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Anatheism – an Incentive to Discover the Importance of Discipleship in Christianity

Abstract: What prevents a modern man, living in a more or less secularized world, from finding new and life-giving answers to his spiritual inquiries and search for the sacred? The authors put forward the thesis that anatheism can be seen as an incentive for Christianity to rediscover the importance of discipleship. The article consists of three parts. In the first part of the article, Kearney's understanding of anatheism is analyzed as presented in his recent publications. In the second part, the authors show how great certainty in the faith and the understanding of religious truths becomes a concept that prevents modern man from being heard and understood in his doubts and search. In the third part, they present the path of discipleship inspired by Jesus Christ as a response to the search of the today's man.

Key words: anatheism, Kearney, discipleship, certainty, sacred, Christianity, God, Jesus Christ

Povzetek: **Anateizem – spodbuda za odkrivanje pomembnosti učenčevstva v krščanstvu**

Kaj preprečuje sodobnemu človeku, ki živi v bolj ali manj sekulariziranem svetu, pri iskanju novih in življenjskih odgovorov za njegovo duhovno raziskovanje in iskanje svetega? Avtorja predstavitava tezo, da je anateizem mogoče razumeti kot spodbudo krščanstvu, da ponovno odkrije pomen učenčevstva. Članek sestavljajo trije deli. V prvem delu članka avtorja analizirata Kearneyjevo razumevanje anateizma, kakor je predstavljeno v njegovih nedavnih publikacijah. V drugem delu pokažeta, kako velika gotovost v veri in razumevanju verskih resnic postane koncept, ki preprečuje, da bi sodobni človek bil slišan in razumljen v svojih dvomih in iskanju. V tretjem delu predstavitava pot učenčevstva, ki ga navdihuje Jezus Kristus, kot odziv na iskanje današnjega človeka.

Ključne besede: anateizem, Kearney, učenčevstvo, gotovost, sveto, krščanstvo, Bog, Jezus Kristus

1. Introduction

Who or what comes after God, whom Nietzsche proclaimed to be dead? Richard Kearney presents a possible answer to this intriguing question in his book *Anatheism: Returning to God After God*, published in 2011. This book with its idea of anatheism led to a series of discussion among the leading figures of the continental philosophical tradition. The result of these discussions is the recently published book *Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God*, printed in 2016. John P. Manoussakis states that Kearney's idea of anatheism presents another turn in the continental philosophical tradition in the last fifty years, when God – despite Nietzsche's proclamation – comes back again. Growing interest in the rediscovery the Divine and a new search for God has gone beyond the bounds of the philosophy of religion or Christianity in particular. There has occurred an increase and unprecedented awareness of the spiritual dimension of human existence, considered as not essential for too long.

In this article we put forward the thesis that anatheism can be seen as an incentive for Christianity to rediscover the importance of discipleship. The first part of this article presents Kearney's understanding of anatheism. The second part shows how great certainty in the faith and the understanding of religious truths becomes a concept that repulses the modern man and prevents him from being heard and understood in his doubts and search for meaning. The third part presents the path of discipleship inspired by Jesus Christ as response to the search of the today's man.

2. Anatheism – returning to God after God

The last century has in many aspects shaken the foundations of Western societies, more or less rooted in Christianity. We witnessed an apparent departure of an old almighty God, supported with dogmatic certainties and strong metaphysics, typical for a militant theism, which has been gradually overcome by atheism and secularism. In his *A Secular Age* (2007, 26–29), Charles Taylor on numerous occasions refers to, and at the same time disagrees with, a »subtraction narrative«, which is the story that human progress in any culture involves the liberation from religion. In Taylor's reflection, this narrative only partially explains, modernity's rejection of religion as something normal and part of human progress. It is true that religion in the 21st century does not occupy the same place as it did in the 15th century.

This, however, does not mean that religion has completely left modernity; what has left are certain traditional forms and expressions of religion, but not religion itself. Modernity challenges religion to find new ways of expression within a pluralistic society and a disenchanted universe, in which a simple appeal to the divine and transcendence cannot be taken for granted. Such argumentation can lead to the recovery of traditional religious resources, and new ways of bringing to light

the deepest spiritual concerns of human existence. In short, the secularization process opens new opportunities for religious/spiritual interest.¹

When facing the challenge of the presence/absence of God in modernity, Richard Kearney does not take an un-doubtful position, but tackles the challenge with the question borrowed from his teacher Paul Ricoeur: »What are the particular perspectives that serve as filters for your way of sensing the world, understanding society, interpreting yourself and others?« (2016, 240) Our cultural, intellectual, as well as theological background always marks our reading and understanding of God.

As an answer to the presence/absence of God, one should say that the departure of God refers us to a particular understanding of God, influenced by our perspective traditions, cultures, and theology. After the departure, however, we face a new openness and refreshed interest in the sacred with its spiritual and religious spheres, which might lead us towards a genuine renewal and a more mature faith.

Within this broad framework, Richard Kearney places his concept of atheism and his inquiry into our understanding of God. For Kearney, God is not a »thing«, which we can describe phenomenologically; God is a call, cry, summons that invites us to different interpretation by asking us: »Who do you say that I am?« (241)

Anatheism is an attempt to reimagine God in our time. The prefix ana- means »up in space or time, back again, anew«, which is much more than a simple »after«. Referring to the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, Kearney describes ana- in terms of an epiphany or »as a retrieval of past experience that moves forward, proffering new life to memory, giving a future to the past« (6). The prefix ana- contains the idea of retrieving, revisiting, reiterating, or repeating a past experience, not in a nostalgic way as a backward repetition of a remote past, but as a repetition forward or coming back afterwards in order to move forward again.

The anatheistic retrieval of the old as the new can be summarized in the double meaning of a in the prefix ana-: »ab« (away from God) and »ad« (toward God). Kearney talks about the return of the lost one – the lost God, which is returning as a more real presence, or a much more powerful and moving presence because of its return through absence. (7) »The ana- of atheism makes sure that that God who has already come is always still to come.« (18)

In other words, Kearney's »returning to God after God« is a hermeneutical retrieval of sacred things from the past, which still bear a radical remainder and unrealized potentiality to be more fully realized in the future. There is a hermeneutical circle between our past and our future; the happening in the future (after) is based on our interpretation of the past (before). Quoting Ricoeur, Kearney summarizes these hermeneutical retrievals in the following way: »We must smash the idols so that symbols can speak anew.« (84)

When dealing with religion, we need to answer anew the existential questions: Who am I? Who do you say I [God] am? In Julia Kristeva's »post-Christian human-

¹ For the possibility of a new religious notion of intersubjectivity with an ethical and educational relevance of Dewey's philosophy of religion and the related pragmatic theology see Škof (2015, 99–108).

ism«, we deal with a puzzling question for European culture, which is undergoing an unprecedented existential crisis regarding the definition of what it means to be human (2013, 3). The above-mentioned questions make part of a hermeneutical arc which leads from existential prefiguration to textual configuration back to existential configuration, and implicitly to the reader's appropriation of the text in his or her life. This travel from the author through the text to the reader opens the door to the possibility of transfiguration and to the power to be anew. (Kearney 2016, 13)

Such transfiguration is based on a notion of divine power, which should not be understood in terms of a sovereign and absolute *potestas*, which is indivisible, outside of movement, time and desire; Kearney states that the divine power should be understood as God's invitation to humans to love and to do justice, which needs to be realized and embodied in time and space. Divine power – Nicolas of Cusa describes it as divine *posse* – is the power to be able to be, the power to be all that one is capable of becoming, namely love. (250) This *divine posse* needs to find its place in modernity, which is in many aspects a real narrowing of mind and spirit. Taylor calls this as a »great unlearning« of certain practices and teachings guided by wisdom, an evacuation of extremely rich spiritual traditions. (85)

In his book *Anatheism*, Kearney analyzes three paths where the re-imagining of the sacred can take place: the philosophical, the poetic, and the religious path. There might be a sacred person, time, and place; they are sacred because there is something set apart, strange and ineffable in them. The Latin *sacer* has the same root as *secretus*, or *mysterion* in Greek, meaning »blindfolded«. Sacred is something that surprises us; it is not constructed by us in advance; it involves a deep sense that there is something »more«, uncanny, transcendent, impossible for us to imagine until we reimagine it anew, which is possible through a leap of faith. »The sacred is the realization that there is something there that is more than ›me‹ – or more than ›us‹, understood as an immanent consensus of ›we‹.« (16)

Kearney with his anatheism claims that the sacred can be experienced in and through the secular. In his words, anatheism is an attempt to sacralize the secular and secularize the sacred; it is reimagining the sacred after the secular and through the secular. (17) On the same page Kearney describes our time in terms of atheism or theism, or the time of farewell to the old God of metaphysical power, the God we possessed, the omni-God of sovereignty and theodicy, which Nietzsche, Freud and Marx proclaimed dead. This farewell opens the door to a God that is coming back again. Or following Kristeva's reflection, the journey of Western philosophy passing through Marxism, Freudianism, linguistics, structuralism, and psychoanalysis, came to the point of a new interrogation on what it means to be human, and poses the most serious question, the one concerning God. (99)

When talking about the return of epiphany, Kearney does not talk in the singular, but in plural, i.e., epiphanies of the everyday (Manoussakis 2006, 3). These epiphanies invite us to experience the ultimate in the mundane, simple, familiar,

insignificant, and the most quotidian. In other words, Kearney invites us to rediscover ourselves again face-to-face with the infinite in Creation, which can take place only here and now.

From here Kearney deduces our highest human vocation, which is to revisit the »inscape« of the sacred in every passing particular, or to re-create the sacral in the carnal. This is a refiguring of first creation in second creation, or re-creation of the sacral in the carnal. Kearney's anatheism includes both atheism and theism, not as the third element in Hegelian dialectic, but as a moment that precontains the dichotomy of atheism and theism, both before the creation of this dichotomy as well as after. Therefore, anatheism is not a negation of the negation, or a return as a synthesis of two elements of dichotomy, following Hegel's dialectic.

There is no such certainty in Kearney's reflection on anatheism; the moment of ana- is a risk, a wager, or a drama that can go either way. There are two a's in ana-. The first a is the »a« of a-theism, and the second »a« is the »not of the not«, or the negation of the negation, which might be understood also as a reopening to something new. However, this re-opening of ana- is not the next step of a linear progress or optimism, grounded in a new synthesis of the previous elements. The same opening can bring us back to the beginning or the time before the division between atheism and theism. Kearney, referring to Kierkegaard, talks about the time or place of the originary disposition of openness toward the radical Other. In this disposition one is called to repeat his act of faith (a leap of faith), as they did in the past, in order to find something in the future that has been lost. At this point Kearney talks about a dynamic that goes beyond chronological time or the succession of moments in linear fashion; it is a kairological time, or a time out of time where eternity crosses the instant. This time, however, does not deny historical time or the finite. Anatheism coincides and engages with our secular humanist culture, a concrete historical situation culturally, socially, and intellectually; it includes the modern announcements of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud; the atheistic principles of the Enlightenment and French Revolution; the critique of religion; modern anxiety in the face of what Weber calls the »disenchantment« of the world, the desacralizing of society, the abandonment of God, and the loss of faith. (2016, 8–9)

Here, we can easily add the struggle of post-communist countries, burdened by their past experiences, in their search for new identity, creativity and hope. All this together presents in Kearney's reflection on anatheism the possibility of a radical opening to someone or something that was lost and forgotten by Western metaphysics and needs to be recalled again. From the question of what comes after the disappearance of God, Kearney moves to a more existential question: how might any contemporary individual encounter this in one's concrete, lived and personal experience, as opposed to impersonal. As an answer to this question, Kearney proposes examples or testimonies of the anatheist moment, when concrete individuals in their abandonment, disillusion and disorientation turned around and opened themselves to a new possibility of turning hostility into hospitality.

To sum up, Kearney's atheism can be in many aspects compared to Taylor's »transcendent humanism«, based on the distinction between transcendent/immanent (2007, 13–15). Every form of humanism, which claims that human fulfillment and flourishing can be achieved exclusively and immanently within human nature, i.e., without any opening to the transcendental, calls for a critical reexamination. Both Taylor and Kearney call for the hermeneutic recovery of religious sources, which will bring religious and spiritual fullness as well as human flourishing on a deeper level. Following this trajectory, Taylor in *A Secular Age* talks about the need to »believe again« and of »incarnation«; our prayer should lead us to a certain kind of life, not just in theory but in a way of being that makes difference. (144; 278)

3. The problem of certainty

It is impossible to live without any certainty. Every person uses basic certainty in all areas of life, because it gives him the security and the power to face the most diverse challenges of life. At the same time, certainty can also be a major obstacle which does not allow the person to accept the fact that in his life, there is always an insecurity that reflects the complexity of (his) life. It is precisely the tension between certainty and uncertainty that gives human beings the space for constant searching and questioning. This also applies to the field of faith and religion, living by faith, the view of God, himself, and the world. It is difficult to accept the fact that uncertainty is always present in the certainty of faith, because it is only then that faith is alive and enables man to be prepared for the surprises that God always prepares for each person. However, man prefers certainty, light, and spiritual consolation, even if it costs him distancing himself from God.

The gospels reveal that Jesus was in constant tension with those who were completely sure in their faith, in life after the law, about their righteousness, the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and the expected Messiah. These were, in particular, the great priests and religious dignitaries who occupied the chair of Moses, especially the scribes and the Pharisees who were the bearers of moral and intellectual authority. This certainty hardened their hearts (Lk 16:15) so that they put heavy and unbearable burdens on the people's shoulders (Mt 23:4) and became inconsolable with those who, for various reasons, could not live by their order. This certainty blinded their eyes and blocked their ears so that they could not recognize the presence of the expected Messiah in Jesus. (Matjaž 2010, 1016–1020) They could not accept the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, the true God. They were greatly disturbed by the fact that he did not respect their way of understanding the Sabbath, that he kept company with the unclean, with criminals, and even gave them the example of faith. (Lk 7:34; 18:14; Mt 21:31)

Just like the Pharisees and dignitaries, Christians who are completely certain in their faith are often incapable of understanding people who are not so sure in their faith as they are, especially non-believers. The certainty in faith and religious

truth often makes it impossible for them to be compassionate, understanding, or even tolerant of those who have doubts or are even non-believers who seek and wonder, who are not quite satisfied with the »catechism« answers. For this reason, they can become imaginative and turn into a »petty elite« who »subconsciously or knowingly exclude others from their comfortable, believable world. This is a tiny, bitter, unbridled, and unfaithful religiousness against which Jesus spoke: spiritual blindness.« (Martin 2013, 33) This spiritual blindness is very explicitly illustrated by the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son who in no way could enter the father's joy upon the return of his son (Lk 15:25-32).

These completely certain Christians are also very poor religious educators for their children. This is illustrated by the results of H. Sundéen's extensive psychological research on the success of various types of believing parents in communicating the faith to their own children as stated by Halik (2012, 30). »Too sure« parents have very little success because they discourage their children with their authoritarianism. The same is true of »too uncertain« parents because their faith is too ambiguous and unconvincing. The best results are achieved by the parents who are »somewhat uncertain« or not »too certain« because they allow their children to put critical questions and raise them primarily by personal example.

The Christians who are not aware of the fragility of their faith and the true nature of religious truths can fall into the temptation of ruinous authority on their spiritual path. When they come to know the truth of God and what is good for all people, they are persuaded by the tempter that they will want to love God and neighbor each one for the glory of God and for the good of the world. In every way, they would endure the world of higher justice and bring people into the kingdom of God, even forcefully, if necessary. (Solovjov 2000, 55)

This temptation can only be resisted by those who keep in mind that they must constantly grow in faith, to take the path of permanent »discipleship« so that they can live in the spirit of the gospel. This is why Pope Francis encourages Christians to remain a disciple throughout whole life: »This message has to be shared humbly as a testimony on the part of one who is always willing to learn, in the awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp.« (EG, par. 128)

Where permanent discipleship is not lived, there is always a danger that people will be locked in their camp where everything is clear to them. Self-confident believers as well as confident atheists face this danger. Neither of them can understand the other who is in the opposite camp. Both of them are at risk of falling into fundamentalism and dangerous fanaticism. Halik (2012, 86) aptly draws attention to the saying:

»Faith without critical questions would turn into a tedious and non-life ideology, infantile bigotry, or in fundamentalism and dangerous fanaticism. But the very rationality without spiritual and ethical impulses emanating from the world of religion would be similarly unilateral and dangerous; it could turn into cynical pragmatism or a hardened skepticism.«

4. The importance of discipleship

Jesus often uses verbs that invite –learn, listen, watch, realize –because this is fundamental to the life of each of his disciples. Even more, this was also fundamentally true to Himself, to know His Father and His ways. He was not satisfied with the seeming, the self-evident. He was aware that what he sees and hears is not only what he »sees at first sight«. There is much more behind that. On the path of discovering God, which was revealed to him by the Old Testament, whose disciple he was, his family and the community he belonged to, he withdrew into solitude – just like in the time of public action – to stop and start to watch and listen to all things and events more deeply, he allowed himself to be instructed in the mystery of God, in which he believed with all his people. (Larrañaga 1999, 8–19)

Jesus was not only true God, but also true man. As a truly human, he had to gradually discover who God is and who he was in relation to Him (this is indicated by Luke's (2:39-52) report of Jesus' growing up). His greatest temptation was to give up his human limitations. However, he remained faithful to being true man to the end, even at the time of rejection, misunderstanding, humiliation, false condemnation, suffering, and death on the cross, and after the resurrection as glorified man. Why did he remain faithful? Certainly, because he allowed himself to be taught in the power of the Holy Spirit by the Father who revealed to him how truly, infinitely, and freely he is being loved, that only the Father's love is real and eternal. Because of this profound experience, he could speak of the Father so clearly and revealed His true face and concrete love and compassion. All of his parables reveal to us particularly clearly how he was able to see the Father everywhere at work (Jn 5:19), and how His everyday things and human tasks became the sign of the Father's care for man, and the presence and growth of the Kingdom of God among us.

In the Holy Spirit, who led him in a special way from his baptism onwards, he was able to cooperate responsibly with the Father and live the joy of his sonship, even when He was left alone and remained alone with Him. This is why, at the last supper, he was able to demonstrate explicitly that he came to the world to serve people, as his Father serves every man so that everyone can recognize that he is his beloved son, and that eternal life and holiness lie precisely in the acceptance of this serving love, and that everyone can live in and according to that Love. It is a constant and excellent incentive for Christians to remain faithful to his spirit of service as well as to look bravely for God today with modern man, as promoted by atheism.

The importance of accepting Jesus' attitude that indicates that, as a teacher, he was all times also the disciple of his Father, and his ability to learn, watch, and listen in his way, was confirmed by some of the spiritual teachers in the history of Christianity. Let us highlight two of those who are among the best known. By following Jesus' example, St. Francis of Assisi was able to sing the hymn of creation at the end of his life from the whole of his heart and with all the power in him. He finally realized that everything in this creation was his brother or sister. (LS, par. 1;

11–12) It all comes from the same Father, the creator of heaven and earth. All of us are connected by brotherly/sisterly relations. All are a gift of God for us and everyone is God's gift for others. We cannot live a true relationship with God, if, at the same time, we do not accept responsibility to everything as the responsibility to our brothers and sisters and begin to live the mutual brotherly/sisterly love.

The second spiritual teacher exhibiting this attitude is St. Ignatius of Loyola. At the end of the spiritual exercises lasting four weeks, he suggests to those who perform them to contemplate in order to attain the love or enter into it (SEEL, par. 230–237). He invites the person who is doing the exercises to ask for the intimate knowledge of so many good things received so that he can love God with all and serve him in his service to all (par. 233). He invites him also to think how God strives and works for him »in all things created on the earth, that is, he acts as one who performs hard work, both in the heavens, in the elements, in the plants, fruits, herds, etc. He gives them, and preserves them, gives them to live and feel, etc.« (par. 236) These exercises reveal how St. Ignatius of Loyola looked at all of creation like Jesus Christ, and that he was instructed by Him about the Trinity, His active presence, and His immense, free, giving, and serving love. For this reason, he was able to find God in all things and to be his active interlocutor and co-worker everywhere. With this final exercise, however, he wanted to help all those who did these exercises to be able to live and work in the Spirit of Jesus Christ and, in His way, to love one another as he loves us.

Christians, especially theologians, are at risk of becoming only teachers without, at the same time, being aware that they cannot be fully satisfied if they do not continue to be disciples of Jesus Christ and his Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, and, of course, including the Church and her teaching. They are also supposed to let Him teach them in everyday things, animals, plants, events, and people who are sent by life to him, even those who are in doubt, confusion, disbelief, and even fighting atheists.

Therefore, Jesus invites his disciples to become like children (Mk 10:13-15). What is the fundamental characteristic of the child? The child can be amazed. He asks again and again. He listens to, watches with all his being, and penetrates into the depths of everything that exists. Everything is secret to him. It only goes without saying that he is aware that he does not yet know everything, that everything he has already understood is not everything, but that there is a lot more for all of them. He is happy to accept the fact that he is a disciple; he is learning to imitate others, especially his parents. This attitude of discipleship allows him to become what he longs at the depth of his soul, even though he does not know exactly what that is. (Matjaž 2002, 184)

The Bible reveals to us that man's deepest desire is to become that what he is according to creation: the image and likeness of God. Therefore, his deepest desire² is to be like the Father, to become merciful as He is, to serve Him as He is.

² »His deepest desire« is indicated by the verb form of the root 'wh, which denotes an aspiration for God as the deepest human ontological need – which is compared to a fundamental need for water. The root

(Szamocki 2012, 59–62) Therefore, whoever is always ready to be taught, to learn, to accept the attitude of discipleship, to nurture the child in his core, even when sent to teach others, he can actively and productively communicate what he has gained and grows in all dimensions of his life. Together with others, he is ready to step on the way of searching and questioning, along the path of Zaccheus (Lk 19,1-9). He is capable of seeing the continued learning as something very positive, because he is aware that God is always a completely different God as he already knows, that it is an inconceivable mystery that goes beyond all human understanding and established mental structures. On this path of learning, the stimulus of atheism is also a wonderful opportunity for a deeper discovery of God.

In his book *Close to the Distant Ones*, Tomas Halik refers to the saying of the philosopher Eric Voegelin, who said, »The biggest problem of today's Christians is not that they do not know the correct answers, but that they have forgotten the questions that were asked and their answers.« (2012, 23) The answers without questions asked by concrete people in concrete time and space are very abstract. They are like trees without roots, as non-believers would think of many Christian truths. We can come to the living truth, living trees – with their roots – spoken by Jesus in the parable of the Kingdom of God as a tree in which the birds nest the birds of heaven (Luke 13:19), in a living »dialogue« between the questions and answers. »The answers are in temptation«, as Halik explained (23), »to complete the process of our search, as the problem of the discussion was the problem – but the problem has already been solved. However, with the new question, the depth of the mystery is again opening up to dissolve.« For this reason, we must live the way of searching and questioning, the path of discipleship.

As the Apostle Paul became all things to all people (1 Cor 9:22), Christians are also called to become all things to them so that they can become seekers with the one who seeks and the one who questions with the people who question. In this way, they will fully be able to enable the others who are, in one way or another, away from God to discover His proximity. At the same time, this proximity denotes distance, because God is immanent and transcendent at the same time. There are ever more Christians who are convinced and claim that they have all the important answers. They offer ultimate answers, which are often cheap. Therefore, some Christians like Halik consciously choose to become a doubter with the doubters and a seeker with the seekers. God Himself then makes sure that their many religious certainties are undermined, but at the same time He gives them valuable gifts as Halik (2012, 24) testifies:

»Just in that ›hollow‹, at the moment of crushing and undermining certainty, it is precisely through that ›hole in the roof‹, precisely in that movement of always new questions and doubts, that He revealed His face to me as never before. I understood that ›meeting with God‹, conversion, the faithful

indicates an existential need, which forces a human being into a »dialogue« with various objects (for preservation), fellow human beings (for reproduction) and, in the prophetic literature, even with God. (Skralovnik 2017, 7; 2016, 187)

agreement with the way in which God reveals Himself and with the way how the Church demonstrates this disclosure, is not the end of the path. Faith is ›tracking‹; it has the nature of a path that never ends in this life.«

5. Conclusion

Kearney's thinking about atheism is a holistic view of how to overcome the limitations of a modern man's secularized thinking. Atheism is the opening of our past, tradition, and religious teachings to new dimensions. This enables us to go deeper into the depths of creation and the beauty of our existence. Atheism confronts us with the existential question of the beauty or poverty of our existence. On one hand, it can be deeply personal and relational, and on the other hand, it is immersed in a certain immanent, impersonal, and time-dependent immanence. For believers as well as for non-believers, it is the challenge of where and in what way we are looking for the fullness of life. For Christians, the challenge of atheism is even greater, because it invites us to discover and enter into the mystery of God's and human existence more fully. It refuses to be embraced by the rational structures. That is why atheism can also be an encouragement for Christians to walk on the path of discipleship more intensively, because only in this way can they live the life of Jesus Christ. When Christians are able to see God in God's way as a Father who is full of love and mercy for every human being, observe his loving and serving presence in all things and people, and when they become like him in the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, they will become more conscious and will begin to strive to build fraternity and sisterhood among all people, the ethics of responsibility and solidarity towards every person and all creation, especially as encouraged by Pope Francis in his *Laudato si'* encyclical exhortation (par. 216–227).

Abbreviations

EG – Francis. 2013. *Evangelii Gaudium*.

LS – Francis. 2015. *Laudato si'*.

SEEL – 1991. Ignatius od Loyola. *Spiritual Exercises* (1548).

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