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Relation between Faith and Science in the Context of the Theory of Evolution

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Theology and natural sciences use different methodologies of research and different scientific languages. In the case of theology, the aim of its investigations is cognition of God and the human in their spiritual aspect as well as justification of the sense of existence of the world (the questions it asks include: Why does something exist? What is something?) while natural sciences aim at examining the structure and mechanisms of functioning of the Nature (they ask the question: What is it like? and How does it go?) It seems that due to this great difference in the cognitive goals of the two disciplines mentioned above, they have to be treated as separate domains of scientific activity.

Despite this separation, we should expect theology to make - for its own use - a selection of the theories and hypotheses important for the world outlook from those, which are offered by science. On the basis of St Paul's words we believe that study of Nature can bring us closer to knowing the God (Romans 1, 19-20: God punishes them, because what can be known about God is plain to them, for God himself made it plain. Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made. So those people have no excuse at all!)

This is why, being a biologist, I am interested in the significance of the theory of evolution in the context of theological and philosophical considerations. The questions that should be asked are: To what extent can this theory be used to explain the fundamental theological questions like the man's moral fall and his redemption by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? and: Can it help us get to know the nature of the Creator and the creation (the origin of man and the essence of his humanity)?

All efforts of the Church are directed at getting to know God and living in union with him. For, thanks to the words of St John (John 1, 15-16) the Church is aware that not knowing God's love leads to excessive care for material well-being, to love for money, power as well as social status (or to too much love to world) and, in consequence, to sin, evil, egoism and cruelty. Men frequently believe in a God that is rather indifferent to human problems and does not care for his creature, Jesus, coming to the world and sacrificing himself clearly destroys this image of God, revealing Him as Father full of mercy and grace and deeply interested in man's problems. God the Father sacrifices the life of his beloved Son to save us.

Thus, the question is: to what extent is the knowledge about the merciful God in accord with the outlook on the world and the man in the evolutionary

perspective treated by Teilhard de Chardin as the power creating also human soul? We know that if evolution is to proceed, it must be accompanied by factors like illness, death and cruelty of Nature. Why has God created such a world, calling it good? Was it the same God who creates the world with illnesses and then bears these illnesses himself ("But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne" Isaiah 53, 4a)? These difficulties are hard to get rid of if we do not adopt the view, which is the thesis of this paper, that in the Creator's primary intention the world and the man were to be different. St Paul, whom I quoted above, believed in the initially perfect man and in the primordial sin that flawed human soul and, maybe, all creation. For instance in Romans 8, 20-23 he writes: "For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth, But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves, as we wait for God to make us his sons and set our whole being free".

There are various philosophical theories expressing their views on the nature of man. Sociobiology ascribes human behaviours like aggression, egoism and altruism to genetic conditionings. According to this theory, they were formed in the process of evolution. This, however, immediately gives rise to various questions and doubts. If we accept genetic determinism as responsible for human behaviour, can free will exist? Where should we place man's responsibility to God? Isn't it so that we can blame the genes selected in the process of evolution for all evil? Doesn't the Last Judgement lose its significance? In the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus speaks of anger as a sin against the commandment not to kill. But could anyone be to blame for reacting in this way if his reaction is determined by genes?

This is why I attach so much importance for John Paul II's statement concerning ontological leap that can be understood as creating the man according to a different order than the rest of living creatures. Human soul or spirit is of different origin, which is indicated in the words of Solomon: a man dies but his soul returns to God. This very spirit of the man caused that the first men had much greater spiritual powers than their descendants. This is suggested in Psalm 8, 4-6:

"... what is man, that you think of him; mere man,
that you care for him? Yet you made him inferior only
to yourself; you crowned him with glory and honour.
You appointed him ruler over everything you made;
you placed him over all creation"

We could imagine that the first Adam had power similar to that of the Second Adam (Son of God) who could master the nature, for instance, during the storm on Lake Galilee, when He and his disciples wanted to sail to the other side. This power was also manifested in controlling human corporeality which, despite its inclination towards wickedness, was fully controlled by the Son of God. Unfortunately, the original sin deprived Adam's descendants of the power of controlling nature. This is indicated in the words of St Paul's letter to Romans speaking of the Fall in God's creation, which manifests itself in man's internal weakness and his proneness to sin. As a result, man falls down headlong from the Ladder of Entities in the Aristotelian-Thomistic hierarchy of beings and

becomes again one of the branches of the Evolutionary Tree of Life (the expression taken from the book "Environmental Ethics" by Zdzisława Piątek, p. 18).

The question I posed at the very beginning was: to what extent can the theory of evolution be used to explain the issues like the origin of man's nature and to present a proper image of the Creator. Answering it I can say that using the theory of evolution alone and neglecting the revelation included in the Bible we can reach merely the sociobiological conception of man. And this conception does not take into account the different primary nature of the first men lost in result of the original sin. Rejection of the initial different nature of the first men can bring about our disappointment with God who created man - as it is written - to be like him and resemble him. In this approach God manifests himself as an indifferent, deistic Being which, at most, observes the world and events taking place in it. In this context, acceptance of philosophy that justifies man's nature and his sinfulness claiming that the whole man together with his soul in a product of evolution becomes dangerous. Also, a problem arises how to interpret events like incarnation of the Son of God and His sacrifice on the cross. What had been lost in the first Adam that the Second Adam was to regain it? While justifying human nature, what attitude should we assume towards our own sinfulness and why should we aspire to holiness?

A solution of these dilemmas regarding the image of God and man can lie in the conception according to which God, creating the world at some point of eternity, i.e., beyond time, took into account the sin committed by Adam and Eve. This sin belongs not only to time but also to eternity, so it does not matter at what moment of the world history it was committed (like the sacrifice of Jesus which, though it took place in time, also belongs to eternity). God manifests himself as a judge who sentences man, responsible for introducing evil to the world, to bear this particular weakness that results in contamination of his nature. In this way we can explain the existence, from the very beginning, of factors like death, illnesses, defects and cruelty without which evolution could not take place. According to this conception evolution could lead to occurrence of highly developed pre-human creatures which God endowed with human soul and in this way, through ontological leap, man came into being. In a special way human soul was equipped with the power to control its own desires and elements of Nature. Man had and still has a dual nature: as a product of evolution he is biologically similar to animals, but at the same time he is a spiritual entity created like God and to resemble Him. Unfortunately, in the selected area on the Earth where he was placed, in the Garden of Eden, he had not remain obedient to God and therefore he was bound to share the lot of all other creatures. Through his aggression he became more similar to animals while his resemblance to the Creator faded, though not completely.

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