
**‘I DREAM OF A CHURCH ...’:
CERTAIN PRINCIPLES FROM POPE FRANCIS
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH***

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ABSTRACT

In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* published in 2013, Pope Francis encourages all Christian communities toward missionary transformation. The transformation should lead to a genuine awareness and restoration of the missionary nature of the contemporary Church. The papal document has been quoted and commented on a number of times since its publication, as it bears enormous potential for transformation of the Catholic Church and for the mission of all Christians. The article presents an analysis of the four principles proposed by *Evangelii gaudium* in a section that focuses on the common good and social peace of humankind. The article acknowledges these principles as the axes of hypothesis that deals with reform of the Catholic Church as much as they contain important implications for a Christian theology of Revelation, for a theology of the act of faith and for a basic reflection on the structure of ecclesiastical communities. These elements are accepted as both an intrinsic condition and practical contribution for the Church’s missionary transformation.

Key words

Evangelii Gaudium; Fundamental theology; Missionary transformation of the Church; Structures of the Catholic Church; Church communities; Theology of revelation

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A few decades ago, the Canadian theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) called for a revision of transcultural categories in his book *Method in Theology*. These should enable making the core of Christianity and the principles of Christian existence more communicable to further generations in a new way.¹ Lonergan claims that the discovery of suitable categories can open up the heuristic potential of examined reality. '[R]eal objectivity', he adds, 'is the fruit of authentic subjectivity'.² That is why authentic subjectivity, which is the result of human conversion (simultaneously intellectual, moral, and religious), is able to see the examined reality in a new way and perceive its dynamic development.

Such a challenge to personal and collective conversion is also typical of Pope Francis and his 'program statement' *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World Evangelii Gaudium* from 24 November 2013.³ This document has certainly been commented on and analysed from various angles in relation to Francis' pontificate.⁴ However, only limited attention has been paid to a short section of this document, the third part of the fourth chapter of the exhortation called 'The Common Good and Peace in Society' (n. 217–237). In its centre, there is an analysis of four principles that 'can guide the development of life in society and the building of a people' and about which the Pope is convinced that 'their application can be a genuine path to peace within (...) the entire world'.⁵ Francis' introduction may indicate that these are the principles of the social doctrine of the Church. The perimeter of those principles, however, provides a much wider view. In concrete, the four principles will be interpreted in order to show a way which would lead to accepting these principles as supporting pillars of fundamental-theological reflections on God's revelation and the Church.

¹ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University Press, 2007), 281–293.

² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 292.

³ Franciscus, *Adhortatio apostolica de Evangelio Nuntiando nostra aetate Evangelii Gaudium*, 23. November 2013, *AAS* 105 (2013), 1019–1137. Used further in the text as *EG*.

⁴ E.g. D. Dormor and A. Harris (eds.), *Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, and the Renewal of the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 2017); K. Kramer and K. Vellguth, *Evangelii gaudium: Stimmen der Weltkirche* (Freiburg im B.: Herder, 2015); H. M. Yanez (ed.), *Evangelii gaudium: il testo ci interroga: chiavi di lettura, testimonianze e prospettive* (Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2014).

⁵ *EG*, 221.

The article will, in its structure, develop a *relecture* and further theological application of the above-mentioned principles. After exploring the origin of those categories in the thinking of the current Pope (1), I will focus on the principles: ‘time is greater than space’ (2), ‘unity prevails over conflict’ (3), ‘realities are more important than ideas’ (4) ‘the whole is greater than the part’ (5). They will be approached through a three-step scheme (description of the principle – application of the principle in the thinking of J. M. Bergoglio – its fundamental-theological application).

1. The Pope ‘from the other End of the World’

The exhortation of Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* offers dynamism within which our four principles have an essential role. This is also proclaimed by the title of the first chapter of this document: ‘Missionary Transformation of the Church’ (EG 19–49). The main idea of the entire text, and also of its individual parts, is searching for a new *form* of life of the Church.⁶ *Evangelii Gaudium* is becoming a program statement through which Bergoglio continues working on the results of the Vatican Council II, in an effort to outline a new *ad intra* view of the Church⁷ that will reveal the new *ad extra* mission of the Church.⁸ The fact that this is not merely a cosmetic adaptation of a secondary phenomenon can be detected when we think of the following statement: ‘becoming a people demands (...) an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part’.⁹ It is not hard to ascertain that the task of ‘becoming people (of God)’ is the primary theme of Pope Bergoglio as concerns the self-awareness of Christians. In this way, he strives for the revitalisation of an important category drafted in the conciliar constitution *Lumen Gentium*.¹⁰

⁶ On the category of form as ‘symmetrical composition of parts’, see W. Tatarkiewicz, ‘Form: History of One Term and Five Concepts’, in *A History of Six Ideas: an Essay in Aesthetics* (Warszawa: M. Nijhoff, 1980), 220–243.

⁷ Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen gentium*, 21 November 1964, in *AAS* 57 (1965), 5–67. Used further in the text as *LG*.

⁸ Vatican Council II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et spes*, 7 December 1965, in *AAS* 58 (1966), 1025–1120.

⁹ *EG*, 220.

¹⁰ ‘God (...) does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals (...) rather has it pleased Him to bring men *together as one people*, a people who acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness.’ *LG*, 9.

Before we turn our attention to the particular principles, let us explore the sources from which J.M. Bergoglio draws on the individuation of these principles.¹¹ We have no information concerning the testimony of Pope Francis himself as to when he started thinking of these principles. It is apparent, however, that they have been on his mind at least since the beginning of the 1970s. Evidence of such a claim can be found in Bergoglio's speech that he delivered as the provincial of the Jesuit Order during the provincial congregation of Argentinian Jesuits on 18 February 1974. Bergoglio mentioned three of these principles as supporting points on which it was possible to construct the life of the Jesuit province.¹²

The crucial turn in the crystallisation of these principles can be spotted during a short period of time when Bergoglio stayed in Germany in 1986. It was the time when he began working on his unfinished dissertation on Roman Guardini's work on philosophical anthropology *Der Gegensatz*.¹³ As the subtitle of the book, *Versuche zu Einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten*, indicates, the work is focused on the real-life experience of a man, on his life in tension between the opposites that are the accompanying key points on the way to the Mystery.¹⁴ These opposites enact the dynamism of human life in its *bipolar tension*, in attention, courage, and openness. This dynamic vision of history, the dialogical character of human existence, and the need for *discernment* plays a fundamental role in Bergoglio's thinking. Because, if this Pope is looking at history in a dynamic way, it is based on the appropriation of Guardini's thinking, not on Hegelian dialectics. A *bipolar tension* in human existence is not a philosophically solvable riddle or an expectation of the possible third step of dialectics, a synthesis.¹⁵

A 'mature' application of these principles can be found in the speech of Archbishop Bergoglio delivered on 16 October 2010 during the XIII

¹¹ See J. C. Scannone, 'Pope Francis and the Theology of the People', *Theological Studies* 77 (2016): 118–135, here 128, doi: 10.1177/0040563915621141.

¹² Bergoglio's speech where he mentions the principles with the exception of 'the reality is more important than an idea' can be found in: J. M. Bergoglio, *Meditaciones para religiosos* (Buenos Aires: Diego de Torres, 1982), 49–50.

¹³ R. Guardini, *Gegensatz: Versuche zu einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1998).

¹⁴ Guardini uses a German term *Gegensatz* (an expression of the opposite of concepts, that is a polar contradiction), not the term *Widerspruch* (in the sense of divergence, a contradiction that would require dialectical dealing with).

¹⁵ 'The nature of contradiction originates in two moments when each of them is unmistakable, not deductible, definite, but they are also inseparably connected one to another and they are only conceivable through one another.' Guardini, *Gegensatz*, 41.

Annual Archdiocesan Meeting of Social Teaching and Pastoral Ministry in Buenos Aires.¹⁶ Bergoglio’s speech is called *Nosotros como ciudadanos, nosotros como pueblo* (*We as citizens, we as people*). The meeting took place in a year when the Argentinian nation celebrated the anniversary of two hundred years since the liberation from Spanish colonialism. Bergoglio wanted to arouse the awareness of his Argentinian listeners that it is not enough to be *citizens* with guaranteed rights and obligations but that it is important to become involved and co-responsible as a *people*, therefore a nation:

Citizens is a logical category. *The people* is a historical and mythical category. (...). *The people* cannot be explained purely in a logical way. (...) The challenge of being a citizen includes living and understanding oneself in the two categories of belonging: belonging to *society* and belonging to a *people*. A man lives in a society, however; his origin is in people.¹⁷

This horizon of Bergoglio’s speech from 2010 enables us to see a framework in which Pope Francis plans to address God’s people through the exhortation of *Evangelii Gaudium*. He wants to awaken the awareness of Christians to participate in the transformation of the Church, to move from a Christian life defined by rights and obligations to forming a responsible people of God, where everyone is baptised by the Holy Spirit, ‘consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood’¹⁸ and called to holiness. According to the Pope’s argumentation, this is ‘a Church which goes forth’,¹⁹ a Church that will seize responsibility in fulfilling its missionary nature.

2. Is Time Superior to Space?

The principle ‘time is greater than space’ is mentioned in *Evangelii Gaudium* as the first one.²⁰

(a) A closer study of the history of this principle brings us into the field of Greek philosophy, to Heraclites of Ephesus and to his statement

¹⁶ J. M. Bergoglio, ‘Nosotros como ciudadanos, nosotros como pueblo’, last modified 16 October 2010, accessed 28 September 2018, <http://www.pastoralsocialbue.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Nosotros-como-Ciudadanos-Nosotros-como-Pueblo.pdf>.

¹⁷ J. M. Bergoglio, ‘Nosotros como ciudadanos’, 7.

¹⁸ *LG*, 10.

¹⁹ Cf. *EG*, 20–24.

²⁰ *EG*, 222–225.

‘everything flows’. In contrast to a person of today, the ancient person of Hellenistic culture lives within a *cyclical* conception of time and also in a fascination with *space*. The entire reflection, mainly under the influence of Plato’s philosophy, is attracted towards unifying the transcendent *Unum* to which the hierarchical-spatial organisation of society and authority corresponds. Thanks to the works *De coelesti hierarchia* and *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (5–6 AD), the thought of priority of space becomes a leading idea of Christian ecclesiology of the second millennium. It gets its specific declaration through the so-called ‘Gregorian form’ of the Church²¹ and places an emphasis on a developed pastoral administration structured through (socially determinate and legally enforceable) *adherence to Christian faith*.

Such a transfer should be, however, assessed *negatively* on the level of Christian epistemology. The accent on *time* is disappearing from the symbolism of the Christian life. For example, the first few verses of the book of Genesis do not present the *where* narration, but the *when* as God’s story with people taking place is important: ‘*In the beginning when God created ...*’ (Gn 1:1). Biblical narration is a story about *promises* and *expectations*; it is thus a story about *time*.

The principle ‘time is superior to space’ can be examined even closer thanks to the epistemology provided by the book *The Practice of Everyday Life* by the French author Michel de Certeau (1922–1986). In his analysis of the social behaviour of humans, he distinguishes between ‘strategy’ and ‘tactics’. Such a distinction, in fact, identifies the two different *logics* of practice. Strategy is a hegemonically oriented *structure* characterised by a clearly given subject defined on the basis of *space*; it is thus definable through power.²² The logic of tactics, by contrast, is conducted through the axis of time. As time becomes the power of the weak, it is an advantage of independence on space (*no-place*) which enables the development and use of the advantages of new conditions.²³ Accord-

²¹ Cf. G. Lafont, *Immaginare la Chiesa cattolica. Linee e approfondimenti per un nuovo dire e un nuovo fare della comunità cristiana* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1998), 39–56.

²² ‘I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (...) can be isolated from an “environment”. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper.’ M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xix.

²³ ‘I call a “tactic” (...) a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (...), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other.’ *Ibid.*

ing to de Certeau, this logic is the logic of everyday social practice: it is governed by unforeseen creativity and the unpredictability that changes *consumers into producers*.²⁴

(b) Taking into consideration the fact that the Pope acknowledges the French Jesuit Michel de Certeau as one of his intellectual mentors, it is apparent how Certeau’s preferences for social *tactics* are updated in Bergoglio’s reflections. The Church has to learn to redeploy its focus from the sphere of *strategies* to the logic of *tactic*. It needs to execute the Abrahamian ‘going out’: to break the logic of spaces, subjects, power, and courageously become the Church that gives priority to time, ‘being concerned about *initiating processes rather than possessing spaces*.’²⁵

As said above, Francis’ reformatory effort is led by an attempt of creating God’s people. This creating is, basically, a question of time,²⁶ a priority of *processes*, modifications, and possibly taking steps that will later prove to be blind alleys. To give priority to time means to legitimate *consumers* into becoming *producers*, making their lives *participate actively* on the growth of the Church. The principle of the priority of time thus enables them ‘to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results’.²⁷

(c) The third moment of reflection of the first principle is an attempt to outline its theological interpretation.

This principle provides us with a basic frame of interpretation of the theology of Revelation. One should recall that the twentieth century stands for the rediscovery of the *prophetic* dimension of the Church and for an awareness of the *non-saturation* of its present form. The self-awareness of the Church must serve to perceive clear signals: our lookout on God’s Revelation from the *gnoseological* subtraction to *ontological* and *metaphysical* excess, a *surplus*. ‘[T]he Lord himself, during his earthly life, often warned his disciples that there were things they could not yet understand and that they would have to await the Holy Spirit’;²⁸ he thus leads us to the *fullness* of realisation (cf. John 16:12–13).

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, XII–XIII.

²⁵ *EG*, 223.

²⁶ The Pope criticises a contradictory tendency: ‘Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion.’ *EG*, 223.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *EG*, 225.

This insight provides a new glimpse of the discussed theme of the Tradition of the Church and its development. Tradition fulfils the basis of its life only when it becomes a *dynamic orthodoxy* that ‘derives its capacity for self-renewal from its beliefs in the presence of a hidden reality, of which current (form of the tradition, *author’s note*) is one aspect, while other aspects of it are to be revealed by future discoveries.’²⁹ *Hidden, not yet revealed*, reality becomes a challenge for the mission of the Church.

I believe that the epistemological inquiry performed by Michael Polanyi (1891–1976), a philosopher of science, could be very useful at this point. The author encourages the community of scientific researchers to wisely distinguish between the ‘focal awareness’ of their research and actions, i.e. *processes* that require the investment of time and energy, and to support such processes by a knowledge of the community, of its life, of that which forms its ‘subsidiary awareness’, its tradition.³⁰ Such an awareness of Christian fellowship helps to reassess the topic of a *perimeter of the Church*. The past centuries of Modernity in particular have led to a problematic definition of the Church and to the delimitation of the *social field* of the Church. Its *symbolic capital*³¹ was more of a reason to differentiate from the world. The missionary transformation of the Church leads us towards a serious consideration of the potential of Christian *symbolic capital*, the richness of the doctrine, and the life of the Church as a way of service in favour of *humanum*.³²

Christian communities have been focused on the principle of *space* and *identity* for centuries. If they are to overcome such boundaries and restrictions, where can new inspiration for the influence of the Church towards *place* and *time* be found? The answer lies within the *transformative* processes towards all members of Christian communities. They should be aware of their co-responsibility for the missionary work of the Church. We are fluctuating in the order of *tactics*; they are an *investment* into the future of the Church within people in the contexts of their lives. The task is to form and educate Christians and also - or *just*

²⁹ M. Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 82.

³⁰ M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge&Kegan, 1958), 57–59.

³¹ See the description of a *social field* which is characterized by *symbolic capital*: P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason. On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 47–52.

³² ‘The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely-knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.’ *LG*, 1.

through their formation and education – to emphasise the *meaning* of their Christian practice. These kinds of tactics cannot be quantified; it is important to search for new possibilities, new ways, and believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in time because this will lead us towards long-term results.⁵⁵

3. Unity Prevails over Conflict

The principle ‘unity prevails over conflict’⁵⁴ is a practical verification of the principle analysed above as it is only possible to resolve this tension of opposites (unity vs. conflict) through the dimension of time. The question is how to achieve a final unity since the history of any human society (either the Church or humankind) is rather a history of conflicts and the polarisation of opinion.

(a) In order to *reconcile* the tension between the unity and conflict of partial groups, it is possible to use the thinking of M. Polanyi as an epistemological tool. This author offers the perspective of a *stratified universe* through the hierarchy of levels of being in his book *Tacit Dimension*.⁵⁵ Polanyi asks how is it possible that a machine, designed by people (who respected physical and chemical laws), is not determined and comprehensible through these sciences. It is, therefore, necessary to look for its *meaning* at ‘a higher level’ of being. ‘Lower levels’ of being are in their whole only understandable through what Polanyi calls ‘boundary control’ that is performed by the higher level. Thus ‘the logical structure of the hierarchy implies that a higher level can come into existence only through a process not manifest in the lower level, a process which thus qualifies as an emergence.’⁵⁶ Polanyi claims that in such a hierarchy of being ‘no level [of reality] can gain control over its own boundary conditions and hence cannot bring into existence a higher level, the operations of which would consist of controlling these boundary conditions’.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ The project of ‘parish evangelisation cells’ can be mentioned as an example of these *processes*. The European origin of this project is in the parish of St. Eustorgio in Milan, Italy.

⁵⁴ *EG*, 226–230.

⁵⁵ Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, 50–52.

⁵⁶ Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, 45.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

In even more detail, these Polanyi's thoughts can be found in a trans-disciplinary study of so-called *complex systems*. These systems are not analysable through the reduction of the whole into a 'uniting element', which is provided by one of the scientific disciplines. The adjective *complex* is not to be understood as a synonym for the word *complicated*, but 'the etymology of the term originates from the Latin word *complexus*, to "net together". It indicates a link of parts or elementary components in a physiological or biological system'.⁵⁸ One of the important principles of the epistemology of complexity is the principle of the self-organisation of complex systems, which existence develops in a 'chaordic structure'.⁵⁹ The structure of organisation is able to securely absorb and arrange elements in its core throughout time that would represent chaos itself. Such a mode of existence does not endanger chaordic systems, but on the contrary, the combination of order and chaos provides an opportunity for new learning, innovation, and therefore a new development of the system.⁴⁰

(b) When we turn our attention to the work of Pope Francis, an analogical thought can be found. During his conference *Nosotros como ciudadanos, nosotros como pueblo* in 2010, Bergoglio emphasised the sterility of a willingness to avoid conflicts, ignore them, and thus not to be able to transform them into a new functioning of the entire system. Bergoglio later updated this vision in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he rejected two destructive approaches to conflict situations.⁴¹ As a solution, he suggests the following: 'the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process'.⁴² Bergoglio gives us the task to form unity: a unity consisting of the conviction that the uniting power of humankind is the work of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, as in the case of the other three principles, it is possible to notice the great confidence which Pope Francis places in the pneumatological dimension of the mission of the Church in the history of humankind.⁴⁵

⁵⁸ R. Benkirane, *La teoria della complessità* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2007), 9.

⁵⁹ A neologism compounded from the terms *chaos* and *order*, expressing the bipolarity of the tension of the system. See D. Hock, *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999).

⁴⁰ A synonym for *chaordic structure*, used in science today, is the term *emergent structure*.

⁴¹ 1. 'when conflict arises, some people simply look at it and go their way as if nothing happened.' 2. 'Others embrace it in such a way that they become its prisoners; they lose their bearings, (...) and thus make unity impossible.' *EG*, 227.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See *EG*, 230.

(c) There are two areas in the life of Christian communities that uncover the actual applicability of Bergoglio’s principle. It is the ecumenical question as well as the question of the theological pluralism itself.

The efforts for ecumenical unity have been of profound significance in the agenda of Christian denominations during the last century.⁴⁴ The reality of the actual separation of Christians leads to a question that begins with and from this phenomenon: Can we perceive the history of the separation of Christians as the possibility for a new apprenticeship that aims at a higher *unity in difference*?

If we allow ourselves to be inspired by the epistemology of complex systems, our thoughts can be heading in this direction. Such an approach, then, prevents us from every attempt at *reductive synthesis*. When considering *boundary conditions*, the meaning of the system which seems from the point of view of each of the phenomena incompatible can be accepted and perceived only once we reach the ‘higher level’ of our recognition. This is the reason why it is important to continue in the ecumenical solidarity that has been developed over recent years and called *receptive ecumenism*.⁴⁵ It is an approach in the ecumenical effort whose cognitive requirement is not the question of ‘what can the other Christians learn from our Church tradition?’, but it is the search for ‘what can our tradition learn from the life of others?’ Such an explicit emphasis was also pronounced by Pope Bergoglio in *Evangelii Gaudium*. He encourages us to ‘reap what the Spirit has sown in them (Christians of other confessions, *author’s note*), which is also meant as a gift for us’.⁴⁶

This tension can also be found in relation with another question that fundamentally belongs to the Christian self-awareness. This is the question of legitimate theological pluralism in Christian theology. An attentive diachronic insight can clarify how it is possible that theological pluralism (perceived for long centuries as a creative tool of

⁴⁴ We can remind you of the words of John Paul II. in *Ut unum sint*, art. 5: ‘At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture.’ Ioannes Paulus II, *Littera encyclica de Oecumenico Officio Ut unum sint*, 25 May 1995, *AAS* 87 (1995), 921–982.

⁴⁵ An introduction to ‘receptive ecumenism’ provided by: P. D. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: University Press, 2008).

⁴⁶ *EG*, 246. This postulate suggests a development of a specific pneumatological dimension of ecumenism that will open the way to Christian unity for spiritual dynamics. See R. Svatoň, *Duchovní cesty českého ekumenismu: Minulost, přítomnost a perspektivy* (Olomouc: Refugium, 2014), 78–82.

Christian reflection) became in the Catholic *social field*, at certain time, a guest that is more *tolerated* than *welcomed*. It is the ignorance of the historical development of the *Magisterium* (especially in its form) that leads towards absolutisation of this institute that immanently belongs to the existence of the Church. For instance, a view of the history of the theological reflection can remind us that the theological method of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) – that has been presented as a *prototype* of all future generations of Catholic theologians⁴⁷ for centuries – provoked at the time of its origin considerable astonishment and incomprehension due to its innovative approach. It managed, however, to find its way through the background of criticism of some parts of Aristotle’s teaching in 1277.⁴⁸ The close connection between the thought of Aquinas and Aristotle was unproblematic for the continuity of the Tradition of the Church at that time. Why is it then that the same connections were denounced in the case of the modern philosophical origins for innovative theological methods?

The existence of the Magisterium is not the question, but it is *quomodo?*, the manner of its execution. When considering this question, the Magisterium finds itself at a crossroads of two antagonistic ways marked by historical epochs. Does this mean that the Magisterium should go along the path of toughening centralisation and thus follow the ideal of Modernity (heading towards the *Unum*) or should it choose the path of positively accepting a postmodern call to dialogue and differentiation, with *alterity* becoming a significant characteristic of the development of the Tradition of the Church in the direction of theological pluralism?

A promising future can be expected from the way reflected in the studies of complex systems. Its principle of self-organisation can convince us that *unity in diversity* is not only present in Jesus’ command directed at his disciples, but also that it is a credible principle from the field of the social organisations. If we admit the superiority of time over space and the superiority of unity over conflict, we can rely on the field of theological pluralism as on the manifestation of the governance of the Holy Spirit, on the phenomenon of *consensus*, and thus on an acceptance or a denial of a certain teaching method within

⁴⁷ See Leo XIII, *Epistola encyclica Aeterni Patris*, 4. August 1879, *ASS* 12 (1879), 97–115.

⁴⁸ Cf. G. F. Vescovini, ‘L’aristotelismo latino’, in *Storia della teologia nel Medioevo* III, ed. G. D’Onofrio (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1996), 227–271.

a community of theologians concerning the horizon of *time* (e.g. the Gamaliel’s speech in Act 5:34–39). Is it not possible to change the approach of the Authority of the Church towards ‘inspection’ of works of individual Catholic theologians and theological approaches? Is not this way one of the possibilities how to begin approaching the Magisterium more as a *process* that helps the Church focus on its completeness?

4. Reality is more Important than an Idea

The third principle listed in *Evangelii Gaudium* is an articulation of the second case of tension that is mentioned by Bergoglio: a bipolar tension between reality and an idea.⁴⁹

(a) Paying attention to the history of this tension in human thinking would require a voluminous work that would far exceed the framework of this article. The time of ancient philosophy (the opposing resolutions of Plato and Aristotle), medieval education (a contradiction between realism and nominalism) as well as the modern enlightened man (Descartes, Kant), are important historical examples of dealing with this tension. The loss of contact with reality has affected the modern history of Euro-American civilisation. This is a loss whose roots can be found in nominalist disembedding of bonding in view of the unifying world-view. Since the beginning of modern history, this has been enhanced by Descartes’ scepticism of objectivity that was later fulfilled by the approach of Immanuel Kant, that is by epistemological approaches which gradually crown the ‘great disembedding’⁵⁰ of an individual into the social bonds of modern historical society. The reality of *every-body’s* life is marginalised by systemic structures, and the dignity of human life is trampled on.

(b) Such an experience of totalitarian ideologies in the historical context of Latin America in the twentieth century has certainly influenced the thinking of Pope Bergoglio as he warns against veiling a reality with an excessive rhetorised truth.⁵¹ It is the current Pope who comes from the gigantic megapolis of Buenos Aires and speaks of poverty and of the difference between living in the *centre* and in the *periphery*; he experienced it as someone who lived in a great agglomeration.

⁴⁹ *EG*, 231–235.

⁵⁰ See also the phenomenal work by C. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁵¹ *EG*, 231: ‘It is dangerous to dwell in the realm of words alone, of images and rhetoric.’

He thus knows that ‘realities simply are’ while ‘ideas are worked out’.⁵² Francis seeks out the systematic development of pastoral care that will be based on an unambiguous starting point: *an option for the poor and for the vulnerable*. Those people, the poor and the vulnerable, are the *reality of life*. An *option for the poor* is the motive for Bergoglio’s statement that ‘ideas – conceptual elaborations – are at the service of communication, understanding, and praxis’.⁵³

(c) A Christian reflection about being and thinking cannot find a more expressive principle of *realism* than the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. God does not live in the world of ideas, neither is he *Deus absconditus*, but he ‘dashed himself, he become a servant, he became one of us’ in his Son (Phil. 2:6–8). When Christians fought fiercely for the dogmatisation of the full humankind of Jesus Christ, the result of this effort was a developed knowledge of the sacramentality of the universe, the presence and (inner) accompanying of reality by Christ. He is the one who turns through incarnation from *universale* to *concretum*. He enters the reality of life of all people in their singularity so that their *concretum* can be significant in God’s *universum*. This point of view suggests a question of *alterity* as an utterly theological impulse. This is the perspective that enables the existence of a human individual *locus theologicus*, whose theme is the redemptive presence of God in the life of each and every individual. Therefore, the ‘objectivity of Revelation is not identical with the objectivity of a *thing* or a *data file*, but it comes “objectively” in a believing subject’.⁵⁴

The superiority of reality does not stop only in the case of individual existence, but it significantly influences the future reflection of the Church. The Church is, thanks to the Second Vatican Council, on the path to transformation towards a more realistic (and humbler) frame. Entering into the view of the Church ‘from below’ has become the main leading line in a category that was established in the program of the Second Vatican Council⁵⁵ but was rejected later.⁵⁶ It has been reg-

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ EG, 232.

⁵⁴ Ch. Theobald, *La Rivelazione* (Bologna: EDB, 2006), 52.

⁵⁵ Cf. LG, 9–17.

⁵⁶ Cf. Synodus Episcoporum, ‘Relatio finalis Synodi piscoporum *Exeunte coetu secundo: Ecclesia sub Verbo Dei mysteria Christi celebrans pro salute mundi*’, in *Enchiridion del Sinodo dei Vescovi I* (Bologna: EDB, 2005), 2351. The document marginalises the category of *God’s people* and begins to claim that ‘the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of documents of the Council.’

ularly repeated, however, since the first day of the pontificate of Jorge Mario Bergoglio: The Church can be understood in its mystery in the historical development and historical function only as a ‘holy faithful People of God’. Such a view, apart from any other, encourages the present theology to search for a deeper *place* of all forms of *ministries* in the life of the Church and to strengthen the *form* of their execution.

Sensus fidei, a supernatural sense of believers for faith,⁵⁷ is a specific topic that has been ‘popular’ in the Catholic Church since the beginning of Francis’ pontificate. It will be a task for the following years to be able to structurally implement *sensus fidei* as a place of ‘bottom-up’ *causality* that opens the future of Church communities. Only the knowledge of co-responsibility – *actuosa participatio* – in the community of believers is a way to become a true *people* instead of *citizens*. Only the growth of an awareness of this source of life of the Church, i.e. of the pneumatological dimension, functions as a permanent impulse for the development of prophetic and, therefore, the missionary role of the Church.

5. The Whole is Greater than the Part

The last principle which the current Pope mentions in the chapter IV of *Evangelii Gaudium* is the principle of ‘the whole is greater than the part’.⁵⁸ This principle covers all the principles above. It can, therefore, become a means of generating Church action in change to structures in the Catholic Church.

(a) The topics of globalisation in its cultural, political, and economic sense as well as the loosening of coherent social relations according to local citizenship have been popular with a number of authors in recent decades.⁵⁹ A negative prognosis of globalisation as a dictation of homogenisation, however, covers up the versatility of this process. Roland Robertson (born 1938) provides a broader view, theorising in his search about the possibilities of perceiving globalisation as

⁵⁷ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, last modified 3 May 2018, accessed 28 September 2018, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html.

⁵⁸ *EG*, 234–237.

⁵⁹ Cf. e.g. A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), chapter II.

‘glocalisation’.⁶⁰ With reference to the rise of national states, the author demonstrates that the establishment of national states (one of the paradigmatic phenomena of the *particularity* of a society in modern history) happened on the background of an increase in *universality*, that is a development of international relations and processes (cultural, economic, and political). Therefore, topics such as ‘home’, ‘community’, and ‘locality’ are internally bound and reflected parallelly with the process of globalisation.

The epistemology of complex systems can once again become a tool for grasping this current phenomenon. *Dual causality* is a principle that considers both the *local* and *global* level of social phenomena as active subjects. Complex systems are not reducible only to a unidirectional way of management. Researchers in the field of the social organisations emphasise that it is essential to give space to the autonomous development of local units for the success and development of organisations. This will also help capture creativity and innovation that can come from the individual units of the system. Every core management knows that, to perceive the given social system as an *emergent structure*, the development of the whole (global level) is possible only through the development of individual units (the local level). In this perspective, the theory of complex systems mentions a *fractal system* that the whole comprises. Every fractal mirrors and embodies *pars pro toto* – the whole of the organisation based on the *holographic principle* of organisation. Every fractal is a distinctively ‘locating’ system that has co-responsibility not only for *actions* (power of directives) but also for *thinking* and thus *innovating* of a specific fractal in benefit of the whole. The development of a complex system as an *emergent structure*, is thus a gamble on *time* (processes developing over time) and also a gamble on *participants* (the active subjects of the development). It is only by means of cooperation of the fractal system in time that could later reveal that the whole is ‘something more than only a sum of parts as it enables bringing forth such qualities that would have never existed without such inner organization’.⁶¹

(b) The appropriation of this principle in the thinking of Bergoglio is apparent. The tension between particularity and universality was

⁶⁰ Cf. R. Robertson, ‘Glocalization: Time-space and Homogeneity-heterogeneity’, in *Global Modernities*, ed. M. Featherstone (London: SAGE, 2002), 25–44.

⁶¹ E. Morin, ‘Le vie della complessità’, in *La sfida della complessità*, ed. G. Bocchi and M. Ceruti (Milano: Mondadori, 2007), 27.

accepted by *Papa* Francis in a unique way in the issue of the terminology characterising his mission. He refers to himself almost exclusively as a ‘Roman Bishop’.⁶² Francis is trying to decentralise the character of the Roman bishop and add to it a new balance in the sense of the relationship between the Roman bishop and the collegium of bishops. Such decentralisation is at the background of thought that Francis develops in *Evangelii Gaudium*. The model of reality is in the shape of a *polyhedron*, not a round shape. A polyhedron provides a credible approach to reality through a formal analogy and ‘reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness’, from which pastoral activity ‘seeks to gather in this polyhedron the best of each’.⁶³

This idea of polyhedron is complemented by the Pope’s attempt to carry out the missionary transformation of the Church and, mainly, in its double causality. Since the beginning of his pontificate, he has been trying to approach reform *in corde* of the Catholic Church through concrete steps in the matter of the Roman curia. This involves the establishment of a *serving* position on the part of the Roman curia towards singular dioceses and also a preference of a Church as a *community of churches*. At the same time, Pope Francis is aware of the fact that the *up-bottom* impulses of change are not enough but that it is essential to allow the Holy Spirit to work through his inspiration and help in order that ‘the People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture’.⁶⁴ There also needs to be a change directed ‘bottom-up’, a change where every diocese has its own unique function and becomes an enrichment and impulse of the whole: ‘the whole is (...) greater than the sum of its parts’.⁶⁵

(c) Francis’ last principle seems extremely important for the course of restructuring the Catholic Church in the future.

Here, we are opening the question of *representation* in the Catholic Church. If we accept the credibility of the principle of double causality, the question is how it is possible to legitimise the current process of the selection of the episcopate according to this principle as it is a process

⁶² See *Annuario Pontificio* 2013, Francesco is referred to in this document as only a “Roman bishop”, see p. 23. All other titles are not annulled but are listed on p. 24. Therefore, not in direct connection with the name ‘Francesco’. *Annuario Pontificio* 2013 (Città del Vaticano: LEV, 2013).

⁶³ *EG*, 236.

⁶⁴ *EG*, 115.

⁶⁵ *EG*, 235.

that a priori *excludes* the synodal structures of individual dioceses. The question is even more pressing when we realise that the *practice of election* in the Catholic Church is a *regular process of choosing superiors* in the field of religious congregations.⁶⁶ A change in this particularly sensitive point, along with a new evaluation of the question of the sacramentality of the episcopate, would certainly help. As once expressed by the German theologian Karl Rahner, we should stop looking at the episcopate as if it were the *senior management of the Church*. They are therefore, not (up-bottom) appointed *superiors* of dioceses but (bottom-up) constituent *servants* (in the fullness of priesthood accepted in bishops' ordination) and *patres* of their dioceses.

A very present and still delicate question is also the 'middle level' of the Church, the level of episcopal conferences of individual states or regions of states (continents). Those episcopal conferences, restored by the Second Vatican Council according to the model of ancient patriarchal and metropolitan sees,⁶⁷ are still living in a vacuum of their own *doctrinal authority* and have not yet had *vere et realiter* entrusted. It was actually blocked in the 1990s, in connection with the efforts to restore the 'communion ecclesiology' and strengthen the centralism of the Catholic Church.⁶⁸ The only way to overcome the universalistic vision of the Church is to strengthen the authority and preference of the middle level. This involves an acceptance of the need to *contextualise* the life of the Church in individual regions on the *doctrinal* level.

Strengthening the authority of ecclesiastical conferences goes hand in hand with the establishment of a collegial authority whose members can be chairmen of ecclesiastical conferences (of continents or other specified regions). They would periodically gather around the Roman bishop and would be able to work at resolving their common issues together. This authority would not only have an advisory vote, but could also have a decision-making vote which, however, would not suppress the position of the authority of the bishop residing in Rome, the successor of the Apostle Peter. The vision of such collegial authority (uniting the heads of contemporary patriarchates) is not only fictional.

⁶⁶ See CIC, canons 624–625.

⁶⁷ *LG*, 23; cf. also *EG*, 32.

⁶⁸ Ioannes Paulus II, *Motu proprio de theologica et iuridica natura Conferentiarum Episcoporum Apostolos suos*, 21. May 1998, *AAS* 90 (1998), 641–658. Of particular interest is art. 21 which established radically restrictive conditions for the performance of the authentic Magisterium: 'unanimous approval', '*recognitio* of the Apostolic See'.

The journey was initiated by the establishment of ‘C9’, a council of nine cardinals from all continents that the Pope chose as his advisory authority while conducting the Catholic Church. Is it really unthinkable that this ‘working team’ could turn into a permanent council that would become a very important stage on the path towards the ecumenical unity of all Christians even when confessional dissimilarities would remain in place?

Conclusion

In this article, I have analysed four principles offered up by Pope Francis in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, specifically in a section entitled ‘The Common Good and Peace in Society’. I was searching for their possible interpretation as the leading principles of a fundamental-theological reflection for the current Catholic Church. The analysis of these principles from the philosophical-historical point of view and from the position of the genealogy of thinking by Jorge Mario Bergoglio displayed the epistemological variety hidden in them. These principles and the entire text of *Evangelii Gaudium* can be only perceived as an immense liberty. It is a liberty of a prophetic voice that resonates in the Catholic Church through Pope Francis who embraced it in the symbolism of the name he chose for himself: Francis. It is a name that enlivens the imprint of a man who revealed a new dimension in the life of the Church: St. Francis of Assisi. This involves not only the dimension of simplicity but, above all, fidelity to God, openness to people, courage, and joy as a demonstration of the Holy Spirit, who is *Spiritus inspirans et movens*:

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.⁶⁹

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⁶⁹ EG, 33.