

CREATIO CONTINUA VI

Signs of harmony

Krakow,

1-2 December 2023

The created world is now usually analysed under the sign of crisis, decline and catastrophe. With climate breakdown and speeding extinction of species there are good reasons to justify such apocalyptic thinking. Yet, during the 6th edition of the *Creatio Continua* conference, we want to proceed otherwise.

That is: to start looking for the signs of harmony of continuous creation. We shall not confine our explorations to the analysis of the state of the natural world, understanding that “we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (*Laudato si'*, 139) and that “the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity” (*Laudato si'*, 119).

Thus to find signs of harmony – of balance, order, concord, of “*Grace*, which tends to manifest itself tangibly” (*Laudato si'*, 236) – we also need to come through all the fundamental areas of human relationships with God, other humans and nature and through sciences & practices illuminating these spheres: theology, economics, (geo)politics and even art.

We shall give attention not only to the idea of harmony, but also to the idea of *sign*. Sign, standing in the centre of the Christian paradox – pointing outside, while attracting our attention; embodying and transcending – might help us to save the idea of a harmonious ordering of one’s soul & city from the seduction of too smooth and easy a harmonisation. From a false harmony which turns God, soul, community and creation, and even the sign of crucifixion into a mere object-image, suppressing the scandal of a man who “had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, /nothing in his appearance that we should desire him / despised and rejected by mankind, / a man of suffering, and familiar with pain” (Isaiah 53, 2-3).

Finally, we want to look at creation on all levels and in all manifestations – natural, political, economic and artistic – from the point of view of the central “sacramental” sign. A sign celebrating the “rest” of all things, harmony found continuously in “the day of the Resurrection, the <first day> of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord’s risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality”; the sign, “unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures”; the ultimate sign of “The Lord [Who] in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. (*Laudato si'*, 236)

DAY I (Dec 1st)

9:30 opening

Keynote Lecture: *Laudate Deum: On the signs of harmony*

Sister Helen Alford OP (Online), Angelicum, Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

10:00 I A DIVINE HARMONY?

The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships. (...) each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile.

Laudato si', 240, 239

There is a turn in contemporary thinking – a turn of which “Laudato Si” encyclical is a magisterial example – an effort to understand relationships as constitutive. One is never simply an individual. One is always already: a son, a father, a mother within an ecosystem of nurture, attention and sacrifice.

Can this kind of more *harmonious* – relational *and* personal – thinking help us to go beyond self-centred and yet tribal identity politics of both Left and Right? And beyond the false alternative of victimising language policing vs. empty self-assertion of free speech which has nothing of value to say?

How can ecosystemic thinking avoid the danger of reducing the person to a “minimal self” disposable, sacrificed on the altar of greater good of the survival and greater harmony of the (algorithmically governed) whole? How to think of divine, human and creaturely relationships and not do away with *exceptionality* of “*person*” – a singularity uniquely discovered in the polemic over the nature of the Trinity?

Pawel Rojek, Jagiellonian University

Philip Goodchild, University of Nottingham

Esmé Partridge, University of Cambridge

Adam Morton, University of Nottingham

Anna Wajda, Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

Panel discussion | Chair: **Marta Olesik**, Polish Academy of Science

coffee break

12:15 II WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SOLIDARITY: IS A HARMONIOUS POLITY POSSIBLE?

Aquinas and Catholic Social Teaching (Quadregesimo Anno) onwards defined harmony between groups and institutions – thus creating *mixed* economy and polity – a virtuous ecosystem.

The relational quality of sustaining life of such an ecosystem was named solidarity.

Is it ever possible after what has been described as the defeat – or even self-defeat – of the biggest movement under this name?

How could the “Solidarity” programme of “self-governing republic” be actualised in the times of deep social, environmental and spiritual crisis?

Andrzej Leder, Polish Academy of Science

Maurice Glasman, Member of the House of Lords

Jan Śpiewak, social activist

Ariadna Lewańska, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Centre de civilisation française University of Warsaw

Panel discussion | Chair: **Maria Libura**, Polish Economy Network, University of Warmia and Mazury

Project “Warm house – war church” presentation, **Joanna Zatylna**, **Mariusz Zatylny**, Laudato si’ Movement Poland

14:15-15:15 Lunch

15:15 III GEOPOLITICS: HARMONIES REAL AND FALSE

They dress the wound of my people

as though it were not serious.

‘Peace, peace,’ they say,

when there is no peace.

Jeremiah, 6, 14

Russian full-scale invasion on Ukraine has shaken the supposedly harmonious comfort of rich Western societies. Many interest groups are calling for going back to business as usual as soon as possible. However, Russian fossil-fueled financed aggression – just as climate breakdown hitting vulnerable the most – can be seen as a deferred repayment for imbalance and imprudence of

decision makers: for lack of what the Greeks & the Bible called *isotēs* – just balance imprinted in the very structure of reality.

How to reestablish a more stable balance of forces between elites and *populus* within European societies, between member states of the EU and with Europe's surrounding? How to build a more equitable Union with a common industrial policy instead of unequal competition debilitating the common market? How to safeguard import of critical materials by establishing fairer terms of trade with the Global South in the times of growing geopolitical rivalries? How to ensure that rebuilding of Ukraine avoids the trap of shock therapy, neocolonial exploitation of labour, land and resources and a resulting (and perhaps armed) backlash? Can the Russian aggression lead to a more just – and thus – more sustainable relations on the continent and beyond?

Konstanty Pilawa, Jagiellonian Klub (TBC)

Grzegorz Lewicki, International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations

Bartłomiej Radziejewski, Nowa Konfederacja Think Zine

Tomasz Majewski, Jagiellonian University

panel discussion | Chair: **Maria Libura**, Polish Economy Network, University of Warmia and Mazury

DAY II (Dec 2nd)

10:00 Keynote lecture: *On what conditions is harmony between politics and faith possible?*

Hanna Suchocka, Honorary President of the Venice Commission

10:20 IV COMMUNITAS & COMMUNION: BEYOND NATURALISM?

all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in His person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation.

Laudato si', 235

What are the ways out from naturalism – which treats matter, and indeed human bodies, as mere disposable and dispensable raw material?

And are there ways out of naturalism which do not divorce human mind from reason-*logos* ?

How can *signs* of matter and body be treated, how can technology be reconstructed and community rethought in the light of sacramental approach to reality in which: “creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself” (Benedict XVI, quoted in *Laudato si'*, 236)

Agata Bielik-Robson, University of Nottingham

John Milbank, University of Nottingham

Conor Cunningham, head of Centre for Theology and Philosophy University of Nottingham

Alison Milbank, University of Nottingham

Adrian Pabst, Deputy Director of National Institute for Economic and Social Research

panel discussion | Chair: **Piotr Popiolek**

coffee break

12:30 V WORKING IN HARMONY

“Human being – a priest unconscious and immature” –

said artist, artisan and thinker C. K. Norwid, establishing a line of the Polish philosophy of labour extending towards John Paul II and his “*Laborem exercens*”; an encyclical letter universalising the experience of “Solidarity” – simultaneously a trade union, a social movement and a spiritual uprising. This line of thinking perceives every human action as having a sacramental dimension contributing to the process of disintegration or reconciliation of God and the world He created.

However, what Polish philosophy (or, shall we say, theology) of labour well understood was that this priesthood is still unconscious and immature: labouring human beings can easily get lost in labour and the structures labour builds.

Can work be a “natural prayer of the soul”, a place of attention and creative peace rather than incessant incentivisation and stress reduced (temporarily) by a vicious circle of external distractions depleting resources of attention. How can we think of labour which gathers and cultivates signs of harmony in its natural and human surrounding and of institutions which such a labour could built and indwell? Or (to use terms taken from another dictionary) how to think of labour and technologies which successfully counter the forces of automatic algorithmisation, forces producing loss of cultural and natural biodiversity of the lifeworld and proletarianising the worker?

Luigino Bruni, LUMSA

Jonathan Cruddas, MP, author of "Dignity of labour"

Jarosław Niemiec, miner, "Przeróbka" trade union in Bogdanka

Marek Rymśza, University of Warsaw, President of the Council for Social Affairs of the President
of the Republic of Poland

Tomasz Herbich, Political Theology

panel discussion | Chair: **Jarema Piekutowski**, Nowa Konfederacja

14:30-15:30 lunch

15:30 VI HORROR & HARMONY: THEOLOGY IN THE TIME OF WAR

Agata Bielik-Robson, University of Nottingham

Sebastian Milbank, University of Nottingham

Adrian Pabst, Deputy Director of National Institute for Economic and Social Research

panel discussion

Chair: **Tomasz Herbich**, Political Theology

16:45 VII Closing: HARMONIOUS LEADERSHIP

Przemysław Radwan in conversation with **Michał Łuczewski (TBC)**