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A THEOLOGICAL READING OF
“THE OBSOLESCENCE OF MAN” BY GÜNTHNER ANDERS

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Abstract: Although Günther Anders explicitly confesses in several places that he is an atheist, his writing *The Obsolescence of Man* lends itself to broad theological readings. We do not understand by this last statement what is commonly accepted in the common mind, but rather we call *theological reading* the process of going through a given text by a theologian who is able to discover the theological meanings implicit in its content. If secular man has expelled God from the world of ideas, and with this act has degraded theology to the status of a discipline perfectly separate from all the other humanities or sciences, we propose, on the contrary, a restoration. The aim of a theological reading is the constitution of understanding and the elucidation of problems, without any obsession with solutions. The theologian engaged in such an endeavour is a historian of ideas who deals with their past, present and above all future. The right and ability of theology to account for everything is presumed axiomatic. Only in this way can we bring theology out of its imposed isolation and restore it to the world as the queen of the disciplines of the spirit. Therefore, we affirm that the theological reading we shall undertake of the Andersian occasionalism in *The Obsolescence of Man* will lead to a diagnosis of the degrading state of the world and of man today and will enable us to point out how to deal with the terrible assault to which the whole of humanity is being subjected by the technological revolution.

Key words: obsolescent man, world, apocalypse, technology, omnipotence, minimization, image/icon, media.

1. Introduction

The thesis of *Obsolescence of Man*, one of the seminal writings of the German philosopher Günther Anders, a phenomenologist of technology (Morabia 2003, 165), is that man’s environment has changed so much that he has major difficulties adapting and surviving. As in the legendary experiment of the ancient Greeks who had entrusted infants to a wild flock of sheep for breeding, wanting to see whether language, social organization and intellectual activity are innate or acquired, Günther Anders argues that the changes that have taken place in the structure of the world have led to dramatic mutations in human nature itself. According to him, today’s man relives, over millennia, the echo of the exemplary episode in classical culture, with devastating consequences (Melle 1988, 701-702).

Günther Anders argues that the world has changed so much that classical thinking is powerless: “the old categories can no longer cope.” (Anders 2013, 168) Our theoretical concepts can no longer catch up with the new reality. We are confronted with a “modification of man as producer, part and victim of his technical world” on the one hand, and on the other with “the modification that the world knows through its technicisation” (Anders 2016, 424). The new concepts say the German philosopher, “can or perhaps even must be designated as theological” (Anders 2016, 424). We find in the latter observation an unexpected and encouraging confirmation of our theological reading. *Human obsolescence* is about these new realities waiting to be named to organize thought.

The ideas launched by Günther Anders were not overlooked by his contemporaries. As his *prophecies* (Figuier 2003) and pessimistic views on the impact of industrial revolutions on human nature (Melle 1988; Meyer 2002; Toscano 2016; De Tuglie 2022; Nosthoff and Maschewski 2022) have come true, the German philosopher’s texts have increasingly attracted the attention of scholars who have mostly shared his observations. Themes such as the *transcendence of the negative* and *apocalyptic phenomenology* have proved to be a point of convergence for various scholars who have carefully analysed the realities described by him in particular in *The Obsolescence of Man*, a work published in two volumes that appeared in 1952 and 1980 (Mongin 2003; Dawsey 2016; Babich 2018; Muller 2020; Mendes 2021) and to identify the ethical and religious substratum of Günther Anders’ thought (Alvis 2017; Schwartz 2019; Latini 2020; Musch 2021). Our study is designed in the latter research direction. We aim to read the contents of the two volumes of *The Obsolescence of Man* from a theological perspective, which provides originality to our study. In the framework of our research, we will emphasize those ideas in the mentioned volumes

that are found mainly in the Orthodox spirituality that Reverend Professor Ioan Chirilă, one of the Romanian biblical theologians who is specialized in biblical anthropology with patristic foundations, promotes in his research directed towards integral anthropology. We will also draw on the research of Virgiliu Gheorghe, a well-known Romanian biophysicist, PhD in bioethics, who has written about the negative effects of television on the human mind. We do not intend to develop the identified common ideas in a comparative manner, but rather to point out areas of convergence. Some ideas or themes can be explored further at a later stage.

Our research will be oriented towards three fundamental themes for Christianity: nature, man and eschatology, which we will call *apocalypse*, as the author calls it. In each section, we will indicate the author’s main reflections on these themes and where necessary we will intervene to confirm the *theological* intuition of the author who has declared himself an atheist.

2. World

The old dilemma about what is more important, man or the world, and which Christianity solves in favour of man called to become godlike (Chirilă 1999,123-124), thus, to overcome the world, is redrawn by Günther Anders in favour of the world, which becomes as discreet as it is oppressive, exerting an ascendancy over man. The composition of the world has changed, today machines (Jacques Ellul would say *the technological system*) are the stuff of which the world is composed, and the way this structure works is likened to the hydra of Greek mythology (Anders 2013, 71), with the observation that technology is the new taboo. For the Christians of evangelical times, the world was nature with all that it had (the Law and the Temple, the Roman occupation, the living community in which he was born, lived out his days, and would die), the family that gave him an identity. The obsolescent man is shaped by machines to the detriment of his natural state, which is not a constant, his soul undergoing successive mutations throughout the industrial revolutions.

From the point of view of the machines, the world is “the mechano-eschatological realm of happiness” (Anders 2016, 118). If we are to find our place in it, we humans must become like machines, become parts of them. And the expansion of machines insatiably devours the world, as they join, becoming one universal machine, in relation to which humans position themselves as servants because they serve it.

The classical world owes its perennial nature to its conditions, of which time and space are the most easily perceived. In terms that are not far from folklore, the world was made of distance-boundedness, both in

time and space. Their role was to teach man effort, victory and helplessness. Under the pressure of technology, these are about to be irretrievably lost. Television invalidates and spectralizes the reality of the world, but also of the home (the small world): distance comes too close, and closeness recedes. A reversal and disruption of the sense of proportion take place that irreparably affects the functioning of the intellect (Gheorghe 2018, 26-28; Vidican-Manci 2020). We have entered, says Günther Anders, into schizotypy (Anders 2016, 787), we are always here and *taken away* (Anders 2016, 89), and public space has become intimate at the cost of transforming our intimate space into public space. For the obsolescent human, the world is the universe of convenience delivered by television (in the form of *spectra*) and radio, a tsunami of images that reconstructs the real in the form of a huge home, a world of demanding commodities in which the human has been robbed of anthropological privilege (Anders 2013, 235).

The normal state between the world and man must be one of friction. Catastrophes, bankruptcies, the death of loved ones, one's own illnesses, and public opprobrium (i.e., the sufferings of the biblical Job) are salvific insofar as they do not allow us to delude ourselves about our fundamental otherness in relation to the world (Chirila 2021, 25-26). In the absence of this awareness of inadequacy, we cannot turn our backs on it and our spiritual ascent cannot even be imagined. In schizotypy, the world has become a consumer object through its delivery on radio and TV. Having a distanced relationship with a world you consume is very hard. On the other hand, we invoke the world through radio and TV. There is no point in turning your back on a world over which you have quasi-divine powers (Gheorghe 2018, 372-374).

A world in relation to which man is in friction is the only world that fulfils its purpose, which is to be experienced. The essence of genuine experimentation is not knowing the results until the end. We can anticipate them, and we can wish for them, but authenticity lies precisely in the fact that they may be different from what we expect. For an experiment to take place, the world must put up a *resistance*, to take the form of an obstacle from time to time. The world that is delivered to us as a unique and huge *home* is a comfortable one, something unreliable and harmless. We are no longer transients in it but invited to remain here forever. In fact, we are captured by the distorted world, we pay the price of this confusion by neutralizing our anthropology: “[...] he to whom everything is at once near and far, he to whom everything comes alike is either an indifferent god or a completely distorted man” (Anders 2013, 169).

The world delivered by the media is a ghost, neither absent nor present. It is a third state, entirely new, different from the world for the one immersed in it or for the one who has turned his back on it by seclusion in the wilderness. The sacred text does not offer us a description

of the world as a mirage, nor guidance on our relationship to something that is neither truth nor lie. And the main consequence of ghosts appearing to us as *the world* is the disappearance of our hunger for interpretation and meaning. Nor would we need to interpret a world of ghosts whose voyeuristic masters we think we are (Anders 2013, 158). The second consequence is that the technologically delivered world acts as a matrix for both the real and the human. Looking at the model, the consumer thinks he sees the world; reacting to the model, he thinks he reacts to the world itself. Templates are forms of aprioristic conditioning (Anders 2013, 214) that are even more successful because they are disguised as *world* and *things*, making the pressure of modelling imperceptible to us. The climax of the matrix phenomenon is reached when our desires are nothing more than reproductions of the needs of commodities (Anders 2013, 225), in the service of which obsolescent man has placed himself. The matrix shapes real events, but at the same time, these *realities* shape the souls of consumers. And to shape is to take captive.

3. Man

The world, as it was once organized by the Church, on the ruins of the pagan world, was a sum of opportunities for salvation. Activity and rest, goods, behaviour, thought, the air of time, and society were arranged in the Church's world in such a way that, on the one hand, the liturgical dimension would never disappear (Chirilă 1993), but on the other hand, people would not forget that they were in the world, that is, in a space of passage, where the memory of Paradise is precious and the name of God must be called incessantly (Chirilă 2022, 31-35; Pașca-Tușa 2011, 75-76).

The Church's monopoly on images was part of this organization, materialized by the existence of icons in public places and in people's homes (Chirilă 2020). Instead, nowadays man is drowned in images. It is just that today's images, riddled with metaphysical use, imbecile him: “because they, as images, do not, unlike texts, make visible any kind of relationship, but only fragments of the world: therefore, by showing the world, they hide it” (Anders 2013, 38). If the icon showed the unseen world, the image hides the seen world (Chirilă et al. 2018). But there is something else, carried by the flood of images in a direction he cannot even suspect, man begins to behave mimetically: he becomes fragmentary (his anthropological structure is pinched) and he relates more and more hardly (both his component parts to each other and to his peers). A qualitative leap occurs because of excessive quantity.

We have a bad relationship with our objects, which we have acquired through the industrial revolutions. Günther Anders speaks first of the

Promethean gap (Anders 2013, 50), about our inability to keep up with our production in spirit, then of the *Promethean shame* (Anders 2013, 57), the inferiority felt by man in relation to the qualities of his own products, because of which he is no longer their creator but their creature. We see here the reversal of a profound relationship, that between the hero and the heroic deed: the obsolescent man is no longer the source and cause of the world, but the world is the source and cause of man. The world of everyday life with which humans must deal is primarily a world of things and appliances in which there are also fellow human beings, not a world of humans in which there are also things and appliances (Anders 2016, 62). In addition, everyone has those principles that things possess (Anders 2013, 350). If appliances have become the world, then this mutation has massive theological implications, for the evangelical man knew that only he who turns his back on the world gains the Kingdom of Heaven, but today we find it hard to formalize the imperative to give up the microwave, or the diesel engine, to be saved. Technology has become the support and disguise for the passions of the old theological tracts, but at the same time, it is taboo to say anything against technology, which passes as neutral.

Only the machines are the illustration of strange immortality: that of reincarnation through production in new and new machines. Being excluded from their serial existence, the obsolescent man is excluded from the only immortality he can perceive. Hence the taste for self-reification (for which make-up is an example – Anders 2013, 65), is the only acceptable form of humiliation for our age (Pollmann 2019, 117-120). If he could, man would defect to the camp of machines, which he tries to approach through *human engineering*, the initiation ritual of the robot age. We can speak in this case of *imitatio instrumentorum*, a parody of the *imitatio Christi* about which Thomas of Kempis wrote. And so, we are entitled to see in the technological system a very present form of pantheism, a reflection of contemporary man’s idolatry of machines, which is no more than an illustration of the adage: we are what we love.

The individual becomes *divisum* (Anders 2013, 185), and is broken into countless fragments that are taken over by different entities, including through the division of labour (Anders 2016, 187). The identity of the obsolescent human is fundamentally disorganised. Work has accustomed him to being busy, and therefore unfree. His organs must be occupied with consumption, to avoid the agonizing hunger that occurs in the absence of the object of consumption. Through leisure, people are stripped of individuality, because *leisure* can only be an extension of work. The obsolescent human is a *specialized human fragment* (Anders 2013, 324) – one and the same man could be a death camp employee and a good father, says Günther Anders. Wherever totalitarianism appears, the individual is the first *occupied territory* (Anders 2016, 232), the person is nullified, and in the case of today’s soft terrorism things are no different.

The obsolescent man is medial, that is, he has lost the status of *acting*

being for a co-perpetuator. The telos of action escapes him, co-perpetuation is active-passive-neutral. Lacking purpose, it lacks both future and time. He has no consciousness because the activity in which he is engaged does not demand it of him (Anders 2013, 347). As a doer, he resembles his deed. His principles are those of the things he possesses. He is not evil, but not by choosing the good, but by a gap between deeds and things he cannot control. Hence a fundamental violence: he behaves with persons as if they were things, and with things as if they were persons.

The demands of the old virtues are abandoned by the logic of production and consumption, which forces the obsolescent man to neglect. Only if he is careless and destructive can he ensure the immortality of production. Care for things would assassinate our civilization as it has become. Yet care is a capital virtue for spiritual becoming. Unexercised in the small, it cannot be put to the service of the great. Consumer society forms characters incompatible with the spiritual path, and its imperatives are contrary to those of the Church. We should perhaps think of the consumer as the *new rich* before whom the doors of salvation are closed (cf. Mt. 19:23-24).

Günther Anders speaks of an economic ontology whose axioms give an account of the state of man today. The first is that reality is produced through reproductions; only in the plural, only as a series is *being* (Anders 2013, 225), in other words, once is never; what is produced once is not *being*, the singular belongs to non-being. Economic ontology begins with the assembly band, which is the matrix of economic beingness. It can only be destructive in relation to the human person, whose essence is unrepeatability when it claims itself from the divine Being, which never repeats itself. The stakes of the assembly line go beyond the simple production of cheap parts, becoming metaphysical when it wants to demonstrate that it can organize a universe of repeatability, grafted onto the universe of unrepeatability created by God. The second axiom of economic ontology concerns our quality as ends of creation: the unusable does not exist or does not deserve to be (Anders 2013, 230). Our innate right not to be a means to something, but that something itself, has been replaced by a *prudish anthropocentrism* (Anders 2013, 253), equivalent to having no place in the cosmos. And the trade-offs are sad: to-be-imagine and to-be-matter pass these days as something more *being* than being itself (Anders 2013, 256).

And economic ontology underpins the ideology of consumerism. A good that wants to become property (the opposite of consumption) has time as its essential feature. Goods that do not offer this possibility cannot have owners. A consumer good, immediately after use, is also exhausted, and our hunger breaks out again. The essence of consumer goods is to exist in order not to exist. Nothing has ever been so far removed from the concept of eternity as a society of disposable commodities. A perfect consumer can have neither the intuition of eternity nor of God. Creating a

state of continuous necessity is one of the main activities of all production. Asceticism liberates, and production enslaves. If we judge from effects, the opposite of asceticism is no longer debauchery but production (or *production* is the new, socially acceptable name for debauchery).

In a world of confusion, the consumer is *the mass hermit* (Anders 2013, 142). In other words, the tastes that are inoculated belong to everyone, but their satisfaction is experienced solistically, in complete isolation. The new massified man is dispersed in relation to his peers, of whom he is unaware (Gheorghe 2018, 358-364). He cannot yearn for isolation in the wilderness because he is already isolated in the home that radio and television have spectralized for him, and he cannot set out in search of self and God because he has neither the time nor the tools to suspect their existence. He is captive to consumption, and no longer has, as Günther Anders says on several occasions, even the freedom to understand his state of unfreedom.

And consumerism is the premise of conformity, the name of captivity. A conformist superimposes the contents of his soul and lives on the contents delivered to him in the form of the world. Since in the system of conformism demand and supply have been brought into congruence, supply is imperative, which is a mild form of violence. The soul of the congruist is awfully full, flooded by the world that floods into it. This statement has profound theological implications, for it calls into question the persistence of biblical anthropology. We know that man is composed of body, soul and spirit, as the Apostle Paul tells us (Heb. 4:12). Now, if the barrier between the soul and the world has been eroded and has finally given way, and the world invades the soul without meeting any form of resistance, then the old anthropology no longer applies to the obsolescent man, who has not only become a *divisum* but has also lost his personal integrity (Chirilă 2009; Chirilă 2019, 15-16). The new structure that seizes him is a hybrid between the world and man, but in which man is phagocytized, hermetically sealed like a chrysalis from which no butterfly will ever emerge. Or we must think that the world has moved, relocated itself from the outside in, to the detriment of the soul (Anders 2013, 152). We call this merger "the world-which-captured-man", turning him into an obsolescent, that is, a dispensable man, who continues to be though he is no longer needed, as a useless prisoner turned into a burden to be taken care of because, by an unforgivable oversight, he was not killed while still a combatant.

The triumphant conformity makes the specific difference between people disappear: we are made identical by the same media fodder (Anders 2016, 91). The definition of conformism is to-not-be-yourself (Anders 2016, 218). So, conformism is a levelling mechanism that abolishes the difference between knowing oneself and knowing the other, because even the difference between self and other is blurred. Society is turning into a huge assembly line that churns out mass-produced people, following the model

of mass-produced products. Selfhood (being a self) becomes under these conditions the equivalent of failure, that of being ourselves. Modern psychology, the megaphone of the forces of conformity, destroys man’s selfhood. Conformism leads to the non-existence of the person (Anders 2016, 206), which it replaces with a hybrid between humans and the world.

4. Apocalypse

There is, in *Man’s Obsolescence*, a sometimes explicit, sometimes diffuse presence of apocalypse. We should not expect an exegesis of the text of St. John the Theologian, “in whose eyes the last day, though man’s fault, was not of his making” (Anders 2016, 435). Rather, an analysis of concepts that have emptied of their meanings once the things they designated have begun to be no more. We would be contemporaries of an apocalypse at idle, as Jean Baudrillard put it, an endless end of history, from which the world and man would have already been evacuated. A series of silent cataclysms would have destroyed the old philosophical categories to which we no longer know how to relate, and if we did, it would be useless anyway. A jumble of old fringes of the world would coexist with new hybrid entities that are-not-are, to which we don’t know how to relate because events have moved faster than thought.

Industrial revolutions are, according to Günther Anders, steps of devastation. The first industrial revolution took place in the middle of the nineteenth century and resulted in the emergence of the technical principle by which human activity is guided: to produce, by means of machines, other machines (or, as he will rephrase in the introduction to the second volume, *the machine principle*). During the second industrial revolution, the production of necessities begins (Anders 2016, 18), and concomitantly there are no acts or objects that are not means (Anders 2016, 388), in inflation that nullifies the sense of ultimate ends (Mendez 2021, 97-98). The third and last industrial revolution (because there is no more time, but a respite until the last consequences of the apocalypse are exhausted) replaced the world with technology, the establishment of the obligatory nature of everything technically possible, the world becoming capable of producing its own extinction, the atomic bomb.

The concept of the world is the first victim, already gone behind its images, produced by radio and television, in which the obsolescent man thinks he lives. And hence Günther Anders’ exegesis of Becket’s Estragon and Vladimir in the play *Waiting for Godot*: the heroes are *lazy, paralytic clowns* (Anders 2013, 268) who are in life but not in the world, true anticipations of obsolescent man. They live by an upside-down logic. If the classical hero said: “I have time, therefore I wait”, the Becketians set waiting as the premise of the existence of time. The world towards which

these human prototypes are heading is called by Günther Anders with a vocabulary existing in several German stories, *Schlaraffenland* – *Land of the Lazy Monkeys* (Anders 2013, 244), the place where our needs are satisfied immediately (Anders 2016, 358), without time and space. Its inhabitants are aspatial and timeless. If in *aetas aurea* there are no desires, in the Land of the Lazy Monkeys they are instantly satisfied, because the lazy monkey does not deprive itself of anything. Now, the main ambition of the technique developed and used in our age is to abolish *dependence on intercession* (Anders 2016, 359). We are dealing, how else, with a new paradise in which everyone is a god, but not through deification, but through a fictional connection to our Darwinian ancestor, the monkey of which Emil Cioran spoke.

We can speak of a cataclysm that has taken our thinking, both in the form of processes and outcomes. Judgments are already being delivered to us in the form of radio and TV broadcasts, which first erase the difference between world and news, then turn judgment into an image, giving up its classical form. But not only these, but the commodities themselves are camouflaged judgements. The obsolescent man no longer needs reflection in a world where judgments are prefabricated (Gheorghe 2018, 59-60), and he agrees with them before appropriating them, through a conformist reflex that modern psychology promotes under the name of adaptation. In parallel, the loss of speech, which has been taken over from us by machines, is massive and results in the impoverishment and stultification of language, along with the suppression of the desire to speak (Gheorghe 2018, 91-99), which leads to the impoverishment and stultification of living. Paradoxically, in the most materially opulent age, people find themselves in the crassest existential poverty. For without the subtlety and richness of speech, there can be no subtlety and richness of our inner selves: "man is as articulate as he articulates himself and becomes as inarticulate as he does not articulate." (Anders 2013, 150) And for the disaster of discernment to be complete, we are contemporaries of a fantastic levelling of opposites: activity has become a variant of passivity, destruction and reconstruction are no longer opposites (Anders 2016, 44), effects transcend cause (Anders 2016, 67). The dream of the industry is humanity made up of "the poor full of means" (Anders 2016, 51) (i.e. the poor-rich). The walls between activity and passivity, between the private and the public sphere, and between the soul and the world are dismantled. The last barrier is essential for salvation.

We have replaced God with the atomic bomb, an abnormal, *sui generis* object, the only exemplar of its kind (Anders 2013, 299). The bomb is not the means, it is the attainment of the absolute. We have appropriated divine attributes: if there is anything in the consciousness of obsolescent man that can be considered infinite or absolute, it is no longer the power of God, but our power (Anders 2013, 289). Instead of *creatio ex nihilo*, we have *reductio ad nihil*. We are titans, and the omnipotence we have

appropriated is the capacity to destroy the world, which we have already destroyed. At the same time, we are pygmies, that is, as Günther Anders says: "To this entirely new omnipotence corresponds an entirely new impotence." (Anders 2016, 432) The fact that we are privately inoffensive does not mean that we cannot unleash total catastrophe like some technical innovation (Anders 2013, 356-357). We are doomed to finitude because we can only need too little (our lack of lack). But our finitude is counterbalanced by the infinitude of our productive possibilities. Our fundamental flaw is our inability to imagine as much as we can produce and undertake. We don't outdo ourselves in feats, but we are our main stumbling block in imagining feats perfectly within our grasp.

In the *Foreword* to the fifth edition that prefaces the first volume, Günther Anders explicitly states three of his theses about our relationship to objects. We will reprint them here because the last one is, at its core, theological in nature: "that we are no match for the perfection of our products; that we produce more than we can imagine and can be responsible for; and that we believe that, if we can, we are also allowed to – no: we really must, no: we really are obliged" (Anders 2013, 31). The short-circuit we can – we are allowed – we must (in other words: power – permission – obligation) means the collapse of all ethical censorship, all moral barriers, but above all the distance between potentiality and act. In scholastic terms, the apocalypse means the exhaustion of all potentialities through their passage into action. Every world ends when there is nothing left to be in it, and ours will be no exception. Now when the obsolescent man feels compelled to pass everything into act, we may say that he is drawn with the greatest speed of which he is capable to the exhaustion of all possibilities.

The confusion between fact and fiction, the death knell of the world, has reached such heights, the templates are so realistic, that in the world of obsolescent man, lying is no longer even necessary (because it *comes true* anyway – Anders 2016, 181). In other words, the abandonment of truth has taken place on a scale that no longer justifies the effort to lie on point, because *one lies true* (Anders 2013, 245). Lying makes sense if there is a truth that we can rely on, that calls us and that we can reach (Gheorghe 2018, 233-235). Yet, the situation of the obsolescent human being is hopeless: "and now we stand like this, in front of a print pretending to be a ghost, pretending to be a replica, pretending to be the world. And we consume it and become like it." (Anders 2013, 241) So we can talk about an apocalypse of truth. We should not be deceived by the appearance of *eschatological calm* (Anders 2013, 328) (or *apocalypse blindness* – Anders 2013, 315) that obsolescent man displays. The end of the world is as incomprehensible as the end itself, and this is the consequence of the fact that the future is no longer *coming* but is human-made. In fact, the absence of the future should be considered the best evidence that the world, as

handed down to us by the Gospel, has already been devoured by the apocalypse.

5. Conclusions

We were tempted to merge the two chapters, *World* and *Man*, into one, named after the new reality: “world-which-captured-man”. If we have not given in, it is because we sincerely believe that what is separate from the beginning must remain separate until the end. This does not mean that hybridity, the preferred form of contemporary confusion, is not a reality that needs to be acknowledged. The time has come for the phenomenon of heterosis with which farmers and animal scientists are all too familiar, manifested by the increased vitality of crossing two varieties, to be included in the analyses of theologians, in the form of a warning: hybrid realities (of the “world-captured-man” variety) tend to have an unexpected vitality. The speed with which these realities change morphology, in addition to their surprising character, has overwhelmed the centuries-old established routines of the Church. Theological readings must become part of the theologian’s effort to understand the world.

In our view, the new theological categories, which would account for the apocalypse into which our part of the world has entered, are an extension of the theology of hell. While it was in another realm, we allowed ourselves to speak of it in metaphorical terms: fire, pitch, burning. But now, since hell has burst into the place and time of our world, ignoring it is no longer a luxury we can afford. If we admit that the road to deification, our vocation on earth, passes through regaining the paradisiacal state, that is, redemption from the bondage of ancestral sin, then the road to paradise can only begin with regaining the condition of evangelical man, who may be sinful, but whose thirst for God keeps him in a state of spiritual availability.

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