

# Familiaris consortio and the Current Cultural and Social Change

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## Introduction

The purpose of this presentation is to analyze the specific causes of the current cultural and social change in light of Pope Benedict XVI's *Regensburg Lecture* and his encyclical *Spe salvi* (esp. par. 13-23).

The presentation has two parts. The first sketches John Paul II's positive vision for marriage and the family in *Familiaris consortio*; the second turns on this basis to the reasons for change.

In order to grasp these reasons, it is useful to ask, What is the institution in our society that shapes our mentality most deeply and powerfully? Without a doubt, it is natural science and technology, powerfully assisted by the universities, the school system, and the media. A strict dichotomy between facts and values is generally accepted in the scientific community. Science is value free; it studies things as they are. Values and norms are not facts, but they are socially constructed.

In this light one can perhaps understand why precisely the great goodness and beauty of communion between man and woman provokes a radical counter-pressure in our culture. Given the fact-value distinction, this communion, the *familiaris consortio*, cannot be truly good *in itself*, good *in its actual being*. The appearance of goodness and beauty can only be a *seductive deception* behind which one must suspect the intense power interests of religious authorities. Already in 1963, in his inaugural lecture at the University of Münster, Joseph Ratzinger identifies this deep source of cultural and social change.

We must see right through traditional value systems and expose them.

In technical rationality we become our own creators and the creators of a world built on the basis of our own inventions. We construct ourselves and reality anew in the unconditional transparency of our rationality. This commitment finds philosophical expression in the idea that there is no pre-given human nature, so that we are free and in fact compelled by our freedom to invent ourselves, to determine what a human being will be in the future.

The strongest form of this detachment from the earth, from the given that carries us, is the complete power over life and death *and the abolition of the difference between man and woman*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre: Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie* (München: Erich Wewel Verlag, 1982) 96-97.

## **A. *Familiaris consortio* on the Good of *Consortio***

### **1. The Superlative in the First Sentence of *Familiaris consortio***

Familiaris consortio aetate nostra,  
UT ALIUD FORTASSE INSTITUTUM NULLUM,  
mutationibus amplis, praegravibus,  
velocibus  
societatis et cultus humani implicatur.

The family communion in our age,  
AS PERHAPS NO OTHER INSTITUTION,  
has been involved in far reaching,  
weighty and fast changes  
of human society and culture.

The superlative “as perhaps no other institution” corresponds to the superlative in the Ratzinger text quoted at the end of the Introduction. “The strongest form of this detachment from the earth, from the given that carries us...” Why is the *familiaris consortio* so singled out as an institution that “perhaps” no other institution has suffered rapid and radical changes?

The document’s second word, *consortio*, offers the heart of an answer to this question. It identifies the good that is at stake in the changes, both in the positive changes and the destructive ones. The family is subject to these changes precisely inasmuch as it is an institution of *consortio*, that is, inasmuch as it is bound together by mutual self-gift and by love for the common good.

### **2. The Word *Consortio***

The Polish text of *Familiaris consortio* has only one word for the two Latin words *familiaris* and *consortio*, namely, “family.” The same is true of all translations I have been able to examine. John Paul II could have begun the document with the single Latin word *familia*. Why did he choose the two words *familiaris* and *consortio* instead? Why did he place *consortio* so prominently in the foreground as the noun, qualified by the adjective *familiaris*?

*Consortio* contains the noun *sortio*, which is formed by adding the ending “*io*” to the verb *sortior*. *Sortior* means to cast or draw a lot. The ending “*io*” produces nouns of action or of the result of actions, somewhat like the ending “*ium*.” *Consortio* is thus quite close to the more frequent noun *consortium*.

The verb *sortior* is related to the noun *sors*, lot. A *sors* is a little tablet with writing on it. The Ancient Romans placed a number of these *sortes* in an urn to cast lots or let people draw lots to predict the future. By extension, *sors* came to signify the result of this action, the allotted good or bad that persons receive or achieve.

The preposition “*con*” in *consortio* adds the notion of “together.” *Consortio* signifies thus the action of casting or drawing a lot together or the result of that action, a shared lot in actual life.

### **3. The Biblical Depth of *Consortio***

Although the word “lot” may seem superficial, at least when one thinks of a lottery, there is an extraordinary depth into which its philosophical and theological roots penetrate in Biblical thought. When Israel entered into the promised land, lots were cast to allot parts of the land to different tribes and families as their permanent inheritance (see esp. Jos 19). The Septuagint usually translates both the Hebrew word for lot (*gôrāl*) and the word for inheritance (*naḥālâ*) as Greek *klēros*, lot, which is very close to the Latin *sors*. The Vulgate is more sparing with *sors*. Nevertheless, *sors* came to carry echoes of the divinely allotted land passed on as a precious inheritance.

No land was allotted to the tribe of Levi. “They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them” (Deut 18:2). In the Wisdom of Solomon, the notion of God as the true lot, the true *sors*, is transferred to the eternal destiny of the just man. When his enemies, who tortured and killed him, see his vindication by God, they exclaim. “His life we accounted madness, and his death dishonored. See now how he is accounted among the sons of God; how his lot (Greek *klēros*, Vulgate: *sors*) is with the saints!” (Wis 5:4–5).

On this background it is not surprising that the Vulgate translation of Colossians 1:12 reads, “God the Father...has made us worthy to be partakers of the lot (*sors*, Greek *klēros*) of the saints in light.” In this passage, *sors* has the meaning of ultimate destiny, of the ultimate good given to us as a gratuitous gift by God, fulfilling all historical promises, including that of the *consortio* of marriage and family.

#### 4. The Human Depth of *Consortio*

The Roman jurist Modestinus, a student of Ulpian, uses “*consortium*” in his Classical definition marriage, which had much influence on the Christian understanding of the *familiaris consortio*. “Marriage is the joining (*coniunctio*) of male and female, and the communion (*consortium*) of life as a whole, by divine and human right.”<sup>2</sup> King Artaxerxes calls his wife Esther “*consortem regni nostri*, the sharer in our kingship, *tēs basileias koinōnon*.”<sup>3</sup> Peter calls Christians “*divinae consortes naturae*, sharers in the divine nature, *theias koinōnoi physeōs*” (1 Peter 1:4).

These texts show a connection between *consortio* and the Greek *koinōnia*, a key word in the New Testament which recent theology usually translate as “communion,” while the Vulgate usually translates it as *societas* or *communicatio*. Such sharing in the divine nature, as St. Augustine argues, implies that God gives himself to us as our common good.

God wants to be worshiped and loved without payment, that is, to be loved chastely, to be loved not because he gives something other than himself, but *because he gives himself*.<sup>4</sup>

Cicero uses the word *consortio* to express the importance of the common good for human beings in general.

There must be one thing proposed for all, so that the good of each and the good of all is the same. If anyone violently snatches it to himself, all human communion (*omnis humana consortio*) will be dissolved.<sup>5</sup>

Seneca makes a similar point with the word *consortium*.

The same is good for me as for you. We are not friends, unless whatever is done to you bears on me. Friendship brings about the communion (*consortium*) of all things between us, nor is anything advantageous or detrimental to one person alone. One lives in common (*in commune vivitur*). Nor can anyone live blessedly (*beate*) if he only looks at himself and turns all things to his own use. Live for another if you want to live for yourself.<sup>6</sup>

A closely related statement by Seneca is even more famous.

Of no good does one have joyful possession without a companion.  
*nullius boni sine socio iucunda possessio est.*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Justinian, *Digesta*, 23.2.1.pr.2.

<sup>3</sup> Esther 8:12n Septuagint, which corresponds to Esther 16:13 Vulgate. The passage is not present in the Hebrew text that has come down to us.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Psalm 52, par. 8; emphasis added. This text is interesting as an indication of St. Augustine’s understanding of “chastely, *caste*.”

<sup>5</sup> Cicero, *De officiis*, 3:26.

<sup>6</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 48:2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 6.4-5.

It is significant that the theological traditions often change Seneca's phrase "*sine socio*, without a companion," to "*sine consortio*, without communion." St. Thomas, quoting Boethius, writes, "Of no good does one have joyful possession without communion (*sine consortio*)." In this version of the saying, the emphasis falls on communion. Already Aristotle had written, "The proverb, What belongs to friends is common (*koina ta philōn*), is correct. For *it is in communion* that friendship consists. *En koinōnia gar hē philia.*"<sup>8</sup>

## 5. The Trinitarian Depth of *Consortio*

In his Trinitarian theology, St. Thomas Aquinas argues that, although there is only one God, this God is not alone. "One person always has the communion (*consortium*) of the fellowship (*societas*) of another person of the same nature."<sup>9</sup> In thinking about God, one must exclude "the understanding of someone alone, as if there were no communion (*consortium*) of divine persons by the union of love (*per unionem amoris*)." <sup>10</sup>

Applying Seneca's dictum to the Trinity as a communion of persons, Thomas argues that God's own eternal joy is closely associated with communion between the divine persons. "The perfection of divine blessedness brings with it a supreme joy that cannot be had without communion (*sine consortio*)." <sup>11</sup>

In this respect, still according to St. Thomas, the Trinity is the exemplar of the perfection of human life. Commenting on Jesus' petition "Preserve them...that they may be one as we are one," he writes.

The [disciples] are preserved for this goal, namely, to be one. *For, our entire perfection (nostra perfectio tota) consists in the unity of the Spirit, "Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together" (Eph 4:3). "How good and joyful it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).*

But he adds, "as we are one" (John 17:11). There is a difficulty in this statement. They are one in essence; therefore we will also be one in essence. But this is not true.

Response: The perfection of each being is nothing other than a participation in the divine likeness. For we are good to the degree in which we are made like God. *Our unity, therefore, is perfective precisely in the degree to which it participates in the divine unity.*

Now, there is a twofold unity in God, namely, the unity of nature (cf. "The Father and I are one." John 10:30) and *the unity of love in the Father and the Son which is the unity of the Spirit*. Both of these are in us, not in equality of rank, but by a certain likeness... They are one by a love that is not derived from the gift of someone else, but that proceeds from them. *For the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit*, but we by a love in which we participate as something derived from a higher source.<sup>12</sup>

The exemplarity of the Trinity affirmed by St. Thomas on the basis of John 17 stands at the very center of the Vatican II text John Paul II quotes most frequently when he explains the *consortio* of marriage and the family, namely, *Gaudium et spes* 24:3.

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when he prays to the Father, "that all may be one...as we are one" (John 17:21-22) and thus offers vistas closed to human reason, indicates a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God's sons in Truth and Love. This likeness shows that man,

- who is the only creature on earth God willed for itself,
- cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self (cf. Luke 17:33).

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1159b.31-32.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum on the Sentences*, lib. 1 d. 21 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 1 co.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum on the Sentences*, lib. 1 d. 23 q. 1 a. 4 expos.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum on the Sentences*, lib. 1 d. 2 q. 1 a. 4 s.c. 1.

<sup>12</sup> St. Thomas, *Super Ioannem*, 17.3.2214, emphasis added.

## 6. Cultural and Social Changes

The Trinitarian exemplar of *consortio*, lived out in marriage and the family by the sacramental gift of self and by love for the common good—this is the main point affected by social and cultural changes. More precisely, it is the reason both for the positive and for the negative developments, of one by attraction and of the other by repulsion.

*Familiaris consortio* mentions two triplets of positive developments. The first set bears on relations between persons within the family.

1. There is a more lively awareness of personal freedom and greater attention to the quality of interpersonal relationships in marriage,
2. to promoting the dignity of women,
3. to responsible procreation, to the education of children  
(*Familiaris consortio*, 6:2).

The second set bears on relations between families.

1. There is also an awareness of the need for the development of interfamily relationships, for reciprocal spiritual and material assistance,
2. the rediscovery of the ecclesial mission proper to the family
3. and its responsibility for the building of a more just society  
(*Familiaris consortio*, 6:2).

In the thirty years since *Familiaris consortio*, the most notable strengthening of these positive developments has been the great impact of John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, not only in academic life at the John Paul II Institute and related centers of learning, but as a grass-roots movement, particularly in the United States. Special merit in this movement belongs to Christopher West, who is a faithful and effective proponent of John Paul II's teaching.

*Familiaris consortio* mentions seven negative aspects of change.

1. a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other;
2. serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children;
3. the concrete difficulties that the family itself experiences in the transmission of values;
4. the growing number of divorces;
5. the scourge of abortion;
6. the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization;
7. the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality (*Familiaris consortio*, 6:2).

## 7. Two Loves and the Common Good

One of the striking features of these two lists is that the first item is the same in both. The first item in the positive list is “a more lively awareness of personal freedom” and in the negative list also a kind of freedom, namely, “a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other.”

The source of these evils is often a corrupt notion and experience of freedom, which is possessed not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as a certain power (*vis*), answerable to no one, of having the strength (*valendi*) to safeguard (*tuendi*), not rarely against others, the defense of one's own interests due to self-love (*Familiaris consortio*, 6:3).

The reference to self-love returns a few paragraphs later when John Paul II points to the deeper causes of the positive as well as negative changes.

History is not simply a necessary progress towards the better, but an event of freedom, even a struggle between freedoms that are opposed to each other, that is, according to the well-known text of St. Augustine, a conflict between two loves: the love of God to the point of

disregarding self, and the love of self to the point of disregarding God (*Familiaris consortio*, 6:6).

The text in Augustine's city of God to which John Paul II refers is noteworthy for its emphasis on power as the motive of the corrupt form of love.

In one [city], the lust for domination dominates (*dominandi libido dominatur*) its princes as well as the nations it enslaves... One [city] loves its own strength (*virtutem*) in its powerful men (*potentibus*); the other says to its God, I will love you, God my strength (*virtus*).<sup>13</sup>

A less famous but very important parallel text in Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* argues that the disordered love is essentially a love for the private good as opposed to the common good.

One of these two loves is holy, the other impure; one is social (*socialis*), the other private (*privatus*); one is attentive to the common good on account of the fellowship (*societas*) above, the other reduces even the common good to its own power (*potestas*)... [These two loves] have existed already in the angels, one in the good angels, the other in the bad, and have distinguished the two cities founded in the human race...<sup>14</sup>

One finds the same emphasis on the common good in Wojtyła. He strongly insists that love between man and woman is inconceivable as genuine love without the bond of the common good.

This special bond does not mean merely that...both seek a common good, it also unites the persons involved internally, and so constitutes the essential core around which any love must grow. In any case, *love between two people is quite unthinkable without some common good to bring them together*...

How is it possible to ensure that one person does not then become for the other...an object used exclusively for the attainment of a selfish end? To exclude this possibility, they must share the same end. Such an end, where marriage is concerned, is procreation, the future generation, a family, and, at the same time, the continual ripening of the relationship between two people, in all the areas of activities which conjugal life includes.<sup>15</sup>

In his *Letter to Families*, John Paul II returns in more detail to the discussion of the common good of the *familiaris consortio*. One of the great goods of marriage is the communion of persons created by the marriage vows, "love, fidelity, honor and the permanence of the union until death" (*Letter to Families*, 10:2). This good is the good of both and at the same time the good of each. "The common good, by its very nature, both unites individual persons and ensures the true good of each" (*Letter to Families*, 10:2). It ensures the true good not by giving to the persons severally their own private advantage, *but by being the good of both*. Since marriage is a sacrament, the common good in question is deeper than a mere human communion of persons. It is a "great mystery" (Eph. 5:32) of grace, of participating in the life of the Trinity (*Letter to Families*, 10:2).

The good of communion, of the *consortio* between husband and wife, then becomes the common good of the family when children enter as a common good of husband and wife.

The words of consent, then, express what is essential to the common good of the spouses, and they indicate what ought to be the common good of the future family. In order to bring this out, the Church asks the spouses if they are prepared to accept the children God grants them and to raise the children as Christians (*Letter to Families*, 10:3).

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<sup>13</sup> St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 14.28.

<sup>14</sup> St. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, 11.15.

<sup>15</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 28 and 30, emphasis added. The final chapter of Wojtyła's main philosophical work, *Person and Act*, examines the dynamics of persons acting together and explains this fundamental role of the common good in detail.

## B. Pope Benedict XVI on the Deep Causes of Change

### 1. Remapping the Geography of the Debate

The conventionally dominant way of mapping the geography of cultural debate in our society distinguishes two main continents, one of them called “religious faith” and the other “science” or “rationality” together with “liberal politics”. The Catholic Church and the Muslim world occupy the continent of religious faith; the dominant institutions of culture, the universities, schools and mass media, live on the continent of science and rationality.

The *Regensburg Lecture* reconfigures this map. The Catholic Church together with Greek philosophy occupies the continent of faith and authentic reason; the Muslim world, modern natural science, and liberal politics the continent of the primacy of will and power over reason.

Many in the Islamic world reacted with passionate indignation against Benedict XVI's quote of a text by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Paleologus. “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.” Violence, the emperor argues, is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. God acts according to reason, with logos.

It is surprising that Western readers of the *Regensburg Lecture* who were fascinated by the critique of Mohammed tended to overlook that the same criticism appears only a few paragraphs later as a criticism of the ideal of rationality that became dominant in the West through the scientific revolution.

In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntas ordinata*. Beyond this is the realm of God's freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done.

This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazm and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions.

As opposed to this, the faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which - as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated - unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language. God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism; rather, the truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as logos and, as logos, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf. Certainly, love, as Saint Paul says, “transcends” knowledge and is thereby capable of perceiving more than thought alone (cf. Eph 3:19); nonetheless it continues to be love of the God who is *Logos*. Consequently, Christian worship is, again to quote Paul, “logikē latreia,” worship in harmony with the eternal Word and with our reason (cf. Rom 12:1).

### 2. Francis Bacon and the Voluntaristic Origins of Natural Science

Voluntarism reached its apex in the Nominalism of Scotus' student William of Ockham. By emphasizing God's arbitrary power to the extreme, Ockham obscures the interior goodness of created beings. He sees their order as an order God happens to have imposed on them from the outside, one among many orders he could have imposed. He regards natural beings as artifacts, not as natural beings, not as having an interior principle of order toward the good. They reflect the free divine power, not the divine being, goodness and wisdom.

As Charles Taylor points out, “This line of thought even contributed in the end to the rise of mechanism: the ideal universe from this point of view is a mechanical one.”<sup>16</sup>

In nominalism, the super-agent who is God relates to things as freely to be disposed of according to his autonomous purposes... The purposes of things are extrinsic to them. The stance is fundamentally one of instrumental reason... The shift will not be long in coming to a new understanding of being, according to which, all intrinsic purpose having been expelled, final causation drops out, and efficient causation alone remains. There comes about what had been called “the mechanization of the world picture.” And this in turn opens the way for a view of science in which a good test of the truth of a hypothesis is what it enables you to effect. This is the Baconian view.<sup>17</sup>

Taylor sees a crucial link between Ockham and the “Baconian view,” which came to dominate the scientific revolution. The link is the subordination of reason as an instrument to the arbitrary power of the will. In Ockham’s God, as in Mohammed’s, the arbitrary power of the divine will. God’s praxis, has absolute priority over logos and theoria. The translation of the Johannine prologue by Goethe’s Faust applies already to Ockham, “In the beginning was the deed.”

Nominalist theology was passed on through Luther and Calvin to Francis Bacon, who was raised as a strict Calvinist. He expresses his fundamental point particularly clearly in a passage Kant chose as the motto of his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Of myself I say nothing; but on behalf of the business which is in hand I entreat men to believe that it is not an opinion to be held, but a work to be done; and to be well assured that I am laboring to lay the foundation, not of any sect or doctrine, but of human utility and power.<sup>18</sup>

Knowledge and power are opposites, as obeying and conquering are, but they coincide on the level of intention, because the purpose of obeying nature by knowing is to conquer her by power. “Human knowledge and power coincide in the same... Nature is conquered by obeying.”<sup>19</sup> “And so these twin intentions, namely, those of human Knowledge and Power, truly coincide in the same.”<sup>20</sup> On this point, Bacon’s secretary Thomas Hobbes agrees with his employer. “Knowledge is for the sake of power.”<sup>21</sup>

Bacon considers seeking knowledge for its own sake immoral. It is the equivalent of enjoying the beauty of a prostitute for pleasure instead of honorably using one’s wife in order to beget children and secure the comforts of life. “Knowledge should not be as a prostitute for pleasure...but as a wife for honorable generation, fruit and comfort.”<sup>22</sup>

### 3. The Choice of Mechanics as the Master-Science of Nature

If one sets out to make oneself master and possessor of nature, the choice of the kind of knowledge useful for this end is clear: the mathematical science of mechanics. Descartes is often credited with having made this choice, but already Bacon is quite clear. The science of power par excellence is mechanics, a science

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<sup>16</sup>Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 82.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 97-8.

<sup>18</sup> Bacon, *The Great Instauration*, Preface, final paragraph; emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> Bacon, *The New Organon*, Aphorism 1.3.

<sup>20</sup> Bacon, *The Great Instauration*, Plan of the Work.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Elementa Philosophiae*, 1.1, De Philosophia, par. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Bacon, *The Advancement of Knowledge*, 1.

known already to the Ancients, as demonstrated by the *Questions of Mechanics*, a text probably by one of Aristotle's students.<sup>23</sup>

When we have to do something contrary to nature, the difficulty of it causes us perplexity and we need technology. The technology which helps us in such perplexities we call Mechanics. The words of the poet Antiphon are quite true: "By technology we are powerful even where nature would defeat us." ... Mechanical problems... have something in common both with mathematical and with physical theorems; for while Mathematics shows "the how," Physics shows "the concerning what."<sup>24</sup>

Bacon adopted his mechanist reform of science directly from this Aristotelian text. "Aristotle [said it] best. Physics and Mathematics give rise to Practical Science and Mechanics."<sup>25</sup> Whenever possible, Bacon argues accordingly, the laws of nature should be expressed mathematically in accord with precise measurements made in experiments. "Inquiries into nature have the best result when the physical is brought to its term in the mathematical."<sup>26</sup>

We give this precept: everything in nature relating both to bodies and powers must be set forth (as far as may be) numbered, weighed, measured, determined. For it is works we are in pursuit of, not speculations. Physics and Mathematics, in due combination, give rise to practical science.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to notice that this precept is not a theoretical judgment based on evidence, but a choice that acts as a non-cognitive selective principle to exclude many modes of being grasped in ordinary experience. Neither Bacon nor Descartes draw attention to the moral character of this first and most fundamental choice. It is this self-concealment that gave and still gives to the "objective" Baconian-Cartesian view of nature its strength as a quasi self-evident theoretical starting-point. To its proponents, the "objective" view is self-evidently the only true one; opposing views are unfounded subjective opinions, religious prejudices motivated by power interests, etc. The fact remains, however, that at its origin "the objective view" is an imposition of will, and not a discovery of reason.

#### 4. Benedict XVI on Francis Bacon

Once the world is reconfigured by the personal subject as a mechanism, it takes revenge on the person. A mechanistic nature is a nature in which the person and its desire for meaning cannot find a home. Good and bad, meaningful and meaningless—these are not objective facts that can be expressed in scientific categories. They are value-judgments imposed from the outside on an objectively value-free world of facts. The personal subject, or a group of subjects, constitutes its own values. Conversely, the person can and must free itself from all pre-given value systems. No value system can make any legitimate claim to being based on facts. Only science has a claim to facts, but it is value-free.

We must take a look at the foundations of the modern age. These appear with particular clarity in the thought of Francis Bacon. That a new era emerged—through the discovery of America and the new technical achievements that had made this development possible—is undeniable. But what is the basis of this new era? It is the new correlation of experiment and method that enables man to arrive at an interpretation of nature in conformity with its laws

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<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Rose and Stillman Drake, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian Questions of Mechanics in Renaissance Culture," *Studies in the Renaissance* 18 (1971): 65-104.

<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Mechanics*, prologue, 847a10-28.

<sup>25</sup> Bacon, *Advancement of Knowledge*, 3.6.

<sup>26</sup> Bacon, *New Organon*, Aphorism 2.8;

<sup>27</sup> Bacon, *Preparation for Natural and Experimental History*, Aphorism 7.

and thus finally to achieve “the triumph of art over nature” (*victoria cursus artis super naturam*).<sup>28</sup>

The novelty—according to Bacon’s vision—lies in a new correlation between science and praxis [that is, the realm of human action]. This is also given a theological application: the new correlation between science and praxis would mean that the dominion over creation—given to man by God and lost through original sin—would be reestablished.

Anyone who reads and reflects on these statements attentively will recognize that a disturbing step has been taken: up to that time, the recovery of what man had lost through the expulsion from Paradise was expected from faith in Jesus Christ: herein lay “redemption”. Now, this “redemption”, the restoration of the lost “Paradise” is no longer expected from faith, but from the newly discovered link between science and praxis. It is not that faith is simply denied; rather it is displaced onto another level—that of purely private and other-worldly affairs—and at the same time it becomes somehow irrelevant for the world.

This programmatic vision has determined the trajectory of modern times and it also shapes the present-day crisis of faith which is essentially a crisis of Christian hope. Thus hope too, in Bacon, acquires a new form. Now it is called: faith in progress (*Spe salvi*, 16-17).

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<sup>28</sup> Bacon, *New Organon*, Aphorism 1.117; Spedding, *Works of Bacon*, Latin 1.323; English 8.149.