I look at myself and my clients, that strong unconscious wishes and desires, attachment to parents, and psychodynamic mechanisms frequently favour faith'.[44] Similarly he remembered the complementary experience, which is certainly no less true: 'All of these can also work mightily against faith'.[45] As we said, neither of these says anything about the truth of faith. Here Görres has in mind especially *fides quae creditur*, the content of Christian belief.

Görres also agrees with Freud on a further point: 'The psychoanalysis can show, that for many believers after a psychoanalytic loosening of the attraction of infantile and libidinal [unconscious] motivations for faith, nothing solid remains'.[46] Here Görres seems to speak particularly of *fides qua creditur*, the faith which gives stability, which without the previous *unconscious and defensive* gratifications can loose much of its strength and existential value for the person. Much which previously seemed coherent and true can then appear highly questionable. Let us take a further step in the line of the 'theories of truth'.

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[44] Görres, *Kennt die Psychologie den Menschen?*, 109.
[45] Görres, *Kennt die Psychologie den Menschen?*, 109.
[46] Görres, *Kennt die Psychologie den Menschen?*, 110.

c) Truth as interpretation and context (the coherence theory of truth)

According to Puntel, coherence is to be understood as more 'than mere consistency (non-contradiction). [...] A coherent cognition is a cognition, in which each judgment implies the whole system and is implied by the whole system'.[47] The coherence theory of truth states that truth is nothing other than an adequate correlation (coherence) of observations or options in the overall context of what is held to be true.[48]

> Such coherence as correspondence in the psychic system was sought by each of the subjects in the example of washing compulsion, eating disorder and submission in terms of unconscious repression and defences as also the development of symptoms, until the pressure of suffering under the washing compulsion or the eating disorder became too great and the person undertook psychotherapy. If the uncovering and working through of the insight into the psychodynamic succeed, one patient may discover in a completely new way his need for intimacy in an interpersonal relation; another patient may come into contact with her destructive rage towards her mother and towards maternal expectations which had always been repressed, in order not to disappoint her mother or even to lose her. Both therapeutic processes may change considerably the person's inner and relational systems through the new emotion-laden insights. The person is faced with questions, developments and decisions, which may be quite new for them – and which may at the same time change their burden of suffering, which can even bring about increased joy and self-acceptance as well as responsibility for oneself. The person seeks for a new coherence, in which what until now has been repressed with effort and in the end painfully – for the sake of another, seemingly more important and surer coherence – can now be accepted as something that is and remains true. This change can in turn give rise again to fears and resistances – in oneself and in the other. One may ask, whether something can be true, which up to then had not to be true – whether the love of truth is greater than the defence against these 'disagreeable facts', which Anna Freud had in mind in her letter to the 14-year old John.

Such processes which challenge the previous coherence and seek to alter it, occur also with reference to lasting commitments and Christian life-decisions.

> A 32-years-old husband unconsciously has strong expectations that his wife will check his ambivalent wishes of independency through being a strong mother, as his own mother did. When they have two children, it becomes more and more clear, how much he is challenged, how it all becomes too much for him and how

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[47] Puntel, *Wahrheitstheorien in der neueren Philosophie*, 191.
[48] Cf. M. Kettner, 'Wahrheit (der psychoanalytischen Erkenntnis)', in W. Mertens – B. Waldvogel (eds.), *Handbuch psychoanalytischer Grundbegriffe*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart et al. ²2002, 793-797; here: 794f.

he is constantly irritated with his wife. In therapy he discovers the extent to which he unconsciously saw his mother in his wife – and the question is now what remains: he does not want to be dependent like a child, but rather grown-up and independent. His wife needs his cooperation for their children, she has her own wishes and expectations in his regard. She is not willingly prepared to subordi- nate all her wishes to his. The question arises, whether he keeps his marriage promise – and what value it has for him. The marriage crisis can lead to an iden- tity crisis; and it is an open question, whether he can develop a more coherently elaborated, achieved identity from the former foreclosure type of identity[49] to be a better husband, and father to his children.

The situation is similar for the priest who following the death of his mother finds himself for the first time in love with a woman of his own age. In an experience of psychotherapy he can discover the truth of how strongly and unconsciously he fulfilled the wishes of his mother, seeking to be her good boy, of whom she could be proud, also as a priest. He also sees how she was subliminally expecting this also, as a condition for keeping her approval. At this point there may arise a par- ticularly frustrating situation in his pastoral work. The newly discovered truth puts his previous system perhaps even more in crisis than the experience of being in love. What he thus far understood as his vocation, now appears as question- able as his professional activity. What will happen? Will he find or construct a new coherence in keeping with his life-decision – or will he change it and abandon it for the sake of a new coherence and a new meaning of life which now is judged to be truer?[50]

In these examples it is obvious how closely interlinked emotional and cognitive factors are in the existential situation. In addition the two goals of psychody- namic psychotherapy come to light, which W. Loch formulated as 'the search for historical truth and the development of meaning, whereas the latter is to be understood as a truth of existence and as a truth for existence'[51]. Both should be 'closely linked with a solution', namely the solution of the previous attempts

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[49] Cf. J.E. Marcia, 'Common Processes Underlying Ego Identity, Cognitive/Moral Develop- ment, and Individuation', in D.K. Lapsley – F.C. Power (eds.), *Self, Ego, and Identity. Integrative Approaches*, Springer, New York-Berlin et al. 1988, 211-225; J.E. Marcia – A.S. Waterman – D.R. Matteson – S.L. Archer – J.L. Orlofsky, *Ego Identity. A Handbook for Psycho-social Research*, Springer, New York 1993. Marcia speaks of the foreclosure type of identity if an individual is committed to, yet no exploration has been undertaken of values, and of identity achievement if an individual is committed and the commitments are preceded by exploration.

[50] As to an application of Marcia's concept of 'identity statuses' to maturation in vocational identity cf. K. Baumann, 'Priesterliche "Identitätszustände"… auf dem Weg, wie Christus gesinnt zu werden', in R. Marx – P. Schallenberg (eds.), *'Wir haben Christi Sinn'. Heilige als Vorbilder priesterlicher Spiritualität*, Bonifatius, Paderborn 2002, 163-181; K. Baumann, 'Persönliche Erfül- lung im Dienen? Motivations- und identitätspsychologische Überlegungen zum beruflichen Engagement in helfenden Berufen', in *Zeitschrift für medizinische Ethik* 49(2003), 29-42.

[51] Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 186.

of coherence, which however were psychically inauthentic and conflictual through the repression of central unpleasant truths of personal and common history.

d) Truth in encounter (the hermeneutical theory of truth)

The situations which we have touched upon in the context of the discovery of personal truth in adequate psychotherapeutic processes clearly have to do with decisions and values. In this the values and attitudes of the psychotherapist play an important role, without compromising the so-called neutrality or rule of abstinence of the therapist. For in psychotherapy the relationship which inevitably develops between therapist and client is a decisive factor. Communication between them takes place at conscious and unconscious levels – as is the case in any interpersonal relationship. As in any other therapeutic relationship, what the client says always elicits both emotional and intellectual reactions in the therapist, which imply judgments, signifying agreement or criticism – at a conscious and/or an unconscious level.

At least two important differences are to be recognized in comparison to everyday interpersonal relations of adults: in the first place there is the structural asymmetry of the relationship in the psychotherapeutic setting and, secondly, psychotherapists should understand how to deal professionally with the unconscious elements in the reciprocal relationship (in transference and countertransference) and to make them useful for the goals of therapy. Therefore, therapists should neither exploit their position of power for their own personal interests nor exert influence covertly or indirectly, i.e. through manipulation or suggestion.

Psychotherapeutic work as 'the search for historical truth and the development of meaning'[52] necessarily takes place within encounter and relationship. The truth which is looked for comes across and develops in the therapeutic relationship. Much therefore depends on the 'between' between client and therapist and the latter's value system. For this reason we can agree on this point to J. Rattner: 'The psychologist in the course of a therapy should lay open his own value system, so that the analysand can confront himself with this. In this way no value judgment is smuggled into his inner life'.[53]

For the client, it may be even more desirable that the broad outline of the therapist's value system be presented from the outset. For example, for many the threshold to be crossed in order to come to me as a psychotherapist is lower when they know that I am a catholic priest. For others the threshold is raised.

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[52] Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 186.

[53] J. Rattner, *Tugend und Laster. Tiefenpsychologie als angewandte Ethik*, Fischer, Frankfurt 1991, 91.

The first group can usually trust that I will not only understand their life of faith, but they know, that I myself try to live and witness the Christian faith. The aforementioned H. Henseler in his more than 30 years of psychoanalytic practice occupied himself much with the question that analysands who profess themselves as religious very rarely spoke of their faith and when they did it was very little. Henseler reflects, whether this has to do with a fear on the part of the analysand of being ridiculed or not taken seriously by a non-believing ana-lyst.[54] Although Henseler does not want to accept this hypothesis, it is supported by empirical studies in the 1990s in the USA.[55] These studies prove among other things, that the similarity of religious conviction of therapist and client is the only variable which allows significant predictions for therapeutic success. This[56] does not alter the fact that love of truth is the basis for the therapeutic relationship and becomes fully effective in it, as Anna Freud's father himself affirmed: '[...] finally one should not forget, that the analytic relationship is based on love for the truth, i.e. on recognition of reality and excludes all appearance and deceit'.[57]

Such processes of seeking and developing a personal 'truth of existence and [...] truth for existence'[58] is in my understanding always thanks to God's free action, who makes use precisely of those laws which he has placed in the human person and his psyche.

This psychotherapeutic event occurs in a space, which I as the therapist open up and guarantee for the other: in a space made up of space and time, which due to my conscious and preconscious perspective of faith is open more or less explic-itly to the living God as a 'Third'[59] – also for the clients; in this space and time, by my stable presence, sufficient security and acceptance are provided for the other, so that he can seek and discover all the more the truth of his own life; suf-ficient security enables him to articulate, tolerate and work through insecurities, fears, new painful discoveries, unspoken hurtful experiences, and open questions – so that the client continues to work on his own between sessions and together with me in the next session. In this space and time there is an increasing trust

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[54] Cf. Henseler, *Religion – Illusion?*, 125f.

[55] Cf. S.L. Jones, 'A Constructive Relationship for Religion With the Science and Profession of Psychology. Perhaps the Boldest Model Yet', in *American Psychologist* 49(1994), 184-199; here: pp. 196f.

[56] Regarding the influence of *Weltanschauung* and image of man on the psychoanalytic prac-tice cf. also the articles in P. Kutter – R. Ráramo-Ortega – T. Müller (eds.), *Weltanschauung und Menschenbild. Einflüsse auf die psychoanalytische Praxis*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1998.

[57] Quoted in Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 187.

[58] Loch, *Psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, 186.

[59] With regard to the role of the 'third person' and to the relevance of such a 'tri-angle' in the psychic space cf. the different contributions in: 'The Third in Psychoanalysis', Special Issue of *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 73(1/2004).

that the truth will make one free and will give orientation, to find, to test and to experience *more* as well as *new* coherence and authenticity in one's own living.

This seems to correspond to H. G. Gadamer's hermeneutical theory of truth: the client looses himself to a new insight, playfully – which does not exclude seriously –, in this mental space which has been opened up through the therapy, finding himself again, enriched by this process.[60] At the same time such space and stability, reliability and presence, contrasts with the post-modern phenomena of unstable relationships, unsettling plurality und fragmentation.

e) The proposal of the truth of the Gospel and of Christian values in psychotherapeutic processes

> 'If you continue in my word,
> you are truly my disciples,
> and you will know the truth,
> and the truth will make you free'.
> (Jn 8:31b-32)

Does belief in God or the relationship with God enter only in an implicit and non-verbal way into the mental-psychic space of psychotherapeutic processes which we have just been describing? Because of his openness to the living God as a 'Third' the responsibility of the therapist not to impose values or attitudes is even more evident. At the same time this triangular space with the living God as a 'Third' implies a tacitly witnessed or often actually *also* explicitly presupposed common (almost) outer, objective and transcendent point of reference. Given that the therapist himself is sufficiently free to internalize the values of Jesus Christ *more* than to distort them, this common personal point of reference gives to the therapist the opportunity to propose to the client in the right moment values connected with the faith, which are relevant for the situation and which up to then the client unconsciously avoided or distorted. The use of such indications[61] in a sparing, appropriate and transparent manner can be experienced by the client as equally surprising as confrontational, alleviating and challenging. In particular he can experience such hints as liberating, in that he reflects on them and as a result hears, reads and deepens the Word of the Gospel in a

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[60] Cf. K. Müller – J. Werbick, 'Wahrheit. II. Philosophie- u. theologiegeschichtlich. IV. Systematisch-theologisch', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vols. 11, Herder, Freiburg i.B. et al. ³2001, X, 929-933; 935-938; here: p. 937; K. Müller, 'Wahrheit', in A. Franz – W. Baum – K. Kreutzer (eds.), *Lexikon philosophischer Grundbegriffe der Theologie*, Herder, Freiburg 2003, 434-438; here: p. 437.

[61] Cf. more details on this in the specific context of the use of the psychotherapeutic method in formation processes of priests and religious: *ACV I*, 388-395, with Fig. 4, p. 392.

new and more personal way.[62] This is all the more important, since such hints on the part of the therapist also have a witness quality which exerts emotional influence and may promote defensive tendencies towards complacency.

The working through of the client's new insights can only be regarded as free and successful, when he concretizes his insights in a deliberate and *enduring* choice of and commitment to new behaviour, in order to realize in this way a growing coherence and authenticity in his acting, relating and living. When he wishes in his acting to accept to a greater degree the truth of Jesus Christ and to remain in his word, this coherence and authenticity will take its measure and seek its criterion of truth in the person Jesus Christ himself. The promise applies to the client, that this truth which is a person will make him free, in spite of all his ambivalence, to love more 'in deed and in truth' (1Jn 3:18) after the example of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 13:15) and to live to God in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 6:11) – in the midst of God's pilgrim people and in the midst of a dazzling post-modern world.

(translation by David Marsden)

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[62] Cf. for the pastoral context: Les Évêques de France, *Proposer la foi dans la société actuelle. Lettre aux catholiques de France* (09/11/1996).