

Abstract

Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI's concept of culture

Previous studies have emphasized Joseph Ratzinger's theology, while his reflections on culture have largely remained in the background. This dissertation therefore focuses on cultural issues in the theologian's thought. Its aim is to reconstruct and analyze Joseph Ratzinger's – Benedict XVI's concept of culture, presented from the perspective of contemporary cultural studies. Although Ratzinger was not a scholar of cultural studies, his numerous theological, philosophical, and social writings contain scattered yet logically coherent insights into culture. This work seeks to systematize those insights and compare them with other currents of cultural reflection in Western thought. The point of departure is Ratzinger's conviction that culture is never a neutral category, but is always rooted in truth, transcendence, and religion without which it becomes susceptible to crisis and disintegration.

The research problem that emerges from the chosen topic can be summarized in several key questions: How does Ratzinger understand culture and its mutual influence on the individual and the community? What role do tradition, history, and the state play in shaping culture? How are faith, reason, and culture interconnected? What is the significance of truth as a fundamental value in the face of relativism? Finally, how coherent and relevant is the model proposed by Ratzinger within contemporary academic and social discourse?

The strategy adopted for approaching Ratzinger's work required the use of several research methods. The first is hermeneutic analysis, which enabled the interpretation of the source texts and a deeper understanding of the theologian's thought and intentions by situating them within the context of cultural change. The comparative method proved indispensable for describing cultural elements in their various contexts with the positions of other cultural researchers, including philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists. Comparing these perspectives allows for the objectification of the Pope's achievements, as well as the verification of his views in a broader scientific context. Finally, the descriptive method made it possible to systematize, detail the description of problems and arguments, and to create an orderly whole of Ratzinger's thoughts on culture. This approach not only catalogued Benedict XVI's writings but also revealed the structure of his vision and the development of his cultural concepts.

The results of the analysis indicate that for Ratzinger, culture is a space constitutively linked to religion, whose meaning is the search for truth and the realization of transcendent values. Tradition serves as a vehicle for identity and memory, and its breakdown leads to a crisis of community. Faith and reason, understood as complementary, enable the creative development of culture, while their separation results in the reduction of man to a technical and

pragmatic dimension. Relativism, on the other hand, which is one of the main threats, is described by Ratzinger as a 'dictatorship' that weakens culture's ability to orient itself towards truth.

The analysis leads to the conclusion that Ratzinger's proposal presents a coherent vision of culture with a strong theological dimension, in which religion serves as the foundation of communal meaning and a guarantee of integral human development. His thought fits within the broader debate on the role of transcendence in European culture and continues to offer a relevant response to the challenges of relativism, secularization, and globalization.

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