

SAGGIO

di Emilio Di Somma

L'ATHEISM AS A RIVAL FAITH TO MONOTHEISM
RICHARD NIEBUHR AND THE PROBLEM OF "NON-MONOTHEISTIC" FAITH

Contemporary academic arguments still have the tendency to define the debate between religion and secularity as a dualism between two radically different anthropological or ontological postures toward reality. We can find an example of this approach in Charles Taylor's work *A Secular Age*,¹ where the debate between religion and secularity is presented as a conflict between *belief* and *unbelief*, or *transcendence* against *immanence*. We can also see a similar presentation of the problem in Fukuyama's *The End of History*, where religion is presented as a more primitive, overcome, stage of humanity, that function as a step in something like a *Universal History* of humanity in the direction of liberal democracies.²

Alternatively, we can see something akin Vattimo's hermenutic interpretation, like *La Fine della Modernità* or *Credere di Credere*, where we can see an interpretation of religion as the affirmation of metaphysics, which is violent in nature. Even in the case in which we should *recover* religion, like Vattimo affirms in *Credere di Credere*³, this *recovery* is, first, characterized by an inherent *weakness*, in the sense that this recovered religion should be a *weak* religion and, secondly, that the paradigm still works through a dichotomy of "secular/religious", or "atheist/religious".

If we go to examine recent scholarly works, we see that, even though the *naïve* belief toward *secularism* and *secularization* seems to be decreasing, to the point that many authors are talking about *post-secular* age.⁴ The problem is that this line of reasoning still

¹ Taylor C., *A Secular Age*, The Belknap of Harvard University Press, London, 2007, pp. 7-10 e pp. 352-356.

² Fukuyama, Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Penguin, London, 1992, 48.

³ Vattimo G., *Credere di Credere*, Garzanti, 1998, pp. 4-8

⁴ For example, Peter Berger, in a lecture he gave at the beginning of the 2016, at the University of Massachussets, clearly admitted that the paradigm of *secularization* had failed and that we are seeing today a return of religion.

attempts to develop a dichotomy between religion and its opposition, lacking a consistent, fundamental, anthropological interpretation of the cultural events he aims to analyze.

Atheism, as a category to define social/political messages or groups, plays a big part in this game of polarities. We define contemporary atheism according to the Greek logic of language, retained also in Italian language, in which the *a* possesses a privative meaning. Atheism, then, would mean, literally, *without god(s)*. Atheism, in this sense, would locate himself in the *immanentist* side of the game of polarities; its rejection of any kind of god would imply a strong adhesion to secularity and the negation of any, allegedly, *transcendent/divine* source of value.

However, I am of the opinion that this demarcation of the debate is, quite literally, a game of polarities; it is a *game* in the truest sense of the word, an activity meant for recreation, but with a scarce practical application. I am of this opinion, because I believe that such polarity is unhelpful to understand what is going on, at an anthropological and ontological level, when we discuss of phenomenon like atheism, secularism or religion. Instead, I am of the opinion that phenomena like atheism or religion, should be investigated through the lenses of anthropology and theology. For example, what are the implication of atheism on (and from) cultural values? What does it tell us of a society a phenomenon like atheism? Does an atheist person rely on different anthropological features than a religious person?

“FAITH” AS THE CORE FEATURE OF SOCIAL LIFE: RICHARD NIEBUHR

To investigate these questions I turn now to the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, who has developed very useful insights on these topics in his own theological. In his work *Radical Monotheism and Western Civilization*, Niebuhr proposes an interesting

argument. A first important statement opens the book: *the essence of the problems of contemporary civilization is not constituted by the problem of religion; instead, the main core of these problems is "faith"*.⁵ According to Niebuhr:

*We express our ultimate faith in all our social institutions and decisions, not in religion only. Furthermore, our whole culture, I believe, is deeply involved in a conflict of faiths that is to be distinguished from the collisions between religions and between religion and irreligion. In the ensuing lectures I shall try to analyze this conflict as one between radical monotheism and the other forms of human faith, polytheism and henotheism, in their modern, non-mythological guise.*⁶

Faith, as a concept that indicates personal commitment, adhesion, belief or trust, is related strongly to an idea of order, may it be political or religious. When we speak of faith, we speak of an adhesion to an idea of order that is political, moral and even ontological. Niebuhr addresses the concept in different works, and always presents the problem of faith in a broader context than the religious one. For example, in *Faith on Earth*, he noticed how the concept of faith, despite being closely related, in our present society, to religious content such as God, church and creed, is, in reality, used in a much broader communicative context. Politicians not only link their discourses to a divine being, but also openly speak of *keeping faith* with those who have died in wars, or to have *faith in democracy*.⁷ From this premise, Niebuhr implies that the problem of faith in itself is much more complex than the current discourse admits.

Is not the word faith so highly equivocal or even indeterminate in meaning that it cannot be significantly used in such various connections in the course of one

⁵ R. H. Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Civilization*, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1960, p. 1.

⁶ Ibid. p. 1.

⁷ R. H. Niebuhr, *Faith on Earth, an Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith*, Yale University Press, 1989, p. 1.

conversation? Now it means belief in a doctrine; now the acceptance of intuited or self-evident truths... Do not these meanings vary so greatly that it is an illusion to think of all these faiths as having anything in common that can be a fit subject of inquiry? It may be so... But it may also be that faith points to a complex structure of which now this, now that, element is focused in the attention while the remainder of the structure is implied.⁸

Faith is described as a multi-faceted structure. It is a common feature of human life that reveals only specific parts of itself according to the specific context in which it appears, while implying the whole structure. Reinhold Niebuhr, Richard's brother, was very receptive to the concept of faith presented in such terms. In *Faith and Politics*, Reinhold describes how faith is related to a realm of meaning, more than to the figure of a God. In this sense, Marx, Freud and Nietzsche, in declaring the death of God, at the same time tried to project alternative *structures of meaning*. Marx was the most successful, as he was able to develop an apocalyptic materialistic vision in which a secular eschatology is unfolded through history until the final redemption, in which the working class will topple the wealthy capitalist class from its position of power.⁹ In this sense then, the religious myths of creation, although disproved by science, are still valid in the inherent and mysterious need for a meaning that is expressed in them. Such need for a meaning is still present in secular ideologies as well. The Darwinian controversy during the nineteenth century is, for Reinhold Niebuhr, a clear example of this.¹⁰

In *Radical Monotheism*, H.R. Niebuhr offers us an analysis of the forms faith can take in our social relations. He uses the word *henotheism* to define a form of faith in which a definite social structure, political or religious in nature, becomes the object of trust and loyalty. Niebuhr describes henotheism as capable of subverting even officially

⁸ Ibid. p. 4.

⁹ R. Niebuhr, *Faith and Politics*, George Braziller Inc, New York, 1968, pp. 3-6. However, speaking from a contemporary point of view, it is possible for us to say the same about economic neo-liberalism and capitalism. The historical context did make difficult for Reinhold Niebuhr to push his thought so far but, at the same time, it could be said that, would have he used more his brother's work, he would have been able to notice the inherent weaknesses of western culture at that time. Further evidence of this could be found, I believe, in how Reinhold Niebuhr addresses inequalities of privileges and power in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.

monotheistic institutions such as the churches¹¹ to uphold its own specific set of values. For this reason, speaking from a theological view that is clearly alert to such danger, he defines henotheism as the most dangerous rival of monotheism. Faith, as a concept, is described, instead, as

*...the attitude and action of confidence in, and fidelity to, certain realities as the sources of value and the objects of loyalty. This personal attitude or action is ambivalent; it involves reference to the value that attaches to the self and to the value toward which the self is directed. On the one hand, it is trust in that which gives value to the self; on the other hand, it is loyalty to what the self values.*¹²

Following H.R. Niebuhr's approach, it is possible to define things such as friendship, nationalism, or the belief in a particular structure of society as forms of faith, despite being extremely different from the contemporary standard definition of the term. We can conceive faith as something like a value-centered attitude, or the commitment to a cause. The truthfulness of this definition of faith is shown when we examine severe moments of *crisis of faith*, such moments reveal the human necessity to *have faith* into something. This basic attitude of faith represents a need for a center of value that, in return, gives value to our lives. For example, we can examine what happens to a society when it meets a perceived failure. It can be the betrayal of or from the gods, a treason, the

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 6-10. In the same way, Reinhold Niebuhr states that, despite the rejection of religious myths, modern secularism still has some limits in its discourse because of the inherent mythical nature of some concepts, which makes them impossible to explicate through a naturalistic/empirical language. Things like values, the concept of creation, the unity and meaningfulness of the world are inherently mythical problems. Secular ideologies have to choose between a total discard of them or a translation of these myths in an acceptable language that, however, in the end does not negate the mythical nature of these problems; in this sense, then, we obtain rationalized myths (ibid. pp. 15-23).

¹¹ Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Civilization*, pp. 1-2.

¹² Ibid. p. 8. It is interesting to notice how Niebuhr presents, at the same time, both a similarity and a difference of assumptions with Charles Taylor. Niebuhr defines faith, like Taylor, as a form of connection to our ultimate values. However, unlike Taylor, we can see firstly how the relation of faith, for Niebuhr, has a non-exclusive field of application. Secondly, how this attitude is a form of relation that involves not only our evaluation of what is good; but also how the good in itself is reflected upon our self, how the self is in a relation with the evaluated good that works both ways.

failure of an atheistic attempt to create an existentialism of self-liberation, the failure of a political ideology. All these individual/social events can easily fit the definition of *crisis of faith*.¹³ In the moment of crisis, the human being faces a loss of meaning that does not involve only the things he believes in, but invest his whole world and existence.

Through these reflections on the nature of faith, Niebuhr re-defines the concept of monotheism, intended as the loyalty and commitment to one specific *source of value*, a One-beyond from which we derive our meaningfulness and values. Such monotheism is in constant conflict with alternative forms of faith, namely either a pluralism of sources of values, defined as polytheism, or a social faith with a specific social object, defined as henotheism. Niebuhr also re-defines the concept of atheism, defined as an alternative form of faith that aims specifically to the negation of the monotheist One-Beyond.¹⁴ On this note, H.R. Niebuhr says that something like true atheism, a radical negation of any source of value, would be a kind of psychological solipsism all centered on the act of negation of any value, without any positive, constructive content. In this sense, a radical form of atheism would be irreconcilable with human life. In fact, Niebuhr affirms that *to deny the reality of a supernatural being called God is one thing; to live without confidence in some center of value and without loyalty to a cause is another*.¹⁵ Paradoxically, the atheist negation of the monotheist one-beyond does not represent an escape from the phenomenon of faith, but merely the replacement of a specific source of value with alternative sources of value.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 9-16. Niebuhr uses here, as a primary reference, Tolstoy's work *Confession*. This theme, however, is extremely common in the whole of the Russian literature; another clear example would be Dostoevsky's work, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 17-18.

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 18-19; in the same way, Reinhold Niebuhr, in *The Nature and Destiny of Man (Vol 1, Nisbet and co.. ltd, London, 1941)* in the first chapter, *Man as a Problem to Himself*, tells us how all modern ideologies have to rest on some meaningful general assumption, a "naïve faith", to give consistency to their claims.

For example: physiocratic capitalism had to rest on the assumption that nature's pre-established harmonies would stop humans from destroying themselves. While every philosophy of history has to rely on an idea of progress, in which either by a force immanent in nature itself, or by the gradual extension of rationality, or by the elimination of specific sources of evil... modern man expects to move toward some kind of perfect society (ibid. pp. 20-26).

Regarding the status of the different forms of faith, Niebuhr believes that henotheism and polytheism were the common kind of faith present in primitive and ancient societies. These created an alternation between struggles and accommodations that shaped the different civilizations. However, according to him, the transition to a Christian society, in the West, did not lead necessarily to the triumph of monotheism and the disappearance of the other two forms of faith. In this sense, examples of henotheism and polytheism are still present in the modern world; examples of henotheism can be the various nationalisms (even the totalitarian nationalisms like Nazism and Fascism), Communism, or Progressivism.¹⁶ In this sense, atheism is a necessary cultural development of western modernity to foster alternative forms of faith that openly oppose *radical monotheism*. However, according to Niebuhr, in modernity, with the dissolution of communal faiths we see an increased importance given to the self. The modern self is directed toward a plurality of centers of values, which he describes as a plurality of gods, a form of polytheism. According to Niebuhr, modern polytheism is, in our contemporary society, a state of the fractured self that is turned toward a plurality of values, while at the same time being unable to settle definitively with a specific one.¹⁷

Niebuhr defines true monotheism as *radical monotheism*. It is an act of belief and loyalty directed toward a single center of value. In the case of Christianity, the One God. Interestingly enough, Niebuhr considers radical monotheism to have always been the loser in the history of western civilization.¹⁸ The actual relation that a human being, or

¹⁶ This, however, can create another methodological problem that Niebuhr does not address deeply enough: how is it possible to distinguish clearly about the different kinds of faith? In addition, is it correct to describe the shifts in the concept and nature of faiths throughout history only as a struggle between these different faiths?

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 18-26. As an Example, Niebuhr presents existentialism as a form of modern polytheism.

¹⁸ This has, of course, extremely important consequences on how a Christian should behave toward a political structure. In fact in, *Theology, History and Culture*, in the essay *Religion and the Democratic Tradition* Niebuhr addresses the problem of the relation between Christianity and Democracy, and in general, with state power.

Essentially, the form of government is totally indifferent regarding the will of God. To act according to the law of God is something that should be done regardless of the form of government in which we are. In addition, if we, to follow the will of God, are to go against the laws of the state than we have to accept any kind of punishment and bear responsibility for our actions, as even the government of the state, as cruel it may be, is in any case an event of the will of God. Is there, however, a case in which a Christian should instead oppose openly the government? Niebuhr assumes that, when the government becomes a religion, namely, when happens what Niebuhr describe as:

society, develops with its idea of the good or its idea of the world is a relevant topic for religious and secular claims alike. It is fruitful to understand the characteristics that Niebuhr attributes to this relation of faith. I consider particularly important the following statement.

*Faith, as human confidence in a center and conserver of value, and as human loyalty to a cause, seems to manifest itself almost as directly in politics, science and other cultural activities as it does in religion.*¹⁹

To support this statement, Niebuhr analyses how it is important for the life of modern nation-states to make continuous use of a language of loyalty in their communicative structures.²⁰ Loyalty has assumed, in our political language, more and more the feature of *fidelity* in a political cause. Fidelity, whether practiced in the church, profession or state, has always the same general form. It is always a set of mind, a habit of devotion to a cause, and a disciplining of actions in service to a cause. It is a specific attitude that, Niebuhr claims, is clearly distinguishable from other attitudes like fearful obedience or loving attachment. At the same time, its forms of betrayal are also clearly distinguishable from other, like defiant disobedience or hatred. Fidelity in the modern state is more than simple loyalty in the community itself. It presents itself to its citizens, in political communication and propaganda, as a society pledged to the promotion of a cause that transcends the society itself. It represents itself as a *community with a mission*,

The attempt of any individuals, or institutions, or whole peoples to think of themselves as powerful enough to rule without being overruled and as good enough to declare the moral law otherwise than as subjects of that law, is a great illusion which results in disaster for themselves as well as in the crucifixion of the innocent (Ibid. p. 149).

In this case then it is right and also a duty, for a Christian, to oppose openly the government or the society to reestablish God as the superior and almighty ruler of humankind, as well as the moral source for any kind of ethics. This, however, shows us how Niebuhr is looking at *radical monotheism* with a bias that leads him to consider Christianity as a privileged form of it.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 68.

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 69-73.

significant also for other nations and human societies, until it can encompass the whole world.²¹ Following this description, Niebuhr affirms.

Three things, then, seem important when we consider the question whether faith as fidelity is present in political as well as in religious actions and communities of the West. The first is that the nation-states base their existence on the loyalty of their citizens and not only on the latter's fear and desires for benefits. The second, that the nations as communities achieve their unity and justify their existence by pledging their loyalty to transcendent causes; and third, that the loyalty expected of citizens is the double loyalty extended to the nation's cause as well as to nation as cause.²²

The reference to transcendence is extremely important. Niebuhr is not referring specifically to some sort of metaphysical entity or idea of good. At the same time, Niebuhr's idea of the transcendent cannot be reduced to the terms of the dichotomy transcendent/immanent. Rather, he uses the term transcendence to mean *going beyond one-self*, in reference to a value that is considered of a higher order. In this sense, then, even secular ideologies can be transcendent, if they aim to achieve social structures that go beyond the simple sum of the individuals who compose it. Especially when this social structure is considered as being inherently good, because of some qualities that, despite not being fully transcendent are not very immanent either.²³ The statement that faith is an attitude inherent to human relations is essential. We are not simply talking about trust or consensus, but about a determinative, world-making, confidence, fidelity and loyalty.²⁴ Faith is a dynamic in which we are immersed in a web of relations with our source of value and with the other individuals who value or dis-value that source. This source may

²¹ Ibid. pp. 70.

²² Ibid. pp. 71-72.

²³ Even an ideology like capitalism that has the self-interest of the individual as its core-value, still aims to achieve a social structure that creates a system (the market) that cannot be reduced to the simple sum of the people composing it.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 72-73. For example, even the commitment to freedom, Richard Niebuhr says, is not simply a materialistic confidence in the people. It also implies the presence of the assurance that there is a kind of universal government of things, a sense of how things should go, on which both nations and individuals can depend on. Without faithfulness, Niebuhr says, to an ideal or cause of truth there could be no freedom at all.

be God, but it may be as well United States, or democracy or civilization. Through this source of value, we are also in a relation with the other individuals. The source of value becomes a common cause to which we assume our fellows will be loyal, and help us define as non-fellows those disloyal to it.²⁵ It helps shape also the kind of authority that represents the source of value we do consider important. We can notice how, for Niebuhr, the social/cultural struggle of Western civilization is not simply caused by conflicting ideas regarding the best way to achieve human flourishing. He describes such a struggle mainly as a conflict of *different dogmas*, of different commitments toward different ideas of good and different ideas of the world. Pluralism, then, is a state of persistent moral, political and ontological struggle.

ATHEISM AND RELIGION: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEM

At this point, I wish to integrate Niebuhr's theological analyses with anthropology, to attempt an analysis of this persistent ontological struggle. I turn here to Ernesto De Martino, Italian anthropologist and student of Croce, who, I believe, provided us with useful means to understand the problem at hand. According to De Martino, every social and cultural form is tied to a concept of reality.²⁶ It is not only a problem about perceptions and the relation that human beings have and establish with the world around them. The world itself acquires certain ontological categories in certain cultural context. It is not just an epistemic structure of individuals or communities; the world itself obtains certain ontological properties that influence *a priori* the epistemic structure of a society.

²⁵ C. D. Grant, *God the Center of Value; Value Theory in the Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr*, Texas Christian University Press, Fort Worth, 1984, p. 45.

²⁶ E. De Martino, *Il Mondo Magico: Prolegomeni ad una Storia del Magismo*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2007, 10-11. De Martino ties this problem to the understanding of the *reality* of magical powers in primitive cultures. According to De Martino, magical powers are *real* in these culture because they operate in a completely different ontology of the world. They operate in a different *reality*, a reality in which magical powers *work*.

Our experiences of the world can, then, be constituted a priori by our cultural interpretations, that can lead to empirical evidence that are firmly denied in a different cultural context. We face, according to De Martino, a problem of *culturally conditioned nature*.²⁷ Modernity as well is not able to escape this problem. The ontology of modernity has been established as a contradictory polemic against the reality of magical powers first and religion, later, a struggle that becomes particularly evident when we address naturalistic sciences and their reactions in front of claims of alleged magical powers or miracles. To address the problem of magical/religious powers from a posture different from total rejection would put again into question the historical and cultural pre-supposition that guarantee the modern cultural stability.²⁸ It can easily become a case of cultural pride, even arrogance. However, precisely this strong rejection reveals how the problem of the culturally conditioned nature is, *de facto*, inescapable. Not only the reality of magical powers has to be referred to their culture of origin, but also the modern rejection of such powers and the establishment of a different nature, a different *Weltanschauung*, has to be related to the same historical/cultural process. From De Martino, then, we obtain the insight that there is a fundamental anthropological constant at work in the history of human societies, in such a way that the problem of culturally conditioned nature is always present in all epochs and societies.

At the same time, precisely the analysis of the concrete historical drama of western civilization reveals, according to De Martino, a conflict unresolved that persists in the modern age. For De Martino, the principle of the autonomy of the individual is a core feature of western civilization and is what identifies and distinguish our civilization from all others. However, he traces the origin of this feature in the Greek ethics, particularly in Plato. With Christianity, it began that slow historical process that would lead us to the discovery of this autonomy that finds its culmination in the Kantian transcendental unity

²⁷ Ibid. 51-54.

²⁸ Ibid. 53.

of the conscience.²⁹ However, this absolute subject still is an historical product of a specific form of civility, which is not isolated from the general existential problem of the presence.

For De Martino, now that we have posed an autonomous individual in relation with an autonomous world, we have also reached the maximum amount of risk for the presence.³⁰ Precisely because the individual form is the result of a self-production, it includes within itself the possibility of failure, hence the maximum amount of risk of non-existence. The supreme risk, for the modern man, becomes the supreme abandonment of its autonomy whenever he faces contents and events that he is unable to assimilate and control.³¹

This acknowledgment leads De Martino to two main conclusions. First, that even the autonomy of the person, the individual self, as historical product, *does not represent any factual reality*.³² It is, as other cultural productions, a process of abstraction and categorization. Even the procedures through which we claim to be able to find this unified

²⁹ Ibid. 156-158. It is interesting, then, that for De Martino Christianity already represents its own concrete historical context, separated from the other ones. For example, mentioning again briefly Charles Taylor's narrative, in *A Secular* the pre-modern era is assimilated, by analogy, to any other magical civilization, a position that De Martino would criticize as anti-historical and disrespectful for both Christianity and the other civilizations. The reason being that, according to De Martino, with Greek philosophy, followed by Christian philosophy, we already see the first attempts to establish some boundaries between the self and the world. In the sense that the world starts to lose its autonomy of action in its processes of influences and interactions with the human self (Ibid. pp. 157-159).

As an example, De Martino describes the magic world as a state in which the world is really and very autonomous in its possibility to influence the individual self, or a community. The magical tragedy may happen in a totally spontaneous way; it does not require a reason to happen. The individual presence does not exist as a constituted reality, because it is constantly threatened by the risk of non-existence. The magical practices, the establishment of taboos, the creation of magical items are interpreted, by De Martino, as an attempt to constitute the autonomy of the presence in front of the constant risk of a threatening world.

Greek/Roman philosophy, and then Christianity, represent already a different stage in this interaction of risk/security. In the Greek/Roman tradition and in the Christian one the world already does not possess a total autonomy in its possibility of representing a risk. Something that Taylor himself admits, unknowingly. In his statement, that *to breach the social rules is to breach the rules of the cosmos* lies the difference between the pre-modern western traditions and other ones. If there is the need for a *breach of the rules* to be the victim of the consequences, then we are already in a stage in which the cultural context has created a *de jure* situation for the individual/communitarian presence. Any attempt to breach the *de jure* situation represents the creation of a risk, but it also means that without the breach, there can be no risks. Therefore, we already see a state of security that, for De Martino, did not exist in the magical world. In this sense, modernity can be interpreted as the attempt to further reinforce the *de jure* condition of security of the individual, to the point that there cannot be any kind of breaches that can threaten it.

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 158.

³¹ Ibid. pp. 158-161.

³² Ibid. p. 161.

autonomous conscience, by investigating its capabilities, categories, fields of operation, already imply the individual conscience in its totality.³³ Second, precisely because the individual guaranteed presence, with its ontological security, is a historical product, and not a neutral fact, the possibility of its weakening and disappearance is always implied in the historical process. De Martino affirms that events like mental illness or death of a loved one can be as destructive for the presence of a single individual as wars and great tragedies are for the presence of whole civilizations.³⁴ The modern man can still lose himself, as well as its entire civilization. The modern *Weltanschauung* is deeply at work and has to rely on a non-rational, a priori acceptance of its own, fundamental, ontological statements to be able to sustain itself.

By admitting that religious and non-religious social forms share common dilemmas toward reality and common attitudes toward it, common relations of faith, we may be able to truly create a meaningful discussion between the two and finally compare, with honesty, the respective ways in which each form of life structures the world and human moral action within it. The risk of considering faith as a purely religious or transcendental attitude is that it leads us to misunderstand completely the kind of relations that human beings build with the world around themselves. In this case, communication would really die and every group would merely pursue its own path toward flourishing in total disregard of the opinions and objections of other groups. This would further break human communities and would risk of generating such tragedies that Heidegger's statement *Only a God can save us* would become dangerously even truer.

³³ Ibid. pp. 161-162.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 162.