

Resilience in a Troubled World

Proceedings of the Malta International Theological Conference III



JOHN ANTHONY BERRY
EDITOR

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III

John Anthony Berry

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Kite

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Romano Guardini, Virtue Ethics and Resilience

Mirosław Mróz

This article is divided into two parts. The first refers to the second part of the title: “An Ethics of the ‘Living Concrete’” and my intention is to point out a “new method” used by Romano Guardini in his works. I will also try to provide an answer to the question whether a Christian can help the contemporary postmodern world which is having trouble with the human destiny.¹ The second part of the article focuses on the first sentence of the title: “Romano Guardini on virtues.” Apart from discussing the content of Guardini’s aretology and presenting his catalogue of virtues I intend to take one step further and demonstrate the next fragment of his “new *method*” which refers to the “theory of opposites”² applied to virtues.

¹ Romano Guardini (1885–1968), one of the most important 20th century theologians of Italian and German descent. Guardini, who looks at the postmodern reality as a whole, notes a deep de-Christianisation of the vision of man, his culture and his world. Nevertheless, Guardini expresses the hope that the postmodern Christian will be more radically guided by faith and trust in God’s action (See, for example, Romano Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit. Ein Versuch zur Orientierung* (Basel: Verlag Heß, 1950) [*The End of the Modern World*]).

² The basic list of opposites according to Guardini is as follows: A) *Categorical opposites*: (a) Intra-empirical: Act – structure (Akt – Bau); Fullness – form (Fülle – Form); Individuality/detail – wholeness (Einzelheit – Ganzheit). (b) Trans-empirical: Production – disposition (Produktion – Dysposition); Naturalness/originality –

An Ethics of the “Living Concrete” in a World Having Trouble with Human Destiny

Romano Guardini is a theologian who in my opinion has much in common with St. Thomas Aquinas. He applies a concrete philosophy to present theological questions. He calls it the “philosophy of a living concrete.”³ I do not intend to discuss theological details of this philosophy as it has not been fully developed by Guardini himself. I would just like to mention that according to Guardini “the living concrete” can be recognised only if we apply both conceptual cognition and intuition. They are opposites, but together they create one solid act. The great measure of intuition shaped by the great measure of conceptual power takes on a new cognitive form, which is the “apprehension.” In order to make philosophy accessible for the modern mentality Romano Guardini wishes to develop what concerns the method “to supplement by epistemology the synthesis of the metaphysical order.”⁴ Guardini leads us to know what is unique and one of its kind, and in referring to the modern philosophical thought he analyses not only common and universal structures but, above all, what is individual and accidental and based on a concrete experience. Guardini maintains that he does not only capture the concrete itself but also what is lasting and unchangeable, namely the essence. The main aim of Guardini’s philosophical research refers to the “Christian worldview,”

rule/norm (Ursprünglichkeit – Regel); Immanence – transcendence (Immanenz – Transcendenz). B) *Transcendental opposites*: Relationship/affinity – particularity (Verwandschaft – Besonderung); Unity – multiplicity (Einheit – Vielheit). According to Guardini, these eight pairs represent the basic poles of life, and the opposites present in them remain in constant tension. If we are familiar with them, we consider the reality of life as it is. It is possible to expand or reduce these eight pairs. Guardini himself left his “philosophy of opposites” unfinished. In subsequent reflections he completes, applies and updates it and we wish to follow this approach.

³ Romano Guardini, *Der Gegensatz. Versuche zu einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, [Antithesis: Essays on a philosophy of concrete existence]; Idem, *Die Gegensatz und Gegensätze. Entwurf eines Systems der Typenlehre* (Freiburg: Herder, 1917) [Antithesis and Antitheses: Schüchtes of a Systematic Doctrine of Types].

⁴ See Georges Van Riet, *Philosophie et religion* (Louvain-Paris: Nauwelaerts, 1970), 104. Marian Jaworski, “Eidos chrześcijaństwa w nawiązaniu do poglądów Romano Guardiniego.” *Logos i ethos* 35, n. 2 (2013): 43-54; Czesław Stanisław Bartnik, *Romano Guardini. Metoda witalistyczno-fenomenologiczna* [Romano Guardini. Vitalist-Phenomenological Method] (Lublin: KUL, 1990), 13-56.

to what Christianity is in itself and what the Christian's responsibility for himself and the world stands for.⁵

Thus, Guardini's philosophy is not in opposition to the philosophical approach of St. Thomas but can be, as I see it, some kind of continuation or help to notice some themes of Aquinas which overcome what is general and merely universal.

In approaching "the living concrete" a Christian, aware of his responsibility, seeks to answer the question of how Christianity as such and every particular Christian as well can help the contemporary world and the postmodern man who is broken, divided, fragmented, anxious and lost, who cannot discover his identity and thus plunges into hopelessness. The world and man are either permeated with presumption (*praesumptio*) or desperation (*desperatio*). Is it still possible to find a way out of this situation and to help the world and man? But how can it be done?

It would be appropriate to draw attention here to *the symptomatic statement of Immanuel Kant, a philosopher from Königsberg (1724-1804)*. As early as in 1794 he observed that apart from the natural end of things there might be some perverted end, contrary to nature. In his work *Das Ende aller Dinge (The End of All Things)* he says: "If Christianity should one day cease to be worthy of love ... then the prevailing mode in human thought would be the rejection and opposition to it; and the Antichrist... would begin his – albeit short – regime (presumably based on fear and self-interest); but then, because Christianity, though destined to be the world religion, would not in fact be favoured by destiny to become so, then, in a moral respect, this could lead to the (perverted) end of all things."⁶

⁵ On the "Philosophy of the Living Concrete," see: Czesław Stanisław Bartnik, *Filozofia przeciwieństw Romano Guardiniego [The Philosophy of Opposites by Romano Guardini]*, *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL*, 2 (1959), n. 2, 97-104; *Romano Guardini: próba nowej metody fenomenologicznej [Romano Guardini: An Attempt at a New Phenomenological Method]*, Lublin 1954; Marian Jaworski "Religijne poznanie Boga. Próba charakterystyki na tle poglądów R. Guardiniego" (*Religious Knowledge of God. An Attempt to Characterize the Views of R. Guardini*), *Zeszyty Naukowe (KUL)* 4, no. 3 (1961): 39-59.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Das Ende aller Dinge* was first published in June 1794 in the *Berlinische Monatschrift* 23, 495-522 [*The End of All Things*: in: *Religion and Rational Theology*], translated and edited by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 231.

Christianity cannot lose its taste. For the existence of the world depends on the “to be or not to be.” How can Christianity remain “worthy of love” and “be *destined* to be the world religion?” Romano Guardini seeks the answer to this question not only in the sphere of Christianity as such but in the concrete of each believer in Christ. He engages his whole method of philosophical concrete to “grasp” the content of the message that “Jesus is the Lord.” This becomes the main question of his work (large volume of 667 pages) *Der Herr. Betrachtung über Person und das Leben Jesu Christi* (English: *The Lord*).

Following Guardini’s thought we can search for the answer to the dilemmas of our times in this important work. I wish to refer here to the ethical text *par excellence*, namely to the Sermon on the Mount which Guardini comments with precision.⁷ It is in the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6, Matt. 5) that we have a vision of the new human existence brought by Jesus which so clearly contrasts with our modern reality. “Blessed are you who are poor, ... Blessed are you who hunger now, ... Blessed are you who weep now, ... Blessed are you when people resent you” (Luke 6:20). Guardini writes: “We have a real cause to stop and ask what the four sentences stand for. There is something revolutionary about them – but what is it?”⁸ Guardini asks next: Do they not contain the mystery of Christianity itself? “The awareness of subverting all that is recognised and binding in the world in order to erect what is really authentic?” Guardini’s answer is surprising:

“Jesus did not come to add a new link to humankind’s already existing chain of cognition; he did not come to scale new peaks of existence higher than any previously glimpsed; nor did he come to establish a new ideal, a transvaluation for which the time is ripe. No, it’s the other way around. From the abundance otherwise reserved for heaven, Jesus brings divine reality to earth. He is the stream of living water from the eternal source of the Father’s love to the thirsting world. From ‘above’ he delivers the new existence which is impossible for the world to establish solely and which is built on principles seen from ‘below’ as subversive and incoherent.” In all this one can see the disturbing, contradictory “re-evaluation of all values.”⁹

⁷ Romano Guardini, *Der Herr. Betrachtung über person und das leben Jesu Christi*, (Paderborn: Verlag F. Schöningh, 1997), 75-83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 70 (*Jesus kommt nicht, um der Reihe der bisherigen Menschheitserkenntnisse eine neue*

Romano Guardini senses the otherness of Christianity and the otherness of Christians. The powers of this world where the world values and loves only what comes from it are different in comparison to this reality. If the world wants to be saved, it must turn to what comes from the outside of this temporal existence. To be a Christian that saves this world and the relationships between people is to accept and remain in the relation which does not come from us but is given to us from 'above.' It leads to the alienation from this world, but at the same time it draws people closer to the Lord. Guardini shows who the Lord is and what His only and unique reference to the world and to man is like. Only by revealing this otherness, which Guardini calls "the opposite," we find not so much the synthesis of what is here and there, but the road to it. In short, Jesus Christ is this experienced "living concrete." "But how difficult it must be to exist in such a way that you don't signify anything while Christ is everything."¹⁰ The Christian experience is nothing else than the encounter of Jesus the Lord and man in history which cannot be annulled. "Jesus came – He alone and nobody else - to bring great 'transvaluation of values.'"¹¹ This transvaluation must happen through faith and through the realisation of freedom in the relationship with Jesus.

Romano Guardini as the author of *The End of the Modern World* (*Das Ende der Neuzeit*) notes that throughout centuries man has been able to overcome his own finiteness by basing his own being on the being of God. The loss of God in the modern times makes man feel abandoned in his own world. Is there any remedy for this crisis? The answer can be found in the new ethics of virtues where the truth about the essence of man and the anthropology presented in *The World and the Person* (*Welt und Person. Versuche zur christlichen Lehre vom Menschen*) find their realisation.

hinzufügen, um eine Höhe zu erobern über jene hinaus, die bereits erschaut sind; um ein neues Ideal, eine neue Wertordnung aufzurichten, für die es nunan der Zeit wäre. Nein, sondern aus der Gott vorbehaltenen Fülle des Himmels trägt Jezus eine heilige Wirklichkeit vor. Aus Gottes Herzen führt er einen Lebensstrom in die dürstende Welt. Von "Oben" her tut er ein neues Dasein auf, das aus der Schöpfung selbst nicht möglich und nach Ordnungen gebaut ist, die von "Unten" her als Verwirrung und Umsturz erscheinen).

¹⁰ Ibid., 85.

¹¹ Ibid., 62.

Romano Guardini on Virtues

One of the less known works of Romano Guardini is *Tugenden. Meditationen über Gestalten sittlichen Lebens* (*The Virtues: On Forms of Moral Life*) published in 1963. Relying on the older translation from 1967 the new English version from 1998 published by Sophia Institute Press (Manchester, New Hampshire) uses a changed title *Learning the virtues that Lead You to God*. I believe that this title expresses very accurately the ethics of virtues presented by Romano Guardini.

What are the virtues for? Why should we learn them?¹² They are the ones that lead man to God and to the renewal of both himself and the world he lives in. Guardini appears here as a professor of the Catholic *Weltanschauung*. His goal is to renew the moral and spiritual life of the postmodern man, giving him a new category of virtue to reconsider. In his well-known essay from 1913 Max Scheler already called for the return to the ethics of virtues *Zur Rehabilitierung der Tugend* (*On the Rehabilitation of Virtue*). In using this category of virtue, R. Guardini wants to serve man through the “re-evaluation” of this old and moralizing formula. He writes: “If our language had another word, we would use it. But it has only this one; therefore we want to begin by agreeing that “virtue” denotes something living and beautiful.”¹³ Guardini is not so much interested in the word itself, but above all, in the content behind it. “It means that the motives, the powers, the actions, and the being of man are gathered, at any given time, into a characteristic whole by a definitive moral value, an ethical dominant, so to speak.”¹⁴

Guardini is convinced that behind the virtue the good of man and his world is hidden. The reason for this is that the human condition and its whole environment of being and action are determined by man’s internal moral condition. The realisation of good leads to true humanity, and this is how the virtue is formed. “A true virtue signifies an ability to penetrate with a glance the whole existence of man.”¹⁵ “Ethics, which under the rule of Kant had petrified and become merely

¹² See Mirosław Mróz, *Człowiek w dynamizmie cnoty* [*Man in the Dynamism of Virtue*], WSD, Toruń 2001; Servais Pinckaers, *Morality: The Catholic View* (South Bend, IN: St Augustine’s Press, 2001); Michael S. Sherwin, *On Love and Virtue: Theological Essays [Renewal Within Tradition]* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Academic, 2018).

¹³ Romano Guardini, *Learning the Virtues that Lead You to God*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

a doctrine of duties, was loosening up, and people were beginning once again to think of the good as something living, which concerns the entire man.”¹⁶

“Moral teaching has become too negative; the reflections seek to do justice to the living majesty, nobility, and beauty of the good. We tend too much to view the ethical norm as external to the rebellious man.”¹⁷ “Consequently, this virtue signifies a relation to the whole of the existence and enables us to discover the aspects of it which never becomes clear to the one who lives in disorder.”¹⁸ “Virtue extends through the whole of existence, as a harmony which gathers it into unity. And it also ascends to God, or rather it descends from Him.”¹⁹

Virtues are not understood by Guardini as the everyday good, as something that does require support and relation which transgress the understanding of man himself. If the virtue is to be filled with the authentic meaning and reach the depth of humanity, it has to possess the horizon of the infinite Good. The guarantor of the good of the virtue is ultimately man’s relation to the Good, namely to God. Guardini says: “This concatenation is what the word *virtue* stands for.”²⁰

This rule, however, does not make Romano Guardini a supporter of dogmatizing virtue or a swordsman of dry rules and regulations for man and his world. Guardini is not an advocate, a third-party observer or someone standing outside. The ethics of Guardini’s virtues is the model of morality that shapes and changes the world by organizing oneself and one’s heart first. Virtue removes the evil existing in each individual, giving an insight into the fact that one is a person. The evil, in turn, builds oppositions and contradictions, in the true and proper sense, and is, above all, an act of a particular person, of this particular Matthew, Zacchaeus, Herod, these Pharisees and scribes who are waiting for Jesus’ life. We experience this approach by reading the relevant fragments of *Der Herr (The Lord)*. Man can be conditioned by the environment and the community in which he lives, he can be urged or forced by external forces and conditioned by them, such as those who in Pilate’s court shouted: “Crucify him!” Nevertheless,

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., viii.

¹⁸ Ibid. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid. 9.

²⁰ Ibid. 11.

evil is a characteristic act of each individual. What is most human and appropriate for man is the virtue that “adorns” him, but also the wrong for which he is responsible. Of course, every man’s faults affect the history of the world and what is happening in the world. When it is cumulated as a human pseudo-solidarity in wrong-doing, one can speak of the evil that is sweeping through the world. In this way it can affect - and indeed it affects and harms – innocent people. However, the first principle flows from the very essence of virtue, namely, that for the history of the world it is important to know what is happening in the human heart, when it faces adversities and does not yield to evil.

At this point, Guardini reflects on the first moral opposition, which he views between the state of order and disorder as a standard model of opposition between good and evil. There is an ongoing dispute between the virtue of orderliness and its opposite. “This means that a person knows where a thing belongs and what the proper time for an action is, as well as, what measure is valid in any instance and what the relations of the various matters of life are to each other.”²¹ Nevertheless “the virtue may also become morbid”²² and even “this orderly view may also become rigid,” thus because of it “a person sensitive to order can also suffer in consequence.” For a person with disorder in his interior “the original form of living productiveness disappears; as does all that may be called spiritual fullness, freedom, and creativity; and existence congeals in dull and soundless inevitability.”²³

This pattern of virtue and its “morbid opposite” is marked in each of the sixteen virtues described by Guardini. The world of virtues “becomes morbid” and this affects man and his world. Everything is presented in the form of a phenomenological description of clearly conscious opposites of each of the mentioned virtues.

Thus, Truthfulness as “striving for truth” – has its opposite in the form of striving for the situation where the truth will not be known (to be on the side of lies).

The virtue named by Guardini, acceptance, is viewed as a call to try to correct what is “twisted” or “distorted” in revealing its opposite by strengthening what is distorted and thus the opposite negates the effort to change and order the present state of affairs.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

Patience, where the decision to endure injustice is primary (the acceptance of an unjust fate) because of seeing further than the horizon of the moment, and its opposite is a brutal lack of self-control and aggression towards the smallest manifestations of injustice (a constant rebellion against one's own destiny).

Justice – adopts the measure of personal order where everyone is equally valuable – struggles with the opposite, where the value of the other is trampled.

Reverence, refers to the respect of the hidden moments in human life (also the intimate ones), has its destructive opposite in the desire to take possession of the other person (also someone's intimacy).

Loyalty: a virtue that protects against disappointments and maintains faithfulness towards the vowed reality, has its opposite in changeability, in unfaithfulness consisting in "broken relationships."

Disinterestedness as a realistic view of one's own greatness, which also limits the intention of announcing one's greatness to everyone, faces the opposite of the intention to be superior before others, the desire to impress the other.

Asceticism as overcoming the instincts of nature with the power of the spirit, struggles with the opposite of succumbing to animal instincts, with the lack of acceptance that "the human being is different from the animal kind."

Courage as trust in oneself and to oneself and bravely facing the hardships of life. It is destroyed by the opposite manifested by the fear of life; paralysis in leading a virtuous life.

Kindness, faith in gentleness and mercy through brutality that is permeating the spheres of life and relations.

Understanding as learning to understand the other person and discovering the state of internal needs of other people in a friendly manner as well as struggling with the opposite of selfishness, disrespect and with the lack of interest in the other person.

Courtesy, where the attention is paid to the other person (not to oneself). It is destroyed by the opposite of "withdrawing" from the other person, by keeping distance to other people.

Gratitude, emphasizes the importance of being together with other people, to realize the need to be endowed and to be thankful for the help of others. It faces the opposite expressed by the attitude "I don't need anybody."

Unselfishness as a relation of service to others without seeking self-interest has its distinct opposite in treating others in an egoistic way, self-centeredness.

Recollection, is the virtue of mastering excessive activity; in recognizing one's duties, focusing on what is most important and degrading the opposite expressed by the attitude "I'm still doing something." As a result, people do not pay attention to their own being and lose themselves in their activities.

Silence as a virtue demonstrates the ability to be silent and to live in silence, which is ruined by its opposite, namely unlimited garrulity.

These sixteen virtues and their opposites indicate that "in every virtue there is also the possibility of a lack of freedom." Therefore, the question arises how to restore the purity of virtue, to live it fully and how to be the master of one's virtue.

First of all, one cannot say that man does not experience opposites. It would be a denial of our inner experience. Nor should the opposite be called virtue. It is of evil and both hurts and distorts relationships. Guardini captures the problem of the opposite from the perspective of the healing activity of God,²⁴ in which the opposite is confronted with the "eternal goodness of God." Why is it necessary to have such an infinite perspective? Guardini responds: "It is from the eternal goodness of God that moral enlightenment comes into the soul of the receptive man." Man should not confront himself with "an anonymous principle of the universe, nor a mere idea,"²⁵ i.e. not with the good, which is only a disclosure of the obligations in the context of the order of things. The reality of virtue must be bound by the relational and personal good in order to have a binding force.

"But the basic character of my human self-experience consists precisely in this fact that I experience myself as a person (...)." ²⁶ The virtue of sincerity, patience, faithfulness, courtesy, etc. all the sixteen virtues mentioned above remain somehow helpless in overcoming

²⁴ See Marian Jaworski, "Poznanie symboliczne Boga u Romano Guardiniego" (*Symbolic Knowledge of God with Romano Guardini*), *Roczniki Filozoficzne*, 8 (1961): n. 1, 89-124; Marian Jaworski, "Religijne poznanie Boga," *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 4, n. 3 (1961): 39-59.

²⁵ Romano Guardini, *Learning the Virtues*, 9.

²⁶ Romano Guardini, *Welt und person. Versuche zur christlichen lehre vom menschen* [*The World and the Person*] (Würzburg: Werkbund-Verlag, 1939), 196.

their opposites if there is no binding or experienced relationship with Goodness *per se*, which is conceived personally.

Guardini's sixteen virtues clearly show that they all have a relational (social) status, the possibility of mutual opening of the human "I" to "You."²⁷ As Guardini writes - "It is the basic order of all earthly relations and earthly activities."²⁸ It is a relational justice which has its basis in the relation to God, and it is accentuated by each of the sixteen virtues. Justice, "is the virtue that helps other people to face the events of life," just as their essence requires them to do.²⁹

In the end, the defeat of the opposites manifesting within each virtue, finds its basis here. It is the power of forgiveness and the "condonation of trespasses." Man who wants to live virtuously asks: "Is it possible that the guilt will be taken away from me?"³⁰ This guilt that arose from the opposites revealed by virtue? Guardini's answer is clear: it is within the community, "which overcomes the difference between I and not-I"³¹ [A unique indification takes place]. I am truly free from all opposites. When I say "I," I do not say it autonomously, but as based upon that "thou" which God speaks to me. I say it as the truly my own "I," but as coming from God, and so dependent upon the keyword of my existence, which is "I through Him." "In this way, I am also absolved, but through Christ's atonement; I am justified, but through His justice."³²

What are the opposites experienced in virtue, the disease syndromes of virtue? Virtue marks the authenticity of life, and makes it "rightly ordered," "it possesses such an energy that it can overcome itself, but also (...) it is capable of breaking a rule,"³³ while the opposite, although necessary for winning virtues through effort,³⁴ is the awareness of what life inhibits" [it includes a consciousness of what hinders life]. It can also make man "limited and hard," "around whom life dries out."³⁵

²⁷ See Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtue and Gifts* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

²⁸ Guardini, *Learning the Virtues*, 9.

²⁹ Romano Guardini, *Welt und person*, 155.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

³² *Ibid.*, 197.

³³ Guardini, *Learning the Virtues*, 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

The opposite “feels danger” [senses the danger], “fear of disorder,”³⁶ “is reflected in the notion of chaos, destruction of being” [be expressed in the ancient concept of chaos, the destruction of existence], and then “the world is cruel and unfriendly” [make the world monstrous, and unliveable.]³⁷ The opposition “in the interior of man, in interpersonal relations ... is something disturbing and even painful” [in the interior life of man, in human relations (...) can even be tormented.]³⁸

The contrast between virtues and opposites “will help us to better understand man himself, to see more clearly how he lives, how life is an assignment for him, how it completes the meaning of life, or how it does not do that” [help us to understand man better, to see more clearly how he lives, how life becomes his task, and how he performs it meaningfully or gambles it away.]³⁹

The concluding and summarizing chapter of Guardini’s treaty on virtues entitled “Justice Before God” reveals a “healing” bond with God’s goodness. “God there carries on with men a history which shall build His kingdom on earth. But the term *God* is not to be understood as *the absolute being* or *the basic cause of the world* or in any other philosophical terms, but as *the living one*, who (...) becomes known (...) through Revelation.”⁴⁰

It is not man who, through his own strength, eliminates his own opposites and the evil in his heart, but the relationship and confrontation with the Person, who is filled with love and who forgives. Virtue is not so much tolerant as “forgiving.” It does not mix the good with evil but separates them well and cancels in “higher justice.” After all, Guardini knows the principle of St. Paul that “there can be no justice through our own actions.”⁴¹ Christian teaching is included in the words: “not I, but the grace of God which is with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

The decisive factor to forgive sins, to cancel a debt against the person who has caused the evil and the pain is the received grace of forgiveness. The virtue, that Guardini speaks of, is a Christian virtue and it must remain so. Otherwise, there is no way of abandoning the

³⁶ Ibid., 8.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 189.

⁴¹ Ibid., 192.

opposite. The following words are important here: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Christian virtue does not see evil and does not notice the opposites thanks to the power of the previously received forgiveness. Opposites, wrongs, impulses of evil have been overshadowed by love, because my wrongdoings have also been considered as forgotten. Virtue can return to the pure heart and man has become restored to man again. In such a state, where there is no hatred and no one is detached from their neighbours, the renewed virtue can dwell again in perfect harmony. This virtue is authentically Christian, because it is founded on the forgiving power of Christ. This virtue can bear authentic Christian fruits if we finally accept Christ’s words: “When you shall have done all these things, say “We are unworthy servants” (Luke 17:10).⁴²

Christian virtue makes us realize the incomprehensible thing, the authentically unique moment through which morality receives a new order: the order of “forgiven” opposition. Guardini says that this is the knowledge of those who accept Christian meditation on virtues.

“The virtues of which we have spoken, then become ways in which the justice of Christ becomes fruitful. They receive a new fullness and a new character.”⁴³ Thus this is the character of forgiveness and of pardoning wrongs and opposites, those that are overcome by the pure and beautiful existence of virtue. In the virtue conceived in this way the opposites disappear as they are destroyed by the fire of the forgiving love, the world ceases to be cruel and unfriendly, whereas freedom and proper proportions are restored. Guardini’s virtue is the virtue of the order of human matters and the order of the world.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this essay, we have explored how virtues offer a means to resilience and can address disorder and injustice in our troubled world. Guardini believed that virtues are essential in restoring order in the post-modern world and can reveal the existence of opposites and antitheses in both personal and social relationships. However, they also provide a way out of these troubled situations.

Additionally, forgiveness plays a crucial role in constructing a renewed world by removing these opposites and antitheses. The only

⁴² Ibid., 199.

⁴³ Ibid., 200.

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way to achieve this true good is through accepting and receiving forgiveness from above, as it reveals the connection and binding of the good of man with the good of God. The integration of forgiveness into virtues is essential, and Guardini refers to this unique identification of opposites as “absolution” and “justification.” Ultimately, Guardini believed that this history of God carrying on with men will build His kingdom on earth. As Christians, we can use the power of forgiveness and virtues to overcome the antitheses in the world and create a new earth and new heaven.

“This kingdom does not signify any abstract order of values or a generally comprehensible form of human society, but the world of grace and love of the living God and the transformation which everything human – indeed everything created – undergoes therein. (...) [The] right action is faith in the growth of his kingdom and love, which serves it in daily activities.”

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