THE SYNTHESIS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH AND CLASSICAL CULTURE AS THE FOUNDATIONS OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

HERBERT WERNER RÜSSEL: CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

The selection of values in interwar Christian humanistic wayfinding is characteristic in Rüssel's works. His essay on *Christian Humanism* published in 1940 opened new frontiers in the history of Western self-interpretation.[1] Rüssel was one of the representatives of conservative but progressive humanist „Europeanism", an idea advocated by contemporary intellectuals.[2] While contemporary philosopher Jacques Maritain defended Christian humanism on behalf of Neo-Thomism, Rüssel expressed methods and images on history from an intellectual classical philologist's viewpoint.[3] Instead of various streams of medieval Scholasticism, Rüssel favoured the output of Classical

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[1] Rüssel, Herbert Werner. 1940. *Gestalt eines christlichen Humanismus* (Occident Verlag).

The Hungarian translation was published not long before the end of the Second World War: Rüssel, Herbert Werner. 1944. *Keresztény humanizmus: kultúra, eszmény, hitvallás (Christian Humanism: culture, idea, confession)* (Pharos). The latest Hungarian edition is a fac simile of the original Hungarian translation published in 1944: Rüssel, Herbert Werner. 1997. *Keresztény humanizmus (Christian Humanism)* (Ecclesia-Kairosz) published in Budapest. In present article the English translation and quotations of Rüssel's essay are based on the latest Hungarian version. (Quotations are translated into English by the author.)

[2] Herbert Werner Rüssel was a German humanist, philosopher and journalist. As an intellectual, he is not widely known, but he had some impact on the 20th century humanities. Moreover, he played a political role against Nacism. Rüssel studied philosophy from 1923, including with Max Scheler at the University of Cologne, and completed his education in 1927 with a doctorate. From 1929 he worked as a journalist. He was a member of the German Centre Party (Catholic Centre Party) and worked for the Catholic newspapers. In 1936 he was imprisoned for supporting a Catholic resistance group. In 1939 he was sentenced to one year in prison. After his release, he was deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1940, where he died shortly afterwards. Until the 1940s, several of his writings on Christian ethics were published. His adaptation on Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's work *On Human Dignity* (1940) was well-known among academics.

antiquity, early Christian patristics, and Renaissance. His *Christian Humanism* formulated criticism on contemporary culture from another aspect than that found in Maritain's *Integral Humanism*, and it also differed from renowned classical philologist Werner Jaeger's *Third humanism* which placed the education of the antiquity – *paideia* – into focus.[4] Unlike Maritain, Rüssel did not approach the elements of the crisis of his time from the relations of God and human beings and the substantial episodes of the changes in this relationship. Instead, he aimed to prove that the nature of the

3   The scope of interest of Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), one of the most original thinkers of 20th-century Catholic philosophy, spanned from art- education- and political philosophy to the theory of knowledge. From the 1930s, Maritain came to be the most renowned representative of the renewed stream of Catholic political philosophy. The young French philosopher from a protestant, anticleric and citoyen family background turned Catholic at the beginning of the 20th century. His most influential work was *Humanisme Intégral* (Maritain, *Humanisme intégral: problémes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté*. English translation: Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, in some English versions: *True Humanism*) written in the mid-thirties (1936) at the time of the Spanish civil war. As a philosopher he represented the Catholic circles, small in number but much respected intellectually which raised their voice to prevent the bloodshed. Maritain did not accept speculations that sought to use strengthening fascism against the communist danger. Instead, he remained an adamant antitotalitarian.

4 In the 20th century German reception of Classical antiquity, a special role is attributed to Werner Jaeger's (1888-1961) *Third humanism*, which rose to become a standard example of humanistic intellectual history. *Third humanism,* as an educational and cultural concept is distinguished from the humanism of Italian Reneissance *(First Humanism),* and also from the German educational humanism *(Second Humanism)* described in the early 19th century by Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766–1848) which stressed the mind-shaping power of Greek and Latin studies, as opposed to philantropism, which held practical and physical education more important. The basic work on the topic was published by Niethammer in 1808 under the title *Der Streit des Philanthropinismus und des Humanismus in der Theorie des Erziehungs-Unterrichts unsrer Zeit.* Paul Oscar Kristeller (1905-1999), who was one of the most influential researcher of the Renaissance in the 20th century, argued that the word *humanism* may have been coined by Niethammer, formed on earlier expressions *studia humanitatis* and *humanist.*

Jaeger's *Third humanism* focused on the notion of Greek *paideia* (education) when it attempted to reinterpret the mind-shaping legacy of ancient culture. Jaeger thought it was important to maintain the humanist methods of

connection between culture – Classical antiquity – and faith – Christianity – had been one of the most important factors which brought unique character to Western European culture and education. Any change in the interference between them is in correlation with the fact that we live in a world which „has disunited with itself, its intellectual bases have been shaken, and as a consequence, its relation to Classical antiquity and Christianity has become unstable too".[5]

In his effort to present the relationship between Christianity and the ancient world, Rüssel starts out from the point when the Greco-Roman world first met Christianity in the Late Antiquity. Then, he systematically projects the interactions between the two phenomena onto crucial events of European cultural history. The relations of Christianity and Classical antiquity was a key element in Rüssel's image of Europe, which he represented in his quiet „value preserving" fight against the ideology of the Nazi regime. Similar to the contemporary Catholic historian Christopher Dawson[6], Rüssel did not

classical philology, as a counterpoint to positivism. He also believed that understanding Greek paideia would provide solid bases for modern man in crisis, as opposed to decadent streams of the 20th century. Besides the importance of developing the individual, Jaeger also emphasised paideia's effectiveness in creating communal goals, but eventually he turned against Hitler's dictatorship and fled to the US in 1936. Although Jaeger engaged in some in-depth studies in the field of early Christian patristics, he continued to examine the role of Greek paideia in itself, and not as the prerequisite of Christianity as Rüssel interpreted it. Similar to 19th century German Neohumanists, Jaeger treated the humanistic values of Classical antiquity as a progressive piece of legacy of European culture. Jaeger's famed work on Greek paideia: *Paideia: die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (1933–1947) Vol.1-3. (English translation by Gilbert Highet.) Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture. The Conflicts of Cultural Ideals in the Age of Plato.* Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture. In Search of the Divine Centre.*

5 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 9.

6 Christopher Dawson (1889-1970) is considered to be the greatest figure in the 20th century English Catholic historiography. Spengler's and Toynbee's civilization-centered approach also influenced his perspective, but ultimately he developed an original metahistorical way of thinking, in which he assigned a special role to the history-shaping power of world religions. From this point of view, he is often compared to Max Weber, and because of his Christian philosophy of history, to his contemporary, Herbert Butterfield. Dawson had a significant influence on Eliot and Tolkien, as well as many other representatives of English intellectual life. Although he is the author of at least twenty books and numerous articles, the leading trends in historiography of

agree with such concepts which declared that the relationship between the Christian religion and Classical antiquity could only be grasped by presenting the opposition and the clashes of the two. Such approaches, Rüssel argued, inherently denied the possibility of a Christian humanism to develop in European cultural history, because they only stressed confrontation between the Church and the pagan world and condemned the cultures of the Classical antiquity as a whole. „The most consistent were... Luther and the theologists of reformation. To them, Christianity meant the victory over 'blind and faithless Paganism' whereas the purification of Christianity was symbolised by Reformation which rid the faith of antique Paganism that had found its way back to the Church."[7]

Rüssel believed that „Antihumanism" condemning Classical antiquity and „Humanism" which sought to integrate the Greco-Roman legacy had coexisted throughout the history of European Christian culture. To Rüssel, the „humanist" aspect, linked to Catholicism, represented genuine values, and that philosophy had retained its mainstream position until the Reformation of the early modern age appeared on the horizon.[8] This is the foundation of a cultural phenomenon called Classical-Christian synthesis by historians and Christian humanism by philosophers; the idea hinges on the possibility of rendering faith and culture into peaceful coexistence. While Maritain emphasised the philosophical and anthropological features of Christian humanism to examine opportunities of autonomous human thinking, Rüssel put greater stress on aspects of intellectual and cultural history in his interpretation, grasping the concept of Humanism as a literary and pedagogical category.

The novelty value of *Christian Humanism* compared to Dawson's *The Making of Europe* manifests itself in its effort to place the relations between Christianity and Classical antiquity right into

recent decades refer to him quite rarely. One of his best-known works is: Dawson, *The Making of Europe, An Introduction to the History of European Unity*. Dawson's major works: *Progress and Religion*, *Religion and Culture*, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, *The Dynamics of World History*. Bibliography of Dawson's works: Locas, "Christopher Dawson: A Bibliography"

7 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 11.

8 In many cases, interwar Catholic cultural criticism originated the processes leading to the imbalance of the modern world from Reformation. This phenomenon is not only there in Maritain's or Rüssel's way of thinking, but also in other conservative criticisms of Fascism, for instance by Helmuth Plessner. Traces of this viewpoint can also be found in Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus*.

the centre of interpreting European history. Dawson only brought up a few salient examples from cultural history. Rüssel, on the other hand, also examined theological criteria of a coexistence of Christian faith and Classical culture, besides using methods of historiography and philology. In a certain sense, his approach merged the viewpoints employed in *The Making of Europe* and *Integral Humanism*. Rüssel is set apart from Maritain, who employed historic ages in his analyses barely to illustrate his viewpoints in philosophy of culture, by an onset in intellectual history which relies more strongly on historical and philosophical facts. And Rüssel differed from Dawson too, mostly in the ambition that he also aimed to understand the theological and philosophical basics of the synthesis between Christianity and Classical culture.

In presenting the interaction between Christianity and Classical antiquity, Rüssel hermetically separated himself from „romantic” and „anti-historical” ideas which gave a lopsided account on the confrontation, from either which side. Rüssel also broke away from the 19th century viewpoint which claimed that the difference between Christianity and Classical antiquity had been barely noticeable: „This century believed that the ethical and metaphysical thought of Christianity, and even its mysticism, culture and lifestyle had appeared in Classical antiquity to such a full extent that the obvious question emerged almost by itself: what does the originality of Christianity lie in?"[9] Dissolving Christian mysticism in a universal religion based on reason, stripping the gospels of wonders, simplifying the figure of Jesus Christ to a mere teacher, and finally, believing classic ideals to be sufficient in providing education for a human being – as German Neohumanists thought – were typical aspirations of modern philosophy. On the other hand, Rüssel was also sceptical about the thoughts of Nietzsche, who deemed that Christianity had made human morale shallower by disrupting the life ideals of the Classical antiquity. As he put it, „Christianity tore down altars and destroyed cults as it brought in the gospels and rites of a new God, however, these gospels... were the ones the entire ancient world had been waiting for".[10] „Christianity did not demolish the great human values of the

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9 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 12.

10 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 11.

ancient world at all, it did not radically change them either, instead, it completed them at a higher level."[11]

In Classical antiquity, the concept of man discovered by the Greeks, „the Polis regulated by laws...; the science looking for notions, the ethics to distinguish good and evil; the art of measure and beauty; wise and considerate life"[12] were results which had been born under the aegis of natural human wisdom, without any encounters with the Christianity. According to Rüssel, all these artifacts of culture represented the human objective to reach the Absolutum, albeit the final fulfillment of this objective would only become possible by meeting the Christian truth. At the same time, Christianity did not destroy values of culture but reiterated them and gave depth to them. Thus, *Christian Humanism* acclaimed both the feat of Classical culture and the Christian extra added value. Furthermore, Rüssel also assumed close relations between the two, and did not confront Christianity and Classical antiquity. „We would turn the facts inside out" he emphasised, „if we believed that the Greeks had betrayed their truth upon their conversion to Christianity... They needed to think only a yet further to embrace the Christian faith."[13]

Rüssel's opinion about the relationship between faith and culture was a reference to the Catholic viewpoint harking way back to the times of the early Church. According to the Church, Classical culture – or, in general, cultures which do not know the Christian faith – could not be deemed bad as a whole, neither were they to be condemned, because they represented natural intentions to seek God, beauty, goodness, and truth. Mainstream thinkers of the early Church thus saw Plato as the „Attican Moses" because his philosophy led him to certain pieces of truth without the Christian revelation. In this respect, Plato's philosophy is a *praeparatio evangelica*, a preparation to adopt the gospels. Understanding the cultures such was underpinned by the theology of *logos spermatikos* (in Latin, *semina verbi* – the Seeds of the Word). Appearing in times of the early Church, this idea assumed that „God did not only manifest himself to the Jews in the Old Testament; *logos*, as a divine wisdom was scattered around the world upon Creation; and the seeds of the word grew roots in Plato and other

11 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 13.

12 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 94.

13 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 66.

thinkers so their philosophies, though symbolically, would mean the same to Pagans as the Old Testament meant to the people of Israel."[14] Here, Rüssel quoted Justin the Martyr. A similar idea was expressed by Clement of Alexandria: „Philosophy led the Greeks to Christ, and the Law led the Jews to him too. Philosophy showed the way for those who were to be enlightened by Christ."[15] Values in cultures lacking the Cristian truth were traced back to the Logos in creation. Moreover, Christianity includes the extra value of faith which opens new dimensions to the values of culture. Rüssel believed that the historical opportunities of the synthesis between Christianity and Classical culture, which had served as a basis for Christian humanism, could be best grasped in this theological framework.[16]

From the point of view of European cultural history, an important turning point in the interaction between Christianity and the Classical world was Paul the Apostle's missionary journeys, according to *Christian Humanism*. It presents Paul as a man who first started the dialogue with the Greek way of thinking. On this account – even though Paul's speech on the Areiospagos in Athens hardly contained any humanistic topics[17] – Paul was indeed a forerunner of Christian humanist behaviour: „It was a magnificent feat of Paul ...to have realised that the Greeks were both meek and wise in a philosophical sense, ... and to emphasise those essential views which were seen by the Greeks as daft at first, but in reality they brought the ultimate manifestation of the Greek way of thinking: the creation of the world, the human incarnation of God, the resurrection of the body, salvation going down in history as a one-off phenomenon."[18] Rüssel did not conceal, however, the substantial differences between ancient philosophy and Christianity. He believed that the Greeks had needed to get the meaning of their real values at the light of Christian revelation in order to differentiate between fallacies and acquired truth, both results of their culture based on a „instictical sense".

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14 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 71.

15 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 71.

16 On the judgement of Classical antiquity in the theology of the early Church: Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 314-352.

17 On Paul the Apostle's speech on the Areiospagos in Athens: Acts of the Apostles, 17.

18 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 59.

Christian Humanism thoroughly examined the fruitful interference of Greek philosophy and Christian faith. According to Rüssel, Greek philosophy had something to say for Christianity because it emphasised the importance of knowing the human being. The magnificence and respect of human nature was grasped by Christian thinkers in a way that the importance of divine gift was not played down. Contrary to secular humanism, according to which human values are sufficient by themselves, *Christian Humanism* claimed that the human mission can only be fulfilled through Incarnation and Salvation. This is the very reason that Rüssel could adopt the thoughts of famed Neo-Thomist thinker Étienne Gilson when he argued it was the human being itself which had become the common denominator of Greek philosophy and Christian religion: „Human, an indivisible unit of flesh and soul could never redeem itself without Christianity", however, without the human ideal of Greek philosophy, „Christianity would not have been able to find anything to redeem."[19]

Unlike the philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Christian humanists thought that the importance of Greek philosophy did not only lie in questioning tradition and formulating rules of logic to analyse the world and humans. Such as, it prepared the adoption of the Christian faith, and created the linguistic and philosophical bases of its elaboration. Sticking to the views of phenomenology, Husserl never stepped over the boundaries of idealism which stressed the general human importance of reason, rationalism and philosophical reasoning. Contrary to him, Maritain and Rüssel reformulated an old medieval opinion stating it was philosophy to have paved the way to theology. Christian faith did not suspend philosophy however, it expected the deductions of the autonomous mind not to detach from the Christian truth. For Husserl, philosophy, as a way of thinking based on the rules of reason, became a mark of being „European", whilst *Christian Humanism*, a keen admirer of philosophy and

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19 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 64.

Étienne Gilson was, besides Maritain, the most noted French Neo-Thomist thinker in the 20th century. Like Maritain, he spent much time researching St Thomas Aquinas, however, Gilson was more into the history of philosophy than philosophy. His works on medieval theology and philosophy still set the standard. Gilson always emphasised the „humanism" of medieval philosophy. One of his widely known books: Gilson, *L' Esprit de la philosophie médiévale.* On Gilson's works: Murphy, Francesca A. (2004): *Art and Intellect in the Philosophy of Étienne Gilson.*

culture, argued that the most important feat of European thinking was the distinction it had made between religion and knowledge as well as between theology and philosophy. This differed from the pre-Christian mentality which was based on myths and which did not know the patterns of philosophy and logic, and differed from the self-sufficient Reason of the modern age ignoring the supernatural contents of the Christian faith.

Not only did Christianity make ancient cultures come true at a higher level, but, according to Rüssel, it also saved them from becoming a victim of the Orient. When Christianity appeared on the horizon, Greek philosophy had already been over its zenith, and seeking salvation via Oriental cults, individualistic approaches or theosophy had been spreading. Rüssel argued that the Greek spirit had been unable to rejuvenate itself without a boost, so it had also been the merit of Christianity that „it did not take the Hellenistic world farther to the East, but back to itself... in Christian dogmatics, Greek thinking and Roman order found a new support and eventually did not get lost in the endless speculations and the barbarous despotism of the Orient."[20]

Thus, Rüssel – not unlike Dawson – also employed the motif of Occidental-Oriental distinction which had great tradition in European historiography. However, beyond the political parallel of (occidental) freedom and (oriental) despotism, he attributed greater importance to philosophical and intellectual approach. *Christian Humanism* includes the argument that the Orient (i.e. Asia) typically fails to clarify the central place and dignity of humans in Cosmos. The worlds of animals, humans and monsters were merged there, so there was no place for the ideals of human-centred Greco-Roman culture: „Instead, the Orient placed individualistic despotism, gave superstition to the people and magical theosophy, sombre asceticism and reckless vitalism to the esoteric caste of priests... a life between rapture and blunt emptiness."[21]

Rüssel said that while the Orient had advocated timeless myths, the West had made the first attempt to promote aspects of historicism.[22] Although the Greeks were forerunners of Western thought with their ideals of freedom, sense of order and shape, and by questioning the myth, alone they were

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20 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 38.

21 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 94.

22 A similar phenomenon is shown by the nature-history contrast of Schelling, whose works Rüssel cited.

unable to beat the ahistoric mythic views. Yet „the Greeks... had all the means available for creating history as a science: they had a sense for facts, logics, source research, deduction from consequence to reason... In spite of all this, the Greeks did not become a historist nation, historism did not absorb into their philosophy...”[23] Philosophy of history was only conceivable on Christian grounds.

The Christian philosophical concept of history started with St. Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. Since „there is history only” as Rüssel emphasised „if the eternal cycle of natural   phenomena breaks and there is a one-time, unrepeatable event: the human becomes fully human, not just a being of nature...”[24] Christ's incarnation was such an event, „the entrance of the infinite into a finite world”.[25] Before having been informed about the Christian truth, the Greeks perceived the insufficiency of their mythical concept of the world and they strived to exceed limits, however, lacking the history's own meaning they always returned to the myths.

Rüssel argues that it was Christianity which made the cyclic image of myths outdated. The acceptance of the Christian faith also contributed to the fact that the Greek accomplishments of culture, which served as the bases of Western feats of anthropology, philosophy, and art, were no longer corrupted by Oriental influence. When the Church defeated the first great heretic stream, Gnosticism, which was threatening its very existence, a defenceless ancient civilization was finally rid of a menacing Oriental imagery. Christianity thus saved the Greco-Roman West from „the padlock of fake magic and mysticism, so that it could find... the foundations of a Western world era: the age of free and conscious man. The Christian theology of an incarnated logos, human nature as a gift of God, and the anthropology of a transcendental human being as dignified by grace, gave new glamour and safe foundations to humanity.”[26]

The history of Western European culture emerging from an interference of Christianity and the ancient world was presented by Rüssel as the coexistence of humanistic and antihumanistic streams.

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23 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 44.

24 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 44-45.

A famous elaboration of this thought: Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*.

25 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 45.

26 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 42-43.

Among the medieval advocators of humanistic approach he mentions Boethius, Anselmus of Canterbury and St Thomas Aquinas, and among the humanists of the Renaissance, Petrarch, Ficino, Cusanus and Thomas More. By the way, the image of Renaissance in *Christian Humanism* differs greatly from Maritain's interpretation. While *Integral Humanism* saw the disruption of the medieval spiritual balance between human free will and divine grace, and the birth of an anthropocentric humanism which later took a tragic turn in the modern age, Rüssel's interpretation stressed the Christian bases of Renaissance, much like the well-known researches into intellectual history by Konrad Burdach.[27]

On the one hand, Christian Humanism turned against the doctrine which claimed that „Renaissance started a wholly new era, the modern age in which we live, and it sharply separates from the Middle Ages" and „its Christian traits reflect the last-ditch waves of the medieval spirit".[28] On the other hand, Rüssel was also sceptic about the traditional Christian evaluation which states that „to some extent, Renaissance is the sinning of the West, the victory of Subjectivism and Individualism over medieval Universalism and objective set of values. Criticism wins over authority..., aestheticism over ethics, intellectualism over the wisdom of religion..."[29]

Rüssel accepted that Renaissance had pulled ties with Classical antiquity tighter, but, referring to Burdach, also emphasised that the changes had been based on the Christian idea about the renewal of human being. In general, his viewpoint led to a concept on premodern Europe's past which interpreted great European eras as a series of renewals of ancient heritage on Christian bases rather than as a contrast between Christian Middle Ages and „pagan" Renaissance. At the same time, Rüssel's special affinity to the Classical antiquity made him keep a certain distance when discussing

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27 Konrad Burdach, noted researcher of the Renaissance claimed that Italian Renaissance („rebirth") in the 14-15th centuries did not only mean a renewed interest in ancient culture, but it also included the renewal of man based on a Christian concept. This latter endeavour was the filter through which scholars turned back to the intellectual sources of ancient cultures. Therefore, Renaissance cannot be separated from its Christian background. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 96-97.

28 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 113.

29 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 114.

the Middle Ages. For this reason, he did not elaborate on his sketch saying that the Middle Ages had also been a series of renaissances, reinterpreting ancient heritage from time to time. Otherwise, this view gradually gained ground in the 20th century Western historiography.[30]

In opinion of Rüssel, beside the dominant stream of Catholicism, which accepted Classical antiquity, in the history of the Church there was always a tendency with an „antihumanistic" theology. Its mentality was interpreted in *Christian Humanism* as an effort to disrupt the synthesis between Christianity and Classical antiquity which reflected the spiritual unity of European culture. One of the first representatives of „antihumanistic" theology was Tertullian (2-3. centuries AD.), who supported the ultimate supremacy of religion, and a full rejection of Greek philosophy and culture.[31] The same attitude was adopted by some monastic orders in the Middle Ages – although Rüssel did not believe the Middle Ages to have been wholly against humanism – and by the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation. Unlike Maritain, *Christian Humanism* did not stress the modernising impact of Protestant preaching on the individual – and, consequently, on culture – but rather, it gave an account on religious reformers' concerns about philosophy and Classical antiquity. Luther dubbed philosophy „the devil's whore", he also thought that sin had spoilt human nature radically, Calvin was also very negative about contemporary fine art which relied on ancient motifs. So Rüssel assumes that Reformation kept a distance from both the individual's creative abilities, stemming from human dignity, and the ideals of the Classical antiquity which were used as benchmarks to creativity.[32]

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30 To this concept, Haskins' study on the 12th century Renaissance – published in 1927 – is still considered fundamental: Haskins, *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*.

31 Tertullian, who rejected the Greek culture, according to Rüssel claimed that: „The reason of all types of heresy is in the lush formulations and rules of philosophy. He called the philosophers 'the patriarchs of heresy' and Plato, the 'grocer of all heresies'. He thundered at Aristoteles in a similar way: 'Hapless Aristoteles, for the sake of heresy you introduced dialectics, the mistress of construction and destruction, you were ambiguous in your theses, forced in your opinions, blinded in your arguments, you were a burden to yourself, you discussed everything yet said nothing.'" Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 92-93.

32 The question emerges whether historical facts support the „antihumanistic" behaviour of protestantism. As a matter of fact, Reformation did not at all break the reception of ancient tradition. Philology and the publishing of ancient texts continued also in areas of Protestant majority in the 16-18th centuries. It became even more popular

According to *Christian Humanism* the influential essay of Lev Shestov on *Athens and Jerusalem* continued „antihumanistic" traditions in modern European culture.[33] Shestov argued, reiterating Tertullian's point of view, that there had not been any junctions of Christian religion and Greek culture. At the same time Rüssel believed in the unity of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, perceiving the blend of the Judeo-Christian faith and Greek-Roman culture under the aegis of the Catholic church.

Right before the Second World War, elevating the inseparable ties of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome onto the level of fundamental values of European civilization had the taste of expressing a political opinion. Rüssel saw danger lurking on European culture as Classical antiquity and Christianity were played off against one another. As he put it, such efforts were „realising the dreams of Julian the Apostate[34], where a new storm of barbarous technological forces, depersonalised lives as well as liberated inclinations and instincts are threatening the Christian culture of the West, and within, Humanism, while the religious substance of Christianity may remain unharmed, much like back at times when the hordes of the North and the East threatened the Roman empire. It was indeed only the romantic blindness of Julian the Apostate which could see the revival of the joyous religion of Homer by turning away from Christianity..., and only the same blindness could conceal the possibility for a new worship of the state, which was probable to replace Christianity."[35]

when printing spread. Luther's close co-worker, Melanchton was a learned humanist. In this respect, Rüssel's presentation definitely seems lopsided. Golz and Mayrhofer, *Luther and Melanchthon in the Educational Thought of Central and Eastern Europe*.

33 Existentialist philosopher Lev Shestov (1866-1938) was born in a Russian Jewish family. His deep thoughts renewed modern Western thinking regarding the relationship between religion, philosophy and science. Shestov wrote *Athénes et Jérusalem* in 1930-1937. Shestov, *Athénes et Jérusalem*.

34 Julian the Apostate (361-363): The last member of the dynasty of Constantine. Contrary to the pro-Christian policy of his predecessors, he engaged in a short-lived effort to restitute paganism, and, on the same note, to revive „ancient morals". He advocated religious freedom but forbade Christians to teach ancient literature and philosophy at school. This might have been the reason that Julian was chosen by Rüssel, as the symbol of anti-Christianity, and the historical analogy of the 20th century Neopaganism.

35 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 9-10.

By assuming an unbreakable bond between Christian religion and ancient culture, Rüssel both opposed views which deemed Christianity as the enemy of culture, and arguments stating that the Greco-Roman ideals, in their immanent selves, were enough to serve the needs of humanity. Therefore, Christian humanism was an idea which went against anti-cultural „moralists" and religion-neutral „aestheticists" at the same time. According to Rüssel, the crisis of Western civilization clearly showed that culture, with its loosened bonds to Christianity, was defenceless against human mistakes, and it needed constant support in religious dogmas. This happened in the centuries of the early Church when an exhausted ancient world was saved by Christianity from the imminent despotism and religious influence of the Orient. The relevance of the historic analogy on Rüssel's present was obvious. The West would only surpass its intellectual crisis and defend itself from totalitarian powers – for example Soviet-Russia – if it reformulated the relations between Christianity and its own cultural tradition struggling with crisis. Western culture did not have to have fears of the Christian truth, since Christian religion had never been against genuine values. Rüssel with his strong affiliations to Greco-Roman culture was clearly hoping that a possible revival of culture would still highly value ancient culture. Intending to revive the Western culture with the help of Christianity, he definitely wanted to rescue Classical traditions too.

Rüssel also regarded Christian humanism as an intellectual behaviour which could help with salvaging the values of European civilization in crisis. „A Christian humanist is a type" he wrote „in whom the strain between divine and human has been resolved... and who has found the golden mean hovering between the created world and the kingdom of grace."[36] A Christian humanist endorses universal values, human dignity, natural reason and noble philosophy, and in such a person, faith and knowledge – *fides et ratio* – forms integral entity. Anyway, the Christian humanist presented by Rüssel resembles a Renaissance humanist, so the features he described resulted in an aristocratic type of individual living in a specified historic age. To criticise his historic approach, it may be argued that Rüssel, unlike Maritain, did not stress religious humanism as an inherent phenomenon in Christian faith, of which the synthesis between Christianity and Classical antiquity was nothing but a historical-cultural consequence. However, having perceived the limitations of his analysis narrowed down to a

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36 Rüssel, *Christian Humanism*, 179.

historic type, Rüssel expressed the necessity of turning from „cultural" to „human" in the conclusion of his essay. He recommended the elaboration of a philosophy and an anthropology which were suitable to meet the needs of the modern age and which, via a renewal based on historic experience of European Christian humanism, could save the individual in crisis.

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