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Faith, Reason and Philosophy
Lectures at the al-Azhar, Qum, Tehran,
Lahore and Beijing

by
George F. McLean

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Part I. Context: The Evolution of Reason as Awareness of God	
Chapter I. An Archeology of Reason as Inherently Religious	7
Chapter II. Systematic Graeco-Christian Philosophy	23
Part II. Medieval Islamic and Christian Philosophies on Faith and Reason: Crisis and Response	
Chapter III. Al-Ghazali: a Medieval Crisis of Faith and Reason	39
Chapter IV. The Role of Reason in Belief: A Christian Response	51
Chapter V. Mulla Sadra's Philosophy of Existence: Islamic and Christian Contributions	65
Part III. The Modern Crisis of Reason and the Response in Faith	
Chapter VI. The Crisis of Reason Today and the Response in Faith	85
Chapter VII. Philosophy in the Context of Faith	95
Chapter VIII. The Meaning of Faith for Philosophy	105
Part IV. New Collaboration of Faith and Reason: Future Directions for Islamic-Christian Cooperation and for Religion in Chinese Thought	
Lecture I: Reasoning in Faith: An Address at Mofid University, Qom, 1999	121
Lecture II: Faith and Reason: An Address at the Al-Azhar University, Cairo 1999	135
Lecture III: Philosophy and Religion: An Address at People's University of China, Beijing, 2000	145
Appendix. Fides et Ratio: Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II	155
Index	245

Introduction

In considering the relation of faith and reason it is important to appreciate that the issue generally is viewed from the perspective of the secular rationalism which has characterized much of the modern age. This is the cultural context within which we are born; it constitutes the glasses through which our world is interpreted.

There are various and complex reasons for this. One, as with John Locke, is the desire to make everything patent to everyone in order to facilitate the transfer of the exercise of power to popularly elected authorities. For this everyone needed equal access to all that entered into the debate. Locke recast the understanding of human knowledge on the basis of a story — which Wittgenstein found incorrect — of its origin whereby all was sense observation or what could be done with the ideas it produced. Religious ideas were not unwelcome to Locke — he wrote extensive Biblical commentaries — but they came from without and were added over and above reason in accord with the new reformation theology.

In the liberal mode, some would see the modern person as freed from all hierarchy, whether state or ecclesiastical, and competing equally in function of the new capitalist ideology. Others, such as Rousseau would return all to a fictitious state of nature prior to the development of any superstructure.

All would converge in the supposition that the basic human character was a-religious, defined by contrast to faith and hence secular in the sense of being concerned with life only in this universe of limited and temporal beings, in terms of which all would be judged. Religion then, if it were to be justified at all, would need to be seen not as gratitude and honor to God, but as service to humanity understood then reductively in terms only of its life in this changing universe.

It is precisely this assumption that has proven inadequate, indeed thoroughly destructive. The hope of founding thereby a worldly utopia during the 20th century has been drowned by wars hot and cold. It now sinks under waves of mutual hatred, descending even into genocide on a number of continents.

As a result "humanist" assumptions of the Enlightenment now come to appear ever more inhumane and it is important to review their basic assumptions. Prime among these is the issue of the context within which humanity is to be understood. Is it the self-enclosed and self-sufficient individual seen as creator of all else, or is it the relation between nature and God in a pattern of interchange that is open and fruitful. If so then faith is not a superstructure which can be dispensed with, but is foundational and indispensable; nor is it a constraint upon reason, but its natural context, inspiration and support.

The chapters of this book largely are lectures delivered at the University of the Punjab in Lahore.

Part I of this work surveys human development and examines how reason first emerged and then developed for literally thousands if not millions of years — almost its entire lifespan — within a religious context.

This follows Heidegger's suggestion that human reason chooses among different paths at critical junctures, thereby developing some capabilities while leaving others undeveloped. Hence the real way forward, he suggests, is not incremental steps along the pathways already developed, but a step back to take up different possibilities not yet explored.

In this light we begin by returning to the initial totemic and then mythic stages of human awareness to see if and in what way these were religious in content, method and character. This will constitute an archeology of human consciousness, after which we shall proceed to investigate the religious structure of participation in the philosophy of Graeco-Christian and Islamic thought. For more extensive studies of these issues the reader is referred to my *Ways to God: The Iqbal Lecture* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), where separate chapters are devoted to these themes which here are sketched more schematically.

This provides the context for the main burden of this work which concerns directly the issue of faith and reason and is axised on two crises.

Part II departs from the medieval crisis of al-Ghazali as described in his *Munqid* and follows with the interchange of related work in the Christian and Islamic thought, especially that of Thomas Aquinas and Mulla Sadra.

Part III concerns the present crisis of faith and reason generated by disillusionment with Enlightenment rationalism at the end of the 20th century. Reversing both the modern rejection of religion by reason and the recent "post-modern" drive to dismiss reason, the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* calls instead for a renewal of reason on a more integral bases. Long dismissed by reason as inadequately enlightened, it is religion which now affirms the dignity of humankind and the high mission of reason in time.

Part IV looks for the meaning both of philosophy for faith and of faith for philosophy.

Parts I-III are the series of lectures delivered at the University of the Punjab beginning with the Iqbal lecture, to which is adjoined lecture on Mulla Sadra prepared for the conference on his thought in Tehran.

Part IV consists of three related lectures on faith and reason delivered at the al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, at Mofid University in Qum, Iran, and at People's University of China, Beijing on the occasion of the renaming of its Department of Philosophy as "The Department of Philosophy and Religion".

To these are appended the encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason) of Sept 14, 1998, by Pope John Paul II. In it he studies the present juncture and rethinks in positive terms the relation of faith and reason and their mutual complementarity and contributions.

Chapter I

An Archeology of Reason as Inherently Religious

In the modern secular context the foundational religious meaning of life has been extensively forgotten. Instead, the rare and quite recent phenomenon of a world view precinding from, or neutral to, the divine has come to be taken as the honest baseline from which the religious issue should be considered. For Mohammed Iqbal this is quite out of the question, analogous to defining the mind on the basis of but one (the analytic) of its limited processes. Hence, he does not go far in the first chapter of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* before stating as its principle what the *Vedanta Sutra* exemplified both in its text and in its structure, namely, that: "It is in fact the presence of the total infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible."¹ The genius of his work is its powerful and intricate elaboration of this theme.

To begin, in a typically brief but pregnant aside Iqbal notes that "to the primitive man all experience was supernatural."² Rather than being simply a referee to dead facts from the past, this points to the total cumulative human experience regarding the essential importance of religion as manifested by human life. It suggests, moreover, the common ground needed by the many cultures as they begin to interact more intensively. It is then the place to begin.

From earliest times human thought has always and everywhere had a sacred center. It is possible to track the evolution of this constant awareness by relating it to the three dimensions of the human mind. The first is the external senses of sight, touch and the like by which one receives information from the external world. The second is the internal sense of imagination and memory by which one assembles the received data. This is done in a manner which enables it to represent the original whole from which the various senses draw their specific data, to represent these and other data in various combinations, and/or to recall this at a later time. Finally, beyond the external and internal senses is the intellect by which one knows the nature of things and judges regarding their existence.³

Not surprisingly, upon examination it appears that the actual evolution of human awareness of the sacred follows this sequence of one's natural capacities for knowledge. In all cases it is intellectual knowledge that is in play, for religious awareness concerns not the characteristics or shapes of sensible objects, but existence and indeed the one who gave his name as "I am Who Am". This was articulated successively, first in terms of the external senses in the totemic stage of thought, then in terms of the internal sense in the mythic period, and finally in properly intellectual terms as the origin of philosophy or science.⁴

To follow this evolution it should be noted that for life in any human society as a grouping of persons there is a basic need to understand oneself and one's relation to others. It should not be thought that these are necessarily two questions, rather than one. They will be diversely formalized in the history of philosophy, but prior to any such formalization, indeed prior even to the capacity to formalize this as a speculative problem, some mode of lived empathy rather than antipathy must be possible. Plato later worked out formally and in detail that the unity of the multiple is possible only on the basis of something that is one, but the history of human life manifests that present in the awareness of the early peoples and according to their mode of awareness there always has been some one reality in terms of which they understood all to be related.

Totemic Thought (see Chapter II of *Ways to God*)

The primitive or foundational mode of self-understanding was totemic. The earliest understanding by peoples of themselves and their unity with others and with nature was expressed in terms of some objects of the external senses, such as an animal or bird. Peoples spoke of themselves by simple identity with the animal or bird which was the totem of their clan. Levy-Bruhl expressed this in a law of participation: persons were in some way both themselves and their totem. They saw themselves not merely as in some manner like, or descendent from, their totem, but instead asserted directly, e.g., "I am lion." In these terms they founded their identity and dignity, considered themselves bound to all others who had the same totem, and understood by analogy of their totem with that of other tribes the relations between their two peoples for marriage and the like.⁵

Moreover, the totem, in turn, was not simply one animal among others, but was in a sense limitless: no matter how many persons were born to the tribe the potentiality or resources of the totem was never exhausted — without limit there was always room for one more. Further, the totem was shown special respect, such as not being sold, used for food or other utilitarian purposes which would make it subservient to the individual members of the tribe or clan. Whereas other things might be said to be possessed and used, the totem was the subject of direct predication: one might say that he had a horse or other animal, but only of the totem would one say that he is, e.g., lion.

This concept brings important insight to the question of unity and distinctiveness which has so divided the modern mind as characterized by a rationalist and analytic mode of thinking. The totem is not one in a series, but the unique reality in which each and all have their being — and, by the same token, their unity with all else.

This is the key to social unity. Each is not indifferent to all else or related only externally or accidentally to others in terms of temporal or spatial coincidence or functional service. Rather all are in principle and by their very being united to all, to whom they are naturally and mutually meaningful. Hence, one cannot totally subject anybody or indeed any thing to one's own purpose; one cannot take things merely as means in a purely functional or utilitarian manner. Instead, all persons are brothers or sisters and hence essentially social. This extends as well to nature in an ecological sensitivity which only now is being recuperated.

What is impressive in this is that all are united but without the loss of individuality that has been the case in modern collectivisms. Instead, each individual, rather than being suppressed, has meaning in the unity of the totem. Hence, nothing one does is trivial, for every act is related to the whole. No one is subservient as a tool or instrument; all are members of the whole. As each act stands in relation to the whole whose meaning it reflects, everything is of great moment. There is justice and there are taboos, for there are standards which are not to be compromised.

What then should be said of the totem as the key to a meaning in which all participate: is it religious, is it divine? Some would answer in the affirmative and for a number of reasons:

- it is the key to the unity of persons, recalling the religious statement of the brotherhood of man in the fatherhood of God;
- it has the absolute meaning of the religious center: the one God of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism;
- it is the key to the sacred meaning and dignity of all.

In all these ways the totem is the religious center.

Perhaps, however, it might be called proto-religious, in that while this principle of unity, though privileged and not reducible to humans, is not explicitly appreciated as being distinct from, and transcending the contents of this world.

On the other hand, the effort of the mystic at the high end of the religious spectrum is precisely to overcome the separation of human from God. The direction is immanent, namely, to unite one's life with the divine, and to do so perhaps less by achieving transcendence than by entering more deeply into the center of one's own interiority. In this light totemic thought emerges in its true importance as something not to be escaped from, but to be recaptured and lived in new ways in the midst of our much more complex society and more technically organized world.

This has many of the characteristics of the classical *a posteriori* ways to the existence of God. (a) It began from a reality that did actually exist, namely, the successful and progressive life of peoples through the thousands of centuries which constitute almost the entirety of human experience. (b) It sought the principles of this existence, namely, the content of the understanding which made possible their successful human life. (c) It concluded in that totemic unity and fullness in which people had both their being and their unity. Thus, it established the plenitude of, and participation in, the foundational totem as principle both of the human mind and of social life.

This road differs, however, from the classical five ways of Thomas Aquinas. (a) Being essentially anthropological in character, totemic thought began with people in the primitive stage of their development. (b) Being essentially hermeneutic in method, it attended to the conditions of possibility for the understanding manifested in their life. (c) This combination of anthropological and hermeneutic factors concluded to the plenitude, not as it is in itself, as a cause distinct from its effect — the much later science of metaphysics will be required for that — but only as appreciated by the primitive mind in its totemic mode.

This difference should not be considered to be merely negative. The thought of the primitive is not merely a poorer form of what people in subsequent ages would do better with improved tools. Heidegger indicates the important sense in which especially by returning to the origins important progress can be made.

The totem then was the unique limitless reality in terms of which all particular people and things had their identity and interrelation. It was the sacred center of individual and community life in terms of which all had meaning and cohesion. It made possible the sense of both personal dignity and interpersonal relations, which were the most important aspects of human life. This it did with a sense of direct immediacy that would be echoed, but never surpassed, in subsequent stages of more formally religious thought.

Whether this be seen as religious or proto-religious, what it shows is that religion is not something added to a secular universe, but the basic and essential insight of even the simplest forms of human community. The issue then is not whether there be room for religion alongside public life or how to protect one from the other, but how religion functions as the root of human meaning and community.

Mythic Thought (see Chapter III of *Ways to God*)

It is in the mythic stage of thinking that the explicitly religious element of the gods appears. Here it is important to see whether this is an external addition to, or imposition upon, prior thinking or whether it is the unfolding or flowering of religious elements already there from the beginning.

The totem was able to provide for unity and meaning while the life of all members of the tribe remained similar. But its manner of expressing unity became insufficient as society became more

specialized and differentiated. The bonds between members of the tribe came to depend not merely upon similarity and sameness, but upon the differentiated capabilities of, e.g., hunters, fishers and eventually farmers. With this ability to be both united and differentiated came an appreciation as well of the special distinctiveness of the sacred with regard to the many individuals of which it was the principle and center. What in totemic thought previously had been stated simply by identity (I am lion) could now be appreciated as greater than, and transcending, the members of the tribe. This is reflected in the development of priesthood, rituals and symbols to reflect what was no longer seen simply as one's deepest identity but as the principle thereof.⁶

Such a reality could no longer be stated in terms corresponding to the external senses, but needed instead to be figured by the imagination. The terms drawn originally from the senses now were reconfigured in forms that expressed life above humankind and which stood as the principle of human life. Such higher principles, as the more knowing and having a greater power of will, would be personal; and as transcendent persons, they would be gods.

It would be incorrect then to consider this, as did Freud and Marx, to be simply a projection of human characteristics. On the contrary, the development of the ability to think in terms shaped by the imagination released human appreciation of the principle of life from the limitations of animals, birds and other natural entities available to the intellect held to working in terms of the external senses and allowed the transcendence of the principle of unity to be expressed in a more effective manner. This was not to create the sense of transcendence; rather it allowed the unique and essential foundation of human meaning of which Iqbal spoke to find new expression in terms of the evolving capabilities of human consciousness.

Of this the *Theogony*,⁷ written by Hesiod (ca. 776 B.C.), is especially indicative. Because the gods stated the reality of the various parts of nature, when Hesiod undertook to state how these were interrelated he in effect articulated the unity and interrelation of all in terms of the divine, which is the basic sense of religion.

His work has a number of important characteristics. First, it intends to state the highest possible type of knowledge. Thus, it begins with an invocation to the Muses to provide him with divine knowledge: "These things declare to me from the beginning, ye Muses who dwell in the house of Olympus."⁸ Secondly and correspondingly, it is concerned with the deepest issues, namely, the origin and unity of all things: "Tell me which of them came first" he asked, and then proceeded to a poetic delineation of the most important religious issues, from the justification of the divine reign (later named "theodicy" by Leibniz) to the understanding of evil.⁹ Thirdly, because it was written as the period of purely mythic thought was drawing to a close — within two centuries of the initiation of philosophy in Greece — Hesiod was able to draw upon the full resources of the body of Greek mythology, weaving the entire panoply of the gods into the structure of his poem. He collected and related the gods not externally in a topographical or chronological sequence, but in terms of their inner reality and real order of dependence. Thus, when in the *Theogony* he responds to the question: "how, at the first, gods and earth came to be," his ordering of the gods wed theogony and cosmogony to constitute a unique mythical religious understanding regarding the unity and diversity of all.

The order of the parts of the universe is the following. The first to appear was Chaos: "Verily at the first Chaos came to be." Then came earth: "but next wide-bosomed Earth the ever sure foundation of all," and starry Heaven: "Earth first bare starry Heaven, equal to herself." From Earth, generally in unison with Heaven, were born Oceanus and the various races of Cyclopes and gods, from whom, in turn, were born still other gods such as Zeus and the races of men.

The understanding of the unity of reality expressed by this poem is the very opposite of a random gathering of totally disparate, limited and equally original units. On the contrary, the relation between the gods, and hence between the parts of nature they bespeak is expressed in terms of procreation. Hence, every reality is appreciated as related positively to all others in its genetic sequence.

This relatedness of things does not depend upon a later and arbitrary decision, but is equally original with their very reality; indeed, it is their reality. Neither is it something which involves only certain aspects of the components of the universe: it extends to their total actuality. This includes actions: Rhea, for example, appeals to her parents for protection from the acts of her husband, Cronus, against his children. Hence, the understanding which the poem conveys is that of a unity or relation which is the original reality of things and on which their distinctive character and actions depend.

This unity is understood to be by nature prior to diversity for it appears through a genetic structure in which each god proceeds from the union of an earlier pair of gods, while all such pairs are descendents of the one original pair, Earth and Heaven. Further, the procreation of the gods proceeds from each of these pairs precisely as united in love, under the unitive power of Eros who is equally original with heaven and earth.

From what has been said we can conclude that unity pervades and precedes gods and men. All is traced back to Earth and Heaven as the original pair from whose union, under the impetus of Eros, all is generated. But what is the relation between Heaven and Earth? This question is at the root of the issue of unity as expressed in mythic terms. It promises to be able to take us to a still deeper and more properly religious understanding if we return to the text and use the proper etymological tools.

The text states the following sequence: Chaos, Earth, Heaven. Unfortunately, since the Stoics, Chaos has come to mean disorder and mindless conflict or collision. Aristotle, however, in his *Physics* referred to chaos as empty space (*topos*).¹⁰ Etymologically, the term can be traced through the root of the Greek term 'casko' to the common Indo-European stem, 'gap'. This stem was employed in a manner similar to a sonar signal in order to sound out mythic thought across the broad range of the Indo-European peoples. The term was found to express a gaping abyss at the beginning of time as for example the derivative 'ginungagap' in Nordic mythology.¹¹ Kirk and Raven confirm this analysis and conclude that 'chaos' meant, not a state of confusion or conflict, but an open and perhaps windy space which essentially is between boundaries.¹²

Returning to the text of the *Theogony* in this light, it will be noted that it does not say "In the beginning" or speak directly of a state prior to Chaos, but begins with Chaos: "At first Chaos came to be". But there is no suggestion that Chaos was the original reality; on the contrary, the text is explicit that chaos came to be: "*He toi men prôtista Cháos genet.*"¹³ Further, Chaos is a space to which boundaries are essential. These, it would seem, are the gods which the text states just after Chaos, namely, Earth and its equal, Heaven. These are not said to have existed prior to chaos and to have been brought into position in order to constitute the boundaries of the 'gap'; rather, they are said somehow to follow upon or be arranged on the basis of chaos.

Thus, Kirk and Raven understand the opening verses of the body of the text, namely, "Verily at the first Chaos came to be, but next wide-boomed Earth . . . and Earth first bare starry Heaven equal to herself" in an active sense to express the opening of a gap or space, which thereby gives rise to Heaven and Earth as its two boundaries.¹⁴

For its intelligibility, this implies: (a) that an undifferentiated unity precedes the gap, and (b) that by opening or division the first contrasting realities, namely, Heaven and Earth, were

constituted. That is, on the basis of the gap one boundary, Heaven, is differentiated from the other boundary, Earth: by the gap the boundaries identically are both constituted and differentiated as contraries. As all else are derivatives of Chaos, Earth and Heaven in the manner noted above, it can be concluded that the entire differentiated universe is derivative of an original undifferentiated unity which preceded Chaos.

It would be premature, however, to ask of the mythic mind whether this derivation took place by material or efficient causality; that question must await the development of philosophy. But the original reality itself is not differentiated; it is an undivided unity. As such it is without name, for the names we give reflect our sense perceptions which concern not what is constant and homogenous, but the differentiated bases of the various sense stimuli. What is undifferentiated is not only unspoken in fact, but unspeakable in principle by the language of myth which depends essentially upon the imagination.

Nonetheless, though it is unspeakable by the mythic mind itself, reflection can uncover or reveal something of that undifferentiated reality which the *Theogony* implies. We have, for instance, noted its reality and unity. This lack of differentiation is not a deficiency, but a fullness of reality and meaning from which all particulars and contraries are derived. It is unspeakable because not bounded, limited and related after the fashion of one imaged contrary to another. This is the transcendent fullness that is at the heart of the Hindu *advaita* or nondual philosophy; it is also the total infinite to which Iqbal referred as that which makes finite thinking possible.

It is the source of that which is seen and spoken in our language which is based in the imagination and which Hindu thought refers to as the world of names and forms. Further, it is the source, not only whence the differentiated realities are derived, but of the coming forth itself of these realities. This is reflected in three significant manners. First positively, Eros, which itself is said to come from chaos, is the power which joins together in procreative union the pairs of gods, thereby reflecting the dynamic, manifestive and sharing character of the undifferentiated reality.

Negatively, this is indicated also by the acts which the *Theogony* describes as evil. For example, it says that "Heaven rejoiced in his evil doing", namely, hiding away his children in a secret place of Earth as soon as each was born, and not allowing them to come into the light. Cronus is termed "a wretch" for swallowing his children. In each case evil is described as impeding the process by which new realities are brought into existence. This implies that its opposite, the good, involves essentially bringing forth the real. The undifferentiated unity is the origin of the multiple and differentiated; in terms we shall encounter below, it is participative.

Finally, it can now be seen that all the progeny, that is, all parts of the universe and all humans, are born into the unity of a family. This traces its origin, not to a pair of ultimately alien realities and certainly not to human chaos as conflict, but to the undifferentiated Unity. Just as there is no autogenesis, there is no unrelated reality or aspect of reality. It would seem, then, that verses 118-128 of the hymn imply a reality which is one, undifferentiated and therefore unspeakable, but productive of the multiple and therefore generous and sharing. For the Greek mythic mind then, beings are more one than many, more related than divided, more complementary than contrasting.

As a transformation of the earlier totemic structure, mythic understanding continues the basic totemic insight regarding the related character of all things predicated upon a unity and fullness of meaning. By thinking in terms of the gods, however, myth is able to add a number of important factors. First, quantitatively the myth can integrate, not only a certain tribe or number of tribes, but the entire universe. Second, qualitatively it can take account of such intentional realities as purpose and fidelity. Third, while implying the unitive principle which had been expressed with shocking

directness in totemic thought ("I am lion"), it adds the connotation of its unspeakable and undifferentiated, but generous, character.

The expression of all this in terms of the forms available to the mythic internal sense of imagination had its temptations. These were pointed out by Xenophanes who noted that by the time of Homer and Hesiod a perfervid imagination had gone from expressing the transcendence of the gods to attributing to them as well the many forms of evil found among men:¹⁵ the very principles of meaning and value had begun to point as well to their opposites. Thinking in terms of the imagination was no longer sufficient. Instead, the intellect needed to proceed in its own terms, beyond sense and imagination, to enable the deeper sense of the divine and of nature to be expressed and defended against confusion and corruption. As the mind proceeded to operate in properly intellectual terms, rather than through the images of mythic thinking, science and philosophy replaced myth as the basic mode of human understanding.

Parmenides's Metaphysics of the Changeless, Eternal One (see Chapter V of *Ways to God*)

Once begun, philosophy made spectacularly rapid progress. Within but a few generations, the human intellect had worked out a structure of the physical world using the basic categories of hot and cold, wet and dry available to the external senses, along with mechanisms of vortex motion.¹⁶ Mathematical reason worked with the internal senses to lay down the basic theorems of geometry.¹⁷ In brief, by developing properly intellectual terms the Greeks elaborated with new and hitherto unknown precision insights regarding physical reality.

But that had never been the root human issue. Totemic and mythic thought were not merely ways of understanding and working with nature, although they did that as well. Fundamentally they concerned the metaphysical and religious issues of what it meant to be, the transcendent divine basis of life, and the religious terms in which it needed to be lived in time. After the work of others in conceptualizing the physical and mathematical orders, Parmenides was able to take up the most basic questions of life and being in properly intellectual metaphysical terms.

First, he bound the work of the intellect directly to being: "It is the same thing to think and to be" (fragment 3).¹⁸ Hence, the requirements of thinking would manifest those of being. Second, he contrasted being with its opposite, nonbeing, as something in contrast to nothing at all (fragment 2). This principle of non-contradiction was a construct of the mind; like 2π in geometry it was something good to think with, for it enabled the mind to reflect upon the requirements of both being and mind so as to avoid anything that would undermine their reality.

Speaking still in a mythic language, the Proemium of Parmenides' famous poem described a scene in which he was awakened by goddesses and sent in a chariot drawn by a faithful mare along the arching highway that spans all things. In this process he moved from obscurity to light, from opinion to truth. There the gates were opened by the goddess, Justice, as guardian of true judgements, and he was directed to examine all things in order to discern the truth.

Parmenides then images himself proceeding further along the highway¹⁹ till he comes to a fork with one signpost pointing toward being as essentially beginning. Here, Parmenides must reason regarding the implications of such a route. As "to begin" means to move from nonbeing or nothingness to being, were "to be" to include "to begin" that would mean that being included within its very essence *nonbeing* or nothingness. There would then be no difference between being and nothing; being would be without meaning; the real would be nothing at all. If conversely, from this notion of beginning such nonbeing is removed then it emerges as essentially not beginning, but eternal. This is the first requirement of being: the possibility of taking the fork which would

have being as essentially beginning is excluded; being is by nature eternal and all that does begin can do so only in derivation therefrom. In economics not only would all debts be eliminated, but all assets as well; in speech to affirm something would be the same as to deny it. Among persons everyone would be treated as non-existent. The same would be true in the realm of meaning: absolute nihilism would darken the earth. Being then must not be of the nature of change, but unchanging; that is, being as such is and in no way is not.

The chariot then moves along the highway of being and the procedure is analogous at the two subsequent forks in the road where the signposts tempt one to consider being as changing and multiple, respectively. Each of these, Parmenides reasons, would again place nonbeing within being itself, thereby destroying its very character as being. Nonbeing is contained in the notion of change, inasmuch as a changing being is *no* longer what it had been and *not* yet what it will become. But for such nonbeing to pertain to the essence of being would destroy being. When, however, nonbeing is removed then being emerges as unchanging. Similarly, nonbeing is essential to the notion of multiplicity, inasmuch as this requires that one being *not* be the other. When, however, nonbeing is removed what emerges is one. These then are the characteristics of being: it is infinite and eternal, unchanging and one.

Being itself then transcends the multiple and changing world in which we live: it is in a manner more perfect than could possibly be appreciated in the graphic terms of the internal senses of imagination which defined the nature of human capabilities in the stage of myth.

In this way Parmenides discerned the necessity of Absolute, eternal and unchanging being — whatever be said of anything else. Neither being nor thought makes sense if being is the same as nonbeing, for then to do, say or be anything would be the same as not doing, not saying or not being, respectively. As the real is irreducible to nothing and being is irreducible to nonbeing — as it must be if there is any thing or any meaning whatsoever — then being must have about it the self-sufficiency expressed by Parmenides's notion of the absolute One.

A person can refuse to look at this issue and focus upon particular aspects of limited realities. But if one confronts the issue of being it leads to the Self-sufficient as the creative source of all else. Without this all limited beings would be radically compromised — not least, man himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that Aristotle would conclude his *Metaphysics* as a search for the nature of being with a description of divine life and call the whole a "theology".²⁰

The issue then is not how the notion of the divine entered human thought; it has always been there, for without that which is One and Absolute in the sense of infinite and self-sufficient man and nature would be at odds; humankind would lack social cohesion; indeed, thinking would be the same as not thinking, just as being would be the same as nonbeing.

From the above archeology of human thought in its totemic, mythic and first philosophical stages it can be concluded with Iqbal that it has been religious insight regarding the Absolute which has made finite thinking possible. Leaving home and going deeply into the past thus brings us home to reconstruct the deep truth of faith regarding knowledge, namely, not only that it can also be about religion, but that in essence thought itself is the religious reconstitution of all in God: this is what knowledge most fundamentally is.

There are two implications of this archeology which I would like to note here. The first concerns the relation of a people to the message of a prophet. As the basis of the human self-understanding of the different cultures is essentially religious, a divine revelation through a great prophet comes not as alien and conflictual, but as a special divine help to appreciate, purify and strengthen a culture. The message of the prophet evokes the divine life which lies within; it enables each people to plunge more deeply into the infinite ground of their cultural traditions and to bring

out more of its meaning for their life. Indeed, confidence (etymologically rooted in "faith" — confidence) and commitment to one's tradition as grounded in the infinite means precisely expecting it to have even more to say than a people has yet articulated. In this light, the Prophet's voice is a call to delve anew into one's tradition, to bring out more of its meaning for one's times and to live this more fully. This is a voice to which one can respond fully and freely.

In this sense I would take issue with Iqbal's seemingly overly Darwinian description of the first period of religious life as:

"a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of the command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence in so far and the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned."²¹

The archeology of human thought suggests that the response of a people to the message of the prophet is more precisely a renewal and reaffirmation of their deep self-understanding. This is truly a homecoming in whose very essence lies the deep freedom of the peace one experiences in returning home after a long and confusing day. But I suspect that Iqbal would not disagree with this for in reality it is an application to culture of what he concluded regarding thought, namely, that it is made possible by the presence therein of the total infinite.²² This parallels his observation regarding the natural order, namely, that "there is no such thing as a profane world . . . all is holy ground," citing the Prophet: "The whole of this earth is a mosque."²³

A second implication can be of special importance in these times of intensifying communication and interaction between peoples. If the future is to hold not Huntington's conflict of civilizations, but their cooperation in a shrinking world, then it is important to see how the civilizations deriving from prophets and religious traditions can relate one to another. Hermeneutics can be helpful here with its suggestion that in order to delve more deeply it is good to hear not only reformulations of what we ourselves say in our own horizon, but new formulations from other traditions regarding the basically shared truths of our divine origin and goal. As Iqbal is supported by an archeology of knowledge indicating that all knowledge is grounded in the divine, we can expect that religious texts from the traditions of other great prophets will evoke new echoes from the depths of our own tradition. In this light interchange with other traditions comes not as a threat. Rather, cultural interchange can enable us to make our pilgrimages, each more unerringly along our own path, to the one holy mountain²⁴ to which Iqbal refers as the total absolute. Other forms of cooperation can, and indeed must, be built upon this.

Notes

1. See also the edition edited by M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan and Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989), pp. 4-5.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

3. This threefold structure followed both in Aquinas' *Commentary on Boethius' work On the Trinity*, qq. 3 and 5, and Descartes' systematic procedure for placing under doubt all that arises from the three sources of knowledge until what is derived from that source could be certified as true. Aristotle's dictum regarding humans as physical and spiritual held that there is nothing in the intellect which is not first in the senses.

4. Indeed, one might define philosophy and science precisely as knowledge of the various aspects of reality in terms proper to human reason and hence expressive of the nature or existence of the things themselves.

5. L. Levy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), ch. II.

6. *How Natives Think*, ch. XII.

7. Hesiod, *Theogony* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953).

8. Xenophanes, fragments 11, 14-16 in George F. McLean and Patrick J. Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 31.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 4. See also by the same authors, *Ancient Western Philosophy: The Hellenic Emergence* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1971).

10. Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 12-13.

11. *Physics* IV, 1,208b31.

12. Jaeger, p. 13.

13. G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, pp. 26-32.

14. *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. by H.G. Evelyn-White (London: Heinemann, 1920), p. 86.

15. Kirk and Raven, *loc.cit.*

16. Anaximander, fragments, see McLean and Aspell, pp. 22-28.

17. See McLean and Aspell, *Ancient Western Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), ch. III.

18. Parmenides, fragments, see McLean and Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy*, pp. 39-44.

19. Fragment 8; see Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Images, and Argument in the Fragments* (New Haven: Yale, 1970).

20. *Metaphysics*, XII, 7, 1072 b 26-29.

21. Iqbal, p. 143.

22. Iqbal, pp. 4-5.

23. Iqbal, p. 123.

24. Old Testament.

Chapter II

Systematic Graeco-Christian Philosophy

The Greek Background: Participation (see Chapter V of *Ways to God*)

It is no accident that the great figures, Plato (429-348) and Aristotle (384-322), who marked out the major paths in Western philosophy should follow Parmenides in rapid succession. Once directly confronted with the unity of reality and hence with the issue of the reality of differentiation, the Greek mind had either to accept the skeptical position of the sophists which excluded any basis for organized civil life, or to begin some steps toward the resolution of the issue. These steps proceeded along the route of Plato's notion of participation of the many in the One. Based on this some Church Fathers listed Plato among the precursors of Christ, while Whitehead considered all subsequent Western philosophy to be essentially a series of footnotes to Plato's work.

Plato and the Notion of Participation

On the one hand, the search was directed toward those factors by which an individual being is most properly him- or herself. Ultimately this was toward the discovery of non-being in the sense of "not-that-being"¹ by which one thing is not the other: by which Tom is *not* John. Along with being, this type of non-being is a component principle of each one in the order of multiple things in response to Parmenides, Plato saw this as the key to the difference and distinctiveness between beings.

On the other hand, that the community of things is similar or alike requires a source which itself is one. Because John, Agnes and Thomas are alike as humans, their form is not limited to the perfection of any one person, but is able to be participated in by an indefinite number of humans. To participate means to have one's being in derivation from, and hence as image of, absolute Being itself. Hence, I am by imaging or participating; imaging is not what I do, but what I am.

For Plato moreover, the object of the mind is the idea or form as the exemplar which "completely is" all that can be realized in that manner. Similarly, this form is "perfectly knowable."² The many instances are related as images to that one, either as sensible objects or as more to less differentiated forms. What is essential, as is manifest in Plato's later solution of the problems raised in his *Parmenides*, is that the relation of participation (*mimesis* or *methexis*) not be added to the multiple being as already constituted, but be constitutive of them: their reality is precisely to image.

This implies that the original forms are ontological dimensions of reality which transcend the series of concrete individuals. They are spoken of as ideas or forms in contrast to concrete particulars. The highest of these ideas is the Good or the One in which all else share or participate precisely as images thereof.³ This permits a more balanced and less imaginative interpretation of Plato's references in his *Republic* to the "remembering" of ideas. Rather than being taken literally to imply prior states of the soul, they express the personal development of one's awareness of the reality of a higher ontological realm and its significance for one's life. They have memory's directness and certitude, but their source is the Greek *nous*, for they characterize the relation of the intellect to the source of all being and meaning.

By philosophizing in this mode of participation one escapes becoming trapped in the alternative of either constructing personal but arbitrary intellectual schemata, or elaborating an impersonal science. Philosophizing is rather a gradual process of discovery, of entering more deeply into the values which we have in order to comprehend them more clearly in themselves and in their source. Because progressive sharing or participating in this source is the very essence of human growth and development, the work of philosophizing and the religious sensibility implicit in this notion of participation is neither an addenda to life nor merely about life. Rather, as was seen regarding totem and myth, philosophy and religion are central to the process of human growth itself and at the highest level; from this process it draws its primal discoveries.

Aristotle and the Structure of Participation

Though Plato began the philosophical elaboration of the notion of participation, as his method was dialectical he did not construct a system. His terms remained fluid and his dialogues ended with further questions. It was left to his pupil, Aristotle, to develop the means for more rigorous or systematic work in philosophy. For this Aristotle elaborated a formal logic for the strict codification of forms or terms, their cognition in judgements, and the coordination of judgements into patterns of syllogistic reasoning. With this tool he was able to outline the pattern of the sciences which have played so dominant a role in the Western world to this day.

Further, whereas Plato's philosophy of participation as imaging had been conducive to using "reflections" or shadows, e.g., of trees on the surface of a stream, as a simile of the physical world,⁴ this appeared to Aristotle to threaten the reality of the material and differentiated universe. Hence, he soon abandoned the use of the term "participation" and gave great attention to the changing of physical things, which he saw to be the route to the discovery of the active character of forms and being. By a careful coordination of the sciences of the physical world through a study of their general principles and causes in the *Physics*, and by relating the *Physics* to the *Metaphysics*, he clarified the relation of all changing things to a first principle. This principle is described in *Metaphysics XII* as subsistent knowledge and divine life.⁵ To this all things are related as to their ultimate final cause which they imitate, each according to its own nature. Thus, the source, if not the system, of participation received important philosophical elaboration.

This notion of participation according to which the many derive their being from the One which they manifest and toward which they are oriented and directed would subsequently provide the basic model for what the Chinese refer to as "outer" transcendence or the relation of creatures to God. In Plato's thought, however, the order of forms was relatively passive, rather than active. Hence, the supreme One or Good was the passive object of contemplation by the highest soul, which was conscious and active. Most scholars, therefore, consider that in Plato's thought the highest Soul or the one who contemplates in Plato's thought, rather than the highest One or Good upon which it contemplates, to correspond to his notion of God.

Aristotle's philosophy, in contrast, began with changing beings available to the senses and discovered that such being must be composed of the principles of form as act and of matter as potency. As a result, his sense of being was axised upon form as a principle of act in the process of active physical change — which literally was "trans-formation". Consequently, when in his *Metaphysics* he undertook the search for the nature of being or what was meant by being, he tracked this from accidents such as colors which can exist only in something else to substances which exist in themselves. Inevitably, this same process led him to the highest of such substances which is or exists in the most perfect manner, that is, as knowing and indeed as knowing on

knowing itself (*noesis noeseos*). This he referred to as life divine.⁶ It is the culmination of his philosophy because it brings him to the very heart of the order of being — the goal of being and acting — and, hence, of reality itself. Joseph Owens⁷ would conclude from his investigation of being as the subject of Aristotle's metaphysics that for Aristotle being was primarily the one Absolute Being and was extended to all things by a *pros hen* analogy; that is, all things are beings precisely to the extent that they stand in relation to the Absolute and divine One, which transcends all else.

In Aristotle's philosophy being was primarily substance; what changed was the composite or *synolon* of form and matter; substance was not the composite but the form only.⁸ As a result, his detailed scientific or systematic process of coordinating various types of being and identifying their principles was predicated upon forms according to their capacity for abstract universalization. The physical universe could be understood only as an endless cycle of formation and dissolution, of which the individual was but a function. Therefore, the freedom and significance of the individual were not adequately accounted for.

Further, while the individual's actions were stimulated and patterned — each in its own way — upon the one objectless Knower (*noesis noeseos*) as final cause, the many individuals were not caused thereby, derived therefrom or known by that principle of all meaning. Thus, though intense human concern is expressed in hellenic dramas which reflect the heritage of human meaning as lived in the family and in society, Greek philosophic understanding was much more specialized and restricted, particularly as regards the significance of the person.

More could not be expected while being was understood in terms of form alone. If, however, the meaning of the human person in this world of names and forms is of key importance today in both East and West; if the protection and promotion of the person become increasingly problematic as our cultures become more industrialized, technological and global; and if the search for freedom and human rights is central to our contemporary search to realize a decent society — then it will be necessary to look to further developments of the notion of being and of divine life. These will create higher levels of equilibria by retrieving and making explicit more of what was meant by Parmenides's One than had been articulated in the Greek philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Indeed, the fact that the thought of Plato and Aristotle was not brought into synthesis by Aristotle himself suggests that it simply was not possible to do so in terms of being as understood merely as form, as was the case in those times. Thus, in order to draw upon the full contribution of both Plato's notion of participation and Aristotle's systematic structures it is necessary to look to a later equilibrium predicated upon a significantly deepened understanding of being, namely, being not as form, but as existing.

The Christian Church Fathers: The Discovery of Existence (see Chapter V of *Ways to God*)

Iqbal sees as key to religious reconstruction the overcoming of the relatively passive sense of reality found in the formal order characteristic of the Platonic strain of thought, and also reflected in modern rationalism. In that light limited realities passively replicate the archetypal forms or ideas, but add nothing new; finite reality is drained of its vitality and reduced to a shadow. Instead, Iqbal calls for a return to the active character of reality. As we shall see below this is the same call issued almost stridently by Mulla Sadra, as an archetype of Islamic philosophy. The emergence of being as existence took place in the early Christian Fathers and characterized the thought of Thomas. In order to follow the flowering of reason as the articulation of life in God we must now turn to these sources.

Although Greek philosophy grew out of an intensive mythic sense of life in which all was a reflection of the will of the gods, it nonetheless presupposed matter always to have existed. As a result, the focus of its attention and concern was upon the forms by which matter was determined to be of one type rather than another. For Aristotle, physical or material things in the process of change from one form to another were the most manifest realities and his philosophizing began therefrom. This approach to philosophy beginning from sense encounters with physical beings corresponded well to our human nature as mind and body, and could be extended to the recognition of divine life. But Iqbal wants more; for him "it is in fact the presence of the total infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible." The Greek philosophical awareness of what it meant to be real would need considerable enrichment in order to appreciate the foundational significance for human thought of its grounding in a fully transcendent and infinite Being.

It was just here that the development of the prophetic Judeo-Christian context had an especially liberating effect upon philosophy. By applying to the Greek notion of matter the Judeo-Christian heritage regarding the complete dominion of God over all things, the Church Fathers opened human consciousness to the fact that matter, too, depended for its reality upon God. Thus, before Plotinus, who was the first philosopher to do so, the Fathers already had noted that matter, even if considered eternal, stood also in need of an explanation of its origin.⁹

This enabled philosophical questioning to push beyond issues of form, nature or kind to existence and, hence, to deepen radically the sense of reality. If what must be explained is no longer merely the particular form or type of beings, but matter as well, then the question becomes not only how things are of this form or that kind, but how they exist rather than not exist. In this way the awareness of being evolved beyond change or form; to be real would mean to exist and whatever is related thereto. Quite literally, "To be or not to be" had become the question.

By the same stroke, our self-awareness and will were deepened dramatically. They no longer were restricted to focusing upon choices between various external material objects and modalities of life — the common but superficial contemporary meaning of what Adler terms a circumstantial freedom of self-realization — nor even to Kant's choosing as one ought after the manner of an acquired freedom of self-perfection; all this remains within the context of being as nature or essence. The freedom opened by the conscious assumption and affirmation of one's own existence was rather a natural freedom of self-determination with responsibility for one's very being.¹¹

One might follow the progression of this deepening awareness of being by reflecting upon the experience of being totally absorbed in the particularities of one's job, business, farm or studies — the prices, the colors, the chemicals — and then encountering an imminent danger of death, the loss of a loved one or the birth of a child. At the moment of death, as at the moment of birth, the entire atmosphere and range of preoccupations in a hospital room shifts dramatically, being suddenly transformed from tactical adjustments for limited objectives to confronting existence, in sorrow or in joy, in terms that plunge to the center of the whole range of meaning. (This can be stated in social terms as described in *Ways to God*, Chapter 9.) Such was the effect upon philosophy when the awareness of being developed from attention to merely this or that *kind* of reality, to focus upon the act of existence in contrast to non-existence, and hence to human life in all its dimensions and, indeed, to life divine.

Cornelio Fabro goes further. He suggests that this deepened metaphysical sense of being in the early Christian ages not only opened the possibility for an enriched sense of freedom, but itself was catalyzed by the new sense of freedom proclaimed in the religious message. That message focused not upon Plato's imagery of the sun at the mouth of the cave from which external

enlightenment might be derived, but upon the eternal Word or Logos through and according to which all things received their existence and which enlightened their consciousness life:

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

...

That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.¹²

Thus the power of being bursts into time through creator and prophet:

- it directs the mind beyond the ideological poles of species and individual interests, and beyond issues of place or time as limited series or categories;
- it centers, instead, upon the unique reality of the person as a participation in the creative power of God, a being bursting into existence, who is and cannot be denied;
- it rejects being considered in any sense as nonbeing, or being treated as anything less than its full reality;
- it is a self or in Iqbal's term an 'ego', affirming its own unique actuality and irreducible to any specific group identity; and
- it is image of God for whom life is sacred and sanctifying, a child of God for whom to be is freely to dispose of the power of new life in brotherhood with all humankind.¹³

Thomas Aquinas and the Existential Synthesis (See Chapter VI of *Ways to God*)

It took a long time for the implications of this new appreciation of existence and its meaning to germinate and find its proper philosophic articulation. Over a period of many centuries the term 'form' was used to express both the kind or nature of things and the new sense of being as existence. As the distinction between the two was gradually clarified, however, proper terminology arose in which that by which a being is of this or that kind came to be expressed by the term 'essence,' while the act of existence by which a being simply is was expressed by 'existence' (*esse*).¹⁴ The relation between the two was under intensive, genial discussion by the Islamic philosophers when their Greek tradition in philosophy was abrogated.

This question was resolved soon thereafter in the work of Thomas Aquinas through a real distinction which rendered most intimate the relation of the two principles as act and potency and opened a new and uniquely active sense of being. This is not to say that Ghazali was wrong in opposing Averroes or that Islam was wrong in choosing the side of Ghazali in this dispute. Aquinas also had to overcome the Latin Aerrorists in the course of his intellectual battles in Paris. But Mulla Sadra's and Iqbal's intuition of the central importance of reasoning in terms of being as actively existing suggests the importance of this in the unfolding of human awareness as the evolution of the religious vision both of God and of the reality of the human person and of society as participations therein. This is the heart of the classical Christian philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (see Chapter VI of *Ways to God*) who developed the technical tools for a religious understanding in God of human life in this world. Here I should like to stress the important way in which this

provides for the dignity and proper autonomy of the human person while locating the source of this dignity as participation in the divine.

1. The focus upon being as active had profound implications for the understanding of man in God. It had crucial importance for the sense of the divine itself. In Plato's more passive vision the divine as active would be situated below the idea of the Good or the One which were objects of contemplation. We saw how taking being in a more active sense allowed Aristotle to appreciate divine life as an active thinking on thinking.

Iqbal and the Islamic tradition rightly feared that this notion, as a product of human reasoning, would be essentially limited and limiting. This is his incisive and trenchant critique of the cosmological and other modes of reasoning to God. Certainly reasoning in terms of forms and categories would be subject to this critique, but, as just noted, being had come to be perceived rather in terms of existence, which is affirmation without negation and hence without limitation.

Nevertheless, Iqbal makes a key contribution to any appropriate reading of a systematic Christian philosophy by insisting that the notion of God is not a product of human reasoning. Rather, as seen above through the archeology of human knowledge, the absolute is there as the center of human life in its earliest totemic mode; it flowers as humankind develops the mythic mode of thought; and it is there from the beginning in Parmenides's founding of Greek metaphysical thought. As Augustine notes in his dialectic of love: it is not we who first loved God, but He who first loved us: from him come life and light and love.

Viewed in this perspective, the classical "five ways" to God have been largely misunderstood. They are not proofs for the existence of God, much less ways of constructing the reality of God. Instead they are ways in which all things are bound back to God (*re-ligio* as one of the etymologies of 'religion'), whether they be considered in terms of their origin, of their level of being, or their goal, purpose or meaning. Despite his critique of the cosmological arguments, Iqbal seems to intuit this when he writes that their true significance will appear only "if we are able to show that the human situation is not final."¹⁵

In this light, one need not fear that an affirmation of man whether by personal freedom or technological means will be detrimental to religion. Rather human life becomes the proclamation of God's wisdom, power, love and providence. On this basis Thomas proceeds systematically to shed the requirement not only of an external agent intellect, but also of a special divine illumination for each act of reason, and of seeds of possibility for all new realizations — all of which were ways by which the earlier Christian-Platonism had attempted to preserve a role for God in human progress. Instead the human person is seen as sacrament of God, His sign and symbol, as creative vice regent and artist in and of this world. Thus, Thomas does not hesitate to affirm of the human person whatever is required in order that, properly according to his own nature and in his own name, the person be able to fulfill these roles in this world. This is the proper autonomy of the human in the divine; we might say that in this the human person comes truly home in God.

2. The existential sense of being and its openness to the infinite has allowed more recently for a renewed appreciation of Thomas' structure of participation by which human autonomy is an affirmation, rather than a derogation of God. In any limited being, its essence or nature constitutes by definition a limited and limiting capacity for existence: by it, the being is capable of this much existence, but of no more. Such an essence must then be distinct from the existence which, of itself, bespeaks only affirmation, not negation and limitation.

But such a being, whose nature or essence is not existence but only a capacity for existence, could not of itself or by its own nature justify its possession and exercise of existence. The Parmenidean principle of noncontradiction will not countenance existence coming from non-existence, for then being would be reducible to non-being or nothing. Such beings, then, are dependent precisely for their existence, that is, precisely as beings or existents.

This dependence cannot be upon another limited being similarly composed of a distinct essence and existence, for such a being would be equally dependent; the multiplication of such dependencies even infinitely would multiply, rather than answer the question of how composite beings with a limiting essence have existence. Hence, limited composite beings must depend for their existence upon, or participate in, uncomposite being, that is, in a being whose essence or nature, rather than being distinct from and limiting its existence, is identically existence. This is Being Itself — the total infinite to which Iqbal refers as making finite being and thinking possible.

That uncomposite Being is simple, the One par excellence; it is participated in by all multiple and differentiated beings for their existence. The One, however, does not itself participate; it is the unlimited, self-sufficient, eternal and unchanging Being which Parmenides had shown alone was required for being. "Limited and composite beings are by nature relative to, participate in, and caused by the unique simple and incomposite being which is Absolute, unparticipated and uncaused."¹⁶

This sense of participation makes it possible to speak of the nonreciprocal relation of finite to infinite and to identify the essentially caused character of the former. This is a crucial step beyond the Platonic tradition which rightly can be criticized for failing to develop adequate tools for distinguishing man from God. An existential metaphysics understands causality in terms of participation in the infinite. Hence, even while placing central emphasis upon union with the divine, by its conceptual and ontological structures it never loses sight of their distinction. Nevertheless, through making this distinction it sees every aspect of the caused or created being as totally derivative from, and expressive of, the infinite. Let man be man; indeed let all creatures be, for they glorify God the infinite and all mighty, the munificent and merciful!

As clarified and enriched by Aristotle's sense of being as active, by the Christian existential sense of being and by the work of his great medieval Islamic commentators, Plato's metaphysics of participation can provide the systematic clarification needed regarding religion in order that it be articulated in the increasingly structured physical and social environment in which we live. In the face of the dilemma of human *hubris* vs. religious passivity in our days, this provides indispensable help in responding to the need of those devoted in faith. It can aid them to understand better the relation of their increasingly complex life to God and assist them in living their faith in our times: in a word, it is crucial to coming home and being at home religiously in our times.

Notes

1. Plato, *Sophist*, 259 A.
2. *Ibid.*, 248 E.
3. Plato, *Republic*, 509.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 509-511.
5. *Noesis noeseos*: "Thought thinks itself as object in virtue of its participation in what is thought," *Metaphysics* XII, 1072 b 19-29.
6. *Ibid.*

7. Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being, The Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaval Thought* (Toronto: PIMS, 1951).
8. A. Mansion, "Positions Maitresses de la philosophie d'Aristote," in *Aristote et Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1955), pp. 58-67.
9. G. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Unity of Man in God* (Madras: The University of Madras, 1978), pp. 53-57.
10. Aristotle had taken the compossibility of forms as a sufficient response to the scientific question of 'whether it exists'. See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics; A Study in the Greek Background of Medieval Thought* (Toronto: P.I.M.S., 1978).
11. Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958), I, 609.
12. John I:1-5, 8.
13. C. Fabro called the graded and related manner in which this is realized concretely an intensive notion of being. Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Pub. Univ. de Louvain, 1961).
14. Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica de partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Società Ed. Internazionale, 1950), pp. 75-122.
15. Iqbal, pp. 25.
16. *Ibid.*

Chapter III

Al-Ghazali: A Medieval Crisis of Faith And Reason

Abn Hamed Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Tuse al-Ghazali (450.505 AH/1058-1111 AD) was perhaps the pivotal thinker in turning Islamic thought away from the tradition of Greek philosophical reason.

In order to appreciate the crisis of faith and reason encountered by al-Ghazali it is important to take into account his education under al-Juweyni in Mishapur for it set the epistemology which opened certain routes while closing others. This education had a number of characteristics. First of all and most generally it was intensively religious, built around a strong affirmation of God and the dependence of all upon Him. For al-Juweyni this carried two implications: first that in principle reality is God, and second that any other reality must be understood not only in terms of its proper nature — as, for example, human — but more precisely as God-given.

In the context of the Mutakallimun theology this carried a number of implications. First, there were no finite substances or beings which exist in themselves (*in-se*); instead all must be recreated at each moment. From this it follows also that human actions do not effect or cause things, that is, make them to be; rather on the occasion of human action it is God who brings them about as His effects.

Philosophically, this is called an occasionalism.² Generally and correctly it is considered a metaphysical position regarding the being of effects. What is not so readily recognized, however, is that it has powerful epistemological implications. In Aristotle's logic the syllogism is constructed of two premises which, precisely in combination, cause the conclusion. But if as with occasionalism it is not finite beings but God who causes the effect, then the premises do not cause the conclusion. This results in what is referred to as an "equivalence of proofs": The premises may be wrong but the conclusion would be correct, for there is no necessary connection between them. In this case one could not avoid scepticism with regard to human reasoning.

This position of al-Juweyni was considered by Ibn Khaldün to be the decisive historical turning point in Islamic thought between "the ancients" and "the moderns" for it set strict limits to the role of reasoning. For al-Ghazali it was probably decisive in his choice of the mystical way over that of philosophy. He subjected the latter to severe criticism in his *Tahafut al-Falasifa* while at the same time his skeptical attitude to knowledge left him impervious to rational critique. For what effect could the careful reasoning and trenchant syllogisms of Averroes's *Tahafut al-Falasifa* have had — even had it been published before rather than after the death of Ghazali — if its deductively reasoned proofs were in principle ineffectual. In al-Ghazali's occasionalism the way of philosophy was simply neither available nor retrievable.

Indeed, this was intimated in Ghazali's description of a crisis he underwent before the age of 20. At the time he examined all roads of knowledge in search of certain knowledge, that is, knowledge which held the "soul so bound that nothing could detach it" (a description which would be echoed by Descartes over five centuries later). But when he found himself unable to differentiate the first principles from dreams (also echoed by Descartes) he fell into two months of despair. He soon regained his confidence in reason, but what is significant is that he considered this to be the result not of an objective deductive procedure, but of the light of God projected into his heart — again in the occasionalist manner.

Political Context

Before proceeding to an examination of the personal intellectual history Ghazali recounted in his *Munqidh* it is important to take note of the complex political context in which his life and work were deeply engaged. The political conflict was between the Fatimids and the Abbasids. The Fatimids were shi-ite alides who promoted a batinism stressing the teaching of the Imam (ta'limism). This had swept North Africa and had its capital in Cairo, whence the fatimids desired to achieve supremacy over all of Islam. However the Abbasid caliphs, whose sphere stretched from the Mediterranean east over Iraq, Syria and Khorasam, were Sunnite. In this context Nizam al-Mulk set up as a counter force many schools to teach Sunnite Shafeism and Asharism. The school in Baghdad was the center of this whole system.

Upon the death of al-Juweyni, the education of al-Ghazali was complete and he moved to the camp of Nizam. There he soon became the leading dialectician capable of besting the best minds in the region in spirited — later he would confess to arrogant — argument. As a result, at the age of only 34 (1091/484) he was appointed by the Nizam as director of the school at Baghdad. There he acquired a large and devoted entourage, greater even than that of the Ministers of State. But tragedy would strike the following year in the assassination of Nizam, and by early in the next year Ghazali left Baghdad.

The Munqidh min al-Dalal

A Surface Reading: considered only from the point of view of one interested in the modes of thought of the time, the work presents a review of the different sciences: Kalam, an apologetic approach to theology; philosophy, including both the thought of Plato and Aristotle and that of such Islamic scholars as al-Farabi and Avicenna who drew upon and continued their work; and teaching or ta'alimites according to which all knowledge depended on presentation by the teacher.

Ghazali rejected all of these as unsatisfactory with regard to some very essential matters such as the spiritual nature of man and the union of the human spirit with God. Hence, he turned away from the outward search for objective truth as well as for worldly honors. Instead, he directed his attention inward to subjectivity and the work of the Spirit. There he sought a personal savoring of the truth, achieving thereby an unbreakable union with the divine.

At this point he left Baghdad for Damascus where he spent two years, basically as a hermit and principally in the minaret of the mosque. He continued this retreat for eight more years at home, then returned briefly to teaching; but upon the assassination of the son of Nizam returned finally home. There he opened a small residence for training people in the Sufi way and continue of his studies in *fiqh*.

Though true in its broad lines, there are reasons why this analysis remains too much on the surface and leaves open some crucial misinterpretations with regard to reason. Some would read it in an anti-intellectual light and see either Ghazali's religious experience, Islam in particular or religion in general as an impediment to, or distraction from, knowledge and as unable to take account of human history and to advance with human progress. For others religious fidelity would mean opposing any political program as unfaithful to Islam. Hence it is necessary to take a closer look at the *Munqidh* in order to protect it from misinterpretation and to enable it to provide its proper light for the progress of religion.

Interpretations of the Munqidh: These can proceed on different planes: horizontally they might be social or personal in character, vertically they might be psychological and metaphysical.

a. The political interpretation focuses on the assassination of Nizam and the fear it would have generated in Ghazali.²⁶ It would see his departure from Baghdad not in the spiritual terms in which he depicts it, but rather as fear generated by the assassination of his sponsor, Nizam al-Mulk. Certainly, the Nizamiyya school at Baghdad was the key intellectual battlefield and Ghazali was its key figure. He does not hide the element of fear, which was not unnatural in the circumstances. But Ghazali places it within the context of the much broader and deeper sweep of the challenge of conversion in his life. Undoubtedly, the assassination of the patron of his school was too great and threatening a happening to be ignored, but the *Munqidh*, written when he was an advanced Sufi, naturally describes all in terms of his awareness of the Providence of God, rather than as the mere machinations of humans. The description of his life is in terms of his search for the Way and of what can be communicated of this meaning for a broad class of readers interested in the Way to truth. In these terms the assassinations and other turmoils of his particular time are of marginal importance.

Note that this is not only an individual issue, but one of the Providence of God for all his people. Ghazali looked upon the work of God as supporting the politique of Nizam against the incursions from Cairo. Ultimately, however, the assassination showed him that Providence was not merely political in nature.

It might be noted further that even late in his ten year period of retreat, when he was considering how to respond to the tepidity abroad in Islam, he considered it important to have an authoritative patron. This could be taken as an issue of protection. But it seems more probable that it was considered important as an element in the plan of Nizam to develop an alliance of faith and political power. This would protect against Batinism and promote the Sunnite Islamic faith. The assassination of Nisa meant, of course, the sudden collapse of this worldly hope. The *Munqidh* then may not be adequate history, but the work has survived because it focused not upon surface events that happen only once, but upon what is essential in the human pilgrimage and gives it ultimate meaning. Hence, after the assassination of the son of Nizam, Ghazali returned to his home and continued his life as a Sufi, a teacher and a scholar.

b. Others have seen the account not as social, but as personal and even egoistic. One interpretation would base this upon a supposed hope in the part of Ghazali to appear as a major reformer.

Ghazali himself was conscious that some would suggest that he was being led by his ego to attempt to become the reformer of his century, according to the prophecy that each century would begin with a major reformer.²³ But if ever human reason could conceive such a hope it would certainly be based upon his position as director of the great Nizamiyya school in Baghdad, not as a hermit enclosed in the minaret of the mosque at Damascus or in his hometown of Tus.

c. Others would condemn him by his own words in which he stated that his motivation had been a search for glory and renown. But this remark would be meaningless except in the context of a conversion from such motivation.

d. Yet others would consider the turn in Ghazali's life to be individualistic in character. Some, writing from the individualistic Anglo-Saxon perspective, refer to this as an individualization of the Islamic faith. But the closed, self-centered character of individualism hardly does justice to the Sufi Way through the self to the Infinite source and goal of all. By abnegation one truly dies to self in order to be opened to the transcendent. Hence it would seem more true to speak not of an individualization, but of a personalization of the life of faith. This would no longer be the affair only of great leaders — caliphs or sultans — but of the millions of persons who practiced this religion. And if these cultic practices are carried out in unison by large bodies of persons they are

seen by Ghazali as making the heart flexible and nimble for the Way which each must follow toward union with God. In other words, all was given new life by Ghazali's work which described the Way to the divine Source and Goal of life. In turn this marks the character of each of the faithful and hence of the community of believers, Islam, as a whole.

The Crisis. In reality the vertical explanation which by a phenomenological route takes one into one's personal psychology or subjectivity and thence to the center of one's self and indeed to the absolute Self would seem to be the more appropriate. He does this through a deeper existential crisis which unveils the metaphysical reality of his life.

The account of this crisis by Ghazali in Chapter III of the *Munqidh* is most dramatic. It begins with a detailed description of his uncertain wavering between a sense that he must break away from his present life as head of the school with its accompanying honors and hesitance to leave his position:

I also perceived that I could not hope for eternal happiness unless I feared God and rejected all the passions, that is to say, I should begin by breaking my heart's attachment to the world. I needed to abandon the illusions of life on earth in order to direct my attention towards my eternal home with the most intense desire for God, the Almighty. This entailed avoiding all honors and wealth, and escaping from everything that usually occupies a person and ties him down.

Turning to look inward, I perceived that I was bound by attachments on all sides. I meditated on all that I had done, teaching and instructing being my proudest achievements, and I perceived that all my studies were futile, since they were of no value for the Way to the hereafter. Moreover, what had been my purpose in teaching? My intention had not been pure, for it had not been directed towards God the Almighty alone. Had I not preferred to seek glory and renown? I was teetering on the edge of a precipice, and if I did not step back I would plunge into the Fire.

I thought of nothing else, all the time remaining undecided. One day, I would determine to leave Baghdad and lead a new life, but the next day I would change my mind. I took one step forward, and then one step back. In the morning I might have a desperate thirst for the hereafter, but by the evening the troops of desire would have stormed and defeated it.

This is followed by a dialogue between the angelic call to "take to the road" and Satan's wiles to convince him by all and any means to stay:

My passions kept me chained in place, while the herald of faith cried, "Take to the road! Take to the road! Life is brief, the journey is long. Knowledge and deeds are nothing but mere outward appearance and illusion. If you are not ready at this very moment for the life to come when will you be ready? And if now you do not break your moorings, when will you break away?" At that moment, I felt impelled to go; my decision to depart and escape would be made.

But Satan returned, saying, "This is only a passing mood! Do not be taken in by it, the feeling will pass quickly. . . . If you give way to it, you will lose your honors, your well-established peaceful and secure position which you will find nowhere else. You will be taking the risk that

you will change your mind again and live to regret it. It will not be easy to come back, once you have lost your position. . . ."

There follows a veritable paralysis, an inability to speak or even to eat, as the story builds to its climax:

This tug of war between my emotions and the summons from the Hereafter lasted nearly six months, from the month of Rajab 488 A.H. (July 1095 A.D.), during which I lost my free will and was under compulsion.

The fact is that God tied my tongue and stopped me teaching. I struggled to no avail to speak at least once to my pupils, to please the hearts of those who were attending my lectures, but my tongue refused to serve me at all. And having my tongue tied made my heart grow heavy. I could not swallow anything; I had no appetite for food or drink; I could neither swallow easily nor digest any solid food.

I grew weak. The physicians despaired of treating me. They said, "The malady has descended to the heart, and has spread from there to the humors. There is no other remedy but to free him from the anxiety which is gnawing at him."

Finally, there comes a new calm and soothing theme of personal peace as God gives him the power to break away:

Feeling my impotence, my inability to come to a decision, I put myself in the hands of God, the ultimate refuge of all those who are in need. I was heard by the one who hears those in need when they pray to Him. He made it easy for me to renounce honors, wealth, family and friends.

Levels of Reason and the Work of the Spirit

Jabre would see this as only a psychological issue of individual subjectivity, but in reality it is a psychology that deepens into metaphysics and an account of the divine spirit acting within.

It is suggested here that the truth lies between these two positions.²⁰ That is, the main lines of his epistemology can indeed be traced to the earlier period, as Jabre has done so effectively. He is correct in observing that during that earlier period Ghazal did not advance beyond the realm of reason and that it lacked definitive certainty. But if that be so, when in the second period he does actively apply himself to the Way that leads beyond reason, identifies its veracity, and then applies himself in a ten year retreat to the assiduous practice of the Way from which results his *Iya*, the landmark of Islamic spirituality, certainly something of the greatest moment has taken place. It is hardly a mere "répétition de la première . . . sous un autre form,"²¹ as claims Jabre. His failure to appreciate the distinctive reality of the achievement of the second phase of Ghazali's life would seem to result from seeing it only in psychological terms as the flow of phenomena of a human order, rather than appreciating it in metaphysical terms, e.g., of a Heidegger, as the unveiling of Being Itself through the intentional life of *dasein*, or in the properly mystical terms in which McCarthy approaches Ghazali with great respect, even awe, as before a sanctuary of the divine. This enables McCarthy to grasp the tremendous fascination of the religious event lived by Ghazali and described in the main body of his text as seen above.²²

Here the enlightening analogies would appear to be to Heidegger and to Shankara. For Heidegger Being burst into time through the *dasein*, that is, the conscious human being; Ghazali provides a rich account of just such a human consciousness in action. A more contemplative analogy would be to the thought of Shankara according to whom, through ascetic practice, the human self, spirit, *Atman*, is so perfected as to become translucent to the divine self or *Brahman*.

Ghazali provides us with a helpful roadmap in the section he writes on prophecy in Chapter IV of the *Munqidh*. There he distinguishes three levels of knowledge and contemplation each of which has a corresponding esthesis:

- The first is on the sense level; it is knowledge by belief based on the good opinion one has of the teacher. This was his situation when as a younger person he was attracted to Sufism which he admired, but was not then capable of realizing in his own life.
- The second is on the level of reason. This is indirect knowledge by verification or reasoning.
- The third level is that of prophecy which has both objective and subjective aspects, as we shall see below.

Reviewing these three we can follow with greater precision the progressive deepening of the experience of Ghazali. The first, sense, level of knowledge is not sufficient. This could be either the theory of the teacher (*t'alimites*) in which one waited for, and was ready to listen to, the teacher who was to come. It could be also his own early experience of admiring the Sufis. But in either case there was a major and decisive limitation, namely, that what was experienced remained external and could not be shared.

Second, there is the level of reason. He valued this and became himself one of the major philosophers of the time. His summary of philosophy was a standard source in the High Middle Ages in Europe a century later. Personally, he continued to work on the Islamic sciences till the very end of his life. He saw this as providing the basic truth which he had from the beginning and on which he never faltered. Nevertheless, he came to conclude that it had the crucial limitation that (at least in the thought of Avicenna and Averroes) it could not adequately state the spiritual dimension of the human person or especially its relation to the divine.

There remained then the reality of prophecy which had both objective and subjective dimensions. First of all it was needed in order to provide objective content to the human intellect with regard to the Transcendent or divine Being. Precisely as transcendent it went beyond the human mind and anything that could effect. Hence if the human person was to know its creator it must be the Creator who speaks its own objective reality to the human mind.

In the context of occasionalism this was doubly so. Of itself reason as theology could give only brittle formulas or proceed only externally, defensively and apologetically.

But to this objective content there must correspond an openness of heart or subjectivity on the part of the one who received the objective content of the message of the prophet. This must be prepared by asceticism to remove human impediments to opening the ear and the heart by cult as praying in union renders the heart nimble to the Spirit, and by meditation to open both mind and heart for the messenger and his message.

Through this openness of the human spirit to the Divine Spirit one achieves in the terms of Ghazali and Iqbal "a savoring" of God — a deep, rich, powerful and transporting experience of mind and heart. As a result one's commitment is not external or limited, but open, inclusive and absolutely unshakable. Again, the union of *Atman* and *Brahman* in the thought of Shankaran may be the clearest analogy.

Such is Ghazali's account of his crisis and his turn to the mystical path of the Sufis. It was a personal experience and his public account was so powerful that it redirected the main thrust of Islam in the centuries to follow. In so doing it situates squarely the issue of the relation of reason to faith, namely, can reason in its highest form, that is, as philosophy, develop a sense of the human person and its spiritual nature and destiny which is adequate for one who would in mind and heart be faithful to the rich sense of human destiny as depicted in the Scriptures and the message of the Prophet?

This crisis leaves two problems which will be treated in the following two sections: first is reason alien to religion and truly incapable in its regard, or is it more capable and closer to religion than the epistemology of al-Juweyni and Ghazali would allow? If so it would be capable of being developed even in the same medieval period as an effective collaborator with faith. Second, what can faith contribute to reason, especially if reason is now weakened by sin and is in poor estate.

Notes

1. "Editor's Introduction" in al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty*, tr. M. Abulaylah, intro. George. F. McLean (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), pp. 31-60.

2. Farid Jabre in al-Ghazali, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (Beyrouth: Traduction des chefs d'oeuvre, 1950), pp. 41-51.

Chapter IV

The Role of Reason in Belief: A Christian Response

From the above it becomes clear that the occasionalism of al-Juweyni implied a certain skepticism regarding the capability of any finite being properly to cause an effect. This was extended to an inability of reasoning to generate valid and validated conclusions. This led Ghazali to follow the mystical path of the Sufis. But if one is to proceed with the consideration of the relation of faith and reason it becomes necessary first to establish the character of reason and especially its capability in relation to belief or religion. To do so three propositions become essential: (a) that reason emerged in, and from, a religious world view, (b) that reason in its first and basic philosophical articulation was religious; and (c) that reason was required for religious self-articulation. The first two points were developed above and yet more extensively in chapters II-V of *Ways to God*. Here I shall only summarize the main argument as background for (c).

Reason Emerged in, and from, a Religious World View

The commonplace since the Enlightenment is that reason is the sole capacity of the authentically human spirit and hence that religion as transcending reason can be only superstition. In reality, however, M. Iqbal notes that reason was born from within a religious sense of life.

Further, technical reason is only a first and surface level of the human mind. Finally, Iqbal recognizes that all of human reason depends upon what he refers to as the Total Absolute for its foundation and its transcendence, hence for its certitude and creativity.¹ This can be seen in the two earliest phases of human thought, the totemic and the mythic.

Intellectual thought in the totemic period proceeded in terms available through the external senses. Nevertheless, it does not see all as atomic in character and conflicting in some meaningless jumble. On the contrary, its world view is very highly centralized; through the totem all is united, related and meaningful. The totem itself is a unique principle of all meaning with which all is identified and in which all obtains meaning. Further it is limitless in that the members of the tribe can be multiplied indefinitely without fear of exhausting the totem. Finally, it has a certain sacredness, for anything that might contradict it in any way is strictly taboo. Hence, the actions of individuals have great meaning not only for themselves, but for the tribe as a whole.²

Eventually, mythic thought evolved through the development of the capability of the internal senses, especially that of the imagination. Here all is understood in terms of the gods as transcendent persons. As these are multiple, thought in these terms is capable of handling a greater diversity of life. Further, the genetic interrelationship of the gods entails a close relation between all things. All originally had a sacred or divine character as each part of nature was a god; the interactions between the parts of nature were understood as in reality being interactions between the gods, and vice versa. This made it possible to take account of purpose and ideals, frustrations and defeats as more than brute happenings. Instead the story lines of the myths stated and indeed created patterns of interpretation and will, both synchronic and diachronic. This was the sole mode of thinking available at the time, but in its terms they carried out not only epics, but extended analyses as, for example, in Hesiod's "Works and Days", the first work on labor.³

Reason in Its First and Basic Philosophical Articulations Was Religious

The development of human reason beyond myth to the level of philosophy, as all human transitions, was not univocally one of progress. It did bring something new, namely the capacity to grasp things not in allegorical, but in proper terms, based on their nature. With this the mind gained the capacity for precise and scientific reasoning. Nevertheless, it failed to carry forward some important elements from the totemic and mythic modes. Specifically, what was lost at this point was much that had to do with the personal, i.e., the affective relations of heart and will in terms of the emotions and bonds of love, the creative relations according to the imagination, and the unique relations to the freedom of other humans and to the purposes of nature. Today we begin to experience the lack of these elements; the search for them becomes the center of the process of humanization at this juncture. It is precisely in these matters that Iqbal would identify the most characteristic elements of religion as it goes beyond, but not against, philosophy.

Heidegger would consider this a matter of retrieve. He theorizes that every advance is at the expense of some factors which are left to atrophy. Hence, the most significant progress takes place not by going forward incrementally along paths which have long been trodden, but by going back to retrieve what was not chosen for development and hence holds much greater promise of being able to complement and enrich life as lived thusfar.

Especially, it is to be noted that the beginnings of Greek philosophy were intensively religious. Let us review this in Parmenides as noted above in Chapter I. Parmenides, in opening the field of metaphysics, came immediately to note that being had to be one, unchanging and eternal. He reasoned in Fragment 8 that if it were of the nature of being as such, and hence Being Itself, to be changing then being and Being Itself would need to include non-being. For it is the nature of change *no* longer to be what it had been and *not* yet to be what it is in the process of becoming. It is, then, essential for change to include non-being. But were being as such to include non-being then "to be" would mean also "not to be"; or, to put it in another way, "to be" would be the same as "not to be" and something would be the same as nothing.

The same would be true of plurality in which one is not the other or beginning after non being. Hence, it is of the nature of Being as such, and therefore of Being itself, to be one, unchanging and eternal. These, of course, are precisely the characteristics always be attributed to the One God, infinite and eternal.⁴

Some would think that what Parmenides said above excluded any multiplicity or change in beings, but he went on to devote the remaining 80 percent of his Poem precisely to assembling and relating just such beings, using the scientific knowledge developed by his predecessors among the pre-Socratic philosophers. In other words he recognized beginning, multiplicity and change, but did not relate it to, or integrate it with, the nature of being as such. That task remained to be done and whoever accomplished it would be the father of philosophy in the Greek tradition.

Such integration was the work of Plato and especially important for the relation of religion to reason. First he did not deny the truth of Parmenides's reasoning which was and remained essential: without it no reasoning could go forward. But, second, we live in the midst of — and indeed we ourselves are — beings which began, are limited and change. Plato reconciled these two by recognizing that the many limited beings were not alongside or equally original with the One, which was absolute and self-sufficient, but rather were derivative therefrom, grounded therein and oriented thereto. This is called "participation".

Further, it must be stressed that this relation is not something added over and above the substance of such beings like a coat of paint which could be changed on order or omitted. Rather this relationship is essential. By this they come to be; on this they depend for their existence (the truth in occasionalism); and toward this they are moved to dynamic life and action.

Hence participation in the absolute One is not something added to finite beings; it is what they are. This is the basis of the second insight of M. Iqbal's *Reconstruction*, namely, that all, whether in being or in knowledge, depends upon a total absolute.

It is to be noted that Plato's being was really form taken as the passive object of contemplation. Hence, most concur that God in his system corresponds to the highest soul or conscious which was an active being, rather than to the idea of the One or the Good which in their perfection were passive objects of contemplation. Aristotle corrected that by beginning from the active process of change experienced among physical beings and then reasoning to its highest principle as a correspondingly active consciousness that was living, indeed Life Divine (*Metaph*, XII, 7). To this all were related or bound — re-ligation or "bound back" being one of the etymologies of "religion".

Reason Required for Religious Self-Articulation

The earlier part of this work established that reason emerged from a religious worldview and in its basic philosophical articulation is essentially religious. It should then be able to engage, and be engaged by, faith. This indeed was the case prior to Islam both during the third to the fifth centuries in the time of the Church Fathers and in a more elaborate way in the Christian philosophy/theology of Thomas Aquinas. This becomes clear upon reflection on the efforts of both Christian and Islamic scholars to understand two points on which they concur, namely, the human nature of Christ and the spiritual nature of the human person. Both are essential to the theologies of both faiths. It could be helpful then to look at the role of reason with regard to these essential components of the both faiths.

That Christ is properly and fully human in nature. Islam affirms this to be the whole truth of the nature of Christ: "Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was merely God's messenger and His Word which he cast into Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Him (IV:171)." A Christian would want to look closely at the term "word" and "spirit" here, where a moslem might look more to the term "merely". But, in any case, both would agree that Christ is fully human.

In this precise regard the note that Christ is son of Mary is significant. Indeed this is reinforced by the saying of the Prophet that no child is born in this world but with a touch of evil except Mary and her son, Christ Jesus (Bukhari). A Christian would want to know what was special about Christ and his mission that called for this unique position in God's love and providence. But all see that in order to preserve Christ from evil, it was fitting that Mary also be so preserved. This could be important only provided Christ was really born in the flesh from Mary — human in nature and in matter. The reasoned necessary implication is that Christ was really and fully human.

Some centuries before Mohammed the Christian church in Solemn Council at Chalcedon (following the route traced out by the preceding Councils of Constantinople and Nicea) proceeded along the same line of reasoning and added a philosophical turn. First it affirmed the real humanity of Christ and did so by referring centrally to Mary as Christ's mother. (It carried this reasoning further in its incarnational context, but that is not essential to our present philosophical concern.)

An additional philosophical concern arose in relation to the terminology to be employed. Some of the Fathers at these Councils wanted to employ only terms drawn from Scripture. Others, however, noted the increasing sophistication of the human mind and its ability still to misinterpret or reinterpret the implications of Mary's motherhood for the human nature of her son. The proper technical term, philosophically elaborated, for nature was *physis*, and the human nature of Christ could be directly and properly affirmed only by the use of that philosophically elaborated term.

After ardent debate the decision was made: the philosophical term had to be employed in order for the faith to be transmitted and lived integrally. Hence, they declared both that Christ was born of Mary according to the flesh as would the Qu'ran some centuries later, and also that he was properly of human *physis*, the direct, proper and technical statement that Christ was integrally human in nature.

Note that this was a decisive decision on the part of the Church Fathers taken after full, open and even impassioned debate among the Council in Fathers for over a century. They agreed that precisely in order to protect and communicate the faith it was necessary to employ philosophical reasoning and its products.

With particular regard to our theme, "Faith and Reason," it is to be noted further that this is contrary to the later more fundamentalist Christian position that human reason is corrupted, not to be trusted, or incapable of being engaged in stating the faith, and hence not to be employed in religious matters. On the contrary, it was precisely concern for the integrity of faith that urged — even necessitated — the Councils to conclude that philosophy as the work of human reason needed to be engaged.

The Spiritual Nature of Humankind. This was the crucial issue for al-Ghazali and the one which brought him to break away from philosophy as developed by the Greeks and by the great Islamic heirs of the Greek tradition, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. It was a point on which the Greeks had real accomplishments — Plato's work will remain always a monument to the ideals of human life and to the human spirit which could focus thereupon. But the Greeks were taking only the earliest steps in philosophy; much that was important remained to be done — perhaps most especially on the issue of how the human person could be both physical and spiritual in the distinctive unity that is human nature. It was an issue of decisive importance for understanding and hence implementing both the full dignity of the human body and of the physical world of which it was part, and the significance of time and history for the exercise of human freedom.

For Aristotle the discovery of form and matter as intrinsic composite principles of any changing or physical being meant that the form had to be intimately, indeed totally, a relation to the matter it informed. But if so then he could not see how that form could be the source and foundation of human spiritual activity. In particular, if matter was concrete and singular, how could the form of matter be a principle for the development of the abstract and universal terms essential to the properly human working of the mind or to the freedom characteristic of the will.

The Greek solution, taken up by al-Farabi and Avicenna almost 1500 years later, was that such universal terms could be produced only by a spiritual form or principle which was therefore quite separated from matter which was the principle of individuality. The task of such a principle was to produce a form for the mind which was not determined to any one thing (e.g., this or that person), but stated the nature of the species or genus (e.g., human, rather than horse) which was able to be stated universally and univocally of each and all members of the species. This productive or active principle, called an active or agent intellect, could be drawn upon by many persons. A special difficulty came with regard to the principle for free human actions, for if the principle of these actions was common to many persons it is difficult to assess truly personal responsibility. This, in turn, raised questions regarding the interpretation of the Qu'ranic passages regarding personal immortality and the last judgement. Hence the Islamic scholars of Greek philosophy as well as the Latin Averroists tended to interpret these rather allegorically than as objective statements of the human reality.

Al-Ghazali naturally drew back. All his instincts as a devoted servant of God told him to "take to the road", to escape this heretical attenuation of the full power of the faith regarding the very meaning of human life personally responsible before God. The result, as we saw in the previous section, was his departure from Baghdad — and from philosophy.⁵

A hundred and fifty years after al-Ghazali, Thomas Aquinas confronted this same problem and responded not by leaving philosophy, but by deepening it. Let us see what he had to work with and how he approached the issue.

Thomas was a monk, one of those of whom it is written in the Qu'ran:

you will find the most affectionate of them towards those who believe, are those who say: "We are Christians." That is because some of them are priests and monks and they are not given to arrogance. When they listen to what has been sent down to the Holy Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), you will see their eyes well up with tears because of the Truth they recognize. They say: "Our Lord, we believe, so enroll us among the witnesses. Why should we not believe in God and any Truth that has come down to us? We yearn for our Lord to count us among the religious (5:28, 83, 84). And for this belief of theirs, God will reward them with gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide forever, for such is the requital of doers of good (5:85).

Among the people of the Book, there are some who are upright, who recite God's verses through the small hours of the night as they bow down on their knees. They believe in God and the Last Day and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works; and these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do they shall never be denied the reward thereof, for God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him (3:113, 114, 115).

As a Christian monk Thomas had the advantage of the discovery by the Christian Church Fathers regarding the central notion of being. Briefly, the Greeks had supposed matter to be eternal; hence for them existence was simply taken for granted. Their focus was upon form, but not existence. In contrast, the Christian Fathers applied to matter the biblical notion that all depended on God. Matter too was made to be. In this light the issue was no longer merely what kind of form some matter possessed at any one time, or how it changed from one form to another. Instead they were able to consider the issue of existence, its source, characteristics and goal. It was then that "to be or not to be" became truly the question.

This insight made possible two further progressive steps. The first concerned the issue, lively at the time of Avicenna, Ghazali and Thomas and renewed in our day, of how the existence or "to be" (*esse*) of a thing related to its essence or nature. Coming later than Ghazali, Thomas had the benefit of time and personally resolved the issue by extending the notions of act to existence and of potency to essence. Any limited being was composed of two principles: existence as act and potency as its limiting capacity.

In the aftermath of modern rationalism, today there is great concern to recapture the vital existential sense of human freedom and creativity. Thomas's insight provides a way of relating the two in a mutually complementary and enhancing way.

In turn, he was able to bring the philosophical resources of this insight to Ghazali's problem of the spiritual character of the human person. First, where Ghazali's approach was hampered by the occasionalism he had received from al-Juweyni and the Mutakalimun, whereby human actions

were not the cause, but only the occasions for God causing the being of the effect,⁶ Thomas extended causality to creatures as well. God was indeed great, but not because he caused the finite effects of human action, but because he caused human persons fully capable themselves of causing all the actions and effects which corresponded to their nature. This is the proper autonomy of the human person. It is an implication of the appreciation of existence as act and as participating in absolute Being which was Existence or Existence itself.

This entails, in turn, that the human mind is not dependent on a separated agent intellect in order to form universal concepts that are not composed of single instances as is sense knowledge. Rather, the human intellect itself has the capacity to abstract universal natures from concrete sensed objects. Thus the agent intellect which, for the Greeks as for the Islamic scholars of Greek philosophy, had been separated from the human person and shared by many, was now an internal capacity proper to each person.

Moreover, this pertained to the will as well. The principle of freedom could now be understood as personal; hence responsibility was decidedly personal. This philosophically more adequate understanding of the person made it possible to assimilate more fully the Qu'ranic eschatology of resurrection and personal reward.

Thomas's resolution of Ghazali's problem allowed also for a rigorous pursuit of objective reason among the Scholastic philosophers in the development of the various philosophical and theological sciences. This contributed positively to the development of modern science, though the degree of continuity and discontinuity is still a matter of intense investigation.⁷In any case it has been significant in enabling a more dialogical attitude in the West toward the Enlightenment.

Faith

There may be a deeper root to this difference between Jabre and McCarthy in interpreting al-Ghazali. To see this more precisely one might first consider the case of Ibn Sina. In his very perceptive study of Avicenna's writings on the mystical level of human experience, Louis Gardet elaborates Avicenna's mobilization of his full philosophical resources in order to understand this highest state of the religious mind. Yet Gardet finds that Ibn Sina's effort finally meets a check beyond which it cannot go. Al-Ghazali suggests what this was, noting that Avicenna did not live an ascetic life, but drank wine and often finished his classes with an elaborate banquet. From this Ghazali concludes, what Gardet confirms, namely, that Avicenna's study of the mystical life was correct, but remained objective and external. He seemed not able to experience from within, and thus appropriately to describe, the highest states of the soul.⁸

Ghazali's life differed in this precise regard. Though he avows to vanity during his period of teaching, the crisis of his life was precisely the point of rejection of such motivation in order to devote himself fully to God. There followed a two year retreat, spent in significant part in the minaret of the mosque of Damascus. He would appear to have undergone a deep conversion from which followed the writing of the great *Ihya* in order to explore and describe for others the content of the Sufi way.

But how is this to be understood? Jabre would seem to interpret this simply as a natural psychological process. In this light the basic pattern was set in Ghazali's younger psychological crisis of which the second was a repetition. This approach considers all that could happen in the life of Ghazali as a merely human effort. But that, of course, is in direct contradiction to Ghazali's own experience of the divine acting in him.

We might put aside for the moment the occasionalism of al-Juweyni and Ghazali and follow the lead of Thomas Aquinas. His resolution of the problem of the agent intellect, succeeded in placing it within the human person. We can ask why Jabre did not employ this insight to develop an elegant and progressive understanding of Ghazali's mystical experience in which this would be truly both the action of God and that of the human person — the latter because of the former.

I would suggest that the reason is a theological one, pointed out by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. It has been customary in Catholic theology to distinguish a natural order corresponding to the natures of created beings and including human knowledge of the existence and character of God. This is set in contrast to a supernatural order as the intimate mystery of divine life and its plan for the salvation of humankind. In this context it was then considered that participation in the supernatural order was by baptism. Hence, a non-baptized person remained in the natural order only, and his or her capabilities for mystical union in the divine were limited to what could be achieved by natural reason.

In this light the capabilities of Ghazali could exceed those of Ibn Sina not substantially, essentially or qualitatively, but only accidentally or quantitatively in terms of the intensity of the application of his natural powers of reason and of understanding.

Nasr objects, and rightly so, to the prejudice implied in this exclusion of the mystical life of the different religions from what classically has been described in Catholic theology as the supernatural order.⁹

I believe Vatican II would agree. During the 1930s there was a considerable effort among Catholic theologians to rethink the distinction of natural and supernatural, led most notably by the Jesuite theologian Henri de Lubac¹⁰ reflecting a line of thought from Blondel and Bergson upon which M. Iqbal also drew. In his writing de Lubac proposed a rearticulation of this field so new that the church could not immediately be sure of its implications or confident that it could give adequate spiritual guidance in the field that it opened. Consequently, it directed him not to publish further writings on this matter, a ban which lasted for some years.

It was just at this time and in this context that the Jesuite, Richard McCarthy,¹¹ was doing his work of interpretation on Ghazali's choice of the mystical way of Sufism. He was unencumbered by the supposition that Ghazali's experience could and should be interpreted in terms of the natural powers of the human intellect. Hence, he was able to appreciate the deeply divine action involved in his conversion, and in the Way to which it opened. Thus, as mentioned above, we find McCarthy approaching the second crisis of Ghazali not as "more of the same" as did Jabre, but as the truly dramatic event so eloquently described by Ghazali in his *Munqidh*. It is this, indeed, which makes it the spiritual classic that it is. McCarthy approaches this, as noted above, in awe as before a sanctuary of the divine.

In itself this is of considerable scientific interest as a chapter in the scholarly interpretation of the work of al-Ghazali, but it is much more. For from the general effort to achieve a more adequate theological understanding not just of the distinction, but of the relation of the natural and the supernatural, and indeed of the adequacy and appropriateness of the distinction itself, there came the convocation of the Second Vatican Council of the Church, an event that occurs on the average of only once in two centuries. In that context De Lubac now appeared as a guiding spirit. In that solemn session the bishops assembled from all parts of the world took the decisive step beyond the supposition of the natural-supernatural distinction, and the supposition that the supernatural path was the exclusive possession of any one group of human beings, including the Church. On the contrary, it recognized the Spirit to be at work in all religions, all of which are authentic ways to God.

With particular reference to Islam the Council stated:

Upon the Moslems, too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to men. They strive to submit wholeheartedly even to His inscrutable decrees, just as did Abraham, with whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition they await the day of judgement when God will give each man his due after raising him up. Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting.¹²

The implications of this for world peace and progress have hardly begun to be appreciated. If wars have been fought in the past over religion then this is a declaration of peace. If walls to separate religion from public life were the only possibility of peace in the 17th and 18th centuries, even at the cost of a secularization of life in modern times, then this document implies that they are no longer appropriate and must come down. If scholars have been separated in different schools to the disadvantage of all, then this is a directive to come together to share our experiences in faith. Each will bring, not only its failures and frustrations, but its lessons of fidelity learned from long and holy efforts. Together there is better opportunity to identify the divine roots of peace and to travel, each along one's proper but convergent path, to the one Holy mountain, where the One God will be all in all (Isaias 27:13).

Notes

1. M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Ashrof, 1944).
2. *Ways to God*, ch. II.
3. *Ibid.*, ch. III.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-175.
5. *The Munqidh*, ch. III.
6. G.F. McLean, "Editor's Introduction" to al-Ghazali, pp. 31-60.
7. Ernan McMullin, "Medieval and Modern Science: Continuity and Discontinuity" in *Philosophy in a Technological Culture*, ed. George F. McLean (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), pp. 55-87; James A. Weisheipl, "The Continuity of Ancient and Modern Science," *ibid.*, pp. 88-92.
8. L. Gardet *La Connaissance Mystique chez Ibn Sina et ses presupposés philosophiques* (Cairo: Inst Francais d'archeologie Orientale du Caire, 1952).
9. S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge of the Sacred* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).
10. *Surnaturel* (1946); see also J. Alfaro, "Lo naturel y lo sobranatural," *Gregorianum* 38 (1957), 5-50; and von Herbert Vorgrimler "Henri de Lubac" in *Bilanz der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. H. Vorgrimler and R. Vander Guelt (Frieburg: Herder, 1970).
11. Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment* (Boston: Tuayne, 1980).
12. *Nostra aetate, The Documents of Vatican II*, eds. Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher (New York: Guild Press, 1966), n. 3.

Chapter V

Mulla Sadra's Islamic Philosophy of Existence: Islamic and Christian Contributions

The attention to existence which we saw emerging in the early Christian Fathers was developed by the medieval Christian philosophers from Augustine to St. Bonaventure, basically in Platonic terms; it was a Christian Platonism. St. Thomas elaborated this further by integrating the contributions of Aristotle. At the time of the Renaissance the Platonic elements in philosophy were revived and might be said to predominate in modern thought, giving it a strongly formal character.

At the same time as Descartes, however, Mulla Sadra (1571/72-1640) was very conscious of the deficiencies involved in such a formalism which he criticized most strongly. He went about assembling the full resources of the Islamic heritage in philosophy to develop a philosophy of existence on a neo-Platonic basis.

To grasp the contemporary significance of Mulla Sadra's existential philosophy, it seems necessary to begin with a review of the general crisis generated at this turn of the millennia by the reduction of reason to an interplay of clear but empty concepts. We live in our day Mulla Sadra's description of the meaninglessness of the pursuit of essence alone. The general response must be a revival of the sense of existence, first uncovered by the early Church Fathers.

Next, we shall study the reality and internal constitution of finite beings as existing in their own right in order to capture the significance of Mulla Sadra's existential philosophy for the proper autonomy of creatures.

Finally, in the light of the above, we shall review the role of existence in the medieval Islamic and Christian efforts to respond in philosophy to the requirements of eschatology for human persons who are real, free and responsible before God -- a matter of no less significance in social life today.

In sum, we shall move diachronically, reviewing once again the earlier discovery of existence, through an understanding of the proper autonomy of beings as creatures of God, to the human person as free and responsible. Synchronically, we will move first from essence to existence, second from existence to the subsistence of finite beings, and third from subsistence to the human person as free, responsible and creative in the work of creation. Throughout we will look for ways in which insights by Christian philosophers can cooperate and contribute in the effort of Mulla Sadra to develop an Islamic philosophy which can help in responding to revelation.

Mulla Sadra's Existential Response to the Contemporary Philosophical Challenge

Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn-Ibrahim Sadr al Din Shirazi, a contemporary of Descartes (1596-1650), was trenchant in his description of the vacuity of essences when treated by reason in reductionist manner. Today, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) is considered particularly clairvoyant for having predicted — 70 years after Mulla Sadra had done so — that the human race would be reduced by such abstractive reason to a race of intellectual brutes but brutes nonetheless devoid of sense of personal freedom or cultural creativity. In order to find an alternate way? Heidegger points out that each major step ahead implies a decision to develop one path which leaves alternate paths unexplored. Hence, the real step ahead consists in the step back (*Schritt zurück*) to that which thus far has been left undeveloped. This suggests that in order to understand Mulla Sadra's penetrating

and skillfully elaborated philosophy of existence it may help to review once again the sense of existence as it emerged initially among the Christian Church Fathers in the early centuries of this era.

Although Greek philosophy grew out of an intensive mythic sense of life in which all was a reflection of the will of the gods, it nonetheless presupposed matter always to have existed. As a result, attention and concern were focused upon the forms by which matter was determined to be of one type rather than of another. For Aristotle, this was the most manifest reality and his philosophizing began from there. By the end of his metaphysics he had come by a philosophical route to considerations of divine life as the principle of all.

Iqbal expresses the still deeper religious insight of Islam: "It is in fact the presence of the total infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible." It is not we who discover God, but the being of God which enables us to think at all. Al-Ghazali would abandon Ibn Sina's Islamic effort to develop the Greek philosophical tradition for lack of this awareness and Iqbal would criticize all efforts to reason to God on the same basis.¹

I fear, however, that this response is too radical, for simply to reject the Greek pattern of reasoning to God is to lose the tools it provides for seeing the relation, or tying back to God (*re-tie* or "*re-ligatio*" being an etymology of religion) each and every aspect of finite reality. This is the deeper and perduring significance of Thomas's "five ways" as they proceed in terms of efficient (Ways I-III), formal (Way IV) and final (Way V) causality.

This said, however, the challenge of Ghazali and Iqbal remains, namely, is the human intellect sufficiently open to the divine in order for its work to be, not the creation of an idol in the place of God, but an opening to its own divine source, ground and goal? The Greek philosophical awareness of what it meant to be real would need considerable enrichment in order to be able to appreciate the foundational significance for human thought of its grounding in a fully transcendent and infinite Being.

It is possible to turn directly to revelation in the Holy Books which encourage one to look further into these issues. But if philosophy is to be a human endeavor with universal import then it cannot employ revelation as a premise. There are, however, two other approaches.

One approach is to do an archeology of knowledge, tracing it from its initial totemic form, through myth to philosophy. Such a study, carried out in the earlier chapters of my *Ways to God*, Part I and summarized in chapter I above manifests human thought to have been deeply, richly and inherently religious from its origins.²

The other approach is to examine the point at which Greek thought encountered a culture shaped by revelation in order to see the development which took place in philosophical insight at that point. It was the early Christian Church Fathers who developed an awareness of the meaning of being as existence. This consisted in transcending the Greek notion of being as form, which meant simply a certain differentiated type or kind, to an explicit awareness of the act of existence (*esse*) in terms of which being could be appreciated directly in its active and self-affirmative character. The precise basis for this step is difficult to identify in a conclusive manner, but some things are known.

The Greeks had considered matter (*hyle* -- the stuff of which things were made) -- to be eternal. Hence, no direct question arose concerning the existence or non-existence of things. As matter always had been, the only real questions for the Greeks concerned the shapes or forms under which it existed. Only at the conclusion of the Greek period did Plotinus (205-270 A.D.), rather than simply presupposing matter, attempt the first philosophical explanation of its origin. It was, he explained, the light from the One which, having been progressively attenuated as it emanated

ever further from its source, finally turned to darkness.³ The answer may not be satisfactory, but our interest lies in whence came this new sensitivity to reality which enabled him even to raise such a question. To relive this promises to enable one to recreate the original insight regarding existence.

It is known that shortly prior to Plotinus the Christian Fathers were aware of the need to explain the origin of matter. They explicitly opposed the Greek supposition of matter and affirmed that, like form, it too needed to be explained. The origin of both they traced to the Pantocrator; hence, the proper effect of creation was neither form nor matter, but the existence of beings so composed, or existence simply.⁴

Later, this would be the central insight also of Mulla Sadra. It is still being unfolded in the contemporary emergence of the existential sense of the human person. This directs the mind beyond form and species, that is beyond essence, and beyond place and time or any of the scientific categories. It centers instead upon the unique reality of each being, above all of the person as a participant in the creative power of God, as a being bursting into time who is and cannot be denied. It rejects the person being considered in any sense as nonbeing, or being treated as anything less than its full reality. The human person is a self, affirming its own unique existence, and irreducible to any specific group identity. It is an image of God for whom life is sacred and sanctifying, a child of God for whom to be is freely to dispose of the power of one's new and unique life in union with all humankind.

In sum, it was the unfolding by the Church Fathers of awareness of God and of his creation that made possible the discovery of existence which Mulla Sadra so brilliantly developed. This enabled him to articulate a line of causality deeper and more primary than the horizontal causality of motion between creatures, namely, to explore the vertical line of existence from God to creatures and their return to Him.⁵ Mulla Sadra would develop this latter line with the philosophical tools he personally elaborated in a neo-Platonic vein as the flow of pure being.⁶ For him the creative act of God and human actions were the same act.⁷

This, however, urges the question of the reality of the horizontal causal line, of the human and of one's interaction with other persons and with nature. Today these are the issues of social justice, the treatment of minorities, and the protection of the environment; they are the special human concerns at this juncture. We shall look next for ways in which these concerns can be grounded ontologically and then finally for ways to implement the free and creative possibilities of humankind opened by Mulla Sadra. As the project is vast we must proceed here in somewhat summary fashion to suggest issues and sources which merit subsequent development.

The Existence and Composition of Finite Beings

If attention during the first millennium was focused upon God, it can be said that for the second millennium it has been focused upon this world, especially upon the human person. During the first millennium it was sufficient to see these in some relation to God, to show with Plato that unity did not preclude multiple beings provided they be seen precisely as related by participation to God.

The issue of this second millennium has been rather the existence of creatures -- not by themselves, but in themselves. Since God exists, can there be room for the world, and particularly for truly free human beings? Here we shall look at two issues: (a) the subsistence of finite beings as existing in themselves, and (b) the internal constitution of such beings. The third issue, namely, the freedom and autonomy of the human person will be the subject of Part III. We shall treat each

issue and its response in sequence; in fact, however, they constitute a cumulative problematic, just as their response also is cumulative.

a. Subsistence: the Existence of Finite Beings

In the first millennium of Christ and Mohammed, because human attention was quite absorbed in assimilating their teaching about God, the relative disappearance of the human was not considered to be a special problem, for humankind searched in God for its fulfillment. In the middle of this present millennium, however, attention shifted to the human. For some this was the person in search of God and for one's proper role in His creation. Increasingly, however, philosophers took a Promethean attitude. Today they will not be satisfied unless the legitimate human question in religion is recognized and receives an answer, namely, the issue of the status and role of creatures and of the human person in God's Providence.

Certainly, the path of being is the royal path for the human mind to develop its knowledge of, and response to, God. Parmenides had seen this immediately; it was the very first step in his initiation of the science of metaphysics in the West. As Mulla Sadra rightly pointed out, if this were a process of abstraction then the first principles would be empty.⁸ If, however, they are statements of being and the mind proceeds according to the reality of existence then they articulate the Divine and its work.

As seen above, in his Poem⁹ Parmenides noted that being as such is affirmation and hence could not include its own negation: being is, non-being is not. Negation is essential to beginning and limitation, and hence to multiplicity and change; but being as such is affirmation and hence must be eternal, one and unchanging. Mulla Sadra agrees and thus sees being as absolute and noncomposite or simple, which is to say, that it is the unique and infinite Divine life.

Some would see Parmenides as denying all reality to limited, multiple or changing being. Nevertheless, the second part of this Poem is entirely concerned with such changing beings. How to reconcile the two — the unlimited and the limited, the infinite and the finite, eternity and time — was left to Plato. He responded by developing the structure of participation. But in his famous allegory of the cave this worked in a manner similar to light so that the multiple were but shadows or images (*mimesis*) of the One. Aristotle soon abandoned the use of the term *mimesis* for fear that it would not allow for an adequate appreciation of the active reality of limited beings, but reduce them to passive shadows.¹⁰

Earlier medieval Christian philosophy, working on a Platonic and neo-Platonic model, experienced difficulty in asserting the distinct activity of finite beings. While benefiting from the mystical potentialities of the vertical line of causality from God's existence, its Platonism left it poorly equipped to affirm the distinctive reality of the horizontal causal line between creatures. Hence, some form of divine supplement in the form of illumination or latent forms of seminal reasons was required as if creatures were not quite entitled to act -- and by implication to be -- in their own right.

Mulla Sadra shares this problem. His attempts to resolve it in a neo-Platonic, emanationist framework led him to statements which strongly suggest that if being is existence and not essence then not only is God all, but there is nothing other.¹¹ It is true, as Mulla Sadra points out, that God's existence is also consciousness, which develops a limitless number of existents according to multiple modes¹² as finite beings.¹³ But when this route was classically developed by Shankara in the rich Hindu metaphysical tradition the reality of limited being seemed ultimately to be absorbed into God. In even closer parallel to Mulla Sadra, Ramanuja attempted to give more

distinctive reality to limited beings by constituting them ultimately via attributes of God. All three would say that in the stage of reasoning (in contrast to that of intuition) the world is real. Fazlur Rahman noted that higher knowledge does not negate old knowledge, but puts it into perspective.¹⁴ Yet there was always the still higher or deeper -- and, in any case, truer -- level of intuition in which the world and the individual could be called an illusion (*maya*) by Shankara and "perishing" by Mulla Sadra.¹⁵

For a distinctive step beyond the difficulties of this Platonic and neo-Platonic horizon one needs to turn to Aristotle who precisely went beyond Plato's more passive sense of beings as images or shadows remembering what had been passively observed and now remembered. For Aristotle the point of departure was being as changing and hence as active and dynamic. Beings were ultimately substances standing in their own right and all depended not on a passively contemplated One, but on a quintessentially active divine life as the act of "knowing on knowing".

Paul Tillich notes that because Platonic formalism does not adequately establish the distinctive reality of the world and human beings, while nominalism and positivism do not establish the reality of God, philosophizing in a religious context has gravitated naturally toward an Aristotelian realism in recognition of both God and world. This was precisely the step taken by Thomas Aquinas.

In going beyond the Platonic thought of the Patristic age, and adding to it Aristotle's scientific structures and active sense of being -- now intensified in terms of existence -- Thomas opened a new scientific philosophical age in which "theology", properly as a *logos*, could be born.

For Mulla Sadra, thinking Platonically, these categories remained a passive function of essence and hence were seen as existentially empty. In contrast Aquinas, thinking in an Aristotelian manner, took them actively and in relation to existence. Hence a substance is that to which it pertains precisely to exist in itself, and a being possessing or exercising such existence would be a subsistent being. For Capriolus, in contrast to Cajetan, the proportioned existence itself, and not a mode, is the principle of subsistence. This insight regarding being as act and active made it possible to receive more fully the revelation of God's creative act as making things themselves to exist (something that Mulla Sadra showed himself most anxious to do through his critique of essence). Thomas's deployment of the Aristotelian category of substance in the existential context of creation makes it possible to appreciate the existence of finite beings as from, by, and for God, yet as lived by beings existing in themselves (*in se*).

b. The Internal Composition of Finite Beings

It is not sufficient, however, simply to leave subsistence as existence for of itself this would be divine. Hence, in order for creatures not to be absorbed into God, which Fazlur Rahman sees as continually threatening the thought of Mulla Sadra, it is necessary to look into the constitution of beings which so exist. For lack of this the Mutakallimun were left with an occasionalism which carried a number of implications. There were no finite substances or beings which exist in themselves (*in-se*); instead all must be recreated at each moment. From this it follows also that human actions do not effect or cause things, but rather are the occasions upon which God brings things about as His effects. Fazlur Rahman insists that for Mulla Sadra this does not mean that only God causes, but that nothing causes without God.¹⁶ However, he recognized that some expressions of Mulla Sadra seem to go beyond this and there may be some inconsistencies as he struggles with this point.

Further, while occasionalism is generally and correctly considered a metaphysical position regarding the being of effects, it has powerful epistemological implications. That the premises, the conclusion is the very heart of logical reasoning. If, however, with occasionalism it is not finite beings, but God who causes effects, then the premises do not cause the conclusion. As the premises may be wrong but the conclusion could be correct, for there is no necessary connection between them.¹⁷ This entails skepticism with regard to human reasoning.

Thomas agreed that God was indeed great, but not because he caused the finite effects of each human action, but rather because he caused finite beings who were themselves fully capable of carrying out all the actions and effects which corresponded to their nature. This is the proper autonomy of the human person; it is the implication of the participation of beings as act in Absolute Being as existence itself.

The reasoning of Aquinas a century after Ghazali is indicative of what can be done with Mulla Sadra's insight of the centrality of existence. The discussion of being as existing had proceeded in al-Farabi and Ibn Sina to the point of distinguishing it from form, and relating it to essence as its principle of limitation and definition. But how these were related in a being, and indeed as constituting that being, was not understood. As Mulla Sadra would later argue, if existence was an accident in relation to essence then essence would need to exist in at least logical priority to existence -- which would be logically absurd.¹⁸

Based on his appreciation, like Mulla Sadra's, of being as existing, Aquinas reasoned as follows:

(a) as existence is quintessentially affirmation, where it is not infinite but limited (that is, where existence is not absolute, but in part negated) this must be due to something other than existence;

(b) that "other" could not be merely outside of being such as its efficient cause, for being must have in, and as, itself whatever is required in order that it be what it is (it must be undivided in itself); further

(c) as "inside being" this "other" would have to be or exist; yet as "other than existence" it could not be of itself; hence the "other" as principle of limitation would have to be made to be by existence, in relation to which it stands as potency;

(d) this "other" must be then a determined and limiting capacity for existence, that is, a capacity for "this much of existence and no more"; and finally

(e) existence being thus limited and graded, Fabro and Mulla Sadra would call this an intensive notion of being.¹⁹

On this basis Thomas expanded the meaning of Aristotle's act and potency from merely form and matter as the internal components of changing beings, to express the relation between the internal components of limited beings: existence as act and essence as potency. Neither existence nor essence are things or beings, but are rather internal principles of being. Existence is that by which a being is -- which was Mulla Sadra's great insight. But essence is also necessary, for it is that by which a being is what it is -- a limited and determined being distinct from all else.

Limited or finite beings are then composite beings. Their existence could not be self-explained, that is, explained by their essence, which in this regard is potency. It could be explained only by Being that is incomposite or simple. This is quite the essence of Mulla Sadra's metaphysics. The studies of Fabro on the history of the notion of participation show this to have been a personal discovery of Aquinas.²⁰ His essential formulation of the nature of multiple beings

or of the finite order as participating in the absolute being of God was the relation of composite beings (beings composed of existence as act and essence as potency) to the incomposite, simple, and hence absolute Being.²¹

Fabro pointed out further that the inner constitution of being meant that beings were inherently analogous. Each finite being constitutes a proportion of proportions, that is, of its existence to its proper essence (the existence of being A is in proportion to the essence of being A, as the existence of being B is in proportion to the essence of being B). This analogy between finite beings enables one to appreciate the extension of language as one proceeds from the finite or composite beings as effects (where the essence and existence are really distinct principles of being) to the infinite, incomposite or simple being as cause (where essence and existence are not distinct, but one). Analogy, Fabro would conclude, is the language of Being;²² Mulla Sadra would describe this as systematic ambiguity (*Tashkik*).²³

The Existing Human Being as Free, Responsible and Creative

a. The Freedom and Responsibility of the Existing Human Being

Pope John Paul II in his recent Encyclical "Faith and Reason" suggests that the proper methodology for theology and philosophy is cyclical, that is: (a) to begin from revelation as received through the Prophets and Sacred Books which challenge one to develop fully and solidly the capabilities of the human mind, then (b) to proceed carefully, actively and creatively to the development of philosophy by the light of human reason, and finally (c) to return to revelation so that philosophy thus developed can contribute to the proper unfolding of revelation in history.²⁴

The significance of revelation for philosophy becomes even more evident as one attempts to articulate philosophically a vision of the human person which can face the challenges of eschatology. This demands not only the full spiritual openness of the human to the Transcendent, but also, in view of personal resurrection and definitive judgment, an individual with personal freedom and responsibility subsisting in this world.

This challenge was central to the drama of the life of al-Ghazali as he described it in his *Munqidh*. The spiritual nature of humankind was the crucial issue for al-Ghazali and the one which moved him to break away from philosophy as developed by the great Islamic heirs of the Greek tradition, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina.

For Aristotle the discovery of form and matter as intrinsic principles of any changing being meant that the form was intimately, indeed totally, related to the matter it informed. But if so then how could this form be the source and foundation of spiritual activity? If matter was concrete and singular, how could the form of matter be a principle for the abstract and universal terms which were central to scientific thought or, even more, the principle for the free exercise of the human will?

Aristotle's solution, taken up by al-Farabi and Ibn Sina almost 1500 years latter, was that such terms must depend on a form which was separated from matter — an agent intellect existing separately which could be drawn upon by many persons. But as this would need to be also the principle of free human actions, it would then be difficult to assess personal responsibility. This, in turn, constituted a difficulty in interpreting the Scriptural passages regarding personal immortality and the last judgment. As a result the Greek oriented Islamic philosophers tended to interpret final judgment and eternal reward rather as allegorical than objective statements of the reality of human life.

Al-Ghazali naturally drew back. All his instincts as a devoted servant of God told him "to take to the road,"²⁵ to escape this heretical attenuation of the faith regarding the meaning and exercise of human life. The result was his departure from Baghdad and from philosophy.

This was the crisis which Mulla Sadra would face later. Confronted with the restrictive confines of philosophy done in terms of essences or natures he would separate himself from such thinking at every turn and in every way. Al-Ghazali could see that a separated agent intellect would not allow for personal freedom and responsibility. Mulla Sadra's interpretation of the agent intellect as a divine attribute²⁶ would appear to encounter similar difficulties, especially as to the personal nature of human freedom and its responsibility for evil.

Christian philosophy took the opposite path; reflecting its sense of the autonomy of creatures under God, it placed the agent intellect in the individual human person. But there it encountered Aristotle's original difficulty: if the soul was spiritual how could it also be the form of the body? In the Augustinian tradition up to Bonaventure this was resolved by positing multiple souls, but this created its own difficulties for the unity of the human person as identically bodily in nature and spiritual in dignity -- something of great importance in our day.

In a manner analogous to his work on the inner constitution of finite beings described above, Thomas approached the issue of the spiritual nature of the human person, of human freedom and responsibility. He reasoned in the light of being as existence that:

- one being could have but one existence;
- one existence could have but one essence, and
- one essence could have but one form.

Hence, there could be but one form (or soul) in the human person, whose nature is then neither beastly, nor angelic, nor both, but properly and uniquely human.

This entails, in turn, that the human mind is not dependent on a separated intellect in order to form universal concepts. Rather, the human intellect itself has the capacity to abstract universal natures from concrete sensed objects. Thus the agent intellect which for the Greeks, as for the Islamic scholars of Greek philosophy, had been separated from the human person and shared by many was now seen to be an internal capacity proper to each person. Each person is free, responsible and subject to judgement and reward for his or her actions.

There are other implications here of supreme importance for our present attempt to construct a world that is truly humane: the unique dignity and destiny of the human body; the properly sensual and engaged, yet transcendent, character of human consciousness; the role of the human person as the Cusan point of unity of all creation; and the social character of human rights and their extension to the right to food, to work, to one's culture and religion, etc.

In sum, the participation that Plato saw only externally as between beings was now articulated in terms of the internal constitution of being. Finite beings and hence human persons could be seen as substances existing in their own right (*in se*), but not by themselves or absolutely (*a se*), as is God. As self-conscious and free, persons could act responsibly and hence be subject to final judgment, reward or punishment for lives lived well or ill. Their basic orientation as sharing in divine life is to the good and hence to resurrection and reward. This eschatology, insisted upon by revelation and all who would be faithful thereto, suggests that any theory is in need of further development which would deny creative freedom or responsibility to persons and peoples, either as an ontological or as a socio-political reality.

Mulla Sadra recoiled from the effects in philosophy of treating essences alone, which would reduce being to essence. But he is in danger of falling into the opposite dilemma, namely, of making existence to be being. Though here he is on more solid ground--for this is true of God as simple, absolute and self-explanatory — nonetheless, he is in danger of losing in the divine the reality of finite beings. As with the second half of the Poem of Parmenides and with Shankara, he articulates brilliantly the dynamic process that does exist on the finite level, yet always he is dogged by his words that in a final sense this is nothing. (Fazlur Rahman notes the similar ambiguity between passages of Mulla Sadra in which the first principles bespeak the very reality and power of God, and other passages in which such principles are spurned as empty and vacuous.²⁷) The significance of the work of Aquinas lies in the step he took toward resolving this central tension of being. To do so he developed the notion of subsistence in a philosophy of being as existence, rather than as essence, situating therein all required for the spiritual activity of human persons. Mulla Sadra approached this rather in terms of process.

b. Human Cooperation in God's Creation

In the philosophy of this century the thought of Mulla Sadra is perhaps most reflected in that of M. Iqbal who wrote his thesis on Mulla Sadra and drew notably on Bergson and related thinkers, and in Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy. It might be especially helpful to look at the concerns of the latter to uncover the special relevance of Mulla Sadra for our times.

Whitehead and the derivative school of philosophers share the concerns of many that a philosophy built in terms of substance would be limited and limiting. They fear that it would restrict the capabilities of humans to their generic and specific features, that all change could be understood only as accidental and hence as superficial, and that human progress would then be considered marginal rather than central. Finally, they fear that God as absolute would not be able to take account of, or be affected by, the heroic struggle and real achievements of people. Hence, they think of being as process and of finite beings very much in Mulla Sadra's sense. The world is a process of derivation from God²⁸ similar to a "particular 'structure of events'. . . . Things are particular segments of this continuous process regarded as a particular 'event system' for purposes of description."²⁹

Of course, an existential philosophy of being would respond that natures are markers of human dignity below which no one should be treated; that they are capabilities for conscious and free action according to the essence of each human person; that each concrete essence is unique, just as is each existence; and that the related actions as accidents are not merely external adjuncts, but make the whole person to be such. For example, they make the person to be kind and loving or the opposite. This seems essential for the eschatological human destiny to judgment, resurrection and life in divine goodness.

Nevertheless, each age has its own proper concerns and unfolds its own particular dimension of the human mystery. Contemporary culture is marked by dynamic change which intensifies the search for identity and purpose. Mulla Sadra's process thought brings great richness to this search:

- his philosophy of existence focuses attention on the concrete particular person;
- his integrating sense of finality as orientation to the Absolute Good gives a sense of purpose, for God's creative act is both efficient cause making us to be and final cause drawing us to him in love;³⁰

- his dynamic movement-in-substance (*haraka fi'l-jawhar*)³¹ enables an intense sense of development and progress; and
- his systematic ambiguity opens new horizons of diversity and unity in this age of cultural globalization.

All this must be harvested and applied in our present circumstances. However, my sense is that if we remain within the terms of scientific reasoning employed thus far we will fail to reap the rich harvest of needed insight that Mulla Sadra brings to our present task.

He points out rightly the limitations of conceptual reason and the need to move beyond this to intuition, but he sees this as otherworldly and characteristic rather of the Perfect Man. What is both needed and within reach is instead a new level of human consciousness while in this life, namely, an aesthetic awareness. In the structure of Kant's *Critiques* this comes third. It goes beyond science and the universal and necessary categories of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and beyond the universal categorical imperative of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Yet, aesthetic awareness does not leave these behind, but integrates both in the third *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. This is understanding in terms of beauty and the sublime which mark an eschatology.

The aesthetic is able to grasp the higher principles which in their simplicity do not abstract from, but contain the multiple in their uniqueness. Creative intuition appreciates the dynamic process, but does so from the point of view of its aspiration for a goal in which opposition and conflict are overcome by goodness and love. For Mulla Sadra this is a realization which is beyond this life; it is had through reunion with the Perfect Man, become an attribute of God. However, the final cause is not only the last in realization, but the first in exercise in as much as it mobilizes and coordinates all the rest. Hence, eschatology is not only a time after this life, but shapes our life process from the beginning.

To appreciate this — which is to live life meaningfully and fully — calls for a mode of awareness that can appreciate the concrete particularity of acts of human freedom. It must do so in a way that stimulates, integrates and harmonizes them in intuitions united in terms of beauty and the sublime. To be lived consciously in time, eschatology requires an aesthetic mode of awareness.

Read in these terms, Mulla Sadra's work on existence and process can be appreciated in its full inspiration. It states life with a holy awe, is buoyed up and drawn forward with confidence, and opens to that commitment of love from which peaceful progress proceeds. Deeply understood, his philosophy emerges as a work of the Spirit — of faith, hope and charity — which can turn hatred into love, conflict into peace, and death into eternal life.

Notes

1. M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.
2. There is a similarity here to social contract political theory which sees all in terms of a supposed original position, that is, a social contract hypothetically conceived. All such social theory is developed within the framework of that original contract. Our position differs, however, in that it proceeds not on an hypothesis, but by returning to the earliest character of human thought as anthropologically established.
3. Plotinus, *Enneads II*, 5 (25), ch.5.
4. Maurizio Flick and Zoltan Alszegey, *Il Creatore, l'inizio della salvezza* (Firenze: Lib. Ed. Fiorentina, 1961), pp. 32-49; Mulla Sadra, *Livre des Penetrations Metaphysiques*, ed. H. Corbin (Teheran: Inst. Franco-Iranien, 1964), VII. (Henceforth LP.)

5. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Albany: SUNY, 1975), pp. 74-75. (Henceforth *FR*.)
6. Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, I, 2, pp. 320, 339-341; *FR* p. 89.
7. *FR*, p. 176.
8. *Asfar*, IV, 2, p. 115; I, 3, p. 429; *FR*, p. 238.
9. Parmenides, fragments in G. McLean and P. Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1970); Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Work, Images, and Argument in the Fragments* (New Haven: Yale, 1970).
10. *LP* VIII, n. 8.
11. *Asfar*, I, 2, pp. 308-318; *FR*, pp. 30-31, 38.
12. Exploring the possibilities of consciousness, Paul Tillich suggested a reverse phenomenological approach proceeding through human concern to God as "Ultimate Concern." *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1951), vol. I; *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1952).
13. *Asfar*, IV, 2, p. 116; I, 3, p. 213; *FR*, p. 30, 238.
14. Shankara, *Vedanta Sutras*, Introduction; *LP* VIII, n. 8; *Asfar*, I, 2, p. 292; *FR* p. 38, 237-238. "The relationship between theology and philosophy is best construed as a circle. Theology's source and starting point must always be the word of God revealed in history, while its final goal will be an understanding of that word which increases with each passing generation. Yet, since God's word is Truth (cf. Jn 17:17), the human search for truth -- philosophy, pursued in keeping with its own rules -- can only help to understand God's word better. It is not just a question of theological discourse using this or that concept or element of a philosophical construct; what matters most is that the believer's reason use its powers of reflection in the search for truth which moves from the word of God towards a better understanding of it. It is as if, moving between the twin poles of God's word and a better understanding of it, reason is offered guidance and is warned against paths which would lead it to stray from revealed Truth and to stray in the end from the truth pure and simple. Instead, reason is stirred to explore paths which of itself it would not even have suspected it could take. This circular relationship with the word of God leaves philosophy enriched, because reason discovers new and unsuspected horizons." John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter: Fides et Ratio*, n. 73.
15. Aristotle abandoned the use of *mimesis* after the very first books of his *Organon*, seemingly for fear that it did not assure the reality of finite things.
16. *FR*, p. 178.
17. G. McLean, Introduction to al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty; Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), p. 50.
18. *LP* V; *FR*, pp. 32-33.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 39.
20. *Asfar*, I, 3, p. 83; *FR*, p. 114; C. Fabro, *Participation et causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Pub. Univ. de Louvain, 1961).
21. *Ibid.*; *La Nozione metafisica de partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Societa Ed. Internazionale, 1950), 75-122.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *FR*, pp. 36-37.

24. Fazlur Rahman, "Sadra's Doctrine of Being and God-World Relationship" in *Essays in Islamic Philosophy and Science*, ed. George Hourani (Albany: SUNY); *FR*, pp. 34-37.
25. Al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty*, III, p. 93.
26. *FR*, p. 77.
27. See note 8 above.
28. *FR*, p. 171.
29. *Ibid.*, pp 97-98.
30. *Asfar*, I, 2, pp. 263 and 273; *FR*, p. 80
31. *FR*, pp. 94-108.

Chapter VI

The Crisis of Reason Today

Thusfar we reviewed first the history of human reason and its role in relation to religious issues. Reason emerged from the initial primitive and mythical world views, which were deeply religious in character. In its first major philosophical articulation Parmenides defined its essentially religious character by finding the nature of being and hence of Being Itself to be marked by the divine characteristics of unicity, eternity and unchangeableness. Plato followed, showing that multiple beings had to be essentially participations in the divine which was therefore their source and goal.

Next we looked into the dilemma of al-Ghazali and his dramatic choice of the mystical way of Sufism. He was deeply devoted to faith, but with a weak sense of the capacities of human reason due to an occasionalism which implied also that deductive reasoning could not really cause or certify its conclusions. He saw the limitations of objective reason in the Greek heritage pursued by Avicenna, Averroes and other Islamic philosophers — specifically to grasp the spiritual nature of the human person and its relation to God. As a result he "took to the road" along the subjective interior way of the Sufis on which he wrote the 40 books of the *Ihya*.

Further, we found a companion for Ghazali in the Christian monk and priest, Thomas Aquinas. By further appreciating the power of the creator he saw as well the capability of the creature and hence of human reason. The greatness of God is manifested, not in the weakness of humans to realize their effects, but on the contrary in their being able truly to cause their effects according to their nature in the physical and spiritual areas. In addition he resolved the limitations Ghazali rightly feared in the Greek heritage as it had been continued in Islamic philosophy: the human was not externally spiritual through a separated or separately existing agent intellect, but interiorly spiritual and hence responsible and subject to a final judgement and eternal life along with the resurrection, rewards or punishments of the Qu'ranic eschatology.

This autonomy of human reason opened the road which would lead to modern science. But the question arises whether objective reason could suffice for modern times, and even whether it could take care of itself were it to ignore its subjective dimension and attempt to break away from its religious moorings. If not there would arise a renewed need for faith to provide a context for reason. This, indeed, would seem to be precisely the situation at the present conclusion of modern times and the move to a new and as yet unnamed era of the millennium just beginning.

The Crisis of Reason Today

In order to identify the crisis of reason in which we stand at this turn of the millennia we need to review the history of thought in this era. The first millennium is seen as one in which human attention was focused upon God. It was the time of Christ and the Prophet — Peace be upon them both! — and much of humanity was fully absorbed in the assimilation of their messages.

The second millenium is generally seen as shifting in attention to human beings. The first 500 years focused upon the reintegration of Aristotelian reason by such figures as Ibn Sina, Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and Aquinas, as described above.

The second half of the millennium, from 1500, was marked by a radicalization of reason. Whereas from its beginning human reason always had attempted to draw upon the fullness of human experience, to reflect the highest human and religious aspirations, and to build upon the

accomplishments of the predecessors — philosophers sensed themselves as standing on the shoulders of earlier philosophers — in the Renaissance a certain Promethean hope emerged. As with Milton's *Paradise Lost*, it was now claimed that humankind would save itself, indeed that each person would do so by his or her power of reason.

For this, Francis Bacon¹ directed that the idols which bore the content of tradition be smashed; John Locke² would erase all prior content of the mind in order to reduce it to a blank tablet; René Descartes³ would put all under doubt. What was sought was a body of clear and distinct ideas, strictly united on a mathematical model.

It was true that Descartes intended to reintroduce the various levels of human knowledge on a more certain basis. What he restored, however, was not the rich content of the breadth of human experience, but only what could be had with the requisite clarity and distinctness. Thus, the content of the senses which were bracketed by doubt in the first *Meditation* was to be restored in the sixth *Meditation*. But only the quantitative or measurable was allowed back into his system; all the rest was considered simply provisory and employed only to the degree that it proved helpful in managing one's actions and avoiding dangers in the world.

In this light the goal of knowledge and of life was radically curtailed. For Aristotle, and no less for Christianity and Islam in the first 1500 years of this era, this had been contemplation of the magnificence and munificence of the highest being, God. For the Enlightenment it became the control of nature in the utilitarian service of humankind. But even here, as the goals of human life were reduced to the material, the service of humankind really became the service of machines and the explication of physical nature. This was the real enslavement of human freedom, as noted by John Paul II.

(81) One of the most significant aspects of our current situation, it should be noted, is the "crisis of meaning". Perspectives on life and the world, often of a scientific temper, have so proliferated that we face an increasing fragmentation of knowledge. This makes the search for meaning difficult and often fruitless. Indeed, still more dramatically, in this maelstrom of data and facts in which we live and which seem to comprise the very fabric of life, many people wonder whether it still makes sense to ask about meaning. The array of theories which vie to give an answer, and the different ways of viewing and of interpreting the world and human life, serve only to aggravate this radical doubt, which can easily lead to skepticism, indifference or to various forms of nihilism.

In consequence, the human spirit is often invaded by a kind of ambiguous thinking which leads it to an ever deepening introversion, locked within the confines of its own immanence without reference of any kind of the transcendent. A philosophy which no longer asks the question of the meaning of life would be in grave danger of reducing reason to merely accessory functions, with no real passion for the search for truth.⁴

First, the power of science was diverted to two destructive World Wars and the development of nuclear weapons capable of extinguishing the entire human race.

Second, with reason looking only to itself, religion was reduced to the service of the human rather than the divine, and relegated to the status of a superstructure built parasitically upon the new reductively physical reality or even of superstition.

Third, Josiah Royce's ideals and idealism would give way to William James's and John Dewey's concrete, pragmatic goals which could be achieved by human effort.⁵ Or at least this would be so until it came to be recognized that in positive or empirical terms it was not possible

to articulate such social goals, at which point positivism would succeed pragmatism. But after only two decades this, in turn, would have to admit that its controlling "principle of verifiability" (and then of "falsifiability") was not intelligible in its own positivist terms.

Fourth, Marxism as a scientific history and organization of society, proved to be cruel and dehumanizing beyond belief, until it totally collapsed from its own internal weakness. Suddenly, the ideology on which meaning was conceived and life was lived by half of humankind was extinguished. It was as if the sun went down never to rise again.

Fifth, on the other side of the Cold War the consumer society has shown itself incapable of generating meaning for life, but capable of exploiting everyone else, until in the midst of the "Asian Crises" of 1998 it concluded that its ideology of a totally free market is destructive of the weak majority of the world.

At the beginning of the 20th century humanity had felt itself poised for the final push to create, by the power of science, a utopia not only by subduing and harnessing the physical powers of nature, but by genetic human engineering and social manipulation. Looking back from the present vantage point we find that history of this century has proven to be quite different from these utopian goals. It has been marked by poverty that cannot be erased and exploitation ever more broadspread, two World Wars, pogroms and holocausts, genocide and "ethnic cleansing," emerging intolerance, family collapse and anomie.

The religiously contextualized philosophical traditions not built in terms of the modern enlightenment reductionism were not understandable within that more restricted horizon. Hence the great Hindu and Islamic traditions were dismissed as mystifications and, for reasons opposite to those of al-Ghazali, the medieval tradition of Scholastic philosophy was denigrated not as not going far enough but as having no meaning whatsoever.

It is hard to imagine the utter tragedy of reason in which we now exist, but perhaps some analogies may help. One is the great meteorite which hit the Yucatan Peninsula eons ago. It sent a cloud of dust around the world which obscured the sun for years, killed off the flora and thus broke the food chain for fauna. Life of all sorts was largely extinguished and had to begin to regenerate itself slowly once again.

We move now into a period which is misnamed "postmodern". In reality it is really the final critical period of modernity as it progressively fades in the face of new broader and more humane sensibilities to values, minorities and cultures. Modern philosophy, having become conscious of its own deadly propensities, begins to attack these evils by the only tools it possesses: power and control. Hence, its attack is not creative, but destructive. Knowing that it must arrest its own destructive propensities reason destroys its own speculative foundations: all notions of structures and stages and, of course, all ethical norms. Everything must be trashed because the *hubris* of modern reason closes off any sense that it itself is the real root of its problem. In a paroxysm of despair, like a scorpion trapped in a circle of fire, it commits its own *auto de fe*.

The Religious Response

Where can one find a way beyond this closed, imploding chamber of reason, a way to restore its capabilities for generating a sense of the meaning, direction and goal of life?

We have seen precious pointers in the work of al-Ghazali, Aquinas, Iqbal and recently we have received a detailed blueprint in the Encyclical *Faith and Reason*. Where Ghazali left the path of philosophy for the way of the Sufis, in contrast, Thomas Aquinas illustrated later how it was necessary not to leave the way of philosophy. Instead, this could be — and indeed very much

needed to be — cultivated within the inspirations of faith in order to receive and respond adequately to the prophetic message.

Iqbal for his part remained impressed by the work of science and philosophy, but saw religion as soaring higher in order to enter into "closer more intimate contact with reality".

The aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees Reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living experiences, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy thought must rise higher than itself, and find its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer — one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islam.⁶

Most recently an Encyclical entitled *Faith and Reason* has been written by Pope John Paul II. After the long assault upon religion by a reductive humanism under the pretense of scientific reason, one might expect such a religious source to rejoice in the lowered confidence in reason. The message of the Encyclical Letter, however, is just the opposite. Faith needs reason because faith has always been understood in the Church as an act of intellect. This act is made under the impulse of the will, based upon reasoned confidence in the source of revelation. Conversely, faith is the context within which reason not only began, but now can begin again to rebuild its confidence and extend its reach for the coming millennium. If so then just as the first millennium was that of God and the second millennium that of the human person and reason, the third millennium can be the time when these come together for the glorification of God through human progress.

John Paul II. For those less familiar with church documents it may be helpful to explain the context of the Encyclical "Faith and Reason".⁷ The Catholic Church understands itself as constituting the Body of Christ through time. The Bishops who lead the church are successors of the apostles and are united in the Bishop of Rome, generally referred to as the Pope. He is the successor to St. Peter, whom Christ initially appointed as head of the apostles with instructions to feed His sheep.⁸

The present Pope, John Paul II, received doctoral degrees in philosophy, on the phenomenology of Roman Ingarden, and in theology, on the mystical theology of John of the Cross. First he taught philosophy in Poland, which he continued to do after being appointed Bishop and Cardinal. His engagement in philosophy was marked by the need he perceived, in the face of a depersonalizing Marxism, to articulate a more adequate philosophy of the human person and of social solidarity. The lines of this philosophy can be found in *The Philosophy of Person: Solidarity and Cultural Creativity*.⁹ In 1978, to the great surprise of all, he was elected Pope — the first non-Italian in 400 years. Within two years the "Solidarity Movement" began in Poland, and in ten years culminated in the first free elections in Eastern Europe, June, 1989. In the following six months, again to the amazement of all, the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell and a new era dawned.

It is this same person, Pope John Paul II, who now has responded to the broader, general collapse of reason at this end of the millennium. His 100 page Encyclical affirms that reason can be healed, can regain a deeper ground, and once again can fulfill its glorious role not only for faith, but for all aspects of human life. Its message is that reason must retain its autonomy, but situate

itself in the broader human and divine reality of faith and the cultures and civilizations inspired thereby. There it can develop the objective and subjective characteristics needed in order for it to be a truly humanizing force at the present point of the transition of cultures at this turn of the millennium.

Method. In sum, this is to begin from revelation and the holy text, from there to proceed to philosophical reflection, and then to return to elaborate a theology of the sacred text. We need to break out of the destructive deception that human persons can save themselves: they did not make themselves and they cannot save themselves. Instead God is the creator and in him lies not only our source, but our goal.

This much can be known by objective reason. But due to human evil reason is weakened and distracted. Hence, God sent the prophets to teach us, as is done in the Bible and the Qu'ran. These open our horizons to the source, the dignity and meaning, and the goal of life. Yet this must be responded to by humans who, as free, alone can open their hearts and minds. The words of the Angelus: "*ecce ancilla domini*" may be the essential text.

(73) In the light of these considerations, the relationship between theology and philosophy is best construed as a circle. Theology's source and starting-point must always be the word of God revealed in history, while its final goal will be an understanding of that word which increases with each passing generation. Yet, since God's word is Truth (cf. *Jn 17:17*), the human search for truth — philosophy, pursued in keeping with its own rules — can only help to understand God's word better. It is not just a question of theological discourse using this or that concept or element of a philosophical construct; what matters most is that the believer's reason use its powers of reflection in the search for truth which moves from the word of God towards a better understanding of it. It is as if, moving between the twin poles of God's word and a better understanding of it, reason is offered guidance and is warned against paths which would lead it to stray from revealed Truth and to stray in the end from the truth pure and simple. Instead, reason is stirred to explore paths which of itself it would not even have suspected it could take. This circular relationship with the word of God leaves philosophy enriched, because reason discovers new and unsuspected horizons. (*Fides et Ratio*)

Notes

1. Francis Bacon, *Novum Organon, De Sapientia Veterum* (New York, 1960).
2. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690).
3. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1911), I.
4. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/, 1998.
5. William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York, 1907). John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York, 1920).
6. M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought* (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy, 1989), pp. 48-49.
7. See Appendix.
8. John 21:18.
9. *The Philosophy of Person: Solidarity and Cultural Creativity*, eds. Józef Tischner, J.M. yciniski and George F. McLean (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994).

Chapter VII

Philosophy in the Context of Faith

Autonomous

A first characteristic of philosophy if it is to serve humankind also by helping with the religious understanding of human dignity and destiny, is that it must be authentically philosophical. It cannot be a slave to theology, religion or anything else.

Classically, it has been honored to bear the term "*ancilla theologiae*". The term, of course, goes back to the words of Mary upon hearing the annunciation that she was to be the mother of Jesus. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord (*Ecce ancilla domini*), be it done unto me according to your word" (Lk 1, 38). These words are later echoed in the Qu`ran in detail in 3, 37-47 and in summary form in 4, 171. "The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was merely God's messenger and His Word which He cast into Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him!" For this reason, Mary and Christ were said to be the only ones to be preserved from evil.

The words, "*Ecce ancilla Domini*" are those of the prayer recited three times daily in the Catholic tradition, which in English is called "the angelus". Here Mary speaks for all humanity in inviting the work of the Spirit in human history and hence making it not only something that happens to us, but something we welcome as conscious, free and responsible persons. They contradict only the modern atheistic attitude by which God is excluded and humanity would save itself, that is, the modern idolatry in which one makes oneself to be God. For philosophy to be called the handmaid (*ancilla*) of theology is then by no means to reduce it, to enslave it or to destroy its authenticity; that would be true only in the secularist Promethean presupposition of absolute self-sufficient and revolt. On the contrary, it elevates philosophy to the key, even predominant, position it has held in the Catholic intellectual tradition as the supreme human outreach to participate in the work of human salvation.

Philosophy must be able to establish its own premises and carry them through to their own conclusion. This is found at two levels in Christian philosophy, both of which go beyond the occasionalism we saw in al-Ghazali. The earlier Platonic tradition of Augustine and others held a mediate position between the Greeks and the achievements of the High Middle Ages. For personal responsibility and immortality it was necessary to move from the Greek position of dependence upon a separately existing agent intellect and to recognize the presence of this capability in the human person as its soul. Yet in this medieval neo-Platonic position there were a number of souls according to the different levels of life, e.g., vegetative and rational. Further, God needed to place "seeds" in the person as special possibilities for specific future growth. He needed as well to illumine the mind by special supplemental illumination as it carried out the essential stages of conceptualization.

For Thomas this still was not adequate. As existence makes a being to be, one being could actuate but one existence. Further, by following rigorously the implication of the relation of *esse* or existence to essence, he could see that one *essence* could have but one essence, which was the capacity or potency for existence. In turn, one essence or nature could have only one specifying principle, that is only one form or soul, for otherwise the being would be of one kind by one form and would not be of that kind by reason of a different second form, which would violate the principle of contradiction. Hence, there can be but one form, one essence and one existence in a being. For the human person with both physical and spiritual capabilities this meant that the one *esse*, the one

essence or nature, and the one form of the human person had to be inherently capable of the full range of human activities. Human nature then is not a combination of two levels of reality but a simple, integrated capability for actions all of which are properly human.

This entailed the proper autonomy of the human person. That is, once constituted as a being one is capable of the full range of actions in accord with the one distinctively human essence or nature, including those of a spiritual character. Indeed, spiritual acts of knowledge and freedom are acts properly of the human person. They are acts not of an angel or intellect above the human or even of a second form within the person, but of the one human person living according to a distinct human nature in time and capable of acting accordingly. Conversely the physical acts of the human person are fully human with not only animal but human dignity. Thus the *esse* and essence of the human person are inherently capable of the full range of human activities.

In this light the human intellect and will, with their corresponding philosophical capabilities, enable the human person to live in time as a human image of the divine. This is the true essence of religion. It is not compromised by philosophy following its proper path and arguing according to its own rules and logic; indeed this is essential.

The Encyclical suggests a further important implication, namely, holding rigorously to reasoning that is available to all who share human nature is necessary in order to arrive at insights which are universal in the sense of being available to all. This is especially important for the intensifying interchange and cooperation between the peoples of the world today. The importance of this promises to increase for the future as we proceed beyond the age of scientism and begin to recapture our cultures and to explore them for the values needed in nation building and for global society.

However, as anything humans can do they can do badly, we find to our dismay that cultural identities wrapped in ethnic identities can be manipulated politically into conflicts between peoples and attacks upon minorities. As we move toward the future and an intensification of global interaction, this threatens cumulatively ever larger conflicts in the direction of S. Huntington's conflict between entire civilizations. This generates the imperative of developing ways of reasoning and insight available equally to all, and which at the same time recognizes the native ability of humans to develop in a unique manner their ability to transcend the self and reach out to others. This, in turn, allows for, and capitalizes upon, cultural diversity within overarching social unities.

It is to this that the Encyclical refers in saying:

(75) The demand for a valid autonomy of thought should be respected even when theological discourse makes use of philosophical concepts and arguments. Indeed, to argue according to rigorous rational criteria is to guarantee that the results attained are universally valid. This also confirms the principle that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it: the assent of faith, engaging the intellect and will, does not destroy but perfects the free will of each believer who deep within welcomes what has been revealed. (*Fides et Ratio*)

In this regard the work of Nicholas of Cusa becomes newly relevant. His sense of the importance of diversity among finite beings is not destructive, but constructive and complementary, for unity is ultimately the infinite Oneness of God, which any finite being can image only partially. Hence finite beings depend upon others to image more adequately their infinite source and goal. This is analyzed in depth by David de Leonardis in his *Ethical Implications of Unity and the Divine in Nicholas of Cusa*.¹

Wisdom

Secondly, in order to respond to the present crisis philosophy must be sapiential in character; it must be wisdom. It must not only focus analytically upon one or another particular dimension of reality, but take account of all of creation and relate all of it synthetically in the Creator:

(81) To be consonant with the word of God, philosophy needs first of all to recover its *sapiential dimension* as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life. This first requirement is in fact most helpful in stimulating philosophy to conform to its proper nature. In doing so, it will be not only the decisive critical factor which determines the foundations and limits of the different fields of scientific learning, but will also take its place as the ultimate framework of the unity of human knowledge and action, leading them to converge towards a final goal and meaning. This sapiential dimension is all the more necessary today, because the immense expansion of humanity's technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. If this technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become a potential destroyer of the human race.

The word of God reveals the final destiny of men and women and provides a unifying explanation of all that they do in the world. This is why it invites philosophy to engage in the search for the natural foundation of this meaning, which corresponds to the religious impulse innate in every person. A philosophy denying the possibility of an ultimate and overarching meaning would be not only ill-adapted to its task, but false. (*Fides et Ratio*)

Hence it is not sufficient to restrict philosophy to any one of its dimensions, such as the formal, the functional or utilitarian, or to a phenomenology of human consciousness:

(82) Yet this sapiential function could not be performed by a philosophy which was not itself a true and authentic knowledge, addressed, that is, not only to particular and subordinate aspects of reality — functional, formal and utilitarian — but to its total and definitive truth, to the very being of the object which is known. This prompts a second requirement: that philosophy verify the human capacity to *know the truth*, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of that *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to which the Scholastic Doctors refer. This requirement, proper to faith, was explicitly reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council: "Intelligence is not confined to observable data alone. It can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable, though in consequence of sin that certitude is partially obscured and weakened."

A radically phenomenalist or relativist philosophy would be ill-adapted to help in the deeper exploration of the riches found in the word of God. Sacred Scripture always assumes that the individual, even if guilty of duplicity and mendacity, can know and grasp the clear and simple truth. The Bible, and the New Testament in particular, contains texts and statements which have a genuinely ontological content. The inspired authors intended to formulate true statements, capable, that is, of expressing objective reality. It cannot be said that the Catholic tradition erred when it took certain texts of Saint John and Saint Paul to be statements about the very being of Christ. In seeking to understand and explain these

statements, theology needs therefore the contribution of a philosophy which does not disavow the possibility of a knowledge which is objectively true, even if not perfect. This applies equally to the judgements of moral conscience, which Sacred Scripture considers capable of being objectively true. (*Fides et Ratio*)

Beyond this, philosophy must be knowledge of being as such and of Being Itself. This must be open to the intellect, i.e., true in the sense of a correspondence of being and intellect: "adequatio rei et intellectus". And philosophy, on its part, must develop by the intellect comprehensible ontological, causal and communicative structures to enable the human mind to respond to this intelligibility or truth of being.

Religion is about the relation of all to God as source and goal. Hence in knowing God as one, true and good we know also something about all things, namely, that their reality reflects that unity, truth and goodness. This is perhaps the most dramatic of the shifts needed in order to escape our present dilemma. In modern times, which placed the emphasis upon human power and control, we focused upon material objects which correspond to our lowest powers and are most completely under our domination. But in making our knowledge of these the paradigm of all human knowledge we have subjected ourselves thereto by modelling our powers of human relationships on the violent collisions of the blind atomic world. We can see now that this can only produce a violent society. We need to shift beyond this to the sapiential modes of knowledge and hence to the highest — not the lowest — of human referents. We need to appreciate that the true character of creation is to be found not in the violence of its lowest realization, but in the wisdom and love of its source and goal.

Objective

Further, we need to be concerned, in the words of St. Thomas, not just with what people think, but with the way things are (*De coelo* 1, 22):

(83) The two requirements already stipulated imply a third: the need for a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth. This requirement is implicit in sapiential and analytical knowledge alike; and in particular it is a requirement for knowing the moral good, which has its ultimate foundation in the Supreme Good, God himself. Here I do not mean to speak of metaphysics in the sense of a specific school or a particular historical current of thought. I want only to state that reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical, and to vindicate the human being's capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical. In this sense, metaphysics should not be seen as an alternative to anthropology, since it is metaphysics which makes it possible to ground the concept of personal dignity in virtue of their spiritual nature. In a special way, the person constitutes a privileged locus for the encounter with being, and hence with metaphysical enquiry.

Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the metaphysical dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself, in God. We face a great challenge at the end of this millennium to move

from *phenomenon* to *foundation*, a step as necessary as it is urgent. We cannot stop short at experience alone; even if experience does reveal the human being's interiority and spirituality, speculative thinking must penetrate to the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises. Therefore, a philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation.

The word of God refers constantly to things which transcend human experience and even human thought; but this "mystery" could not be revealed, nor could theology render it in some way intelligible, were human knowledge limited strictly to the world of sense experience. Metaphysics thus plays an essential role of mediation in theological research. A theology without a metaphysical horizon could not move beyond an analysis of religious experience, nor would it allow the *intellectus fidei* to give a coherent account of the universal and transcendent value of revealed truth. (*Fides et Ratio*)

Objectivity is the way the object or thing is known in itself independently of the subject or knower and hence of the subjectivity or consciousness which is proper to the knower. This insistence upon philosophical objectivity stands out when set in the context of the development of the philosophy of John Paul II. Poland in the 1960s and 70s was subjected to the invasive force of an alien materialist ideology which presented itself as a thoroughgoing, objectively scientific view of history. In that context it was particularly important to salvage the subjective dimension of the human person with its self-consciousness and freedom.

As Cardinal Wojtyla in Krakow, John Paul II was intent on joining this to the objective philosophy of being evolved classically in the realist philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. In "The Subject and Community",² he developed the sense of the person in the objective terms of substance (that to whose nature it pertains to exist in itself, such as a stone, rather than an accident which modifies something and depends upon it for its existence as with the color of the stone), supposit ("that which exists actually") and subsistence ("the existence in itself"). In the original introduction to that article Cardinal Wojtyla pointed out especially how "the phenomenological analyses, developed from the principles of the philosophy of consciousness, will begin to work to enrich the realistic image of the people (in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*).³

Here, in *Fides et Ratio*, written in response to the skeptical, post-modern discouragement with the philosophical abilities of human consciousness, John Paul tends more to reaffirm the competencies of reason for objective metaphysical understanding. At the same time he points to the importance of the subjective context provided by belief for the enrichment of human consciousness and thence of objective reason.

Notes

1. David de Leonardis, *Ethical Implications of Unity and the Divine in Nicholas of Cusa*. (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998).

2. *Review of Metaphysics*, 33 (1979/1980), 273-308.

3. *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 53 (1979), 3-4.

Chapter VIII

The Meaning of Faith for Philosophy

Because of the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*'s insistence on the autonomy of the human person and hence of reason and of philosophy — as of science — in their proper spheres, there is no question of philosophy simply drawing its concepts or premises from faith or philosophy and serving merely as a reasoning process to draw out the implications of faith. That would be theology. However faith does inspire a culture, which in turn is the context within which the human spirit is "cultivated" or developed. Hence, for example, a philosophy done within a culture which is marked by a sense of the harmony of humans with their environment can be expected to investigate with empathy and draw out the related philosophical insights: whereas working within a culture which emphasized controlling and subduing nature can be expected to take a quite different turn. The first is proper both to the classical Chinese and Buddhist philosophies of the East and to contemporary developments in philosophy in the West, in contrast to those of modernity.

In this light we can ask what a philosophy done within a cultural context marked by faith would be liable to explore and unfold.

Hermeneutic Mode

First, a culture which is built upon respect for a sacred text can be expected to be sensitive to issues regarding the interpretation of texts and the ability of people to read a text written in an earlier period. Indeed, the problem of fundamentalism is situated just here. If the faithful reading of the sacred text means reading it in the same way in which it was read in earlier times, if the development of human life cannot raise new issues in the minds of the readers and enable the text to provide new insight to them, then fidelity to the text means remaining immobile in a changing world. On the contrary, if fidelity to the text means unfolding its meaning for each age so that the text is enabled by means of the readers to live through time, then the development of life can continually be informed by the prophetic word of Holy Scripture.

The studies of human consciousness precisely as a mode of being (the *dasein*) and hence of the history of Being in time has enabled hermeneutics to make great strides in our day. Two studies done at the Catholic University of America by scholars from Iran and Turkey, Seyed Musa Dibadj, *The Authenticity of the Text in Hermeneutics* and Burhanettin Tatar, *Interpretation and the Problem of the Author: H.G. Gadamer vs E.D. Hirsch*,¹ have been published in this series. It can be hoped that others will follow in order to respond to the fundamentalist concern for fidelity by a profound elaboration of a deeper and more vibrant fidelity which will enable the Holy text to inspire the human pilgrimage in these perilous times.

Further, it can be expected that such a religiously inspired philosophy will be realist in character:

Christian theology always has used the distinction between essential and existential being and predominantly in a way which is nearer to Aristotle than to Plato or Ockham. This is not surprising. In contrast to Plato, Christianity emphasizes existence in terms of creation through God, not through a demiurge. Existence is the fulfillment of creation; existence

gives creation its positive character. In contrast to Ockham, Christianity has emphasized the split between the created goodness of things and their distorted existence. But the good is not considered an arbitrary commandment imposed by an all-powerful existent on the other existents. It is the essential structure of reality.

Christianity must take the middle road wherever it deals with the problem of being. And it must deal with the problem of being, for, although essence and existence are philosophical terms, the experience and the vision behind them precede philosophy. They appeared in mythology and poetry long before philosophy dealt with them rationally. Consequently, theology does not surrender its independence when it uses philosophical terms which are analogous to terms which religion has used for ages in prerational, imaginative language.²

Content

The agenda of philosophy done in a context marked by faith is greatly enriched beyond that in a reductionist rationalist context. This is not to make of philosophy a theology in the sense that its principles are the revealed contents of the scriptures. Rather, it is to recognize that the agenda of philosophy, the issues which are taken up, and the resources drawn upon must differ notably from one culture to another. For example, in some cultures persons are looked upon as simply individuals, singular and conflictual, so that competition becomes the major virtue. This contrasts to a religiously specified culture in which persons are seen as essentially social in origin and goal; there the major virtue becomes harmony with other persons and nature.

The work of philosophy retains its autonomy as it looks with the light of reason to establish its proper principles and to extend and enrich the appreciation of their implications in time.

(76) A second stance adopted by philosophy is often designated as *Christian philosophy*. In itself, the term is valid, but it should not be misunderstood; it in no way intends to suggest that there is an official philosophy of the Church, since the faith as such is not a philosophy. The term seeks rather to indicate a Christian way of philosophizing, a philosophical speculation conceived in dynamic union with faith. It does not therefore refer simply to a philosophy developed by Christian philosophers who have striven in their research not to contradict the faith. The term Christian philosophy includes those important developments of philosophical thinking which would not have happened without the direct or indirect contribution of Christian faith.

In speculating on these questions, philosophers have not become theologians, since they have not sought to understand and expound the truths of faith on the basis of Revelation. They have continued working on their own terrain and with their own purely rational method, yet extending their research to new aspects of truth. It could be said that a good part of modern and contemporary philosophy would not exist without this stimulus of the word of God. This conclusion retains all its relevance, despite the disappointing fact that many thinkers in recent centuries have abandoned Christian orthodoxy. (*Fides et Ratio*)

Some issues exemplify things which philosophy would not take up were it not for the context of faith, but which become of the greatest importance for the delineation of philosophy. One concerns the paradigmatic instance of reality. This was among the first and most basic issues taken

up by Parmenides, at the moment of the creation of metaphysics: namely, does "to be" mean primarily to begin, to be one from among many beings and to change from one kind to another? Or is it, as Parmenides concluded through the reasoning that constitutes the first half of his Poem (see chapter V in *Ways to God*), to be eternally one and unchanging. Philosophy in a context in which faith has come to be suppressed or ignored easily tends to content itself with what is immediately evident to the senses and even attempts to restrict all thereto, as in modern materialism whether positivist or dialectical. Aristotle would agree with this only as a starting point and would arrange all his work in philosophy to move from Physics to Metaphysics, culminating in divine life, which then became the principle in terms of which all is understood as related thereto (*pros hen*). Aristotle's philosophy culminates precisely where the *Vedanta Sutas* (I, 1, 2) begins: Brahma is that from which, in which, and into which all is. Done in a context of faith, philosophy attends seriously to this culmination of Aristotelian reasoning which, drawing on the insights of Plato and Plotinus, it investigates in itself and as both source and goal of all else.

In the West the insights of Plato and Plotinus have been very important in this regard. Its agenda of philosophy done in the context of faith includes God as personal, that is, as knowing or as truth itself, and as love or as goodness itself. Hence, rather than necessity and control, it is freedom which becomes the hallmark of being. Further there is special attention to the divine life as creative, hence its characteristics mark the whole realm of temporal, finite and changing being.

In this light the human person can be appreciated not reductively, as merely the result of material forces, but also as possessing the capacity to transcend one's situatedness and reach out to others. In this light also the dignity and equality of all become salient, as does the essential importance of human freedom which cannot be compromised. In this light also there becomes manifest the horror of moral evil as the failure of human freedom and hence as the radical subversion of one's humanity. Beyond this, moreover, the ultimate goal of life is expanded, as in the beginning and end of Aristotle's ethics, beyond material or even social achievements and benefits, to the contemplation of the divine. In view of this all of creation is transformed into a dynamic, even awesome, manifestation of the glory of God:

(76) The second aspect of Christian philosophy is objective, in the sense that it concerns content. Revelation clearly proposes certain truths which might never have been discovered by reason unaided, although they are not of themselves inaccessible to reason. Among these truths is the notion of a free and personal God who is the Creator of the world, a truth which has been so crucial for the development of philosophical thinking, especially the philosophy of being. There is also the reality of sin, as it appears in the light of faith, which helps to shape an adequate philosophical formulation of the problem of evil. The notion of the person as a spiritual being is another of faith's specific contributions; the Christian proclamation of human dignity, equality and freedom has undoubtedly influenced modern philosophical thought. In more recent times, there has been the discovery that history as event — so central to Christian Revelation — is important for philosophy as well. It is no accident that this has become pivotal for a philosophy of history which stakes its claim as a new chapter in the human search for truth. (*Fides et Ratio*)

Beyond these truths which pertain to speculative reason or to the knowledge of the existence and nature of the divine and of the human, further factors of the practical order are treated in ethics and moral theology. These concern most fundamentally the abilities of the human person to know

the good and to apply this knowledge to particular instances by reasoned judgement, often referred to as the human conscience:

(98) It is no less urgent that philosophy be recovered at the point where the understanding of faith is linked to the moral life of believers. Faced with contemporary challenges in the social, economic, political and scientific fields, the ethical conscience of people is disoriented. In the Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*. I wrote that many of the problems of the contemporary world stem from a crisis of truth. I noted that "once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowledgeable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. Conscience is no longer considered in its prime reality as an act of a person's intelligence, the function of which is to apply the universal knowledge of the good in a specific situation and thus to express a judgement about the right conduct to be chosen here and now. Instead, there is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an individualist ethics, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth different from the truth of others.

Throughout the Encyclical I underscored clearly the fundamental role of truth in the moral field. In the case of the more pressing ethical problems, this truth demands of moral theology a careful enquiry rooted unambiguously in the word of God. In order to fulfil its mission, moral theology must turn to a philosophical ethics which looks to the truth of the good, to an ethic which is neither subjectivist nor utilitarian. Such an ethics implies and presupposes a philosophical anthropology and a metaphysics of the good. Drawing on this organic vision, linked necessarily to Christian holiness and to the practice of the human and supernatural virtues, moral theology will be able to tackle the various problems in its competence, such as peace, social justice, the family, the defence of life and the natural environment, in a more appropriate and effective way. (*Fides et Ratio*)

Mode

The context of faith contributes not only objectively or to the appreciation of being as the object of philosophy, but subjectively to enlivening the creative spirit of the philosopher as well. Al-Ghazali recognized this as decisive. He came to see his earlier work in philosophy as essentially flawed because it was self-concerned, arrogant and lacking in respect in his argumentation with others. His personal conversion enabled him to open himself to truth and respect of others and to share these with others.

For Iqbal this marks the essential character of a religious context as a personal assimilation of life and power. "The individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness". This is a matter of living experience, association and intimacy in which thought rises higher than itself "to find its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer."³

It would be wrong, however, to think of this as purely subjective or attitudinal without implications for the process and content of philosophy. In this regard the Encyclical cites the words of St. Bonaventure at the beginning of his *Itinerary of the Mind to God* on the inadequacy of "reading without repentance, knowledge without devotion, research without the impulse of

wonder, prudence without the ability to surrender to joy, action divorced from religion, learning sundered from love, intelligence without humility, study unsustained by divine grace, thought without the wisdom inspired by God."

That is to say, what is the worth:

- of reading, if one is unwilling to learn and to change one's position;
- of knowledge, if it be cold objectivity without human commitment;
- of research, without that wonder which Aristotle noted as the very beginning or source of philosophy;
- of prudence, if it withholds assent or deadens the ability for joyful engagement in the truth;
- of action, if it is not based on a recognition of the sacred dignity and goals of human life;
- of learning, if it is the cold calculating eye of Plato's rogue, rather than being inspired by love;
- of intelligence, if it is marked by an overriding pride that isolates one from the truths of nature and society, rather than responding to them in humility;
- of study, if it is a reductively human effort, closed to the cycle of divine creativity or to the attraction of divine love; or
- of thought, if it be closed to that wisdom which is inspired by the understanding of all things in God.

A Theological Critique of Faith and Culture

To these rich suggestions of the Encyclical there might be added the need for theology itself to be able to take account of the work of creation in time and hence of the human development of cultures, which generally are based ultimately upon faith. A theology too exclusively focused upon the transcendent can miss this and even suppress it. For if the context of faith opens and stimulates the work of reason it must be remembered that religion is incarnate in time. It is not lived in abstraction from human struggles and the flow and eddies, the discoveries and correctives, of the human attempt to be enlightened by faith. In view of this the history of any faith is significant for philosophy as for the whole of the human effort.

Hence, religion flourished in the Middle Ages to such a degree that it tended to integrate within itself all fields of human activity. This led, at the time of the Renaissance, to the Reformation and its stress on the importance of faith over human activity. In this light all human capabilities came to be seen not only as weakened by sin, but as corrupted thereby. The important fact that salvation is not by human capacities, but by faith then came to mean that till the end of time, that is, throughout history, all efforts of human reason were reflective of the powers of evil and needed to be suppressed. They must be simply supplanted by the revelation contained in the Scriptures, understood as in opposition to all human effort. Resurrection and redemption were situated only at the end of time; they were not already in process.

In such Reformation theology the cultures of humankind tend to be taken negatively. Cultures are not to be promoted as reflections of the divine creator, but rather are works of evil, for redemption takes place not in time, but only after death. In this light the two orders of faith and reason are broken apart and set in opposition one to the other, and with catastrophic results.

Where human nature is conceived as good, in the manner of John Locke who wrote a very lengthy set of biblical commentaries, it is quite separate from religious insight which it would tolerate only negatively. On the contrary, if with Hobbes, human nature is seen as thoroughly

corrupt, self-centered, vicious and brutish, then man is wolf to man. In this view human social institutions are built to restrain this viciousness to the degree needed to enable maximum acquisitiveness.

Human social institutions are then constructed on the basis of this theological position in terms of a separation of religion from human life, of Church from state. In philosophy it is supposed that the human intellect is restricted to the empirical, utilitarian and pragmatic; while metaphysics as the sapiential dimension of philosophy is simply expunged. Here, a theological imperialism is regnant, ruled in turn by a reactionary and hence partial vision which was imposed through the Peace of Westphalia. The modernity that is taken as a position of reason is, in fact, a theological fundamentalism not subjected to adequate rational reflection, but imposed militarily in "the religious" wars of early modernity:

(46) As a result of the crisis of rationalism, what has appeared finally is nihilism. As a philosophy of nothingness, it has a certain attraction for people of our time. Its adherents claim that the search is an end in itself, without any hope or possibility of ever attaining the goal of truth. In the nihilist interpretation, life is no more than an occasion for sensations and experiences in which the ephemeral has pride of place. Nihilism is at the root of the widespread mentality which claims that a definitive commitment should no longer be made, because everything is fleeting and provisional.

(47) It should also be borne in mind that the role of philosophy itself has changed in modern culture. From universal wisdom and learning, it has been gradually reduced to one of the many fields of human knowing; indeed in some ways it has been consigned to a wholly marginal role. Other forms of rationality have acquired an ever higher profile, making philosophical learning appear all the more peripheral. These forms of rationality are directed not towards the contemplation of truth and the search for the ultimate goal and meaning of life; but instead, as instrumental reason, they are directed actually or potentially towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment or power.

In my first Encyclical Letter I stressed the danger of absolutizing such an approach when I wrote: The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will. All too soon, and often in an unforeseeable way, what this manifold activity of man yields is not only subject to 'alienation', in the sense that it is simply taken away from the person who produces it, but rather it turns against man himself, at least in part, through the indirect consequences of its effects returning on himself. It is or can be directed against him. This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadest and universal dimension. Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid of what he produces: not all of it, of course, or even most of it, but part of it and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative which can radically turn against himself.

In the wake of these cultural shifts, some philosophers have abandoned the search for truth in itself and made their sole aim the attainment of a subjective certainty or a pragmatic sense of utility. This in turn has obscured the true dignity of reason, which is no longer equipped to know the truth and to seek the absolute.

(48) This rapid survey of the history of philosophy, then, reveals a growing separation between faith and philosophical reason. Yet closer scrutiny shows that even in the philosophical thinking of those who helped drive faith and reason further apart there are found at times precious and seminal insights which, if pursued and developed with mind and heart rightly tuned, can lead to the discovery of truth's way. Such insights are found, for instance, in penetrating analyses of perception and experience, of the imaginary and the unconscious, of personhood and intersubjectivity, of freedom and values, of time and history. The theme of death as well can become for all thinkers an incisive appeal to seek within themselves the true meaning of their own life. But this does not mean that the link between faith and reason as it now stands does not need to be carefully examined, because each without the other is impoverished and enfeebled. Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal. Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so run the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being.

This is why I make this strong and insistent appeal not, I trust, untimely that faith and philosophy recover the profound unity which allows them to stand in harmony with their nature without compromising their mutual autonomy. The *parrhesia* of faith must be matched by the boldness of reason. (*Fides et Ratio*)

To resolve this situation there is need for a more balanced theology. This may well be in the offing after the ravages of the Cold War. It will require work to reintegrate not only the fall, but redemption and eschatology in time. It will need to be less simplistic and hence will require the more subtle and integrating aesthetic mode of intellection. Only this will allow it to go beyond categorization and classification in general terms, to take new account of the concrete exercise of freedom by innumerable persons and societies and their complex interactions in time, to exercise a more positive and balanced critique of cultures, and to open more hopeful prospects for the work of the Spirit in — indeed as the center of — human history:

(65) Theology is structured as an understanding of faith in the light of a twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*. With the first, theology makes its own the content of Revelation as this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Church's living Magisterium. [88] With the second, theology seeks to respond through speculative enquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought.

Philosophy contributes specifically to theology in preparing for a correct *auditus fidei* with its study of the structure of knowledge and personal communication, especially the various forms and functions of language. No less important is philosophy's contribution to a more coherent understanding of Church Tradition, the pronouncements of the Magisterium and the teaching of the great masters of theology, who often adopt concepts and thought-forms drawn from a particular philosophical tradition. In this case, the theologian is summoned

not only to explain the concepts and terms used by the Church in her thinking and the development of her teaching, but also to know in depth the philosophical systems which may have influenced those concepts and terms, in order to formulate correct and consistent interpretations of them. (*Fides et Ratio*)

This, indeed, constitutes a charter for the cooperation and synthesis of faith and reason for the new millennium.

Notes

1. Seyed Musa Dibadj, *The Authenticity of the Text in Hermeneutics* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998) and Burhanettin Tatar, *Interpretation and the Problem of the Author: H.G. Gadamer vs E.D. Hirsch* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998).

2. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 204.

3. M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy and Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989), pp. 48-49.

Lecture I
Reasoning in Faith
(al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt)

We stand now on the verge of a new millennium. At such a point it is essential to appreciate the dimensions of the change which is taking place. For if we think of present changes as minimal or superficial we will not appreciate the extent of the creative work to which we are called and which the present circumstances make newly possible. The transition through which we are passing is not merely one of numbers from 1999 to 2000, nor is it simply a change within a given structure such as the election of a new political party, e.g., moving from a conservative to a liberal administration; indeed, it is more than merely a change between social structures, for the nature and value of structures themselves are in question. Rather, the basic transformation through which we are passing concerns the very way in which we think about life and values, sometimes referred to as a paradigm shift. It is then at the point of intersection of reason and religion.

The History of Faith and Reason

Reviewing the history of human horizons during the present era, it can be said in general terms that the first millennium was focused upon God. It was the time of the messages of Christ and the Prophet—Peace be upon them both!—and its assimilation. The second millennium can be said to have focused rather on humanity. Its first half was absorbed in the reintroduction of Greek reason as found especially in the work of Aristotle. This project was carried forward by such figures as Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Thomas Aquinas and Scotus. They used reason to understand better the message of the Prophets and to elaborate a comprehensive philosophy for human person.

As noted in Chapter VI above, from 1500 modern life has been marked by a radicalization of reason. Earlier considerable attention had always been given to the thought of one's predecessors and to how one could build thereupon—philosophers spoke of standing on the shoulders of their predecessors. In the middle of this second millennium the attitude changed radically. It was supplanted by an effort to clear away all prior thought in order to construct by technical reason a strictly controlled new pattern of thought. Thus, Francis Bacon called for smashing the idols which carried the wisdom tradition. John Locke spoke of erasing the entire content of the mind until it had the character of a blank tablet. René Descartes called for placing all under doubt until one arrived at an idea which was simply indubitable, and then building thereupon a structure of clear and distinct ideas connected among themselves by clear and distinct relations. This would constitute an aseptic laboratory of ideas, cut off from the long tradition of human engagement in God's creation. The great cultures, as the cumulative results of the exercise of human freedom lived consciously in God, were to be substituted by a human artifact entirely dependent upon the specialized but restricted capabilities of technical human reason. This could develop analytically a scientific pattern of clear and distinct ideas which were universal and necessary, abstracted from the concrete and unique creative acts of human freedom.

The goal here was no longer the same as in the past, namely, contemplation of the magnificence and munificence of God. Rather, it was the establishment of speculative reason as power and control over all. Practical reason was reduced to utilitarian and pragmatic concerns in the service of humankind. Thus, the "Enlightenment" relegated religion to the position of a

superstructure or even of superstition. By the beginning of the 20th century reason felt prepared to build the final utopia.

Now, at the verge of the third millennium, looking back we find this last century to have been instead the bloodiest of them all. Science has not been capable of generating a human utopia or Paradise, or even of establishing and defending human dignity. In contrast, it has implemented two destructive World Wars and invented atomic weapons capable of eliminating humanity itself.

The Cold War, which occupied most of the last half of the century, was a natural result of the attempt to live in terms of clear and distinct ideas. This meant the development of two interiorly consistent, but radically distinct world systems, which in operation inevitably opposed each other as the mortal enemies they were. On the one hand, there was the communist system developed on the basis of the philosophy of Karl Marx. This promised a scientific history which would culminate in an idyllic society. In fact it turned out to be cruel beyond belief. Correlatively liberal ideology developed a pattern of consumerism inherently incapable of generating purpose, meaning or satisfaction for human life, but oriented by its nature to exploiting the weak.

All of this generated a collapse of confidence in reason and a general skepticism, resulting in a nihilism both of meaning and of values, termed “post-modern.” That, however, would seem to be a misnomer, for it does not really go beyond modernity, but stands rather as its last or critical stage in which its initial hopes and aspirations, as well as its major realizations, are subjected to a process of critique. It remains part of the modernity, however, because the critique is carried out in the modern rationalist terms of power and control.

Today, philosophy, seeing the destructive results caused by rationalism, comes to despair of these tools. Convinced that it must do something to stop this destruction and prevent its repetition in the future, but limited in its means to power and control, modern technical reason can only destroy its own principles and foundations, its structures and conclusions. In this it is similar to Sampson pulling down the pillars to which he was chained, and thus the temple itself, upon his head.

The Encyclical “Faith and Reason”

In response to this desperate situation of human reason on September 14, 1998 Pope John Paul II issued an encyclical entitled “Faith and Reason.” In Poland before becoming Pope he had been a professor of philosophy and developed the philosophy of person and solidarity. This emphasized the dignity of the human person and the essential necessity of recognizing personal freedom in social life. This inspired, generated and guided the Solidarity Movement which in 10 years forced the first free elections in Eastern Europe since the Second World War. In the following six months the communist regimes in Poland and in all the Eastern European countries simply imploded.

Now, ten years later, it is no longer a matter of the collapse of merely the Soviet system, but a crisis of technical reason itself. Hence, in the face of the present skepticism concerning reason at this very end of the second millennium and looking to the beginning of the new millennium, Pope John Paul II issued a 100 page document on the relation of faith and reason.

The contents of the Encyclical letter constitute a spectacular strategic inversion of the Enlightenment’s Promethean atheistic attitude, which had claimed rashly that only reason was worthy of humankind and that faith was but an unworthy superstition. In its place the Encyclical proceeds to assert mutually the confidence generated by faith in the ability of humankind to develop an adequate work of reason and the significance of this work for the life of faith.

On the part of God it sees Him as having made and saved man. Because human reason has been weakened by sin, God has sent Prophets to guide reason along its proper paths to its ultimate goal. Their messages are found in the Bible and the Quran; they open human horizons to the source and goal of life and of meaning.

On the part of humanity, the Encyclical asserts the dignity proper to one who is created in the image of God and hence able to know him as source and goal. Humanity then must be capable of responding to God as its destiny. As human, this response is conscious as a matter of mind, but it is also free, responsible and loving—which al-Ghazali described by the term “savoring.”

In this light the Encyclical proposes a method for the interaction and cooperation of faith and reason which is circumscribed in character. This begins from revelation and faith as proposed by the Prophets. Its goal is an increased understanding of God and His revelation through theology. In between these two, revelation and theology, there is the proper work of the development of philosophy or reason. This position calls upon reason not merely to provide some conceptual tools for theology. Rather, it evokes the highest efforts of reason, calling it to take up the most important issues which otherwise it might not have appreciated or treated by reason. Its position between revelation and theology helps to protect reason from lapsing into error or following paths which would not be adequate to the full dignity and destiny of humankind as described in the eschatology of the Holy Scriptures.

While so situated, philosophy should be understood, nonetheless, as a proper discipline in its own right. It proceeds in the light of human reason, on the basis of its own principles, and according to its own structures; it is responsible to its own rules of evidence. This is necessary in order that its conclusions be universal in application throughout the world and thereby enable deep and rich human interchange.

The “Enlightenment” had proposed human freedom in the sense of arbitrary choice among modes of self-assertion in the acquiring of possessions. In contrast, the eschatology in the sacred texts requires rather a personal and conscious freedom in order to respond to the gift of life received from the creator. It requires as well responsibility for one’s actions, if one is to be the subject of fitting and eternal reward or punishment in the final judgement and resurrection.

Two Examples of the Interaction between Faith and Reason

The Human Nature of Christ

Both Islam and Christianity insist, though from different perspectives, that it is important to recognize the human nature of Christ. There are two approaches to this. One is from the revelation found on the sacred texts. This teaches that Christ was son of Mary, that is, that he was really born of human flesh and blood. This has the implication that Christ is truly and fully human. Both Islam and Christianity insist upon this.

The second approach is from philosophy. Here the crucial point in the history of human reflection on the humanity of Christ was the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Against those who would affirm only a Divine or a combined nature for Christ it was important for the Christian community (the *ecclesia* or church) to clarify that Christ was truly and fully human. Philosophy had developed a proper term to express nature, that is “*physis*.” Anything less than this could be understood as only a generic—general, but not specific—human nature which could be only an appearance of humanity. Consequently, many held that it was necessary to use the philosophically elaborated technical term, *physis*, in order to be able adequately to teach the content of revelation.

For over a century there had been great discussion about doing this. Many held that only terms from Sacred Scripture should be used in official Church teachings and hence that the Council should remain with the indirect expression of Christ's humanity by citing that he was the son of Mary. Others held, however, that the philosophical term must be used in order to state unambiguously the content of revelation. This latter position was finally accepted. In so doing the Church, as it were, "crossed the Rubicon," or decisive frontier, to engage in its articulation of the content of revelation. Such philosophical terms as *physis* and *ousia* which could be produced only by human reason.

This had been prepared during the previous century in the first councils of Nicca and of Constantinople. Hence forwarded it has been recognized that, given the evolution of the human mind, one could not teach the faith effectively to humankind without using terms from philosophy, that is, from reason. This opened the path for close collaboration between faith and reason. While forgotten under the impact of the Enlightenment, the Encyclical "Faith and Reason" reopens this collaboration as an urgent need not only for faith, but also for reason at this juncture and as of great promise for future.

The Spiritual Nature of the Human Person

The Greek mind had difficulty with the spiritual nature of the human person. Aristotle had ingeniously managed to penetrate into the composition of changing things and to identify there two principles, form and matter, the form being related as act to matter as potency. Indeed, the two were so closed related, even by definition, that form was not conceivable except in terms of relation to matter.

Consequently, a serious problem arose regarding the development by the human mind of terms that were universal and not held to the particular time or place that characterized material things. In order to explain how the human mind could have such ideas the Greeks developed the notion of an active or agent intellect, existing in a state separated from matter. This could be employed by a number of human minds to separate the intelligibility of a concept from the concrete matter and hence uniqueness of concrete things. In contemporary technological terms, it was as if the properly intellectual character of human thought was supplied by a principle superior and separated from humans, and whose services, like a satellite, were able to be accessed by many persons. The unfortunate implication was that freedom, and hence responsibility, would not then pertain properly to particular persons and their process of thinking, willing and acting, but rather to the common agent intellect. In that case, it is difficult to understand as properly pertaining to human persons the facts of responsibility, immortality, last judgement and eternal reward or punishment.

As a result when the Greek philosophical tradition was being redeveloped in the Middle Ages Ibn Sina, facing this issue, could interpret the eschatological elements of resurrection and personal judgement only in an allegorical manner. (Later, Mulla Sadra would draw the agent intellect into the "perfect man" understood ultimately as an attribute of God.) Al-Ghazali studied this Hellenistic philosophy, about which he wrote one of the best detailed summaries. But he considered the work of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina to be heretical as simply unable to reflect the full eschatology of the Quran. Hence, he pushed this whole approach aside in a deeply personal, even physical, experience described in his work, the *Munqidh*. The passage, translated with deep insight and feeling by M. Abulaylah, Professor here at the al-Azhar University, and cited at somewhat greater length in Chapter III above reads as follows:1

I also perceived that I could not hope for eternal happiness unless I feared God and rejected all the passions, that is to say, I should begin by breaking my heart's attachment to the world. I needed to abandon the illusions of life on earth in order to direct my attention towards my eternal home with the most intense desire for God, the Almighty. This entailed avoiding all honors and wealth, and escaping from everything that usually occupies a person and ties him down.

Turning to look inward, I perceived that I was bound by attachments on all sides. I meditated on all that I had done, teaching and instructing beings my proudest achievements, and I perceived that all my studies were futile, since they were of no value for the Way to the hereafter.² Moreover, what had been my purpose in teaching? My intention had not been pure, for it had not been directed towards God the Almighty alone. Had I not preferred to seek glory and renown? I was teetering on the edge of a precipice, and if I did not step back I would plunge into the Fire.

I thought of nothing else, all the time remaining undecided. One day, I would determine to leave Baghdad and lead a new life, but the next day I would change my mind. I took one step forward, and then one step back. In the morning I might have a desperate thirst for the hereafter, but by the evening the troops of desire would have stormed and defeated it.

My passions kept me chained in place, while the herald of faith cried, "Take to the road! Take to the road! Life is brief, the journey is long. Knowledge and deeds are nothing but mere outward appearance and illusion.³ If you are not ready at this very moment for the life to come when will you be ready? And if now you do not break your moorings, when will you break away?" At that moment, I felt impelled to go; my decision to depart and escape would be made.

But Satan returned, saying, "This is only a passing mood! Do not be taken in by it, the feeling will pass quickly...If you give way to it, you will lose your honors, your well-established peaceful and secure position which you will find nowhere else. You will be taking the risk that you will change your mind again and live to regret it. It will not be easy to come back, once you have lost your position..."

This tug of war between my emotions and the summons from the Hereafter lasted nearly six months, from the month of Rajab 488 A.H. (July 1095 A.D.), during which I lost my free will and was under compulsion.

The fact is that God tied my tongue and stopped me teaching. I struggled to no avail to speak at least once to my pupils, to please the hearts of those who were attending my lectures, but my tongue refused to serve me at all. And having my tongue tied made my heart grow heavy. I could not swallow anything; I had no appetite for food or drink; I could neither swallow easily nor digest any solid food.

I grew weak. The physicians despaired of treating me. They said, "The malady has descended to the heart, and has spread from there to the humors. There is no other remedy but to free him from the anxiety which is gnawing at him."⁴

"Feeling my impotence, my inability to come to a decision, I put myself in the hands of God, the ultimate refuge of all those who are in need. I was heard by the one who hears those in need when they pray to Him."⁵ He made it easy for me to renounce honors, wealth, family and friends.

In this passage al-Ghazali moves from wavering between staying in his post of teaching philosophy and the sciences and breaking away to follow the mystical path of the Sufis. He feels deeply called to leave, to “take to the road,” but hesitates to leave his position as the head of the academy at Baghdad. So deeply does he experience the tension between call and hesitancy that there results a physical paralysis in which he could neither speak nor eat. Finally there follows the peace and liberation that God alone can give along with the strength to give up his worldly privileges and break away in order to follow the mystical Way of the Sufis.

One hundred years later Thomas Aquinas faced the same question, but responded in a different way. Rather than pushing reason and philosophy aside, he pushed it ahead. Here the decisive insight was that the power of God was manifested above all in his creation of the human person. In this light he was convinced of the proper existence of man under God. Further, to participate in God’s existence as a creature was to receive and exercise being in itself, that is to exist in one’s own right—standing, as it were, on one’s own two feet—and acting in one’s own right. Hence the human mind could not depend for its most proper actions upon another separated intellect, but rather must have within itself all the abilities needed in order to act according to its human, and hence intellectual and properly free, nature. This had to include the capacity to abstract universal terms from concrete and singular sensed objects. This opened the way to the rigorous pursuit of reason and science. Even more, it implied cooperation between faith and reason in the development of human knowledge, and with religion in the rational pursuit of life as a matter of committed human freedom and loving fulfillment.

The Nature of Reason and Philosophy between Revelation and Eschatology

As described by the Encyclical letter “Faith and Reason” philosophy should have a number of characteristics:

a. First, philosophy is not a slave to theology, nor does it even depend upon revelation for its premises. For in that case only believers would be able to develop philosophy or to use a philosophy so developed. In contrast, philosophy is an authentic work of human reason, proceeding according to principles and techniques which, in principle, could be developed by any human reason and whose conclusions would be valid for all humans, that is, universal.

b. Second, such a philosophy should be concerned not simply with some specific tasks, such as the development of formal structures, functional or utilitarian reasoning, or the phenomenological investigation of human consciousness. These are valid philosophical tasks, but not sufficient for a philosophical response to the challenge faith brings to reason to rise to its full potential and to provide human wisdom. For this, it must attain knowledge of being as such, that is: (1) of all being; (2) of being as true or open to the human intellect; (3) with its ontological, causal and communicative structures; (4) and hence open to God as the source and goal of all. Philosophy is then the deepest knowledge of all things: classically it is defined as knowledge of all things through their ultimate causes.

c. Third, philosophy must be objective, not simply reporting what people think, but revealing how things are (*de Coel*, I.22).

d. Fourth, its content contains issues which by itself philosophy might not have taken up, but which it is called to consider by the context of faith and the challenge of eschatology. These include God as personal and creator; the human person as spiritual; human dignity, freedom and equality; the problem of evil; and the direction of life towards goals which go beyond or transcend the

worldly concerns of power (politics) or profit (economy), and extend rather to the contemplation of God and to seeing Him in others.

e. Finally, the mode of such a philosophy does not remain mere detached observation, but is rather a free and spirited response to God's creation. It is therefore marked by love for life and knowledge as gifts given by God out of love. Iqbal describes in these words the proper sense of religion as it goes beyond philosophy:

Metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness.⁶

.....

The aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduced all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees Reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory, the other is living experiences, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy thought must rise higher than itself, and finds its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion described as prayer—one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islam.⁷

St. Bonaventure describes the implication of this for enlivening and transforming philosophy into a truly creative human project in the first part of his *The Itinerary of the Mind to God*, regretting there the inadequacy of “reading without repentance, knowledge without devotion, research without the impulse of wonder, prudence without the ability to surrender to joy, action divorced from religion, learning sundered from love, intelligence without humility, study unsustained by divine grace, thought without the wisdom inspired by God.”⁸

Conclusion

It then we return reason to the encyclical context between revelation and theology, we find the following:

1. Faith promotes the human person; it insists on one's personal and social freedom and dignity; and it calls on society to recognize, to live up to, and to fulfill this dignity.

2. Faith today calls for a recognition and defense of the human person, but it points also beyond reason. Where reason has tended to universalize structures which did not include the concrete and unique exercise of human freedom and gave primacy to the objective appreciation of things over against the human person, the context of faith bespeaks rather an engagement in human life as concretely and passionately lived.

3. A new awareness of human subjectivity, with its freedom and creativity, is emerging at this point of transition to the third millennium. These must now be taken into account. If the third millennium is to do so and in the process to integrate and heal the achievements of the first two millennia it will be necessary to develop an aesthetic dimension of human awareness which unites reason with faith, necessity with freedom, time with eternity, and this life with the path to God.

Notes

1. Al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), ch. III.

2. He had been teaching *figh*, which he still considered to be of value, even in contrast to *kalam* and medicine.

3. *Tashal*: fakery, make-believe, fantasy.

4. McCarthy considers fear of assassination by the Batinites not to be the major factor here. He reads these paragraphs as a moving account of a classic personal religious crisis, ending in a true conversion. "He received divine grace which was at once a call and a help to personal holiness; he accepted the grace and really became a holy man." McCarthy, p. 134, n. 172.

5. *Quran* 27.63/62.

6. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. By M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy Pakistan and Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989), p. 143.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

8. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 105.

Lecture II
Faith and Reason
(Mofid University, Qum, Iran)
George F. McLean

Professor David Burrell and I are honored to be here and to address this audience. We share deeply the conviction, the concerns and the spirit of generosity which you show in your vocation as theology students. In particular we admire profoundly your efforts to continue, to extend and to enrich your education in philosophy, economics, political science and other fields here at Mofid University. Islam in particular, but the world as a whole, will depend upon the vision you are able to develop during these years of study. Professor Burrell and I have spent our life times teaching students such as you, and searching along with our students to discover the deeper philosophical coordinates which will enable us to articulate our religious vision and render it operative in this world. So we come as brothers in faith and fellow wayfarers in the hope that our common journey will lead to the Holy Precincts.

The situation of change in which we stand opens new possibilities for our efforts. The greater the change the greater the opportunity. So it seems important to recall something of the dramatic character of the change in which we stand. At the present time there emerge dramatic differences. Whereas before, physical nature was considered something to be exploited by humankind, now we feel that nature is a gift of God that must be protected and promoted. Before, we thought of power in social life especially as coming from above: today we think much more of the power of the people, of the way in which God speaks to their hearts, of the way in which the Spirit lives within them, and hence of the way in which power emerges and rises upward. Before, we thought of women and minorities more as servants; today we appreciate them as partners.

But a still deeper and broader change is taking place, a change in the very way we see and interpret our world and ourselves. Everything now is seen differently, appreciated differently, and responded to differently. Hence to serve the faith today it is important to appreciate how we think and exercise reason in a new and more positive manner.

A History of Reason

To appreciate this change in our way of thinking it may be helpful to review the history of reason¹ in this era. During its first 1000 years the human mind and reason were focused upon God. It was the period of the reception of the messages of the Prophets, Jesus and Mohammed — Peace be upon them both! — and humanity was occupied with the assimilation of their message. Hence, the first 1000 years can be described generally as focused upon God. The next millennium which concludes this very year, could be described as focused upon the human person, especially with regard to its capacity for scientific reasoning. During its first centuries Greek philosophy was received in Islam by al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd and others. It was passed largely from them to Christianity in the person of Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Scotus and others. Reason was developed within this context and was referred to as the *ancilla theologiae* — the helper or handmaid of theology.

In the Christian scriptures this is the word that Mary used when the Angel appeared to her and told her that she was to be the mother of Jesus. She responded: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." This was not to slight her human dignity; on the contrary it was her way of accepting to be a central

cooperation in God's work of redemption. It was the high point of humanity as it welcomed the message of the angel regarding the great Prophet who was to come. Salvation would not be something that simply happened to humankind, but something in which human kind played an active role. Hence, to speak of reason as the *ancilla theologiae* is to express the highest dignity of humanity.

By a Promethean Enlightenment this reference to reason and philosophy in the Middle Ages was misinterpreted as disrespect. Rather, the word "*ancilla*" is part of the prayer that is said three times daily in the Catholic tradition. Archotypically Mary's response was the act in which humanity was most dignified by God and when humanity responded freely in her person to accept and to join actively the process of its redemption. To call philosophy the handmaid or *ancilla* of theology then is not to diminish it, but rather to indicate the greatness of human reason in the context of the faith. That was the spirit of faith and reason up to the middle of this millennium.

At about 1500 reason became radicalized, as is reflected in a number of exceptional philosophical moves. Previously work in philosophy always began from the wisdom of the predecessors; it was said that philosophy stood on the shoulders of the predecessors. In the middle of this millennium, however, we find that philosophers changed that relationship. Francis Bacon spoke of smashing the idols which bore the traditions of the people. John Locke spoke of erasing the contents of the mind in order that it be a blank tablet. Descartes, the Father of Modern Philosophy, began his system by suggesting that everything be put under doubt until we found one idea that could not be doubted. That would constitute the basis upon which philosophy could be reconstructed in a scientific manner. In other words, they went about removing the wisdom accumulated by reason through the ages and developed instead an aseptic laboratory in which would be allowed only ideas clear and distinct to the human mind. However, this mind is not unlimited as is God's, but limited; only what was clearly dominated by that limited power was integrated into the modern human horizon. As a result the pattern of so-called Enlightenment reason removed the content of faith and developed a secular world. This has tended to look down upon anyone who proceeds on the basis of faith. Islamic nations have suffered more than most the sense of injustice in being depreciated because of their faith.

This is the tragedy of modern reason. We find then that this century, rather than becoming the great utopia created by science and human reason, has turned out to be bloody and destructive in the extreme. It has been marked by the "elimination" or killing of millions of people in holocausts and pogroms. Gradually people have begun to draw back before the recognition of this pattern of destruction. In order to keep reason from destroying humanity they have begun to negate reason itself, denying that it could have a foundation, that it could have universal and necessary knowledge, or that it could proceed according to well grounded principles. In effect, they have begun to deny reason itself in order to keep it from destroying humankind. This recalls the image of Samson chained to the pillars of his prison and who pulled those pillars down, bringing down upon him the devastating weight of the prison itself. This is something of the spirit of the moment as people today become doubtful, even fearful, of their own reason.

What can be a response of a people of faith to this great crisis of reason in our day? The document "Faith and Reason" written by the Pope in Rome, John Paul II, in response to this situation of skepticism and despair provides an important example.

John Paul II

First, a note about John Paul II.

John Paul was a professor of philosophy in his younger days, who went through the same trials we experience in attempting to understand and to teach in this field. When Cardinal of Krakow in Poland he told me that he thought the only real response to Marxism was to develop a better philosophy of the human person. He spent some time each morning writing on that project. It came to be referred to as the philosophy of the person as regards the individual³ and the philosophy of solidarity as regards society.⁴ In an amazing move, when the previous Pope passed away, the Cardinals, assembled in Rome, chose Cardinal Wojtyla in Krakow to be the next Pope. For 400 years the Popes had always been Italians; yet in the midst of the great oppression of Soviet atheistic materialism they chose as Pope a Cardinal from the midst of that empire to lead the people of the Christian churches throughout the world. Very shortly after he left for Rome, the next time there was a labor conflict in Poland a labor movement was created called, not incidentally, "solidarity". Each time the government offered the people concessions — some quite good — they were rejected because the philosophy of solidarity had made clear that concessions given to the people, but without their participation, were an insult to their dignity as free and responsible in the image of God. In ten years Solidarity dissolved Marxism in Poland, and within six months of the first free elections in Poland Marxism was gone throughout the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. The work John Paul had done in philosophy to develop a better vision of the human person and of society had been the iron tip of the spear which freed peoples from Berlin to the Pacific.

Faith and Reason

That was 1989. Now ten years later John Paul has written a document entitled "Faith and Reason" because it has become apparent that the problem was not only Marxism, but the Enlightenment as a whole. The present discouragement with reason is a reflection of the fundamental error made when reason turned only to itself as if it were the savior which only God could be.

The response of John Paul is in a sense surprising. He does not rejoice at being free at last from the *hubris* or pride of reason which had been so oppressive though the 400 years of the Enlightenment. Instead, he writes that in faith we know that human persons are images of God and possess reason given by God. Thus, he calls upon them to live up to this dignity in the exercise of their reason.

The inversion is dramatic. Where reason had always said that religion was unworthy of humankind and would disappear, now faith says to reason: do not despair, do not disappear. You are a gift of God, and you are needed; stand tall and be reason.

The document, called an "Encyclical," meaning that it is a letter sent around to all the Bishops of the world, proposes a method for the relation of faith and reason. It is the method employed in your studies here in Qum. The students begin their religious studies in the seminaries with a prayerful analysis of the Qu'ran and of the law. Then some come to the University to study one of the sciences, such as economics, political science or philosophy. Finally the two studies come together to generate a better theology or understanding in faith and of the faith. This indeed is what John Paul recommends as the proper interaction of faith and reason, namely, to begin with revelation, to follow with philosophy, and then to join the two for a better understanding of theology.

Revelation. Why begin with revelation? We know that humankind did not create, and cannot save, itself. So, in His goodness, God sent the Prophets who give us the Scriptures and the Qu'ran

to tell us how we have been loved in our creation and about our great and exalted destiny, namely, to live with God for all eternity. They open our sensibilities to the magnificence and munificence of God. They set for us a paradigm or archetype of human relations which is not the collision of atoms or even the laws of the market place where we buy and sell, but rather a vision of the love of the Creator which is shared in creating us and which we, in turn, should share in our life. This is the vision given to us by the Prophets; we should begin with that.

The message as lived becomes a tradition. It opens our sensibilities and provides the possibility for appreciating the way in which we are to live in our lives this creative love. It specifies the culture as a way in which our life can be cultivated or made to flourish.

Reason. It is at this point, after speaking about revelation and the way in which God has generously shared his life, that John Paul turns to the issue of philosophy. In this passage he does something magnificent. He points out that the human person has been created by a wise, loving and all-powerful God. What God made is not a defective creature; rather he has made the human person in his own image as one who can know and love. Hence, we can have confidence that God has given to us all that is required in order to be able to think and to will as children of God who, in his image, are to rule this universe.

Thus, reason has its own autonomy; it can elaborate its own principles, and must follow its own pattern of reasoning. In doing this it is able to work out a philosophical vision that will enable persons to live as children of God and as His Vice-gerants in this world.

This is quite consistent with the vision of philosophy and theology in the Middle Ages, namely, that man has within himself all that is required in order to be fully human. Hence John Paul says to philosophers: have confidence in reason as an instrument that is truly worthy of Children of God.

In the experience of Islam you will remember how al-Ghazali was concerned about philosophy. It seemed to him that the key Islamic philosophers of his time were not able to develop a vision of the human person rich enough to correspond to the eschatology found in the Qu'ran. Faith tells us that the human person will be judged in the last day and will be resurrected for the last judgement and reward. But how could that be unless the human person is free and responsible? For Ghazali philosophy would have to have a much richer sense of the human person in order to provide for the human destiny described in the Qu'ran.

Pope John Paul does something similar. He says that reason must work in its own way and according to its own laws, but that it does so within the culture of a people inspired by The Book. This culture, inspired by revelation understands the human person as free and responsible, as living with dignity in confrontation with evil, and as having a transcendent goal in God himself. This invites reason to work better than it would if it did not have the context of faith.

There are some special characteristics of a philosophy so situated. It must be able to do some specific and proper tasks such as logical and phenomenological analysis, but it must be able also to bring these together in a wisdom that opens the mind to all of creation and to the Creator himself: it must be a wisdom.

Further, it must be not only subjective, looking into itself and seeing things the way one likes to see them. Rather, reason must be able to see and to say how things truly are: this is the God who is; this is the world that He has created; this is the human being to whom he has given such great responsibility. Also it must be a philosophy with a sense of will that is sufficiently open and exalted to be able to respond in freedom and in love to the love of God by which it has been

created. This is the vision of philosophy presented by John Paul II in his recent Encyclical, *Faith and Reason*.

Theology. Joining the divine message received by the Prophet with such a philosophy, one can proceed to develop a theology truly capable of providing guidance for humanity in this time of great change, great complexity and great promise.

In this light, it is possible to respond to two questions that concern us all.

I. *Freedom.* It has been asked whether attending to, and promoting, human freedom is not the wrong approach. Is it not freedom which causes all conflicts and evils in world, and is not the message of the Scriptures intended precisely to delimit this freedom?

In response I would ask: what is freedom? In the pattern delineated above, at the time of the Enlightenment the horizons of the human person came to be very focused on humanity and on what is clear and distinct to the human mind. There resulted an exclusion or rejection of the pattern of wisdom and of freedom which had evolved through the ages in the great religious traditions. Freedom shrunk and was reduced to the ability to do what one wants — which was to acquire physical goods and satisfaction. This is a very minimal notion of freedom, but a very common one.

Mortimer Alder, with a team of philosophers spent some years reading through all of Western philosophy, attending precisely to the notion of freedom. At the end of the work they compiled two volumes⁵ which identified three levels of freedom. One was that mentioned above, namely, the surface freedom to do what I want; it is the operative freedom of the U.S. Supreme Court. Beyond this there is in Kant a second level of freedom, namely, to choose as I ought. Here, we begin to get direction and orientation, but this is only formal in character. It sets certain patterns and universal directions and norms, but it does not take account of the third level of freedom which we are given as children of God, namely, the existential freedom of creatures to develop life in a way that reflects the divine characteristics of truth and justice, of unity and love.

To respond to this limitation of freedom to the first level in our day, there is need for philosophers, particularly those in the religious traditions, to go more deeply into what freedom is. At its third level freedom is the power of the children of God, in the concrete circumstances of their life, to be able to respond in love and thereby to create justice, harmony and peace.

Is there a principal in theology or in revelation which will speak to the problem of freedom? Yes, it is the whole of revelation; that is what revelation is about. The whole of theology is a process of wisdom; it is not only to defend one or another point. Rather theology as a wisdom; indeed the whole of religion is a vision in which, in their exercise of freedom, all persons come together to live as a holy people.

It is not then a question of restricting freedom, but of liberating freedom from the bonds of materialism and hedonism to which it has been subjected — not least, during these last 400 years. At this turn of the millennium a momentous change is taking place, as described above. As leaders in our faiths, for the first time in four centuries it has become possible to invert the process of secularization and to speak to what freedom really is. We can know that people will respond to that message because they have suffered enough and now are looking for new values and new sensibilities. That is my reading of the present and my hope for the future.

II. *Relations between Religions.* It has been asked whether the divisions in Christianity do not result in failure on the part of the Catholic Church to appreciate the work of such Protestant leaders as Martin Luther King.

It may help to note that the Protestant denominations are a reformation of the Catholic tradition. Between the two there is then the relationship of the initial, more positive and integrated vision in the Roman Church and a more critical, revolutionary attitude in the Protestant Churches. The Catholic Church has the great intellectual tradition of positive scholarship and of wisdom reflected in such thinkers as Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, which was reflected by the Islamic scholars Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd who contributed richly in turn. The Protestant tradition is much more critical; it sees human nature and reason as corrupted by original sin and therefore does not look to philosophy, but stays more exclusively with the Scriptures.

Is it possible to integrate the two; is there interest in doing this? There is both considerable interest and considerable difficulty. We know how when branches of a faith divide it is difficult to bring them back together. But there is something new in relation to the Christian division; indeed it reaches beyond the Christian traditions to Islam and to Buddhism, etc. During these last 10-15 years there has been a great change in attitude which now looks positively towards ways for cooperation and dialog. The great possibility is that these branches of Christianity and indeed the great religions of the world will increasingly contribute mutually one to another. I am very hopeful in this.

I do not experience the Catholic position as negative toward developments within other religions. Indeed, Martin Luther King and I both wrote our Ph.D. dissertations on the very same subject, and I feel with him a special bond of admiration and understanding. When determining my topic for a doctoral dissertation I first chose William of Ockham because Luther was among his followers. When I could not obtain the needed texts I chose Kierkegaard, a modernizing Protestant. But because there was so much secondary literature on the topic my director suggested Paul Tillich, a leading contemporary Protestant systematic theologian/philosopher. Since then there has been increasing positive interest in the thought of other Churches, for example, in scriptural studies where Protestant thought is advanced.

I would see this interest reaching beyond the Christian Churches to other religions as well. In 1969 I spent my first sabbatical studying Hindu philosophy in India. Interest in Buddhism as well as Islam is now quite considerable in Europe. This expansion of interest across the range of religions seems to be the direction for the future.

It would be a sign of loss of faith if this interest in another religion meant a lessening of commitment to one's own. My own experience is that acquaintance with other cultures and religions can instead enable one to deepen the understanding of one's own faith and inspire one to live in one's own fashion a greater fidelity to God.

Notes

1. *Ways to God*, chs. II-VII.
2. Sept. 14, 1998.
3. *The Acting Person* (Analecta Husserliana) X; (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979).
4. "The Person: Subject and Community," *Review of Metaphysics*, 33 (1979/1980), 273-308.
5. *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1958).

Lecture III
Philosophy and Religion
(People's University of China, Beijing, China)
George F. McLean

The challenge for the new millennium is to construct a world that is not only sustainable, but desirable because worthy of its persons and peoples. In this task philosophy and religion stand as partners.

The Challenge

In order to understand the present moment and its dramatic significance it is helpful to review briefly the previous millennia. The first millennium was the time of Christ and of Mohammed; people were concerned especially with the assimilation of their message. But where the first millennium was focused on God, the second, just ending, has been focused on humankind. In its first 500 years — 1000 to 1500 — philosophers were engaged in integrating reason as received from the Greeks at the time of the high Middle Ages. This was the work of Thomas Aquinas, Scotus and others, who in this depended extensively on such great Islamic thinkers as Al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes.

The change which took place in the middle of this last millennium at the beginning of the modern period was deep and radical. Previously, the philosophers had always built upon the work of their predecessors. In contrast, Bacon now called for smashing the idols which carried the traditions of the ancestors; John Locke spoke of reducing the mind to a blank tablet in order to be able to codify what would be written upon it; and, of course, Descartes began with a systematic doubt bracketing everything in the mind and then restored only what could be certified as clear and distinct.

As professors and students of philosophy undoubtedly you share the enthusiasm which I always had in teaching about this great experiment in which the mind was cleared and the philosophers reconstructed its content piece by piece according to the norms of scientific knowledge. Much was accomplished, but today, at this conclusion of the second millennium, we are conscious more of the limitations of that great experiment.

Where the 20th century began with high hopes that it could solve all human problems, it has concluded with a sense that this century has been a most disastrous period. Today, we remember Fascism and the Second World War it evoked, the reality of colonialism and its oppression of peoples, the holocaust and other instances of genocide.

In these last two decades the world has fallen back in dismay at what human reason has done and many philosophers have felt that the only way to protect the future from the continuation of these disasters is to criticize and even negate the competencies of reason. Often referred to as post modernism, this constitutes a ground clearing — or mind clearing — operation which is overly negative. But, in any case, it opens the way for a new and quite distinct positive human project for the third millennium just dawning.

We find today a truly new agenda for humanity. Whereas, before, the United Nations was focused on the Security Council debates of the Cold War conflict between economic and military ideologies, now its agenda is quite different. Its concerns are those of the great conferences of Rio

de Janeiro about the environment, of Cairo about the family, of Beijing about women and about peace in the world.

Today the relation of philosophy and religion must be reconsidered in the context of this transformation of the human agenda. The issues now become how to broaden and deepen the human search, which has been too restricted to concerns of profit or power, to concern for the quality and dignity of human life. The resource for this is the cultures which each people has formed as its attempt to live in a worthy manner.

Since 1986, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) has had almost annual colloquia with teams from China — from Peking University, The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Fudan University, and the Chinese National Academy in Beijing. The evolution of the problematics which these scholars have suggested for discussion is striking, while proceeding always on the basis of China's long search for modernization and its choice of a socialist path to that goal.

At first, the market was supposed to be a matter of vicious competition and conflict, devoid of any ethics. Nevertheless, China chose to open a socialist market to the great excitement of the people. This was necessary in order to engage more intensively the initiative of the people in support of the progress of so large a population. This required that the people, each with their own competencies and each in their own local or village situation, take initiative to develop the quality of their personal and social life. On the front page of *People's Daily* on Jan. 12, 2000 an important article reported the decision of the government Ministry of Community Affairs to promote the responsibility of village and neighborhood councils, in part in order to engage the people more actively in such community efforts.

There is here a dilemma, however. It is not that a socialist government and culture is inviting and stimulating the participation and initiative of the people, for socialism was always intended to be a movement of the people. It is, rather, the danger that such initiative will become what had earlier been expected, namely, a process of vicious competition, marked by the corruption of the rich and the destruction of the poor and the weak. Personal initiative there must be, but it must be directed beyond self in order to be creative. How to do this is the issue for society today. Hence, our specific question regards how the relation of philosophy and religion can help to respond to that challenge.

The Response

A philosophy department, in expanding to become formally a Department of Philosophy and Religion, is taking on more than historical studies about practices of the past or cultural studies about other countries. It is engaging itself in this central challenge of China today. This is so in two precise ways: first, in convergence with socialism, attention to religion can help philosophy to counter the tendency of human initiative to degenerate into individualism and conflict; second and more distinctive, religion can suggest ways of doing this not by deadening, but by enlivening human initiative.

First, overcoming egoism. Both socialism and religion are centrally concerned with the effort to overcome the degeneration of human initiative into egoism and conflict. This is true of all three components of the culture of China: Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. In a recent colloquium of scholars from China in India it was said that Confucianism focuses on the gentleman, whose concern is etiquette or the modes and customs of refined external behavior. Prof. Gu Weikang

countered that Confucianism is not simply about the mode of action of the gentleman. Still more fundamental to Confucianism is the wisdom of the sage regarding the goal and foundation of human life. This illumines the values and virtues which inspire a worthy manner of personal and community life. This vision of the sage is the real heart of Confucianism.

Daoism also focuses on a transcendence of the individual's possessions and competitive concerns. The Dao which can be described — it is noted famously — is not the Dao; if it has to do with objects that can be possessed, one in contrast to another, it is not the Dao. Daoist thinking goes beyond any particular individual or object to include the harmony and meaning of all.

In this way both Confucianism and Daoism open a most important dimension for the contemporary mind. Where Descartes sought only ideas which were clear enough to be distinguished from all else, Daoism seeks just the opposite. In talking of 'this' rather than 'that' one has not yet touched the roots and the meaning of human life. Only by transcending objects and individuals can their real meaning for human life be attained.

Finally, Buddhism has a similar message. Some have misinterpreted Buddhism to be a pattern of ritual superstition or an escape from society. In discussions in India with the professors from Shanghai and the Chinese National Academy, Profs. Nayak and Mishra suggested the contrary. What the Lord Buddha suggested was a middle way: neither the great asceticism of his earlier efforts nor the great indulgence of a consumer society, but a properly balanced life between both of these. This entails abandoning all clinging, that is, all seeking, grasping or holding onto things. As a result one's consciousness is freed to direct the heart along a virtuous path; this is also the *karma yoga* of the Hindu roots of Chinese Buddhism.

It is set directly and purposively against the individualism and egoism, corruption and exploitation, which must be overcome for a healthy socialist market system. Instead, the Buddhist message provides a deep basis for a sense of justice, of compassion for the poor and the suffering, and of universal concern. In other words, it includes a deeply social ethics, which it vigorously supports philosophically with an elaborate epistemology and metaphysics.

It is the task of a department of philosophy and religion in China today, especially in Beijing, to enable these dimensions of the heritage of Chinese culture to be appreciated as more than superstition or flight. Their deep social wisdom is supported by a rich metaphysics which needs to be unfolded and applied by the tools of philosophy. This is needed for a broad social (and socialist) vision to guide the present process of transition.

Second, joining personal initiative with social concern. We come here to a difficult juncture. The challenge is not only to overcome the dynamics of clinging which is at the heart of consumerism, but at the same time to stimulate the initiative of the people of the country. All the competencies of the people in their many specializations and configurations must be mobilized in order to face the challenges of so great a population on the move into the new millennium. Initiative must be stimulated in a context that protects it against degenerating into egoism and exploitation. For all lose if the values of peace and harmony are abandoned in order to stimulate initiative, or, on the other hand, if harmony is stressed in such wise way that the initiative of the people is suppressed. The challenge is to join together both personal initiative and social harmony not in an isometric that paralyzes both, but in a dynamic union which can undertake to build the future.

This is the point at which religion plays its special role in enabling social life. For it opens a transcendent dimension for a culture which frees one's self-understanding from being reduced to one's material conditions, as are rocks, plants and animals. Instead, it opens the mind to meaning and values according to which we judge and value the acceptability of concrete temporal options.

Moreover, it provides a sense of the origin and dignity of ourselves and our fellow humans. It counters centripetal self-concern by love for others as brothers and sisters under the one Source and Goal of all. This provides a basis for real hope that people can be enlivened and mobilized for social goals, for it is the same vision which both assures the importance of the self and sets one in relation to others as well.

How does religion at once inspire both human initiative and its social relatedness? It does so by providing the culture with a sense of the human person — not reductively as the result of lesser physical forces as do the sciences — but by showing the person to be by nature an image of God and hence to transcend or open beyond itself. This it does in three steps, which the Hindus would summarize as existence, consciousness and bliss. First, the person is appreciated as self-sufficient in existence, that is, as existing, not of itself which is the character of the God as Absolute Being, but in its own right. Thomas Aquinas would use the term "autonomous", that is, possessed of all that is required in order to be fully human and to be able to act accordingly. The person then is active and a center of initiative. To use Heidegger's term, this is the *dasein*, namely, being as emerging into time through the conscious reality which is the human person. As seen by a religious vision the person erupts or bursts into time and will not be suppressed. This is initiative indeed.

Moreover, as a creature and image of God the human person is a reflection of the All-wise, of knowledge itself or consciousness: *cit* as Hindu philosophy would say. The human, then, is not a blind, destructive force, but is conscious and creative.

Finally, religion points out that the person is not made as an object, tool or instrument to serve a need of the creator. Rather, because the Source is already all perfect, it creates out of a generous love or bliss (*ananda*), and hence, as image of God, the person's freedom is not essentially self-centered or self-seeking, but open, sharing and social.

The Christian vision is centered on a parallel Trinity of Father, Son (Logos, was conscious expression), and Spirit when is love. This is of such great import for philosophy that classical Western philosophy began to codify the transcendental characteristics of being itself as unity, truth and goodness.

Religion, of course, is not philosophy, but rather a basic component element of the culture and civilization. But if it is true, as hermeneutic and scientific methods now insist, that it is possible to obtain answers only to questions which have been posed, then the religious elements in a culture enable philosophers to ask questions such as the nature and meaning of human life and to restate these questions when the answers thusfar do not suffice. Thus, when, as is now the case, a people gives new attention to their cultural roots the religious content of their culture enables their philosophers to pose new and deeper questions, to develop proportional philosophical tools and to achieve penetrating and properly philosophical insights about the nature and progress of human life. This is very much the case today and explains how we now face a quite new agenda.

Philosophy and Religion for China Today

In the case of modernization for China, where the paradigm tends to be the West as articulated in 1919 in terms of the two Misterys, Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy, the relation of philosophy to religion is important for two quite special and specific reasons.

First, philosophy has always differed significantly according to cultures. It is often noted that the broadest ocean on the philosophical map lies between the Anglo-Saxon tradition of England and the Continental philosophy of France, though geographically the two are but 25 miles distant. In its search for a rational structure for life philosophy can stop at any level. If it takes life in a

Humean manner as basically a matter of material survival then it can work out a reductive model based upon physical or economic relations, reducing thereto the human person and relations between peoples. All value theory is then substituted by value-free empirical sciences and ethics can be only utilitarian. This is the position of the positivist and analytic philosophies whose founders, Bertrand Russell and John Dewey were visiting China around the time of the 1919 movement.

Of itself and logically this is so individualistic and disaggregative that it is prone to orient human initiative into a socially destructive egoism. Hence in the socialist tradition personal initiative has been more feared than attractive. The West has been enabled to survive this threat of individualism by its religiously grounded social vision. This is indicated by the way Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and Adam Ferguson's *Civil Society* (1767) provided a necessary context or safety net for Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776).

This suggests that a people opening a market economy with its dangers of individualism and of grasping has special need of renewing the religious roots of its culture. These enable their philosophers to go back to work in order to take account of additional dimensions of human life — of unity and harmony among persons and with nature, of truth and justice in human interchange, of love and service to others, — that is, of life as possessed of true dignity and beauty.

Human initiative must not be destroyed, for it is essential in order to respond to human needs. Rather it must be inspired and promoted, but in terms that at the same time lift one's sights, open one's concerns, and enable and guide one's will along social paths. This is precisely the character of religion. It recalls to the human person that the great power by which it was created — the source and heritage of its initiative — is self-giving and love, that this extends to all peoples and things. Hence to exercise this initiative properly and fully is not to attack and subdue, but to live in harmony with others whose welfare is also one's own. This vision continually inspires philosophy to seek ways to integrate both self and others within the fullness of life.

Secondly, this is not a matter only of speculative knowledge, for philosophy and religion are engaged in the life and struggles of society. China has long conceived modernization as a process of assimilating the products and productive processes developed in the West. This can be only partly true, however, for the West is not only a matter of possessions — and in any case, much of what one buys there is made in Asia and probably in China. It is more revealing to look not at what the West has, but at what it is, at its values and way of life. To do this properly would require a long history of the development of its culture. More immediately, however, we might focus on how the West rebuilt itself in the last half of this Century and achieved its own combination of self-initiative and social cooperation.

At the end of the Second World War Fascism had been eliminated, but everything was destroyed; there was chaos throughout Western Europe. When the people went to elect their leadership for rebuilding their lives from the very foundations they chose neither the liberal leadership that was offered nor its opposite. Rather, consistently, they chose the Christian Democratic Parties inspired by the Catholic religious vision: Adenauer in Germany, DeGasperi in Italy, DeGaul in France and Spaak in Belgium. This initial choice of a party that was explicitly religious in its inspiration and principles reflected their recognition of the need to rebuild their society on the foundations of the deep values of Western culture which, in turn, are grounded in its religious traditions.

Reaffirming these foundations meant that their countries would be marked by respect for persons and rule of law, openness of communication and dialogue, and dedication to human welfare broadly and richly conceived. Thus inspired, they developed a political process which

enabled them to apply effectively the particular values needed for concrete forward progress in continually changing circumstances.

Paradoxically, however, this example of the West does not mean copying an alien culture. For its great lesson is not that of techniques of production or of policy which can be copied, but of building upon the deep religious foundations of one's own culture. This means drawing upon those dimensions of transcendence which we saw above in Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, and which are found also in Islamic, Hindu and Christian tradition. These provide the foundations upon which can be built a solid, humane and distinctively Chinese future. This is the proper task of a Department of Philosophy and Religion sponsored by and for the country.

Appendix

Encyclical Letter **Fides et Ratio**

On the Relationship between Faith and Reason

John Paul II

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. *Ex* 33:18; *Ps* 27:8-9; 63:2-3; *Jn* 14:8; 1 *Jn* 3:2).

Introduction "Know Yourself"

1. In both East and West, we may trace a journey which has led humanity down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded—as it must—within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing. This is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition *Know yourself* was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as "human beings", that is as those who "know themselves".

Moreover, a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: *Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?* These are the questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.

2. The Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be. From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (*Jn* 14:6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: *the diakonia of the truth*.(1) This mission on the one hand makes the believing community a partner in humanity's shared struggle to arrive at truth; (2) and on the other hand it obliges the believing community to proclaim the certitudes arrived at, albeit with a sense that every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God: "For now we see in a

mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully" (*I Cor 13:12*).

3. Men and women have at their disposal an array of resources for generating greater knowledge of truth so that their lives may be ever more human. Among these is *philosophy*, which is directly concerned with asking the question of life's meaning and sketching an answer to it. Philosophy emerges, then, as one of noblest of human tasks. According to its Greek etymology, the term philosophy means "love of wisdom". Born and nurtured when the human being first asked questions about the reason for things and their purpose, philosophy shows in different modes and forms that the desire for truth is part of human nature itself. It is an innate property of human reason to ask why things are as they are, even though the answers which gradually emerge are set within a horizon which reveals how the different human cultures are complementary.

Philosophy's powerful influence on the formation and development of the cultures of the West should not obscure the influence it has also had upon the ways of understanding existence found in the East. Every people has its own native and seminal wisdom which, as a true cultural treasure, tends to find voice and develop in forms which are genuinely philosophical. One example of this is the basic form of philosophical knowledge which is evident to this day in the postulates which inspire national and international legal systems in regulating the life of society.

4. Nonetheless, it is true that a single term conceals a variety of meanings. Hence the need for a preliminary clarification. Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire those universal elements of knowledge which enable them to understand themselves better and to advance in their own self-realization. These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the *wonder* awakened in them by the contemplation of creation: human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny. Here begins, then, the journey which will lead them to discover ever new frontiers of knowledge. Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal. Through philosophy's work, the ability to speculate which is proper to the human intellect produces a rigorous mode of thought; and then in turn, through the logical coherence of the affirmations made and the organic unity of their content, it produces a systematic body of knowledge. In different cultural contexts and at different times, this process has yielded results which have produced genuine systems of thought. Yet often enough in history this has brought with it the temptation to identify one single stream with the whole of philosophy. In such cases, we are clearly dealing with a "philosophical pride" which seeks to present its own partial and imperfect view as the complete reading of all reality. In effect, every philosophical *system*, while it should always be respected in its wholeness, without any instrumentalization, must still recognize the primacy of philosophical *enquiry*, from which it stems and which it ought loyally to serve.

Although times change and knowledge increases, it is possible to discern a core of philosophical insight within the history of thought as a whole. Consider, for example, the principles of non-contradiction, finality and causality, as well as the concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness. Consider as well certain fundamental moral norms which are shared by all. These are among the indications that, beyond different

schools of thought, there exists a body of knowledge which may be judged a kind of spiritual heritage of humanity. It is as if we had come upon an *implicit philosophy*, as a result of which all feel that they possess these principles, albeit in a general and unreflective way. Precisely because it is shared in some measure by all, this knowledge should serve as a kind of reference-point for the different philosophical schools. Once reason successfully intuits and formulates the first universal principles of being and correctly draws from them conclusions which are coherent both logically and ethically, then it may be called right reason or, as the ancients called it, *orth(o)s logos, recta ratio*.

5. On her part, the Church cannot but set great value upon reason's drive to attain goals which render people's lives ever more worthy. She sees in philosophy the way to come to know fundamental truths about human life. At the same time, the Church considers philosophy an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it.

Therefore, following upon similar initiatives by my Predecessors, I wish to reflect upon this special activity of human reason. I judge it necessary to do so because, at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected. Modern philosophy clearly has the great merit of focusing attention upon man. From this starting-point, human reason with its many questions has developed further its yearning to know more and to know it ever more deeply. Complex systems of thought have thus been built, yielding results in the different fields of knowledge and fostering the development of culture and history. Anthropology, logic, the natural sciences, history, linguistics and so forth—the whole universe of knowledge has been involved in one way or another. Yet the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason, in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all. It has happened therefore that reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being. Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing. Rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth, modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned.

This has given rise to different forms of agnosticism and relativism which have led philosophical research to lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism. Recent times have seen the rise to prominence of various doctrines which tend to devalue even the truths which had been judged certain. A legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today's most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in truth. Even certain conceptions of life coming from the East betray this lack of confidence, denying truth its exclusive character and assuming that truth reveals itself equally in different doctrines, even if they contradict one another. On this understanding, everything is reduced to opinion; and there is a sense of being adrift. While, on the one hand, philosophical thinking has succeeded in coming closer to the reality of human life and its forms of expression, it has also tended to pursue issues—existential, hermeneutical or

linguistic—which ignore the radical question of the truth about personal existence, about being and about God. Hence we see among the men and women of our time, and not just in some philosophers, attitudes of widespread distrust of the human being's great capacity for knowledge. With a false modesty, people rest content with partial and provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human, personal and social existence. In short, the hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive answers to these questions has dwindled.

6. Sure of her competence as the bearer of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Church reaffirms the need to reflect upon truth. This is why I have decided to address you, my venerable Brother Bishops, with whom I share the mission of "proclaiming the truth openly" (2 Cor 4:2), as also theologians and philosophers whose duty it is to explore the different aspects of truth, and all those who are searching; and I do so in order to offer some reflections on the path which leads to true wisdom, so that those who love truth may take the sure path leading to it and so find rest from their labours and joy for their spirit.

I feel impelled to undertake this task above all because of the Second Vatican Council's insistence that the Bishops are "witnesses of divine and catholic truth".(3) To bear witness to the truth is therefore a task entrusted to us Bishops; we cannot renounce this task without failing in the ministry which we have received. In reaffirming the truth of faith, we can both restore to our contemporaries a genuine trust in their capacity to know and challenge philosophy to recover and develop its own full dignity.

There is a further reason why I write these reflections. In my Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, I drew attention to "certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which, in the present circumstances, risk being distorted or denied".(4) In the present Letter, I wish to pursue that reflection by concentrating on the theme of *truth* itself and on its *foundation* in relation to *faith*. For it is undeniable that this time of rapid and complex change can leave especially the younger generation, to whom the future belongs and on whom it depends, with a sense that they have no valid points of reference. The need for a foundation for personal and communal life becomes all the more pressing at a time when we are faced with the patent inadequacy of perspectives in which the ephemeral is affirmed as a value and the possibility of discovering the real meaning of life is cast into doubt. This is why many people stumble through life to the very edge of the abyss without knowing where they are going. At times, this happens because those whose vocation it is to give cultural expression to their thinking no longer look to truth, preferring quick success to the toil of patient enquiry into what makes life worth living. With its enduring appeal to the search for truth, philosophy has the great responsibility of forming thought and culture; and now it must strive resolutely to recover its original vocation. This is why I have felt both the need and the duty to address this theme so that, on the threshold of the third millennium of the Christian era, humanity may come to a clearer sense of the great resources with which it has been endowed and may commit itself with renewed courage to implement the plan of salvation of which its history is part.

Chapter I. The Revelation of God's Wisdom

Jesus, Revealer of the Father

7. Underlying all the Church's thinking is the awareness that she is the bearer of a message which has its origin in God himself (cf. *2 Cor* 4:1-2). The knowledge which the Church offers to man has its origin not in any speculation of her own, however sublime, but in the word of God which she has received in faith (cf. *1 Th* 2:13). At the origin of our life of faith there is an encounter, unique in kind, which discloses a mystery hidden for long ages (cf. *1 Cor* 2:7; *Rom* 16:25-26) but which is now revealed: "In his goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will (cf. *Eph* 1:9), by which, through Christ, the Word made flesh, man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and comes to share in the divine nature".(5) This initiative is utterly gratuitous, moving from God to men and women in order to bring them to salvation. As the source of love, God desires to make himself known; and the knowledge which the human being has of God perfects all that the human mind can know of the meaning of life.

8. Restating almost to the letter the teaching of the First Vatican Council's Constitution *Dei Filius*, and taking into account the principles set out by the Council of Trent, the Second Vatican Council's Constitution *Dei Verbum* pursued the age-old journey of *understanding faith*, reflecting on Revelation in the light of the teaching of Scripture and of the entire Patristic tradition. At the First Vatican Council, the Fathers had stressed the supernatural character of God's Revelation. On the basis of mistaken and very widespread assertions, the rationalist critique of the time attacked faith and denied the possibility of any knowledge which was not the fruit of reason's natural capacities. This obliged the Council to reaffirm emphatically that there exists a knowledge which is peculiar to faith, surpassing the knowledge proper to human reason, which nevertheless by its nature can discover the Creator. This knowledge expresses a truth based upon the very fact of God who reveals himself, a truth which is most certain, since God neither deceives nor wishes to deceive.(6)

9. The First Vatican Council teaches, then, that the truth attained by philosophy and the truth of Revelation are neither identical nor mutually exclusive: "There exists a twofold order of knowledge, distinct not only as regards their source, but also as regards their object. With regard to the source, because we know in one by natural reason, in the other by divine faith. With regard to the object, because besides those things which natural reason can attain, there are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known".(7) Based upon God's testimony and enjoying the supernatural assistance of grace, faith is of an order other than philosophical knowledge which depends upon sense perception and experience and which advances by the light of the intellect alone. Philosophy and the sciences function within the order of natural reason; while faith, enlightened and guided by the Spirit, recognizes in the message of salvation the "fullness of grace and truth" (cf. *Jn* 1:14) which God has willed to reveal in history and definitively through his Son, Jesus Christ (cf. *1 Jn* 5:9; *Jn* 5:31-32).

10. Contemplating Jesus as revealer, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stressed the salvific character of God's Revelation in history, describing it in these terms: "In this Revelation, the invisible God (cf. *Col* 1:15; *1 Tim* 1:17), out of the abundance of his love speaks to men and women as friends (cf. *Ex* 33:11; *Jn* 15:14-15) and lives among them (cf. *Bar* 3:38), so that he may invite and take them into communion with himself. This plan of Revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this Revelation, then, the deepest truth about God

and human salvation is made clear to us in Christ, who is the mediator and at the same time the fullness of all Revelation".(8)

11. God's Revelation is therefore immersed in time and history. Jesus Christ took flesh in the "fullness of time" (*Gal 4:4*); and two thousand years later, I feel bound to restate forcefully that "in Christianity time has a fundamental importance".(9) It is within time that the whole work of creation and salvation comes to light; and it emerges clearly above all that, with the Incarnation of the Son of God, our life is even now a foretaste of the fulfilment of time which is to come (cf. *Heb 1:2*).

The truth about himself and his life which God has entrusted to humanity is immersed therefore in time and history; and it was declared once and for all in the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth. The Constitution *Dei Verbum* puts it eloquently: "After speaking in many places and varied ways through the prophets, God 'last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son' (*Heb 1:1-2*). For he sent his Son, the eternal Word who enlightens all people, so that he might dwell among them and tell them the innermost realities about God (cf. *Jn 1:1-18*). Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, sent as 'a human being to human beings', 'speaks the words of God' (*Jn 3:34*), and completes the work of salvation which his Father gave him to do (cf. *Jn 5:36; 17:4*). To see Jesus is to see his Father (*Jn 14:9*). For this reason, Jesus perfected Revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making himself present and manifesting himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious Resurrection from the dead and finally his sending of the Spirit of truth".(10)

For the People of God, therefore, history becomes a path to be followed to the end, so that by the unceasing action of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn 16:13*) the contents of revealed truth may find their full expression. This is the teaching of the Constitution *Dei Verbum* when it states that "as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly progresses towards the fullness of divine truth, until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her".(11)

12. History therefore becomes the arena where we see what God does for humanity. God comes to us in the things we know best and can verify most easily, the things of our everyday life, apart from which we cannot understand ourselves.

In the Incarnation of the Son of God we see forged the enduring and definitive synthesis which the human mind of itself could not even have imagined: the Eternal enters time, the Whole lies hidden in the part, God takes on a human face. The truth communicated in Christ's Revelation is therefore no longer confined to a particular place or culture, but is offered to every man and woman who would welcome it as the word which is the absolutely valid source of meaning for human life. Now, in Christ, all have access to the Father, since by his Death and Resurrection Christ has bestowed the divine life which the first Adam had refused (cf. *Rom 5:12-15*). Through this Revelation, men and women are offered the ultimate truth about their own life and about the goal of history. As the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* puts it, "only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light".(12) Seen in any other terms, the mystery of personal existence remains an insoluble riddle. Where might the human being seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death, if not in the light streaming from the mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection?

Reason before the Mystery

13. It should nonetheless be kept in mind that Revelation remains charged with mystery. It is true that Jesus, with his entire life, revealed the countenance of the Father, for he came to teach the secret things of God.(13) But our vision of the face of God is always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding. Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently.

The Council teaches that "the obedience of faith must be given to God who reveals himself".(14) This brief but dense statement points to a fundamental truth of Christianity. Faith is said first to be an obedient response to God. This implies that God be acknowledged in his divinity, transcendence and supreme freedom. By the authority of his absolute transcendence, God who makes himself known is also the source of the credibility of what he reveals. By faith, men and women give their assent to this divine testimony. This means that they acknowledge fully and integrally the truth of what is revealed because it is God himself who is the guarantor of that truth. They can make no claim upon this truth which comes to them as gift and which, set within the context of interpersonal communication, urges reason to be open to it and to embrace its profound meaning. This is why the Church has always considered the act of entrusting oneself to God to be a moment of fundamental decision which engages the whole person. In that act, the intellect and the will display their spiritual nature, enabling the subject to act in a way which realizes personal freedom to the full.(15) It is not just that freedom is part of the act of faith: it is absolutely required. Indeed, it is faith that allows individuals to give consummate expression to their own freedom. Put differently, freedom is not realized in decisions made against God. For how could it be an exercise of true freedom to refuse to be open to the very reality which enables our self-realization? Men and women can accomplish no more important act in their lives than the act of faith; it is here that freedom reaches the certainty of truth and chooses to live in that truth.

To assist reason in its effort to understand the mystery there are the signs which Revelation itself presents. These serve to lead the search for truth to new depths, enabling the mind in its autonomous exploration to penetrate within the mystery by use of reason's own methods, of which it is rightly jealous. Yet these signs also urge reason to look beyond their status as signs in order to grasp the deeper meaning which they bear. They contain a hidden truth to which the mind is drawn and which it cannot ignore without destroying the very signs which it is given.

In a sense, then, we return to the *sacramental* character of Revelation and especially to the sign of the Eucharist, in which the indissoluble unity between the signifier and signified makes it possible to grasp the depths of the mystery. In the Eucharist, Christ is truly present and alive, working through his Spirit; yet, as Saint Thomas said so well, "what you neither see nor grasp, faith confirms for you, leaving nature far behind; a sign it is that now appears, hiding in mystery realities sublime".(16) He is echoed by the philosopher Pascal: "Just as Jesus Christ went unrecognized among men, so does his truth appear without external difference among common modes of thought. So too does the Eucharist remain among common bread".(17)

In short, the knowledge proper to faith does not destroy the mystery; it only reveals it the more, showing how necessary it is for people's lives: Christ the Lord "in revealing the mystery of the

Father and his love fully reveals man to himself and makes clear his supreme calling", (18) which is to share in the divine mystery of the life of the Trinity. (19)

14. From the teaching of the two Vatican Councils there also emerges a genuinely novel consideration for philosophical learning. Revelation has set within history a point of reference which cannot be ignored if the mystery of human life is to be known. Yet this knowledge refers back constantly to the mystery of God which the human mind cannot exhaust but can only receive and embrace in faith. Between these two poles, reason has its own specific field in which it can enquire and understand, restricted only by its finiteness before the infinite mystery of God.

Revelation therefore introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort; indeed, it impels reason continually to extend the range of its knowledge until it senses that it has done all in its power, leaving no stone unturned. To assist our reflection on this point we have one of the most fruitful and important minds in human history, a point of reference for both philosophy and theology: Saint Anselm. In his *Proslogion*, the Archbishop of Canterbury puts it this way: "Thinking of this problem frequently and intently, at times it seemed I was ready to grasp what I was seeking; at other times it eluded my thought completely, until finally, despairing of being able to find it, I wanted to abandon the search for something which was impossible to find. I wanted to rid myself of that thought because, by filling my mind, it distracted me from other problems from which I could gain some profit; but it would then present itself with ever greater insistence... Woe is me, one of the poor children of Eve, far from God, what did I set out to do and what have I accomplished? What was I aiming for and how far have I got? What did I aspire to and what did I long for?... O Lord, you are not only that than which nothing greater can be conceived (*non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit*), but you are greater than all that can be conceived (*quiddam maius quam cogitari possit*)... If you were not such, something greater than you could be thought, but this is impossible". (20)

15. The truth of Christian Revelation, found in Jesus of Nazareth, enables all men and women to embrace the "mystery" of their own life. As absolute truth, it summons human beings to be open to the transcendent, whilst respecting both their autonomy as creatures and their freedom. At this point the relationship between freedom and truth is complete, and we understand the full meaning of the Lord's words: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (*Jn* 8:32).

Christian Revelation is the true lodestar of men and women as they strive to make their way amid the pressures of an immanentist habit of mind and the constrictions of a technocratic logic. It is the ultimate possibility offered by God for the human being to know in all its fullness the seminal plan of love which began with creation. To those wishing to know the truth, if they can look beyond themselves and their own concerns, there is given the possibility of taking full and harmonious possession of their lives, precisely by following the path of truth. Here the words of the Book of Deuteronomy are pertinent: "This commandment which I command you is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?' But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that you can do it" (30:11-14). This text finds an echo in the famous dictum of the holy philosopher and theologian Augustine: "Do not wander

far and wide but return into yourself. Deep within man there dwells the truth" (*Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat veritas*).⁽²¹⁾

These considerations prompt a first conclusion: the truth made known to us by Revelation is neither the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason. It appears instead as something gratuitous, which itself stirs thought and seeks acceptance as an expression of love. This revealed truth is set within our history as an anticipation of that ultimate and definitive vision of God which is reserved for those who believe in him and seek him with a sincere heart. The ultimate purpose of personal existence, then, is the theme of philosophy and theology alike. For all their difference of method and content, both disciplines point to that "path of life" (*Ps 16:11*) which, as faith tells us, leads in the end to the full and lasting joy of the contemplation of the Triune God.

Chapter II. Credo Ut Intellegam

"Wisdom knows all and understands all" (Wis 9:11)

16. Sacred Scripture indicates with remarkably clear cues how deeply related are the knowledge conferred by faith and the knowledge conferred by reason; and it is in *the Wisdom literature* that this relationship is addressed most explicitly. What is striking about these biblical texts, if they are read without prejudice, is that they embody not only the faith of Israel, but also the treasury of cultures and civilizations which have long vanished. As if by special design, the voices of Egypt and Mesopotamia sound again and certain features common to the cultures of the ancient Near East come to life in these pages which are so singularly rich in deep intuition.

It is no accident that, when the sacred author comes to describe the wise man, he portrays him as one who loves and seeks the truth: "Happy the man who meditates on wisdom and reasons intelligently, who reflects in his heart on her ways and ponders her secrets. He pursues her like a hunter and lies in wait on her paths. He peers through her windows and listens at her doors. He camps near her house and fastens his tent-peg to her walls; he pitches his tent near her and so finds an excellent resting-place; he places his children under her protection and lodges under her boughs; by her he is sheltered from the heat and he dwells in the shade of her glory" (*Sir 14:20-27*).

For the inspired writer, as we see, the desire for knowledge is characteristic of all people. Intelligence enables everyone, believer and non-believer, to reach "the deep waters" of knowledge (cf. *Prov 20:5*). It is true that ancient Israel did not come to knowledge of the world and its phenomena by way of abstraction, as did the Greek philosopher or the Egyptian sage. Still less did the good Israelite understand knowledge in the way of the modern world which tends more to distinguish different kinds of knowing. Nonetheless, the biblical world has made its own distinctive contribution to the theory of knowledge.

What is distinctive in the biblical text is the conviction that there is a profound and indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith. The world and all that happens within it, including history and the fate of peoples, are realities to be observed, analysed and assessed with all the resources of reason, but without faith ever being foreign to the process. Faith intervenes not to abolish reason's autonomy nor to reduce its scope for action, but solely to bring

the human being to understand that in these events it is the God of Israel who acts. Thus the world and the events of history cannot be understood in depth without professing faith in the God who is at work in them. Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence. Here the words of the Book of Proverbs are pertinent: "The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps" (16:9). This is to say that with the light of reason human beings can know which path to take, but they can follow that path to its end, quickly and unhindered, only if with a rightly tuned spirit they search for it within the horizon of faith. Therefore, reason and faith cannot be separated without diminishing the capacity of men and women to know themselves, the world and God in an appropriate way.

17. There is thus no reason for competition of any kind between reason and faith: each contains the other, and each has its own scope for action. Again the Book of Proverbs points in this direction when it exclaims: "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" (*Prov* 25:2). In their respective worlds, God and the human being are set within a unique relationship. In God there lies the origin of all things, in him is found the fullness of the mystery, and in this his glory consists; to men and women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists. The Psalmist adds one final piece to this mosaic when he says in prayer: "How deep to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I try to count them, they are more than the sand. If I come to the end, I am still with you" (139:17-18). The desire for knowledge is so great and it works in such a way that the human heart, despite its experience of insurmountable limitation, yearns for the infinite riches which lie beyond, knowing that there is to be found the satisfying answer to every question as yet unanswered.

18. We may say, then, that Israel, with her reflection, was able to open to reason the path that leads to the mystery. With the Revelation of God Israel could plumb the depths of all that she sought in vain to reach by way of reason. On the basis of this deeper form of knowledge, the Chosen People understood that, if reason were to be fully true to itself, then it must respect certain basic rules. The first of these is that reason must realize that human knowledge is a journey which allows no rest; the second stems from the awareness that such a path is not for the proud who think that everything is the fruit of personal conquest; a third rule is grounded in the "fear of God" whose transcendent sovereignty and provident love in the governance of the world reason must recognize. In abandoning these rules, the human being runs the risk of failure and ends up in the condition of "the fool". For the Bible, in this foolishness there lies a threat to life. The fool thinks that he knows many things, but really he is incapable of fixing his gaze on the things that truly matter. Therefore he can neither order his mind (*Prov* 1:7) nor assume a correct attitude to himself or to the world around him. And so when he claims that "God does not exist" (cf. *Ps* 14:1), he shows with absolute clarity just how deficient his knowledge is and just how far he is from the full truth of things, their origin and their destiny.

19. The Book of Wisdom contains several important texts which cast further light on this theme. There the sacred author speaks of God who reveals himself in nature. For the ancients, the study of the natural sciences coincided in large part with philosophical learning. Having affirmed that with their intelligence human beings can "know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements... the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars, the natures of animals and the tempers of wild beasts" (*Wis* 7:17, 19-20)—in a word, that he can philosophize—the sacred text takes a significant step forward. Making his own the thought of Greek philosophy, to which he

seems to refer in the context, the author affirms that, in reasoning about nature, the human being can rise to God: "From the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator" (*Wis* 13:5). This is to recognize as a first stage of divine Revelation the marvellous "book of nature", which, when read with the proper tools of human reason, can lead to knowledge of the Creator. If human beings with their intelligence fail to recognize God as Creator of all, it is not because they lack the means to do so, but because their free will and their sinfulness place an impediment in the way.

20. Seen in this light, reason is valued without being overvalued. The results of reasoning may in fact be true, but these results acquire their true meaning only if they are set within the larger horizon of faith: "All man's steps are ordered by the Lord: how then can man understand his own ways?" (*Prov* 20:24). For the Old Testament, then, faith liberates reason in so far as it allows reason to attain correctly what it seeks to know and to place it within the ultimate order of things, in which everything acquires true meaning. In brief, human beings attain truth by way of reason because, enlightened by faith, they discover the deeper meaning of all things and most especially of their own existence. Rightly, therefore, the sacred author identifies the fear of God as the beginning of true knowledge: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (*Prov* 1:7; cf. *Sir* 1:14).

"Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding" (Prov 4:5)

21. For the Old Testament, knowledge is not simply a matter of careful observation of the human being, of the world and of history, but supposes as well an indispensable link with faith and with what has been revealed. These are the challenges which the Chosen People had to confront and to which they had to respond. Pondering this as his situation, biblical man discovered that he could understand himself only as "being in relation"—with himself, with people, with the world and with God. This opening to the mystery, which came to him through Revelation, was for him, in the end, the source of true knowledge. It was this which allowed his reason to enter the realm of the infinite where an understanding for which until then he had not dared to hope became a possibility.

For the sacred author, the task of searching for the truth was not without the strain which comes once the limits of reason are reached. This is what we find, for example, when the Book of Proverbs notes the weariness which comes from the effort to understand the mysterious designs of God (cf. *Prov* 30:1-6). Yet, for all the toil involved, believers do not surrender. They can continue on their way to the truth because they are certain that God has created them "explorers" (cf. *Qoh* 1:13), whose mission it is to leave no stone unturned, though the temptation to doubt is always there. Leaning on God, they continue to reach out, always and everywhere, for all that is beautiful, good and true.

22. In the first chapter of his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul helps us to appreciate better the depth of insight of the Wisdom literature's reflection. Developing a philosophical argument in popular language, the Apostle declares a profound truth: through all that is created the "eyes of the mind" can come to know God. Through the medium of creatures, God stirs in reason an intuition of his "power" and his "divinity" (cf. *Rom* 1:20). This is to concede to human reason a capacity which seems almost to surpass its natural limitations. Not only is it not restricted to sensory knowledge, from the moment that it can reflect critically upon the data of the senses, but, by discoursing on the data provided by the senses, reason can reach the cause which lies at the origin of all perceptible reality. In philosophical terms, we could say that this important Pauline text affirms the human capacity for metaphysical enquiry.

According to the Apostle, it was part of the original plan of the creation that reason should without difficulty reach beyond the sensory data to the origin of all things: the Creator. But because of the disobedience by which man and woman chose to set themselves in full and absolute autonomy in relation to the One who had created them, this ready access to God the Creator diminished.

This is the human condition vividly described by the Book of Genesis when it tells us that God placed the human being in the Garden of Eden, in the middle of which there stood "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (2:17). The symbol is clear: man was in no position to discern and decide for himself what was good and what was evil, but was constrained to appeal to a higher source. The blindness of pride deceived our first parents into thinking themselves sovereign and autonomous, and into thinking that they could ignore the knowledge which comes from God. All men and women were caught up in this primal disobedience, which so wounded reason that from then on its path to full truth would be strewn with obstacles. From that time onwards the human capacity to know the truth was impaired by an aversion to the One who is the source and origin of truth. It is again the Apostle who reveals just how far human thinking, because of sin, became "empty", and human reasoning became distorted and inclined to falsehood (cf. *Rom* 1:21-22). The eyes of the mind were no longer able to see clearly: reason became more and more a prisoner to itself. The coming of Christ was the saving event which redeemed reason from its weakness, setting it free from the shackles in which it had imprisoned itself.

23. This is why the Christian's relationship to philosophy requires thorough-going discernment. In the New Testament, especially in the Letters of Saint Paul, one thing emerges with great clarity: the opposition between "the wisdom of this world" and the wisdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The depth of revealed wisdom disrupts the cycle of our habitual patterns of thought, which are in no way able to express that wisdom in its fullness.

The beginning of the First Letter to the Corinthians poses the dilemma in a radical way. The crucified Son of God is the historic event upon which every attempt of the mind to construct an adequate explanation of the meaning of existence upon merely human argumentation comes to grief. The true key-point, which challenges every philosophy, is Jesus Christ's death on the Cross. It is here that every attempt to reduce the Father's saving plan to purely human logic is doomed to failure. "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the learned? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (*1 Cor* 1:20), the Apostle asks emphatically. The wisdom of the wise is no longer enough for what God wants to accomplish; what is required is a decisive step towards welcoming something radically new: "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise...; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not to reduce to nothing things that are" (*1 Cor* 1:27-28). Human wisdom refuses to see in its own weakness the possibility of its strength; yet Saint Paul is quick to affirm: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (*2 Cor* 12:10). Man cannot grasp how death could be the source of life and love; yet to reveal the mystery of his saving plan God has chosen precisely that which reason considers "foolishness" and a "scandal". Adopting the language of the philosophers of his time, Paul comes to the summit of his teaching as he speaks the paradox: "God has chosen in the world... that which is nothing to reduce to nothing things that are" (cf. *Cor* 1:28). In order to express the gratuitous nature of the love revealed in the Cross of Christ, the Apostle is not afraid to use the most radical language of the philosophers in their thinking about God. Reason cannot eliminate the mystery of

love which the Cross represents, while the Cross can give to reason the ultimate answer which it seeks. It is not the wisdom of words, but the Word of Wisdom which Saint Paul offers as the criterion of both truth and salvation.

The wisdom of the Cross, therefore, breaks free of all cultural limitations which seek to contain it and insists upon an openness to the universality of the truth which it bears. What a challenge this is to our reason, and how great the gain for reason if it yields to this wisdom! Of itself, philosophy is able to recognize the human being's ceaselessly self-transcendent orientation towards the truth; and, with the assistance of faith, it is capable of accepting the "foolishness" of the Cross as the authentic critique of those who delude themselves that they possess the truth, when in fact they run it aground on the shoals of a system of their own devising. The preaching of Christ crucified and risen is the reef upon which the link between faith and philosophy can break up, but it is also the reef beyond which the two can set forth upon the boundless ocean of truth. Here we see not only the border between reason and faith, but also the space where the two may meet.

Chapter III. Intellego Ut Credam

Journeying in Search of Truth

24. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Evangelist Luke tells of Paul's coming to Athens on one of his missionary journeys. The city of philosophers was full of statues of various idols. One altar in particular caught his eye, and he took this as a convenient starting-point to establish a common base for the proclamation of the kerygma. "Athenians," he said, "I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god'. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (*Acts 17:22-23*). From this starting-point, Saint Paul speaks of God as Creator, as the One who transcends all things and gives life to all. He then continues his speech in these terms: "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us" (*Acts 17:26-27*).

The Apostle accentuates a truth which the Church has always treasured: in the far reaches of the human heart there is a seed of desire and nostalgia for God. The Liturgy of Good Friday recalls this powerfully when, in praying for those who do not believe, we say: "Almighty and eternal God, you created mankind so that all might long to find you and have peace when you are found".(22) There is therefore a path which the human being may choose to take, a path which begins with reason's capacity to rise beyond what is contingent and set out towards the infinite.

In different ways and at different times, men and women have shown that they can articulate this intimate desire of theirs. Through literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture and every other work of their creative intelligence they have declared the urgency of their quest. In a special way philosophy has made this search its own and, with its specific tools and scholarly methods, has articulated this universal human desire.

25. "All human beings desire to know",⁽²³⁾ and truth is the proper object of this desire. Everyday life shows how concerned each of us is to discover for ourselves, beyond mere opinions, how things really are. Within visible creation, man is the only creature who not only is capable of knowing but who knows that he knows, and is therefore interested in the real truth of what he perceives. People cannot be genuinely indifferent to the question of whether what they know is true or not. If they discover that it is false, they reject it; but if they can establish its truth, they feel themselves rewarded. It is this that Saint Augustine teaches when he writes: "I have met many who wanted to deceive, but none who wanted to be deceived".⁽²⁴⁾ It is rightly claimed that persons have reached adulthood when they can distinguish independently between truth and falsehood, making up their own minds about the objective reality of things. This is what has driven so many enquiries, especially in the scientific field, which in recent centuries have produced important results, leading to genuine progress for all humanity.

No less important than research in the theoretical field is research in the practical field—by which I mean the search for truth which looks to the good which is to be performed. In acting ethically, according to a free and rightly tuned will, the human person sets foot upon the path to happiness and moves towards perfection. Here too it is a question of truth. It is this conviction which I stressed in my Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*: "There is no morality without freedom... Although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known".⁽²⁵⁾

It is essential, therefore, that the values chosen and pursued in one's life be true, because only true values can lead people to realize themselves fully, allowing them to be true to their nature. The truth of these values is to be found not by turning in on oneself but by opening oneself to apprehend that truth even at levels which transcend the person. This is an essential condition for us to become ourselves and to grow as mature, adult persons.

26. The truth comes initially to the human being as a question: *Does life have a meaning? Where is it going?* At first sight, personal existence may seem completely meaningless. It is not necessary to turn to the philosophers of the absurd or to the provocative questioning found in the Book of Job in order to have doubts about life's meaning. The daily experience of suffering—in one's own life and in the lives of others—and the array of facts which seem inexplicable to reason are enough to ensure that a question as dramatic as the question of meaning cannot be evaded.⁽²⁶⁾ Moreover, the first absolutely certain truth of our life, beyond the fact that we exist, is the inevitability of our death. Given this unsettling fact, the search for a full answer is inescapable. Each of us has both the desire and the duty to know the truth of our own destiny. We want to know if death will be the definitive end of our life or if there is something beyond—if it is possible to hope for an after-life or not. It is not insignificant that the death of Socrates gave philosophy one of its decisive orientations, no less decisive now than it was more than two thousand years ago. It is not by chance, then, that faced with the fact of death philosophers have again and again posed this question, together with the question of the meaning of life and immortality.

27. No-one can avoid this questioning, neither the philosopher nor the ordinary person. The answer we give will determine whether or not we think it possible to attain universal and absolute truth; and this is a decisive moment of the search. Every truth—if it really is truth—presents itself as

universal, even if it is not the whole truth. If something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times. Beyond this universality, however, people seek an absolute which might give to all their searching a meaning and an answer—something ultimate, which might serve as the ground of all things. In other words, they seek a final explanation, a supreme value, which refers to nothing beyond itself and which puts an end to all questioning. Hypotheses may fascinate, but they do not satisfy. Whether we admit it or not, there comes for everyone the moment when personal existence must be anchored to a truth recognized as final, a truth which confers a certitude no longer open to doubt.

Through the centuries, philosophers have sought to discover and articulate such a truth, giving rise to various systems and schools of thought. But beyond philosophical systems, people seek in different ways to shape a "philosophy" of their own—in personal convictions and experiences, in traditions of family and culture, or in journeys in search of life's meaning under the guidance of a master. What inspires all of these is the desire to reach the certitude of truth and the certitude of its absolute value.

The Different Faces of Human Truth

28. The search for truth, of course, is not always so transparent nor does it always produce such results. The natural limitation of reason and the inconstancy of the heart often obscure and distort a person's search. Truth can also drown in a welter of other concerns. People can even run from the truth as soon as they glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands. Yet, for all that they may evade it, the truth still influences life. Life in fact can never be grounded upon doubt, uncertainty or deceit; such an existence would be threatened constantly by fear and anxiety. One may define the human being, therefore, *as the one who seeks the truth*.

29. It is unthinkable that a search so deeply rooted in human nature would be completely vain and useless. The capacity to search for truth and to pose questions itself implies the rudiments of a response. Human beings would not even begin to search for something of which they knew nothing or for something which they thought was wholly beyond them. Only the sense that they can arrive at an answer leads them to take the first step. This is what normally happens in scientific research. When scientists, following their intuition, set out in search of the logical and verifiable explanation of a phenomenon, they are confident from the first that they will find an answer, and they do not give up in the face of setbacks. They do not judge their original intuition useless simply because they have not reached their goal; rightly enough they will say that they have not yet found a satisfactory answer.

The same must be equally true of the search for truth when it comes to the ultimate questions. The thirst for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast our existence into jeopardy. Everyday life shows well enough how each one of us is preoccupied by the pressure of a few fundamental questions and how in the soul of each of us there is at least an outline of the answers. One reason why the truth of these answers convinces is that they are no different in substance from the answers to which many others have come. To be sure, not every truth to which we come has the same value. But the sum of the results achieved confirms that in principle the human being can arrive at the truth.

30. It may help, then, to turn briefly to the different modes of truth. Most of them depend upon immediate evidence or are confirmed by experimentation. This is the mode of truth proper to everyday life and to scientific research. At another level we find philosophical truth, attained by means of the speculative powers of the human intellect. Finally, there are religious truths which are to some degree grounded in philosophy, and which we find in the answers which the different religious traditions offer to the ultimate questions.(27)

The truths of philosophy, it should be said, are not restricted only to the sometimes ephemeral teachings of professional philosophers. All men and women, as I have noted, are in some sense philosophers and have their own philosophical conceptions with which they direct their lives. In one way or other, they shape a comprehensive vision and an answer to the question of life's meaning; and in the light of this they interpret their own life's course and regulate their behaviour. At this point, we may pose the question of the link between, on the one hand, the truths of philosophy and religion and, on the other, the truth revealed in Jesus Christ. But before tackling that question, one last datum of philosophy needs to be weighed.

31. Human beings are not made to live alone. They are born into a family and in a family they grow, eventually entering society through their activity. From birth, therefore, they are immersed in traditions which give them not only a language and a cultural formation but also a range of truths in which they believe almost instinctively. Yet personal growth and maturity imply that these same truths can be cast into doubt and evaluated through a process of critical enquiry. It may be that, after this time of transition, these truths are "recovered" as a result of the experience of life or by dint of further reasoning. Nonetheless, there are in the life of a human being many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired by way of personal verification. Who, for instance, could assess critically the countless scientific findings upon which modern life is based? Who could personally examine the flow of information which comes day after day from all parts of the world and which is generally accepted as true? Who in the end could forge anew the paths of experience and thought which have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion? This means that the human being—the one who seeks the truth—is also the one who lives by belief.

32. In believing, we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people. This suggests an important tension. On the one hand, the knowledge acquired through belief can seem an imperfect form of knowledge, to be perfected gradually through personal accumulation of evidence; on the other hand, belief is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring. It should be stressed that the truths sought in this interpersonal relationship are not primarily empirical or philosophical. Rather, what is sought is the truth of the person—what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within. Human perfection, then, consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving with others. It is in this faithful self-giving that a person finds a fullness of certainty and security. At the same time, however, knowledge through belief, grounded as it is on trust between persons, is linked to truth: in the act of believing, men and women entrust themselves to the truth which the other declares to them.

Any number of examples could be found to demonstrate this; but I think immediately of the martyrs, who are the most authentic witnesses to the truth about existence. The martyrs know that they have found the truth about life in the encounter with Jesus Christ, and nothing and no-one could ever take this certainty from them. Neither suffering nor violent death could ever lead them to abandon the truth which they have discovered in the encounter with Christ. This is why to this day the witness of the martyrs continues to arouse such interest, to draw agreement, to win such a hearing and to invite emulation. This is why their word inspires such confidence: from the moment they speak to us of what we perceive deep down as the truth we have sought for so long, the martyrs provide evidence of a love that has no need of lengthy arguments in order to convince. The martyrs stir in us a profound trust because they give voice to what we already feel and they declare what we would like to have the strength to express.

33. Step by step, then, we are assembling the terms of the question. It is the nature of the human being to seek the truth. This search looks not only to the attainment of truths which are partial, empirical or scientific; nor is it only in individual acts of decision-making that people seek the true good. Their search looks towards an ulterior truth which would explain the meaning of life. And it is therefore a search which can reach its end only in reaching the absolute.(28) Thanks to the inherent capacities of thought, man is able to encounter and recognize a truth of this kind. Such a truth—vital and necessary as it is for life—is attained not only by way of reason but also through trusting acquiescence to other persons who can guarantee the authenticity and certainty of the truth itself. There is no doubt that the capacity to entrust oneself and one's life to another person and the decision to do so are among the most significant and expressive human acts.

It must not be forgotten that reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship. A climate of suspicion and distrust, which can beset speculative research, ignores the teaching of the ancient philosophers who proposed friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for sound philosophical enquiry.

From all that I have said to this point it emerges that men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable—a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves. Christian faith comes to meet them, offering the concrete possibility of reaching the goal which they seek. Moving beyond the stage of simple believing, Christian faith immerses human beings in the order of grace, which enables them to share in the mystery of Christ, which in turn offers them a true and coherent knowledge of the Triune God. In Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, faith recognizes the ultimate appeal to humanity, an appeal made in order that what we experience as desire and nostalgia may come to its fulfilment.

34. This truth, which God reveals to us in Jesus Christ, is not opposed to the truths which philosophy perceives. On the contrary, the two modes of knowledge lead to truth in all its fullness. The unity of truth is a fundamental premise of human reasoning, as the principle of non-contradiction makes clear. Revelation renders this unity certain, showing that the God of creation is also the God of salvation history. It is the one and the same God who establishes and guarantees the intelligibility and reasonableness of the natural order of things upon which scientists confidently depend,(29) and who reveals himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This unity of truth, natural and revealed, is embodied in a living and personal way in Christ, as the Apostle reminds us: "Truth is in Jesus" (cf. *Eph* 4:21; *Col* 1:15-20). He is the eternal Word in whom all

things were created, and he is the incarnate Word who in his entire person (30) reveals the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:14, 18). What human reason seeks "without knowing it" (cf. *Acts* 17:23) can be found only through Christ: what is revealed in him is "the full truth" (cf. *Jn* 1:14-16) of everything which was created in him and through him and which therefore in him finds its fulfilment (cf. *Col* 1:17). 35. On the basis of these broad considerations, we must now explore more directly the relationship between revealed truth and philosophy. This relationship imposes a twofold consideration, since the truth conferred by Revelation is a truth to be understood in the light of reason. It is this duality alone which allows us to specify correctly the relationship between revealed truth and philosophical learning. First, then, let us consider the links between faith and philosophy in the course of history. From this, certain principles will emerge as useful reference-points in the attempt to establish the correct link between the two orders of knowledge.

Chapter IV. The Relationship between Faith and Reason

Important Moments in the Encounter of Faith and Reason

36. The Acts of the Apostles provides evidence that Christian proclamation was engaged from the very first with the philosophical currents of the time. In Athens, we read, Saint Paul entered into discussion with "certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers" (17:18); and exegetical analysis of his speech at the Areopagus has revealed frequent allusions to popular beliefs deriving for the most part from Stoicism. This is by no means accidental. If pagans were to understand them, the first Christians could not refer only to "Moses and the prophets" when they spoke. They had to point as well to natural knowledge of God and to the voice of conscience in every human being (cf. *Rom* 1:19-21; 2:14-15; *Acts* 14:16-17). Since in pagan religion this natural knowledge had lapsed into idolatry (cf. *Rom* 1:21-32), the Apostle judged it wiser in his speech to make the link with the thinking of the philosophers, who had always set in opposition to the myths and mystery cults notions more respectful of divine transcendence.

One of the major concerns of classical philosophy was to purify human notions of God of mythological elements. We know that Greek religion, like most cosmic religions, was polytheistic, even to the point of divinizing natural things and phenomena. Human attempts to understand the origin of the gods and hence the origin of the universe find their earliest expression in poetry; and the theogonies remain the first evidence of this human search. But it was the task of the fathers of philosophy to bring to light the link between reason and religion. As they broadened their view to include universal principles, they no longer rested content with the ancient myths, but wanted to provide a rational foundation for their belief in the divinity. This opened a path which took its rise from ancient traditions but allowed a development satisfying the demands of universal reason. This development sought to acquire a critical awareness of what they believed in, and the concept of divinity was the prime beneficiary of this. Superstitions were recognized for what they were and religion was, at least in part, purified by rational analysis. It was on this basis that the Fathers of the Church entered into fruitful dialogue with ancient philosophy, which offered new ways of proclaiming and understanding the God of Jesus Christ.

37. In tracing Christianity's adoption of philosophy, one should not forget how cautiously Christians regarded other elements of the cultural world of paganism, one example of which is gnosticism. It was easy to confuse philosophy—understood as practical wisdom and an education

for life—with a higher and esoteric kind of knowledge, reserved to those few who were perfect. It is surely this kind of esoteric speculation which Saint Paul has in mind when he puts the Colossians on their guard: "See to it that no-one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe and not according to Christ" (2:8). The Apostle's words seem all too pertinent now if we apply them to the various kinds of esoteric superstition widespread today, even among some believers who lack a proper critical sense. Following Saint Paul, other writers of the early centuries, especially Saint Irenaeus and Tertullian, sound the alarm when confronted with a cultural perspective which sought to subordinate the truth of Revelation to the interpretation of the philosophers.

38. Christianity's engagement with philosophy was therefore neither straight-forward nor immediate. The practice of philosophy and attendance at philosophical schools seemed to the first Christians more of a disturbance than an opportunity. For them, the first and most urgent task was the proclamation of the Risen Christ by way of a personal encounter which would bring the listener to conversion of heart and the request for Baptism. But that does not mean that they ignored the task of deepening the understanding of faith and its motivations. Quite the contrary. That is why the criticism of Celsus—that Christians were "illiterate and uncouth"(31)—is unfounded and untrue. Their initial disinterest is to be explained on other grounds. The encounter with the Gospel offered such a satisfying answer to the hitherto unresolved question of life's meaning that delving into the philosophers seemed to them something remote and in some ways outmoded.

That seems still more evident today, if we think of Christianity's contribution to the affirmation of the right of everyone to have access to the truth. In dismantling barriers of race, social status and gender, Christianity proclaimed from the first the equality of all men and women before God. One prime implication of this touched the theme of truth. The elitism which had characterized the ancients' search for truth was clearly abandoned. Since access to the truth enables access to God, it must be denied to none. There are many paths which lead to truth, but since Christian truth has a salvific value, any one of these paths may be taken, as long as it leads to the final goal, that is to the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

A pioneer of positive engagement with philosophical thinking—albeit with cautious discernment—was Saint Justin. Although he continued to hold Greek philosophy in high esteem after his conversion, Justin claimed with power and clarity that he had found in Christianity "the only sure and profitable philosophy".(32) Similarly, Clement of Alexandria called the Gospel "the true philosophy", (33) and he understood philosophy, like the Mosaic Law, as instruction which prepared for Christian faith (34) and paved the way for the Gospel.(35) Since "philosophy yearns for the wisdom which consists in rightness of soul and speech and in purity of life, it is well disposed towards wisdom and does all it can to acquire it. We call philosophers those who love the wisdom that is creator and mistress of all things, that is knowledge of the Son of God".(36) For Clement, Greek philosophy is not meant in the first place to bolster and complete Christian truth. Its task is rather the defence of the faith: "The teaching of the Saviour is perfect in itself and has no need of support, because it is the strength and the wisdom of God. Greek philosophy, with its contribution, does not strengthen truth; but, in rendering the attack of sophistry impotent and in disarming those who betray truth and wage war upon it, Greek philosophy is rightly called the hedge and the protective wall around the vineyard".(37)

39. It is clear from history, then, that Christian thinkers were critical in adopting philosophical thought. Among the early examples of this, Origen is certainly outstanding. In countering the attacks launched by the philosopher Celsus, Origen adopts Platonic philosophy to shape his argument and mount his reply. Assuming many elements of Platonic thought, he begins to construct an early form of Christian theology. The name "theology" itself, together with the idea of theology as rational discourse about God, had to this point been tied to its Greek origins. In Aristotelian philosophy, for example, the name signified the noblest part and the true summit of philosophical discourse. But in the light of Christian Revelation what had signified a generic doctrine about the gods assumed a wholly new meaning, signifying now the reflection undertaken by the believer in order to express *the true doctrine* about God. As it developed, this new Christian thought made use of philosophy, but at the same time tended to distinguish itself clearly from philosophy. History shows how Platonic thought, once adopted by theology, underwent profound changes, especially with regard to concepts such as the immortality of the soul, the divinization of man and the origin of evil.

40. In this work of christianizing Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought, the Cappadocian Fathers, Dionysius called the Areopagite and especially Saint Augustine were important. The great Doctor of the West had come into contact with different philosophical schools, but all of them left him disappointed. It was when he encountered the truth of Christian faith that he found strength to undergo the radical conversion to which the philosophers he had known had been powerless to lead him. He himself reveals his motive: "From this time on, I gave my preference to the Catholic faith. I thought it more modest and not in the least misleading to be told by the Church to believe what could not be demonstrated—whether that was because a demonstration existed but could not be understood by all or whether the matter was not one open to rational proof—rather than from the Manichees to have a rash promise of knowledge with mockery of mere belief, and then afterwards to be ordered to believe many fabulous and absurd myths impossible to prove true".(38) Though he accorded the Platonists a place of privilege, Augustine rebuked them because, knowing the goal to seek, they had ignored the path which leads to it: the Word made flesh.(39) The Bishop of Hippo succeeded in producing the first great synthesis of philosophy and theology, embracing currents of thought both Greek and Latin. In him too the great unity of knowledge, grounded in the thought of the Bible, was both confirmed and sustained by a depth of speculative thinking. The synthesis devised by Saint Augustine remained for centuries the most exalted form of philosophical and theological speculation known to the West. Reinforced by his personal story and sustained by a wonderful holiness of life, he could also introduce into his works a range of material which, drawing on experience, was a prelude to future developments in different currents of philosophy.

41. The ways in which the Fathers of East and West engaged the philosophical schools were, therefore, quite different. This does not mean that they identified the content of their message with the systems to which they referred. Consider Tertullian's question: "What does Athens have in common with Jerusalem? The Academy with the Church?".(40) This clearly indicates the critical consciousness with which Christian thinkers from the first confronted the problem of the relationship between faith and philosophy, viewing it comprehensively with both its positive aspects and its limitations. They were not naive thinkers. Precisely because they were intense in living faith's content they were able to reach the deepest forms of speculation. It is therefore minimalizing and mistaken to restrict their work simply to the transposition of the truths of faith

into philosophical categories. They did much more. In fact they succeeded in disclosing completely all that remained implicit and preliminary in the thinking of the great philosophers of antiquity.(41) As I have noted, theirs was the task of showing how reason, freed from external constraints, could find its way out of the blind alley of myth and open itself to the transcendent in a more appropriate way. Purified and rightly tuned, therefore, reason could rise to the higher planes of thought, providing a solid foundation for the perception of being, of the transcendent and of the absolute. It is here that we see the originality of what the Fathers accomplished. They fully welcomed reason which was open to the absolute, and they infused it with the richness drawn from Revelation. This was more than a meeting of cultures, with one culture perhaps succumbing to the fascination of the other. It happened rather in the depths of human souls, and it was a meeting of creature and Creator. Surpassing the goal towards which it unwittingly tended by dint of its nature, reason attained the supreme good and ultimate truth in the person of the Word made flesh. Faced with the various philosophies, the Fathers were not afraid to acknowledge those elements in them that were consonant with Revelation and those that were not. Recognition of the points of convergence did not blind them to the points of divergence.

42. In Scholastic theology, the role of philosophically trained reason becomes even more conspicuous under the impulse of Saint Anselm's interpretation of the *intellectus fidei*. For the saintly Archbishop of Canterbury the priority of faith is not in competition with the search which is proper to reason. Reason in fact is not asked to pass judgement on the contents of faith, something of which it would be incapable, since this is not its function. Its function is rather to find meaning, to discover explanations which might allow everyone to come to a certain understanding of the contents of faith. Saint Anselm underscores the fact that the intellect must seek that which it loves: the more it loves, the more it desires to know. Whoever lives for the truth is reaching for a form of knowledge which is fired more and more with love for what it knows, while having to admit that it has not yet attained what it desires: "To see you was I conceived; and I have yet to conceive that for which I was conceived (*Ad te videndum factus sum; et nondum feci propter quod factus sum*)".(42) The desire for truth, therefore, spurs reason always to go further; indeed, it is as if reason were overwhelmed to see that it can always go beyond what it has already achieved. It is at this point, though, that reason can learn where its path will lead in the end: "I think that whoever investigates something incomprehensible should be satisfied if, by way of reasoning, he reaches a quite certain perception of its reality, even if his intellect cannot penetrate its mode of being... But is there anything so incomprehensible and ineffable as that which is above all things? Therefore, if that which until now has been a matter of debate concerning the highest essence has been established on the basis of due reasoning, then the foundation of one's certainty is not shaken in the least if the intellect cannot penetrate it in a way that allows clear formulation. If prior thought has concluded rationally that one cannot comprehend (*rationabiliter comprehendit incomprehensibile esse*) how supernal wisdom knows its own accomplishments..., who then will explain how this same wisdom, of which the human being can know nothing or next to nothing, is to be known and expressed?".(43)

The fundamental harmony between the knowledge of faith and the knowledge of philosophy is once again confirmed. Faith asks that its object be understood with the help of reason; and at the summit of its searching reason acknowledges that it cannot do without what faith presents.

The Enduring Originality of the Thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas

43. A quite special place in this long development belongs to Saint Thomas, not only because of what he taught but also because of the dialogue which he undertook with the Arab and Jewish thought of his time. In an age when Christian thinkers were rediscovering the treasures of ancient philosophy, and more particularly of Aristotle, Thomas had the great merit of giving pride of place to the harmony which exists between faith and reason. Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, he argued; hence there can be no contradiction between them.(44)

More radically, Thomas recognized that nature, philosophy's proper concern, could contribute to the understanding of divine Revelation. Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it. Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment,(45) so faith builds upon and perfects reason. Illumined by faith, reason is set free from the fragility and limitations deriving from the disobedience of sin and finds the strength required to rise to the knowledge of the Triune God. Although he made much of the supernatural character of faith, the Angelic Doctor did not overlook the importance of its reasonableness; indeed he was able to plumb the depths and explain the meaning of this reasonableness. Faith is in a sense an "exercise of thought"; and human reason is neither annulled nor debased in assenting to the contents of faith, which are in any case attained by way of free and informed choice.(46)

This is why the Church has been justified in consistently proposing Saint Thomas as a master of thought and a model of the right way to do theology. In this connection, I would recall what my Predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI, wrote on the occasion of the seventh centenary of the death of the Angelic Doctor: "Without doubt, Thomas possessed supremely the courage of the truth, a freedom of spirit in confronting new problems, the intellectual honesty of those who allow Christianity to be contaminated neither by secular philosophy nor by a prejudiced rejection of it. He passed therefore into the history of Christian thought as a pioneer of the new path of philosophy and universal culture. The key point and almost the kernel of the solution which, with all the brilliance of his prophetic intuition, he gave to the new encounter of faith and reason was a reconciliation between the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel, thus avoiding the unnatural tendency to negate the world and its values while at the same time keeping faith with the supreme and inexorable demands of the supernatural order".(47)

44. Another of the great insights of Saint Thomas was his perception of the role of the Holy Spirit in the process by which knowledge matures into wisdom. From the first pages of his *Summa Theologiae*,(48) Aquinas was keen to show the primacy of the wisdom which is the gift of the Holy Spirit and which opens the way to a knowledge of divine realities. His theology allows us to understand what is distinctive of wisdom in its close link with faith and knowledge of the divine. This wisdom comes to know by way of connaturality; it presupposes faith and eventually formulates its right judgement on the basis of the truth of faith itself: "The wisdom named among the gifts of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the wisdom found among the intellectual virtues. This second wisdom is acquired through study, but the first 'comes from on high', as Saint James puts it. This also distinguishes it from faith, since faith accepts divine truth as it is. But the gift of wisdom enables judgement according to divine truth".(49)

Yet the priority accorded this wisdom does not lead the Angelic Doctor to overlook the presence of two other complementary forms of wisdom—*philosophical* wisdom, which is based upon the

capacity of the intellect, for all its natural limitations, to explore reality, and theological wisdom, which is based upon Revelation and which explores the contents of faith, entering the very mystery of God.

Profoundly convinced that "whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit" (*omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est*) (50) Saint Thomas was impartial in his love of truth. He sought truth wherever it might be found and gave consummate demonstration of its universality. In him, the Church's Magisterium has seen and recognized the passion for truth; and, precisely because it stays consistently within the horizon of universal, objective and transcendent truth, his thought scales "heights unthinkable to human intelligence".(51) Rightly, then, he may be called an "apostle of the truth".(52) Looking unreservedly to truth, the realism of Thomas could recognize the objectivity of truth and produce not merely a philosophy of "what seems to be" but a philosophy of "what is".

The Drama of the Separation of Faith and Reason

45. With the rise of the first universities, theology came more directly into contact with other forms of learning and scientific research. Although they insisted upon the organic link between theology and philosophy, Saint Albert the Great and Saint Thomas were the first to recognize the autonomy which philosophy and the sciences needed if they were to perform well in their respective fields of research. From the late Medieval period onwards, however, the legitimate distinction between the two forms of learning became more and more a fateful separation. As a result of the exaggerated rationalism of certain thinkers, positions grew more radical and there emerged eventually a philosophy which was separate from and absolutely independent of the contents of faith. Another of the many consequences of this separation was an ever deeper mistrust with regard to reason itself. In a spirit both sceptical and agnostic, some began to voice a general mistrust, which led some to focus more on faith and others to deny its rationality altogether.

In short, what for Patristic and Medieval thought was in both theory and practice a profound unity, producing knowledge capable of reaching the highest forms of speculation, was destroyed by systems which espoused the cause of rational knowledge sundered from faith and meant to take the place of faith.

46. The more influential of these radical positions are well known and high in profile, especially in the history of the West. It is not too much to claim that the development of a good part of modern philosophy has seen it move further and further away from Christian Revelation, to the point of setting itself quite explicitly in opposition. This process reached its apogee in the last century. Some representatives of idealism sought in various ways to transform faith and its contents, even the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, into dialectical structures which could be grasped by reason. Opposed to this kind of thinking were various forms of atheistic humanism, expressed in philosophical terms, which regarded faith as alienating and damaging to the development of a full rationality. They did not hesitate to present themselves as new religions serving as a basis for projects which, on the political and social plane, gave rise to totalitarian systems which have been disastrous for humanity.

In the field of scientific research, a positivistic mentality took hold which not only abandoned the Christian vision of the world, but more especially rejected every appeal to a metaphysical or moral vision. It follows that certain scientists, lacking any ethical point of reference, are in danger of putting at the centre of their concerns something other than the human person and the entirety of the person's life. Further still, some of these, sensing the opportunities of technological progress, seem to succumb not only to a market-based logic, but also to the temptation of a quasi-divine power over nature and even over the human being.

As a result of the crisis of rationalism, what has appeared finally is nihilism. As a philosophy of nothingness, it has a certain attraction for people of our time. Its adherents claim that the search is an end in itself, without any hope or possibility of ever attaining the goal of truth. In the nihilist interpretation, life is no more than an occasion for sensations and experiences in which the ephemeral has pride of place. Nihilism is at the root of the widespread mentality which claims that a definitive commitment should no longer be made, because everything is fleeting and provisional. 47. It should also be borne in mind that the role of philosophy itself has changed in modern culture. From universal wisdom and learning, it has been gradually reduced to one of the many fields of human knowing; indeed in some ways it has been consigned to a wholly marginal role. Other forms of rationality have acquired an ever higher profile, making philosophical learning appear all the more peripheral. These forms of rationality are directed not towards the contemplation of truth and the search for the ultimate goal and meaning of life; but instead, as "instrumental reason", they are directed—actually or potentially—towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment or power.

In my first Encyclical Letter I stressed the danger of absolutizing such an approach when I wrote: "The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will. All too soon, and often in an unforeseeable way, what this manifold activity of man yields is not only subject to 'alienation', in the sense that it is simply taken away from the person who produces it, but rather it turns against man himself, at least in part, through the indirect consequences of its effects returning on himself. It is or can be directed against him. This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadest and universal dimension. Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid of what he produces—not all of it, of course, or even most of it, but part of it and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative—can radically turn against himself".(53)

In the wake of these cultural shifts, some philosophers have abandoned the search for truth in itself and made their sole aim the attainment of a subjective certainty or a pragmatic sense of utility. This in turn has obscured the true dignity of reason, which is no longer equipped to know the truth and to seek the absolute.

48. This rapid survey of the history of philosophy, then, reveals a growing separation between faith and philosophical reason. Yet closer scrutiny shows that even in the philosophical thinking of those who helped drive faith and reason further apart there are found at times precious and seminal insights which, if pursued and developed with mind and heart rightly tuned, can lead to the discovery of truth's way. Such insights are found, for instance, in penetrating analyses of perception and experience, of the imaginary and the unconscious, of personhood and

intersubjectivity, of freedom and values, of time and history. The theme of death as well can become for all thinkers an incisive appeal to seek within themselves the true meaning of their own life. But this does not mean that the link between faith and reason as it now stands does not need to be carefully examined, because each without the other is impoverished and enfeebled. Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal. Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so run the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being.

This is why I make this strong and insistent appeal—not, I trust, untimely—that faith and philosophy recover the profound unity which allows them to stand in harmony with their nature without compromising their mutual autonomy. The *parrhesia* of faith must be matched by the boldness of reason.

Chapter V. The Magisterium's Interventions in Philosophical Matters

The Magisterium's Discernment as diakonia of the Truth

49. The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others.(54) The underlying reason for this reluctance is that, even when it engages theology, philosophy must remain faithful to its own principles and methods. Otherwise there would be no guarantee that it would remain oriented to truth and that it was moving towards truth by way of a process governed by reason. A philosophy which did not proceed in the light of reason according to its own principles and methods would serve little purpose. At the deepest level, the autonomy which philosophy enjoys is rooted in the fact that reason is by its nature oriented to truth and is equipped moreover with the means necessary to arrive at truth. A philosophy conscious of this as its "constitutive status" cannot but respect the demands and the data of revealed truth.

Yet history shows that philosophy—especially modern philosophy—has taken wrong turns and fallen into error. It is neither the task nor the competence of the Magisterium to intervene in order to make good the lacunas of deficient philosophical discourse. Rather, it is the Magisterium's duty to respond clearly and strongly when controversial philosophical opinions threaten right understanding of what has been revealed, and when false and partial theories which sow the seed of serious error, confusing the pure and simple faith of the People of God, begin to spread more widely.

50. In the light of faith, therefore, the Church's Magisterium can and must authoritatively exercise a critical discernment of opinions and philosophies which contradict Christian doctrine.(55) It is the task of the Magisterium in the first place to indicate which philosophical presuppositions and conclusions are incompatible with revealed truth, thus articulating the demands which faith's point of view makes of philosophy. Moreover, as philosophical learning has developed, different schools of thought have emerged. This pluralism also imposes upon the Magisterium the responsibility of expressing a judgement as to whether or not the basic tenets of these different schools are compatible with the demands of the word of God and theological enquiry.

It is the Church's duty to indicate the elements in a philosophical system which are incompatible with her own faith. In fact, many philosophical opinions—concerning God, the human being, human freedom and ethical behaviour—engage the Church directly, because they touch on the revealed truth of which she is the guardian. In making this discernment, we Bishops have the duty to be "witnesses to the truth", fulfilling a humble but tenacious ministry of service which every philosopher should appreciate, a service in favour of *recta ratio*, or of reason reflecting rightly upon what is true.

51. This discernment, however, should not be seen as primarily negative, as if the Magisterium intended to abolish or limit any possible mediation. On the contrary, the Magisterium's interventions are intended above all to prompt, promote and encourage philosophical enquiry. Besides, philosophers are the first to understand the need for self-criticism, the correction of errors and the extension of the too restricted terms in which their thinking has been framed. In particular, it is necessary to keep in mind the unity of truth, even if its formulations are shaped by history and produced by human reason wounded and weakened by sin. This is why no historical form of philosophy can legitimately claim to embrace the totality of truth, nor to be the complete explanation of the human being, of the world and of the human being's relationship with God.

Today, then, with the proliferation of systems, methods, concepts and philosophical theses which are often extremely complex, the need for a critical discernment in the light of faith becomes more urgent, even if it remains a daunting task. Given all of reason's inherent and historical limitations, it is difficult enough to recognize the inalienable powers proper to it; but it is still more difficult at times to discern in specific philosophical claims what is valid and fruitful from faith's point of view and what is mistaken or dangerous. Yet the Church knows that "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hidden in Christ (*Col 2:3*) and therefore intervenes in order to stimulate philosophical enquiry, lest it stray from the path which leads to recognition of the mystery.

52. It is not only in recent times that the Magisterium of the Church has intervened to make its mind known with regard to particular philosophical teachings. It is enough to recall, by way of example, the pronouncements made through the centuries concerning theories which argued in favour of the pre-existence of the soul,(56) or concerning the different forms of idolatry and esoteric superstition found in astrological speculations,(57) without forgetting the more systematic pronouncements against certain claims of Latin Averroism which were incompatible with the Christian faith.(58)

If the Magisterium has spoken out more frequently since the middle of the last century, it is because in that period not a few Catholics felt it their duty to counter various streams of modern thought with a philosophy of their own. At this point, the Magisterium of the Church was obliged to be vigilant lest these philosophies developed in ways which were themselves erroneous and negative. The censures were delivered even-handedly: on the one hand, *fideism* (59) and *radical traditionalism*,(60) for their distrust of reason's natural capacities, and, on the other, *rationalism* (61) and *ontologism* (62) because they attributed to natural reason a knowledge which only the light of faith could confer. The positive elements of this debate were assembled in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, in which for the first time an Ecumenical Council—in this case, the First Vatican Council—pronounced solemnly on the relationship between reason and

faith. The teaching contained in this document strongly and positively marked the philosophical research of many believers and remains today a standard reference-point for correct and coherent Christian thinking in this regard.

53. The Magisterium's pronouncements have been concerned less with individual philosophical theses than with the need for rational and hence ultimately philosophical knowledge for the understanding of faith. In synthesizing and solemnly reaffirming the teachings constantly proposed to the faithful by the ordinary Papal Magisterium, the First Vatican Council showed how inseparable and at the same time how distinct were faith and reason, Revelation and natural knowledge of God. The Council began with the basic criterion, presupposed by Revelation itself, of the natural knowability of the existence of God, the beginning and end of all things,(63) and concluded with the solemn assertion quoted earlier: "There are two orders of knowledge, distinct not only in their point of departure, but also in their object".(64) Against all forms of rationalism, then, there was a need to affirm the distinction between the mysteries of faith and the findings of philosophy, and the transcendence and precedence of the mysteries of faith over the findings of philosophy. Against the temptations of fideism, however, it was necessary to stress the unity of truth and thus the positive contribution which rational knowledge can and must make to faith's knowledge: "Even if faith is superior to reason there can never be a true divergence between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals the mysteries and bestows the gift of faith has also placed in the human spirit the light of reason. This God could not deny himself, nor could the truth ever contradict the truth".(65)

54. In our own century too the Magisterium has revisited the theme on a number of occasions, warning against the lure of rationalism. Here the pronouncements of Pope Saint Pius X are pertinent, stressing as they did that at the basis of Modernism were philosophical claims which were phenomenist, agnostic and immanentist.(66) Nor can the importance of the Catholic rejection of Marxist philosophy and atheistic Communism be forgotten.(67)

Later, in his Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII warned against mistaken interpretations linked to evolutionism, existentialism and historicism. He made it clear that these theories had not been proposed and developed by theologians, but had their origins "outside the sheepfold of Christ".(68) He added, however, that errors of this kind should not simply be rejected but should be examined critically: "Catholic theologians and philosophers, whose grave duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instill it in human hearts, cannot afford to ignore these more or less erroneous opinions. Rather they must come to understand these theories well, not only because diseases are properly treated only if rightly diagnosed and because even in these false theories some truth is found at times, but because in the end these theories provoke a more discriminating discussion and evaluation of philosophical and theological truths".(69)

In accomplishing its specific task in service of the Roman Pontiff's universal Magisterium,(70) the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith has more recently had to intervene to re-emphasize the danger of an uncritical adoption by some liberation theologians of opinions and methods drawn from Marxism.(71)

In the past, then, the Magisterium has on different occasions and in different ways offered its discernment in philosophical matters. My revered Predecessors have thus made an invaluable contribution which must not be forgotten.

55. Surveying the situation today, we see that the problems of other times have returned, but in a new key. It is no longer a matter of questions of interest only to certain individuals and groups, but convictions so widespread that they have become to some extent the common mind. An example of this is the deep-seated distrust of reason which has surfaced in the most recent developments of much of philosophical research, to the point where there is talk at times of "the end of metaphysics". Philosophy is expected to rest content with more modest tasks such as the simple interpretation of facts or an enquiry into restricted fields of human knowing or its structures.

In theology too the temptations of other times have reappeared. In some contemporary theologies, for instance, a certain *rationalism* is gaining ground, especially when opinions thought to be philosophically well founded are taken as normative for theological research. This happens particularly when theologians, through lack of philosophical competence, allow themselves to be swayed uncritically by assertions which have become part of current parlance and culture but which are poorly grounded in reason.(72)

There are also signs of a resurgence of *fideism*, which fails to recognize the importance of rational knowledge and philosophical discourse for the understanding of faith, indeed for the very possibility of belief in God. One currently widespread symptom of this fideistic tendency is a "biblicism" which tends to make the reading and exegesis of Sacred Scripture the sole criterion of truth. In consequence, the word of God is identified with Sacred Scripture alone, thus eliminating the doctrine of the Church which the Second Vatican Council stressed quite specifically. Having recalled that the word of God is present in both Scripture and Tradition,(73) the Constitution *Dei Verbum* continues emphatically: "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture comprise a single sacred deposit of the word of God entrusted to the Church. Embracing this deposit and united with their pastors, the People of God remain always faithful to the teaching of the Apostles".(74) Scripture, therefore, is not the Church's sole point of reference. The "supreme rule of her faith" (75) derives from the unity which the Spirit has created between Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church in a reciprocity which means that none of the three can survive without the others.(76)

Moreover, one should not underestimate the danger inherent in seeking to derive the truth of Sacred Scripture from the use of one method alone, ignoring the need for a more comprehensive exegesis which enables the exegete, together with the whole Church, to arrive at the full sense of the texts. Those who devote themselves to the study of Sacred Scripture should always remember that the various hermeneutical approaches have their own philosophical underpinnings, which need to be carefully evaluated before they are applied to the sacred texts.

Other modes of latent fideism appear in the scant consideration accorded to speculative theology, and in disdain for the classical philosophy from which the terms of both the understanding of faith and the actual formulation of dogma have been drawn. My revered Predecessor Pope Pius XII warned against such neglect of the philosophical tradition and against abandonment of the traditional terminology.(77)

56. In brief, there are signs of a widespread distrust of universal and absolute statements, especially among those who think that truth is born of consensus and not of a consonance between intellect and objective reality. In a world subdivided into so many specialized fields, it is not hard to see how difficult it can be to acknowledge the full and ultimate meaning of life which has traditionally been the goal of philosophy. Nonetheless, in the light of faith which finds in Jesus Christ this ultimate meaning, I cannot but encourage philosophers—be they Christian or not—to trust in the power of human reason and not to set themselves goals that are too modest in their philosophizing. The lesson of history in this millennium now drawing to a close shows that this is the path to follow: it is necessary not to abandon the passion for ultimate truth, the eagerness to search for it or the audacity to forge new paths in the search. It is faith which stirs reason to move beyond all isolation and willingly to run risks so that it may attain whatever is beautiful, good and true. Faith thus becomes the convinced and convincing advocate of reason.

The Church's Interest in Philosophy

57. Yet the Magisterium does more than point out the misperceptions and the mistakes of philosophical theories. With no less concern it has sought to stress the basic principles of a genuine renewal of philosophical enquiry, indicating as well particular paths to be taken. In this regard, Pope Leo XIII with his Encyclical Letter *Æterni Patris* took a step of historic importance for the life of the Church, since it remains to this day the one papal document of such authority devoted entirely to philosophy. The great Pope revisited and developed the First Vatican Council's teaching on the relationship between faith and reason, showing how philosophical thinking contributes in fundamental ways to faith and theological learning.(78) More than a century later, many of the insights of his Encyclical Letter have lost none of their interest from either a practical or pedagogical point of view—most particularly, his insistence upon the incomparable value of the philosophy of Saint Thomas. A renewed insistence upon the thought of the Angelic Doctor seemed to Pope Leo XIII the best way to recover the practice of a philosophy consonant with the demands of faith. "Just when Saint Thomas distinguishes perfectly between faith and reason", the Pope writes, "he unites them in bonds of mutual friendship, conceding to each its specific rights and to each its specific dignity".(79)

58. The positive results of the papal summons are well known. Studies of the thought of Saint Thomas and other Scholastic writers received new impetus. Historical studies flourished, resulting in a rediscovery of the riches of Medieval thought, which until then had been largely unknown; and there emerged new Thomistic schools. With the use of historical method, knowledge of the works of Saint Thomas increased greatly, and many scholars had courage enough to introduce the Thomistic tradition into the philosophical and theological discussions of the day. The most influential Catholic theologians of the present century, to whose thinking and research the Second Vatican Council was much indebted, were products of this revival of Thomistic philosophy. Throughout the twentieth century, the Church has been served by a powerful array of thinkers formed in the school of the Angelic Doctor.

59. Yet the Thomistic and neo-Thomistic revival was not the only sign of a resurgence of philosophical thought in culture of Christian inspiration. Earlier still, and parallel to Pope Leo's call, there had emerged a number of Catholic philosophers who, adopting more recent currents of

thought and according to a specific method, produced philosophical works of great influence and lasting value. Some devised syntheses so remarkable that they stood comparison with the great systems of idealism. Others established the epistemological foundations for a new consideration of faith in the light of a renewed understanding of moral consciousness; others again produced a philosophy which, starting with an analysis of immanence, opened the way to the transcendent; and there were finally those who sought to combine the demands of faith with the perspective of phenomenological method. From different quarters, then, modes of philosophical speculation have continued to emerge and have sought to keep alive the great tradition of Christian thought which unites faith and reason.

60. The Second Vatican Council, for its part, offers a rich and fruitful teaching concerning philosophy. I cannot fail to note, especially in the context of this Encyclical Letter, that one chapter of the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* amounts to a virtual compendium of the biblical anthropology from which philosophy too can draw inspiration. The chapter deals with the value of the human person created in the image of God, explains the dignity and superiority of the human being over the rest of creation, and declares the transcendent capacity of human reason.(80) The problem of atheism is also dealt with in *Gaudium et Spes*, and the flaws of its philosophical vision are identified, especially in relation to the dignity and freedom of the human person.(81) There is no doubt that the climactic section of the chapter is profoundly significant for philosophy; and it was this which I took up in my first Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* and which serves as one of the constant reference-points of my teaching: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come, Christ the Lord. Christ, the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling".(82)

The Council also dealt with the study of philosophy required of candidates for the priesthood; and its recommendations have implications for Christian education as a whole. These are the Council's words: "The philosophical disciplines should be taught in such a way that students acquire in the first place a solid and harmonious knowledge of the human being, of the world and of God, based upon the philosophical heritage which is enduringly valid, yet taking into account currents of modern philosophy".(83)

These directives have been reiterated and developed in a number of other magisterial documents in order to guarantee a solid philosophical formation, especially for those preparing for theological studies. I have myself emphasized several times the importance of this philosophical formation for those who one day, in their pastoral life, will have to address the aspirations of the contemporary world and understand the causes of certain behaviour in order to respond in appropriate ways.(84) 61. If it has been necessary from time to time to intervene on this question, to reiterate the value of the Angelic Doctor's insights and insist on the study of his thought, this has been because the Magisterium's directives have not always been followed with the readiness one would wish. In the years after the Second Vatican Council, many Catholic faculties were in some ways impoverished by a diminished sense of the importance of the study not just of Scholastic philosophy but more generally of the study of philosophy itself. I cannot fail to note with surprise and displeasure that this lack of interest in the study of philosophy is shared by not a few theologians.

There are various reasons for this disenchantment. First, there is the distrust of reason found in much contemporary philosophy, which has largely abandoned metaphysical study of the ultimate human questions in order to concentrate upon problems which are more detailed and restricted, at times even purely formal. Another reason, it should be said, is the misunderstanding which has arisen especially with regard to the "human sciences". On a number of occasions, the Second Vatican Council stressed the positive value of scientific research for a deeper knowledge of the mystery of the human being.(85) But the invitation addressed to theologians to engage the human sciences and apply them properly in their enquiries should not be interpreted as an implicit authorization to marginalize philosophy or to put something else in its place in pastoral formation and in the *praeparatio fidei*. A further factor is the renewed interest in the inculturation of faith. The life of the young Churches in particular has brought to light, together with sophisticated modes of thinking, an array of expressions of popular wisdom; and this constitutes a genuine cultural wealth of traditions. Yet the study of traditional ways must go hand in hand with philosophical enquiry, an enquiry which will allow the positive traits of popular wisdom to emerge and forge the necessary link with the proclamation of the Gospel.(86)

62. I wish to repeat clearly that the study of philosophy is fundamental and indispensable to the structure of theological studies and to the formation of candidates for the priesthood. It is not by chance that the curriculum of theological studies is preceded by a time of special study of philosophy. This decision, confirmed by the Fifth Lateran Council,(87) is rooted in the experience which matured through the Middle Ages, when the importance of a constructive harmony of philosophical and theological learning emerged. This ordering of studies influenced, promoted and enabled much of the development of modern philosophy, albeit indirectly. One telling example of this is the influence of the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* of Francisco Suárez, which found its way even into the Lutheran universities of Germany. Conversely, the dismantling of this arrangement has created serious gaps in both priestly formation and theological research. Consider, for instance, the disregard of modern thought and culture which has led either to a refusal of any kind of dialogue or to an indiscriminate acceptance of any kind of philosophy.

I trust most sincerely that these difficulties will be overcome by an intelligent philosophical and theological formation, which must never be lacking in the Church.

63. For the reasons suggested here, it has seemed to me urgent to re-emphasize with this Encyclical Letter the Church's intense interest in philosophy—indeed the intimate bond which ties theological work to the philosophical search for truth. From this comes the Magisterium's duty to discern and promote philosophical thinking which is not at odds with faith. It is my task to state principles and criteria which in my judgement are necessary in order to restore a harmonious and creative relationship between theology and philosophy. In the light of these principles and criteria, it will be possible to discern with greater clarity what link, if any, theology should forge with the different philosophical opinions or systems which the world of today presents.

Chapter VI. The Interaction between Philosophy and Theology

The Knowledge of Faith and the Demands of Philosophical Reason

64. The word of God is addressed to all people, in every age and in every part of the world; and the human being is by nature a philosopher. As a reflective and scientific elaboration of the understanding of God's word in the light of faith, theology for its part must relate, in some of its procedures and in the performance of its specific tasks, to the philosophies which have been developed through the ages. I have no wish to direct theologians to particular methods, since that is not the competence of the Magisterium. I wish instead to recall some specific tasks of theology which, by the very nature of the revealed word, demand recourse to philosophical enquiry.

65. Theology is structured as an understanding of faith in the light of a twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*. With the first, theology makes its own the content of Revelation as this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Church's living Magisterium.(88) With the second, theology seeks to respond through speculative enquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought.

Philosophy contributes specifically to theology in preparing for a correct *auditus fidei* with its study of the structure of knowledge and personal communication, especially the various forms and functions of language. No less important is philosophy's contribution to a more coherent understanding of Church Tradition, the pronouncements of the Magisterium and the teaching of the great masters of theology, who often adopt concepts and thought-forms drawn from a particular philosophical tradition. In this case, the theologian is summoned not only to explain the concepts and terms used by the Church in her thinking and the development of her teaching, but also to know in depth the philosophical systems which may have influenced those concepts and terms, in order to formulate correct and consistent interpretations of them.

66. With regard to the *intellectus fidei*, a prime consideration must be that divine Truth "proposed to us in the Sacred Scriptures and rightly interpreted by the Church's teaching" (89) enjoys an innate intelligibility, so logically consistent that it stands as an authentic body of knowledge. The *intellectus fidei* expounds this truth, not only in grasping the logical and conceptual structure of the propositions in which the Church's teaching is framed, but also, indeed primarily, in bringing to light the salvific meaning of these propositions for the individual and for humanity. From the sum of these propositions, the believer comes to know the history of salvation, which culminates in the person of Jesus Christ and in his Paschal Mystery. Believers then share in this mystery by their assent of faith.

For its part, *dogmatic theology* must be able to articulate the universal meaning of the mystery of the One and Triune God and of the economy of salvation, both as a narrative and, above all, in the form of argument. It must do so, in other words, through concepts formulated in a critical and universally communicable way. Without philosophy's contribution, it would in fact be impossible to discuss theological issues such as, for example, the use of language to speak about God, the personal relations within the Trinity, God's creative activity in the world, the relationship between God and man, or Christ's identity as true God and true man. This is no less true of the different themes of moral theology, which employ concepts such as the moral law, conscience, freedom, personal responsibility and guilt, which are in part defined by philosophical ethics.

It is necessary therefore that the mind of the believer acquire a natural, consistent and true knowledge of created realities—the world and man himself—which are also the object of divine Revelation. Still more, reason must be able to articulate this knowledge in concept and argument.

Speculative dogmatic theology thus presupposes and implies a philosophy of the human being, the world and, more radically, of being, which has objective truth as its foundation.

67. With its specific character as a discipline charged with giving an account of faith (cf. *1 Pet 3:15*), the concern of *fundamental theology* will be to justify and expound the relationship between faith and philosophical thought. Recalling the teaching of Saint Paul (cf. *Rom 1:19-20*), the First Vatican Council pointed to the existence of truths which are naturally, and thus philosophically, knowable; and an acceptance of God's Revelation necessarily presupposes knowledge of these truths. In studying Revelation and its credibility, as well as the corresponding act of faith, fundamental theology should show how, in the light of the knowledge conferred by faith, there emerge certain truths which reason, from its own independent enquiry, already perceives. Revelation endows these truths with their fullest meaning, directing them towards the richness of the revealed mystery in which they find their ultimate purpose. Consider, for example, the natural knowledge of God, the possibility of distinguishing divine Revelation from other phenomena or the recognition of its credibility, the capacity of human language to speak in a true and meaningful way even of things which transcend all human experience. From all these truths, the mind is led to acknowledge the existence of a truly propaedeutic path to faith, one which can lead to the acceptance of Revelation without in any way compromising the principles and autonomy of the mind itself.(90)

Similarly, fundamental theology should demonstrate the profound compatibility that exists between faith and its need to find expression by way of human reason fully free to give its assent. Faith will thus be able "to show fully the path to reason in a sincere search for the truth. Although faith, a gift of God, is not based on reason, it can certainly not dispense with it. At the same time, it becomes apparent that reason needs to be reinforced by faith, in order to discover horizons it cannot reach on its own".(91)

68. Moral theology has perhaps an even greater need of philosophy's contribution. In the New Testament, human life is much less governed by prescriptions than in the Old Testament. Life in the Spirit leads believers to a freedom and responsibility which surpass the Law. Yet the Gospel and the Apostolic writings still set forth both general principles of Christian conduct and specific teachings and precepts. In order to apply these to the particular circumstances of individual and communal life, Christians must be able fully to engage their conscience and the power of their reason. In other words, moral theology requires a sound philosophical vision of human nature and society, as well as of the general principles of ethical decision-making.

69. It might be objected that the theologian should nowadays rely less on philosophy than on the help of other kinds of human knowledge, such as history and above all the sciences, the extraordinary advances of which in recent times stir such admiration. Others, more alert to the link between faith and culture, claim that theology should look more to the wisdom contained in peoples' traditions than to a philosophy of Greek and Eurocentric provenance. Others still, prompted by a mistaken notion of cultural pluralism, simply deny the universal value of the Church's philosophical heritage.

There is some truth in these claims which are acknowledged in the teaching of the Council.(92) Reference to the sciences is often helpful, allowing as it does a more thorough knowledge of the

subject under study; but it should not mean the rejection of a typically philosophical and critical thinking which is concerned with the universal. Indeed, this kind of thinking is required for a fruitful exchange between cultures. What I wish to emphasize is the duty to go beyond the particular and concrete, lest the prime task of demonstrating the universality of faith's content be abandoned. Nor should it be forgotten that the specific contribution of philosophical enquiry enables us to discern in different world-views and different cultures "not what people think but what the objective truth is".(93) It is not an array of human opinions but truth alone which can be of help to theology.

70. Because of its implications for both philosophy and theology, the question of the relationship with cultures calls for particular attention, which cannot however claim to be exhaustive. From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures. Christ's mandate to his disciples to go out everywhere, "even to the ends of the earth" (*Acts* 1:8), in order to pass on the truth which he had revealed, led the Christian community to recognize from the first the universality of its message and the difficulties created by cultural differences. A passage of Saint Paul's letter to the Christians of Ephesus helps us to understand how the early community responded to the problem. The Apostle writes: "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the wall of hostility" (2:13-14).

In the light of this text, we reflect further to see how the Gentiles were transformed once they had embraced the faith. With the richness of the salvation wrought by Christ, the walls separating the different cultures collapsed. God's promise in Christ now became a universal offer: no longer limited to one particular people, its language and its customs, but extended to all as a heritage from which each might freely draw. From their different locations and traditions all are called in Christ to share in the unity of the family of God's children. It is Christ who enables the two peoples to become "one". Those who were "far off" have come "near", thanks to the newness brought by the Paschal Mystery. Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery. This unity is so deep that the Church can say with Saint Paul: "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are saints and members of the household of God" (*Eph*2:19).

This simple statement contains a great truth: faith's encounter with different cultures has created something new. When they are deeply rooted in experience, cultures show forth the human being's characteristic openness to the universal and the transcendent. Therefore they offer different paths to the truth, which assuredly serve men and women well in revealing values which can make their life ever more human.(94) Insofar as cultures appeal to the values of older traditions, they point—implicitly but authentically—to the manifestation of God in nature, as we saw earlier in considering the Wisdom literature and the teaching of Saint Paul.

71. Inseparable as they are from people and their history, cultures share the dynamics which the human experience of life reveals. They change and advance because people meet in new ways and share with each other their ways of life. Cultures are fed by the communication of values, and they survive and flourish insofar as they remain open to assimilating new experiences. How are we to explain these dynamics? All people are part of a culture, depend upon it and shape it. Human beings are both child and parent of the culture in which they are immersed. To everything they do,

they bring something which sets them apart from the rest of creation: their unfailing openness to mystery and their boundless desire for knowledge. Lying deep in every culture, there appears this impulse towards a fulfilment. We may say, then, that culture itself has an intrinsic capacity to receive divine Revelation.

Cultural context permeates the living of Christian faith, which contributes in turn little by little to shaping that context. To every culture Christians bring the unchanging truth of God, which he reveals in the history and culture of a people. Time and again, therefore, in the course of the centuries we have seen repeated the event witnessed by the pilgrims in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Hearing the Apostles, they asked one another: "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (*Acts 2:7-11*). While it demands of all who hear it the adherence of faith, the proclamation of the Gospel in different cultures allows people to preserve their own cultural identity. This in no way creates division, because the community of the baptized is marked by a universality which can embrace every culture and help to foster whatever is implicit in them to the point where it will be fully explicit in the light of truth.

This means that no one culture can ever become the criterion of judgment, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God's Revelation. The Gospel is not opposed to any culture, as if in engaging a culture the Gospel would seek to strip it of its native riches and force it to adopt forms which are alien to it. On the contrary, the message which believers bring to the world and to cultures is a genuine liberation from all the disorders caused by sin and is, at the same time, a call to the fullness of truth. Cultures are not only not diminished by this encounter; rather, they are prompted to open themselves to the newness of the Gospel's truth and to be stirred by this truth to develop in new ways.

72. In preaching the Gospel, Christianity first encountered Greek philosophy; but this does not mean at all that other approaches are precluded. Today, as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, there are new tasks of inculturation, which mean that our generation faces problems not unlike those faced by the Church in the first centuries.

My thoughts turn immediately to the lands of the East, so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of great antiquity. Among these lands, India has a special place. A great spiritual impulse leads Indian thought to seek an experience which would liberate the spirit from the shackles of time and space and would therefore acquire absolute value. The dynamic of this quest for liberation provides the context for great metaphysical systems.

In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought. In this work of discernment, which finds its inspiration in the Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, certain criteria will have to be kept in mind. The first of these is the universality of the human spirit, whose basic needs are the same in the most disparate cultures. The second, which derives from the first, is this: in engaging great

cultures for the first time, the Church cannot abandon what she has gained from her inculturation in the world of Greco-Latin thought. To reject this heritage would be to deny the providential plan of God who guides his Church down the paths of time and history. This criterion is valid for the Church in every age, even for the Church of the future, who will judge herself enriched by all that comes from today's engagement with Eastern cultures and will find in this inheritance fresh cues for fruitful dialogue with the cultures which will emerge as humanity moves into the future. Thirdly, care will need to be taken lest, contrary to the very nature of the human spirit, the legitimate defense of the uniqueness and originality of Indian thought be confused with the idea that a particular cultural tradition should remain closed in its difference and affirm itself by opposing other traditions.

What has been said here of India is no less true for the heritage of the great cultures of China, Japan and the other countries of Asia, as also for the riches of the traditional cultures of Africa, which are for the most part orally transmitted.

73. In the light of these considerations, the relationship between theology and philosophy is best construed as a circle. Theology's source and starting-point must always be the word of God revealed in history, while its final goal will be an understanding of that word which increases with each passing generation. Yet, since God's word is Truth (cf. *Jn 17:17*), the human search for truth—philosophy, pursued in keeping with its own rules—can only help to understand God's word better. It is not just a question of theological discourse using this or that concept or element of a philosophical construct; what matters most is that the believer's reason use its powers of reflection in the search for truth which moves from the word of God towards a better understanding of it. It is as if, moving between the twin poles of God's word and a better understanding of it, reason is offered guidance and is warned against paths which would lead it to stray from revealed Truth and to stray in the end from the truth pure and simple. Instead, reason is stirred to explore paths which of itself it would not even have suspected it could take. This circular relationship with the word of God leaves philosophy enriched, because reason discovers new and unsuspected horizons.

74. The fruitfulness of this relationship is confirmed by the experience of great Christian theologians who also distinguished themselves as great philosophers, bequeathing to us writings of such high speculative value as to warrant comparison with the masters of ancient philosophy. This is true of both the Fathers of the Church, among whom at least Saint Gregory of Nazianzus and Saint Augustine should be mentioned, and the Medieval Doctors with the great triad of Saint Anselm, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas. We see the same fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God in the courageous research pursued by more recent thinkers, among whom I gladly mention, in a Western context, figures such as John Henry Newman, Antonio Rosmini, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson and Edith Stein and, in an Eastern context, eminent scholars such as Vladimir S. Soloviev, Pavel A. Florensky, Petr Chaadaev and Vladimir N. Lossky. Obviously other names could be cited; and in referring to these I intend not to endorse every aspect of their thought, but simply to offer significant examples of a process of philosophical enquiry which was enriched by engaging the data of faith. One thing is certain: attention to the spiritual journey of these masters can only give greater momentum to both the search for truth and the effort to apply the results of that search to the service of humanity. It is to

be hoped that now and in the future there will be those who continue to cultivate this great philosophical and theological tradition for the good of both the Church and humanity.

Different Stances of Philosophy

75. As appears from this brief sketch of the history of the relationship between faith and philosophy, one can distinguish different stances of philosophy with regard to Christian faith. First, there is a *philosophy completely independent of the Gospel's Revelation*: this is the stance adopted by philosophy as it took shape in history before the birth of the Redeemer and later in regions as yet untouched by the Gospel. We see here philosophy's valid aspiration to be an *autonomous* enterprise, obeying its own rules and employing the powers of reason alone. Although seriously handicapped by the inherent weakness of human reason, this aspiration should be supported and strengthened. As a search for truth within the natural order, the enterprise of philosophy is always open—at least implicitly—to the supernatural.

Moreover, the demand for a valid autonomy of thought should be respected even when theological discourse makes use of philosophical concepts and arguments. Indeed, to argue according to rigorous rational criteria is to guarantee that the results attained are universally valid. This also confirms the principle that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it: the assent of faith, engaging the intellect and will, does not destroy but perfects the free will of each believer who deep within welcomes what has been revealed.

It is clear that this legitimate approach is rejected by the theory of so-called "separate" philosophy, pursued by some modern philosophers. This theory claims for philosophy not only a valid autonomy, but a self-sufficiency of thought which is patently invalid. In refusing the truth offered by divine Revelation, philosophy only does itself damage, since this is to preclude access to a deeper knowledge of truth.

76. A second stance adopted by philosophy is often designated as *Christian philosophy*. In itself, the term is valid, but it should not be misunderstood: it in no way intends to suggest that there is an official philosophy of the Church, since the faith as such is not a philosophy. The term seeks rather to indicate a Christian way of philosophizing, a philosophical speculation conceived in dynamic union with faith. It does not therefore refer simply to a philosophy developed by Christian philosophers who have striven in their research not to contradict the faith. The term Christian philosophy includes those important developments of philosophical thinking which would not have happened without the direct or indirect contribution of Christian faith.

Christian philosophy therefore has two aspects. The first is subjective, in the sense that faith purifies reason. As a theological virtue, faith liberates reason from presumption, the typical temptation of the philosopher. Saint Paul, the Fathers of the Church and, closer to our own time, philosophers such as Pascal and Kierkegaard reproached such presumption. The philosopher who learns humility will also find courage to tackle questions which are difficult to resolve if the data of Revelation are ignored—for example, the problem of evil and suffering, the personal nature of God and the question of the meaning of life or, more directly, the radical metaphysical question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?".

The second aspect of Christian philosophy is objective, in the sense that it concerns content. Revelation clearly proposes certain truths which might never have been discovered by reason unaided, although they are not of themselves inaccessible to reason. Among these truths is the notion of a free and personal God who is the Creator of the world, a truth which has been so crucial for the development of philosophical thinking, especially the philosophy of being. There is also the reality of sin, as it appears in the light of faith, which helps to shape an adequate philosophical formulation of the problem of evil. The notion of the person as a spiritual being is another of faith's specific contributions: the Christian proclamation of human dignity, equality and freedom has undoubtedly influenced modern philosophical thought. In more recent times, there has been the discovery that history as event—so central to Christian Revelation—is important for philosophy as well. It is no accident that this has become pivotal for a philosophy of history which stakes its claim as a new chapter in the human search for truth.

Among the objective elements of Christian philosophy we might also place the need to explore the rationality of certain truths expressed in Sacred Scripture, such as the possibility of man's supernatural vocation and original sin itself. These are tasks which challenge reason to recognize that there is something true and rational lying far beyond the straits within which it would normally be confined. These questions in fact broaden reason's scope for action.

In speculating on these questions, philosophers have not become theologians, since they have not sought to understand and expound the truths of faith on the basis of Revelation. They have continued working on their own terrain and with their own purely rational method, yet extending their research to new aspects of truth. It could be said that a good part of modern and contemporary philosophy would not exist without this stimulus of the word of God. This conclusion retains all its relevance, despite the disappointing fact that many thinkers in recent centuries have abandoned Christian orthodoxy.

77. Philosophy presents another stance worth noting *when theology itself calls upon it*. Theology in fact has always needed and still needs philosophy's contribution. As a work of critical reason in the light of faith, theology presupposes and requires in all its research a reason formed and educated to concept and argument. Moreover, theology needs philosophy as a partner in dialogue in order to confirm the intelligibility and universal truth of its claims. It was not by accident that the Fathers of the Church and the Medieval theologians adopted non-Christian philosophies. This historical fact confirms the value of philosophy's *autonomy*, which remains unimpaired when theology calls upon it; but it shows as well the profound transformations which philosophy itself must undergo.

It was because of its noble and indispensable contribution that, from the Patristic period onwards, philosophy was called the *ancilla theologiae*. The title was not intended to indicate philosophy's servile submission or purely functional role with regard to theology. Rather, it was used in the sense in which Aristotle had spoken of the experimental sciences as "ancillary" to "*prima philosophia*". The term can scarcely be used today, given the principle of autonomy to which we have referred, but it has served throughout history to indicate the necessity of the link between the two sciences and the impossibility of their separation.

Were theologians to refuse the help of philosophy, they would run the risk of doing philosophy unwittingly and locking themselves within thought-structures poorly adapted to the understanding of faith. Were philosophers, for their part, to shun theology completely, they would be forced to master on their own the contents of Christian faith, as has been the case with some modern philosophers. Either way, the grounding principles of autonomy which every science rightly wants guaranteed would be seriously threatened.

When it adopts this stance, philosophy, like theology, comes more directly under the authority of the Magisterium and its discernment, because of the implications it has for the understanding of Revelation, as I have already explained. The truths of faith make certain demands which philosophy must respect whenever it engages theology.

78. It should be clear in the light of these reflections why the Magisterium has repeatedly acclaimed the merits of Saint Thomas' thought and made him the guide and model for theological studies. This has not been in order to take a position on properly philosophical questions nor to demand adherence to particular theses. The Magisterium's intention has always been to show how Saint Thomas is an authentic model for all who seek the truth. In his thinking, the demands of reason and the power of faith found the most elevated synthesis ever attained by human thought, for he could defend the radical newness introduced by Revelation without ever demeaning the venture proper to reason.

79. Developing further what the Magisterium before me has taught, I intend in this final section to point out certain requirements which theology—and more fundamentally still, the word of God itself—makes today of philosophical thinking and contemporary philosophies. As I have already noted, philosophy must obey its own rules and be based upon its own principles; truth, however, can only be one. The content of Revelation can never debase the discoveries and legitimate autonomy of reason. Yet, conscious that it cannot set itself up as an absolute and exclusive value, reason on its part must never lose its capacity to question and to be questioned. By virtue of the splendour emanating from subsistent Being itself, revealed truth offers the fullness of light and will therefore illumine the path of philosophical enquiry. In short, Christian Revelation becomes the true point of encounter and engagement between philosophical and theological thinking in their reciprocal relationship. It is to be hoped therefore that theologians and philosophers will let themselves be guided by the authority of truth alone so that there will emerge a philosophy consonant with the word of God. Such a philosophy will be a place where Christian faith and human cultures may meet, a point of understanding between believer and non-believer. It will help lead believers to a stronger conviction that faith grows deeper and more authentic when it is wedded to thought and does not reject it. It is again the Fathers who teach us this: "To believe is nothing other than to think with assent... Believers are also thinkers: in believing, they think and in thinking, they believe... If faith does not think, it is nothing".(95) And again: "If there is no assent, there is no faith, for without assent one does not really believe".(96)

Chapter VII. Current Requirements and Tasks

The Indispensable Requirements of the Word of God

80. In Sacred Scripture are found elements, both implicit and explicit, which allow a vision of the human being and the world which has exceptional philosophical density. Christians have come to an ever deeper awareness of the wealth to be found in the sacred text. It is there that we learn that what we experience is not absolute: it is neither uncreated nor self-generating. God alone is the Absolute. From the Bible there emerges also a vision of man as *imago Dei*. This vision offers indications regarding man's life, his freedom and the immortality of the human spirit. Since the created world is not self-sufficient, every illusion of autonomy which would deny the essential dependence on God of every creature—the human being included—leads to dramatic situations which subvert the rational search for the harmony and the meaning of human life.

The problem of moral evil—the most tragic of evil's forms—is also addressed in the Bible, which tells us that such evil stems not from any material deficiency, but is a wound inflicted by the disordered exercise of human freedom. In the end, the word of God poses the problem of the meaning of life and proffers its response in directing the human being to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, who is the perfect realization of human existence. A reading of the sacred text would reveal other aspects of this problem; but what emerges clearly is the rejection of all forms of relativism, materialism and pantheism.

The fundamental conviction of the "philosophy" found in the Bible is that the world and human life do have a meaning and look towards their fulfilment, which comes in Jesus Christ. The mystery of the Incarnation will always remain the central point of reference for an understanding of the enigma of human existence, the created world and God himself. The challenge of this mystery pushes philosophy to its limits, as reason is summoned to make its own a logic which brings down the walls within which it risks being confined. Yet only at this point does the meaning of life reach its defining moment. The intimate essence of God and of the human being become intelligible: in the mystery of the Incarnate Word, human nature and divine nature are safeguarded in all their autonomy, and at the same time the unique bond which sets them together in mutuality without confusion of any kind is revealed.(97)

81. One of the most significant aspects of our current situation, it should be noted, is the "crisis of meaning". Perspectives on life and the world, often of a scientific temper, have so proliferated that we face an increasing fragmentation of knowledge. This makes the search for meaning difficult and often fruitless. Indeed, still more dramatically, in this maelstrom of data and facts in which we live and which seem to comprise the very fabric of life, many people wonder whether it still makes sense to ask about meaning. The array of theories which vie to give an answer, and the different ways of viewing and of interpreting the world and human life, serve only to aggravate this radical doubt, which can easily lead to scepticism, indifference or to various forms of nihilism.

In consequence, the human spirit is often invaded by a kind of ambiguous thinking which leads it to an ever deepening introversion, locked within the confines of its own immanence without reference of any kind to the transcendent. A philosophy which no longer asks the question of the meaning of life would be in grave danger of reducing reason to merely accessory functions, with no real passion for the search for truth.

To be consonant with the word of God, philosophy needs first of all to recover its *sapiential dimension* as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life. This first requirement is in

fact most helpful in stimulating philosophy to conform to its proper nature. In doing so, it will be not only the decisive critical factor which determines the foundations and limits of the different fields of scientific learning, but will also take its place as the ultimate framework of the unity of human knowledge and action, leading them to converge towards a final goal and meaning. This sapiential dimension is all the more necessary today, because the immense expansion of humanity's technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. If this technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become potential destroyer of the human race.(98)

The word of God reveals the final destiny of men and women and provides a unifying explanation of all that they do in the world. This is why it invites philosophy to engage in the search for the natural foundation of this meaning, which corresponds to the religious impulse innate in every person. A philosophy denying the possibility of an ultimate and overarching meaning would be not only ill-adapted to its task, but false.

82. Yet this sapiential function could not be performed by a philosophy which was not itself a true and authentic knowledge, addressed, that is, not only to particular and subordinate aspects of reality—functional, formal or utilitarian—but to its total and definitive truth, to the very being of the object which is known. This prompts a second requirement: that philosophy verify the human capacity to know the truth, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of that *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to which the Scholastic Doctors referred.(99) This requirement, proper to faith, was explicitly reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council: "Intelligence is not confined to observable data alone. It can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable, though in consequence of sin that certitude is partially obscured and weakened". (100)

A radically phenomenalist or relativist philosophy would be ill-adapted to help in the deeper exploration of the riches found in the word of God. Sacred Scripture always assumes that the individual, even if guilty of duplicity and mendacity, can know and grasp the clear and simple truth. The Bible, and the New Testament in particular, contains texts and statements which have a genuinely ontological content. The inspired authors intended to formulate true statements, capable, that is, of expressing objective reality. It cannot be said that the Catholic tradition erred when it took certain texts of Saint John and Saint Paul to be statements about the very being of Christ. In seeking to understand and explain these statements, theology needs therefore the contribution of a philosophy which does not disavow the possibility of a knowledge which is objectively true, even if not perfect. This applies equally to the judgements of moral conscience, which Sacred Scripture considers capable of being objectively true. (101)

83. The two requirements already stipulated imply a third: the need for a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth. This requirement is implicit in sapiential and analytical knowledge alike; and in particular it is a requirement for knowing the moral good, which has its ultimate foundation in the Supreme Good, God himself. Here I do not mean to speak of metaphysics in the sense of a specific school or a particular historical current of thought. I want only to state that reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical, and to vindicate the human being's capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical. In this sense, metaphysics should not be seen as

an alternative to anthropology, since it is metaphysics which makes it possible to ground the concept of personal dignity in virtue of their spiritual nature. In a special way, the person constitutes a privileged locus for the encounter with being, and hence with metaphysical enquiry. Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the metaphysical dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself, in God. We face a great challenge at the end of this millennium to move from *phenomenon* to *foundation*, a step as necessary as it is urgent. We cannot stop short at experience alone; even if experience does reveal the human being's interiority and spirituality, speculative thinking must penetrate to the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises. Therefore, a philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation.

The word of God refers constantly to things which transcend human experience and even human thought; but this "mystery" could not be revealed, nor could theology render it in some way intelligible, (102) were human knowledge limited strictly to the world of sense experience. Metaphysics thus plays an essential role of mediation in theological research. A theology without a metaphysical horizon could not move beyond an analysis of religious experience, nor would it allow the *intellectus fidei* to give a coherent account of the universal and transcendent value of revealed truth.

If I insist so strongly on the metaphysical element, it is because I am convinced that it is the path to be taken in order to move beyond the crisis pervading large sectors of philosophy at the moment, and thus to correct certain mistaken modes of behaviour now widespread in our society.

84. The importance of metaphysics becomes still more evident if we consider current developments in hermeneutics and the analysis of language. The results of such studies can be very helpful for the understanding of faith, since they bring to light the structure of our thought and speech and the meaning which language bears. However, some scholars working in these fields tend to stop short at the question of how reality is understood and expressed, without going further to see whether reason can discover its essence. How can we fail to see in such a frame of mind the confirmation of our present crisis of confidence in the powers of reason? When, on the basis of preconceived assumptions, these positions tend to obscure the contents of faith or to deny their universal validity, then not only do they abase reason but in so doing they also disqualify themselves. Faith clearly presupposes that human language is capable of expressing divine and transcendent reality in a universal way—analogically, it is true, but no less meaningfully for that. (103) Were this not so, the word of God, which is always a divine word in human language, would not be capable of saying anything about God. The interpretation of this word cannot merely keep referring us to one interpretation after another, without ever leading us to a statement which is simply true; otherwise there would be no Revelation of God, but only the expression of human notions about God and about what God presumably thinks of us.

85. I am well aware that these requirements which the word of God imposes upon philosophy may seem daunting to many people involved in philosophical research today. Yet this is why, taking up what has been taught repeatedly by the Popes for several generations and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council itself, I wish to reaffirm strongly the conviction that the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge. This is one of the tasks which Christian thought

will have to take up through the next millennium of the Christian era. The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to an interior unity. How could the Church not be concerned by this? It is the Gospel which imposes this sapiential task directly upon her Pastors, and they cannot shrink from their duty to undertake it.

I believe that those philosophers who wish to respond today to the demands which the word of God makes on human thinking should develop their thought on the basis of these postulates and in organic continuity with the great tradition which, beginning with the ancients, passes through the Fathers of the Church and the masters of Scholasticism and includes the fundamental achievements of modern and contemporary thought. If philosophers can take their place within this tradition and draw their inspiration from it, they will certainly not fail to respect philosophy's demand for autonomy.

In the present situation, therefore, it is most significant that some philosophers are promoting a recovery of the determining role of this tradition for a right approach to knowledge. The appeal to tradition is not a mere remembrance of the past; it involves rather the recognition of a cultural heritage which belongs to all of humanity. Indeed it may be said that it is we who belong to the tradition and that it is not ours to dispose of at will. Precisely by being rooted in the tradition will we be able today to develop for the future an original, new and constructive mode of thinking. This same appeal is all the more valid for theology. Not only because theology has the living Tradition of the Church as its original source, (104) but also because, in virtue of this, it must be able to recover both the profound theological tradition of earlier times and the enduring tradition of that philosophy which by dint of its authentic wisdom can transcend the boundaries of space and time. 86. This insistence on the need for a close relationship of continuity between contemporary philosophy and the philosophy developed in the Christian tradition is intended to avert the danger which lies hidden in some currents of thought which are especially prevalent today. It is appropriate, I think, to review them, however briefly, in order to point out their errors and the consequent risks for philosophical work.

The first goes by the name of *eclecticism*, by which is meant the approach of those who, in research, teaching and argumentation, even in theology, tend to use individual ideas drawn from different philosophies, without concern for their internal coherence, their place within a system or their historical context. They therefore run the risk of being unable to distinguish the part of truth of a given doctrine from elements of it which may be erroneous or ill-suited to the task at hand. An extreme form of eclecticism appears also in the rhetorical misuse of philosophical terms to which some theologians are given at times. Such manipulation does not help the search for truth and does not train reason—whether theological or philosophical—to formulate arguments seriously and scientifically. The rigorous and far-reaching study of philosophical doctrines, their particular terminology and the context in which they arose, helps to overcome the danger of eclecticism and makes it possible to integrate them into theological discourse in a way appropriate to the task.

87. Eclecticism is an error of method, but lying hidden within it can also be the claims of *historicism*. To understand a doctrine from the past correctly, it is necessary to set it within its proper historical and cultural context. The fundamental claim of historicism, however, is that the

truth of a philosophy is determined on the basis of its appropriateness to a certain period and a certain historical purpose. At least implicitly, therefore, the enduring validity of truth is denied. What was true in one period, historicists claim, may not be true in another. Thus for them the history of thought becomes little more than an archeological resource useful for illustrating positions once held, but for the most part outmoded and meaningless now. On the contrary, it should not be forgotten that, even if a formulation is bound in some way by time and culture, the truth or the error which it expresses can invariably be identified and evaluated as such despite the distance of space and time.

In theological enquiry, historicism tends to appear for the most part under the guise of "modernism". Rightly concerned to make theological discourse relevant and understandable to our time, some theologians use only the most recent opinions and philosophical language, ignoring the critical evaluation which ought to be made of them in the light of the tradition. By exchanging relevance for truth, this form of modernism shows itself incapable of satisfying the demands of truth to which theology is called to respond.

88. Another threat to be reckoned with is *scientism*. This is the philosophical notion which refuses to admit the validity of forms of knowledge other than those of the positive sciences; and it relegates religious, theological, ethical and aesthetic knowledge to the realm of mere fantasy. In the past, the same idea emerged in positivism and neo-positivism, which considered metaphysical statements to be meaningless. Critical epistemology has discredited such a claim, but now we see it revived in the new guise of scientism, which dismisses values as mere products of the emotions and rejects the notion of being in order to clear the way for pure and simple facticity. Science would thus be poised to dominate all aspects of human life through technological progress. The undeniable triumphs of scientific research and contemporary technology have helped to propagate a scientific outlook, which now seems boundless, given its inroads into different cultures and the radical changes it has brought.

Regrettably, it must be noted, scientism consigns all that has to do with the question of the meaning of life to the realm of the irrational or imaginary. No less disappointing is the way in which it approaches the other great problems of philosophy which, if they are not ignored, are subjected to analyses based on superficial analogies, lacking all rational foundation. This leads to the impoverishment of human thought, which no longer addresses the ultimate problems which the human being, as the *animal rationale*, has pondered constantly from the beginning of time. And since it leaves no space for the critique offered by ethical judgement, the scientific mentality has succeeded in leading many to think that if something is technically possible it is therefore morally admissible.

89. No less dangerous is *pragmatism*, an attitude of mind which, in making its choices, precludes theoretical considerations or judgements based on ethical principles. The practical consequences of this mode of thinking are significant. In particular there is growing support for a concept of democracy which is not grounded upon any reference to unchanging values: whether or not a line of action is admissible is decided by the vote of a parliamentary majority. (105) The consequences of this are clear: in practice, the great moral decisions of humanity are subordinated to decisions taken one after another by institutional agencies. Moreover, anthropology itself is severely compromised by a one-dimensional vision of the human being, a vision which excludes the great

ethical dilemmas and the existential analyses of the meaning of suffering and sacrifice, of life and death.

90. The positions we have examined lead in turn to a more general conception which appears today as the common framework of many philosophies which have rejected the meaningfulness of being. I am referring to the nihilist interpretation, which is at once the denial of all foundations and the negation of all objective truth. Quite apart from the fact that it conflicts with the demands and the content of the word of God, nihilism is a denial of the humanity and of the very identity of the human being. It should never be forgotten that the neglect of being inevitably leads to losing touch with objective truth and therefore with the very ground of human dignity. This in turn makes it possible to erase from the countenance of man and woman the marks of their likeness to God, and thus to lead them little by little either to a destructive will to power or to a solitude without hope. Once the truth is denied to human beings, it is pure illusion to try to set them free. Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery. (106)

91. In discussing these currents of thought, it has not been my intention to present a complete picture of the present state of philosophy, which would, in any case, be difficult to reduce to a unified vision. And I certainly wish to stress that our heritage of knowledge and wisdom has indeed been enriched in different fields. We need only cite logic, the philosophy of language, epistemology, the philosophy of nature, anthropology, the more penetrating analysis of the affective dimensions of knowledge and the existential approach to the analysis of freedom. Since the last century, however, the affirmation of the principle of immanence, central to the rationalist argument, has provoked a radical questioning of claims once thought indisputable. In response, currents of irrationalism arose, even as the baselessness of the demand that reason be absolutely self-grounded was being critically demonstrated.

Our age has been termed by some thinkers the age of "postmodernity". Often used in very different contexts, the term designates the emergence of a complex of new factors which, widespread and powerful as they are, have shown themselves able to produce important and lasting changes. The term was first used with reference to aesthetic, social and technological phenomena. It was then transposed into the philosophical field, but has remained somewhat ambiguous, both because judgement on what is called "postmodern" is sometimes positive and sometimes negative, and because there is as yet no consensus on the delicate question of the demarcation of the different historical periods. One thing however is certain: the currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention. According to some of them, the time of certainties is irrevocably past, and the human being must now learn to live in a horizon of total absence of meaning, where everything is provisional and ephemeral. In their destructive critique of every certitude, several authors have failed to make crucial distinctions and have called into question the certitudes of faith.

This nihilism has been justified in a sense by the terrible experience of evil which has marked our age. Such a dramatic experience has ensured the collapse of rationalist optimism, which viewed history as the triumphant progress of reason, the source of all happiness and freedom; and now, at the end of this century, one of our greatest threats is the temptation to despair.

Even so, it remains true that a certain positivist cast of mind continues to nurture the illusion that, thanks to scientific and technical progress, man and woman may live as a demiurge, single-handedly and completely taking charge of their destiny.

Current Tasks for Theology

92. As an understanding of Revelation, theology has always had to respond in different historical moments to the demands of different cultures, in order then to mediate the content of faith to those cultures in a coherent and conceptually clear way. Today, too, theology faces a dual task. On the one hand, it must be increasingly committed to the task entrusted to it by the Second Vatican Council, the task of renewing its specific methods in order to serve evangelization more effectively. How can we fail to recall in this regard the words of Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Council? He said then: "In line with the keen expectation of those who sincerely love the Christian, Catholic and apostolic religion, this doctrine must be known more widely and deeply, and souls must be instructed and formed in it more completely; and this certain and unchangeable doctrine, always to be faithfully respected, must be understood more profoundly and presented in a way which meets the needs of our time". (107)

On the other hand, theology must look to the ultimate truth which Revelation entrusts to it, never content to stop short of that goal. Theologians should remember that their work corresponds "to a dynamism found in the faith itself" and that the proper object of their enquiry is "the Truth which is the living God and his plan for salvation revealed in Jesus Christ". (108) This task, which is theology's prime concern, challenges philosophy as well. The array of problems which today need to be tackled demands a joint effort—approached, it is true, with different methods—so that the truth may once again be known and expressed. The Truth, which is Christ, imposes itself as an all-embracing authority which holds out to theology and philosophy alike the prospect of support, stimulation and increase (cf. *Eph* 4:15).

To believe it possible to know a universally valid truth is in no way to encourage intolerance; on the contrary, it is the essential condition for sincere and authentic dialogue between persons. On this basis alone is it possible to overcome divisions and to journey together towards full truth, walking those paths known only to the Spirit of the Risen Lord. (109) I wish at this point to indicate the specific form which the call to unity now takes, given the current tasks of theology.

93. The chief purpose of theology is to *provide an understanding of Revelation and the content of faith*. The very heart of theological enquiry will thus be the contemplation of the mystery of the Triune God. The approach to this mystery begins with reflection upon the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God: his coming as man, his going to his Passion and Death, a mystery issuing into his glorious Resurrection and Ascension to the right hand of the Father, whence he would send the Spirit of truth to bring his Church to birth and give her growth. From this vantage-point, the prime commitment of theology is seen to be the understanding of God's *kenosis*, a grand and mysterious truth for the human mind, which finds it inconceivable that suffering and death can express a love which gives itself and seeks nothing in return. In this light, a careful analysis of texts emerges as a basic and urgent need: first the texts of Scripture, and then those which express the Church's living Tradition. On this score, some problems have emerged in recent times,

problems which are only partially new; and a coherent solution to them will not be found without philosophy's contribution.

94. An initial problem is that of the relationship between meaning and truth. Like every other text, the sources which the theologian interprets primarily transmit a meaning which needs to be grasped and explained. This meaning presents itself as the truth about God which God himself communicates through the sacred text. Human language thus embodies the language of God, who communicates his own truth with that wonderful "condescension" which mirrors the logic of the Incarnation. (110) In interpreting the sources of Revelation, then, the theologian needs to ask what is the deep and authentic truth which the texts wish to communicate, even within the limits of language.

The truth of the biblical texts, and of the Gospels in particular, is certainly not restricted to the narration of simple historical events or the statement of neutral facts, as historicist positivism would claim. (111) Beyond simple historical occurrence, the truth of the events which these texts relate lies rather in the meaning they have *in* and *for* the history of salvation. This truth is elaborated fully in the Church's constant reading of these texts over the centuries, a reading which preserves intact their original meaning. There is a pressing need, therefore, that the relationship between fact and meaning, a relationship which constitutes the specific sense of history, be examined also from the philosophical point of view.

95. The word of God is not addressed to any one people or to any one period of history. Similarly, dogmatic statements, while reflecting at times the culture of the period in which they were defined, formulate an unchanging and ultimate truth. This prompts the question of how one can reconcile the absoluteness and the universality of truth with the unavoidable historical and cultural conditioning of the formulas which express that truth. The claims of historicism, I noted earlier, are untenable; but the use of a hermeneutic open to the appeal of metaphysics can show how it is possible to move from the historical and contingent circumstances in which the texts developed to the truth which they express, a truth transcending those circumstances.

Human language may be conditioned by history and constricted in other ways, but the human being can still express truths which surpass the phenomenon of language. Truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history.

96. To see this is to glimpse the solution of another problem: the problem of the enduring validity of the conceptual language used in Conciliar definitions. This is a question which my revered predecessor Pius XII addressed in his Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*. (112)

This is a complex theme to ponder, since one must reckon seriously with the meaning which words assume in different times and cultures. Nonetheless, the history of thought shows that across the range of cultures and their development certain basic concepts retain their universal epistemological value and thus retain the truth of the propositions in which they are expressed. (113) Were this not the case, philosophy and the sciences could not communicate with each other, nor could they find a place in cultures different from those in which they were conceived and developed. The hermeneutical problem exists, to be sure; but it is not insoluble. Moreover, the objective value of many concepts does not exclude that their meaning is often imperfect. This is

where philosophical speculation can be very helpful. We may hope, then, that philosophy will be especially concerned to deepen the understanding of the relationship between conceptual language and truth, and to propose ways which will lead to a right understanding of that relationship.

97. The interpretation of sources is a vital task for theology; but another still more delicate and demanding task is the *understanding of revealed truth*, or the articulation of the *intellectus fidei*. The *intellectus fidei*, as I have noted, demands the contribution of a philosophy of being which first of all would enable *dogmatic theology* to perform its functions appropriately. The dogmatic pragmatism of the early years of this century, which viewed the truths of faith as nothing more than rules of conduct, has already been refuted and rejected; (114) but the temptation always remains of understanding these truths in purely functional terms. This leads only to an approach which is inadequate, reductive and superficial at the level of speculation. A Christology, for example, which proceeded solely "from below", as is said nowadays, or an ecclesiology developed solely on the model of civil society, would be hard pressed to avoid the danger of such reductionism.

If the *intellectus fidei* wishes to integrate all the wealth of the theological tradition, it must turn to the philosophy of being, which should be able to propose anew the problem of being—and this in harmony with the demands and insights of the entire philosophical tradition, including philosophy of more recent times, without lapsing into sterile repetition of antiquated formulas. Set within the Christian metaphysical tradition, the philosophy of being is a dynamic philosophy which views reality in its ontological, causal and communicative structures. It is strong and enduring because it is based upon the very act of being itself, which allows a full and comprehensive openness to reality as a whole, surpassing every limit in order to reach the One who brings all things to fulfilment. (115) In theology, which draws its principles from Revelation as a new source of knowledge, this perspective is confirmed by the intimate relationship which exists between faith and metaphysical reasoning.

98. These considerations apply equally to *moral theology*. It is no less urgent that philosophy be recovered at the point where the understanding of faith is linked to the moral life of believers. Faced with contemporary challenges in the social, economic, political and scientific fields, the ethical conscience of people is disoriented. In the Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, I wrote that many of the problems of the contemporary world stem from a crisis of truth. I noted that "once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. Conscience is no longer considered in its prime reality as an act of a person's intelligence, the function of which is to apply the universal knowledge of the good in a specific situation and thus to express a judgment about the right conduct to be chosen here and now. Instead, there is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an individualist ethic, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth different from the truth of others". (116)

Throughout the Encyclical I underscored clearly the fundamental role of truth in the moral field. In the case of the more pressing ethical problems, this truth demands of moral theology a careful enquiry rooted unambiguously in the word of God. In order to fulfil its mission, moral theology must turn to a philosophical ethics which looks to the truth of the good, to an ethics which is neither

subjectivist nor utilitarian. Such an ethics implies and presupposes a philosophical anthropology and a metaphysics of the good. Drawing on this organic vision, linked necessarily to Christian holiness and to the practice of the human and supernatural virtues, moral theology will be able to tackle the various problems in its competence, such as peace, social justice, the family, the defence of life and the natural environment, in a more appropriate and effective way.

99. Theological work in the Church is first of all at the service of the proclamation of the faith and of catechesis. (117) Proclamation or kerygma is a call to conversion, announcing the truth of Christ, which reaches its summit in his Paschal Mystery: for only in Christ is it possible to know the fullness of the truth which saves (cf. *Acts* 4:12; *1 Tm* 2:4-6).

In this respect, it is easy to see why, in addition to theology, reference to *catechesis* is also important, since catechesis has philosophical implications which must be explored more deeply in the light of faith. The teaching imparted in catechesis helps to form the person. As a mode of linguistic communication, catechesis must present the Church's doctrine in its integrity, (118) demonstrating its link with the life of the faithful. (119) The result is a unique bond between teaching and living which is otherwise unattainable, since what is communicated in catechesis is not a body of conceptual truths, but the mystery of the living God. (120)

Philosophical enquiry can help greatly to clarify the relationship between truth and life, between event and doctrinal truth, and above all between transcendent truth and humanly comprehensible language. (121) This involves a reciprocity between the theological disciplines and the insights drawn from the various strands of philosophy; and such a reciprocity can prove genuinely fruitful for the communication and deeper understanding of the faith.

Conclusion

100. More than a hundred years after the appearance of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Æterni Patris*, to which I have often referred in these pages, I have sensed the need to revisit in a more systematic way the issue of the relationship between faith and philosophy. The importance of philosophical thought in the development of culture and its influence on patterns of personal and social behaviour is there for all to see. In addition, philosophy exercises a powerful, though not always obvious, influence on theology and its disciplines. For these reasons, I have judged it appropriate and necessary to emphasize the value of philosophy for the understanding of the faith, as well as the limits which philosophy faces when it neglects or rejects the truths of Revelation. The Church remains profoundly convinced that faith and reason "mutually support each other"; (122) each influences the other, as they offer to each other a purifying critique and a stimulus to pursue the search for deeper understanding.

101. A survey of the history of thought, especially in the West, shows clearly that the encounter between philosophy and theology and the exchange of their respective insights have contributed richly to the progress of humanity. Endowed as it is with an openness and originality which allow it to stand as the science of faith, theology has certainly challenged reason to remain open to the radical newness found in God's Revelation; and this has been an undoubted boon for philosophy which has thus glimpsed new vistas of further meanings which reason is summoned to penetrate.

Precisely in the light of this consideration, and just as I have reaffirmed theology's duty to recover its true relationship with philosophy, I feel equally bound to stress how right it is that, for the benefit and development of human thought, philosophy too should recover its relationship with theology. In theology, philosophy will find not the thinking of a single person which, however rich and profound, still entails the limited perspective of an individual, but the wealth of a communal reflection. For by its very nature, theology is sustained in the search for truth by its ecclesial context (123) and by the tradition of the People of God, with its harmony of many different fields of learning and culture within the unity of faith.

102. Insisting on the importance and true range of philosophical thought, the Church promotes both the defence of human dignity and the proclamation of the Gospel message. There is today no more urgent preparation for the performance of these tasks than this: to lead people to discover both their capacity to know the truth (124) and their yearning for the ultimate and definitive meaning of life. In the light of these profound needs, inscribed by God in human nature, the human and humanizing meaning of God's word also emerges more clearly. Through the mediation of a philosophy which is also true wisdom, people today will come to realize that their humanity is all the more affirmed the more they entrust themselves to the Gospel and open themselves to Christ.

103. Philosophy moreover is the mirror which reflects the culture of a people. A philosophy which responds to the challenge of theology's demands and evolves in harmony with faith is part of that "evangelization of culture" which Paul VI proposed as one of the fundamental goals of evangelization. (125) I have unstintingly recalled the pressing need for a new *evangelization*; and I appeal now to philosophers to explore more comprehensively the dimensions of the true, the good and the beautiful to which the word of God gives access. This task becomes all the more urgent if we consider the challenges which the new millennium seems to entail, and which affect in a particular way regions and cultures which have a long-standing Christian tradition. This attention to philosophy too should be seen as a fundamental and original contribution in service of the new evangelization.

104. Philosophical thought is often the only ground for understanding and dialogue with those who do not share our faith. The current ferment in philosophy demands of believing philosophers an attentive and competent commitment, able to discern the expectations, the points of openness and the key issues of this historical moment. Reflecting in the light of reason and in keeping with its rules, and guided always by the deeper understanding given them by the word of God, Christian philosophers can develop a reflection which will be both comprehensible and appealing to those who do not yet grasp the full truth which divine Revelation declares. Such a ground for understanding and dialogue is all the more vital nowadays, since the most pressing issues facing humanity—ecology, peace and the co-existence of different races and cultures, for instance—may possibly find a solution if there is a clear and honest collaboration between Christians and the followers of other religions and all those who, while not sharing a religious belief, have at heart the renewal of humanity. The Second Vatican Council said as much: "For our part, the desire for such dialogue, undertaken solely out of love for the truth and with all due prudence, excludes no one, neither those who cultivate the values of the human spirit while not yet acknowledging their Source, nor those who are hostile to the Church and persecute her in various ways". (126) A philosophy in which there shines even a glimmer of the truth of Christ, the one definitive answer to humanity's problems, (127) will provide a potent underpinning for the true and planetary ethics which the world now needs.

105. In concluding this Encyclical Letter, my thoughts turn particularly to *theologians*, encouraging them to pay special attention to the philosophical implications of the word of God and to be sure to reflect in their work all the speculative and practical breadth of the science of theology. I wish to thank them for their service to the Church. The intimate bond between theological and philosophical wisdom is one of the Christian tradition's most distinctive treasures in the exploration of revealed truth. This is why I urge them to recover and express to the full the metaphysical dimension of truth in order to enter into a demanding critical dialogue with both contemporary philosophical thought and with the philosophical tradition in all its aspects, whether consonant with the word of God or not. Let theologians always remember the words of that great master of thought and spirituality, Saint Bonaventure, who in introducing his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* invites the reader to recognize the inadequacy of "reading without repentance, knowledge without devotion, research without the impulse of wonder, prudence without the ability to surrender to joy, action divorced from religion, learning sundered from love, intelligence without humility, study unsustained by divine grace, thought without the wisdom inspired by God". (128) I am thinking too of those *responsible for priestly formation*, whether academic or pastoral. I encourage them to pay special attention to the philosophical preparation of those who will proclaim the Gospel to the men and women of today and, even more, of those who will devote themselves to theological research and teaching. They must make every effort to carry out their work in the light of the directives laid down by the Second Vatican Council (129) and subsequent legislation, which speak clearly of the urgent and binding obligation, incumbent on all, to contribute to a genuine and profound communication of the truths of the faith. The grave responsibility to provide for the appropriate training of those charged with teaching philosophy both in seminaries and ecclesiastical faculties must not be neglected. (130) Teaching in this field necessarily entails a suitable scholarly preparation, a systematic presentation of the great heritage of the Christian tradition and due discernment in the light of the current needs of the Church and the world.

106. I appeal also to *philosophers*, and to all *teachers of philosophy*, asking them to have the courage to recover, in the flow of an enduringly valid philosophical tradition, the range of authentic wisdom and truth—metaphysical truth included—which is proper to philosophical enquiry. They should be open to the impelling questions which arise from the word of God and they should be strong enough to shape their thought and discussion in response to that challenge. Let them always strive for truth, alert to the good which truth contains. Then they will be able to formulate the genuine ethics which humanity needs so urgently at this particular time. The Church follows the work of philosophers with interest and appreciation; and they should rest assured of her respect for the rightful autonomy of their discipline. I would want especially to encourage believers working in the philosophical field to illumine the range of human activity by the exercise of a reason which grows more penetrating and assured because of the support it receives from faith.

Finally, I cannot fail to address a word to *scientists*, whose research offers an ever greater knowledge of the universe as a whole and of the incredibly rich array of its component parts, animate and inanimate, with their complex atomic and molecular structures. So far has science come, especially in this century, that its achievements never cease to amaze us. In expressing my admiration and in offering encouragement to these brave pioneers of scientific research, to whom humanity owes so much of its current development, I would urge them to continue their efforts without ever abandoning the *sapiential* horizon within which scientific and technological achievements are wedded to the philosophical and ethical values which are the distinctive and

indelible mark of the human person. Scientists are well aware that "the search for truth, even when it concerns a finite reality of the world or of man, is never-ending, but always points beyond to something higher than the immediate object of study, to the questions which give access to Mystery". (131)

107. I ask *everyone* to look more deeply at man, whom Christ has saved in the mystery of his love, and at the human being's unceasing search for truth and meaning. Different philosophical systems have lured people into believing that they are their own absolute master, able to decide their own destiny and future in complete autonomy, trusting only in themselves and their own powers. But this can never be the grandeur of the human being, who can find fulfilment only in choosing to enter the truth, to make a home under the shade of Wisdom and dwell there. Only within this horizon of truth will people understand their freedom in its fullness and their call to know and love God as the supreme realization of their true self.

108. I turn in the end to the woman whom the prayer of the Church invokes as *Seat of Wisdom*, and whose life itself is a true parable illuminating the reflection contained in these pages. For between the vocation of the Blessed Virgin and the vocation of true philosophy there is a deep harmony. Just as the Virgin was called to offer herself entirely as human being and as woman that God's Word might take flesh and come among us, so too philosophy is called to offer its rational and critical resources that theology, as the understanding of faith, may be fruitful and creative. And just as in giving her assent to Gabriel's word, Mary lost nothing of her true humanity and freedom, so too when philosophy heeds the summons of the Gospel's truth its autonomy is in no way impaired. Indeed, it is then that philosophy sees all its enquiries rise to their highest expression. This was a truth which the holy monks of Christian antiquity understood well when they called Mary "the table at which faith sits in thought". (132) In her they saw a lucid image of true philosophy and they were convinced of the need to *philosophari in Maria*.

May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, be a sure haven for all who devote their lives to the search for wisdom. May their journey into wisdom, sure and final goal of all true knowing, be freed of every hindrance by the intercession of the one who, in giving birth to the Truth and treasuring it in her heart, has shared it forever with all the world.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 14 September, the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, in the year 1998, the twentieth of my Pontificate.

Notes

(1) In my first Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, I wrote: "We have become sharers in this mission of the prophet Christ, and in virtue of that mission we together with him are serving divine truth in the Church. Being responsible for that truth also means loving it and seeking the most exact understanding of it, in order to bring it closer to ourselves and others in all its saving power, its splendour and its profundity joined with simplicity": No. 19: AAS 71 (1979), 306.

(2) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

(3) Dogmatic Constitution on the *Church Lumen Gentium*, 25.

(4) No. 4: AAS 85 (1993), 1136.

- (5) Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 2.
- (6) Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, III: DS 3008.
- (7) *Ibid.*, IV: DS 3015; quoted also in Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 59.
- (8) Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 2.
- (9) Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 10: AAS 87 (1995), 11.
- (10) No. 4.
- (11) No. 8.
- (12) No. 22.
- (13) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 4.
- (14) *Ibid.*, 5.
- (15) The First Vatican Council, to which the quotation above refers, teaches that the obedience of faith requires the engagement of the intellect and the will: "Since human beings are totally dependent on God as their creator and Lord, and created reason is completely subject to uncreated truth, we are obliged to yield through faith to God the revealer full submission of intellect and will" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, III: DS 3008).
- (16) *Sequence* for the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of the Lord.
- (17) *Pensées*, 789 (ed. L. Brunschvicg).
- (18) Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.
- (19) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 2.
- (20) Proemium and Nos. 1, 15: PL 158, 223-224; 226; 235.
- (21) *De Vera Religione*, XXXIX, 72: CCL 32, 234.
- (22) "*Ut te semper desiderando quaerent et inveniendo quiescerent*": *Missale Romanum*.
- (23) Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1.
- (24) *Confessions*, X, 23, 33: CCL 27, 173.
- (25) No. 34: AAS 85 (1993), 1161.
- (26) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (11 February 1984), 9: AAS 76 (1984), 209-210.
- (27) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Relations of the Church with Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.
- (28) This is a theme which I have long pursued and which I have addressed on a number of occasions. "'What is man and of what use is he? What is good in him and what is evil?'" (*Sir* 18:8)... These are questions in every human heart, as the poetic genius of every time and every people has shown, posing again and again—almost as the prophetic voice of humanity—the serious question which makes human beings truly what they are. They are questions which express the urgency of finding a reason for existence, in every moment, at life's most important and decisive times as well as more ordinary times. These questions show the deep reasonableness of human existence, since they summon human intelligence and will to search freely for a solution which can reveal the full meaning of life. These enquiries, therefore, are the highest expression of human nature; which is why the answer to them is the gauge of the depth of his engagement with his own existence. In particular, when *the why of things* is explored in full harmony with the search for the ultimate answer, then human reason reaches its zenith and opens to the religious impulse. The religious

impulse is the highest expression of the human person, because it is the highpoint of his rational nature. It springs from the profound human aspiration for the truth and it is the basis of the human being's free and personal search for the divine": General Audience (19 October 1983), 1-2: *Insegnamenti* VI, 2 (1983), 814-815.

(29) "[Galileo] declared explicitly that the two truths, of faith and of science, can never contradict each other, 'Sacred Scripture and the natural world proceeding equally from the divine Word, the first as dictated by the Holy Spirit, the second as a very faithful executor of the commands of God', as he wrote in his letter to Father Benedetto Castelli on 21 December 1613.

The Second Vatican Council says the same thing, even adopting similar language in its teaching: 'Methodical research, in all realms of knowledge, if it respects... moral norms, will never be genuinely opposed to faith: the reality of the world and of faith have their origin in the same God' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 36). Galileo sensed in his scientific research the presence of the Creator who, stirring in the depths of his spirit, stimulated him, anticipating and assisting his intuitions": John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (10 November 1979): *Insegnamenti*, II, 2 (1979), 1111-1112.

(30) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 4.

(31) Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3, 55: SC 136, 130.

(32) *Dialogue with Trypho*, 8, 1: PG 6, 492.

(33) *Stromata* I, 18, 90, 1: SC 30, 115.

(34) Cf. *ibid.*, I, 16, 80, 5: SC 30, 108.

(35) Cf. *ibid.*, I, 5, 28, 1: SC 30, 65.

(36) *Ibid.*, VI, 7, 55, 1-2: PG 9, 277.

(37) *Ibid.*, I, 20, 100, 1: SC 30, 124.

(38) Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, VI, 5, 7: CCL 27, 77-78.

(39) Cf. *ibid.*, VII, 9, 13-14: CCL 27, 101-102.

(40) *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, VII, 9: SC 46, 98: "*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? Quid academiae et ecclesiae?*".

(41) Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction on the Study of the Fathers of the Church in Priestly Formation (10 November 1989), 25: AAS 82 (1990), 617-618.

(42) Saint Anselm, *Proslogion*, 1: PL 158, 226.

(43) Idem, *Monologion*, 64: PL 158, 210.

(44) Cf. *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 7.

(45) Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, 1, 8 ad 2: "*cum enim gratia non tollat naturam sed perficiat*".

(46) Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Participants at the IX International Thomistic Congress (29 September 1990): *Insegnamenti*, XIII, 2 (1990), 770-771.

(47) Apostolic Letter *Lumen Ecclesiae* (20 November 1974), 8: AAS 66 (1974), 680.

(48) Cf. I, 1, 6: "*Praeterea, haec doctrina per studium acquiritur. Sapientia autem per infusionem habetur, unde inter septem dona Spiritus Sancti connumeratur*".

(49) *Ibid.*, II-II, 45, 1 ad 2; cf. also II-II, 45, 2.

(50) *Ibid.*, I-II, 109, 1 ad 1, which echoes the well known phrase of the *Ambrosiaster*, *In Prima Cor* 12:3: PL 17, 258.

(51) Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Aeterni Patris* (4 August 1879): ASS 11 (1878-79), 109.

(52) Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Lumen Ecclesiae* (20 November 1974), 8: AAS 66 (1974), 683.

(53) Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 286.

(54) Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 566.

- (55) Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ *Pastor Aeternus*: DS 3070; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 25 c.
- (56) Cf. Synod of Constantinople, DS 403.
- (57) Cf. Council of Toledo I, DS 205; Council of Braga I, DS 459-460; Sixtus V, Bull *Coeli et Terrae Creator* (5 January 1586): *Bullarium Romanum* 4/4, Rome 1747, 176-179; Urban VIII, *Inscrutabilis Iudiciorum* (1 April 1631): *Bullarium Romanum* 6/1, Rome 1758, 268-270.
- (58) Cf. Ecumenical Council of Vienne, Decree *Fidei Catholicae*, DS 902; Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council, Bull *Apostoli Regiminis*, DS 1440.
- (59) Cf. *Theses a Ludovico Eugenio Bautain iussu sui Episcopi subscriptae* (8 September 1840), DS 2751-2756; *Theses a Ludovico Eugenio Bautain ex mandato S. Cong. Episcoporum et Religiosorum subscriptae* (26 April 1844), DS 2765-2769.
- (60) Cf. Sacred Congregation of the Index, Decree *Theses contra Traditionalismum Augustini Bonnetty* (11 June 1855), DS 2811-2814.
- (61) Cf. Pius IX, Brief *Eximiam Tuam* (15 June 1857), DS 2828-2831; Brief *Gravissimas Inter* (11 December 1862), DS 2850-2861.
- (62) Cf. Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, Decree *Errores Ontologistarum* (18 September 1861), DS 2841-2847.
- (63) Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, II: DS 3004; and Canon 2, 1: DS 3026.
- (64) *Ibid.*, IV: DS 3015, cited in Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 59.
- (65) First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, IV: DS 3017.
- (66) Cf. Encyclical Letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (8 September 1907): ASS 40 (1907), 596-597.
- (67) Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris* (19 March 1937): AAS 29 (1937), 65-106.
- (68) Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 562-563.
- (69) *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*, 563-564.
- (70) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988), Arts. 48-49: AAS 80 (1988), 873; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (24 May 1990), 18: AAS 82 (1990), 1558.
- (71) Cf. Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" *Libertatis Nuntius* (6 August 1984), VII-X: AAS 76 (1984), 890-903.
- (72) In language as clear as it is authoritative, the First Vatican Council condemned this error, affirming on the one hand that "as regards this faith..., the Catholic Church professes that it is a supernatural virtue by means of which, under divine inspiration and with the help of grace, we believe to be true the things revealed by God, not because of the intrinsic truth of the things perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself, who reveals them and who can neither deceive nor be deceived": Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, III: DS 3008, and Canon 3, 2: DS 3032. On the other hand, the Council declared that reason is never "able to penetrate [these mysteries] as it does the truths which are its proper object": *ibid.*, IV: DS 3016. It then drew a practical conclusion: "The Christian faithful not only have no right to defend as legitimate scientific conclusions opinions which are contrary to the doctrine of the faith, particularly if condemned by the Church, but they are strictly obliged to regard them as errors which have no more than a fraudulent semblance of truth": *ibid.*, IV: DS 3018.

- (73) Cf. Nos. 9-10.
- (74) *Ibid.*, 10.
- (75) *Ibid.*, 21.
- (76) Cf. *ibid.*, 10.
- (77) Cf. Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 565-567; 571-573.
- (78) Cf. Encyclical Letter *Æterni Patris* (4 August 1879): ASS 11 (1878-1879), 97-115.
- (79) *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*, 109.
- (80) Cf. Nos. 14-15.
- (81) Cf. *ibid.*, 20-21.
- (82) *Ibid.*, 22; cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 8: AAS 71 (1979), 271-272.
- (83) Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 15.
- (84) Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (15 April 1979), Arts. 79-80: AAS 71 (1979), 495-496; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 52: AAS 84 (1992), 750-751. Cf. also various remarks on the philosophy of Saint Thomas: Address to the International Pontifical Athenaeum "Angelicum" (17 November 1979): *Insegnamenti* II, 2 (1979), 1177-1189; Address to the Participants of the Eighth International Thomistic Congress (13 September 1980): *Insegnamenti* III, 2 (1980), 604-615; Address to the Participants at the International Congress of the Saint Thomas Society on the Doctrine of the Soul in Saint Thomas (4 January 1986): *Insegnamenti* IX, 1 (1986), 18-24. Also the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (6 January 1970), 70-75: AAS 62 (1970), 366-368; Decree *Sacra Theologia* (20 January 1972): AAS 64 (1972), 583-586.
- (85) Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 57; 62.
- (86) Cf. *ibid.*, 44.
- (87) Cf. Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council, Bull *Apostolici Regimini Sollicitudo*, Session VIII: *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, 1991, 605-606.
- (88) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10.
- (89) Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 5, 3 ad 2.
- (90) "The search for the conditions in which man on his own initiative asks the first basic questions about the meaning of life, the purpose he wishes to give it and what awaits him after death constitutes the necessary preamble to fundamental theology, so that today too, faith can fully show the way to reason in a sincere search for the truth": John Paul II, *Letter to Participants in the International Congress of Fundamental Theology on the 125th Anniversary of "Dei Filius"* (30 September 1995), 4: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 October 1995, 8.
- (91) *Ibid.*
- (92) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 15; Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, 22.
- (93) Saint Thomas Aquinas, *De Caelo*, 1, 22.
- (94) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 53-59.
- (95) Saint Augustine, *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, 2, 5: PL 44, 963.
- (96) Idem, *De Fide, Spe et Caritate*, 7: CCL 64, 61.
- (97) Cf. Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, *Symbolum, Definitio*: DS 302.
- (98) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 286-289.

- (99) Cf., for example, Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 16, 1; Saint Bonaventure, *Coll. In Hex.*, 3, 8, 1.
- (100) Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 15.
- (101) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor* (6 August 1993), 57-61: AAS 85 (1993), 1179-1182.
- (102) Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, IV: DS 3016.
- (103) Cf. Fourth Lateran Ecumenical Council, *De Errone Abbatis Ioachim*, II: DS 806.
- (104) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 24; Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 16.
- (105) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995), 69: AAS 87 (1995), 481.
- (106) In the same sense I commented in my first Encyclical Letter on the expression in the Gospel of Saint John, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (8:32): "These words contain both a fundamental requirement and a warning: the requirement of an honest relationship with regard to truth as a condition for authentic freedom, and the warning to avoid every kind of illusory freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about man and the world. Today also, even after two thousand years, we see Christ as the one who brings man freedom based on truth, frees man from what curtails, diminishes and as it were breaks off this freedom at its root, in man's soul, his heart and his conscience": Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 12: AAS 71 (1979), 280-281.
- (107) Address at the Opening of the Council (11 October 1962): AAS 54 (1962), 792.
- (108) Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (24 May 1990), 7-8: AAS 82 (1990), 1552-1553.
- (109) In the Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*, commenting on Jn 16:12-13, I wrote: "Jesus presents the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, as the one who 'will teach' and 'bring to remembrance', as the one who 'will bear witness' to him. Now he says: 'he will guide you into all the truth'. This 'guiding into all the truth', referring to what the Apostles 'cannot bear now', is necessarily connected with Christ's self-emptying through his Passion and Death on the Cross, which, when he spoke these words, was just about to happen. Later however it becomes clear that this 'guiding into all the truth' is connected not only with the *scandalum Crucis*, but also with everything that Christ 'did and taught' (*Acts* 1:1). For the *mysterium Christi* taken as a whole demands faith, since it is faith that adequately introduces man into the reality of the revealed mystery. The 'guiding into all the truth' is therefore achieved in faith and through faith: and this is the work of the Spirit of truth and the result of his action in man. Here the Holy Spirit is to be man's supreme guide and the light of the human spirit": No. 6: AAS 78 (1986), 815-816.
- (110) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 13.
- (111) Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels (21 April 1964): AAS 56 (1964), 713.
- (112) "It is clear that the Church cannot be tied to any and every passing philosophical system. Nevertheless, those notions and terms which have been developed through common effort by Catholic teachers over the course of the centuries to bring about some understanding of dogma are certainly not based on any such weak foundation. They are based on principles and notions deduced from a true knowledge of created things. In the process of deduction, this knowledge, like a star, gave enlightenment to the human mind through the Church. Hence it is not astonishing that

- some of these notions have not only been employed by the Ecumenical Councils, but even sanctioned by them, so that it is wrong to depart from them": Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 566-567; cf. International Theological Commission, Document *Interpretationis Problema* (October 1989): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 11, 2717-2811.
- (113) "As for the meaning of dogmatic formulas, this remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is expressed with greater clarity or more developed. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify the truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it": Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration in Defence of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (24 June 1973), 5: AAS 65 (1973), 403.
- (114) Cf. Congregation of the Holy Office, *Decree Lamentabili* (3 July 1907), 26: ASS 40 (1907), 473.
- (115) Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Athenaeum "Angelicum" (17 November 1979), 6: *Insegnamenti*, II, 2 (1979), 1183-1185.
- (116) No. 32: AAS 85 (1993), 1159-1160.
- (117) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (16 October 1979), 30: AAS 71 (1979), 1302-1303; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (24 May 1990), 7: AAS 82 (1990), 1552-1553.
- (118) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (16 October 1979), 30: AAS 71 (1979), 1302-1303.
- (119) Cf. *ibid.*, 22, *loc. cit.*, 1295-1296.
- (120) Cf. *ibid.*, 7, *loc. cit.*, 1282.
- (121) Cf. *ibid.*, 59, *loc. cit.*, 1325.
- (122) First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, IV: DS 3019.
- (123) "Nobody can make of theology as it were a simple collection of his own personal ideas, but everybody must be aware of being in close union with the mission of teaching truth for which the Church is responsible": John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 19: AAS 71 (1979), 308.
- (124) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1-3.
- (125) Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 20: AAS 68 (1976), 18-19.
- (126) Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 92.
- (127) Cf. *ibid.*, 10.
- (128) Prologus, 4: *Opera Omnia*, Florence, 1891, vol. V, 296.
- (129) Cf. Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 15.
- (130) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (15 April 1979), Arts. 67-68: AAS 71 (1979), 491-492.
- (131) John Paul II, Address to the University of Krakow for the 600th Anniversary of the Jagiellonian University (8 June 1997), 4: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 9-10 June 1997, 12.
- (132) "*He noera tes pist(o-)s trapeza*": Pseudo-Epiphanius, *Homily in Praise of Holy Mary Mother of God*: PG 43, 493.