

Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change
Series IIIB, South Asia, Volume 13
General Editor
George F. McLean

Faith and Reason Today
Fides et Ratio
in a Post-modern Era

Indian Philosophical Studies, XIII

Edited by
Varghese Manimala

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Cardinal Station
Washington, D.C. 20064

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication

Faith and reason today : *Fides et Ratio* in a post-modern era / edited by
Varghese Manimala.

p. cm. – (Cultural heritage and contemporary change. Series IIIB,
South Asia ; v. 13) (Indian philosophical studies ; 13)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Faith and reason--Christianity. 2. Catholic Church. Pope (1978-2005 : John
Paul II) *Fides et ratio*. 3. Knowledge, Theory of (Religion) 4. Religion and
science. I. Manimala, Varghese, J., 1946- II. Title. III. Series.

BT50.F347 2008

2008021996

231'.042--dc22

CIP

ISBN 978-1-56518-255-4 (pbk.: alk. paper)

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PREFACE

During the time of Soviet Marxist hegemony over Central and Eastern Europe, Karol Wojtyła, then Cardinal of Krakow, Poland, wrote that the only answer to communism was a better philosophical anthropology. Some years later in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* he applied the same thinking to the philosophy of the West.

What he perceived there was less the strong rationalism of modern times, but its weakness in postmodern terms. It is rather paradoxical then that far from objecting to an overbearing rationalism dismissive of faith, he calls in the name of faith for a restoration of reason. Both are needed in order that, as on two wings, the human heart and mind be able to soar. This work is a response by Indian Catholic philosophers to this Encyclical, and it is extraordinary indeed.

To understand why it must be noted that these authors go beyond the letter of the encyclical to cast it in the concrete terms of the philosophy of the late Richard Rorty and his post modern rejection of any objective causal foundation for truth. A more superficial reader noting the Encyclical's frequent references to Thomas Aquinas might suppose that this implied a return to premodern objectivist understanding of human knowledge. But John Paul II was much more of a bridge figure, combing wise fidelity to the traditional wisdom of the past with a discerning engagement with the contemporary phenomenological explorations of human subjectivity.

What is truly exciting about this volume is that its authors themselves perform a similarly sophisticated maneuver. Thus after analyzing the structure of the document in Part I, they proceed to compare and contrast closely its position with that of Prof. Rorty in part II. This enables them to show that the document proposes neither simply the epistemological objectivity of Thomas nor the merely pragmatic anti-foundationalism of Rorty. Rather, it carefully introduces the role of human understanding in its hermeneutic realization. As a result the sense of reason is seen to be engaged in the history of human interchange with its long cultural and civilizational traditions. Knowledge is truly a human work of reason undergirded by faith. Part II is then not only a report or commentary, but a magnificent development of the encyclical carrying forward its creative contribution to the ongoing search of humanity to live faithfully in our day.

In this light Part III proceeds to consider the special attention given to Hindu thought in this encyclical and its implication for the relation of philosophy to theology. One finds here a new excitement at the recognition that each culture brings to the work of theology special new capabilities to help in the work of unfolding the content of revelation for the many peoples of the world, both separately and together in these global times.

Finally Part IV takes up specifically the relation of religion to science reflecting the contemporary form of that debate in the West regarding Intelligent Design and in the East regarding the special contribution of its mystical traditions.

In sum it must be said that the volume represents the best of the long interaction of philosophy and theology, reason and faith. The authors have been moved by the encyclical to look more deeply into a notable orientation of contemporary philosophy and have found not an impediment but a help. Dislodging reason from its excessively objectivist past and its too skeptical present, they explore a more proper way in which the recognition of human subjectivity can enable a richer understanding of reason and thereby enable it to regain a more proper role and work more closely with faith in our day. This is fidelity, indeed!

George F. McLean

INTRODUCTION

Faith, reason and science are various aspects of the human being's development. One needs to be aware of the intricacies contained in them to have a fair understanding of these realities. While faith belongs to a different level than reason and science, it cannot be opposed to the latter two. These need to complement one another and play a supportive role. Faith, without the support of reason and science, can become blind; while reason and science without the aid of faith can lose its depth. To arrive at truth is the aim of all human beings, but the paths to this truth vary. One has to be a seeker of truth and, at the same time, needs to realize that one cannot possess truth as a commodity. Although truth may not be totally relative, it cannot be thought of in absolute terms, since human beings are not endowed with absolute certainty. They are endowed with a receptivity to truth and the greater this receptivity, the deeper the capacity of the individual to grasp truth. The human being is a questioner, and through questions he tries to find answers to many of the basic problems of life, however inadequate those answers may be. Sometimes the answers may not be forthcoming; but he/she finds happiness in asking questions, and prodded on by these questions to establish some meaning for life.

The greatest capacity of human being is transcendence – to transcend to the beyond, not in the sense of merely that which is beyond this empirical world, but to reach out to other humans, the Absolute and other realities in a spirit of openness. This openness is the basic quality needed to attain truth. When I feel the need of the 'other' to realize myself, then I have the basic openness to truth. The other acts as a mirror to me, and I must be in a position to see myself in the other. When I am able to reach out to the other in a spirit of intersubjectivity, I attain a deeper meaning of truth, for truth is not something which I possess, rather it is striving after the ultimate meanings. To this there is also a communitarian dimension, because all human beings are seekers of truth. The more dialogical the approach to truth becomes, the more reliable and creditable it is. Very often this dialogue can remain only on the level of 'dialectical dialogue' rather than reach the level of 'dialogical dialogue'. Only on this latter level is there a true openness to the other, seeking the other in trust and confidence and making the other a co-partner in the search for truth. In dialectical dialogue we may engage in discussion on matters which may not personally engage us. We can be 'objective' and fail to be 'intersubjective'. Human beings on various levels of existence have to engage in this exercise of dialogue to arrive at truth.

Faith is an exercise of human being in which he/she engages himself/herself with the totality of being. It is a personal commitment and an engagement of the whole person. Faith is orienting one's whole life in response to a belief system. It is a response to a revelation of the Absolute who enters into our life as a person. We can think of certain aspects and

attitudes of the person involved in faith experience: the trust in the Ultimate, acceptance of a set of truths, and being committed to a way of life. Basic faith is this commitment to a way of life; here intellectual abilities do not count much. A genius and a man of feeble intellect can belong to the same faith and way of life. Religion which binds people to an absolute calls for personal affirmation and readiness to die for the values which one holds as most dear. In the past faith was considered absolute and reason was only an aid to this faith; hence the great dictum: *credo ut intelligam* (I believe that I may understand). Reason was considered only as further help to deepen one's faith.

But with the onset of modern philosophy there comes a rift between theology and philosophy, and consequently between faith and reason. These two were considered totally independent sciences; philosophy was no more looked upon as *ancilla theologiae*, the handmaid of theology. It is against this rift and exaltation of reason that the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* reacts. There cannot be a dichotomy between reason and faith; they belong to different realms, but support each other. The danger is when they are looked upon as estranged, whereas they are partners in the search for truth. Since truth is not a monopoly of any religion or person, there can be various approaches to truth. As John Paul II in his encyclical mentions, the right attitude would be *intelligo ut credam* (I understand that I may believe). The Pope wants to combat distrust of reason, without at the same time enthroning reason as a god. Seeing the importance of the search for truth, the encyclical offers a good definition for human being: "*the one who seeks the truth.*" (Art. 28). But the search for truth can be clouded by the concerns of life, or finding the demands of truth too high people may refuse to submit themselves to truth. Still it is undeniable that truth influences everyone's life. That is why Gandhiji said: "Denial of God, we have known, denial of truth we have not known. Truth is God." He identified Truth and God. For him, too, the search for Truth was the basic duty of every human being. It is this basic intuition that made him title his autobiography "My Experiments with Truth." Like Gandhiji we, too, must dare to experiment with truth; for this the basic attitude needed is to become seekers of truth, and to be committed to this search, whatever the cost.

Science also fits into this scheme of thinking. Today to be oblivious of science and its importance in daily life is suicidal. Science has overtaken many a field of human research. While the present-day world owes much to science, there is a growing attitude of scientism on the other hand. And while both pure and applied science have to be taken into account, often the latter overtakes the former, thus leading to a 'dehumanizing' of human existence. Like faith and reason, science, too, is only a tool in the search for truth, though some absolutize it to such an extent as to make it stand in contradistinction to faith and reason. Like philosophy and theology, science also originates in wonder, and the moment this sense of wonder is lost we lose our grasp of truth. Hence faith,

reason and science are to be seen as servants of truth, and mutually complementary.

Taking the above factors into account, the members of the Association of Christian Philosophers of India here reflect on the various aspects of the theme of this book. The launching pad for the reflection and the papers was the encyclical of John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*. The contributors addressed many of the basic themes contained in the encyclical, but at the same time were not constrained thereto. While a few papers make an attempt to study the encyclical and its concerns in some detail, others have attempted to bring together some of the aspects that are implied in the encyclical. Hence, besides the discussion on faith and reason, they also took up short analyses of science from certain perspectives.

Part I studies the structure of *Fides et Ratio* and its concern with the lack of confidence in reason.

Chapter I, by George Panthanmackal, is a brief study of the encyclical regarding its contents. He divides his paper into two parts: A Synopsis and An Assessment. He tries to show how the Pope is concerned about the attainment of truth and the fact that there are certain tendencies at work to dilute truth and its importance. The author of the encyclical feels that the ministry of the Church is a *diakonia of the truth*. The Pope is eager to show that search for truth becomes a basis of belief, that there is an inseparability of faith and reason, and that philosophy and theology have to become servants of truth. Philosophically speaking there should be a return to metaphysics, and the Pope is concerned with the situation of theologians not taking philosophy seriously. The neglect of the so called 'perennial philosophy' seems to be another concern of the encyclical.

In his assessment of the encyclical, Panthanmackal feels that the encyclical is very much in tune with the long tradition of the Church, and there is not very much new, except in the fact that certain authors are quoted who were neglected in the traditional teachings of the Church. Also the Pope seems to be aware of the contributions that other philosophies, especially Indian Philosophy, have made to the philosophical reflection. While the pluralism of cultures and philosophies seem to be taken note of, there is an underscoring of the importance of *experience (anubhava)*, and the reality of the *myth*. A concern that is lacking in the encyclical is the perspective of social justice and the centrality of the poor; hence it may be accused of being elitist in nature overly stressing reason and philosophy.

Chapter II, by Joseph Mathew Angadiyil, attempts at a detailed analysis of *Fides et Ratio* from various aspects. While the author looks at the main concerns of the encyclical, he has given a detailed description of the thought patterns that are found in Western Philosophy and Theology. The long paper has been divided into four sections: Distrust of Reason in Western Thought, Distrust of Reason and Theology, Cognitive Thrust of *Fides et Ratio*, and the Metaphysical Thrust of *Fides et Ratio*. Distrust of Reason has invaded Western Philosophy from a distant past and continues

even today. The author tries to show the chronological growth of this in contemporary philosophy and theology, leading almost to a phenomenism in theology.

Fides et Ratio (FR) next deals with the cognitive and metaphysical thrust. Since truth is the chief concern of *FR*, it is easy to discover again the assertion that human being is capable of arriving at truth – “in principle the human being can arrive at truth” (no. 29). The Pope also forcefully affirms the truth-element in Christian faith and theology and the necessity of metaphysics, which is a tool for theological mediation. The oblivion of metaphysics needs to be corrected, for it is the basis of all philosophical and theological reflection. Metaphysics, being a dynamic philosophy, views reality in its ontological, causal and communicative structures. Thus the author tries to point out that *FR* is aimed at the restoration of the power of reason to search for truth, and thus a rejection of phenomenism. It reaffirms that philosophy, as well as faith and theology, provides us with the knowledge of reality.

Part II studies the postmodern views, especially of Rorty and suggests a hermeneutic approach instead.

Chapter III, by Stanislaus Swamikannu, underlines the legitimate concern of *Fides et Ratio* for metaphysics. After having attempted at a brief survey of *FR* regarding the concern for metaphysics and a general mistrust of reason, the author tries to show the mistrust of the Pope regarding Postmodernism and other suspected ideologies. Stanislaus argues for a greater openness, especially in this age when the truth models are varied. The argument is that postmodernity is not nihilistic in character as it is painted in the encyclical and the attacks of the Pope are uncalled for. He attempts a short narration of the history of ‘nihilism’ as it originated with Nietzsche by analyzing the notion of ‘nihil’, and shows how Heidegger, in particular, tried to show a different understanding of ‘nothing’. Only in the context of ‘nothing’ can being be understood.

Against the plea of the Pope for a metaphysical theology, Swamikannu tries to plead for a ‘non-metaphysical’ theology, for which he has recourse to various authors. What is important is the recognition of the value of the freedom of the individual as against absolute moral certainty for to a certain extent even the highest values have devalued themselves. The notions of a metaphysical absolute and a monotheistic God are mediated through the logical necessity of metaphysics. But focus upon an outdated metaphysics will not be of assistance, says the author. Concern about the mistrust of reason, which has culminated in a malaise of meaninglessness in the West is correct; but it cannot be transcended through recourse to the thought patterns of traditional philosophy. The author concludes that theology without metaphysical assumptions is more conducive for a multicultural and multi-religious context.

Chapter III, by Ivo Coelho, takes up the theme of Rorty’s Anti-foundationalism and *Fides et Ratio*, for his discussion and analysis. After

discussing Rorty in detail, the author tries to show the relevance of this philosophy to *FR*. As we know the concern of *FR* is with the attainment of Truth, and there is a heavy emphasis on the approach of traditional philosophy. Unlike the traditional approach, Rorty holds that objectivity of truth is a matter of consensus, rather than of correspondence. He favours hermeneutics over epistemology. While *FR* is concerned very much with ‘*foundations*’, as we see in statements like “the challenge at the end of this millennium is to move from phenomenon to foundation,” Rorty’s position is anti-foundational. *FR* sees a neglect of truth as rampant, part of this neglect arising from modernity’s fascination with human subjectivity. Due to the mistrust of reason there arises a neglect of metaphysics, with the end result of a burgeoning of such various theories as pragmatism, relativism, historicism, nihilism, etc. As a reaction to these theories *FR* pleads for a sapiential philosophy, which is sure to attain to truth.

Although Coelho may not be an advocate of Rorty’s position in its entirety, he dialogues with Rorty and tries to find a way between antifoundationalism and *FR*. Rorty is very much dependent on the ‘ocular metaphor,’ based on which he attacks representations, foundations, truth, and champions pragmatism, solidarity and ethnocentrism. At times he stresses the importance of questioning, which is conditioned by four factors: a chance for further questions to arise, questions should set correctly, mastery of the situation, and temperament. Here self-transparency, self-appropriation, and thematization of our horizons, become essential, in which context conversation and dialogue enter the picture. Human progress towards truth is dialectical; it is the prerogative not so much of the individual as of the species. The question, perhaps, to be asked is will this make us reach truth? Rorty seems to maintain that there is no ultimate criterion. He will not admit truth as *adequatio*. Truth is rather consensus, which may not be in consonant with *FR*. In the end Rorty defies classification.

Part III deals with philosophical and theological studies.

Chapter V, by Joe Mannath, brings the postmodern concern with the concrete, the social and the temporal into the broader context of cultural traditions as bearing the learning of prior generations, meeting thereby the hermeneutic context of Gadamer and Ricoeur.

To do this it does not need to add foreign and dissociate elements to the encyclical, rather it mines that text and shows the ways in which its reaffirmation of founded knowledge is neither a mechanical causality rather of nor of ocular perception but of human understanding properly as the work of spiritual human conscious intentionality. This is what makes the work of reason to be essentially hermeneutic, not that of the Descartes’ solitary thinker, but rather of the communities in the amplitude of their creative experience founded in faith.

Chapter VI, by John B. Chethimattam, tries to explain the contents of *FR* without a detailed analysis of the encyclical. The paper with its title:

“Philosophy, Religion and Spirituality – Continuities and Discontinuities,” is an attempt to show the relationship between these, and to restore the basic traditional philosophy. While faith and reason are co-partners, the former is obviously the senior and more respected partner. Both have their origin in the Absolute and they cannot be opposed to each other. But for theology to be relevant today it has to dialogue with various disciplines; it cannot withdraw into an ecclesiastical ghetto. Theology is not a mere mental construct; being a reflection on faith it requires personal commitment. Theology is rooted in a particular religious tradition and related to a community, while philosophy can be independent of any such moorings. To be a true philosopher one should aim at becoming as objective as possible, and should be willing to give up a position, if proved wrong. One should be committed to truth with all one’s being.

The author looks also at the realm of experience, especially religious experience, in a rather detailed manner. Experience at the philosophical and theological level has different nuances. The religious experience at its peak is called mystical experience, and has the characteristics of ineffability, passivity, transitoriness and certainty. Both the philosopher and the religious person needs to respect each other in their awareness of the limit, and should have a readiness to transcend comfortable but limited formulae. It is our right to ask questions and seek answers for them, while at the same time reminding ourselves that the reality quite often transcends our ken.

Chapter VII, John Francis Sequeira, by the veteran scholar, taking into consideration the concern of *FR* for a proper foundation for theology, makes an earnest effort to point out the true nature of a clear cut philosophical theology. After having looked at the sad plight of theology today, he proceeds to analyze where the roots of theology lie. He sketches historically the growth of Western theology and points out how Pope John II is duly concerned about a true philosophical theology for which he makes clear the basic postulates. A good knowledge of philosophy is essential even to understand divine Revelation, for this revelation takes place through history and through the words and deeds of humankind.

The author points out that a new philosophical theology is the need of the hour as the situation has called for a ‘new evangelization.’ In Western theologizing the starting point is the infinite distance between God and the world, and now this distance has been bridged through incarnation. Christian theology celebrates the hope of a new Kingdom of God. When we look to the East too, there is a possibility of a philosophical theology; but unlike the West the stress is not on the distance between God and the world, but on the unity between them. The author goes into the meaning of the *Mahavakyani* (the great sayings), and also tries to show that, we can think of certain Christian *Mayavakyani*. The paper concludes by showing the avenues in theology where new approaches are needed, especially in ecclesiology and morality.

Chapter VIII, by Johnson Puthenpurackal, has attempted at reviewing the relation between philosophy and theology. He tries to show that this is precisely a Western problem, as there is a marked division between philosophy and theology in the West, whereas in the East there is no clear cut distinction between them. Originally philosophy was translated as love of wisdom, but the Greek word *sophia* has a much wider meaning than ‘intellectual knowledge’; it is an attitude of *sophia* and *philia* (wisdom and orientation). Theology was etymologically interpreted as ‘Science of God’; but for the ‘pagans’ it meant a mythological explanation of the world phenomena. For the Fathers of the Church, *Theologia* meant the inner mysteries of God in correlation to *oikonomia* or God’s plan for the world as manifest in the Christ-event. Gradually theology became an intellectual discipline, with metaphysics as its instrument for the explanation of the faith. Modern theology has broken from these moorings and become existential. But despite all the good efforts by philosophers and theologians the rift between philosophy and theology still exists. What is needed today is a synthetic approach; a philosopher can be a theologian, and a theologian a philosopher. Also there is too much of a division between the secular and sacred; the boundaries between these need to be crossed, they are two aspects of the same reality. Mystics arrive at the unity of both.

Part IV is concerned with the relation of science and religion.

Although not directly related to the theme of *Fides et Ratio*, we include two papers on Science and Religion. Chapter IX by William Sweet, analyses the relation between the two by taking into account the theory of Intelligent Design (hereafter ID). Many people think in terms of Evolution vs. Intelligent Design. It is important is to understand the basic presuppositions of ID. It is not the same as creationism, although there is a clear affinity between the two. In opposition to ID many recent thinkers, such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennet, Robert Pennock, propose materialistic, naturalistic and reductionist accounts of reality and see ID and evolutionary theory as competing hypotheses. The author argues that ID is not a theory like evolution, but a hypothesis about species origin and questions can be asked whether it is a plausible one. ID should not be seen as a means to religion. There are fundamental differences between propositions or conclusions of ‘science’ and religious belief.

Religious belief has both descriptive and dispositional elements. Basic conditions of religious belief are that they are not self-contradictory, that they meet standards set by traditions and institutions, that they are consistent or coherent with other true beliefs, that they reflect both ‘the world’ and dominant ideas in human consciousness. In contrast, a scientific proposition is a proposition that purports to be ‘publicly’ verifiable through tests. This public character, neutrality and objectivity characterize scientific propositions. Religious belief and scientific propositions are not radically different as both are rooted in the world.

Though ID is a science it can render a psychological support to religion. We need to test the religious beliefs for they should not be contradictory. Science cannot prove religious beliefs, and although religion can judge science it cannot disprove a genuinely scientific proposition. The author goes beyond ID to show that the propositions of both can cohere. Their correct relation is compatibility, not a reduction of one to the other.

Chapter X, by Maria Norma Rebello, deals with the relation of science and religion. She tries to show how the modern mind has been influenced by science, but at the same time true science cannot be at clash with true religion. Distorted science like technology has destroyed nature and thus caused environmental problems, but pure science, with its passion for human welfare, will always remain one of the noblest pursuits of man. The author, quoting Indian thinkers, shows how they understood science in its true colour looking upon the macrocosm and the microcosm as complementary. Similarly there should be a real symbiosis between the external and the internal. What man should aim at is a proper understanding of science and religion; both exist in different planes, but complement each other. Religion deals with the metaphysical world, while science deals with the physical world; they can be mutually complementary and enriching. The need is for an appreciation of the reciprocal relationships and dependencies of the goal of both, namely, the persistent search after truth; they differ only in the field of research. Mystery pervades both science and religion. Science will lose all meaning without religion, and without science religion can degenerate to the level of superstition.

Sincere thanks is extended to all who have contributed papers to Missio, Aachen, for the support, and to the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy for bringing this work to publication.

Varghese Manimala

PART I

***FIDES AT RATIO* IN DEFENSE OF REASON**

CHAPTER I

FIDES ET RATIO: **A SYNOPSIS AND ASSESSMENT**

GEORGE PANTHANMACKAL, MSFS

Pope John Paul II's thirteenth encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* was made public on October 15, 1998, by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. It was dated September 14, 1998, the feast of the Triumph of the Cross. The central theme of the encyclical letter is the question of Truth. The encyclical intends to give the people of today a fresh confidence in their search for truth through faith and reason. Our effort in this paper is to give a synopsis of the encyclical, followed by a modest assessment of the same.¹

A SYNOPSIS

Faith and Reason as Means of Truth

The Human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth by faith and reason. The human desire to know has its source in God who wants humans to come to the fullness of truth about themselves by knowing and loving God. The humans discover and know themselves ('know yourself') in discovering and knowing reality and the world. The sacred writings of both East and West unfold the fundamental questions which pervade human life: the meanings of things and their existence. The Church makes her journey of discovery in different ways, especially through the *diakonia of the truth*, which makes the faithful partners in humanity's shared struggle to arrive at truth and obliges them to proclaim the certitudes arrived at. Philosophy, one of the noblest human tasks, is among the human resources in generating greater knowledge of truth, so that human lives may be ever more human. It is directly concerned with asking questions of life's meaning and sketching an answer to it. It shows different modes and forms that the desire for truth is part of human nature itself. It has also powerful influence on the formation and development of the cultures of East and West. Every people has its own native and seminal wisdom which is genuinely philosophical, and it is evident in the postulates of the national and international legal systems. The fundamental elements of philosophical knowledge spring from the *wonder* of creation manifest in philosophical *enquiry*, which has primacy over every philosophical *system*, which stems from the former. There is also an implicit, general and unreflective core of philosophical insight within the history of thought as a whole which consists of the principles of non-contradiction, finality and causality, the concept of person

as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness. The Church sees philosophy not only as a way to know fundamental truths about human life, but also as an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the Gospel to those who do not yet know it. However, recent times have seen a legitimate plurality of positions yielding to an undifferentiated pluralism based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid; this weakens the search for the ultimate truth. While philosophical thinking has succeeded in coming closer to the reality of human life and its forms of expression, it has also pursued issues ignoring the radical question of the truth about personal existence, Being and God (questions of ultimate truth). The Church reaffirms the need to reflect upon truth, calling bishops, theologians and philosophers to explore different aspects of truth in order to restore to our contemporaries a genuine trust in their capacity to know and challenge philosophy, thus recovering and developing its own full dignity. For, with its enduring appeal to the search for truth, philosophy has the great responsibility of forming thought and culture (Arts. 1-6).

Surpassing and Perfecting Reason by Faith in Revelation

The Church has a message which has its origin in God revealed through Jesus Christ, which surpasses and perfects all that the human mind can know of the meaning of life by reason. Philosophical knowledge depends upon sense perception and experience advancing by the light of intellect alone; whereas faith recognizes in the message of salvation the “fullness of grace and truth” in Christ who revealed the deepest truth about God and human salvation as a mystery in history. Faith alone enables us to understand this mystery of revelation and salvation coherently. Faith is a free, obedient response to God, acknowledging his divinity, transcendence and supreme freedom. God who reveals himself is also the source of the credibility (guarantor of truth) of what he reveals on account of the authority of his absolute transcendence. The signs of revelation assist reason in its effort to understand the mystery. These signs serve to lead the search for truth to new depths and to go beyond the signs themselves in order to grasp the deeper meaning they bear. In this way, revelation is sacramental; and the knowledge proper to faith does not destroy the mystery, but only reveals it more deeply. Reason is restricted only by its own finiteness before the mystery of God. Revelation impels reason to extend the range of its knowledge until it senses that it has done all in its power. The truth of Christian revelation in Jesus Christ summons humans to be open to the transcendent, respecting both their autonomy and freedom. The truth of revelation is something gratuitous, set within our history as an anticipation of that ultimate and definitive vision of God reserved for those who believe in him and seek him with a sincere heart. The ultimate purpose of personal existence is the theme of both philosophy and theology. Both

point to that “path of life” which leads in the end to the full and lasting joy of the contemplation of the triune God. (Arts. 7-15).

Enlightening Reason by Faith

Faith sharpens the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence. Reason and faith are indissolubly united. Each contains the other. We cannot understand in depth the world and the events of history without professing faith in the God who is at work in them. In other words, human beings attain truth by way of reason enlightened by faith. The coming of Christ was the saving event, which redeemed reason from its weakness, setting it free from the shackles in which it was formed. Philosophy recognizes human’s self-transcendent orientation towards the truth. 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 Arts. 16-23).

Search for Truth as the Ground of Belief

Humans have a seed of desire and nostalgia for God. Philosophy has already articulated this universal human desire. “All human beings desire to know,” and truth is the proper object of this desire. The human is the only creature who is not only capable of knowing but who knows that one knows, and is therefore interested in the real truth of what one perceives. People cannot be genuinely indifferent to the question of what is true or false. If they discover that something is false, they reject it. But if they can establish its truth, they feel themselves rewarded. St. Augustine puts it this way: “I have met many who wanted to deceive, but none who wanted to be deceived.” The Truth comes to the human as a question: Does life have a meaning? Where is it going? No one can avoid this questioning. The answer we give will determine whether it is possible or not, to attain universal and absolute truth. Every 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 (Art. 27). Beyond this universality, people seek an absolute or ultimate, which gives meaning to their searching and serves as the ground of all things. One may define the human being as the one who seeks the truth. The thirst for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast us into jeopardy. There are different modes of truth: scientific, philosophical and religious. Scientific truth depends on immediate evidence of or experimentation. Philosophical truth is attained by means of the speculative powers of the human intellect. Religious truth is, to some degree, grounded in philosophy, but found in the answers that the different religious traditions offer to the ultimate questions. The truths of philosophy are not restricted to the teachings of the professional philosophers, but all humans who are in some sense philosophers, insofar as

they have their own philosophical conceptions with which they direct lives; insofar as they shape a comprehensive vision answering the question of life's meaning; and insofar as they interpret their own life's course and regulate their behaviour. There are also in the lives of humans many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired by way of personal verification. This means that the human is not the only one who seeks the truth, but also the one who lives by belief. In belief, one entrusts oneself to other people. 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. Knowledge through belief, grounded as it is on trust between persons, is linked to truth. For, in the act of believing, humans entrust themselves to the truth which the other declares to them. In this sense, the most authentic witnesses of truth and belief are the martyrs who entrusted themselves to Jesus Christ (Art. 24-35).

Inseparability of Faith and Reason

A rapid survey of the history of philosophy reveals a growing separation between faith and philosophical reason. Yet closer scrutiny shows that, even in such attempts at separation, there are precious and seminal insights found in penetrating analyses of perception and experience, of the imagination and the unconscious, of personhood and intersubjectivity, of freedom and values, of time and history. The theme of death also appeals to all thinkers to seek within themselves the true meaning of their own lives. Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason is exposed to the danger of losing sight of its final goal; and deprived of reason, faith runs the risk of losing its universality and withers into myth or superstition (Arts. 36-47).

Task of Church Magisterium in Philosophical Matters

Although the Church has no philosophy of her own nor a particular philosophy in preference to others, it is the task of the *Magisterium* to indicate which philosophical presuppositions and conclusions are incompatible with revealed truth, and to stress the basic principles of a genuine renewal of philosophical enquiry, indicating the paths to be followed. The encyclical notes with concern certain neglect in the teaching of philosophy in our faculties. "In the years after the Second Vatican Council, many Catholic faculties were in some ways impoverished by the 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" (Art. 61). There are various reasons for this disenchantment. One of them is the distrust of

reason found in contemporary philosophy which abandons the metaphysical study of the ultimate human questions in order to concentrate upon problems which are more detailed and restricted. Hence, “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” (Art. 62). It is the duty of the *Magisterium* to discern and promote philosophical thinking which is not at odds with faith (Art. 49-63).

Philosophico-Theological Circle

Theology is structured as an understanding of faith in the light of a twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei* (hearing of faith and the understanding of faith). With the first, theology makes its own the content of Revelation, and this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and *Magisterium*. With the second, theology seeks to respond through speculative enquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought. The relationship between theology and philosophy is best construed as a circle. Theology’s source and starting point is the Word of God revealed in history, while its final goal is an understanding of that Word. God’s Word is Truth. Philosophy is the human search for truth. Hence, philosophy helps us to better understand God’s Word. In other words, the believer’s reason uses its powers of reflection in the search for truth which moves from the Word of God towards a better understanding of it. Faith grows deeper and more authentic when it is wedded to thought and does not reject it. There is a close link between faith and culture, for cultural context permeates the living of Christian faith and the same faith contributes in turn, little by little, to shaping that context. The Gospel is not opposed to any culture. It brings genuine liberation to the culture from all the disorders caused by sin and is a call to the fullness of truth. Cultures are not diminished by this encounter, but 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. Today, the Gospel comes into contact with cultures of various lands. “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...” (Art. 72, also Arts. 64-79).

Present Requirements and Challenges

Philosophy needs to recover its *sapiential dimension* as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life. This first requirement is most helpful in stimulating philosophy to conform to its proper nature. For the immense expansion of humanity's technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. The second requirement is that philosophy should verify the human capacity *to know the truth*, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of that *adequatio rei et intellectus* of the Scholastic Doctors. The third requirement calls for a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, capable of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and fundamental in its search for truth. Reality and truth do transcend the factual and empirical, and humans have the capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical. "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" (Art. 83). The encyclical also warns of the dangers of certain currents of thought such as eclecticism, historicism, scientism, pragmatism, post-modernism and nihilism (Arts. 80-99).

Mutual Influence of Faith and Reason

Philosophy plays an important role in the development of culture and it influences the patterns of personal and social behaviour. Besides, philosophy exercises a powerful, though not always obvious, influence on theology and its disciplines. The Church is convinced that faith and reason mutually support each other. Each influences the other, as they offer to each other a purifying critique and a stimulus to pursue the search for deeper understanding. A survey of the history of thought, especially in the West, shows that the encounter between philosophy and theology and the exchange of their respective insights have contributed richly to the progress of humanity. In theology, philosophy will find not the thinking of a single person which 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*, by the tradition of the people of God. Philosophy 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. For, philosophers explore more comprehensively the dimensions of the true, the good and the beautiful to which the word of God gives access. Philosophical thought is often the only ground for understanding and dialogue with those who do not share our faith (Arts. 100-104).

An Appeal to the Concerned

The *theologians* are 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; the formators are to pay special attention to the philosophical preparation of those who will proclaim the Gospel to humans today and of those who will devote themselves to theological research and teaching. The philosophers and the teachers of philosophy should have the courage to recover the authentic wisdom and truth (metaphysical) which is proper to philosophical enquiry. The scientists are 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; everyone has to look more deeply at human beings, whom Christ has saved in the mystery of his love, and at the human's unceasing search for truth and meaning. There is also a deep harmony between the vocation of the Blessed Virgin and the vocation of true philosophy. Just as the Virgin was called to offer herself entirely as human that God's Word might take flesh and come among us, so too philosophy is called to offer its rational and critical resources so that theology, as the understanding of faith, may be fruitful and creative. Just as in giving 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, but philosophical enquiries rise to their highest expression (Arts. 105-108).

ASSESSMENT

The encyclical is very much in conformity to the thought of *Aeterni Patris*, of Pope Leo XIII (August 4, 1879). In that encyclical, Leo advocated that in the education of her priests, the Church should return to the philosophical and theological thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas. The encyclical was an expression of his firm conviction that only through a sound, coherent, and philosophically integrated understanding of her inherited intellectual resources, would the Church be able to engage once again in dialogue with the secularized leaders of 19th century Europe.² In *Fides et Ratio*, too, John Paul expresses his displeasure at the way in which, after Vatican II, the teaching of St. Thomas has often been neglected in seminary education (Arts. 76-80). It should not, however, be taken as the principal message of the encyclical. "The designation of a particular philosophical system as such," he tells us, "is not the business of the

Church.” The Pope’s views on the importance of St. Thomas are, therefore, not an attempt to endow St. Thomas with the exclusive sort of authority in Catholic theology, which Leo XIII hoped to confer on him in *Aeterni Patris*. In differing from Leo in this regard, John Paul II is taking the same approach to St. Thomas which Vatican II adopted in *Optatam Totius*. It is true that John Paul II is happy to be, in his own way, a disciple of St. Thomas, but he has never advocated an exclusive approach to Thomism. His survey of Catholic philosophers in *Fides et Ratio* lists St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure among its great representatives, even though their philosophies were basically diverse from that of St. Thomas (Arts. 56-61, 93). In his review of the 19th century, Pope singles out for praise John Henry Newman and Aotnio Rosemini, who kept a deliberate distance from reviving the thought of St. Thomas (Art. 93). In his survey of our own century, he praises Jacque Maritain, even though Maritain’s defense of democracy and of religious freedom disturbed the political right wing Thomists earlier in this century. He has a word of admiration for Etienne Gilson, though his historical approach to St. Thomas upset Garrigou Lagrange and the older Dominicans who read St. Thomas in the light of his 17th century commentators. He has also made mention of Maurice Blondel, the 19th century philosopher, who helped to inspire the Transcendental Thomism of Joseph Marechal (Arts. 93-96). The Pope’s own publications show the influence upon his thought not just of Blondel and Marechal’s Transcendental Thomism, but of Marcel’s personalist philosophy as well. That influence is evident in his stress on the individual, self-conscious human subject as the starting point and central focus of his own philosophical reflection. Such a stress on the individual, self-conscious human subject is the hallmark of modern, post-Cartesian philosophy. Hence in *Fides et Ratio* Pope is far from promoting Thomism in any narrow sense, but with a difference of his own.³

The Pope is also aware of the events in the world and the Church, which may impede the Church’s effective communication of its message today. One of them is the general loss of confidence in human reason due to the absence of a sound philosophy. That loss of confidence has led to the contemporary crisis of meaning which confronts the Church today. In *Fides et Ratio*, the Pope has brought that event and its significance to our attention, stressing the need to recover the lost confidence in human reason. Wojtyła’s starting point in being, enables him to make a move in this direction. His subsistent knowing subject is no longer merely the subject-pole of intentional consciousness, but a real incarnate agent, subsisting in itself, yet essentially related to others through the communicative language of its body (Art. 1). In the fundamental structure of the incarnate spirit, manifest in the immediate experience of action, the subjective pole of human intentionality remains the same, despite the variety in the objective pole manifested to it through a plurality of diverse conceptual framework.⁴ John Paul II ends his encyclical by appealing to philosophers and teachers of philosophy to have the courage to recover authentic wisdom by

welcoming the true insights present in contemporary philosophical syntheses, and to philosophize creatively and constructively in order to increase humanity's spiritual heritage for the benefit of all who will live in the Third Millennium.⁵

Although the Pope speaks from his own cultural perspective, he is well aware of the pluralism and the value of the cultures and philosophies. It is in this context that the attention of the Pope is drawn to the Asian cultures. Never had any Pope spoken officially in such warm terms of the Indian religious and philosophical tradition as John Paul II does here (Art. 72).⁶

To the negative, however, the encyclical undervalues experience as dealing with the particular and ephemeral, and as unable to deliver to us the universal and thus the ultimate truth. For Indians, experience or *anubhava* is the only real contact with the absolute and, therefore, universal reality. The universal found in the depth of the human consciousness by a direct experience is therefore concrete. This is in line with the incarnational and sacramental principles of the revelation in Christ who was *heard, seen* and *touched*.⁷

In the same way for the encyclical *myth* represents a first assimilation of the truth of God which must be transcended: for without reason "faith runs the risk of withering into myth or superstition" (Art. 48). This is a minimizing view of myth. For some thinkers, because of its holistic perception, *mythos* is the appropriate language of revelation and faith, while reason, *logos*, impoverishes it in the very act of universalizing it.⁸

Finally, those who look at faith from the perspective of social justice and the centrality of the poor in the Gospel may find the encyclical elitist, in that it ignores their concerns. The encyclical deals with an epistemology of faith that reaches out to all humans as humans. This universality has evident social implications. The encyclical seems to ignore the fact that early Christians found in the Gospel, rather than in philosophy, the answer to the question of the meaning of life.⁹ Thus, the encyclical's heavy stress on reason and philosophy might cause one to wonder whether John Paul II has preferred the 'God of Philosophers' to the 'God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'

NOTES

1 The thirteenth encyclical of Pope John Paul II to the bishops of the Catholic Church on the relationship between Faith and Reason was given on 14th September and made public on 15th October, 1998 in Rome. It consists of seven chapters, 108 articles with 132 footnotes. For the synopsis of *Fides et Ratio*, the author relies on his own summary of it, "*Fides et Ratio*," *Indian Journal of Spirituality*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (January-March, 1999), pp. 138-146.

2 Gerald A. McCool, "From Leo XIII to John Paul II: Continuity and Development," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XL, No. 2, Issue No. 158 (June 2000), p. 173.

3 *IPQ*, pp. 176-177.

4 *Ibid.* pp. 181-183.

5 *Ibid.* p. 195.

6 G. Gispert Sauch, "Document: Stray Reflections on 'Faith and Reason'," *Vidyajyoti*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (February 1999), pp. 146-147.

7 *Ibid.* p. 149.

8 *Ibid.* pp. 149-150.

9 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER II

**THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER
FIDES ET RATIO: ITS COGNITIVE AND
METAPHYSICAL THRUST***

JOSEPH MATHEW ANGADIYIL, OFM CAP.

INTRODUCTION

The encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II entitled *Fides et Ratio*¹ has appeared at a time when non-cognitive and anti-metaphysical trends are gaining ground in continental and Anglo-Saxon philosophy and theology. Against these currents of thought the Pope strongly argues for cognitivism in philosophy and theology, as well as for metaphysical thinking in philosophical enterprise.² These objectives are explicitly stated and argued throughout the encyclical. Though *FR* does not espouse any philosophical or theological system in particular, its overall thrust is evident; it advocates realism in philosophy, as well as in Christian faith and theology. Consequently, *FR* exhibits an uncompromising opposition to phenomenalism in any form. The Pope affirms emphatically that “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.”³ For, phenomenalism is a non-cognitive and anti-metaphysical mode of philosophizing.

The cognitive and metaphysical orientation of the encyclical letter is stated in the introduction itself. The cognitive thrust of *FR* is clear when the Pope says: “I judge it necessary to do so [to reflect upon the capacity of reason to know the fundamental truths] because, at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected.”⁴ Again, the Pontiff states: “In the present Letter, I wish to pursue that reflection [on certain fundamental truths, initiated in *Veritatis Splendor*] by concentrating on the theme of truth itself and on its foundation in relation to faith.”⁵ Similarly, *FR*’s metaphysical thrust, too, is evident at the outset, when it refers to man as asking metaphysical questions such as: “Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?”⁶

In this paper, I intend to articulate the cognitive and metaphysical thrust of *FR*, which, I believe, is the issue addressed by the Pope in the present encyclical letter. Since the non-cognitive and anti-metaphysical currents of thought prevalent in much contemporary Western philosophy is one of the foremost concerns of the encyclical, in the second part of the

paper I propose to explore this trend, referred by *FR* as ‘the distrust of reason.’⁷ The third part is an investigation of the impact of this distrust of reason on theological reflection, analyzing some of the typical positions in theology. The fourth part deals explicitly with the affirmations of cognitivity in philosophy and theology as found in *FR*. Finally, in the fifth part, the metaphysical thrust of *FR* is articulated.

THE DISTRUST OF REASON IN WESTERN THOUGHT

FR states that a radical distrust of reason has gripped the present-day philosophical and theological thinking in the West. In fact, this ‘present crisis of confidence in the powers of reason’⁸ is the very rationale of the present encyclical. Hence in this section, we propose to make an investigation of the distrust of reason in Western thought, from the medieval period up to the present.

Fides et Ratio and the Distrust of Reason

Let us start with the clarification of the term ‘reason.’ *Ratio* or reason is ordinarily said to be man’s capacity to ask the ‘why’ of things. It is Leibniz who formulated the principle of reason, and he called it ‘*principium rationis sufficientis*.’ Broadly speaking, this principle states, “*nihil est sine ratione*,” nothing is without reason. Now, in the expression ‘*principium rationis sufficientis*,’ the word ‘*ratio*’ can be interpreted in two ways: either as ‘reason’ or as ‘rationality.’ When ‘*ratio*’ is translated as ‘reason,’ it is often identified with scientific explanation. Science starts with the conviction that all that happens can be explained in terms of antecedents. And these antecedents are the necessary *and* sufficient conditions of particular events. Thus ‘AIDS,’ for example, does not just happen. It can be explained in terms of its antecedents.⁹

But ‘*ratio*’ can be interpreted also as ‘rationality.’ In this sense, *ratio* is related to the metaphysical ‘why’ question, and has a much richer meaning than ‘reason’ as explained above. “Metaphysics, then, is the search for the ‘ratio-nality’ in things, their ‘reason-able-ness,’ their *logos* – which is broader than their ‘reasons.’”¹⁰ The task of metaphysics, in this sense, is to make reality as a whole intelligible and to account for it in a reasonable way. In this context, the principle of sufficient reason is the metaphysical principle *par excellence* that governs man’s search for the ultimate *logos* in things. Now, just as there is rationality in things, there is also rationality in man; it is the *logos* operative in man. In this sense “*ratio* is generally understood as the ‘natural’ capacity [*logos*] of human beings to arrive at truth [*logos*] in a holistic way and not merely in the fragmented way of experiences, or in the partial truths of science: . . .”¹¹ Thus, in the context of metaphysical reflection, ‘*ratio*’ can be interpreted as ‘rationality’ – ‘*logos*’ – in man in search of the ultimate rationality – *logos* – in things.

From the references to the word ‘reason’ in *FR*, we take it to mean ‘rationality’ or ‘*logos*,’ rather than ‘scientific explanation in terms of antecedents.’ According to the Pope, “Right reason or, as the ancients called it, *orthos logos, recta ratio*”¹² is the capacity for “reflecting rightly upon what is true.”¹³ *FR* recounts the characteristics and functions of reason. Reason is “by its nature oriented to truth and is equipped moreover with the means necessary to arrive at truth.”¹⁴ Furthermore, reason “intuits and formulates the first universal principles of being and correctly draws from them conclusions which are coherent both logically and ethically...”¹⁵ Moreover, “its [reason’s] function is to find meaning, to discover *explanations*. ...”¹⁶ This is in fact *FR*’s unabashed affirmation in the capacity of reason to discover the rationality – *logos* – in things, to attain the truth of things. This means that human reason, according to *FR*, is transparent to all reality. By the same token, it is also an affirmation of the *principium rationis sufficientis*.

The Pope observes that there is a pervading distrust of reason in present-day Western thought: “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.”¹⁷ As a result of this distrust of reason, many Catholic faculties have neglected the study of philosophy during the years after the Second Vatican Council. Philosophy is expected to rest content with more modest tasks, such as the simple interpretation of facts or an inquiry into restricted fields of human knowing and its structures.¹⁸

In our view, the distrust of reason referred to by *FR* consists in the fact that ‘the function of reason, to find meaning and discover explanations,’ and thus to attain the truth – *logos* – of reality, is gradually repudiated as a result of adopting phenomenalist, and so non-cognitive and anti-metaphysical positions in philosophy.¹⁹ In other words, as the Western philosophical tradition reaches the contemporary era, the transparency of reason to reality is increasingly lost because of phenomenalist tendencies; and an opacity sets in that renders reality beyond the domain of reason. The story of the distrust of reason is at the same time the story of this opacity of reason; by the same token it is also the tale of phenomenism in Western philosophy.

The Distrust of Reason in Medieval Thought

The present-day distrust of reason can be ultimately traced to the collapse of philosophical enterprise by the end of the Middle Ages. The Greek and medieval philosophers on the whole trusted the capacity of reason to understand and explain reality, and they built up comprehensive metaphysical systems. It was an experiment in philosophizing that started with object as the point of departure. The golden period of scholastic

philosophy in the Middle Ages culminated in the Thomistic synthesis of the real and the rational in Aquinas' doctrine of universal ideas.

. . . Aquinas avoids reducing the real to the rational or *vice versa*. Like Kant, he keeps the dualism of the real and the rational, but unlike Kant, he does so without cutting the tie between them. He does so, too, without cutting the tie between either one of them and God. And the reason is that for Aquinas *universale in re, universale post rem, and universale ante rem* are the same thing but in different modes.²⁰

Thus, according to Aquinas, universal ideas exist in things as their essences or natures, and as ideas in the mind of man and of God. There is a total transparency of reason to all reality. Reason is capable of knowing the truth of everything – man, world and God. And truth consists in the conformity of the rational to the real. Ethics is based on a theory of man, which in turn, is ultimately founded on metaphysics. Moral laws are based on human nature; and they have their ultimate foundation in the idea of human essence in the mind of God.

But 'Occam's razor' signaled the downfall of the philosophical synthesis achieved by St. Thomas Aquinas. Occam's razor is well known – *entia non multiplicanda sine necessitate*: entities are not to be multiplied without necessity. With the application of this principle, the Thomistic doctrine of the three-fold existence of universal ideas collapsed. With the existence of universal ideas denied, there is no room for philosophical knowledge of man, world and God. Only scientific knowledge is possible, which is to be attained inductively. What then is the foundation of ethics? According to Occam, since there is no possibility of the philosophical knowledge of man, there cannot be an ethics based on human nature.

Thus the Greek and medieval experiment in philosophizing that started with object as the point of departure came to a dead end. Reason is no more thought to be capable of understanding or explaining anything. The transparency of reason to reality is gradually lost; reason becomes opaque to reality. And thus the distrust of reason surfaces in Western philosophy.

The Distrust of Reason in Modern Philosophy: Phenomenalism

The Cartesian philosophy came as a response to the breakdown of medieval philosophy at the hands of Occam. Descartes inaugurated a movement in Western thought that may be called 'phenomenalism' to which *FR* refers.²¹ In this mode of philosophizing, the philosopher's gaze is gradually turned away from 'what there is' to 'what is given,' – in the human subject. The phenomenalist philosopher starts metaphysical reflection with the phenomena given in human subjectivity, rather than with the object outside. Thus the starting point of philosophy, according to

Descartes, is not the object outside the self, but the *Cogito*, the thinking self, and the meanings or phenomena – the so-called innate ideas – immanent in the thinking self. But he could not satisfactorily solve the problem of correlating these innate ideas with the reality outside. Descartes finally ends up appealing to God's truthfulness in order to secure the correspondence of ideas in the *Cogito* with external realities. Spinoza and Leibniz, too, treaded the path of phenomenalism inaugurated by Descartes. "In sum, the conceptualists' [that is, phenomenologists'] radical separation of the real and the rational opens another gap, namely, one between knowledge and truth, on the one side, and reality, on the other."²²

Meanwhile, another type of phenomenalism showed itself in British empiricism. For the empiricists, 'the given' is sense impression. As in the case of Descartes, the empiricist philosopher Locke, too, was faced with the problem of correlating sense impressions with the reality outside. He made use of the principle of causality in order to reach out to the real from impressions. The empiricist experiment ended up in a blind alley with the skepticism of Hume. He drew the logical conclusion from the empiricist mode of phenomenalism: if one starts with the given – sense impressions in this case – one cannot get beyond them, and come to know reality. Again, ethics became the prime casualty: deprived of any metaphysical knowledge about human nature, ethical norms were made to depend on human feelings. The distrust of reason in the form of Humean skepticism was much more radical than the Occamist variety, being the complete denial, not only of philosophical knowledge, but of scientific knowledge as well. Reason is no more transparent to reality, and becomes totally opaque to the real.

It was such a radical distrust of reason that awoke Kant from his 'dogmatic slumber.' In his 'Copernican revolution,' Kant brought to completion the phenomenalist 'turn to the subject,' inaugurated by Descartes. Since the philosophical experiment of attaining truth by making the rational conform to the real came to a dead end – in medieval philosophy as well as in modern philosophy – Kant proposed to try the opposite strategy of arriving at truth by conforming the real to the rational. Rather, what is conformed to the rational itself becomes the real. Human knowledge can reach only as far as phenomena – objects constructed by, and thus conformed to, reason itself; but not *noumena*, namely, man, world and God, which are beyond the domain of reason. Here again reason falters, and is denied access to *noumena* or things-in-themselves. Thus "for Kant, the most celebrated conceptualist, [that is, phenomenologist] there is an impassable gulf between mind and reality-in-itself"²³ so that reason once again becomes opaque to the real. What about ethics? If knowledge of the reality of man is impossible, it follows that there cannot be moral laws based on the nature of man. Hence Kant makes morality to depend on human will. Just as truth is that which is conformed to the *a priori* elements of reason, so the good is that which is conformed to the form of the will.

Thus in modern Western philosophy, distrust of reason takes the form of phenomenalism, as found in Continental rationalism, British

empiricism and Kantian criticism. In the philosophy of Kant, phenomenalism comes of age in so far as, according to his position, human knowledge can reach only as far as the phenomenal world constructed by reason. Thus, “conceptualism [that is, phenomenalism] so separates the real from the rational as to exclude any tie between them.”²⁴

The Distrust of Reason in Contemporary Philosophy

The distrust of reason that appeared on the Western philosophical scene with the collapse of medieval philosophy at the hands of Occam, continues its march through contemporary philosophy. There are explicit references in *FR* about the distrust of reason in present-day Western thought.

Fides et Ratio and the Distrust of Reason in Contemporary Philosophy. The Pope acknowledges that “modern [that is, contemporary] philosophy clearly has the great merit of focusing attention upon man.”²⁵ Complex systems of thought have been built up around man yielding results in anthropology, logic, history, linguistics and so forth. Moreover, there have been “penetrating analyses of perception and experience, of the imaginary and the unconscious, of personhood and intersubjectivity, of freedom and values, of time and history.”²⁶ In spite of all these achievements, *FR* observes that contemporary philosophy has a “one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity. ...”²⁷ But exclusive interest in human existence has resulted in ignoring questions of ultimate truth and being.

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.²⁸

The end result is that “abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing.”²⁹

More specifically, *FR* states that the distrust of reason in contemporary Western philosophy is the result of employing certain methods such as hermeneutics or phenomenology, and the analysis of language.

The results of such studies [employing hermeneutics and the analysis of language] 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?³⁰

With the advent of phenomenology and the analysis of language, the function of reason itself underwent a radical change. Reason, once thought to be the instrument to attain the truth of reality, is transformed into a tool to deal merely with the meaning of reality. And both these methods concern themselves exclusively with the issue of meaning. Whereas phenomenology deals with the meaning of experiences, the analysis of language is concerned with the meaning of language; and both eschew the question of the referent of meaning, and so of truth. In these tools of analysis, we find phenomenism *par excellence* in so far as they remain with the given phenomena – of experience or of language – and their meanings. It would be worthwhile investigating the phenomenist elements in ‘hermeneutics and the analysis of language,’ as these methods are widely employed in present-day philosophical and theological thought.

Phenomenology and the Analysis of Language. Already with Continental rationalism, British empiricism and Kantian phenomenism, interest in philosophizing was shifted from ‘what there is’ to ‘what is given’. This orientation exclusively to ‘the given’ is carried further in phenomenology and the analysis of language. In the case of phenomenology, ‘what is given’ is the meaning of the phenomena immanent in human subjectivity; and in the case of the analysis of language, especially à la later Wittgenstein, ‘what is given’ is the meaning embedded in language, or rather in the ‘language-game.’ Philosophy is concerned with the description and analysis of the given, and in principle it gives up the project of making comprehensive systems. The philosopher does not aspire to construct theories out of the given, but he is interested only in clarifying what is given; that is, in analyzing the meaning of experiences given in human subject, in the case of phenomenology, and the meaning of language given in language games, in the case of the analysis of language.

The great phenomenologist Husserl’s well-known slogan ‘back to things themselves’ meant, not a return to the external object, but its very antithesis – a return to the phenomena that appear in transcendental consciousness. Phenomenology does not abstract from concrete ‘things’ or phenomena, but remains with them, and attempts to describe their meanings. “Phenomenology ... was a careful, methodical study of immediate, direct experience, its characteristics and structures, abjuring all philosophies which might explain and so explain away aspects of experience. ...”³¹ True to its name, phenomenology confines itself to the description of the essential meanings of experienced phenomena, leaving the existence of the referent of meanings out of consideration through the technique of *epoche*. Indeed, phenomenology is a form of phenomenism in contemporary Western thought.

Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Heidegger are the typical representatives of another type of phenomenology, called ‘hermeneutical phenomenology’ which seeks to interpret the latent meanings of pre-

reflective, lived experiences, that are not evident to our normal self-understanding. ‘Meaning’ for hermeneutical phenomenology is ‘meaningfulness’ or ‘meaning-for-the-subject.’ Thus for example, Heidegger’s *Being and Time* is an analysis of the phenomena of lived experience in relation to, and as they are meaningful to, *Dasein*. He interprets phenomena such as world, understanding, space, self, fear, and so on, in relation to *Dasein*; that is to say, what they *mean* for *Dasein*, not as objective entities, apart from *Dasein*’s concerns. Thus the world, for example, according to Heidegger, is an instrumental system in relation to the practical concerns of *Dasein*. Meaning here is meaning-for-*Dasein*. Heidegger’s hermeneutical phenomenology can be said to be phenomenalism, in a comprehensive sense in so far as he describes all *phenomena* of experience, as they are meaningful to *Dasein*.

Whereas phenomenologists are concerned about the description of the meanings of experienced phenomena, later Wittgenstein and his followers are interested in the description of the meanings of linguistic phenomena – that is, the analysis of language and its meanings.³² According to this tradition, ‘the given’ is the phenomenon of language, or what Wittgenstein calls ‘language game.’³³ The task of the philosopher is to clarify the ‘depth grammar’ of a language game, its rules and its uses. “Depth grammar is made explicit by asking what can and what cannot be said of the concept in question.”³⁴ The philosopher deals with conceptual issues, “what it makes sense to say.”³⁵ For Wittgenstein, the function of philosophy is not explanation, but description of the usages of concepts and the rules of language. Thus in the linguistic tradition too, there is a determination to stay on with the given phenomena, namely, the meaning of language, and this is again phenomenalism in another form.

It would be no exaggeration to say that phenomenology – both classical and hermeneutical – and the analysis of language are the contemporary expressions of phenomenalism in so far as there is a resolve in these philosophical traditions to remain with ‘the given things themselves.’ Limiting themselves exclusively to the description of the meanings of the experienced phenomena and linguistic phenomena, both traditions reject any kind of metaphysical explanation, and thus abstain from dealing with the truth of the meanings analyzed. To that extent, both phenomenology and the analysis of language are non-cognitive and anti-metaphysical currents of thought, and as such, they are symptoms of the distrust of reason in contemporary philosophy.

THE DISTRUST OF REASON AND THEOLOGY

The distrust of reason that affected contemporary philosophy has had a great impact on Western theology – mainly under the influence of phenomenology – both classical and hermeneutical – and the analysis of language. We propose to investigate some of the theological positions that employ these methods for theological reflection, as test cases in order to

highlight the distrust of reason and the phenomenalist elements in these currents of thought.

Phenomenology of Religious Experience and Hermeneutical Theology

One of the classical examples of employing phenomenology in the investigation of religious experience is Rudolf Otto's monumental work, *The Idea of the Holy*.³⁶ Otto's analysis of the structure of religious consciousness is based on the clarification of the key word of all religions – 'holiness.' In its most fundamental sense, the word 'holy' stands for a non-rational character which cannot be thought conceptually. To refer to this meaning of the 'holy,' Otto employs the term 'numinous.' His investigation is a careful phenomenological analysis of the feelings-states which constitute numinous experience. The 'numinous' is analyzed in terms of the feeling-states of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which are the elements of any deeply felt religious experience, such as an act of solemn religious worship. Numinous experience is an awful experience of the "Wholly Other," leading the religious man to dizzy intoxication.³⁷

Otto gives a Kantian justification to the category of the holy. According to him, the holy is an *a priori* category. He maintains that the non-rational elements of the category of the holy arise from a deep source in the soul, from what the mystics call "the *fundus animae*, the 'bottom' or 'ground of the soul' (*Seelengrund*)."³⁸ Thus Otto starts with the phenomenological analysis of religious experience, and ends up with the Kantian justification of his analysis without ever reaching the affirmation of the Transcendent; and this reinforces the phenomenalist underpinning of his investigation. We may rightly call Otto's position 'theological phenomenism.'³⁹

The Bultmannian programme of demythologization of the New Testament is an instance of employing hermeneutical phenomenology in order to investigate the meaningfulness of Christian doctrines. It is an attempt to apply Heidegger's conceptual framework as found in his *Being and Time* to Christian faith. Just as Heidegger analyzed the *meaningfulness* of the concepts such as 'world,' 'understanding,' and so on, in relation to *Dasein*, so Bultmann in his *Theology of the New Testament* investigates the *meaningfulness* of the Christian doctrines, such as the resurrection of the Lord, eschatology, Holy Spirit, and so forth, in relation to modern man; the issue for him is what these teachings *mean* for the man of today. Thus for example, Bultmann translates the doctrine of the resurrection of the Lord in relation to human existence. According to him, resurrection is to be understood, not as a past objective happening, but as a present event – as the present repeatable possibility of the authentic life that God offers to man in Christ.⁴⁰ Indeed, Bultmannian theology is nothing but theological phenomenism in so far as it limits itself to the *meaningfulness* of Christian faith for modern man without affirming the truth of the Christian doctrines.

The Analysis of Language and Theology

Analysis of religious or theological language is the attempt to elucidate the meaning of the ‘religious language-game,’ or faith language, its concepts and rules for its use, and thus to clarify what constitutes sense and non-sense in religion. “Its [of the analysis of religious language] task would be seen to be a descriptive one: that of bringing out the kind of language involved in religious belief and the notions of reality embodied in it.”⁴¹ The issue here is what we can or cannot say about different religious concepts. Thus for example, with regard to the existence of God, “It is not the task of the philosopher to decide whether there is a God or not, but to ask what it means to affirm or deny the existence of God.”⁴² Hence one must ask, “What is the grammar of our idea of God: what can we say and what cannot we say about God?”⁴³ The analysis of religious language is concerned about the investigation of the meaning of statements such as “God exists,” “God is all-good,” “God is eternal,” “God is all-powerful,” and other forms of religious discourse. Certainly, linguistic theology is yet another form of theological phenomenism in so far as it limits itself to the meaning and sense of religious and faith-language.

Our test cases – Otto’s phenomenology of religious experience, Bultmannian hermeneutical theology and linguistic theology – show that contemporary theological thinking has a tendency to distrust reason. Distrust of reason in the form of phenomenism in contemporary philosophy has found its way to theology as a result of applying classical phenomenology to religious experience and hermeneutical phenomenology to Christian faith, on the one hand, and the analysis of language to religious discourse, on the other. Employing these methods, theologians confine themselves to the description and analysis of the meaning of religious phenomena and faith-experiences, and of religious language, abstaining from discussions about the truth of Christian faith. Theology came to limit itself to the ‘given’ – the phenomena – that is, religious experience and faith-language.

THE COGNITIVE THRUST OF *FIDES ET RATIO*

In opposition to the phenomenist, non-cognitive and anti-metaphysical trends we have analyzed above, *FR* forcefully affirms that it is possible to attain truth – knowledge of reality – in both philosophy and theology. *FR* is “a vigorous defence of metaphysical reason and a call for a ‘real passion in the search of truth’ – objective and universal truth.”⁴⁴ According to the encyclical, both philosophy and theology must attempt to say how things are, and make statements about, and provide knowledge, of reality.

Fides et Ratio and the Cognitive Thrust in Philosophy

Throughout *FR*, the Pope maintains that truth is one of the chief concerns of philosophy. *FR* defines the “human being, therefore, as the one who seeks the truth.”⁴⁵ The Pope says again that “it is the nature of human being to seek the truth.”⁴⁶ This fundamental premise is articulated again and again. “Everyday life shows how concerned each of us is to discover for ourselves, beyond mere opinions, how things really are.”⁴⁷ According to *FR*, the maturity of persons is measured against their capacity to “distinguish independently between truth and falsehood, making up their own minds about the objective reality of things.”⁴⁸ 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. *FR* categorically asserts that “the thirst for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast our existence into jeopardy.”⁴⁹ This search looks not only to the attainment of truths which are partial, empirical or scientific, but truth in a comprehensive – philosophical – sense. Hence *FR* exhorts us to acquire a natural, consistent and true knowledge of created realities – the world and man himself. And reason must articulate this knowledge in concept and argument.⁵⁰ Thus the Pope strongly affirms that “in principle the human being can arrive at the truth.”⁵¹

FR notes that our everyday life shows well enough how each one of us is preoccupied by the pressure of a few fundamental questions. The capacity to search for truth and to pose questions itself implies the rudiments of a response. For 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.⁵² People thus seek “a final explanation, a supreme value, which refers to nothing beyond itself and which puts an end to all questioning.”⁵³ Hence the Pope says emphatically: “I wish to reaffirm strongly that the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge,”⁵⁴ which we ordinarily call ‘philosophy.’ Employing philosophical conceptions, men and women “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.”⁵⁵ Through philosophy’s work, rational speculation produces a rigorous mode of thought, and “through the logical coherence of the affirmations made and the organic unity of their content, it produces a systematic body of knowledge.”⁵⁶

Now, in so far as *FR* affirms the possibility of ‘a comprehensive vision,’ it opposes the fragmentation of knowledge we find today. The Pope says, “The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to an interior unity.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, *FR* advocates ‘a unified and organic vision of knowledge,’ and an integrated and holistic concept of truth: “The unity of truth is a fundamental premise of human reasoning. ...”⁵⁸ But this

unity is to be understood as unity-in-diversity. Hence *FR* speaks about different modes of truth. First, there is the empirical truth that depends upon immediate evidence or is confirmed by experimentation. This is the mode of truth proper to everyday life and to scientific research. Secondly, we find philosophical truth, attained by means of the speculative powers of human intellect. Finally, there are the religious truths which are to some degree grounded in philosophy, and which are found in the answers that the different religious traditions offer to the ultimate questions.⁵⁹

We may add that in such a multi-dimensional conception of truth, one can legitimately speak of the truth of exact sciences, human sciences, history, poetry, philosophy, theology, and of religion. Thus there are different dimensions to truth – scientific, philosophical, aesthetic and religious – each having its own validity. Certainly, the truth of an empirical statement is different from the truth of a mathematical proposition as it is also different from the truth of a theological doctrine. In other words, if we say that the assertions of mathematics, chemistry, history and of theology are all true, truth is in every case different. At the same time, there is also a unity among these different modes of truth, in so far as each makes a claim to truth. We may suggest that “what is common to the several forms of truth is that they all claim to let us see, as it is, without concealment or distortion, that which is talked about.”⁶⁰ But none of these affirmations has a monopoly to truth; and so there is no reduction of one level of truth to another. In fact, the clue to the problem of cognitivity in philosophy, as well as in Christian faith, is this concept of truth as unity-in-diversity.⁶¹

From the overall tone of the encyclical, it is evident that it adopts realism in epistemology and in metaphysics. Hence it proposes *adaequatio rei et intellectus* as the criterion of truth. *FR* says that philosophy must attain a knowledge “which can reach objective truth by means of that *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. ...”⁶² *Adequatio* is often understood as ‘agreement’ or ‘correspondence’ of thought and thing, language and reality. But in the present context, *adaequatio* can be interpreted as ‘adequacy.’ “Then what we say is true to the extent that it is adequate to what we are talking about, that is to say, to the extent to which it is able to light up what is talked about, so that we see it for what it is.”⁶³ A myth, for instance, is true to the extent that it makes unhidden the reality it talks about; and false to the extent that it obscures that reality. But its adequacy or inadequacy does not depend on its picturing reality in the way of a direct representation.

Fides et Ratio and the Cognitive Thrust in Theology

Throughout *FR*, the Pope forcefully affirms the truth element in Christian faith and theology. At the beginning of the encyclical itself, he says that the Church has “a responsibility of a quite special kind: the *diakonia* of the truth.”⁶⁴ The truths made known to us by Revelation are neither the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason. Among these truths are the notion of a free and personal

God who is the Creator of the world, and the notion of the person as a spiritual being as well as the concept of the reality of sin, which helps to shape an adequate philosophical formulation of the problem of evil.⁶⁵ Furthermore, “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.”⁶⁶ Thus *FR* states unequivocally that faith provides us knowledge; that “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.”⁶⁷

FR affirms that the Bible and the New Testament in particular contain texts and statements which have a genuinely ontological content. The inspired authors intended to formulate true statements, capable of expressing objective reality. It cannot be said that the Catholic tradition erred when it took certain texts of St. John and St. Paul to be statements about the very being of Christ. *FR* mentions how the First Vatican Council came to emphasize the truth-element of faith. The rationalist critique of that 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.⁶⁸

FR is emphatic that truth and knowledge should be also one of the main concerns of theology which is reflection upon faith. “The chief purpose of theology is to provide an understanding of Revelation and the content of faith.”⁶⁹ Reflecting upon the data of Revelation, the theologian should attempt to state the ontological content of the discourse contained therein. “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.”⁷⁰ For, in pursuing any serious study, one takes upon oneself the responsibility of uttering the *logos*; the *logos* in turn, by its very nature as assertion, claims to be an unveiling of truth. And as the very name ‘theology’ indicates, this is *logos*, rational discourse concerning a given area of subject matter, and therefore part of the whole intellectual enterprise of mankind.⁷¹

We sum up these reflections with the well-known quotation from St. Augustine, which *FR* approvingly cites: “Believers are also thinkers: in believing, they think and in thinking, they believe. . . If faith does not think, it is nothing.”⁷²

THE METAPHYSICAL THRUST OF *FIDES ET RATIO*

The metaphysical thrust of *Fides et Ratio* is nothing but the reverse side of its cognitive thrust. It is no exaggeration to say that the most important objective of *FR* is to make a forceful statement of the necessity of metaphysics, and that, too, as a tool for theological mediation. But anti-metaphysical trends in contemporary philosophy, resulting from the deep-

seated distrust of reason, have reached a point where metaphysics is altogether neglected, if not despised.

From Phenomenon to Foundation

Referring to the daunting task to be accomplished in the face of the prevalent anti-metaphysical mood in the present-day philosophical and theological thought, the Pope observes:

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 into the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises.⁷³

Such theologies that 'stop short at experience,' and do not go beyond, abound in the contemporary theological scene, as we have seen above.⁷⁴

FR specially mentions 'biblicism' and fideism as forms of theology that do not move beyond experience or phenomenon. A theology that is merely based on the experience of faith may be called 'fideism.' The fideistic position can be succinctly expressed as, "The fact that faith exists, and only that, proves its truth."⁷⁵ *FR* observes that fideism 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 'biblicism' which tends to make the reading and exegesis of Sacred Scripture the sole criterion of truth.⁷⁶

Biblicism in this sense keeps "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."⁷⁷ Biblicist fideism understands scriptural texts merely by the analysis of their meanings, employing various methods of biblical criticism without ever arriving at the affirmation of the truth of the texts. On the contrary, the Pope says: "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."⁷⁸

Over against fideism in general, we observe that faith and theology do not merely describe our states of mind and attitudes. It makes no sense to talk of faith in isolation – a kind of faith for faith's sake. One must also be prepared to say something about the ground of faith, about that which makes faith possible and evokes it. But this means that we have to talk not just of our own attitudes, but of "the way things are."⁷⁹ Thus when we talk

about God, we are not talking merely or only about our faith in Him, but “when we use the name ‘God’, one thing we must mean by that name is truth, the final reality that is uncovered when all illusions and errors have been stripped away. The desire for truth implanted in us is the desire to know the real, and ‘God’ is our name for that which is most real.”⁸⁰

In fact, theological phenomenism in the form of phenomenological analysis of religious experience is nothing but a variety of fideism. Phenomenological description sets plainly before us the basic elements in religious experience without introducing doubtful speculations about the possible genesis or ultimate significance of such experience. Indeed, an accurate description of the typical experiences of the religious person would provide a firm starting point for an investigation into religious faith. But however searching and accurate such descriptions of religious experience may be, they cannot establish the validity of such experience.⁸¹ For, strict phenomenological analysis operates in the context of the *epoche*, that is, bracketing of the external referent of the object, limiting itself to mere description of the essential meanings of experienced phenomena. “What it [phenomenology] lacks is a capacity to grasp concrete being; it is a philosophy of essence and not being.”⁸² Hence Otto, for example, is in principle unable to establish the referent of numinous experience; and that is why he ends with a Kantian justification of the numinous.

Similar comments are in place about hermeneutical phenomenology of the Bultmannian variety. “Bultmann might be said to regard theology as a kind of phenomenology of faith.”⁸³ And to that extent it is a form of fideism. It is characteristic of Bultmann to insist that “in any talk of God, we are talking at the same time of ourselves, but his whole method of existential interpretation tends to stress the talking about ourselves, and clarifies this talk in terms of self-understanding.”⁸⁴ God seems to have been internalized in human experience. It is necessary, however, to show how this talk of the self can also be talk of the other whom we call God; and unless this is done, we may be left with the strong suspicion that, in spite of Bultmann’s intentions, we are dealing *only* with our own self-understanding, and that the name ‘God’ is used simply as a mythological expression for a subjective ideal of human existence.⁸⁵ Thus the Bultmannian interpretation of Christian doctrines might lead to the transformation of Christian faith into something hardly distinguishable from a humanistic ethic or Feuerbachian identification of God with the infinity of consciousness. Though it is a well meant enterprise to start theologizing with the concrete experience of human subjectivity, often such a theology tends to become reductionistic, that “converts theological statements into anthropological statements and indeed into autobiographical statements.”⁸⁶

Indeed, phenomenology – both classical and hermeneutical – is a very useful tool for exploring the meaning of religious phenomena, and the meaningfulness of Christian faith. But being exclusively concerned with these issues, it has an in-built mechanism for eschewing all questions of

truth and validity. Hence as a method of analysis, it cannot move beyond the meaning and meaningfulness of the areas of experience under investigation. Applying phenomenology to Christian faith, “it [phenomenology] shows what is meant, if religious symbols are used. But it cannot go beyond description. Phenomenology cannot raise the question of validity of the phenomena it makes visible.”⁸⁷ And this is the point of the Pope’s observation that “a theology without a metaphysical horizon [that is, phenomenology in this case] 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.”⁸⁸

Coming to the analysis of religious language, we note that as in the case of phenomenology, this method too has an in-built mechanism for abstaining from questions of truth and explanation. Employing this tool, linguistic theology merely clarifies the depth grammar of Christian discourse, elucidates its concepts, and specifies that it makes sense, or does not make sense to say in the language game of faith. But “having clarified the grammar in an area of discourse it leaves untouched the question of the ontological status of the terms and concepts involved. By itself it does not contain the wherewithal to promote us from the conceptual to the ontological level.”⁸⁹ Hence, “the unacceptable feature of the position [of linguistic theology] is that . . . it deprives religious statements of ‘ontological’ or ‘metaphysical’ significance.”⁹⁰ In fact, philosophers of the linguistic tradition have increasingly come to appreciate the necessity of dealing with the cognitive dimension of the language of faith.⁹¹ “To say that the discourse of Christianity is neither true nor false is to relinquish part of what should be considered essential to Christianity; that is, that many of its claims were undoubtedly intended as true assertions.”⁹² Certainly, Christians intend at least some of the statements they make as believers to say how things are.

In fact, the Pope does oppose the use of phenomenology or the analysis of language as methods of investigation in theology. Rather he acknowledges their positive value when he says that they “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.”⁹³ But *FR* does contest a theology which limits itself to a phenomenology of religious experience and faith, or to an analysis of faith-language. The point is not that phenomenology and analysis of language are not valid methods in theology, nor that concrete experience of the human subject and religious discourse are not legitimate starting point for theologizing; but the issue is that the theologian who altogether neglects or refuses to discuss the question of the cognitive and metaphysical status of faith-experiences and Christian discourse is on the verge of endangering theological enterprise itself. As methods of investigation, phenomenology and linguistic analysis can hardly take us beyond the clarification of the meaning of faith-experience and the meaning of the religious language. It is one thing to

recognize the limitations of these methods, and another thing to refuse to deal with the metaphysical dimension of Christian faith.

*The Foundation Itself: The Metaphysics of Being*⁹⁴

The upshot of the foregoing discussions is that “we cannot stop short at experience [phenomenon] alone,”⁹⁵ whether it be in the form of fideism, phenomenological analysis of religious experience, hermeneutical theology of the Bultmannian variety or the analysis of the language of faith. But “speculative thinking must penetrate into the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises.”⁹⁶ Hence one has to move to the foundations – the affirmation of the Ground all experience and being. This is possible only through the mediation of metaphysics.

But, *FR* observes, because of the deep-seated distrust of reason that has surfaced in much contemporary philosophical reflection, philosophy has largely abandoned metaphysical study of the ultimate questions,⁹⁷ “to the point where there is talk at times of ‘the end of metaphysics.’”⁹⁸ 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.”⁹⁹ The Pope says further: “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.”¹⁰⁰

At the beginning *FR* itself, the Pope refers to the capacity of man to ask the fundamental metaphysical question: “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.”¹⁰¹ Now, the ‘why’ question is “the radical metaphysical question, ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’”¹⁰² The desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence – and indeed the ‘why’ question itself – springs from the wonder awakened in them [men and women] 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. Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal.¹⁰³

Not only in the experience of wonder, but also “whenever 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.”¹⁰⁴

FR indicates some important characteristics of metaphysics. Metaphysics or philosophy of being is “a dynamic philosophy which views reality in its ontological, causal and communicative structures.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, metaphysics investigates the most general concepts – the

transcendental concepts – of truth, goodness and beauty. Hence the Pope exhorts philosophers “to explore more comprehensively the dimensions of the true, the good and the beautiful to which the word of God gives access.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, metaphysics provides an all-encompassing vision, and it “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 fulfillment.”¹⁰⁷

To complement these reflections, we may add that in so far as metaphysics “allows a full and comprehensive openness to reality as a whole,” it can be seen as an endeavour “to develop a rational sight (insight) into the whole of reality in its coherence (and incoherence), starting from its basic principles.”¹⁰⁸ In this sense, metaphysics is an attempt to elucidate the rationality – *logos* – of reality as experienced. Thus metaphysics concerns experience; indeed it is the articulation of the whole range of human experience. But metaphysics transcends experience, just as all speculative understanding does. Hence in order to articulate all of human experience, it will have to construct theories that go beyond immediate experience; it has to move from concrete experience to abstract thinking.¹⁰⁹ The Pope refers to this abstract nature of metaphysics when he remarks that “a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, [is capable] . . . of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.”¹¹⁰

With regard to the relation between metaphysics and theology, *FR* says that “metaphysics thus plays an essential role of mediation in theological research.”¹¹¹ If the *intellectus fidei* wishes to integrate all the wealth of the theological tradition, it must turn to the philosophy of being. And so a requirement of a philosophy consonant with the Word of God is that it has a genuinely metaphysical range. *FR* goes on to recount the role of metaphysics and other branches of philosophy in the theological enterprise. Speculative, dogmatic theology presupposes and implies a philosophy of the human being, of the world and, more radically, of being. Dogmatic theology can perform its tasks appropriately only with the contribution of a philosophy of being. Moreover, in order to fulfill 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 presupposes a philosophical anthropology and metaphysics of the good. 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 man’s spiritual nature.¹¹²

Finally, there is the inevitability of metaphysics. Any ultimate position taken is, in fact, a metaphysics. This is true even with regard to phenomenism and fideism. This means that these theories themselves can be affirmed only as true teachings about reality. And that is metaphysics! The inevitability of metaphysics is succinctly expressed as: to philosophize, one has to philosophize; and not to philosophize, one has to philosophize. Whitehead’s observation about importance is *mutatis mutandis* applicable

in the case of metaphysics: “Expel it with a pitchfork, and it ever returns.”¹¹³

CONCLUSION

The Pope’s foremost concern in *FR* is, in our view, is the issue of phenomenalism *versus* realism in philosophy and theology. Throughout *FR*, he opposes phenomenalism and affirms realism in the strongest sense possible. The Pope opts, not for “a philosophy of ‘what seems to be’ but for a philosophy of ‘what is.’”¹¹⁴ Hence he asserts that philosophy as well as faith and theology provide us *knowledge of reality*. In this way the Pope upholds the cognitive and metaphysical dimension in philosophy, Christian faith and theology. By the same token, without being rationalistic, *FR* defends the capacity of human reason to attain the truth of reality – the capacity of the *logos* in man to reach out to the *logos* in things, and it repudiates the distrust of reason found in much contemporary philosophical and theological thought. It is also a vigorous defence of the need of speculative, dogmatic theology with the mediation of metaphysics. As such, *FR* proposes a method of doing theology. Though it does not advocate any particular system of philosophy or theology, it does affirm realism in both.

The immediate occasion of the publication of *FR*, in our view, is the appearance of phenomenalism on the contemporary philosophical and theological scene, consequent upon the use of phenomenology and the analysis of language as tools for philosophical and theological investigation, and the resultant overemphasis on meaning at the expense of truth. These methods of analysis concern themselves exclusively with the issue of meaning – that is, “how reality is understood and expressed.”¹¹⁵ Both eschew the question, “whether reason can discover its [reality’s] essence”¹¹⁶ – that is, the issue of the referent of meaning, and so of truth. In fact, what is needed here is the right emphasis of both meaning and truth. This implies that neither meaning is assimilated to truth nor truth to meaning, but that having described and analyzed the meaning of experience, one must proceed to articulate the truth-element involved in meaning. *FR* takes an explicitly anti-reductionistic position in so far as it opposes the assimilation of truth to meaning in philosophy, faith and theology.

Indeed, theological reflection must start with the investigation of the phenomena of concrete human experience and faith-language; that is to say, with the description and analysis of the meaning of experience taken in the broadest sense of the term, to include not only anthropological experience – of human subjectivity, but also cosmological experience – of the cosmos, Christian experience as found in the Sacred Scriptures, and also the experience of other religious traditions and cultures, as well as the experience of the struggles of the people in different socio-economic contexts. In investigating these sources of the theological enterprise, the theologian can, and should, employ various methods for isolating the

meanings in question; thus he must apply phenomenology to the experience of Christian faith, the analysis of language to religious discourse, as well as social analysis to socio-economic reality and its structures.¹¹⁷

Without being bogged down with the descriptions and analyses of the meanings of a variety of experiences, theological reflection must move beyond, towards rational explanation and systematization, explicitly dealing with the question of truth.¹¹⁸ This is the point of the Pope's suggestion that "even if experience does reveal the human being's interiority and spirituality, speculative thinking must penetrate into the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises."¹¹⁹ For, rationality is an essential characteristic of the whole man, and no experience however intense, and no faith however fervent, could be exempted from critical examination. Hence the Pope observes that deprived of reason, faith stressing feeling and experience, runs "the risk of no longer being a universal proposition."¹²⁰

Hence the true method in theology must embrace both concrete experience and abstract systematization. For, as Kant has rightly observed, experience without categories is blind, and categories without experience are empty. Moreover, the theologian must from time to time return from abstract speculation to the experience of the individual believer and of the worshipping community. Whitehead's remark about method in metaphysics is *mutatis mutandis* applicable to method in theology as well: "The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation."¹²¹ The cognitive and metaphysical elements in theology can be salvaged only by a method that employs 'imaginative generalization' and 'rational interpretation' of the meanings of human, religious and faith-experience.¹²² And this is possible only through the mediation of a metaphysics consonant with Christian faith, as the Pope strongly advocates. Conversely, "a philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation."¹²³

We conclude this paper with opening sentences of *Fides et Ratio*: "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."

NOTES

* This paper was published in *Indian Theological Studies*, Bangalore, March 2001

1 Hereafter referred to as *FR*.

2 Here an explanation of the meaning of the words 'cognitive' and 'metaphysical,' intended in this paper is in place. When it is said that a

statement is cognitive, it means that it purports *to make claims to truth*. Similarly, when one says that a proposition is metaphysical, it means that such a proposition purports *to provide knowledge of reality*. In fact both mean the same, but from different points of view. A statement is cognitive and metaphysical when it claims to *give knowledge about reality*. Hence a statement that is cognitive is metaphysical, and vice versa; conversely, a statement which is non-cognitive is non-metaphysical, and vice versa.

3 *FR* no. 82. In this context, the term ‘phenomenalism’ refers to a mode of philosophizing which starts, and ends up, with phenomena in the human subjectivity without ever reaching out to the real. It is also called ‘conceptualism.’

4 *FR* no. 5.

5 *FR* no. 6. Emphasis in the original text.

6 *FR* no. 1. Emphasis in the original text.

7 For example, in *FR* nos. 5, 45, 55, 61, 84.

8 *FR* no. 84.

9 Andre Cloots, “Thinking Things Together: The Concept of Metaphysics,” in *idem* and Santiago Sia, eds., *Framing a Vision of the World: Essays in Philosophy, Science and Religion* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), p. 71.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

11 G. Gispert-Sauch, “Stray Reflections on ‘Faith and Reason,’” *Vidyajyoti* 63 (Feb. 1999): 146.

12 *FR* no. 4. Since the word ‘reason’ has been used throughout *FR*, though it actually means ‘rationality’ in the sense explained above, we will continue to use term ‘reason’ in this paper.

13 *FR* no. 50.

14 *FR* no. 49.

15 *FR* no. 4.

16 *FR* no. 42. Emphasis added. In view of what we have said above about the concepts of ‘reason’ and ‘explanation’ (see the two previous paragraphs), the word ‘explanation’ here has to be taken in its broadest sense, that is, in the context of metaphysical reflection. Where ultimate questions are concerned – when we are trying to elucidate reality regarding its ultimate character – we should take the notion of ‘explanation’ in its richest meaning, as rationality, not in the restricted, scientific sense of ‘providing antecedents.’ (Cloots, “Thinking Things Together: The Concept of Metaphysics,” p. 72).

17 *FR* no. 61. The Pope notes also that “attitudes of widespread distrust of the human being’s great capacity for knowledge” is found not only among the philosophers, but also among the men and women of our time. (*FR* 5).

18 *FR* nos. 61, 55.

19 A clarification of the relationship between the concepts of ‘phenomenalism,’ ‘distrust of reason,’ on the one hand, and of ‘non-cognitivity’ and ‘anti-metaphysical thinking’ on the other, is in place here.

Phenomenalism is a non-cognitive and anti-metaphysical mode of philosophizing resulting from the distrust of reason.

20 John Peterson, "The Real and the Rational: Aquinas's Synthesis," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 37 (June 1997): 189.

21 *FR* no. 82.

22 Peterson, "The Real and the Rational: Aquinas's Synthesis," p. 197.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

24 *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original text. Kantian phenomenism is blown up into a metaphysics in German idealism which is in fact the most consistent articulation of phenomenism. The genesis of idealistic metaphysics from the philosophy of Kant is one of the strangest developments in the Western thought. It is the outgrowth of metaphysical systems from the thought of a thinker who was an avowed skeptic of metaphysical knowledge. The German idealists – Fichte, Schelling and Hegel – brought Kantian phenomenism to its logical conclusion. What they accomplished was quite simple; they transformed the Kantian 'transcendental reason' into the Absolute ego which now becomes, not only the source of truth, goodness and beauty, but becomes creative of the very reality itself. The dualism between phenomena and noumena is thus abolished; there is no place for unknown noumena which are now thought to be the product of the creative activity of Absolute ego. In German idealism, phenomenism continues its triumphant march – now assimilating the real to the rational without leaving a trace of it. Thus between the real and the rational, there is no place for a half-way house as in Kantian philosophy. Either philosophy is a consistent statement of the real; then it is realism; or it is a consistent statement of the rational; then it is idealism.

25 *FR* no. 5.

26 *FR* no. 48.

27 *FR* no. 5. Emphasis added.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*

30 *FR* no. 84.

31 Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), p. 242.

32 It is well known that there are two traditions in the analysis of language – the one following the teachings of earlier Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and of Russell, Ayer, and others; and the other tradition, following the doctrines of later Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*. For our purpose we limit ourselves to the latter tradition.

33 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953; paperback edition, 1974), p. 5e, para. 7.

34 D.Z. Phillips, *The Concept of Prayer* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 8.

35 Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 102. Emphasis in the original.

36 Trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1923; paperback edition, reprint, 1972).

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 12-41.

38 *Ibid.*

39 This term was coined by Penelhum. (Terence Penelhum, *Problems of Religious Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 78). But we give it a different interpretation. Theological phenomenalism in our view refers to a mode of theologizing which starts, and ends up, with religious experience or faith-language of the believer without ever reaching out to the Transcendent.

40 For an excellent introduction to Bultmannian theology, see John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955; Pelican Books reprint, 1980). For a work on hermeneutical theology, see Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language*.

41 D.Z. Phillips, *Religion without Explanation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), p. 4.

42 *Idem*, *The Concept of Prayer*, p. 10.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

44 Gispert-Sauch, "Stray Reflections on 'Faith and Reason,'" p. 145. Emphasis in the original text.

45 FR no. 28. Emphasis in the original text. It is interesting to note that throughout FR the word 'truth' is used 408 times, 'knowledge' 102 times, and the related words 'know' 66 times and 'knowing' 14 times. The Pope's anxious concern about truth is evident also in his encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor*. It is remarkable that an encyclical dealing with moral issues – the good – starts with the word '*veritatis*' – 'of truth.' He says that "here [in morality] too it is a question of truth." (FR no. 25). Referring to *Veritatis Splendor* the Pope says: "Throughout the Encyclical I underscored clearly the role of truth in the moral field." (FR no. 98). He traces the root cause of the present-day crisis in morality – the good – to the crisis of truth. (*Veritatis Splendor*, no. 32). For "once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience changes." (*Ibid.* This is quoted in FR no. 98). And morality ends up adopting such norms of moral values as "criterion of sincerity, authenticity, and 'being at peace with oneself', so much so that some have come to adopt a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgment." (*Veritatis Splendor*, no. 32).

46 FR no. 33.

47 FR no. 25. Emphasis added.

48 *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

49 FR no. 29.

50 FR no. 66.

51 *FR* no. 29.

52 *FR* nos. 29, 17.

53 *FR* no.27.

54 *FR* no. 85.

55 *FR* no. 30.

56 *FR* no. 4.

57 *FR* no. 85.

58 *FR* no. 34.

59 *FR* no. 30.

60 John Macquarrie, *Thinking about God* (London: SCM Press, 1975), p. 17.

61 *FR* criticizes scientism for rejecting the pluriform character of truth and knowledge. Scientism “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.” (No. 88)

62 *FR* no. 82. Some authors suggest that *FR* espouses Thomism. Different references to Thomism in *FR* are interpreted as “good evidence to show that Thomism has a very special place in the Church, not only in the past but also today and even in the future.” (Job Kozhamthadam, “*Fides et Ratio* and Inculturation,” *Vidyajyoti* 63 (November 1999): 857-58). But the Pope makes it clear that “the Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others.” (*FR* no. 49. Here there is a reference to the encyclical letter *Humani Generis* of Pius XII). Hence by referring to Thomism in *FR*, the Pope does not seem to promote Thomism as *the* philosophy of the Church, but he merely wants to point out “how Saint Thomas is an authentic model for all who seek the truth.” (*FR* no.78). In our view, the Pope advocates in *FR* only the *realistic* mode of philosophizing and theologizing found in the thought of St. Thomas. That is the point of his remark that “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.’” (*FR* no. 44).

63 Macquarrie, *Thinking about God*, pp. 23-24.

64 *FR* no. 2. Emphasis in the original text.

65 *FR* nos. 15, 76.

66 *FR* no. 81.

67 *FR* no. 9.

68 *FR* nos. 82, 8.

69 *FR* no. 93. Emphasis in the original text.

70 *FR* no. 94. Emphasis added.

71 John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 1971), pp. 64, 70.

72 St. Augustine, *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, 2, 5: PL 44, 963, quoted in *FR* no. 79. Ellipsis found in *FR*. We have quoted only a part of it.

73 *FR* no. 83. Emphasis in the original text.

74 See above pp. 11-14.

75 M. de Unamuno, *Diario Intimo* (Alianza Editorial: n.p., 1970), p. 25, quoted in Macquarrie, *Thinking about God*, p. 6.

76 FR no. 55.

77 FR no. 84. This is our interpretation of this passage as referring to biblicism.

78 FR no. 94.

79 Macquarrie, *Thinking about God*, p. 11.

80 *Idem*, *Paths in Spirituality*, p. 71.

81 *Idem*, *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1963; 1978), pp. 223 – 24.

82 I. M. Bochenski, *Contemporary European Philosophy*, trans. D. Nicholl and K. Aschenbrenner (California: n.p., 1956), p. 153, quoted in Macquarrie, *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought*, p. 224.

83 Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology*, p. 34.

84 *Idem*, *Thinking about God*, pp. 179-80.

85 *Ibid.*

86 Thomas F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 50.

87 Paul Tillich, "The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols," in Sidney Hook, ed., *Religious Experience and Truth* (New York: New York University Press, 1961), p. 7.

88 FR no. 83.

89 Joseph Fitzpatrick, "Philosophy of Religion: The Linguistic Approach," *Heythrop Journal* 19 (July 1978): 239.

90 John Hick, "Sceptics and Believers," in *idem*, ed., *Faith and the Philosophers* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 239.

91 Thus a flood of discussions followed Antony Flew's challenge to the religious philosophers and theologians to justify the cognitive meaning – the truth-element – of religious statements. ("Theology and Falsification," in *idem* & Alasdair MacIntyre, eds., *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955; study edition, 1972), pp. 96-100; 106-109).

92 Ronald S. Laura, "The Positivist Poltergeist and Some Difficulties with Wittgensteinian Liberation," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2 (fall 1971): 188. Similarly, MacKay says: "The burden of Christian religion is not primarily that certain attitudes are desirable nor that certain practices are comfortable, but that *certain things are true*. ... Questions of the [cognitive] meaningfulness and truth-status of religious language are thus central to Christian apologetic." (D.M. MacKay, "Language, Meaning and God," *Philosophy* 47 (January 1972): 1. Emphasis added).

93 FR no. 84.

94 'The Metaphysics of Being' was the title of a course taught by Monsignor De Raeymaeker at the Institute of Philosophy, University of

Leuven. (Jan Van der Veken, "My Way from Being to Becoming," in Cloots and Sia, eds., *Framing a Vision of the World*, p. 267).

95 *FR* no. 83.

96 *Ibid.*

97 *FR* no. 61.

98 *FR* no.55. In fact, the talk of "the end of metaphysics' is not a philosopher's contention only: it is in fact our actual way of living. Differentiation and fragmentation seem to be a distinctive feature of everyday culture, both on the level of thinking and on the level of acting. ... Our world is a world of plurality and the way to manage it is up to each of us, without any certainty, without any ultimate ground or point of view, without any final rational hold." (Cloots, "Thinking Things Together: The Concept of Metaphysics," p. 67).

99 *FR* no. 5.

100 *FR* no. 83. In *FR* the word 'metaphysics' is used 10 times and 'metaphysical' 14 times.

101 *FR* no. 3.

102 *FR* no. 76.

103 *FR* no. 4. Emphasis in the original text.

104 *FR* no. 83.

105 *FR* no. 97.

106 *FR* no. 103. In fact, the crucial question between realism and phenomenism is whether man can reach out "always and everywhere, for all that is beautiful, good and true." (*FR* no. 21).

107 *FR* no. 97.

108 Cloots, "Thinking Things Together: The Concept of Metaphysics," p. 72.

109 *Ibid.* This is in striking contrast with phenomenology and the analysis of language which remain with experience, and do not abstract from experience to construct metaphysical theories. (See above pp. 9-12).

110 *FR* no. 83. Emphasis in the original text.

111 *FR* no. 83.

112 *FR* nos. 83, 97, 66, 98.

113 *Modes of Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1938; Free Press edition, 1968), p. 8.

114 *FR* no. 44.

115 *FR* no. 84.

116 *Ibid.*

117 As a matter of fact, even these experiences and their meanings themselves cannot be accepted uncritically. Neither the meanings of the mono-dimensional experiences of the modern consumerist nor the conclusions of the Marxian-inspired analysis of socio-economic structures can be taken without criticism.

118 Phenomenalism of all varieties stops short at these meanings and does not, and cannot, proceed further to the affirmation of their truth-element. In order to move from meaning to truth, a metaphysical mode of

reflection is needed: “To determine the truth-status of the results of one’s investigations into the meaning of both common human experience and Christian texts the theologian should employ an explicitly transcendental or metaphysical mode of reflection.” (David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. x. Emphasis in the original text). In fact, these considerations are applicable to any theology that starts ‘from below’ – such as liberation theology, feminist theology and so forth. Whatever be the methods employed for unearthing the meaning of different experiences, the theologian should attempt to correlate these meanings with truth-element from the Christian point of view. Or else such a theology would end up in reductionism. That is the point of the Pope’s remark that “a Christology, for example, which proceeded solely ‘from below’, as is said now-a-days, or an ecclesiology developed solely on the model of civil society, would be hard pressed to avoid the danger of such reductionism.” (FR no. 97).

119 FR no. 83.

120 FR no. 48.

121 *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929; Free Press edition, 1969), p. 7.

122 For an argument upholding the cognitive element in religious discourse and Christian faith, see Joseph Mathew Angadiyil, “Semantics and Theology: A *Status Questionis*,” *Jeevadhara* 61 (Jan.-Feb. 1981): 65-66. This article in fact presents the conclusions of the present writer’s doctoral dissertation entitled, “From Modal Language to Model-Language: A Plea for the Cognitivity of Religious Discourse,” Institute of Philosophy, University of Leuven, 1980.

123 FR no. 83.

PART II

THE POST-MODERN AND HERMENEUTICS

CHAPTER III

FIDES ET RATIO AND METAPHYSICS

STANISLAUS SWAMIKANNU, SDB

On different occasions during his pontificate, John Paul II, the philosopher Pope, has expressed his concern for a serious, sincere and well-guided intellectual research into different fields in view of ascertaining and upholding truth. Now, in *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason), he explains why this light of truth no longer shines through the work of most philosophers, as well as the corrosive effects of that ambiguity on our culture. Moving beyond the destructive moral and political consequences of bad ideas, John Paul II takes on the state of philosophy itself: its loss of true metaphysical inquiry and its lack of confidence in, of all things, intelligence.

The encyclical is meant for everyone, but it would be naïve not to recognize that the Pope clearly has professional philosophers and theologians in mind when he sets down guidelines for pursuing their sciences well. Like a good father in Christ, the Pope wants to explain to us not just tell us, what he finds wrong with some directions in modern philosophy and theology. This time, John Paul II calls for a reconciliation between the theological disciplines- especially as practiced within the setting of seminarians, ecclesiastical faculties, and Catholic colleges and the truth of the Catholic faith, and he makes a similar appeal, *mutatis mutandis*, to philosophers, especially when *he stresses the importance of metaphysics (Fides et Ratio 83-84)*

MAN IS A SEEKER AFTER TRUTH

Pope John Paul II addresses the question of the relationship between faith and reason in Chapter IV, after a sequence of chapters entitled, “The Revelation of God’s Wisdom” (Chapter I), “*Credo Ut Intellegam*” (chapter, where He examines the so-called wisdom literature), and “*Intellego Ut Credam*” (chapters, in which he describes the search for truth and its different faces). It is in this section that the Pope defines the human being as “the one who seeks the truth” (*Fides et Ratio*, 45). This he does on the basis of appeals to both Aristotle and St. Augustine, by arguing that all human beings desire to know, and that truth is the proper object of this desire (*Fides et Ratio*, 40). Truth first comes to us as a question, “Does life have a meaning?” and truth presents itself as a universal. He continues, “The first absolutely certain truth of our life, beyond the fact that we exist, is the inevitability of our death” (*Fides et Ratio* 42-43). Yet beyond these universal truths, we seek an absolute, a supreme value or final explanation that will give our search for meaning an ultimate ground.

John Paul distinguishes between several different modes of truth: (1) scientific truth, which is confirmed through experimentation; (2) truth that is proper to everyday life, which, he says, is dependent upon immediate evidence; (3) philosophical truth, which is attained through speculation, and, finally, (4) religious truth, which is grounded in philosophy and which, through the various religious traditions, offers answers to ultimate questions. Pope John Paul II also appeals to the notion of unity of truth that he describes as a fundamental premise of human reasoning. It is on the basis of this unity that he claims the “Truth which God reveals to us in Jesus Christ...[that] is not opposed to the truths which philosophy perceives” (*Fides Ratio* 51). It is at this point that Pope John Paul II examines the links between faith and philosophy in the course of history in order to arrive at a set of principles to establish the correct link between the two.

As an introduction, Pope John Paul II recounts important moments in the encounter of faith and reason: the engagement of the Apostles with Epicurean and Stoic thought, the christianizing of Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought, the synthesis devised by Augustine, the scholastic theology of Anselm, and the originality of Aquinas. It is only with the growth of the first universities during the late medieval period that the separation between faith and reason, theology and philosophy, occurred. The unity between reason and faith was destroyed by a system of rational knowledge that took the place of faith. Most modern philosophy, we are told, has taken this rationalist route, moving further away from Christian revelation. Hegelian idealism, dialectical materialism, and atheistic humanism “presented themselves as new religions” which, on the socio-political plane, “gave rise to totalitarian systems which have been disastrous for humanity” (*Fides et Ratio*, 70). In science, positivism divorced itself from metaphysics and any ethical orientation, abandoning the Christian worldview. At its worst it succumbed to the logic of the market, serving as a handmaiden to technological ‘progress’. The crisis of rationalism in both its Hegelian and positivistic forms has finally led to nihilism. The search for truth has been abandoned, and some philosophers have sought instead “a subjective certainty” or a “pragmatic sense of utility” (*Fides et Ratio*, 72-73). The Pope calls for a renewal of philosophical inquiry.

CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF HUMAN REASON FOR OBJECTIVE TRUTH

There is a lack of confidence in the capacity of reason to rise above the maelstrom of data and facts and proceed to a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life. This lack of confidence in the capacity of reason is expressed in the recent trends in philosophy which go by the blanket term, post-modernity. The pervasive mentality of today’s academy encourages, whether intentionally or not, the ‘nihilism’ that *Fides et Ratio* finds at the heart of postmodern philosophy and all its scholarly

corollaries (eclecticism, historicism, scientism, relativism etc.). An immediate and disastrous consequence of nihilism in thinking, according to *Fides et Ratio*, leads the human mind “to an ever deepening introversion, locked within the confines of its own immanence without reference of any kind to the transcendent”. (*Fides et Ratio*, 199, italics added). The void appears especially in academic settings, where the separation of faith and reason has reached dramatic proportions.

Of course, some of us academics will defend ourselves by claiming that we are taking the Socratic high road of questioning and fostering dialogue. The trouble is that the postmodern technique of deconstruction - the radical denial of intelligible order in reality - goes, according to *Fides et Ratio*, far beyond challenging a youthful mind with reasonable doubt. Even Descartes employed his method of doubt to reaffirm the immortality of the soul and the existence to God. In the hand of its postmodern practitioners, Socratic questioning has become an endless array of objections leading to the removal of all foundations for knowledge. As the Holy Father writes, “Whether we admit it or not, there comes for everyone the moment when existence must be anchored to a truth recognized as final, a truth that confers a certitude no longer open to doubt.”

In *Fides et Ratio*, it is affirmed that the meanings of all these crucial terms - finality, truth, and certitude - have no place in postmodernism except as evidence of unenlightened prejudice. Such old fashioned attitudes have to be removed so that human action can be judged, not from the vantage point of natural law, but from the perspective of the dominant ideology and the media establishment it controls.

Censures have been delivered against all forms of fideism, radical traditionalism, ontologism, Marxism (including forms of liberation theology based upon it), evolutionism, existentialism, historicism, and rationalism. Pope John Paul II’s concern is that certain past problems have returned. He is particularly concerned by the “deep-seated distrust of reason” surfacing in talk about “the end of metaphysics” (*Fides et Ratio*, 83). There are also signs of a resurgence of both rationalism and fideism in contemporary theologies. In short, he argues, “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” (*Fides et Ratio*, 86, italics added)

Fides et Ratio reminds the Catholic world that the *Magisterium* still reveres the capacity of the human mind to achieve a fundamental “consonance” with objective reality (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*). The well chosen passages of Leo XIII’s *Aeterni Patris* (1879) strongly support this claim of the present encyclical. Pope John Paul II suggests that postmodernism appears on the horizon at this point in history as a form of nihilism, resulting from the crisis of rationalism, for which Catholic theology provides the precisely correct philosophical antidote: self-certainty and absolute values based upon faith in the truth of personal existence sought in relation to God revealed in the incarnation of Christ. He writes:

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 nihilistic interpretation, life is no more than an occasion for sensations and experience in which the ephemeral has pride of place. Nihilism is at the root of the widespread mentality which claims that a definite commitment should no longer be made, because everything is fleeting and provisional (*Fides et Ratio*, 71).

Modern philosophy, he says, has abandoned the investigation of being to concentrate on knowing. This move accentuates the limited capacity to know rather than the use of knowledge to reach the truth, leading to forms of agnosticism, relativism and pluralism. The Pope argues, "A legitimate pluralism of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of the most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in the truth" (*Fides et Ratio*, 10). Against the 'postmodern' nihilistic view, Pope John Paul II pits a set of absolute values based upon the radical question of truth about personal existence, about being, and about God. He reaffirms the truth of faith and the faith in truth as a foundation for personal and communal life, suggestion that a core of philosophical insight in the history of thought has revealed certain principles as a "spiritual heritage of humanity"—and implicit philosophy— which all schools should use as a reference-point. He includes the principles of non-contraction, finality and causality, certain fundamental moral norms (unspecified) "which are shared by all," as well as the concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth, and goodness. This is what he calls "right reason".

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, *orthos logos*, *recta ratio* (*Fides et Ratio*, 8).

POSTMODERN SITUATION – A NIHILISM WITHOUT TRANSCENDENT REALITY

The dangers that lie in contemporary currents of thought are named by the Pope as eclecticism, scientism, pragmatism, and a historicism that tends to appear as 'modernism'. It is the nihilist interpretation that acts as "the common framework of many philosophies that have rejected the meaningfulness of being." Pope John Paul II reserves his greatest criticism for this nihilist interpretation because it denies all foundation, negates all objective truth, and thereby denies humanity and the identity of human

beings. It is at this point that Pope John Paul II is clearest in respect to so-called postmodern philosophy and I shall quote the full paragraph.

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 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 judgment on what is called 'postmodern' is sometimes positive and sometimes negative, and because there is 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 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 (*Fides et Ratio*, 133)

Pope John Paul II continues; "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 nationalist optimism, which viewed history as the triumphant progress of reason, the source of happiness and freedom; and now, at the end of this century, one of our greatest threats is the temptation to despair" (*Fides et Ratio* 133-4)

THREE-FOLD REQUIREMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Pope John Paul II acknowledges philosophy's contribution to dogmatic, fundamental and moral theology, and describes its different stances with regard to Christian faith. He then outlines philosophy's current requirements and tasks, keeping in mind the problems we face because of their distrust of reason (Chapter VII). First, given that we face a "crisis of meaning" and a fragmentation of knowledge", philosophy needs to recover its role as the search of the ultimate and overruling meaning of life (*Fides et Ratio*, 119). Second, it must verify the human capacity to know the truth and attain knowledge of an objective reality. These two imply the third requirement: "the need for a philosophy of genuine metaphysical range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something

absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth” (*Fides et Ratio*, 122).

He concludes by appealing to theologians, to philosophers, to teachers of philosophy, and to scientists to help recover the unity of truth that he perceives as so necessary in moving from phenomena to foundation as the greatest challenge that humanity faces at the end of this millennium.

POSTMODERNITY IS NOT NIHILISTIC

Pope John Paul II talks of the crisis of meaning and the fragmentation of knowledge as aspects of nihilism, a philosophy of nothing, where life is comprised only of sensations and experiences and where there can be no faith or commitment because everything is provisional and uncertain. He attributes this nihilism to postmodern philosophy, no doubt with the philosopher Frederic Nietzsche in mind (though Nietzsche is never explicitly named at any point in the encyclical). Nietzsche is often taken as the grandfather of postmodern philosophy, and as the thinker whose influence has been decisive on the ‘movement’ of contemporary French philosophy sometime referred to as post-structuralism.¹ Yet, as can be seen from the above quotation where Pope John Paul II refers to ‘postmodernity’, his analysis is far from being dismissive or condemnatory. He is, it might be said, gentle and even-handed, suggesting - surprisingly perhaps - that “the currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention” (*Fides et Ratio*, 133).

Pope John Paul II’s presentation of postmodern philosophy as nihilistic requires a more thoughtful and nuanced response that takes into account the history of the concept of nihilism, its appropriation and place in the thinking of Nietzsche and Heidegger, and its subsequent influence for contemporary Continental Philosophy. Only on the basis of an understanding of this history and a productive encounter with the nihil, is it possible to recognize the theological implications of postmodern philosophy, in both its metaphysical and anti-metaphysical expressions, and the potential for a dialogue or on-going conversation between philosophy and theology.

Accounts of the so-called postmodern philosophy that attribute its source and power of inspiration to Nietzsche typically begin with Nietzsche’s revelation that “God is dead.” Often on the basis of rudimentary understanding of this remark, commentators falsely attribute a nihilism to Nietzsche (and to postmodern philosophy), as though Nietzsche was advocating nihilism as a philosophy. Nothing could be farther from Nietzsche’s purpose. While it is the case of Nietzsche that nihilism proceeds as a consequence from the fact that “God is dead”, it is also the starting point for a philosophy of the future that promotes the reevaluation of all values “to pursue the problem of the total health of a people, time, race or of humanity,” aimed at “growth, power, life.”² It is also the case that those who follow Nietzsche, particularly Heidegger, but also those

contemporary French philosophers we call ‘poststructuralists,’ sympathetically understand Nietzsche’s philosophy as a basis to overcome the desire to substitute and surrogate or replacement for God as the transcendental truth, centre, or eternal guarantee for morality and self-certainty. And this is so, whether that replacement be Reason, science, or – perhaps the greatest temptation of all – the Human. This Nietzschean trope, along with methodological concerns of structuralism as applied in linguistics and the social sciences, is the source of inspiration for the alleged anti-humanism of Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard and many others.³

There is considerable disagreement in interpretation concerning the status of Nietzsche’s “death of God” pronouncement. Martin Heidegger’s monumental *Nietzsche*⁴ equivocates over Nietzsche’s meaning, suggesting that Nietzsche is not attacking the Christian God of revelation but only a misrepresentation of God in metaphysical onto-theology. In the final volume of his *Nietzsche*, Heidegger traces the philosophical use of the word nihilism to Frederic Jacobi, later to Turgenev, Jean-Paul Sartre and Dostoevsky. Against these early uses, Heidegger claims:

Nietzsche, uses nihilism as the name for the historical movement that he was the first to recognize and that already governed the previous century while defining the century to come, the movement whose essential interpretation he concentrates in the terse sentence: “God is dead.” That is to say, “the Christian God” has lost His power over beings and over the determination of man. “Christian God” also stands for the “transcendent” in general in its various meanings – for “ideals” and “norms”, “principles” and “rules”, “ends” and “values” which are set “above” the being, in order to give being as a whole a purpose, and order, and – as it is succinctly expressed – “meaning”.⁵

For Heidegger, drawing heavily on the fragments of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche’s sense of nihilism is interpreted in terms of the historical process completing the modern era, culminating in the “end of metaphysics” and a “revaluation [that] thinks Being for the first time as value.”⁶

Heidegger’s essay “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being” in *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, builds upon Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s nihilism as the collapse of “cosmological” values (unity, purpose, truth, Being), a humanization of metaphysics and morality, and thus, the fulfillment of a metaphysics of subjectivity. It also clearly maps out Heidegger’s judgment that Nietzsche never successfully engages the nihil – as that which conceals the truth of the Being of beings. This carries the strong implication for Heidegger, that Nietzsche’s nihilism can never

become a value. Nietzsche's thought is "negative onto-theology," unable to think unconcealment as the truth of Being. Nietzsche is considered the "last metaphysician," and it remains for Heidegger himself to initiate a thinking that encounters Being in withdrawal and, thereby, to "step back" out of metaphysics into history of being.⁷

Many scholars in Nietzsche, aver that much has been made of the Nietzsche-Heidegger connection and Heidegger's Nietzsche as a source of inspiration for postwar French philosophy. It is also the case, however, that interpretations of Nietzsche by Bataille, Klossowsky, Derrida, Kofman, and Irigaray, either owe little directly to Heidegger's Nietzsche or take issue with its totalizing account of the history of metaphysics, emphasizing by contrast, Nietzsche's rhetorical strategies and multiplicity of styles, the difference of force and power, the playfulness of interpretative multiplicity, and what Derrida calls "the axial intention of [Nietzsche's] concept of interpretation": the emancipation of interpretation from the constraints of truth "which always implies the presence of the signified (*aletheia* or *adequatio*)."⁸

A PLEA FOR A NON-METAPHYSICAL THEOLOGY

Simon Critchley argued that it is the Christian reactive response to the all-too-human origin of our values in declaring existence or life meaningless that is the real source of nihilism. That is, once the transcendental guarantees of Christian morality and grand expectations based upon them have collapsed or been exposed for what they really are, an active nihilism ensues. And yet the same genealogical critique, the loss of faith in the categories of reason, can also inspire a revolutionary demand for things to be different. Post-Nietzschean philosophy not only provides a critique of the rational, autonomous (Christian-liberal) subject but also redirects our attention to historical sources of normativity that are embedded in cultures. It provides, in other words, a path for moral reconstruction after the so-called "death of God"- a way forward and a positive response to the question of nihilism that demands the reevaluation of values. In doing so it belongs to the counter-enlightenment tradition of thought that asserts the historicity of human reason and experience on the basis of a radical questioning of the transcendental guarantee and moral authority of God, and of all possible substitutes for God (Humanity, Reason, Science, the transcendental signifier).

For Critchley, Nietzsche provides the critical response through his concept of nihilism which is decisive for a whole generation of critical thinkers from Heidegger and Adorno to Lacan, Derrida and Foucault, namely that the subject's freedom goes hand in hand with that collapse of moral certainty in the world, that the highest values have devalued themselves. Nihilism is the breakdown of the order of meaning, where all that was posited as a transcendent source of value in pre-Kantian metaphysics becomes null and void, where there are no cognitive skyhooks

upon which to hang a meaning for life all transcendent claims for a meaning to life have been reduced to mere value- in Kant the reduction of God and the immortality of the soul to the status of postulates of pure practical reason- and those values have become, for Nietzsche, ... standing in need of “transvaluation” or reevaluation”.

Yet this does not mean that there can be no theology, or, indeed, that faith and reason might not be reunified. It may, however, mean the development of a Christian theology, so to speak, after God⁹ or the notion of postfoundationalist theology (Van Huyssteen). In any event, thinkers after Nietzsche and the event of “the death of God” are actively pursuing the possibility of postmodern theologies (see, for example, Thiselton and Tilly). Some of these postmodern theologies draw directly upon the “transcendent” of Nietzsche, including most notably Heidegger and Derrida.

Merold Westphal suggests that “the question of postmodern theology is the question of the nature of discourse about deity that would both be tied to the metaphysical assumptions postmodern philosophy finds untenable.¹⁰ Westphal then considers three possibilities for postmodern theology: the negative theology of tradition;¹¹ the a/theology of Mark Taylor (*Erring, 1984*), and the post-metaphysical theology of Jean Luc Marion (*Dieu sans être, 1982*), written in a Kierkegaardian mode. A full inventory of forms of ‘post-theology’ is waiting to be composed and if the list is to be anything like complete, it must begin by mentioning the potentialities inherent in the combined legacies of Nietzsche and Heidegger, their French, German, and Anglo-American ‘descendants’ and, indeed,, other thinkers who represent a significant anticipation of ‘postmodern’ philosophy, such as William James and Ludwig Wittgenstein. When this list or typology is provisionally drawn up, we might see not the “recovery” of the range of authentic wisdom and truth proper to philosophical inquiry, as Pope John Paul II wishes, but rather the impossibility of thinking we can never escape metaphysics, together with a better understanding of the costs of thinking we could ever ‘overcome’ it.

METAPHYSICAL ABSOLUTE AND THE MONOTHEISTIC GOD

According to Samuel Ijsseling, a renowned professor from the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, the movement from Greek polytheism to Greek monotheism was mediated through the logical necessity of metaphysics.¹² In this sense, the existence of many gods cannot be thought of in philosophy, for it would mean the existence of many highest beings, which is a contradiction. However, the claim that Greek monotheism a result of the logical necessity of Greek metaphysics would be valid only on condition that one answers the following questions – ‘What does one understand by the word God? and ‘What is logical necessity?’ – in a particular way. When for example the term ‘God’ refers to the highest being, then it is imperative that there be only one of that kind. In this sense

polytheism indeed cannot even be considered about. Samuel Ijsseling raises useful questions in this regard. I shall single out two of them: “Is God a being or Being itself? And if he were to be Being itself, distinguished from beings, of plural or multiple?”¹³ Be that as it may, one thing is certain from Samuel Ijsseling’s questions. He says that the Western philosophy, in what concerns its fundamental structure, is monotheistic or, to use Heideggerian expression, onto-theo-logical. Even those who deny the existence of such a God are trapped in that onto-theo-logical structure, namely, that there is one reality, one world, one history and one truth. In such an onto-theo-logical fundamental structure, the thought of accepting two or more irreconcilable ‘truths’ is an impossibility. According to Samuel Ijsseling, after the problems raised by Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida, this is not self-evident.

Efforts have been made to separate the two issues that characterize, according to Heidegger, the onto-theo-logical nature of metaphysics: the question of Being (ontology) and the God of faith (theology). In other words, both philosophers and theologians have been trying to separate religion and philosophy.¹⁴ One remembers the well known expression of Blaise Pascal, ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is not the God of the philosopher and the intellectuals’. The latter idea had been already expressed by the twelfth century rabbi, Yehouda Haleevi.¹⁵ The distinction between the God of faith and the philosophical Absolute may be useful. But, by over-emphasizing this separation, the original intention of identifying the two has been neglected. The question as to why the two (ontology and theology) were initially identified (which means the forgetfulness of Being for Heidegger) is as important as the desire to separate the two in the present anti-metaphysical age.¹⁶

If in scholastic metaphysics, which evidently identified the philosophical absolute with the God of theology, Being was constructed as the absolute with the transcendental characteristics of goodness, truth, beauty and unity, it had a vital function to fulfil. The God of faith, even if more and greater than the philosophical absolute (like person, Father, benevolence, etc.), should have at least the characteristics of the philosophical absolute.

CONCLUSION

We can and should concede that the concern of *Fides et Ratio* for metaphysics is very legitimate indeed. Who among us can be a spectator in the face of a growing meaninglessness? Human beings will not dare to live in illusion for long! He/she is never satisfied with the minimum: always more! Always higher! Always ahead! Why not that simple jump, always move beyond, and above the visible world? In short, human life demands truth, finality, certitude, meaning and transcendence!

However, the constant plea for and even an obsession with the older metaphysics, having a steady and stereotype reference to St.

Augustine, St. Anselm and St. Thomas Aquinas will not take us any further. We have come a long way. Metaphysics has, rightly or wrongly, encountered friends and foes on its trajectory leading up to the present day, so-called post modern world. We have been sufficiently warned all along.

While *Fides et Ratio* is correct in pointing out the situation of post modern meaninglessness as a malaise, it does not go further than saying that the distrust in the capacity of reason is the sole cause of this malaise. A closer look at the issue suggests that the problem lies not so much in distrust of the capacity of reason, as in the inadequate context, partly created by Western metaphysics, which constrains its movement. To furnish an example, the hierarchical dualistic context which began with Plato and Aristotle, canonized by the medieval philosopher saints, has come to stay. Reason, whatever be its capacity, is constrained to operate within this context of dualism: the world as a two-tiered reality of matter and of spirit. Every human effort – be it political, religious, social, scientific, intellectual – has been influenced by this dual context: subject-object, matter-form, mind-body, natural-supernatural, soul-body, being-becoming, one-many, etc.

Another fundamental issue at work in *Fides et Ratio* is the general optimism and faith that Christian revelation, God in Jesus Christ, is the final certitude which will put to rest the insatiable human desire to know and explain reality. In this connection, I would like to refer to a distinction that Van de Wiele, a late Louvain philosopher, makes within philosophical thought. According to him, philosophy, in its quest for the ultimate meaning and foundations and in its response to the same, has become bifurcated: one way led to the Divine and the sacred as the ultimate explanation of reality; the other way looked for a natural and non-divine explanation of things. He notes further that the onto-theology of the Christian era had over-emphasized the importance of the first way, while the second way receive hardly any attention. Whoever bypasses and rejects the second way, deforms in a certain sense the problem of being and falsifies a real quest for ultimate foundations.¹⁷ The struggle against Western metaphysics appears to be synonymous with the struggle “to rid philosophy and particularly the problem of being of Christian theological remnants.”¹⁸ The age-old problem of the relation between philosophy and theology is back on the scene. The encyclical addresses this issue as its central theme. In a sense, times have changed. The question faced by postmodern thinkers with regard to the end of metaphysics is not so much the negation of metaphysics in itself, as the struggle to separate metaphysics from theology. This has, according to postmodern thinkers a number of advantages both for theology and philosophy: the human search for truth will remain open-ended without the constrains of a supreme being; the other of Western reason has a chance of being heard; flux which is one of the basic aspects of reality can be accounted for; the hierarchical dualism of the Western world can be reevaluated.

It is the firm hope, whether well-founded or not, of postmodern thinkers that a theology without metaphysical assumptions is more conducive for a multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

NOTES

1 A Schrift, *Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism*. (New York & London: Routledge, 1995). Id., "Nietzsche's French Legacy" in B. Magnus and K. Higgins, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 323-355.

2 F. Nietzsche's, *The Gay Science*. Trans. W. Kaufman. (New York: Vintage, 1974 [orig. 1882]), 35.

3 M.A. Peters, "Education and Humanism: Heidegger, Derrida, and the New Humanities" in G. Biesta and D. Egea-Kuehne, Eds. *Derrida and Education*. (London: Routledge, 2000)

4 M. Heidegger, Nietzsche, Volume IV Trans. F. A. Capuzi, Ed. With Notes and an Analysis by D. F. Krell. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).

5 *Ibid.*, 4.

6 *Ibid.*, 6.

7 *Id.*, "Overcoming Metaphysics", Heidegger, M., *The End of Philosophy*, Trans J. Stambaugh, London: Souvenir Press, 1975), 81-110; *id.*, "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in W. Kaufmann, (Ed.) *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: New American Library, 1975), 265-279.

8 A Schrift, *Nietzsche's French Legacy*: in B. Magnus and K. Higgins, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 335.

9 D. Cupitt, *The Last Philosophy*. (London: SCM Press, 1995); *id.*, *After God: The Future of Religion*. (Guernsey, UK: Guernsey Press, 1997); J. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of Religion at the Limits of Reason Alone." In J. Derrida and G. Vattimo, eds. *Religion*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 1-78.

10 M. Westphal, "Postmodern Theology" in E. Craig, ed. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 7. (London: Routledge, 1998), 583-586.

11 While Derrida denies that deconstruction is a form of negative theology, Kevin Hart suggests that "negative theology is a corm of deconstruction of positive theology, and in this way the paradigm of post-metaphysical theology;" it has been suggested by James Bernauer that Foucault's work can be considered a 'negative theology' based on his negative anthropology.

12 S. Ijsseling, *Appollo, Dionysos, Aphrodite en de anderen: Griekse goden in de hedendaagse filosofie* (Boom/Amsterdam, 1994), 178. He writes: "De ontwikkeling van het Griekse polytheïsme naar een

monotheïsme verloopt in de filosofie volgens een logische noodzakelijkheid. Filosofische gezien zou het bestaan van vele goden niet gedacht kunnen worden encyclical wat niet gedacht kan worden zou volgens de meeste filosofen sinds parmenides, geen werkelijkheid kunnen zijn.”

13 *Ibid.*, p. 179. The Dutch text reads: “Is God een zinde of het zijn zelf? En Wanneer hij het zijn zelf zou zijn, betekent dat hij noodzakelijk een encyclical enig is? Is het onmogelijk dat hij zijn, onderscheiden van het ziknde, in zichzelf veelvuldig is?”

14 On the hand, as we have already noted in one of the footnotes of thesis section, philosophy was considered, in the scholastic tradition at least, as the handmaid of theology. On the other hand, theologians were always uncomfortable about *the necessity* of philosophy for theology. The discomfort with the necessity of philosophy for theology sprang from the theological conviction that the God of faith and revelation is more than the Absolute arrived at as the conclusion of human reasoning (metaphysics).

15 E. Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient al’idee*,

16 Cf. J. Van de Wiele, “La Metaphysique et le probleme de Dieu: Un dialogue avec Martin Heidegger,” in *Philosophie de la Religion: Godsdienstfilosofie. Miscellanea Albert Dondeyne*, ed. Behjamin Willaert, (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium XXXV), (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987, 1st ed, 1974), pp. 365-391.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 371.

18 *Ibid.*, 372. “Ils [Nietzsche et Heidegger] desirent arracher less restes de la theologie chretienne dela problematique philosophique, encyclical particulier de celle de l’etre.”

CHAPTER IV

RORTY'S ANTI-FOUNDATIONALISM AND *FIDES ET RATIO*

IVO COELHO, SDB

Fides et Ratio (*FR*) critiques both the modern turn to the subject, as well as the prevalent crisis of meaning, the fragmentation of meaning, nihilism and the proclamation of the end of metaphysics. It decries the contemporary tendency to champion a 'regione debole' but goes along with contemporary criticism of the self sufficient and totalizing reason of the enlightenment. It does mention post-modernity, but is cautious in its appraisal of it. It attacks those who upheld a consensus theory as against the correspondence theory of truth. It seems to be reserved for nihilism and for those tendencies within post-modernity that coincide with nihilism.

It would seem then that *FR* is a critique of both modernity and post-modernity. It therefore provides a foil against which to dialogue with Rorty. Rorty himself, while advocating a thorough going 'ethnocentrism,' does admit the possibility of dialogue or conversation.

I will first present Rorty, then go on to *Fides et Ratio* and finally comment on Rorty from my own perspective – a perspective which, recognizing the situatedness of reason, hold that we are not imprisoned within our facticity and thrownness. Such, I would like to believe, is the position of people as varied as Heidegger, Gadamer, and MacIntyre, and also of *Fides et Ratio*.

RORTY'S ANTI-FOUNDATIONALISM

In the new *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Rorty is mentioned in the article on post-structuralism,¹ but in that on postmodernism.² The piece dedicated to Rorty himself mentions neither postmodernism nor post-structuralism, contending itself with referring to Rorty as a pragmatist who advocates anti-foundationalism in epistemology, anti-representationalism in philosophy of language, anti-essentialism and both realism and anti-realism in metaphysics and ironism in meta-ethics.³

In Stanislaus Swamikannu's paper on postmodernism, Rorty is mentioned only in a note.⁴ However, the paper does talk about favourite Rortian themes such as the attack on 'knowledge as representation' and 'on reason as searching for foundations,'⁵ and the key postmodern conviction that we cannot escape from our own limited cultural framework and transhistorical and transcultural assertions.⁶

Rorty's link with postmodernism is perhaps best clarified by Lawrence Cahoon in his introduction to his anthology on postmodernism.

Cahoone points out that in the area of philosophy, the term postmodern “came in the 1980s to refer primarily to French poststructuralist philosophy, and secondarily to a general reaction against modern rationalism, utopianism, and what came to be called ‘fundamentalism,’ the attempt to establish the foundations of knowledge and judgment, an attempt that had been a preoccupation of philosophy since Rene Descartes in the seventeenth century (although arguably since Plato).”⁷ Among the three books which “galvanized postmodernism as a movement” in the late 1970s, Cahoone lists Richard Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) (the other two being Jenck’s *The Language of Post Modern Architecture* (1977) and Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (1979). Rorty’s book, “while not discussing postmodernism *per se*, argued that the developments of post-Heideggerian European philosophy and post-Wittgensteinian analytic philosophy were converging on a kind of pragmatic anti-foundationalism. Rorty thereby became an American representative of postmodernism, albeit in pragmatic garb. It was partly through Rorty’s influence that, in the 1980s, postmodernism came to have a meaning for most American philosophers, and not just architectural and literary critics.”⁸

Cahoone distinguishes historical, methodological and positive postmodernism. Rorty would obviously qualify as a methodological postmodernist. Methodological postmodernism

rejects the possibility of establishing the foundations, hence the ultimate reliability, of knowledge understood as valid in a realist sense, that is, knowledge claimed to represent the true, independent “real” nature of its objects... Methodological postmodernism is antirealist – claiming that knowledge is made valid not by its relation to its objects, but by its relation to our pragmatic interests, our communal perspectives, our needs, our rhetoric, and so on – and/or anti-foundationalist – undercutting the philosophical attempt to justify realism. Some forms of methodological postmodernism appear to undermine the very possibility of rational inquiry, by subjecting the very notions of ‘truth,’ ‘rationality,’ and ‘meaning’ to critique. Methodological postmodernism is purely negative, that is, it claims or shows the inadequacy or problematic nature of other forms of writing and talking and theorizing, but does not explicitly offer an alternative.⁹

Dean Geuras refers to Rorty as “postmodernism’s most gifted defender.”¹⁰

Rorty points out that the present way of doing philosophy – epistemology as giving rise to metaphysics, and philosophy as judging culture – has its origin in neo-Kantianism. Descartes and Hobbes, he says,

did not distinguish between philosophy and science; they were engaged in trying to distinguish philosophy from religion. The distinction between philosophy as theory of knowledge, and such theory of knowledge as distinct from the sciences insofar as it is their foundation may be found in Descartes and Spinoza, but did not attain self-consciousness until Kant. However, this Kantian picture of philosophy as centered on epistemology and as foundational to culture became generally accepted only after the demise of Hegelianism. This was the work of the neo-Kantians.¹¹

The major point made by Rorty is that the notion of foundations of knowledge – truths which are certain because of their causes rather than because of the arguments given for them – is the fruit of the Greek (and more specifically Platonic) analogy between perceiving and knowing (PMN 157). The essential feature of this analogy is that knowing a proposition to be true involves being caused to something by an object. The object imposes the proposition's truth. This truth is a necessary truth; the grip of the object is ineluctable. Thus, for example, it is claimed that the axioms of geometry have no need of argumentation or justification. (PMN 157-158)

If knowledge and justification are conceived of in terms of privileged relations to the objects that the propositions are about, says Rorty, "we will want to get behind reasons to causes, beyond argument to compulsion from the object known, to a situation in which argument would be not just silly but impossible, for anyone gripped by the object in the required way will be unable to doubt or to see an alternative." (PMN 159) To reach this point, remarks Rorty, "is to reach the foundations of knowledge." (PMN 159) Clearly then Rorty conceives of foundations not only in terms of privileged relations to objects but also in terms of 'compulsion from the object known,' being 'gripped by the object,' being quite 'unable to doubt.' To causal relation between knowledge and objects is added the element of Cartesian certainty.

By means of the 'ocular metaphor,' therefore, Rorty assimilates Plato to the foundationalist conception of philosophy. (Cf. PMN 159, 337) He traces the development (somewhat simplistically, as he himself admits) along the following lines. The original metaphor is that of having our beliefs determined by being brought face to face with the object of belief. Next follows the idea of knowledge as an assemblage of accurate representations. Knowing here is the activity of a quasi-visual faculty, the Mirror of Nature. But how are we to have accurate representations? We have to find within the Mirror a special privileged class of representations so compelling that their accuracy cannot be doubted; these will be the foundations of knowledge, and the discipline which directs us to them will be the foundation of culture. The theory of knowledge is therefore the search for that which compels belief as soon as it is unveiled. Philosophy-as-epistemology is the search for immutable structures within which knowledge, life, and culture are contained – structure set by the privileged representations which it studies. "The neo-Kantian consensus thus appears

as the end-product of an original wish to substitute *confrontation* for *conversation* as the determinant of our belief.” (PMN 163)

By concentrating on the ocular metaphor, Rorty can thus find a unity in the history of Western philosophy. He can therefore speak about the foundationalist premise shared by Plato and Ayer: “We are able to eliminate the possibility of perpetual, undecidable rational disagreement only in those areas where unquestioned links to external reality (= Privileged relations to objects) provide a common ground for the disputants.” (PMN 337)

But is it really possible to identify a set of privileged links to reality? Can we really find “a way of obtaining access to something which ‘grounds’ current practices of justification in something else”? Such a ground is thought to need no justification, because it is so clearly and distinctly perceived as to count as a philosophical foundation. But, says Rorty, this is absurd because the ultimate foundation here is itself unjustifiable, and also because it is assumed that our present vocabulary has some privileged attachment to reality which makes it more than just a further set of descriptions. (PMN 36) Rorty holds that there are really no privileged links, no algorithm, and no explicit criterion for attaining objectivity (cf. PMN 337-338)

Truth as Consensus: Solidarity rather than Objectivity

Positively, Rorty proposes that objectivity is a matter of consensus or agreement rather than correspondence. Truth is ‘what it is better for us to believe’ rather than ‘the accurate representation of reality’ or ‘contact with reality.’¹² Words take meaning from other words, and not by being representations. (PMN 368) Accurate representation is simply an automatic and empty compliment which we pay to those beliefs which are successful in helping us do what we want to do. (PMN 10-11) Rational certainty is a matter of victory in argument rather than of relation to an object.

What exactly does victory in argument mean? What does it mean to hold on to premise or to affirm a proposition? On what grounds does one object to premises? Rorty explains that justification is “a relation between the propositions in question and other propositions from which the former may be inferred.” (PMN 159) But then, what about “the potentially infinite regress of propositions-brought-forward-in-defense-of-other-propositions”? Rorty sees no need to end this regress. “It would be foolish to keep conversations on the subject going once everyone, or the majority, or the wise, are satisfied, but of course we can.” (PMN 159) Certainty, therefore, is a matter of conversation rather than of interaction with nonhuman reality. We must look for an airtight case rather than an unshakable foundation. We ought to be in the logical space of reasons rather than in that of causal relations to objects. (PMN 157)

But if assertions are justified by society rather than by the character of the inner representations they express, then there is no point in

attempting to isolate privileged representation, no point in searching for foundations.¹³ “To choose between these approaches is to choose between truth as ‘what it is good for us to believe’ and truth as ‘contact with reality’” (PMN 176) This is the pragmatist conception of knowledge. Such a pragmatist conception of knowledge eliminates the Greek contrast between contemplation and action, between representing the world and coping with it. (PMN 11)

Rorty admits that “the quest for truth is one among many ways in which we might be edified.” (PMN 360) He points out that for Heidegger, Sartre, Gadamer, objective inquiry is perfectly possible and frequently actual; only, it does not exhaust the process of edification, and in some ways it can even block this process. He adds immediately, however, that objectivity here “should be seen as conformity to the norms of justification (for assertions and for actions) we find about us.” (PMN 361) “The application of such honorifics as ‘objective’ and ‘cognitive’ is never anything more than an expression of the present of, or the hope for, agreement among inquirers.” (PMN 335) Objectivity is the property of theories, which are chosen by rational consensus after adequate discussion. Along the same lines, subjectivity consists in bringing in considerations, which others consider irrelevant. (PMN 338-339)

Does such theory involve Idealism? Rorty thinks not.

From the fact that we have no algorithms, says Rorty, it does not follow that we land in idealism. (PMN 342) “To say that the study of the history of science ... must be hermeneutical, and to deny ... that there is something extra called ‘rational reconstruction’ which can legitimize current scientific practice, is still not to say that the atoms, wave packages, etc., discovered by the physical scientists are creations of the human spirit.” (PMN 345)

However, whatever comfort these words might give to ‘realists’ is quickly denied when Rorty adds that there is no need to be afraid of idealism, because really there is no deep difference between the imagery of making and finding, these are just convenient images. The difference between making and finding is merely the difference between two different vocabularies. (PMN 367-368)

From another angle, Rorty tells us that he does not question the notion that at most one of many incompatible theories can be true. He merely holds that there is no set of necessary and sufficient conditions for picking out the unique ‘true theory’. This, he says, is not surprising in a concrete choice situation; why should it be different for other situations? (PMN 373-374)

What about our being shoved around by physical reality? But this is *contact* with reality, Rorty says; it is a causal, non-intentional, non-description-relative relation. It is not dealing with reality, which involves describing, explaining, predicting, and modifying reality. The former – unmediated pressure – has nothing to do with the sense in which one of our ways of describing physical reality is the right one. Here lack of mediation

is being confused with accuracy of mediation. Absence of description is being confused with a privilege attaching to a certain description. "Only by such a confusion can the inability to offer individuating conditions for the one true description of material things be confused with insensitivity to the things' obduracy." (PMN374-375)

It is not true, says Rorty, that we are able to eliminate the possibility of perpetual disagreement only in those areas where unquestioned links (privileged representations) to external reality provide a common ground to the disputants. (PMN 336-337) There is a middle ground between 'mere matters of taste' and 'matters capable of being settled by a previously storable algorithm.' What exactly is this middle ground? I think Rorty appeals to 'taste', but in a Gadamerian sense which involves phronesis, a non-explicated and in that sense non-criterial way of estimating or judging.

In sum: Rorty is not saying that we create reality; at the same time, he plays down the difference between making and knowing. He does not want to deny brute reality, but feels we cannot have any accurate mediated access to it. He says there are no explicit criteria for choosing between various descriptions, and yet he is willing to talk about a middle way, involving phronesis and conversation, for settling such matters.

Hermeneutics rather than Epistemology

Rorty conceives of two possible roles for philosophy: (1) Socratic intermediary between various discourses, compromising or transcending disagreements in the course of conversation; (2) cultural overseer that knows everyone's common ground, the Platonic philosopher-king. The first role is appropriate to hermeneutics, the second to epistemology. (PMN 317-318)

Hermeneutics sees relations between various discourses as strands in possible conversation, with hope of agreement, which is not a hope of discovering an antecedently existing common ground epistemology but instead sees hope of agreement as token of the existence of a common ground. Again, for hermeneutics, to be rational is to refrain from thinking that there is a special set of terms in which all contributions to the conversation must be put; to be rational is to be willing to pick up the jargon the interlocutor rather than translating it into one's own. For epistemology instead, to be rational is to find the special set of terms, if agreement is to become possible. (PMN 318)

The notion of knowledge as accurate representation naturally lends itself to the notion that certain sorts of representations or processes or expressions are privileged, basic, and foundational. (PMN 318-319) But the hermeneutic circle is unavoidable; we will not be able to isolate basic elements except on the basis of a prior knowledge of the whole; and we cannot get a prior knowledge of the whole until we have an understanding of the parts. (PMN318) Does this mean that we can never arrive at

understanding? No, for vicious circles are logical entities, whereas coming to understand is more like getting acquainted with a person than like following a demonstration. (PMN 319) Getting into conversation with strangers is, like acquiring a new virtue or skill by imitating models, more a question of *phronesis* than *episteme*. (PMN 319)

Again, hermeneutics is Whiggish: it inevitably takes some norm for granted. We begin from where we are. (PMN 321) There is no permanent neutral framework.

In later writings, Rorty tends to avoid the term hermeneutics, perhaps because of the suspicion that hermeneutics itself is somehow 'transcendental' and metaphysical.¹⁴ He speaks clearly, however, of what he calls the 'ethnocentrism' of his position. For objectivity in the sense of unforced agreement will necessarily be among 'us.' It will be necessarily ethnocentric; we must work by our own lights, but 'us' can be enlarged to include other cultures, regarding them as members of the same community of inquiry. What we cannot do is rise above all human communities. We cannot lift ourselves out of mere coherence – agreement – to 'correspondence with reality.'¹⁵ As Gutting points out, we have no alternative but to accept as true what we (the community of knowers) agree upon. There is no appeal beyond the results of the conversation of mankind.¹⁶

Rorty points out that our practices and institutions (e.g. liberal democracy, academic freedom, and scientific research) do not require ultimate justification. This is not to say that they do not stand in need of justification, but only that all such justification will always be piecemeal and local. 'Ethnocentrism' intends to convey the position that justification is relative to our practices. The defense of our beliefs will always be question-begging, Rorty points out, but this does not vitiate the defense. The recognition that our most important values and practices are without foundations, and without non-question-begging justification, Rorty calls ironism.¹⁷

Rorty rejects the term 'relativist' for his pragmatic ethnocentric view, because 'relativist' implies tacit acceptance of the 'realist' view. "Not having any epistemology, *a fortiori* he, the pragmatist, does not have a relativistic one."¹⁸ He claims to be neither realist nor anti-realist. What then is he? He feels that his pragmatic outlook is quite enough for handling whatever problems arise in our living together. There is no need of relating pieces of language to pieces of the world.

Fides et Ratio and Anti-foundationalism

Our consideration of Rorty and his links to postmodernity enables us to identify certain themes in *FR* as pertaining to a critique of postmodernity and anti-foundationalism; the neglect of the search for truth; the dangers arising from such neglect, such a pragmatism, historicism, relativism, and the fragmentation of meaning; the identification of nihilism

as the underlying framework of such trends; and finally, the cautious attempt to indicate the links between such nihilism and postmodernity.

Before we outline these themes, however, we might note that *FR* seems to be making rather deliberate use of the word ‘foundation.’ It complains that people no longer seek “to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate *foundation* of human, personal and social existence.” (*FR* 5, emphasis added) It indicates its intention to concentrate “on the theme of *truth* itself and on its *foundation* in relation to *faith*.” (*FR* 6, emphases in text)

It declares that “[t]he need for 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.” [*FR* 6] It points out that speculative dogmatic theology “presupposes and implies a philosophy of the human being, the world and more radically, of being which has objective truth as its foundation.” [*FR* 66] it calls 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.” [*FR* 83] It notes that the great challenge at the end of this millennium is to move from phenomenon to foundation. [*FR* 83]

FR even seems to think of philosophy as fulfilling the foundationalist role of cultural overseer. Thus it complains that “those whose vocation is to give cultural expression to their thinking no longer look to truth.” And again: “with its enduring appeal to the search for truth, philosophy has the great responsibility of forming thought and culture.” [*FR*]

The Neglect of the Search for Truth

FR says that the main reason for its reflection on philosophy is that “at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected.” [*FR* 5, cf.47]

Part of this neglect arises from modernity’s fascination with human subjectivity. Modern philosophy “has the great merit of focusing attention upon man,” and this starting point has yielded very fruitful results. However, this 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.”

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. (FR 55 5, cf.47)

The contemporary situation continues to accentuate the weakness of human reason, but there is a new element in this situation: the distrust of reason has become so deep-seated and so widespread as to have become the common mind. (FR 55, 5, 51.)

The deep-seated distrust of reason leads to talk of “the end of metaphysics” (FR 55, 61.) and a revision of the role of philosophy. From universal wisdom and learning, philosophy has been reduced to one of the fields of human knowing, increasingly marginal, peripheral, and restricted in its tasks. (FR 47, 55.) The very notion of truth has changed: “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 the consonance between intellect and objective reality.” (FR 56.)

Even in the areas of hermeneutics an analysis of language, some scholars “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.” (FR 84) They tend to deny that human language can express transcendent reality in a universal way. But, says the Pope, the interpretation of the word of God “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 notion about God and about what God presumable thinks of us.” (FR 84)

Consequences and Dangers

FR complains that “some philosophers have abandoned the search for the truth in itself and made their sole aim the attainment of a subjective certainty or a pragmatic sense of utility” and that “[t]his in turn has obscured the true dignity of reason, which is no longer equipped to know the truth and to seek the absolute.” [FR 47] But when the truth that transcends us is neglected, individuals are at the mercy of caprice. Their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all. [FR 5] The document describes pragmatism as “an attitude of mind which, in making its choices, precludes theoretical considerations or judgments based on ethical principles.” [FR]

Historicism and Relativism. The emphasis on the limitedness of human reason has resulted in different forms of agnosticism and relativism and a widespread skepticism. Recent times “have seen the rise to

prominence of various doctrines which tend to devalue even the truths which had been judged certain.” [FR 5] A legitimate plurality of positions has given way to an undifferentiated pluralism, which, says FR, “is one of today’s most widespread symptoms of the 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 mere opinion.” [FR 5]

As for historicism, FR admits that in order to understand a doctrine from the past correctly, “it is necessary to set it within its proper historical and cultural context.” However, it maintains that “it should not be forgotten that, even if a formulation is bound in some way by time and culture, the truth or error which it expresses can invariably be identified and evaluated as such despite the distance of space and time.” [FR 87] Historicism instead claims 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.” [FR 87]

Fragmentation of Meaning / Distrust of Meta-narratives. In what might possibly be an allusion to the postmodern distrust of meta-narratives, FR speaks about the contemporary crisis of meaning, increasing fragmentation of meaning and of knowledge. “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.” [FR 8] Cf. Also FR 85]. This leads to an “ever deepening introversion, locked within the confines of its own immanence without reference of any kind to the transcendent.” [FR 81]

The Underlying Framework: Nihilism and Postmodernity

FR declares, right in the introduction, that “[t]he 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” [FR 6]. Subsequent reveals that the reference to the ephemeral must be taken as an allusion to nihilism

Nihilism, we are told, is the culmination of the reaction to the rationalist belief in the absoluteness and autonomy of reason [FR 46, 91]. It is the common framework of many philosophies, which have rejected the meaningfulness of being, among which may be numbered eclecticism, historicism and pragmatism [FR 90]. Nihilism is a philosophy of nothingness. “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" [FR 46]. Again, nihilism "is at once the denial of all *foundations* and the negation of all objective truth" [FR 90, emphasis added]. It is a denial of the very identity of the human being. To lose touch with objective truth is to lose touch with the very ground of human dignity, and to erase from the countenance of human beings the marks of their likeness to God, leading slowly "either to a destructive will to power or to solitude without hope" [FR 90].

In sum, nihilism is the denial of foundations, the negation of objective truth, and the affirmation of the ephemeral. It would seem therefore that nihilism is a way of referring to postmodernity. In fact, *FR* does go on to mention postmodernity "our age has been termed by some thinkers the age of 'postmodernity.'" [FR 91]. The term is somewhat ambiguous, the document tells us, both because the judgment on what is called 'postmodern' is sometimes positive and sometimes negative, and because there is as yet no consensus about the question of the demarcation of historical periods. This much, however, is certain: the currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention

Among the various currents of postmodern thought, there are some which claim that "the time of certainties is irrevocably past, and [that] the human being must now learn to live in a horizon of total absence of meaning, where everything is provisional and ephemeral" [FR 91]. The critique of nihilism applies to such currents of postmodernity.

A Philosophy Consonant with the Word of God

FR calls for philosophy that would be consonant with the Word of God. This would be philosophy that is sapiential, that attains truth, and that is genuinely metaphysical.

A Sapiential Philosophy. "To be consonant with the Word of God, philosophy needs first of all to recover its sapiential dimensions as a search for the ultimate and over arching meaning of life" [FR 81, Cf. Also *FR* 106]. Given the comprehensiveness of wisdom (*sapientia omnia ordinat*), this insistence could be seen as yet another assertion against the postmodern fragmentation of meaning and rejection of meta-narratives. When philosophy recovers its sapiential dimension, *FR* goes on, it will be foundational, in the sense of being "the decisive and critical factor which determines the foundations and limits of the different fields of scientific learning," and also in the sense of being "the ultimate framework of the unity of human knowledge and action" [FR 81].

It is the Word of God in the first place that "reveals the final destiny of men and women and provides a unifying explanation of all that they do in the world." This same Word of God "invites philosophy to engage in the search for the natural foundation of this meaning, which corresponds to the religious impulse innate in every person" [FR 81]. "A

philosophy denying the possibility of an ultimate and overarching meaning would be not only ill-adapted to its task, but false” [FR 81].

Against the *distrust of meta-narratives*, FR affirms the universality of the Christian message and the need for a matching philosophy. “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 fulfillment, which comes in Jesus Christ” [FR 80]. A typically philosophical and critical thinking which is *concerned with the universal* is required for a fruitful exchange between cultures. We have a duty to go beyond the particular and concrete, “lest the prime task of demonstrating the *universality of faith’s content* be abandoned” [FR 69, cf. 70]. Further: “I wish to reaffirm strongly the conviction that the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge” [FR 85].

The comments on inculturation may perhaps be seen as a caution against an *ethnocentrism* which either tends to subordinate Revelation to itself or else ‘remains closed in its own difference.’ Thus, “No one culture can ever become the criterion of judgment, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God’s Revelation” [FR 71]. Again, the first criterion in inculturation is the universality of the human spirit [FR 72]. And the third criterion is that legitimate defense of the uniqueness and originality of the thought of a particular culture should not be confused with the idea “that a particular cultural tradition should remain closed in its difference and affirm itself by opposing other traditions” [FR 72].

A Philosophy That Attains Truth. Philosophy cannot be sapiential if it is not itself a true and authentic knowledge. ‘True and authentic knowledge’ means a knowledge that is not merely partial, functional, formal, utilitarian, but total and definitive, penetrating “to the very being of the object known” [FR 82]. Philosophy must therefore “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” [FR 82]. Theology needs the contribution of a philosophy “which does not disavow the possibility of a knowledge which is objectively true, even if not perfect” [FR 82].

Dogmatic statements do reflect at times the culture of the period in which they were defined; still, they formulate an unchanging and ultimate truth. But how can one reconcile the absolute and universality of truth with the historical and cultural conditioning of the formulas, which express that truth? “The claims of historicism ... 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 constructed 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" [FR 95].

Not content with affirming the truth of dogmatic definitions, FR goes on to uphold also the enduring validity of the conceptual language of the definitions. Words do assume different meanings 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" [FR 96]. Were this not the case, philosophy and the sciences could not communicate with each other, nor could they be transferred over cultures: "The hermeneutical problem exists, to be sure; but it is not insoluble." FR goes on to admit that the objective value of many concepts does not exclude that their meaning is often imperfect. It calls upon philosophy to help clarify the relationship between conceptual language and truth [Cf. FR 96].

A Philosophy of Genuinely Metaphysical Range. The word of God also calls 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" [FR 83]. Reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical; the human being has the capacity "to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical" [FR 83].

What, we might ask, is this 'factual and empirical' that is transcended? How is this affirmation of the metaphysical capacity of human reason different from its capacity to attain truth? Is this a reference to human capacity to reach the Transcendent? The matter does not seem quite clear to me. Perhaps we have here a reference to the Maritainian distinction between the three levels of abstraction – physical, mathematical, and metaphysical. Truth is attained in all three, but being as being is attained properly only on the third. It would seem that this distinction is indeed implied, because the document mentions the need to move from phenomenon to foundation, from experience to the spiritual core and the ground from which it arises. This is Maritain language: the sciences deal with phenomena, metaphysics deals with being. "A theology without a metaphysical horizon could not move beyond an analysis of religious experience" [FR 83].

CONVERSATION WITH RORTY

FR speaks about entering 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 [FR 105]. In this spirit, we enter into a conversation with Rorty.

There should be no difficulty, I think, in agreeing with Rorty's attack on Cartesian subjectivity. Again, there should be no difficulty in

agreeing with Rorty's attack on the Cartesian search for apodicticity. Rorty quotes Dewey and Wittgenstein to the effect that a natural quest for understanding has been run together, by modern philosophers, with an unnatural quest for certainty [PMN 228]. Even more interesting however is Rorty quoting Gilson on Descartes' unwarranted extension of an excessive ideal of certitude to all spheres: "From the point of view of medieval philosophy, Descartes plays the role of the *indisciplinatus* – someone who takes pride in insisting, no matter what discipline is in question, on the same degree of certainty, no matter how inappropriate. In a word, Descartes no longer recognizes an intermediary between the true and the false; his philosophy is the radical elimination of the notion of the 'probable.'"¹⁹

However, when we come to Rorty's reflections on the ocular metaphor, we must be careful. From these reflections flow his attacks on representations, on foundations, on truth, and his championing of pragmatism, solidarity and ethnocentrism. In this regard, I think Rorty is both right and wrong. He is right insofar as the ocular metaphor has played a dominant role in the history of Western philosophy. He is wrong, however, in assimilating the whole tradition to this metaphor.

Rorty knows quite well that besides Plato's option for knowing as confrontation, there is also Aristotle's option for knowing as identity [MN 144]. Rorty, however, chooses to assimilate both these to the ocular metaphor: both the options, he says, assume a picture of knowing as involving a causal relationship to objects. The reason he gives is that knowing is a relationship between persons and propositions rather than a relationship between persons and objects. He therefore wants to substitute confrontation with conversation.

But what is Rorty's ultimate reason for preferring to think of knowing as a relation between persons and propositions rather than as a relation between persons and objects? Why does he insist on rejecting truth as correspondence in favour of truth as consensus? The reason, it would seem, is that he believes it impossible to think coherently of the former possibility:

[T]he issue is not adequacy of explanation of fact, but rather whether a practice of justification can be given a 'grounding' in fact. The question is not whether human knowledge in fact has 'foundation,' but whether it makes sense to suggest that it does – whether the idea of epistemic or moral authority having a 'ground' in nature is a coherent one. For the pragmatist in morals, the claim that the customs of a given society are 'grounded in human nature' is not one which he knows how to argue about. He is a pragmatist because he cannot see what it would be like for a custom to be so grounded. For the Quine-Sellars approach to epistemology, to say that truth and knowledge can only be judged by the standards of the inquirers of our

own day ... is merely to say that nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and that there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence [PMN 178].

Dean Geuras, in fact, maintains that Rorty is a Cartesian in spite of himself: he challenges those who believe in an objective reality to establish knowledge of it. He points out that there is always a gap between our sense experience and the reality that is purported to exist. He argues that Descartes was unable to bridge the gap by means of reason any more than Hume could bridge it by experience. Rorty also points out that we cannot escape our linguistic heritage when we examine our world. Like Descartes, then, he points out that there is always a gap between our impressions of reality and reality itself. Rorty, Geuras says, has a fixation with doubt and skepticism born of Descartes' quest for certainty. Rorty is, therefore, modern rather than postmodern, Cartesian rather than anti-Cartesian.²⁰

Physics, phronesis, adaequatio

Rorty's options then seem to stem from his being unable to see any way out of his tacit (Cartesian) assumptions. We have to present other possibilities and options which firmly admit situatedness and yet show a way of attaining truth in its traditional sense of *adaequatio* (though not in the sense of naïve realism).

We may begin by questioning Rorty's assimilation of the Platonic and the Aristotelian options. It is possible to regard these as two fundamental options in Western thinking about knowing. In the former, the fundamental moment in knowing is confrontation; in the latter, the fundamental moment is identity. If knowing is fundamentally confrontation, then there is an inescapable duality at the heart of all knowing. If, on the other hand, knowing is fundamentally identity, such duality is avoided from the start. Aquinas, for one, was well aware of the consequence of the two options as regards divine knowing. The Platonic option, he realized, creates insoluble difficulties with regard to knowledge in God, for Plato was forced to admit that the absolute being, if it knows, must undergo motion. That difficulty does not exist for the Aristotelian: if knowing is an identity, the unmoved mover may remain unmoved and yet know. Accordingly, Aquinas opted clearly and explicitly for the Aristotelian position.²¹

Aquinas also realized, however, that Aristotelian gnoseology was incomplete: "knowledge is by identity; the act of the thing as sensible is the fact of sensation; the act of the thing as intelligible is the act of understanding; but the act of the thing as real is the *esse naturale* of the thing and, except in divine self-knowledge, that *esse* is not identical with knowing it."²² The problem of knowledge, once it is granted that knowledge is by identity, is knowledge of the other.²³

But does this not involve a conception of knowing as involving a causal relationship to objects? Why, we might ask, was Aquinas not bothered by such a conception? Why was he comfortable with it in a way that Rorty is not? Is it because he believed it was possible to isolate some set of representations with privileged links to reality, representations that would then serve as touchstones of truth? Or is it because he had some other way of thinking about knowledge? My belief is that he did have another way, a way, it seems to me, that is slowly being rediscovered and also enriched by our contemporaries. I will try to outline this way by appealing to the Aristotelian notions of *physis* and *phronesis*.

We may begin by noting that where Rorty rejects all representation, we must admit that human knowing involves an element of the given, of data, which could consist of perceptual images as well as free images, and where images may be not only ocular but also auricular or kinesthetic or olfactory. But are these accurate representations? Are they representations at all? Does all data belong to a further moment of the process of knowing.

The next moment is the grasping of the form, the intelligibility immanent in data. The form, or the intelligibility, or the set of relations between aspects of data – this is not at all a question of representation – not even a question of impoverished replicas of ‘reality’ or of perceptual images or of impressions. Here lies the truth in Rorty’s attack on the ocular metaphor. The insidiousness of the ocular metaphor lies not so much in the tendency to conceive of knowing as involving a causal relation with objects, but rather in the tendency to conceive of understanding on the pattern of seeing. Whatever understanding may be, it is neither seeing nor somehow analogous to seeing. We must resist, for example, the temptation to conceive of understanding as something automatic: just as I open my eyes and see a tree, so also I look at a tree and grasp the form or the essence of tree. There is no Eye of the Mind that grasps treehood and doghood in a way similar to the physical eye seeing trees and dogs. Understanding is *sui generis*. I find it very significant that Rorty rarely or never mentions understanding. In this he is of course merely a good continuator of his largely modern and analytic heritage, which is a tradition that has simply forgotten the activity and the peculiarity of understanding, even when, as in Locke, Hume, and Kant, it talks about understanding.

The understanding then does not mirror things; rather, it thinks out things on the basis of available data. The formulation of what has been understood is therefore merely a hypothesis: it may or may not be relevant to things. The question therefore arises: is this formulation or hypothesis accurate? Is it valid? Is it correct?

But how are we to judge? Is not all understanding and knowing done from within certain particular linguistic frameworks or language games or conceptual schemes? That we have to begin from where we are, as Rorty insists, there is no doubt. That we remain trapped within our standpoints or conceptual frameworks, perhaps not

In my reading, Heidegger provides a way that makes use of historicism itself to transcend the *aporias* of historicism. He sees the attempt to make a method out of understanding as an attempt to find a firm foothold, a way out of historicism. He problematizes the idea of finding a firm foothold by exposing what he called its metaphysical presuppositions: it is, he said, a flight from temporality. He proposes, instead, that we radically situate ourselves within finitude, and work through the structure of prejudice as a positive ontological characteristic of understanding in order to perceive our possibilities. In this way Heidegger gets beyond historicism as well as its corollary, the need for a methodology of the human sciences. The point is, he says, not how to jump out of the hermeneutic circle of our historicity, but rather how to enter properly into it.²⁴

Along the same line, Gadamer also clearly recognizes that human understanding can never transcend its limitations so as to arrive at some atemporal Archimedean point, that human understanding is always culturally and historically situated, and is, indeed, rooted in tradition. He also, following Heidegger's lead, realizes that this is not a defect in the makeup of human understanding but something without which there would be no understanding at all. That is why Gary Madison can say that hermeneuticists insist, against both Rorty and Derrida, that "although we cannot hope to transcend either historical or linguistic contingency, this does not mean that we are imprisoned in them."²⁵ Madison quotes Gadamer:

While we live wholly within a language, the fact that we do so does not constitute linguistic relativism because there is absolutely no captivity within a language – not even within our native language. ... Any language in which we live is infinite in this sense, and it is completely mistaken to infer that reason is fragmented because there are various language. Just the opposite is the case. Precisely through our finitude, the particularity our being, which is evident even in the variety of languages, the infinite dialogue is opened in the direction of the truth that we are.²⁶

With Heidegger and Gadamer and *FR*, then, we would like to maintain that we are not imprisoned within our historicity. But we need to outline a proper phenomenology and an explanation of judgment, one that does justice to both the historicity and the transcendence of truth.

Clearly, such a phenomenology of judgment cannot consist of isolating a privileged call of representations, on the basis of which we could then judge every other representation.

Again, 'knowing everyone's common ground' [PMN 317-318] may not be necessary at all. 'Transcending disagreements in the course of

conversation,' however, is a good insight that can be placed in a context that is different from Rorty's.

But again, 'common ground' need not be a bad word. Even Wittgenstein speaks of a shared form of life, which makes cross-cultural understanding possible. ('If a lion could speak, we would not be able to understand it.") but the common ground need not be a privileged set of representation; it need not even be a common set of rules. It could be, for example, the way we function. It could be inbuilt dynamisms, our native drive to ask questions and to seek answers. It could be, as Aristotle pointed out, 'nature' in the sense of *physis*, inbuilt principles of motion and of rest. It could be habits of wisdom and of prudence, or else a set of habits which combines what was formerly the work of the speculative habit of wisdom and the practical habit of prudence. The in-built dynamism's relevance to knowing are questions: questions, which seek to understand, other questions, which seek to know whether what we understand is correct. These are inbuilt dynamisms before they are formulated questions.

Here and there in fact, Rorty admits or opens himself up to the importance of questioning. We have seen, for example, that he conceives of philosophy as performing the role of Socratic intermediary between various discourses, compromising or transcending disagreements in the course of conversation. [PMN 3317-318] Again, he points out that the hermeneutic circle is unavoidable, but he also holds that understanding is not impossible, for vicious circles are logical entities, whereas coming to understand is more like getting acquainted with a person than like following a demonstration. [PMN 318-319] Getting into conversation with strangers is, like acquiring a new virtue or skill by imitating models, more a question of *phronesis* than of *episteme*. [PMN 319] Yet again, Rorty explains that justification is "a relation between the propositions in question and other proportions from which the former may be inferred." [PMN 159] What then about "the potentially infinite regress of propositions-brought-forward-in-defense-of-other-propositions"? Rorty sees no need to end this regress. But, he says, "It would be foolish to keep conversation on the subject going once everyone, or the majority, or the wise, are satisfied, but of course we can." [PMN 159]

The last comment is especially interesting, for it ties in with the inbuilt principles of motion and of rest that we have been speaking about. Conscience, for example, is one such principle of motion and of rest: as long as it is dissatisfied, it continues to trouble us; when it is satisfied, it comes to rest. In a similar way, when thinking is still in process, questions keep arising thick and fast; when questions come to a halt, we know that our insight is correct. There are then inbuilt criteria by which we 'know' our insights, whether in the moral or the factual realm, are correct: the cessation of further relevant questions. Wittgenstein's spade touching rock bottom: questions come to an end somewhere. Infinite regress is a theoretical possibility; in point of fact, questions do come to an end.²⁷

But is this not an excessively subjective criterion? Are not our moral judgments subjective and relative? And can we not say the same of other judgments? True, questions come to an end, and all of us have experiences of that. But questions come to an end for so many reasons: not only when there is nothing more to be understood, but also because we are bored, or distracted, or prejudiced. Is there any way of distinguishing between these cases? Is there any way of finding out when it is that questions have really come to an end on any particular topic? Here is where we have to face the human condition squarely: there is simply no recipe for making correct judgments; there is no method which leads to truth, no criteria that are so 'objective' as to be independent of the person making the judgment. (As Aquinas pointed out, understanding – both direct and reflective – is a *pati*, a passion rather than an action. It is not completely under our control. Making good judgments is not a question of willing it. There is no method that can take away the finitude of the human being.)

Is there nothing more to be said? No, for while there are no rules for making correct judgments, there are certain factors that could be kept in mind, factors that make correct judgment more probable.

A first factor is that we should give further questions a chance to arise. A second factor is that questions should be set correctly.

This raises a problem: for setting questions correctly can be done only when one is familiar with a situation or a subject, when one has attained mastery over one's domain; but this means that in order to make one judgment one has to be in possession of a whole set of correct judgments, and we cannot have a set of correct judgments unless we make a whole series of correct judgments. Here we have a vicious circle. But what does one do when one does not have something? One borrows from those who have. If one does not have the necessary correct judgments, one borrows from the expert, the master, the guru. The vicious circle is broken, therefore, by the process of learning. All learning is a borrowing from others who know better; all learning involves a suspension of personal judgment till such time as one can judge on one's own. All learning involves, therefore, a modicum of humility. It must be kept in mind of course that the process of learning is not merely formal but also informal. It is the process of education, acculturation, and socialization. We are, therefore, smack in the middle of society, culture, tradition, history.

The third factor then is mastery of the situation. Through a self-correcting process of learning we move gradually towards master of situations. One who is mastery of a situation can be relatively confident that his setting of questions is correct, that questions have really come to an end.

The fourth factor is temperament: is one hasty by temperament? Is one indecisive by temperament? All one can do is become aware of one's temperament and try to attain a balance.

Between the third and fourth factors, personal and historical factors enter into judgment: there is no criterion of truth that is so objective as to be independent of the person. Objectivity, in other words, is the fruit of

authentic subjectivity, where subjectivity is not merely the subjectivity of the individual but also of the tradition which has formed him or her, and where personal authenticity includes not only moral and religious aspects but also emotional-psychic and intellectual-philosophical ones.

What we have been saying is in some ways a translation and a development of Aristotle when he says that the criterion of moral judgments is the good conscience of a virtuous person: not just of any good conscience, but the good conscience of a virtuous person, a person who is totally authentic. Again, what we have been saying is in some way a translation and a development of Aquinas' teaching on wisdom as the habit or virtue of right judgment: Just as judgment does not consist merely in reduction to the sources in sense and in intellectual light, but needs to be the judgment of a wise person, so also the awfully subjective character of 'the cessation of further relevant questions' is complemented by recognizing its insertion into the larger context of the authenticity of the individual and of his/her tradition. Yet again, what we have been saying is related in some ways to the whole Christian tradition of spiritual discernment, right from Paul who says that the unspiritual man cannot grasp the things of the Spirit, through the Fathers of the Church who taught that fish cannot be seen when the water is muddy, and that the sense of taste cannot be relied on when the person is sick.²⁸ Discernment requires that we are spiritually whole and holy. Heidegger recognized this when he called Augustine a hermeneutician in the grand tradition: Augustine called for faith, hope and charity in the reading of scripture.²⁹

We do reach reality then, not because we have some God's eye point of view (Putnam), not because there is some skyhook by which we can hang ourselves and transcend the human condition (Rorty), but because we have inbuilt principles of movements and of rest and habits of wisdom/prudence or familiarity with context.

But what do we do when we come across radically differing interpretations and judgments? How do we handle radical differences in viewpoints or horizons? How do we pass judgment upon tradition? How do we pass judgment upon personal or community attainment of authenticity?

This is a question, as Heidegger has pointed out, not of jumping out of the hermeneutic circle of our historicity, but rather of entering properly into it, by attaining self-transparency, by engaging in self-appropriation, by thematizing our horizons (while recognizing with Gadamer that such thematization will always remain incomplete), by objectification of our subjectivity.

Of course, self-transparency, self-appropriation, thematization of our horizons, is not to be confused with introspection in the sense of closing one's eyes and trying to spot out what is going on inside. Here is where conversation and dialogue enter into the picture. Here is where it is fruitful to remember that human progress towards truth is always dialectical; it is the prerogative not so much of the individual as of the species. Paul Ricoeur is completely right when he points out that self-knowledge is attained at the

end of a long detour. One comes to knowledge of oneself only through encounter with the other, with the text, with the tradition or traditions, and eventually also with living persons. The coming to light of the self is at once the coming to light of the tradition. Self-appropriation is a question really of mutual self-mediation through a tradition.

Is this a foolproof method? Will it really solve our problems? Is it really able to handle radical differences in horizons? – there is really no foolproof method, no automatic criterion. All we can do is become aware, as much as possible, of our horizons. All we can do is to bring these horizons to light, and then make our decisions, this time with explicit deliberateness. Such explicit deliberateness is as much authenticity as can be expected of any human being. Thus as Rorty would say, there is ultimately no algorithm, no explicit criterion for selecting between one radically opposed horizon or another, no touchstone of choosing between incommensurable universes of discourse. There is simply no logical process between incommensurable universes of discourse.

Is there nothing more to be said? Perhaps just one thing more, and that is the experiment of history, the judgment of history over traditions. Just as radical lack of harmony in a person ends up in self-destruction, so also radical lack of harmony in a tradition results eventually in the decline and destruction of that tradition. This, of course, is a very pragmatic and empirical criterion that should appeal to the like of Rorty. Yet I think there is much to be said in favour of it. We just cannot think and say and do anything and everything with impunity. We pay for it with our lives.

Foundation? Solidarity or Objectivity? Hermeneutics or Epistemology?

What then of foundations? – there are no foundations in the sense of privileged links with reality, touchstones of truth, explicitly formulated criteria or algorithms. If we speak of foundations at all, we must speak of inbuilt dynamisms of *physis* in the sense of the principles of movements and of rest that are our native drive to ask questions; and of habits such as *phronesis*.

What about truth? Do we have to choose between consensus and correspondence, solidarity and objectivity? – there is no need to choose. Where Rorty feels obliged to think of knowledge as a question of solidarity rather than objectivity, as a relation between persons and propositions rather than between persons and objects, we have been conceiving of knowledge as involving relations to both objects and propositions, as involving both solidarity and objectivity. It is possible, we have been saying, that knowledge begins as a relation between persons and objects (the moment of identity), goes onto a relationship between persons and propositions (the aspect of tradition and history, conversation and dialogue), and through this returns to the relation between persons and objects (the moment of distinction). (We need to keep in mind, of course, that 'object' here need

not mean the term of animal extroversion, an ‘already out there now.’ It need not, in other words, presuppose Cartesian inner and outer space.)

Rorty insists that in a post-philosophical age the attempt to understand things is passé; the important thing is to learn how to cope. This, says Madison, is a fairly common characteristic of postmodern thought: “the primacy of the practical over the theoretical. Gadamer’s rehabilitation of the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* is well known, and the point should be granted: “the primacy of ‘practice’ is undeniable.” Madison however goes on to point out that it is one thing to accord priority to praxis, and quite another to deny legitimacy to theory [Madison 5], and here I think he is in fundamental agreement with Heidegger and Gadamer: not that there is no place for science and for theory, but that these must be recognized as derivative modes of understanding and coping with the world.³⁰

What about hermeneutics rather than epistemology? – Epistemology in the foundationalist sense is out. “Epistemology is now dead, thanks in large part to Rorty.”³¹ *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* opened the eyes of so many “to the utter bankruptcy of traditional, foundationalist philosophizing. European philosophers (e.g. Derrida) had, of course, already said much the same things, but Rorty’s easy style of writing served to bring the message home with great éclat. What is announced here so effectively is the demise of modern philosophy, of, in other words, the whole epistemological project of modernity or what Rorty calls ‘epistemology centered philosophy.’”³² Gadamer also characterizes his philosophizing – hermeneutics – as an attempt to overcome the modes of thought of the epistemological era.³³

Rorty: Cartesian Malgre Lui?

We have seen that Geuras considers Rorty a Cartesian in spite of himself.³⁴ Rorty sometimes speaks as though he is not denying unmediated contact with things. He is only questioning the validity of our mediation of reality, our descriptions of reality. These mediations, he says, cannot be validated by comparing them to reality; all we can do therefore is to be content with pragmatic criteria: does it work? Can I win an argument about it? Is it useful? Is there a consensus? – There is decidedly an element of truth in what Rorty is saying, because there is a whole realm of human life, the realm of the commonsensical and of the everyday, which is governed largely by criteria of utility and practicality, where it is not so important to know the nature of things as to know how to deal usefully with them. Again, it is very true to say that a large part of the properly human world is constituted of meaning. Still, it seems to me that the simplest, most economic, explanation of knowing would involve a relationship to being. Human knowing, after all, is only a part of the universe of being, and if it is admitted that the human being is the fruit of an evolving universe, then it should stand to reason that there be some relationship between our knowing and that reality of which knowing is a part, Rorty’s position, that we do

experience the unmediated pressure of things, and yet that we have no way of knowing whether our mediations are accurate, smacks of something odd.

Again, Rorty is reported as saying that there is no truth out there, that 'truth' is a quality that applies only to sentences. True. Or better, truth is a quality that applies only to propositions, because only propositions can be properly true or false. This is an old dictum: *verum et falsum in mente, bonum et malum in re*. Things may be good or bad; they cannot however be true or false. True or false applies only to propositions, and it is through correct judgments – affirming or denying propositions – that we attain to reality. But Rorty cannot see any way of penetrating through propositions to attain reality, perhaps because, in the end, he continues to assume a Cartesian enclosure or else a Kantian dichotomy between phenomena and noumena. With Heidegger I would prefer to assume that being is being-in-the-world, that all privacy is derivative and secondary, that we are carried along on realities that are larger than any tiny monadic selves that we might conceive. With Aquinas I would prefer to assume that we naturally attain being, and that all distinctions between subjects and objects take place within being, so that the problem of how to reach being from the supposed starting point of knowing is simply a pseudo-problem to be recognized for what it is and to be quickly abandoned.

Having burst open Cartesian subjectivity, we must be careful not to get enclosed within language-games, viewpoints, horizons, and conceptual frameworks. This would be a new enclosure, and perhaps as unnecessary as what it has replaced. Wittgenstein and Heidegger seem not to be advocating such a new enclosure, and to that extent, I am not sure I would go along with Rorty's characterization of them as 'historicist' – unless his usage of 'historicist' does not coincide with that of *FR*. What they seem to be affirming is the primacy of the practical, of phronesis. Explicit criteria and algorithms are derivative and secondary. As far as the basic choices in philosophy are concerned, there are no explicit criteria and no algorithms for choosing one philosophy rather than another, one world-view rather than another, no privileged links with reality. So, we are inevitably situated, and we have to begin from where we are, but respectful dialogue is possible nonetheless. Philosophy conceived as a Socratic intermediary between different universes of discourse, is fine. Conversation as leading to consensus is fine. Understanding as a matter of phronesis is fine. But in that case there is situatedness but no enclosure; there is historicity but no despair of ever attaining the truth and no need to jettison so completely the idea of truth as *adaequatio*.³⁵ There is even a certain inevitable ethnocentrism, but no need to give up entertaining the hope of metaphysics.

Against pragmatism, historicism, relativism, and the neglect of truth, *FR* admits historicity and yet stresses the need for a philosophy that attains truth in the sense of *adaequatio*.

Against the fragmentation of meaning and the nihilistic stress on the ephemeral, *FR* calls for a sapiential philosophy which searches for the

ultimate meaning of life and provides an ultimate framework of the unity of human knowledge and action.

Against the distrust of reason and the restriction of its range, *FR* calls for a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, which attains not only being but also transcends the realm of the empirical.

Rorty will have nothing to do with truth as *adaequatio*. He is frankly historicist and ethnocentric. He upholds truth as consensus. However, he rejects the label of relativist. Again, he does not seem to admit of an undifferentiated pluralism [Cf. PMN 373-374], and, further, he admits the possibility of dialogue between incommensurable viewpoints. If these positions are not denied or diluted in his later works, Rorty would seem to be closer to Gadamer than, perhaps, to someone like Derrida.

Rorty calls himself a pragmatist, but probably would not think that this leads to 'individuals being at the mercy of caprice.' (We cannot exclude, of course, that some of his theses may have such consequences, good intentions notwithstanding.) Again, he would probably not think of himself as having no regard for values, but rather as holding that our most important values and practices are without non-question-begging justification.

Again, Rorty would not admit any overarching meaning to human life. He would fully endorse Lyotard's claim that philosophical meta-narratives are out, mini-narratives are in. He would reject as quite impossible the calls for a sapiential and foundational philosophy which would provide the ultimate framework for human knowledge and action. Could Rorty be accused of a nihilistic stress on the ephemeral? But he seems to be solidly white, American, bourgeois, liberal. Could he be accused of advocating the impossibility of definitive commitments and of denying human dignity? Not explicitly, for commitments are always possible within communities. Rorty seems to be denying the possibility of ultimate justifications of such commitments as dignity. Does his position make human solidarity impossible? He does talk of solidarity without objectivity, but his position seems to exclude at least the theoretical possibility of a solidarity that cuts across groups to embrace all human beings.

As for metaphysics, clearly the question does not even arise for Rorty.

CONCLUSION

With *FR* and Rorty we reject Cartesian subjectivity and apodicticity. With *FR* and Rorty we admit the historicity of human beings and communities. With *FR*, with Heidegger and Gadamer, and also with a certain tendency in Rorty himself, we maintain that our situatedness is not an imprisonment. We entertain the hope of truth even in the sense of *adaequatio*, basing ourselves on the dialogue or the ongoing dialectic of question and answer which is the life of thought.

Rorty is without doubt a brilliant philosopher, but too ambiguous to be pinned down clearly; he takes back with one hand what he has given with another. Perhaps he does not really understand Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Gadamer. On the other hand, he may not want to understand them, but feel free to use them as he pleases, 'according to his own lights.' Dennett (who is one of the philosophers to whom Rorty acknowledges debt) speaks of the *Rorty Factor*: "Take whatever Rorty says about anyone's views and multiply it by 742" to derive what they actually said.³⁶ Or perhaps Rorty just revels in postmodern playfulness; being infected with Nietzsche's joyful wisdom.³⁷

NOTES

1 Gary Gutting, "Post-Structuralism," Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, ed., E. Craig (London & New York: Routledge, 1998) 7: 599 – 600.

2 Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, "Postmodernism," Routledge Encyclopedia of philosophy, ed. E. Craig (London & New York: Routledge, 1998) 7:587-590.

3 Michael David Rohr, "Rorty, Richard McKay," Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. E. Craig (London & New York: Routledge, 1998) 8: 352 .

4 The note indicates that most North American Postmodern Theologians, and the Anglican divine Don Cupitt, work partly under the influence of Rorty. Stanislaus Swamikannu, "Postmodernity and its Effects on Metaphysics" (paper at the 24th Annual Conference of the Association of Christian Philosophers of India [ACPI], 27 – 29 October 1999, Janampet), p. 13, note 20.

5 Swamikannu 1.

6 Swamikannu 8. Stanley Grenz also indicates that postmodernism "affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate... there is no absolute truth: rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate." Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 8, cited in Dean Geuras, "Richard Rorty and the postmodern Rejection of Absolute Truth," <http://www.leaderu.com/aip/doc/geuras.html> 2000-07-13, 2.

7 Lawrence Cahoon, ed., "Introduction," *From Modernism Postmodernism: an Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996) 2. Poststructuralism "denies the possibility of objective knowledge of the real world, 'univocal' (single or primary) meaning of words and text, the unity of human self, the cogency of the distinctions between rational inquiry and political action, literal and metaphorical meaning, science and art, and even the possibility of truth itself." (Coho one 1). Poststructuralists "seemed to announce the end of rational inquiry into the truth, the illusory nature of any unified self, the impossibility of clear and unequivocal meaning, the

legitimacy of Western civilization, and the oppressive all modern institutions. They appeared critically to undermine any and all positive, philosophical, and political positions” (Cahoone 4).

8 Cahoone 7. Among four themes criticized by postmodernism, Cahoone lists two, which are very Rortian: the inquiry into origins and the transcendent of norms. The attack on inquiry into origins is obviously the attack on foundations: “inquiry in to origins is an attempt to see behind or beyond phenomena to their ultimate foundation ... postmodernism in the strict sense denies any such possibility. It denies the possibility of returning to, recapturing, or even representing the origin, source, or any deeper reality behind phenomena, and casts doubt on or even denies its existence. In a sense, postmodernism is intentionally superficial...” (Cahoone 10). The denial of the transcendence of norms, says Cahoone, is crucial to postmodernism, thus agreeing with Stanislaus and Grenz: “Norms such as truth, goodness, beauty, rationality, are no longer regarded as independent of the processes they serve to govern or judge, but are rather products of an immanent in those processes” (Cahoone 11).

9 Cahoone 12- 13.

10 Geuras.

11 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 132 – 134, henceforth PMN.

12 PMN 176. Cf. Also Rorty, “Solidarity or Objectivity?” *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume I* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 23: for pragmatists, the desire for objectivity is the desire for as much inter-subjective agreement as possible. The distinction between knowledge and opinion is the distinction between topics where agreement is easy, and others where it is not. Truth is what is good for us to believe; there is no need of metaphysics and epistemology, and no need of ‘correspondence.’

13 PMN 174. Cf. PMN 188: community is the source of epistemic authority.

14 Madison 4, cf.7.

15 Rorty, “Solidarity or Objectivity?” 38.

16 Gutting, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 7:599.

17 Rohr, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 8: 354.

18 Rorty, “Solidarity or Objectivity?” 24. Swamikannu 14 note 29, notes that all the authors who point out to the inevitable situatedness of our interpretations also shun relativism.

19 PMN 222 note 8, quoting Etienne Gilson, *Etudes sur le role de la pensee medievale dans la formation du systeme Cartesien* [Paris, 1930] 235.

20 Geuras 8-9, Geuras cites also David Hall in support: cf. D.L. Hall, Richard Rorty: *Prophet and Poet of the New Pragmatism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

21 B. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected works of Bernard Lonergan 2, ed. F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 84 – 85.

22 Lonergan 83.

23 Lonergan 84.

24 Cf. Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994) 97.

25 Gary Brent Madison, "Coping with Nietzsche's Legacy: Rorty, Derrida, Gadamer," <http://www.focusing.org/madison2.html>, 2000-07-14, 15.

26 Cited in Madison 16.

27 Fred Lawrence says that it is his emphasis on questioning that most distinguishes Gadamer from Heidegger and Rorty, for it is questioning that takes us from the world of immediacy to the universe of being. It is this emphasis on questioning that places Gadamer on the side of Aquinas' intellectual light against Rorty and Heidegger who, says, Lawrence, ultimately fall into a species of picture thinking. Cf. Lawrence, "Language as horizon?" *The Beginning and Beyond: Papers from Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences*, supplementary issue of vol. 4 of the *Lonergan Workshop*, ed. Fred Lawrence (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 26, 31.

28 "Indeed those who struggle must ceaselessly maintain calmness of thought: thus the mind will be able to discriminate between the suggestions which pass through it and will place those which are good and come from God in the treasure house of memory, while it will eject from this natural reservoir those which are evil and come from the devil. When the sea is calm, fishermen perceive the movement of its depths to such a point that hardly any of the creatures, which move along its tracks, escape them; but when the sea is tossed about by winds it hides in its sombre movement what it readily reveals in the smiling surface of its tranquility. (...)

The spiritual sense is an exact taste of the things which we discern. Just as, in fact, through our bodily sense of taste, when we are doing well, we distinguish unmistakable the good from the bad, and desire what is useful, so, in the same way, our spirit, when it begins to move vigorously in all quietude, is able to feel in all its fullness the divine consolation (...). through the action of love the spirit retains an unfading memory of this taste, discerning infallibly what is best, according to St. Paul's words: 'And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent.'

Diadochus of Photike, *On Perfection*, cited in *the Divine Office* (Collins E.J. Dwyer/Talbot, London/Sydney/Dublin, 1978) I: 477-78. Cf.

Also the lengthy articles on discernment and related topics in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualite*: “Discernement des esprits,” III: cols. 1222-1291; “Direction spirituelle,” III: cols. 1002-1214. “Demon,” III: cols. 234-238.

29 Grondin 33.

30 Cf. Grondin 93-94.

31 Madison 4.

32 Madison 4.

33 Madison 4.

34 Geuras 8-9.

35 Grondin maintains that Gadamer with Heidegger holds for a mean between non-temporal, non-relative, infinite truth and historical relativism, between positivist dissolution of self and Nietzschean universal perspectivism (Grondin 13, 112, 135-139, 140 142). Grondin even goes so far as to speak of truth as correspondence: “By truth we mean simply a meaningful account that corresponds to things” (Grondin 141).

36 Rohr, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 8:353.

37 Madison.

PART III

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

CHAPTER V

PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY: CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES

JOE MANNATH, SDB

Fides et Ratio compares faith and reason – as also philosophy and theology – and clearly stands for their harmony. This by itself is nothing really new in the history of Catholic theology or official church teaching. The author most enthusiastically quoted by the document – Thomas Aquinas – will surprise no one who knows the history of this dialectic.

This tradition, going back to St. Thomas or even earlier, is noted not only for admitting the congruence between faith and reason, but also for a deep faith in human reason. In Aquinas, and those who hold a similar view, there is a robust sense of the goodness of human nature and a deep trust in the power of human intelligence to reach the truth. The view of human nature espoused by this trend is more optimistic than, say, the one to which Saint Augustine, or later Martin Luther subscribe. Implied in the difference are different views of human nature and different theologies on the impact of original sin and on what it means to be saved. If a theologian holds that original deeply corrupted human beings, robbing us of the very capacity to reason correctly, so that we are crippled beyond hope without the help of grace, then, such a thinker will have scant regard for the power of unaided human reason. If, instead, the view held is that original sin, while being a fall, did not drastically handicap human nature, and that human beings retained their innate capacity to judge, think and reach valid conclusions, then, such a position would certainly be more optimistic about the role of reason in general.

In this paper, I would like to say a word on the continuities between faith and reason, and on their differences. I will dwell longer on the differences, since the harmony is already strongly stressed in the document.

CONTINUITIES BETWEEN REASON AND FAITH

The most basic argument for the harmony of faith and reason is the obvious truth that both come from God, and cannot be intrinsically opposed to each other. Not only do both come from God; they are both valid paths which lead us to God. The order of priority is, however, clear. Faith is obviously the senior and more respected partner.

Even on this point, however, there have been, historically, many quarrels. During the controversy that raged in the fourteenth century about Latin Averroism – called more correctly “Heterodox Aristotelianism” –

there was the issue of “double truth.” Heterodox Aristotelians took Aristotle to be the philosopher *par excellence*, and the very incarnation of reason. If they found an apparent conflict between one of Aristotle’s views and a doctrine of faith, they would hold both to be true – one “according to reason and to Aristotle, and the other according to faith.” This may strike us as strange and untenable – as it did seem to most theologians in the University of Paris in the fourteenth century – but an influential group of medieval scholars did subscribe to such a view.¹

Apart from this largely discredited view, most Christian scholars have subscribed to the harmony of faith and reason. But they have differed in the relative importance they assign to each, and to the way the two are brought together in theology or in real life. Don’t we ourselves know believers and religious writers who are strongly for building the human to support the spiritual quest, and others who see reasoning, questioning or the promotion of the human as a serious threat to the journey of faith?

In the document under study – *Fides et Ratio* – philosophy is once again referred to as the handmaid of theology. Philosophy asks questions, and provides tools which theologians make use of for elaborating theological thought. Thus, we have Augustine’s use of Neoplatonic thought, Aquinas’s use of Aristotle’s categories, or, more recently, Karl Rahner’s recourse to the insights of Kant and Heidegger.

Two things need to be pointed out in this regard, things mentioned only very briefly in *Fides et Ratio*.

One is the stand taken by theologians like Rahner, that “the monogamy is over,” that is, philosophy is not, and need not be, the only partner for theology.² Today’s theology, to take Rahner’s method, for instance, must start with the questions of contemporary men and women; and since their world is mediated through the sciences, theology needs to enter into a serious dialogue with the sciences.³ In this sense, philosophy plays a more restricted role in the elaboration of theology than it did, for instance, in the case of neo-scholastic theology. Think, for instance, of liberation theology. It makes use of social analysis much more than of philosophy.⁴ Similar statements could be made about feminist theology and spirituality,⁵ or about Dalit theology.⁶

Let us go back a moment to the author most quoted in the document. We can learn precious lessons in approach, method and preferred thematic from the bold stand taken by Thomas Aquinas. What he did, among other things, was to be open to the secular learning that hit and shook Europe and Christian civilization in his days, namely, the discovery of the works of Aristotle. To make matters more complicated for Christian theologians, the Aristotelian *corpus* and great studies on it came to the Christian West through the Arabs, who were Moslems, and in conflict with Christian Europe. Great theologies are born by confronting the current culture and its icons, methods and challenges head on, not by running away, not by rejection, not by burying our heads in the sand of an ecclesiastical ghetto.

What are the areas of secular learning today that theology needs to dialogue with? If the medieval university had four faculties – arts, theology, law and medicine - today’s spectrum of subjects and areas of investigation are so many more, and with such a wide variety of methods. The theologian needs to address this world, listen to its questions and anxieties, and engage in a constructive and intelligent discourse which the secular interlocutor can both understand and respect. Too much theology is born and discussed among the “converted” – among those who already hold positions identical with, or very similar to, the speaker’s. Most theologians are not seriously and consistently in dialogue with scholars from other fields.

Given the literally mind-boggling spectrum of specializations today, no one person can grasp, or, much less, master the whole field of academia, or even a sizable portion of it. One can only bite off a small bit (this is what specialists do), or form part of a team (as, for instance, when a team of scripture scholars come together to prepare a biblical commentary). The type of field-encompassing work that Jerome or Aquinas did would be foolhardy to attempt today.

The other point is this: While the document mentions cultural pluralism with respect, and makes particular mention of India’s culture, there is always the danger that in judging the orthodoxy of a particular theology, the criteria developed in another cultural context are used, either exclusively, or predominantly. Most of what we call Christian theology is a Western product. It reflects the thinking patterns, the concerns, the cultural matrix of a *small* part of the world – which, quite unfairly, set itself as the norm for all – which abrogated to its use the greatest part of the earth’s material resources and tended to judge everyone else on its own criteria. This was certainly the case during most of the colonial period, and this “colonial” mentality still operates in a number of people in the church even today. Haven’t we heard ethnocentrism, or Europe-centred ways of looking at the church and at theology? To quote just one instance, a theology elaborated in Germany or France was simply called theology (and by implication good for worldwide consumption). A theology elaborated in Latin America was called Latin American theology (as if it is not good enough for the first world.)

We, in India, are right now in the process of elaborating creative methods for doing theology.⁷ There is no one Indian theology; there are, rather, different methods and attempts that call themselves Indian, or identify themselves more with local languages and cultures. We need to try various methods and paths, listen to the voices of our religious traditions and the needs of our most marginalized groups, precisely to be faithful to the gospel and to the Christian tradition. In this adventure, we will make mistakes and can certainly learn much from the example of our sister churches elsewhere, and be fruitfully challenged by theologies developed in other countries. What Thomas Aquinas did in Europe in the thirteenth century, we still need to do in India – with the same courage, openness and fidelity. Like him, we too may be misunderstood in the process. Indian

theology is not to become a mere footnote to European theology, but an adult contribution to the church's theological endeavour. It must seek its own avenues, both creatively and faithfully – of course in dialogue with world theology, in respectful obedience to the church's teaching authority, and never betraying the urgent concerns of that group of people for whom the Gospel is above all meant, namely, the poor and the forgotten.

DISCONTINUITIES

When we compare faith and reason, we are not comparing merely two modes or sources of knowledge. We are comparing a way of *knowing* with a committed way of *living*. While philosophy is mainly a way of knowing, of interpreting reality in search of meaning, faith refers to one's whole way of orienting one's life in response to one's belief system:

Within the life of faith, the intellectual element – the assent – is only a part; it cannot by any means be the whole. The most erudite scholar and the least intelligent man or woman can be a person of deep faith. Both the Nobel Prize winner and the mentally handicapped, illiterate person can belong to the same community of faith.

For faith refers to three aspects of a person's central attitudes and decisions – to one's *trust* in the Ultimate (God), to one's acceptance of a set of *truths*, and to being committed to a way of *living*. If you want to use a mnemonic to keep it in mind, faith contains three Cs: *confidence, content and commitment*. (And they make sense within another C, namely, the *community* of faith. Theology is always a community-related activity.) In fact, if we look at Jesus' stories of the last judgment, nothing is asked about one's intellectual positions, or even about one's religious views; what matters is how one lives. One's faith is best seen in the way one lives, not in the statements one makes. This committed life, as we know, can go with great intellectual acumen and with a feeble mind. While our IQ can be tested and graded, none of us can know the level of faith of each of the members of a community. The person of greatest faith among our acquaintances may be a brilliant scientist or a dancer or a sweeper.

Theology is not just a mental construct built upon an intellectual capital called "the deposit of faith" and the tools taken from a culture's philosophical categories. Theology is committed reflection on one's faith experience and that of one's community. So, unlike philosophy, only a person living the Catholic faith can be a Catholic theologian, and only a convinced Moslem can be a Moslem theologian. Without this faith experience and committed life, including committed relationships with the community, one can have a sociologist of religion, or a philosopher of religion, but not a theologian.

Rahner, for example, would say that all his theology flows out of the spiritual exercises. For Gutierrez, theology can only be a secondary exercise. The primary things – in importance and in logical order – are one’s faith experience and one’s commitment to people. Only on this twofold love can one build a theology. Otherwise, one has nothing to theologize about.⁸

In this sense, theology is a very different kind of intellectual enterprise from philosophy.⁹

I would like to highlight some other basic differences between the two.

Theology makes no sense without reference to a particular religious tradition. It is the critical reflection by specially qualified members on the faith experience and tradition of a particular faith community. That community exists because it shares common beliefs and a common tradition, and takes seriously the claims made by the founder (as in the case of Christianity or Islam or Buddhism) or by early texts (as in the case of Hinduism). Everything the community says about itself or about the foundational experience cannot be proved rationally. Thus we cannot “prove” to an outsider the reality of original sin or the meaning of the Resurrection, nor can a Moslem prove to us that the Koran is the word of God, as they understand it. In fact, behind all religious traditions, and hence at the heart of any theology, is a central claim: that there was special and unique *experience*.

Thus, if Jesus was nothing more than another human being, you and I are thoroughly misled. If the Resurrection accounts of the early Christians were delusions, we are, as St. Paul tells us, people most to be pitied. Even within our Christian tradition, we further trust the testimony of individuals who claim to have had God-experiences. Thus, if Ignatius’s claims to have experienced God are fake, the Jesuits would be a group of misled individuals. If I do not believe that Don Bosco was led by God, I would be a fool to belong to the Salesian congregation – or, at best, I would be merely a social worker with a religious tag. The Missionaries of Charity observe “Inspiration Day” each year – recalling the day when Mother Teresa is said to have received the inspiration (“a call within a call,” as she put it) to leave the Loretto Sisters and go out among the poorest.

Such central claims cannot be checked and proved, either by followers or by outsiders. For philosophy, such privileged claims would make no sense. Philosophy’s strength and nobility, its truly catholic appeal, is that the only authority is that of reason. Anyone can say anything, provided he or she can prove it. No one can claim special revelations, or a special status. And, to be honest, one must always admit the possibility that one may be wrong. When a famous philosopher – I think it was Bertrand Russell – was asked whether he would be willing to die for his convictions, he replied: “No, I may be wrong.”

A good illustration of a philosopher’s attitude to truth and certainty is given in Bertrand Russell’s “Ten Commandments.” In the line of

Socrates, Kant and other pioneering thinkers, Russell lays down certain basic norms for our search:

The philosopher, Socrates, ignored his accusers and steadfastly obeyed the command of Apollo, the god of reason. The philosopher, Kant, ignored the accusers of his day and called for the courage to use one's own reason. The philosopher, Bertrand Russell, (1872-1970) interpreted the meaning of Apollo for our own time:

1. Do not be certain of anything.
2. Do not think it worthwhile to produce belief by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
3. Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
4. When met with opposition, even if it should be from your husband or your children, endeavour to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
5. Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
6. Do not use power to suppress opinion you believe to be pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you.
7. Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
8. Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
9. Be scrupulously truthful, even when truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
10. Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fools' paradise, for only a fool will think that it is happiness."¹⁰

This is very different from the position of the believer, for whom the martyr is the most convinced and the most convincing believer. We do not imply that the martyrs had all their intellectual questions worked out in their head; but they believed in something or someone strongly enough to stake everything they had on that faith. This is in many ways the opposite of the perennial skeptic.

Underlying this basic difference are two very different ways of understanding experience. Both philosophy and theology go back to experience, but in very, very different ways. Let us see how.

THE DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF "EXPERIENCE"

Philosophy starts with what is called "ordinary" human experience, in which there are no privileged observers, or specialized instruments. In this, it differs from theology and from experimental science. Philosophers discuss aspects of human experience which anyone can check for oneself. Thus, we see the ancient Greeks discussing the trustworthiness of sense

knowledge, or Aristotle exploring the meaning of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, or Karl Marx calling our attention to the widespread experience of exploitation of the masses by powerful elites. In each of these, anyone with normal physical and mental abilities can check out the facts. One need not make an act of trust in the speaker to hold the veracity of what is being said. The debate on the reliability of sense knowledge can be illustrated with examples which even a child can follow (like the famous example of a stick appearing bent when seen through water). Aristotle's descriptions of the true and false friendship can very well fit our experiences. Marx, in his turn, was giving voice to the bitter experiences of large numbers of people.

The core experience on which religion and theology rest belongs to a very different category. To accept Jesus as God, for instance, is "scandal to the Jews and folly to the Greeks," as the well-educated Paul realized. The Damascus experience which changed the self-righteous persecutor of Jesus' followers into a passionate lover of Christ cannot be proved or explained. In fact, even after reading an "account" of it (which can never be a description) we do not know what Saul/Paul experienced.

What did the Vedic seers see? What did the Gautama experience that turned him into the Buddha? What made the illiterate Mohammed a powerful messenger of God? What did Teresa of Avila glimpse? What exactly is John of the Cross saying when he writes about the Beloved and the Dark Night? What did Mahatma Gandhi hear when he listened to the Inner Voice?

None of us really knows the answer to these questions. But, as Bergson used to say, philosophers, as seekers of the truth, cannot ignore the fact that some of the best human beings, whose influence on society has been great and beneficial, have claimed to be led by such experiences.¹¹

In his much-quoted work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, philosopher-psychologist William James takes a respectful look at mystical experience. Among other things, he lists the characteristics of religious (mystical) experience. These special experiences, he said, are *ineffable* (they cannot be described), passive (they happen to a person; they are not the person's own doing); transitory (not continuous). Another quality he found is that they bring with it a *certainty* of their own. The mystic's inner certainty does not come from the correctness of his/her formulations, but from what he/she has seen. This is miles away from the kind of attitude described by Russell.¹²

So, too, James said, mystical experience was *noetic*, that is, it brings knowledge, but in a different way from what we normally call knowledge. What it brings is not new information, or quantitative knowledge (information added to what we already know), but a whole new way of knowing. To quote an example: After his experiences at Manresa, Ignatius of Loyola said he understood so many things clearly, as he had not understood them through years of study. He felt that God had instructed him as a teacher instructs a pupil. This type of knowledge cannot be

explained to someone else. It is not “public knowledge.” It cannot be directly described, examined or critiqued. This article, for instance, belongs to the public realm. You can check my sources. You can decide whether what I am saying is logical. You can agree with, or differ from, my conclusions, depending on the strength or the weakness of the evidence I offer. All this cannot be done with Mother Teresa’s “call within a call” or with Augustine’s conversion experience or Ramakrishna’s ecstatic religiosity.

Why bring in mystical knowledge here? For a simple reason: Theology is the language of a faith community in talking about its experience and doctrines. If theology loses touch with its mystical moorings, it is reduced to empty talk. Not just that; a theologian who is not, to some degree at least, a mystic, does not really know what the words mean. He/she becomes a merchant of words, or the defender of an ideology rather than an explorer of a faith.

Philosophers (like Russell or Kant or Heidegger) can bring to theology their tools, their honest questioning. Theology is public discourse, and cannot remove itself from honest questioning. Theology is not the same as revelation. It is the work of human beings, and must submit itself to the rules of correct discourse and honest confrontation. This is, after all, how new theologies are born. They do not fall from the sky, readymade; they are human responses to new situations and new challenges.¹³ The challenges and the questions (as well as the tools for solving them) may come from philosophy, social sciences, literary studies, or other fields.

PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THE ARTS

At the World Conference of Religion held in Kochi in the 1980s, Father Barboza, a trained Bharatanatyam dancer, gave a dance on a Christian theme. Most of us professors see such events as relaxation, or as minor additions to the “real serious stuff,” namely, our discussions and papers. One day, during the group discussion, one of the Hindu scholars told us: “I learned more about your religion from that dance than from the papers in the sessions.” Many of us wondered what he meant. What did the dance convey that the learned papers had not?

Philosophy and theology are largely left brain activities, dealing with concepts, theories and discursive reasoning. The whole world of aesthetics, beauty and feeling is largely left out. In fact, some of the most moving expressions of religious faith are not found in theological and philosophical seminars, but in a prayerful liturgy, in a moving procession, in good singing, in great works of art. There is much more to religion than dogmas and doctrines.¹⁴

In a British study of adolescents and religion, a group of boys were given the chance to participate in different types of prayer services. Some included meaningful explanations of religious doctrines. When asked to rate

the different services, the boys chose the service in which the music moved them as the most devotional.¹⁵

Human beings are apparently moved more by emotion than by concepts. Or, if concepts move them, it is largely because these are capable of provoking deep emotion.

The whole emotional and aesthetic side of religious life and practice is largely ignored by philosophers and theologians. It does not have to be. When Thomas Aquinas preached to the simple people of Naples in their dialect, they were moved to tears. Maybe, we are taking a small part of the total personality of such great men, and reducing them to dry and lifeless caricatures. If the professor's sermon sounds like a seminar paper, or if he celebrates Mass with as much (or as little) personal involvement as a purely theoretical discussion, the fault is not with theology, but with inadequate personal integration. Human beings are, after all, much more than sophisticated computers. One-dimensional people are not only unappealing human beings; they are also unfit to become great theologians or philosophers.

I have been highlighting the different understandings of experience in philosophy and religion, and contrasting the mystic's inner certainty with the philosopher's endless questioning (which must be respected). But at one level, the mystic and the philosopher are twin souls and understand each other well.

That level is this. Both the deep thinker and the deep mystic have seen the limit of words and concepts, and feel the inadequacy of human language and mental gymnastics to picture the truth. The "*neti, neti*" of Sankara, or Aquinas's conclusion, "This is to know God – that we are aware that we do not know Him" (*Hoc est Deum cognoscere, quod scimus nos ignorare de Deo quid sit*), Saint Ignatius's insistence, *Deus semper maius*, that is, "God is always greater (than anything we can know or say about God)" – such pearls of wisdom will find a respectful response in the great philosophers. Deep thinkers suspect easy answers and the certainties that come from shallow thinking. In some sense, the mystic and the agnostic are closer than we suspect. Both have seen through the inadequacy of knowledge and words. Both are aware how much ignorance our so-called learning contains. As Rahner would insist, the human being's basic awareness is that of mystery. In being aware of a few islands of knowledge, we cannot but glimpse even more sharply the immense ocean of mystery:

In this honest admission of our ignorance, of the littleness of our conquests, the philosopher and the mystic come together. Both challenge the easy assertions of superficial theologians who may forget that God is not a tidy formula. Explaining why a number of his colleagues do not take religious writers seriously, one scientist wrote: "Some religious people write as if they know more about God and spiritual matters than a scientist claims to know about a

bug.” This cocksureness, this blissful unawareness of one’s limitations and the consequent claims of certainty – well, that is hard for any thinking person to take seriously. Just as the mystic insists that one’s experience is ineffable, and is painfully aware of the poverty of words and concepts, the serious scholar is honestly aware of how little one knows, how much more there is to know, and how inadequate our tools are.

The philosopher and the mystic respect each other in their awareness of limit and the readiness to move beyond comfortable formulae. They part company in this, that, while philosophers (like Kant or Heidegger or Russell) see the inadequacy of traditional answers and see more questions than answers, the mystic sees the darkness as filled by a Presence, which he/she cannot describe, but which has made Itself felt. It is a “dazzling darkness,” to use a favourite expression of some mystics; it is life-giving and brings with it its own kind of certainty. Hence the use of symbol, story and paradox by mystics to give expression to what cannot really be captured by the mind or by the rules of grammar and logic.

Religions are vehicles for this self-transforming inner experience. They are like rusty pipes bringing us life-giving water. We need the water, and hence the pipes. But there are no perfect pipes. The life-giving water gets mixed up with rust and grime and rubbish. Theologies are like tool kits maintaining the pipes. They are not the source of the living water.

For those who have discovered the original source of the water, the pipes are secondary, and may even be discarded. Theologies, rituals, structures, regulations and dogma are, in this sense, mediations and tools – necessary in the normal course of events, but to be transcended. It is water that quenches our thirst, not the pipes, however elaborate they may be, and how very clever their construction. It may be good to remember cases like that of the brilliant Aquinas who, once he glimpsed the Real in an essentially incommunicable personal experience, refused to write any further. “All that I have written,” he is said to have told a friend who pleaded with him to complete the *Summa*, “seems to be like so much straw.”

For those who have not glimpsed that Other Shore, the straw may be everything they have found, and it may even appear like gold. Or one may be frustrated at not finding something more meaningful, as it seems to have happened to an earnest seeker like Albert Camus.

Moving to a conclusion on the relationships among philosophy, theology and spirituality, this is what we can say:

Human reason is the best tool we have for understanding ourselves, each other and the world around us. It is by no means a tool to be despised. (For, even if one were to despise reason, one would have to have reasons for such contempt, and those reasons would have to be elaborated by the same mind that we suspect.). Relentless quest, discovery, growth, and progress – all this belongs to the greatness of the human race. Apart from moving us from beast-like lives to what we call civilization today, it also saves us from fanaticism, exploitation and regression. In fact, as Jiddu Krishnamurti insists, we always trust our reason; for, even when I decide to trust someone else (such as, a person, or a newspaper, or a religious authority), I basically trust the soundness of my own mind in coming to such a decision. So, no human inquiry is possible without adequate trust in human reason.

That there are many questions raised by reason which reason cannot answer, is obvious. E.g., why are you and I alive and in good health, while others die before us, or are afflicted with cancer or leprosy? In such matters, philosophers remind us to be honest and not to accept consoling myths just to comfort ourselves. (Think of the critique of religion by Feuerbach, Marx and Freud). We should also avoid claiming to know what we really do not know. As a professor of theology once told us, when anyone (including a theologian) makes an assertion, the hearer has the right to ask: “How do you know the truth of what you said just now?” We cannot escape rational inquiry by appealing to authority or mystery or “faith” (To tell someone, “If you had more faith, you would not ask such questions,” is both an insult and an escape).

Questions – that is something all of us have. And the wiser and deeper persons among us will have more questions and perhaps deeper anguish than the rest. In this, two avenues are open to us. One is the classical saying of the Greeks that “it is better to be a dissatisfied Socrates than a contented pig.” That is, it is the mark of wisdom to move beyond easy answers and to be on a relentless search.¹⁶ The other answer comes from the mystic. Great and deep human beings like Ramana Maharshi and John of the Cross, Paul of Tarsus and Francis of Assisi, have touched the depth of human reality and seen beyond it in a way they could not describe.¹⁷ That is a level we cannot learn through discussion and mere cleverness. At this very personal and deepest level, it is not a matter of arguing; it is a matter of sight. Just as a theology that protects itself from the bold questions of philosophy and the sciences would be shallow and useless, any religious exploration that did not nourish itself at the sources through direct experience runs the risk of ending up as mere chatter – or as self-serving power games. History has shown us examples of both.

NOTES

1 J.T. Mannath, *Harvey of Nedellec's Proofs for the Existence of God: "De Cognitione Primi Principii, QQ. III-IV"* (Rome: Salesian

Pontifical University, 1969), pp. 6-7. Some masters in the faculty of arts posited two sets of opposing conclusions: conclusions to be held *secundum fidem et veritatem* and those that are valid *secundum viam Aristotelis et Commentatoris*.

2 Karl Rahner, "The Current Relationship between Philosophy and Theology," *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), Vol XIII, pp. 61-79.

3 Karl Rahner, "Theology as Engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue with the Sciences," *Ibid.*, pp. 80-93; "On the Relationship between Theology and Contemporary Sciences," *Ibid.*, pp.94-102.

4 Rosino Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), especially pp. 1-19: "The Origin and Method of Liberation Theology," and pp. 80-87: "We Cannot Do Theology in a Dead Corner of History: A Conversation with Gustavo Gutierrez."

5 The literature on feminist theology is vast and growing, as any scholar in the field will attest. Just to mention a few names in connection with its methodologies: Elizabeth Schuessler-Fiorenza's path-breaking research into Christian sources, Elizabeth Johnson's contributions to our whole language about God, Rosemary Radford Reuther's linking of feminism with other liberation movements, the work of Sandra Schneiders clarifying the strands of feminism within and outside the church, Anne Carr's work on feminist spirituality – the roster is large and impressive.

6 Apart from the titles directly dealing with Dalit theology, works in such related areas as subaltern studies or people's movements bring fresh perspectives on social and religious issues which are quite different from, and offer a direct challenge to, the vision proposed by privileged groups.

7 It is enough to think of the topics discussed in the annual gathering of the Indian Theological Association. Its publications, as well as the more numerous writings of its many members, are ample proof of the ferment within Indian theologizing, as well of the range and depth of the writings. India presents, right now, one of the most active scenes within Christian theology.

8 In his lectures at Boston College, Gutierrez used to insist on this. His position is a very convincing answer to those who think – or fear – that liberation theology plays down spirituality or prayer life. Again, when interviewed at the silver jubilee of the publication of his seminal work, *Theology of Liberation*, he made his position strikingly clear. To the question: "Do you preach liberation theology?" his answer was: "I was not ordained to preach liberation theology. I was ordained to preach Jesus Christ."

9 I am using the term "philosophy" in the normally accepted Western sense, in which it is generally used in Church circles. We tend to study under philosophy themes and questions that can be explored without reference to any revelation or religious authority. Thus Socrates and Marx and Heidegger can be studied in the philosophy department of a seminary,

or the philosophical (that is, non-theological) views of theologians like Augustine or Thomas Aquinas.

This is not the meaning given to the term “philosophy” in Indian universities, for instance. On the same floor where I work at Madras University, there are the departments of Philosophy, Jainology, Saiva Siddhanta and Vaishnavism, in addition to ours, namely, Christian Studies. In a Western university, all such departments would be considered parts of religious studies, or of divinity/theology. What is taught under “philosophy” in most Indian universities is Hindu theology (*advaita*, more than anything else). Sankara or Madhava would be, for a Westerner, theologians, not philosophers, since they are largely interpreting the sacred texts of their religious group.

10 Bertrand Russell, “The Ten Commandments,” *The Independent*, June 1965, p. 4, as quoted in John R. Burr and Milton Goldinger, *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), pp. 5-6.

11 We need not travel far to have first hand knowledge of the influence of mystics and saints, or of persons who are seen thus by their followers. Think of the recent celebration of the fiftieth birthday of Mata Amritanandmayi in Kochi. Politicians, captains of industry, the famous and the obscure – all came in impressive numbers to pay their respect to this woman, whose impact is not based on formal education or money or caste hierarchy or political clout. No scholar or writer in our country has that kind of appeal.

12 There have been many other studies of religious experience since James’s pioneering work. Think of James Pratt, who studied normal religious experience, or Alister Hardy, whose center in Oxford has published several volumes on the religious experiences of ordinary people, or the study of children’s spiritual experiences by Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles. For a recent look at some such studies, see: Joe Mannath, “Spirituality and Children,” *Vaigarai*, 6, 1 (March 2001), pp. 16-25.

13 That is why there are, and have to be, many theologies, not just one theology. See, for instance, works like: Robert J. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (London: SCM Press, 1985).

14 See, e.g., the discussion on the various ways in which spirituality and religiosity are expressed: art, architecture, books, diaries, music, states of life. For a short discussion, see: *The Study of Spirituality*, edited by Cheslyn Jones and Geoferey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially the chapter: “Media of Spirituality.”

15 David Wulff, *Psychology of Religion* (New York: J. Wiley, 1991).

16 A striking contemporary example would be Thomas Merton, the twentieth century’s most famous monk. At the beginning of his monastic life (as seen in his best selling autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*) he feels he has come home. He enjoys inner certainty. Later, facing the

questions thrown at him by life – racism in the US, the Vietnam War, the truths of the Eastern religions – he found himself a learner once again. His new questions, and the challenge his new awareness represented to one type of settled Catholicism, disappointed and even scandalized a number of his former admirers, who were looking up to him for the certainty of easy answers.

17 By quoting well-known and respected names, I do not imply, by any means, that ordinary mortals are not mystics. In fact, there is abundant research evidence that many “normal” men, women and children have religious experiences. So, too, as Andrew Greeley’s study of the US population has shown, these ordinary mystics are not misfits; they are happier and function better than the rest of the population.

Closer home, Joshua Iyadurai, an M. Phil. Student in our department at Madras University, has just completed a dissertation under my guidance on the religious experiences of Christian college students in Chennai. Contrary to what a number of us may think, it is among the brighter students – students of medical and engineering colleges – that we came across a larger number of religious experiences. We are not talking of the Middle Ages, but of 2003!

CHAPTER VI

TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

JOHN B. CHETHIMATTAM, CMI

Aristotle in the sixth book of the *Metaphysics* (1. 1036a 18) divided theoretical philosophy into physics, mathematics and theology. Following him early Western theologian treated theology as a philosophical discipline. Boethius Anicus Manlius Severinus (480-525), mostly ignored during his life time and for long after his death, was discovered by Alicuin in the 9th century, and became almost the Father of Western theological thinking. Thierry of Chartre, commenting on Boethius, defines theology as a philosophical discipline that considers the totality of things (*universitas rerum*) in the simplicity and unity of the divine principle. In the 12th century, Abelard praised Boethius as “*maximus philosophus Latinorum*,” the greatest philosopher of the Latins, since he made available to the West the classical Greek sources, especially Aristotle. Though Thomas Aquinas later made a sharp distinction between what could be known by the light of reason and what was discernible through the light of faith from divine revelation, today with the realization that it is the same God that reveals himself in both creation and revelation, one has to return to what M. D. Chenu called the *aetas Boetiana*. In this age of ecumenism and inter-religious theologizing the more theology can be brought to the pale of philosophy the more accessible to all human beings it becomes.

THE SAD PLIGHT OF THEOLOGY TODAY

Biblical scholarship has shown that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are not ideological statements of the Christian faith, but only culturally conditioned responses to actual problems and questions raised by different Christian communities. Not a single statement can be taken as the very word of Christ or as referring to an event exactly as it happened. An exegetical approach to Scripture is a rather difficult and unreliable method for presenting faith today. Coming from different cultural and philosophical backgrounds they present a plurality of christologies, ecclesiologies and perspectives of salvation. We have to read between the lines even to find out what Jesus actually did and taught. With the loss of faith in Scripture as a series of propositional truths dictated by God, theology has degenerated today into what theologians actually do. Ecumenical theology is just a survey of what various Christian theologians think about various issues, and what the majority opinion among them is.

Most of our Indian theologians trained in the traditional Western methodology had taken for granted ecclesial and religious pluralism, since

both exclusivism and inclusivism were already out of fashion. So they were shocked when the recent Vatican declaration “*Dominus Jesus*” bluntly stated that “the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid episcopate and genuine integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense.” If Christianity is the movement started by the testimony of the Apostles and Memorial of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, a true Church cannot be without apostolic succession and true Eucharist. They were further shocked by the statement that all religions are not of divine origin nor of equal salvific validity though they may contain what the “Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of people, in cultures and religions.” If there is only one God and one human race, there can be only one authentic religion that has its origin in the initiative from the side of God inviting all to deeper fellowship with the Godhead. So the thousands of religious groups that mushroom everyday for sociological, political and historical reasons cannot be religions in the same sense.

Most disturbing to them was the reaffirmation of the statement of *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II that “the Church as pilgrim on earth, is necessary for salvation; the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church” (LG # 14). If the unique role of Christianity is to invite all human beings to be sons and daughters of God, this can be done only through the one Son incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. None of the other religious leaders like Mohammed and Buddha who belong to the common heritage of humanity claims the title of Son of God or of Mediator. Christian pluralists insist that other religious leaders also should be recognized as mediators and saviours! But this is a favour the other religions do not ask. On the whole Christian theology is today a rudderless vessel floating aimlessly on the sea of world opinion. The right approach in this situation is to turn to the philosophical roots of Christian theologizing.

PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF THEOLOGIZING

Sin and redemption were not the primary concerns of Christian theology. The primary scope of the Incarnation was not actually to repair the damage caused by Adam’s fall and to restore humanity back to Paradise from which it was expelled. Its scope was to continue the original plan of creation and bring all things to the full development of their potential. Following Aristotle, Boethius ascribes to physics matter and motion, to mathematics that which is abstract, and to theology the immaterial substance of God. Theology is the highest discipline in the order of sciences because it considers “that form which is pure form and being itself.” He finds an identity between knowledge based on revelation and information gathered by reason. So he ascribes to theology a task which Aristotle never dreamt of, namely *intellectus fidei*, the rational understanding of the Trinity. Besides *De Consolatione Philosophiae* which remained the text book of

schools for centuries, he had five theological treatises, the most important of which was *On the Trinity*. Though he was inspired by the example of Augustine, he states that this method was radically different since he drew his arguments “from the deepest disciplines of philosophy.”

In *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Boethius lays down the common goal of philosophy and theology as attainment of happiness. Before this Kant said that this happiness was the general objective of all philosophy. Augustine writes in his *De Civitate Dei*: “There is no reason for a human being to philosophize except to be happy, and only the highest good makes one happy.”¹ Boethius defines happiness as “that state which is perfect since all goods are together in it.”² The highest Good is identified with God. So Boethius presses in Platonic fashion his argument that happiness is sharing in the divinity. All that is imperfectly good is not goodness itself, but something that shares in the Good. Since human beings are made happy by happiness shared from divine happiness, happiness itself is divinity. Therefore every happy man is a god. Though by nature only one is God, nothing prevents there being many gods by participation.³ *De Consolatione Philosophiae* dealt with issues such as divine providence, human freedom, eternity and time. Thrown into prison by the unscrupulous king, Theoderic, Boethius found in his own case a philosophical vindication of divine providence even in a world where the just are not rewarded with prosperity and the wicked are allowed power. In the twelfth century the focus was not on the distinction between knowledge based on revelation and data gathered by the use of reason, but on their unity. Thus William of Conches opens his *Philosophia Mundi* with an exposé of the two basic Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Philosophy was what was done in the monasteries by the monks, who dedicated themselves to the study of the development of the potentialities of all human beings, especially the contemplation of the Supreme Good, the Immovable Mover who moves all things as the object of their knowledge and love.

For the Medieval Christian theologians the conflict was between Plato and Augustine. Plato presented divinity as the absolute Good which was diffusive of itself like the Sun of the moral universe communicating itself through intermediary beings, especially the creator Demiurge who produced all things according to the intermediary ideas. The goal of human life was to attain a direct contemplation of the Good as the source of all things. Pseudo Dionysius, who was generally accepted as Dionysius the Areopagite, corrected and completed Plato by stating that the first instalment of this divine communication was the nature of things followed by their faculties and proper activities. Augustine, on the other hand, on the basis of the personal revelation of God in Scripture, emphasized the fall and sinfulness of man, which necessitated that humans could be maintained in rectitude only through a continued illumination of their minds. Thus Abelard argues on the basis of Plato that “God’s creation and providence are the best possible and could not be different” since the Supreme Good could do only the best. On the other hand, he draws from Augustine the

idea that divine providence is at work in salvation history, saving creation from the evil that human free will has brought to it. Plato deals only with evil in general, since demiurge did not create matter, the source of limitation and corruption. Augustine on the other hand envisages the divine providence as executed in the sweep of sacred history, as well as in each individual through God's free gift of grace or the withholding of it. So he has the notion of *felix culpa Adami*, the happy sin of Adam, that presents the picture of a God who has so organized every event that even where the free will of rational creatures intends evil, all that happens is part of the best possible providence.⁴ So, for Abelard, the individual is left with no recourse from the way things have unfolded, since everything is ordered in the best possible way. Boethius who has similar ideas about divine Providence tries in his *De Consolatione* in some degree to find some solace for human suffering explaining how Providence is at work in the suffering, of the good and the prosperity of the wicked.

SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY

This philosophical theology which was the main outlook of schools for four centuries came to an abrupt end in the thirteenth century. Thomas Aquinas drew the lines of demarcation between philosophy and theology: Philosophy is the search of unaided reason for answers to questions concerning reality as such, while theology is the rational reflection on divine Revelation. Bonaventure in his later works even condemns the use of philosophy for justification of the divine gift of faith.⁵ The historical reason, however, for this radical distinction was the move of mendicant monks like Aquinas and Bonaventure to get into the academe. Against the strong opposition of the Masters of schools like Averroes and Siger Brabant, who wanted to keep the monks confined to their monastic cells with the ideal of contemplation, they strongly defended their right to active life, namely "*contemplata aliis tradere*", effectively to communicate to others the fruit of their contemplation. For this they had to raise theology to the status of an academic subject, using strict logical reasoning. Divine Revelation which was presented as "formal speech" was supposed to communicate propositional truths like: "There are three persons in one God," and "the Second Person of the Trinity truly became man," became the first premise of a theological syllogism. Thomas Aquinas, who was the first to write a commentary on Boethius' Treatise on the Trinity, clearly marks the transition. Commenting on Boethius' statement: "In divine science we should apprehend the divine form itself" (6. 4), he twists the question into: "Can our intellect behold the divine form by means of some theoretical science?" Even St. Anselm had argued that the divine form, than which nothing could be greater, was the basic supposition for human knowledge, but not as the first premise of a syllogism. Even according to the Greek-Arabic philosophical thinking, the ultimate happiness of man is to understand the separate substances. But Aquinas rejects the position with

the argument that “in the theoretical sciences we always proceed from something previously known, both in demonstrating propositions and also in finding definitions.” Even Anselm’s ‘idea of the Greatest’, Aquinas distorts to mean “only *our* idea of the greatest” and not the Greatest in itself. But it is impossible to proceed to infinity, since the infinite cannot be traversed. So every inquiry in the theoretical sciences should be reduced to some *firsts*. There are only two kinds of *firsts*, data of divine revelation which is the ground of theological thinking, or the demonstrable principles of demonstration and the first conceptions of the intellect, such as ‘being’ and ‘one’ which are the basis of philosophy. Since there are no innate or infused ideas in the human mind, which is a blank board to start with, we can only proceed with questions: “Does God exist?”, “Is there original sin?” and the like. Then, in attempting to answer these questions, one has to weigh the arguments for and against provided by Scripture, the teaching authority of the Church and statements of the Fathers and other eminent authorities like Plato and Aristotle, often taking the texts out of their contexts. Clearly, theology relying on statements of divine Revelation is a superior science. Aquinas, reacting to Arab Enlightenment, even introduced a distinction between revealed articles of faith evident only to God, and the experience of faith in what is revealed in those articles.⁶ Philosophy lost its existential dimension and was downgraded to that of a purely theoretical discourse and ended up as a mere handmaid of theology, to prove by reasoning what was revealed as truth by revelation. There are two kinds of happiness, one imperfect of which philosophers speak, consisting in the imperfect contemplation of the separate substances, and the other the perfect happiness of the vision of God that will come only in the light of glory.⁷

Aquinas also had recourse to the authority of Ps. Dionysius and presented an anthropology. Man is a free, incarnate spirit directly ordered to God, his creator as well as his ultimate end. Since he is ordered to make the earth fruitful, his work cannot be ordered to anything lower than himself. If man is a free and responsible person living and working in a world created by a transcendent God and redeemed by the creative Word, incarnate as a true human being, the true meaning of human life cannot be known unless man’s mind is able to grasp the whole range of being, and that mind is enlightened by God’s historical revelation. It was a metaphysical anthropology rooted in a realistic philosophy of being. But from Aquinas’ comprehensive philosophy two radically different Thomisms emerged. One followed Aristotelian naturalism insisting that the specific objects determined the actions, that the actions specified the faculties and the faculties’ nature itself. The Nominalist theology of the late Middle Ages detached nature from its supernatural destiny. Cardinal Cajetan could even speak of a ‘pure nature’. For the same reason Martin Luther, on the other hand with his battle cry “*sola Scriptura*,” declared war not only against traditional interpretation of Scripture but also against Scholasticism and its use of Plato and Aristotle to explain faith. Suarez and a great many others

were loyal to this purely naturalist tradition. The crucial point here was Aristotle's idea of 'ousia', essence, which is an intrinsically unitary entity, the principle of unity, activity, finality and active potentiality. St. Thomas had wholeheartedly accepted this Aristotelian position. "Every substance exists for the sake of its operation," he said.⁸ "Each and everything shows forth that it exists for the sake of its operation; indeed, operation is the ultimate perfection of each thing."⁹ Though it sounds pretty dynamic it is difficult to find a more static idea of things: Operation is simply to actualize the potentialities in nature and bring it to a closed completeness!

The post-Cartesian European thinking and the Enlightenment wanted to liberate religion from the Church and denied even the possibility of divine Revelation. As envisioned by the 19th century intellectuals, reason was an independent self-grounding, disembodied form of thought totally divorced from divine revelation in its operation. Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason* denied the very possibility of rationally proving the existence of God, though He was the unifying principle of a transcendental dialectics of reality. Religion within the limits of reason was simply reduced to ethics based on the categorical imperative of Practical Reason. Hegel tried to build a religion from below according to the dialectics of consciousness reaching up even to a Trinity. But there was no possibility of Revelation. Christian thinking responded to the post-Cartesian mentality in two ways: Some took refuge in Fideism, claiming that transcendental reality could be grasped only through faith, while others supported Rationalism, insisting that religion had to submit itself to the scrutiny of Reason. In reaction to the Renaissance which was backward looking, trying to restore the glorious past, the Enlightenment was forward looking. It encouraged the individual freedom and created a stage of optimism with the discovery of new lands and new inventions. As sociologists think, the Counter Reformation initiated by the Council of Trent over-reacted to the situation. It was essentially concerned to bring the faithful into line on the basis of an effort at doctrinal clarification and the development of a totalitarian catechesis, which divided the world into the thinkable and unthinkable, the prescribed and the forbidden. Cano, Bellarmine, Suarez and others proposed against the Reformation rules to secure the consensus of faith as a criterion of truth. This meant that the sense of faith as an individual and collective organ of discernment of the event of Revelation was subordinated to a criteriology of rational theological statement. In the opinion of W. Kaspar confession and conviction were subjected to theologically articulated dogma; testimony of Scripture was reduced to a mere proof for official doctrine. "Word of God sank below dogma". As Yves Congar states, "Tridentinism represented a kind of conditioning, I mean a kind of enveloping, the provision of framework into which one entered and in which one stayed."¹⁰ Meanwhile Vatican I in its "Constitution on Faith" *Dei Filius* clearly rejected both Fideism and rationalism because post-Cartesian philosophical reason did not possess an adequate philosophy of man which could ground a coherent

social ethics, nor a philosophy of being required to harmonize the legitimate claims of faith and reason. In the words of Peter Eiches, “The Church of Vatican I chose with all its consequences to take up a position over against modern society, and chose thereby isolation from the historical experience of the modern era. It did this ... not only as an infallible retention of traditional doctrine, but also by retaining an historically exhausted form of feudalism and sovereign absolutism.”¹¹ It was in this spirit that Pope Leo XIII wrote his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* to reinstate original Thomism and the *Rerum Novarum* to establish social doctrine on a more integrated anthropology.

Many Thomists like Garrigou Lagrange could not think of a natural orientation to the vision of God. With the strict distinction between what was purely natural and what was supernatural even the more liberal Thomists like Blondel, Marechal and Rahner hesitated to embrace the traditional idea of a philosophical desire for God, as smacking too much of Neo-Platonism. It was the theology of grace and nature that was looked upon with suspicion even at the eve of Vatican II, when Pius XII with his encyclical *Humani Generis* strongly condemned the “New Theology” that supported a strong link between the two. The Tridentinian type of Catholicism persisted till the death of Pope of Pius XII and the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II.

TRANSCENDENTAL THOMISM

The other line of Thomism followed the Dionysian strand in the philosophy of Aquinas. The core of this orientation was the Thomistic doctrine of the natural desire to see God. This was derived from Plato and Plotinus and emphasized by Augustine’s statement in the *Confessions* about the restless heart. Aquinas develops this idea in many places in his writings. First of all, looking for the cause of things one comes to the idea of a First Cause and Immobile Mover of all things, the mind is not satisfied with any imperfect knowledge of it, but desires to see God face to face. In fact this natural desire is one of the strongest arguments for the existence of God: “The intellect in knowing any thing tends to the infinite. A sign of that is that given any finite quantity one can think of something greater. This inclination towards the infinite would be in vain if there were nothing infinite. So there is an infinite, which we call God. To know God is the end of all intellectual substance.”¹² Christian thinkers like Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus and Ps. Dionysius had spoken about man as the microcosm, the frontier between the world of finite beings and the Infinite. Even Aristotle in *De Anima* had described the Agent Intellect as a divine principle, the impulse of a principle that is uninterruptedly cognizant, which can only be God. If reason divine, he argued in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (X. 7. 1177b), the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. Thomas repeatedly argues for the immanent presence of the creative cause both in being and acting: “God is the cause of action not only being the form which

is the principle of action ... but also by preserving the forms and powers of things. ... Because in all things God himself is properly the cause of universal being which is innermost in all things, it follows that in all things God works inwardly.”¹³ In his commentary on St. John’s Gospel he affirms: “God who operates by conveying being, operates in all things in the most intimate way.”¹⁴ For Aquinas and Bonaventure philosophy had a mystical dimension.

Meister Eckhart coming to teach in the University of Paris in 1302 at the same time as Duns Scotus, continued this dynamic Thomistic tradition, even somewhat correcting the static naturalist trend permitted by Thomas in his *Summas*. Eckhart started in Neo-Platonic fashion with a statement of experience. As he explains in his prologue to his *Opus Tripartitum* his intention was to have a threefold division of theology. He began with an axiomatic system following the example of Proclus and the anonymous *Book of Causes* with more than thousand propositions. This was followed by a second book of Questions organized on the model of the *Summa* of Aquinas as school exercises and finally concluded with a Work of Expositions consisting of commentaries on both Testaments of Sacred Scripture, namely Genesis, Exodus, the Book of Wisdom and the Gospel of John and a collection of sermons. Referring to Augustine’s statement in the Confessions Vi, 29 that he read that “In the beginning was the Word,” and a good part of the first chapter of St. John in the books of Plato, but had not read Jn. 1: 11 “God came among his own” and that the Word was made flesh, Eckhart tries to show that there are natural arguments for the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and of the Trinity.¹⁵ According to some Eckhart, intended to write a philosophy of Christianity as autonomous self-realization of human reason. Though most of the authors of the 13th and 14th centuries held that God can be known as Three and One solely by faith, Eckhart appeals to both Anselm and Boethius as the models for his rationality, and quotes the words of Boethius at the end of his Treatise on the Trinity: “Connect as much as you can, faith and reason.” In fact Eckhart’s aim was to demonstrate “how the truths of natural principles, inferences and properties are clearly intimated in the very words of Scripture expounded with the help of those natural truths.”¹⁶ What he actually does is to identify the transcendentals, being, one, true and good with God. So for him the question is in what sense these can be predicated of creatures. These have being and other transcendental properties totally from God, and they are not rooted in creatures in themselves. Being is not imputed to creatures by God so that they should appear “as if” they were; but rather, being is lent by God to the creature. The reception of being is a permanent process, a continuous influx. Commenting on Ecclesiasticus 24: 29 “Those who eat me still hunger” Eckhart says, “So far as creature is (and is one, etc.), it always ‘eats’; insofar as it is not of itself but through something else, it always hungers.”¹⁷ Eckhart divides philosophy into physics, mathematics and “ethics or theology.” He avoided the traditional distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy and identified

philosophical theology (or metaphysics) and ethics.¹⁹ According to him contemplative life and active life are not separate. Man's final end consists in union with God and this is attained through detachment, which is the highest virtue. Detaching oneself from one's finite existence, goodness, etc., and all that is creaturely, one finds one's identity in the divinity itself, before the very procession of the Word. The birth or generation of God in the human soul is a characteristic teaching of Eckhart. Explained in many scriptural commentaries.¹⁹ This doctrine gets support from the doctrine of Incarnation: Man can become divine because God has become man. Eckhart's theology was generally considered as mysticism, and hence generally rejected by the Scholastics.

Nicholas of Cusa (1401 – 1462) was one who in his philosophical theology argued for a fundamental orientation of the mind to God. The human self as the image of God looks for the divine prototype in the mind's efforts to get back through its activities to its origins. Desire to know is a desire to know oneself and knowing oneself needs knowing one's original essence. He says in his *De Filiatione Dei*:²⁰ "Therein is that supreme intellectual joy, when the intellect beholds its Beginning, Middle and End – beholds them in the object of the intellect, i.e., in pure truth, while knowing that these excel all the loftiness of that apprehension. And this is intellect's apprehending of itself in truth, in such excellence of glory that the intellect understands that nothing can remain outside itself but that in it all things are." For Nicholas, all knowing is motivated by an implicit desire to know God and all particular objects are just "symbolic signs of the true."²¹ No knowing is simply secular, but part of the movement towards deification: "God who is in all things, shines forth in mind when mind, as living image of God, turns to its own Exemplar and assimilates itself thereto with all its effort."²² According to him God's eternal wisdom, which constitutes the very life of spiritual understanding, attracts us by granting us a foretaste of what we can ultimately arrive at. The soul may not be aware of this tendency to the Infinite. Only in the mystery of God's being which unites absoluteness and self-identity, does the mind grasp its unity and distinctness. Only in the mirror of God does the mind recognize itself.²³

Among recent European philosophers, Max Scheler, argued strongly against the rationalist trend prevalent in Europe and affirmed that a desire to see God face to face lies at the ground of the very affirmation of the existence of God. He says: "Only a real being with the essential character of divinity can be the cause of man's religious propensity, that is the propensity to execute in a real sense acts of that class whose acts, though finite experience cannot fulfill them, nevertheless demand fulfillment."²⁴ He repeats Aquinas' conclusion: Without God's existence the religious aspirations of mankind would be self-contradictory.

POPE JOHN PAUL II AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

One who made an extensive use of Max Scheler's existential

phenomenology is Karol Wojtyła. In his doctrinal thesis, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*²⁵ even risking the displeasure of his mentor, the conservative Thomist Garrigou Lagrange, he followed a distinctive personalistic philosophy. As Pope John Paul II though he regretted the neglect of Thomas Aquinas in the post-Vatican II theology, he stated that it is not the job of the Church to impose on all a particular system of philosophy. He emphasizes man's inviolable dignity as a free and responsible person ordered in his activity to an infinite transcendental goal. Already in his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, he clearly stated that the true meaning of human life cannot be known unless man's mind is able to grasp the whole range of being and that the mind is enlightened, as well, in its quest for meaning by God's historical revelation. He has given a fuller explanation of the same through an orderly, historical, systematic reasoning in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. In a survey of Catholic philosophy it mentions Augustine, Anselm and Bonaventure²⁶ though their approaches differed a great deal from that of Aquinas. In presenting a survey of the revival of Thomism in recent times, Pope John Paul II singles out for praise John Henry Newman and Antonio Rosemini, the two thinkers who had actually distanced themselves from the movement for reviving traditional Thomism. This means that it is not a narrow traditionalist philosophy the Pope is supporting. As Gerald A. McCool, S. J. remarks in surveying Neo-Scholasticism, the encyclical commends a number of Neo-Thomists like Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain who are controversial figures in the eyes of the traditionalists. M. D. Chenu recounts the difficulty he faced from Garrigou Lagrange in introducing in academic curriculum the historical approach of Gilson to Aquinas.²⁷ Similarly, honourable mention is given to Maurice Blondel, whose 'Transcendental Thomism,' as well the personalist philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, influenced Karol Wojtyła for placing the stress on the individual, self-conscious human subject as the starting point, which was the hallmark of post-Cartesian philosophy, would not be recognized as Thomism by traditionalists Garrigou Lagrange and Maritain. This means the Pope is far from promoting Thomism in any narrow sense in his *Fides et Ratio*. Similarly he rehabilitated and raised to cardinalate Fr. De Lubac who was in disgrace since Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani Generis*, on account of his "New Theology." He had contended in his ground-breaking historical study, *Surnaturel*, that Aquinas himself had taught that created nature was endowed with a natural desire of the beatific vision and that there was no pure nature.

Fides et Ratio makes clear the basic postulates of philosophical theology. Wojtyła's starting point is the self-awareness of the self-determining agent. He made a radical departure from Blondel and the Transcendental Thomists of not beginning inside the world of consciousness as did the post-Cartesians, but instead from the dynamic striving of the human spirit. In this perspective the world has meaning only as created by God and as redeemed by the Son. The Incarnate Word not only repaired the damage done by sin, but also restored man's original

orientation to fellowship with the Trinity. Men and women looking for ultimate meaning are responsible agents endowed with self-consciousness and responsibility to follow the natural orientation to the full development of their rational nature. The linking of creation and redemption is a sequel to the unique place of Christ emphasized in the *Redemptor Hominis*.

Unfortunately today there is in the world at large a crisis of meaning. Postmodernism, a designation introduced by Arnold Toynbee to mark the end of an era dominated by the bourgeoisie, has questioned the assumptions of Modernity, namely the primacy of organizing reason, the power of science to solve all problems, the centrality of the profit motive in all human pursuits and the idea of an infinite progress. As Jose Ortega Y Gasset indicated, all the initiating principles of the modern age are now in crisis. The breakdown of the Soviet Republic has shown the futility of all utopian solutions to social problems. "Anti-Foundationism" became a catchword to criticize the Cartesian or empiricist search for a single, solid foundation on which to erect a defensible philosophy, and there emerged a resistance to all kinds of meta-narratives, as of Kant and Hegel, to establish grandiose systems of thought. Even Marxist philosophers, especially the Frankfurt School, realized that the development of science and technology did lead not to the Paradise of the Proletariat as expected but only to greater enslavement of peoples. They had finally to take refuge in American Pragmatism, in which, according to Richard Rorty, "the realistic true believer's notion of the world is an obsession rather than an intuition."²⁸ So philosophers feel compelled to confine their questions to narrow technical issues. The loss of faith in reason is cause of the contemporary crisis of meaning which challenges humanity.²⁹ That is why, according to *Fides et Ratio*, the Catholic apostle who sets out to evangelize the world should have sound knowledge of philosophy.³⁰

A good knowledge of philosophy is necessary even for understanding divine Revelation. God's self-disclosure comes to us through history since the words and deeds transmitted through Scripture can be understood only against the background of the context in which problems were raised. It is in the context of history that the Church realizes what the Spirit is communicating to the people today. In fact revelation itself is not any abstract ontology of God, but God's truth about Himself and His revelation to the world according to which people are to guide their lives. They are spoken in different ages and in different places through the thought forms of different cultures, though Christian Revelation has an irreducibly distinct identity and unity.³¹ The empirical method of the historico-critical approach has great advantage for reaching the original meaning of Scriptural texts. But it has also epistemological presuppositions that do violence to the unity of the abiding word that has been and is being transmitted through Church's doctrinal and liturgical tradition. Metaphysical thought forms of the Church Fathers and of Scholastics have definite function in the transmission of the faith of the Church.³² Only through a correct philosophical discernment can a theologian integrate

exegesis and tradition. The theologians' success in coping with this difficult situation depends, according to the Papal document, on their solid grasp of epistemology and classical metaphysics through which the Church's tradition has been expressed. This is particularly relevant when transposing the teaching from one tradition to another, for example when the teaching of the Western Church is translated into the very different conceptual frameworks of Oriental philosophy,³³ or when incompatible categories of contemporary philosophies are introduced into traditional moral teaching.³⁴

RELEVANCE OF THE NEW PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

The new philosophical approach to theological issues proposed by Pope John Paul II has great relevance for evangelization today. This was emphasized by the Pope in several addresses at the beginning of his pontificate as a "new evangelization." Speaking to large audiences of fallen away Christians at Nova Houta near Crakow in Poland and in San Domingo, he said that what they needed was not a re-evangelization but a "new" evangelization. The old evangelization announced a body of truths to the ignorant. The new evangelization, on the other hand, listens to the Word of God as announced by the Spirit from the hearts of those who were alienated by oppression and exploitation and had lost their faith. It is the crucified Christ speaking again from these crucified members. But this "new evangelization" did not elicit enthusiastic support from the traditionalist Roman theologians. Since it was the same old Gospel that was communicated in this new approach too, Roman documents went back to talking about "re-evangelization" of the large mass of Christians who had lost their faith.

Western Theologizing: In fact, the message of Christ does not come out of an accident of creation, as a mere repair work necessitated by the mythological fall of Adam and the story of human sin. Since, sin or no-sin, humanity by itself did not have any right to divine life, the invitation to intimate fellowship with God was addressed to all human beings by the very original intention of creation. The starting point of Western theologizing is the infinite distance between the world and God, and the effort is to bridge the gap. All three religions of the Middle East, Judaism, Christianity and Islam show the same religious dynamics. Born under foreign political and cultural domination, each one of them is proposed as a secret short cut to attain the ultimate aim of human life, namely intimate union with God, bypassing the foreign power. The focus of Judaism is the Covenant with Yahweh available only to the members of the priestly nation chosen by God. Christianity is the new Covenant established in the Son of God incarnate Jesus of Nazareth. The benefit of the salvation achieved by the death and resurrection of Jesus, the unique Christ event, is available only to those who believe in Jesus and are incorporated through Baptism into the new Community. For the Arab people, dominated by alien rulers, the Persians, Byzantines and the Ethiopians, Islam is a community of

Muslims, People endowed with obedient faith. But all three claim that their individual messages were for all human beings, to be imposed on all, even through militant means. All three appeal to divine mediation in their move towards fellowship with God, of the expected Messiah in Judaism, of Jesus Christ, the Son of God in Christianity, and the Qur'an, the revealed living Word of God in Islam. For Jews theology is celebrating the great deeds of God in history in their favour. He liberated creation originally from the primeval chaos, then brought Israel from Egyptian captivity and gave it the land of Palestine, and later brought an end to their Babylonian captivity. In the light of these stories of liberation, they hoped that God would give them final glory in political supremacy. Christian theology celebrates the birth, death and resurrection of Christ as the model and pledge of the salvation of all human beings incorporated in the Kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus, who constituted the new head of humanity in the place of Adam. Muslims envision the bringing together of all peoples in the *Umma*, the community of faith. The more intimately one enters this new people, the faithful observant of the Law of God, the closer he is to God. The Messiah and the Qur'an are in fact functions of the one Son of God in whom all can become sons and daughters of God.

Eastern Philosophical Theology: In the East, too, we find the same religious dynamics for a philosophical theology. But in contrast to the West the Eastern starting point is not the infinite distance between God and creation, but rather the unity between them. Futility and emptiness of all phenomenal things is the starting point of Buddhism. Though one has to pass through several stages of spiritual development, Buddha, the personality of the Enlightened, is the ideal of life one has to strive for. Realization of God as the Self of one's self, the One-alone-without-a-second is the ideal of Hinduism. But as for the post-Cartesian idealists of the West, getting trapped in one's inner consciousness is a real danger in the East, too. To forestall this, Hinduism had recourse to a great many mythological *avatars* to form an outer pole for religious experience.

Even Sri Sankara, who was a strict Advaitin, did not stop with Brahman as pure consciousness, light shining by itself. He was a Vaishnavite who developed a devotional system that gave meaning and relevance to the present bodily existence as long as it lasted. The *mahavakyani*, the great statements of the Upanishads, present the main stages of a philosophical ontology. (1) *Ekamevaadvitiam*, One alone without a second, is the basis of Indian theologizing. Reality is one. The wise men, the poets call him by many names.³⁵ The basic unity of all things in the one absolute ground is the supposition against which the plurality of beings has to be evaluated. Hence the quest is to attain the One beyond the many. That One is not additional to the many, since the many do not add anything to its infinite and immutable perfection. (2) *Neti, neti* – "Not so, not so". For the very reasons that the many are not additions to the One, standing on the side of the many, bound in the world of plurality, we cannot

gain a true idea of the Absolute. The relative reality of the world has, however, a pedagogical function, namely to tell us what the Absolute is not, and point the finger away from and beyond themselves. (3) *Prajnanam Brahma*, “Brahman is consciousness.” The link between the world of experience and the really Real is consciousness, that is a share in the consciousness which makes the individual human being a conscious, responsible and active principle. Only in and through this consciousness can Supreme Consciousness be approached. The individual human being, bound by passions and ignorance needs a purification in order that through the removal of the veil that hides the light within, the consciousness of the inner Self may shine forth. (4) *Ayam Atma Brahma*, “Self is God”: The self and ground of each thing is God. The Supreme Reality should not be sought outside as a thing among things, a person among persons. He is the ultimate ground that embraces all things. In the understanding of God, correlatives and contrasts, like inferior and superior, interior and exterior, one and many, cause and effect, etc., are totally irrelevant, for where one member of these is God, the other side does not exist. The world as effect cannot be contrasted with God as cause since the world does not add anything to the reality of God. He is the Atman, the self and totally reality of all things. (5) *Aham Brahmasmi*: “My Self is Brahman.” The approach from empirical self cannot be in the objective direction. Divine reality is not a thing among things, nor a person among persons. The correct way of speaking about God is in the line of our own selfhood. God cannot be placed in an I-Thou relation with us, since our I-hood itself is only a reflection of God’s supra-personal reality. (6) *Tattvamasi*: “That art Thou.” In relation with this Supreme Reality everything else is only a function. The Guru who advises the disciple about this identity, the saints and divine symbols we worship are only objects to gather up our dissipated powers and concentrate them on God. Since the ideal of spiritual life is realization of God as the Supreme Reality and the Self of one’s own self, everything is treated as its function, an irradiation of the same.

THE CHRISTIAN MAHAVAKYANI

The Christian philosophical theology also may be presented in terms of the key statements of the Bible. (1) In the beginning God created heaven and earth (Gen. 1: 1). While for most Middle Eastern religions all things came of Timat, the primeval dragon which Marduk split into two, to form heaven and earth for the personalist approach of the Bible God was the sole creator, who brought out all things including heaven and earth out of nothing at the beginning of time. (2) In the beginning, the Word was with God, the Word was God. Through him everything came into being Jn. 1: 1-3). Only through the creative Word could creation be led to its final goal. (3) The Word was made flesh and dwelt in our midst (Jn. 1: 14). To become the Lord of creation the Logos became immanent in it through the Incarnation, taking humanity as Jesus of Nazareth. (4) “Christ Jesus though

existing in the form of God... emptied himself as he took the form of a slave and became like human beings" (Phil. 2: 6-7). The world of our experience can be understood only in the light of its natural orientation through God and the Redeemer who underwent the humiliation of death on the cross. (5) "He was openly designated the Son with power through Resurrection" (Rom. 1: 4). Freed from the limitations of space and time, the humanity of Christ has become an animating Spirit, a new Adam effecting human beings, sons and daughters of God! It is through incorporation with him that we are enabled to address God as Father. (6) "Do you not recognize by yourselves that Christ Jesus is within you?" (2 Cor. 13: 5). The ultimate guarantee of our faith is not the dogma of the Church nor the words of Scripture but the inner witness of the Spirit and the Risen Christ, dwelling in every heart.

Yves Congar states: "Now the fate of the Church seems to me increasingly to be bound up with a spiritual and supernatural life, that of the Christian life... Today given that we live in a secularized world it is impossible to preserve a Christian life style without a degree of inner life."³⁶ What we find today is a lapse from the specific mission of the Church and a fall into religious relativism. The position that all religions are equally valid ways to God is an expression of it.³⁷ Religions as human structures are imperfect and are not by themselves salvific. One extreme position is to say that there is no salvation without Baptism. It was in this sense that Feeny's opinion that there is no salvation outside the Church was condemned in 1947. Equally erroneous is Rahner's opinion that people of other faiths are anonymous Christians. In the same style Hindus could call us 'anonymous Hindus'. We are not preaching anything vague, but the one human history of salvation. There is anonymity or indefiniteness about one's faith in the Spirit and Christ present in one's own heart! Similarly unacceptable is Hans Kung's view that since the majority of humanity belongs to other religions other than Christianity, they are the ordinary ways of salvation and that Christianity is only an extraordinary way. If that is the case, we would not have to strive for the conversion of others, but only help Muslims to be better Muslims, and a Hindu to be a better Hindu. It is not a comparison or competition between religions, which after all do not save, just as the sign boards do not walk the road they point to. Religions are imperfect human systems that emerged at specific moments in history and are the common heritage of all humans. Similarly all religious leaders, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha and others belong to all. Each one of them presents a specific role in the one religious history of humanity. The role Jesus plays as the one Son of God, in whom alone all humans can become sons and daughters of God is unique, not shared by other religious leaders. Instead of considering the question of religions as such, one should first look at the individuals who are themselves clearly bound up with a culture and a religion. People can attain salvation by following the directives of the culture in which they live and the religion they are bound up with, which are not absolutes in themselves. Regarding them, one has to

make decisions and choices according to one's inner light. The Church is a preparation for the Kingdom; other religions, too, are. But in Christ, the humanity of the Word is the Kingdom in miniature, whom we have to preach. But to proclaim Jesus, it is not always necessary to speak of him or to preach him explicitly. The wrong assumption is that we are in a world where he is very much present, present in every heart, and in every group gathered in his name, as immediate witness and guarantor of each one's faith. Doing social work or teaching in a state institution is not mere pre-evangelization, but evangelization. A point Pope John Paul II emphasized during the Roman Synod for Asia is worth noting: Even today Jesus is the one missionary sent by the Father. We have to wait patiently for his initiative to respond to the call of the Spirit inviting us to announce the Gospel.

There are avenues where a philosophical theology needs new approaches, particularly in ecclesiology and morality. It is rather difficult to have a philosophical theology of the Church. The basic idea of the Church is not of an external organization, but of internal unity and harmony among believers. It is from the community of faith gathered together for worship that the Church emerges. Serving the Mystery of salvation through their ministry priests gather and organize the people. Whenever in the course of history the ecclesiastical authority failed, people had spontaneously taken recourse to the presence of the Spirit and of Christ in their hearts. In the sixteenth century when Church leadership became almost irrelevant with its political intrigues and squabbles about monies collected through the sale of indulgences, it was to the invisible Church of faith that Luther pointed, and the Church of the predestined that Calvin spoke about. In post-Cartesian thought, time itself had become neutral, a sort of grid for mapping the affairs that happen in the world. Are we not more or less in the same situation today? The Church appears merely a space-time continuum in which things happen under the impact of socio-political forces without any sacral plan or regulating force behind them. As one of our ecclesiastical leaders remarked, our bishops are so divided on the most trivial matters that they cannot even raise the serious questions. There are two approaches one can take in such a situation. One is to proceed as Buddhism and Whiteheadian process philosophy do, to start from the non-experienced, theoretically inferred level below, to the directly experienced above. The condition of the world, according to Buddhism, is flux, emptiness and suffering. Over against this basic emptiness are the ideals of Buddha, *Sangha* and *Dhamma*. The other is the procedure to render intelligible the entities we directly encounter in our experience and then to extend the structures discovered there to levels of reality beyond our direct experience and also to micro-levels far below our senses. Thus, in traditional societies including the pre-Modern West, time's structure was basically religious. The supernatural and yearly liturgical cycle was indistinguishable. That is why the Church and its authority arose of liturgical celebration. The unique

character of the Christian Church is that it is constituted by the gift of the Spirit by the Risen Christ, the head.

Closely related to Eucharistic Ecclesiology is the question of morality. How do we build up a philosophico-theological morality that is in tune with our spiritual calling and is suited to the demands of life in the present world? We arrive at moral principles from different angles. Jews proposed the Decalogue and other moral prescriptions as commands of God, part of His Covenant with them, though most of the principles of moral behaviour were taken from human sources like the *Laws of Hamurabi*. The Mimamsakas of India viewed *dharma*, moral laws, as eternal values flowing from *rta*, the natural flow of things, which the sages intuited and put down in human words in the Law Books. Every lawgiver in the Greek world, like Licurgus and Solon, pretended that he received the laws straight from God, from Apollo mostly. Most of the Christian moral system, on the other hand, was lifted bodily from the Stoics with a sprinkling of texts from the Bible to give the appearance of a Biblical morality. Stoic morality was simply a complement to the Greek philosophy articulated by Plato and Aristotle. St. Thomas and the Scholastics built up a morality based on “natural law,” with some Biblical backing.

But the whole moral theology tradition has come to a crisis today with the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* which tried to prove the immorality of all forms of contraception on philosophical grounds and papal authority. Similar is the case of John Paul II’s *Veritatis Splendor*. “The Splendor of Truth,” which simply adopts a single theology system of John Finnis and others to the exclusion of others, excluding even opinions strongly defended elsewhere by the Pope himself. The natural law theory of Aquinas is not convincing to most people. There are no absolute, universal principles from which all moral conclusions can be drawn as binding on everyone in every situation. The knowledge that we need for acting morally is not theoretical but practical. As Aristotle himself suggests the recourse to theoretical principles is just an excuse from making difficult decisions. And practical knowledge is not applied theoretical knowledge. What one needs to know is how to discriminate among the various objects presented to one’s desires. There is need to discriminate among the hypes of advertising that seek to create artificial wants for various consumer goods and selectivity of television programmes that make what was so far deemed immoral, suddenly moral and acceptable. The glamour of the rich and the powerful and the aura of prestige exert their influence on our choices. To withstand such pressures one has to examine the relevance and relationship of various objects to the ultimate goal.

The practical orientation to the ultimate goal has various dimensions. First of all, we have to distinguish between those objects which satisfy our desire and those which are in line of good in general for human beings and of the ultimate good. Ultimately, every moral good has to be related to the Ultimate Good to which we are bound to offer ourselves in the spirit of Liturgy. Augustine’s statement about the restless heart refers to

this. Only those things in the life of the ultimate goal do correspond to the will, which is the faculty of good as such. This means that the immediate goods that come up for choice should agree with the total good and should form a harmonious whole with one's life. This way of evaluating the particular goods that come up for choice should become a habit with a person that he makes the choice even without much deliberation. Thirdly, one feels that the moral choices one makes appear an integral part of one's whole life. A necessary condition for such spontaneous and free choice is the support of the moral community one belongs to. A community inspired by the Spirit has a sense of right and wrong analogous to the *sensus fidelium* in matters of doctrine.

NOTES

- 1 *De Civitate Dei* XIX, 1
- 2 Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* III, 2
- 3 *Ibid.* III, 10.
- 4 Cf. John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997, pp. 233-235.
- 5 J. Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Bonaventure*, Chicago, 1989.
- 6 Cf. Etienne Gilson, *Thomisme*, Paris, 6th ed. 1965, pp. 16ff.
- 7 *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, 6.4 ad 3m.
- 8 St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* I, 105, 5
- 9 St. Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentes*, III, 113
- 10 *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology with Yves Congar*, ed. Bernard Lauret, Edition de Cerf, 1987, trans. Jown Bowden, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, p. 4.
- 11 Quoted in *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology*, p. 11
- 12 *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 25. Cf. also III, 52.
- 13 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 105, 5c
- 14 *Commentary of John's Gospel*, I, I, 5.
- 15 Eckhart, *Lateinische Werke*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936, Vol. III, p. 83. In *Johannem*, n. 96, "Potest autem dici probabiliter, quia ad ista verba in propria venit, etc. in rebus naturalibus exemplariter et manifeste convincit ratio naturalis."
- 16 *Ibid.* In *Johannem* # 3 *Werke* III, p. 4.
- 17 In *Eccl.*, Nn. 42-61.
- 18 Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die beati Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 2 *Werke* V, p. 90.
- 19 Cf. E.g. In *Joh.* Nn. 3-13, *Werke*, III, pp. 5-12
- 20 Nicholas of Cusa, *De Filiatione Dei* III 64, trans. Jasper Hopkins, *Miscellenia of Nicholas of Cusa*, Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1994, p. 166.
- 21 *Ibid.* II, 61.

22 Nicholas of Cusa, *Idiotae de Mente*, VII, 106, trans. Jasper Hopkins in *On Wisdom and Knowledge*, Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1999, p. 237.

23 *Idiotae de Sapientia* I, 10 Nikolaus von Kues, Werke, ed. Paul Wilpert, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967, vol. I, p. 220, quoted by Louis Dupre, "Philosophy and the Natural Desire for God: An Historical Reflection," *IPQ* 40 (2000) p. 145.

24 Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, trans. Bernard Noble, New York: Harper & Bros., 1960, p. 261.

25 *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981.

26 *Fides et Ratio* # 56-61, 93.

27 Gerald A. McCool S.J., "From Leo XIII to John Paul II, Continuity and Development," *IPQ* 40 (June 2000) p. 176.

28 Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press, 1982, p. 13.

29 *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 62-63.

30 *Ibid.* nos. 73-76, 100-104.

31 *Ibid.* Nos. 103-106, 116-117.

32 *Ibid.* nos. 74-75, 116-119.

33 *Ibid.* nos. 91-92, 116-119.

34 *Ibid.* no. 73

35 *Rg Veda*, X, 114, 5; 129, 2.

36 L.C.

37 LG #17, *Ad Gentes* # 7.

CHAPTER VII

TRUTH AND HISTORICITY: A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH TO *FIDES ET RATIO*

JOHN FRANCIS SEQUERIA, OCD

“All human beings desire to know *and truth is the proper object of this desire.*”¹ In the different spheres of reality, the mind keeps on probing science, philosophy, and religion. But above all the quest is centered on the meaning of human existence. A cursory glance at the history of humanity shows us that irrespective of place, time and culture, the fundamental questions concerning human life, its meaning, origin and destiny are repeatedly asked.² Moreover, the quest is characterized not only by individual efforts but also by collective contributions that in a brief space of time shape diverse cultures. Since “human beings are not made to live alone, but are born and brought up in a family and enter into society through their activities, they form part of these cultural formations, accepting and believing almost instinctively thereby a set of truths which are accepted by the same society.”³ This believing becomes part of the tradition of a given culture and the tradition centers around such key events as the meaning of life and death, the importance of given values in a society, the fundamentals of cult and worship, etc. Another facet of believing is the interrelationships, mutual trust and friendship which play such an important role in accepting and believing truth. However, these beliefs may be questioned, re-valued in the course of time, in proportion to the intellectual development of a person in accordance with the given opportunities.⁴

History shows us that in his quest for truth, man has come a long way. Although this quest is a never-ending task because of the limitation of the human mind and comprehensiveness of the nature of truth, it is indisputable that a great many truths have been attained in the spheres of human knowledge, practical and theoretical, scientific and philosophical, secular and religious, legal and moral.

Philosophy has a special role to play in answering the basic questions that arise in this quest for truth. No other branch of human inquiry is so much concerned with the question of meaning, including the meaning of knowledge, truth and existence, life and love, as that of philosophy.

Contemporary epistemology obliges us to take hermeneutics too into account. This is the base to the topic of our discussion: The significance of historicity for the problem of truth. My analysis has three stages. In the first part we will present the concept of historicity as proposed by Dilthey and Gadamer, focusing more on the hermeneutic historicity of

Gadamer as a spring board to explicate how human understanding and the arrival of truth is through and through hermeneutic. Second, we discover how even *Fides et Ratio* stresses the concept of historicity in the understanding of truth, both human and revealed. In the case of knowledge given by faith, we find historicity transcended, although the process of revelation through the pre-Christian centuries was historical and the understanding of revelation, too, through Christian centuries has been a historical process resulting in the evolution of doctrine. Finally, taking into consideration the human historicity, and the keen desire *Fides et Ratio* shows on it we will be in a position to make some passing reflections on the practical living of Christian faith in the Indian context.

THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORICITY

Historicity in the Lebensphilosophie of Wilhelm Dilthey

The crucial problem of the role of history in our understanding of truth was perceived and discussed by Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey situates himself at a critical point by incorporating the regional problem of the interpretation of texts into the broader field of the historical knowledge, and thus making social science a science of the first order. Influenced by the nineteenth century German school of history, that of L. Ranke and J. Droysen, Dilthey maintains that the whole reality of human understanding depends on the “universal history” or the reality itself in its inter-connections.

Dilthey maintains that “understanding,” with its psychological nature is the proper method to human sciences. The proper method of gaining *objectively valid* interpretations of *expressions of inner life*,⁵ is possible only by understanding life and not by explaining it. Dilthey writes, “The sciences explain nature, the human studies understand expressions of life.”⁶

The Meaning of Historicity

Dilthey places the epistemological foundation for the nature of the act of understanding in the realm of man’s *Historicity*. Against the Hegelian form of purely rational construction of world history, Dilthey asserts the superiority of experience.⁷ “Not through introspection but only through history do we come to know ourselves.”⁸ We experience life not in the mechanical categories of *power* but in complex individual moments of *meaning*, of the direct experience of life as a totality and in loving grasp of the particular.⁹ These units of meaning require the context of the past and the horizon of future expectations; they are intrinsically temporal and finite and they are to be understood in these dimensions - that is historically.¹⁰ In other words, what Dilthey tried to answer was how experience could serve

as the basis for historical science or how experience renders history intelligible.

However, the word “history” has a special connotation for Dilthey. He does not conceive history as something of the past that stands over against us as an object, nor does historicity point to the already objectively clear fact that man is born, lives, and dies in the course of time.¹¹ Historicity means two things. (1) Man understands himself not through introspection but through objectification of life. “What man is, only history can tell him.”¹²

Or elsewhere, “what man is and what he wills, he experiences only in the development of his nature through the millennia and never completely to the last syllable, never in objective concepts but always only in the living experience which springs up out of the depths of his own being.¹³ Man’s self-understanding in other words, is not direct but indirect; it must take a hermeneutic detour through fixed expressions dating back to the past. Dependent on history, it is essentially and necessarily historical.

Man’s nature is not a fixed essence; man is not in all his objectifying efforts, simply painting murals on the walls of time, in order to find out what his nature has always been. On the contrary in the words of Nietzsche, Dilthey would say that man is the “not yet determined animal,” (*noch nicht festgestellte tier*) the animal who has not yet determined what he is.¹⁴ He is a man in creative historicity, a man who has not yet decided what he will be. What he will be is waiting for his historical decisions. He is the architect of his ship and not a rudder man on an already finished ship (this is what Ortega y Gasset later called man’s *ontological privilege*). As man is continually taking possession of the formed expressions which constitute his heritage, he becomes creatively historical. Since man has the power to alter his own essence, it could be said that he has the power to alter his life itself; he has true and radical powers of creation.¹⁵

If this is what we mean by historicity then man does not escape from history, for he is what he is in and through history. Dilthey says, “The totality of man’s nature is history.”¹⁶ For Dilthey this resulted in a historical relativism. He asserts that it is in no way possible to go back behind the relativity of the historical consciousness. “The type *man* dissolves and changes in the process of history.”¹⁷

Dilthey contrasted our experiential understanding of history with that of our understanding of the natural sciences. This he does for two reasons. First, there is a coherence between the subject and object of history, and secondly there is a coherence within the object of history - namely the historical experience itself. For the first he finds his support in Vico, where, in reaction against Cartesian doubt and the certainty of the mathematical knowledge of nature based on it, Vico asserted the primacy of the man-made world.¹⁸ Dilthey repeats the same argument and writes, “The first condition of a possibility of a science of history is that I myself am a historical being, that the person studying history is the person making history.”¹⁹

The second coherence needed for the understanding of history is the intrinsic continuity within the object, that is, within experience. To put it in the words of Gadamer, "The structure of the historical world is not based on facts taken from experience which then acquire a value relation, but rather on the inner historicity that belongs to experience itself..what pre-shapes the special mode of knowing in the historical sciences is the suffering and instruction that the person who is growing in insight receives from the painful experience of reality. The historical sciences only advance and broaden the thought already implicit in the experience of life."²⁰

In retrospect, therefore, Dilthey is of the opinion that all our understanding is a constant process of our encounter with our historicity. It is our encounter with the day to day experiences of life that really influences our mode of understanding and the recognition of objective truth. Although Dilthey still bases himself on a traditional dichotomy of subject/object distinction, his *Lebensphilosophie* becomes an eye opener for his hermeneutic predecessors. When one encounters Heidegger's hermeneutics the truth of Dilthey becomes more than evident.

Historicity in the Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer

The development of the thought of historicity in the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer is to be anchored in the hermeneutic phenomenology of Martin Heidegger. The concept of historicity and truth proceed from Heidegger's greater quest for a more fundamental ontology. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempts to answer the question of human existence through a methodical project called hermeneutic phenomenology.

In the analysis of human existence (*Dasein*), Heidegger affirms that the basic character of *Dasein* is its being in the world as thrownness. In its thrown facticity, understanding is conceived as a fundamental mode of being which defines the way in which human existence is inserted into the world. Understanding is the basic ontological power to grasp one's own possibilities for being in one's situation (*Befindlichkeit*), its projective character (*Entwurfscharactor*) which has its relation to the future. Thus human understanding becomes totally historical and contextual, i.e. the basic state of being in the world realized through the very act of disclosure.

Taking his lead from Heidegger, Gadamer places understanding and consequent disclosure of truth in the event of historical tradition. In his *opus magnum* he contends that method is not the way to truth. "Truth is the disclosure of what is the revelation of reality itself."²¹ Any scientific inquirer who superimposes a methodically structured formula upon one's experience necessarily distorts that experience and shuts off the true sense of the revelation of being. The reason that a method cannot but distort experience is based on the Cartesian principle of subject/object dichotomy.

As an antidote, to the distorting tendencies of our methodical bias, Gadamer describes human understanding as a historical event, a tradition event (*Überlieferungsgeschehen*).²² The indisputable temporal nature of

understanding as a process, in conjunction with the recognition that one is always in a particular situation-being, means being in the world at some particular time and place, and indicates the full historicity of the understanding subject.²³ It is impossible to go beyond one's finitude and the temporal character of one's existence. There is no independent ego which rises to a vantage point above existence or history where it can get an objective viewpoint.²⁴ One always finds oneself standing within a tradition, and understanding is itself a finite event of that tradition. The experiencing subject can never experience anything from a neutral vantage point; rather all our reflections or experiences are the results of our constant encounter with our thrown situation on one hand and of the new situations on the other. Because all our understanding presupposes a previously formed prejudice which is a springboard for the further acquisition of knowledge, Gadamer concludes that prejudice is not a block for understanding, rather the very condition by which understanding is made possible.²⁵ Thus, projections or prejudices²⁶ are a gift of belonging to a historical situation,²⁷ and this historical situation is the very condition of our understanding." "The prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments constitute the historical reality of his being."²⁸ Thus, "understanding, itself, is to be considered not so much as an action of subjectivity, but rather as an entering into a tradition event (*Überlieferungsgeschehen*) in which past and present are continually mediated. This is what must come to prevail in hermeneutic theory, which is dominated too much by the idea of procedural method."²⁹

Gadamer stresses the need to understand the radicality of the historical and finite dimension of our human existence. "Actually history does not belong to us we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves in retrospect we understand ourselves of course in the family, society and state in which we live."³⁰

Gadamer drives home the point that we belong to a historical situation through the concept of history of effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).³¹ Deriving the concept from Heidegger, Gadamer means by *Wirkungsgeschichte*, that the temporality of everything and one's being are internally related to both past and future. As finite beings we are what we are because of our historical past, yet capable of and necessarily responsible for influencing or affecting what happens in the future. All our historical experiences are hermeneutic in nature, that is, they appropriate the past of which they are the products, and effectually project themselves, thereby conditioning future events of experience. As historical beings we are bound to this continuous tradition process, and thus there is no possibility for any absolute understanding of the reality under investigation, because of our historically affected consciousness (*das Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*).³² A subject is not a transcendent ego but already being in the world, and thus simply cannot impose at will or assign meaning to the reality he encounters in experience.³³ Rather, the reality which also includes the subject discloses direction and meaning in all pre reflective experience.

Fusion of Horizon (Horizontverschmelzung)

Gadamer further explicates the authentically historical understanding through a dialogical principle called fusion of horizon. Our historically affected consciousness is the consciousness of a hermeneutic situation, which cannot give us a full vision of reality; it can give us only partial or contingent knowledge.³⁴

“To be historical means that knowledge can never be complete.”³⁵

One can only see the reality from his vantage point. Horizon is a mental range which circumscribes and includes everything visible from one viewpoint. It provides the context within which individual things can be seen in proper perspective and appropriately evaluated. The task of hermeneutic understanding is to gain an historical horizon, wherein that which one wants to understand will present itself in the perspective.³⁶ Recognizing our radical finitude which characterizes our being in the world, Gadamer is still seeking in the light of this the possibilities of knowing the truth of what is.

However, the horizon of a person should not be understood as a closed horizon. A person, through the horizon, can open himself up to new experiences and thereby extend or broaden that horizon to include new ones. Thus, one can speak of a narrowness of horizon, of the possibility of the broadening of horizon and incorporation of a new horizon.³⁷ “Horizon is something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Likewise the horizon of the past, out of which all humanity lives and which is there in the mode of tradition, is always already in motion.”³⁸ The relativity implicit in the historical movement does not limit or prohibit the freedom of knowing or understanding, rather it is the very condition which makes this knowing possible.

The merging of the horizon of the past text with the present interpreter in a dialogical happening is what Gadamer labels “Fusion of horizon” (*Horizontverschmelzung*).³⁹ In the initial stage of understanding the two horizons are recognized in their distance from each other. Although one’s own horizon can never become an object as such, it may take on a definitiveness of a sort when focused upon in relation to another horizon. Because one’s horizon is not closed or fixed, but capable of movement and expansion of understanding the new horizon and fusing that horizon within one’s own horizon is possible. However, one cannot leave behind one’s own horizon of meaning in order to enter totally into the horizon with which the reality stands, rather one’s own horizon must be broadened so that it eventually fuses with that of the text, thus forming a more comprehensive horizon.⁴⁰ This new horizon which is an “elevation to a higher universality” overcomes not only one’s particularity but also that of the other.

For Gadamer this fusion of horizon taking place between traditions affected by historical consciousness and the consciousness of the present through the process of fusion of horizon is a constant process of dialogue.

Basing on the Aristotelian *Phronesis*,⁴¹ Gadamer asserts that it is in this dialogical act of appropriation that one comes to understand the subject matter under discussion. Gadamer confirms that the *docta ignorantia*⁴² and Hegel's dialectics of experience⁴³ are the two models on which this dialogical understanding is built. It is the openness from the part of the interpreter based on the consciousness of his subjective finitude and recognition that one does not have the complete truth, regarding one's convictions as perspectives, tentative in nature open for further confirmation and justification, thus the hermeneutical understanding becomes an event, or happening of understanding.⁴⁴ It is in this constant process of dialogue between past and present horizons, tradition and further reflection, the understanding is arrived at and truth disclosed.

If understanding is a happening in tradition through a constant process of dialogue, the truth arrived thereby cannot be absolute but only partial and tentative. A genuine dialogue takes into consideration the otherness of the other, the opinions of the other, new awareness, new unity of judgments, thus a new consensus and transformed knowledge. Truth is considered as *aletheia*, a slow and constant disclosure of reality in its perspectiveness.

Gadamer is convinced that no absolute essence or noumenon can be accounted for within the relativities of human discourse. He recognizes the fundamentally temporal and cultural character of all phenomena, concluding therefore that what is subject to philosophical analysis is basically historical. There is a single plenum of finite historical events which is the common arena of both subject and object in the event of human understanding. It is the structure of this event of understanding in tradition that Gadamer wants to uncover through his phenomenological analysis. That structure, indicative of human understanding at every level, is hermeneutical in character.

Consequences that Arise from Gadamer's Thesis

a) Since all our understanding is understanding of something through our given prejudices the traditional givenness becomes the basic data of our frame of reference on which reason works.

b) The dialogical nature of understanding progressively pursues fusing the horizons, gaining greater consequences concerning the truth under discussion. As yet the last word has not been spoken; the human mind recognizes that the wealth and richness of reality is wider and deeper than can be easily fathomed. There is always scope for wider comprehension and deeper understanding of the reality.

c) Understanding is more than prejudices and dialogue; it is an appropriation and assimilation of a universal idea for a particular praxis situation. This suggests that the truth that is accepted acquires the form of the individual's horizon; in the formation of this horizon and tradition have

to play their parts. In other words the individual's historicity gives colour and shape to every piece of information received.

d) In this perspective of historicity meeting historicity at the level of consciousness transmitting and transmuting, Gadamer sees the possibility of *aletheia* - truth revealing itself progressively.

THE EMPHASIS OF HISTORICITY IN *FIDES ET RATIO*

The encyclical illustrates the process character of our acquisition and understanding of truth in and through its historicity. Since the process is conditioned by a variety of factors of historical settings and situation, this understanding process results in the formation of different cultures. Man himself is a historical being and conditioned by time. The natural approach to acquire and accumulate the truth, too, is based on one's culture and tradition, because one's culture and tradition are the precondition upon which all our reflective knowledge can be based. Philosophy today is more than ever aware of this fact. The encyclical rightly affirms it when it states, "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 being rooted in the tradition we will be able today to develop for the future an original, new and constructive mode of thinking."⁴⁵

"Revelation too on the other hand is immersed in time and history."⁴⁶ Basing itself on scripture and the second Vatican council, the encyclical enumerates the process character of revelation with its distinct facets taking place in the history of Israel and finally in the fullness of time, in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus represents the fullness of time a moment where eternity enters into human temporality, whereby a mysterious fusion of horizon takes place, transforming revelation as the history of salvation. "History becomes the path to be followed to the end, so that by the unceasing action of the Holy Spirit the contents of revealed truths may find their full expression."⁴⁷ "History 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."⁴⁸ "It is through this revelation men and women are offered the ultimate truth about their own lives and about the goal of history."⁴⁹

The encyclical also recommends the development of theological doctrines and faith formation in and through the existing historical settings. We see how down the centuries the revelation presents itself through the existing philosophical language. Although cautiously, the fathers of the church, like Justin and Origen in the beginning, Anselm and St. Thomas in the Middle Ages and Karl Rahner, Bernard Häring, Hans Von Balthazar and others in our own time, tried to clothe Christian doctrine with the available philosophical terms accessible to their audience, accepting thereby

that the revealed truths could be understood by historical humanity only in and through their historical thought patterns. The encyclical rightly adheres to this way of thinking when it states, "In the present situation, therefore, it is most significant that some philosophers are promoting a recovery of the determining role of tradition for a right approach to knowledge."⁵⁰

However, it should also be noted that because of the ontological finitude, the fullness of truth can neither completely be grasped nor understood immediately by the human mind. The evolution of the doctrine from the first century of the Christian era to the twentieth century is a clear witness to this constant deepening of the understanding of the faith in the minds of the faithful. This evolution was expressed within the existing, philosophico-social settings and the very formulations also were articulated accordingly.

The Transcendental Truth and the Limitation of Philosophy

Entering the realm of divine faith it is important to recognize not only the limitations of philosophy in general but also of any human hermeneutics in particular. The encyclical asserts: "No historical form of philosophy can legitimately claim to embrace the totality of truth, nor to be the complete explanation of human being, of the world, and of human persons' relationship to God."⁵¹ On the other hand paradoxically, philosophy is indispensable for a better understanding of theology. "Without philosophical contribution it would be, in fact, impossible to discuss the 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 relation between God and man or Christ's identity as true God and true man." It is easy to see the reasons for it. God is an eternal mystery who wishes to commune with human beings. The first stage in this communication is self-revelation. In making this self-revelation God uses a language that human beings can understand. However, because of human finitude and the limitations of the language the mystery nature of the content of this communication goes beyond the understanding of man. The psalmist rightly proclaims this human condition when he sings, "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. To finish I must be eternal like you. (Psalm 39).

Thus, the contents of this mystery of revelation which overwhelms the human capacity to understand invites the faithful for an allegiance of faith. The path to God, although it begins with reason which can be refined and motivated by making use of the methodical and systematic articulation through a philosophical vocabulary, transcends all that is philosophical and historical reaching towards the infinite. In fact, human intellect recognizes that there are in possibility and in actuality truths beyond its reach and beyond its grasp.

LIVING THE FAITH

Basing ourselves on the situatedness of the human person, on the one hand, and the emphasis *Fides et Ratio* places on it, on the other, we are now in a better position to make some passing reflections on the practical living of Christian faith in the Indian context. We will deal with two key issues of our faith, viz., religious beliefs and experiences and living of these belief systems in the Indian context

Belief Systems and Evolution of Dogma

Here are a few issues that deserve deeper reflection: can the Christian *kerygma* be understood as a given whole in its pristine form? Is it reasonable to maintain that our religious belief systems remain perpetually unchanged and unchanging, or are they constantly changing and being transformed into something new?

In its pristine form the divine revelation is a communication of truth, the fullness of which is constituted by elements that could be naturally attainable by the human mind, as well as other elements that could naturally never be attained. This revelation has been made progressively through many centuries till it reached a certain fullness in the fullness of time (Heb. 1:1) through the Word incarnate.

Historical consciousness is still probing deeper, attaining a firmer grasp and recognizing new depths of meanings as well as application of the principles proclaimed in the pristine *kerygma*. As St. Vincent of Lerins comments, no one can deny a child the right to grow. In other words, development of doctrine is to be encouraged. Just as a child retaining its identity grows into an adult, so too the identity of revealed doctrine remaining the same, its understanding can grow more profound; and in the course of time the articulation of that understanding can grow more refined. History has shown us how the axiom, for example *extra ecclesia nulla salus*, has received diverse interpretations in different eras. Historical understanding therefore is a factor for interpreting some of the truths of revelation.

This interpretation of old truths in the new situations is effected partly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who moves the faithful through his charisms and partly through the church leadership and authority. Anyone who excels in his subject excels well by applying the old to the new, and discerning what is common between the two. Applying this to belief systems, it becomes obvious that while a person's creed remains identical with what it had always been, his/her faith in that creed and understanding of its contexts may grow indefinitely.

One outstanding class of new situations from the ecclesiological point of view is encountered when the Christian *kerygma* and the church itself is to be transmitted to and implanted in a new historico-cultural milieu. Since the commencement of the Christian era, culture after culture

has been evangelized. The process has been advanced through charismatic authority on the one hand and the charismatic gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit on the other. While adapting to the new cultures although the essential identity of revelation has been maintained, this very revelation was clothed in the local cultural garb, thus giving the revelation beauty, dignity and cultural authenticity.

Inculturation as the Fusion of Horizons

The greatest act of divine inculturation is the incarnation of the word. “After speaking in many places and in varied ways through the prophets, God last of all in these days has spoken to us by His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, sent as a human being to human beings, to complete the work of salvation which his father gave him to do. (Jn. 5:36, 17:4). Living in a historical setting and speaking a historical language the incarnate Word gave a new meaning to human history, taking on himself even the restrictions of space and time that human beings cannot escape. These very restrictions led Christ to select and form other human beings to pursue and complete his mission.

The ongoing mission of the church requires an ongoing incarnation through inculturation. From our present standpoint in the third millennium this incarnation undertaken by the church in her mission has a rich and diversified past, at the same time nurturing rich expectations for the future.

Among the milestones in the past, as the encyclical suggests, is the “event” meeting of Christianity with Greco-Roman culture. This encounter required and resulted in the clothing of Christian *kerygma* in Greco-Roman garb. In the Christianization of the rest of Europe – the process that went on for another millennium – the Greco-Roman garb had to, in large measure, be retained, though occasionally its colour had to be adjusted and adopted to the needs of the times and climes.

The important role that Indian philosophy and religion played in the history of Eastern thought cannot be underestimated. Its metaphysical speculations have led to fascinating heights in speculative transcendence. Indian culture becomes therefore an equally fertile soil for implanting the universal Gospel message and the Christian *kerygma*. We can rightly expect the message to strike deep roots in this soil. Just as in Western history prevailing philosophy and idiom have served to express and communicate the apostolic *kerygma*, so, too, in the East, and in India in particular, prevailing patterns of thought will be made available to serve, express, and communicate the message of salvation. If Western philosophy could be turned into a handmaid for theology, why can't the Indian philosophy and culture fulfill the same function? The task of making Indian philosophy serve the message of salvation will result, in Gadamerian terms, in new fusion of horizons, a task which awaits us all in the future to be fulfilled.

However, Gadamer's fusion of horizon as a dialogical process indicates how the task has to be performed. The horizons to be fused in this

dialogue are those of Greco-Latin and Greco-Syrian garbs on the one hand and Indian philosophy and culture on the other. If Gadamer is right the future of Indian Christianity depends on the transforming fusion of these diverse horizons.

CONCLUSION

The search for truth is a constant process. The greatest disposition of the human person consists in accepting one's finitude and historicity and constantly keeping alive a passion to search for the "Ultimate truth." This constant seeking urges one to discover new paths and fuse it with that which exists in one's historico-cultural situation. In this historical quest faith stirs reason to move beyond and be willingly to run the risks so that it may attain whatever is beautiful, good and true. Faith thus becomes the convinced and convincing advocate of reason. This is the vocation given to every philosopher: to seek after "Ultimate Truth" while at the same time acknowledging human finitude in one's mobility, a vocation that is central to our humanity.

NOTES

1 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, I. Italics is the added quote from the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, no. 25.

2 *Fides et Ratio* No. 1.

3 *Fides et Ratio*, No. 31.

4 See *Fides et Ratio* No. 31

5 Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. J. B. Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49.

6 "Die natur erklären wir, das seelenleben verstehen wir." Wilhelm Dilthey. *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VII, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1916-1967), 144

7 In this regard Dilthey's critical intent was against Hegel whom he thought as the last in the line of *ancient logos philosophy*. For Hegel the world was rational and the world history is the history of reason- the history of philosophy. History is intelligible to the mind because it is the manifestation of the mind.

8 "Der Mensch erkennt sich nur in der Geschichte, nie durch Introspektion". Wilhelm Dilthey, vol. V, 1916-1967, 279. See also R. E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics, Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1969), 101.

9 See Palmer 1969, 101.

10 See Palmer 1969, 101.

11 See Palmer 1969, 117.

12 Wilhelm Dilthey, vol. VIII, 1916-1967. 224.

13 “Was der Mensch sei und was er wolle, erfährt er erst in der Entwicklung seines Wesens durch die Jahrtausende und nie bis zum letzten Worte, nie in allgemeingültigen Begriffen, sondern immer nur in dem lebendigen Erfahrungen, welches aus der Tiefe seines ganzen Wesens entspringen.” Wilhelm Dilthey, vol.VI, 1916-1967, 57.

14 O. F. Bollnow. *Die lebensphilosophie*. (Berlin: Springer, 1958), 42.

15 Palmer 1969, 117.

16 “Die Totalität der Mensch Natur ist Geschichte” Wilhelm Dilthey, vol. VIII, 1916-1967, 166

17 “Der Typus Mensch zerschmitzt in dem Prozeß der Geschichte.” Wilhelm Dilthey, vol.VIII, 1916-1967, 6.

18 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., Trans. by Joel Weinscheimer and D.G. Marshal (London: Sheed and Ward1993), 222

19 Gadamer 1993, 222.

20 Gadamer 1993, 222.

21 Gadamer 1993, 489.

22 The word tradition is used in several senses by Gadamer. Following Paul Ricouer, James Risser gives us at least three senses of the word tradition. Accordingly in the first place, tradition refers to mean traditionality, to a succession of historical succession. In this style of succession, which is rooted in the dynamics of historical experience, there is a tension “between the efficacy of the past that we undergo and the reception of the past that we bring about,” in the other words, it simply means trans-mission (*Über-lieferung*).

Tradition, as it is used by Gadamer in the second sense does not indicate the formal concept of traditionality but the material concept of the contents. It is in this sense that Gadamer uses the phrase tradition its essentially linguistic meaning to say that language precedes the idea that we are always taking possession of the world. Through tradition we understand the things already said.

Gadamer uses the word tradition in the singular to mean an anti-argumentative authority. In this sense tradition is linked to authority. In effect the voice of the past makes a truth claim upon us. Thus, what the tradition truly says has its own authority. This authority, therefore, quite different from blind obedience, but is the recognition of this superior truth claim. See James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-reading Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 71, Gadamer 1993, 290.

23 Ted Peters, “Truth in History: Gadamer’s Hermeneutics and Pannenberg’s Apologetic Method” *Journal of Religion* 55, (1975, 76): 40.

24 Gadamer 1993, 276.

25 Gadamer 1993, 267. See also Joel Weinscheimer, *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 251.

26 Speaking on prejudice, Rudolf A. Makkreel says, the concept of prejudice can be seen in its double dimensions – explicit and implicit. Explicit prejudice denotes an explicit premature judgment, whereas an implicit prejudice denotes an implicit understanding that informs other judgments. He is of the opinion that when Gadamer uses the word prejudice he has the concept of implicit prejudice in mind. See Rudolf A. Makreel, “Gadamer and the Problem of How to Relate Kant and Hegel to Hermeneutics”. *Laval theologique et philosophique*, 53, 1 (February 1997), 160. See also (Gadamer, 1980, 133)

27 For a detailed discussion on the issue see, Jerald Wallulis, “Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Conflict of Ontologies,” in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 24 (1984), 283-302

28 Gadamer 1993, 277.

29 Gadamer 1993, 290.

30 Gadamer 1993, 276. For different translations of this word see Jerald Bruns, *Inventions: Writing, Textuality and Understanding in Literature and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 181; D. C. Hoy, *The Critical Circle: Literature, History and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 63; R.E.Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1969), 191; Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 359. However in our discussion following Joel Weinsheimer we will use it as “Historically affected Consciousness.

31 Gadamer 1993, 300. It is quite difficult to translate this German word *Wirkungsgeschichte*. In fact authors differ when they translate this word. Allan Hoy translates it as effective history, James Risser calls it efficacy of history. Here, following Joel Weinsheimer, we will translate it as history of effect.

32 Gadamer 1993, 301.

33 Gadamer 1993, 300.

34 Gadamer 1993, 302.

35 Gadamer 1993, 302.

36 Gadamer 1993, 303.

37 Gadamer 1993, 302.

38 Gadamer 1993, 304.

39 Gadamer 1993, 306.

40 Gadamer 1993, 306.

41 Gadamer 1993, 307. Gadamer makes a distinction between the natural law and practical law as that of Aristotle to drive home his theory of appropriation. He sees in Aristotle’s analysis of the natural law the full scope of this problem. In the fifth book of *Ethics* Aristotle distinguishes natural law from convention. For Aristotle it is apparent that the unchangeable laws are limited to the gods. Among men “all rules of justice are variable.” How can change then be compatible with natural law?

Gadamer interprets Aristotle, saying that “some laws are a matter of mere agreement (e.g., traffic regulations). But there are also other laws which although they do not fall under the conventions, of their “nature of the thing” asserts itself to be so and thus to be called “natural law”. Aristotle gives some examples for this: (1) the right hand is naturally stronger than the left, although it is possible to be ambidextrous; (2) wine measures are not equal everywhere with respect to buying and selling and thus there seems to be a free-play within set limits; (3) the best state is everywhere the same but not in the same way that the fire burns everywhere the same whether in Greece or in Persia. According to Gadamer the natural law has only a critical function, in deciding what is equitable or to correct any one-sidedness of the law.

Gadamer recognizes that in all the things there is such a thing called “the nature of the things” But the nature of the thing is not a fixed yardstick that we first recognize and then apply. Rather the norm itself is the basis of ethical life. In other words, the nature of the things “are concretized only in the concrete situation of the person acting.” For a detailed reading of Gadamer’s analysis of natural law see (Gadamer, 1989, 318-320), (Gadamer, 1886, 1:). See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. H. Rackham, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 1134b 29, 1134b 34- 1134a 6.

42 Gadamer 1993, 362. *Docta Ignorantia* means the doctrine of ignorance, which is to say that the subject is still not in the possession of complete truth, therefore still in search of it.

43 Gadamer 1993, 354. Hegel bases his concept of experience on his wider theory of dialectic triad. Moltke S Gram, in his article “Gadamer on Hegel’s Dialectic,” beautifully explains the concept of Hegel’s notion of this reversal (what Hegel calls *Die verkehte Welt*). Here Gram, agreeing with Gadamer says, when Hegel speaks of reversal he meant two things, (1) How contradictory the consciousness of this object is in the form it presents itself to us.(2) the movement in which the consciousness under observation learns of these contradictions itself. See Moltke S Gram, “Gadamer on Hegel’s Dialectic”, in *Thomist* 43 (1979), 322-330. See also, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel’ Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, Trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 37, 39, 46, 49.

44 Gadamer 1993, 363.

45 *Fides et Ratio* No. 85

46 *Fides et Ratio* No. 11

47 *Die Verbum* No. 8

48 *Fides et Ratio* No. 12

49 *Fides et Ratio* No. 12

50 *Fides et Ratio*, 85.

51 *Fides et Ratio*, No. 51.

CHAPTER VIII

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY: IDENTITY AND/OR DIFFERENCE?

JOHNSON PUTHENPURACKAL

“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” Without blindly taking the answer implicitly contained in the well-known rhetorical question by Tertullian,¹ we need to reformulate this question in other ways: How far apart are Athens and Jerusalem? Can the distance between them be narrowed down? This outburst of Tertullian is expressive of the type of relation existing between philosophy and theology in the West.² This relation has been marked by varying distance and closeness, understanding and mis-understanding, suspicion and appreciation. This short study is an attempt to look into this ever new and never old question. We shall consider it by making a clarification of the much ambiguous meaning of the terms, philosophy and theology (I), followed by a historical survey of the relation between them (II). The study is concluded with a thinking ahead towards an attempted solution to the question of relation (III).

THE MEANING OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

The question of ‘the relation between philosophy and theology’ is largely a Western problem – and thus a Christian problem – since for the Western mind philosophy and theology are different disciplines of knowledge, one dealing with reality as a whole, and the other with the Divine reality. Hence we need to be clear about the meaning of these terms, philosophy and theology, as used primarily in the West, and then in the East.

In the West *philosophy* has been considered as ‘love of wisdom’ from its Greek etymology. But *sophia* in the popular usage has a much wider meaning than mere ‘intellectual knowledge’; its meaning includes the practical *know-how* in the various fields. Originally philosophy was considered as a way of life, an attitude of life, an orientation (*philia*) to a goal (*Sophia*).³ But later philosophers have confined the word ‘philosophy’ within narrower boundaries, though in the popular usage its original breadth of meaning is not entirely lost.⁴ It is to be noted that although the West has been considering philosophy primarily as discursive knowledge, Plato⁵ considers the culmination of philosophical inquiry as direct intuition, and thus the *philosopher* becomes a *sage*.⁶ Except for such stray digressions, philosophy in the West, until the contemporary period, has remained eminently discursive and epistemological in character. In the contemporary West, especially with the advent of Nietzsche, Bergson and Heidegger, the

priority of intellection and rationalization is very much played down. Thus two forms of activity go under the name of philosophy: one that is essentially *rational* and logical, and the other (represented by Heidegger) that is *supra-rational* or intuitive. For many, the first group consists of ‘philosophers’, and the second group, of ‘sages’. This again shows that Western philosophy is unprepared to include within itself anything that is non-rational or intuitive.

Theology etymologically means the ‘*Science of God*’. For the pagan antiquity it meant a mythological explanation of the ultimate mysteries of the world (Plato, *Republic*, 379a). Aristotle uses it as synonym for what he properly calls ‘first philosophy’ or ‘metaphysics’. The early Greek fathers used *theologia* (the inner mysteries of Godhead) in correlation to *oikonomia* (God’s plan for the world manifest in the Christ-event). Only with Abelard in the twelfth century has theology come to be used in today’s sense of an ‘intellectual discipline’, an ordered body of knowledge about God.⁷ Gradually theology assumed the status of a unitary science, either in the strict deductive sense of Aristotle’s *episteme* (Thomas Aquinas) or in the broader sense of a salvific practical science of the love of God (Bonaventure). In either case a realist metaphysics was the instrument of seeking to understand what faith confessed. Anselm’s description of theology – *fides quaerens intellectum*: faith seeking understanding – became a classical one. After the period of enlightenment, theology became increasingly an aggregate of highly specialized disciplines, such as exegesis, patristics, dogmatics, church history, pastoral theology, moral theology, etc.

In the twentieth century theology found itself in a state of crisis, and it was forced to redefine itself. The metaphysical thinking, prominent in the scholastic and neo-scholastic periods, has given way to existential thinking (Bultmann and Rahner) and to historical thinking (Pannenberg and Metz). Theology has taken an anthropological turn with an emphasis on the praxis dimension. It became less a science of God than a study of humanity as it stands before God. In spite of the thinking beyond the metaphysical theology, the relation between revelation (God’s address to human beings) and theology (conceptual clarification and interpretation of the meaning contained in revelation) is not fully settled. Rahner’s distinction between *transcendental* revelation (non-objective and pre-conceptual) and *categorical* revelation (thematization of the former) is significant. Gradually theology has assumed the methodological role of hermeneutics.

Our above-given explanation concerning philosophy and theology is from the Western point of view. In the East, especially in India, they are understood differently. Although there is no single term in Sanskrit corresponding to ‘philosophy’ in the Western sense, *darsana* (literally, ‘seeing’) is the most appropriate term to refer to what is meant by philosophy in India. It has several important characteristics, distinguishing it from Western philosophy. First of all, it got crystallized into different systems or *ways of seeing*. Hence it is not a monolithic system that levels

down all differences. Secondly, all these *ways of thought* tend to have a soteriological or theological focus, i.e., they are supposed to lead to a vision of the world involving religious or mystical experience. Thus the purpose of philosophy is to help human beings not towards a *knowledge of reality*, but towards a *realization of oneself*. The ultimate aim of philosophy is *moksha* or salvation. Thirdly, Indian philosophy is less of a rational and conceptual enterprise, and more of an intuitive seeing. The scientific *rigour*, conceptual *clarity* and rational *precision*, by which Western philosophy is characterized, are almost absent in the Eastern ways of thinking. It is, so to say, supra-conceptual and supra-rational. Philosophizing, and thus theologizing, is more of an orientation of the total person, rather than an activity only with the intellect. Fourthly, according to Eastern thought there is no distinction between philosophy and theology. The East does not, in fact, have a philosophy or theology, as understood in the West; there is only a *'seeing'*. The thinking or *'seeing of reality'* (philosophizing) is a thinking or *'seeing of the Divine'* (theologizing). A *'seer'* (*darsanika*) or enlightened person is both a *'learned person'* (seer of reality) and a *'holy or realized person'* (seer of the Divine).⁸

What has been said above about Indian thought is equally true also of Chinese thought, (centered on social living), Japanese thought (centered on political living) and Zoroastrian thought (that combines the opposites). None of them has a theology – as understood in the Western Christian understanding – apart from a philosophy, and vice versa. Thus, the question of the relation between philosophy and theology is non-existent in the East.

THE HISTORICAL RELATION OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

The very phrase, *'the relation between philosophy and theology,'* undoubtedly implies that there is a difference between them. But the question that we are concerned about is this: how *different* is/has been this difference? Is this difference reconcilable, or are they moving in parted ways? These questions cannot be answered in one word, since the *difference* has been differently considered in the history of Western thought.

The early Patristic period is characterized by a largely sinister attitude of Christianity towards philosophy, with a view that religion/theology has hardly anything to do with philosophy. Augustine's position is rather ambiguous. He, on the one hand, speaks of the Platonists as proto-Christians, and on the other hand, refers to the pride of the philosophers in the power of reason. It is this attitude of suspicion towards philosophy and philosophers – an attitude that linked them with the pride of reason rather than the humility of faith – that provided much of the ammunition for the bitter and unchristian arguments about orthodoxy and heterodoxy, which marred the Christian history from the beginning.⁹ Thus there came about a rather dichotomous distinction between philosophy and theology, in which philosophy represents the pride of human reason and

theology the humble acceptance of Divine revelation.¹⁰ Such a dichotomous distinction gave rise and strengthened similar ones, such as, faith and reason, grace and nature, sacred and profane, divine and human, etc. The bitter antagonism became less sharp with Justin the Martyr and Clement of Alexandria; the former accepted philosophy and theology as fellow travelers on a long quest, and the latter proposed a Christian *gnosis*, a Christian wisdom, or a religious philosophy.

A careful study of the religious philosophy should not be carried out from a perspective of the superiority of Christianity and the subsidiarity of philosophy, providing the Christian thinkers with shapeless, elastic 'concepts' to be molded to the distinctive content of Christian faith. We can find not only a religious tinge, but also an implicit presence of the *religious* in the so-called *secular* philosophies of the ancient period, be it Platonism, Aristotelianism or Neoplatonism. The medieval period has produced a Christian or religious philosophy, especially through Thomas Aquinas. In the modern period, when scientific reasoning became dominant in the Western culture, the philosophers sought to give the Christian spirit a new expression. With the Protestant revolution, human reason was blamed as exclusively responsible for the Christian corporate corruption. Gradually the split between philosophy and theology, reason and revelation, nature and grace became more evident. Western philosophy began to turn against Christianity/theology. With few exceptions, Western philosophy basically distanced itself from religion and theology.

Even in the contemporary period, despite the shift in Western philosophy from the emphasis on the *rational* to the *supra-rational* (experiential, intuitive), the distance between philosophy and theology is not narrowed down. Although postmodern thought has apparently made use of in theology and religious thought, such changes are looked at with caution and suspicion. As theology remains, even today, rational and dogmatic in character, the distance and difference between philosophy and theology continues to be present in the Western Christian thought-pattern.

THE RELATION OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY: EAST AND WEST

Now that we have made a short itinerary through the notional clarification of and relation between philosophy and theology, we need to think anew regarding this question. As persons open to both Eastern and Western thought, should not the Indian Christian philosophers and theologians have their own *way* of looking at this question, without being content with an easy answer, namely, in the East they are identified and in the West they are different? Western philosophy has been eminently a philosophy of distinction, difference and either/or. Christian theology took over this either/or structure – Plato's distinction between the ideal and the real world is responsible for this either/or structure – and thus there arose many a dichotomous distinction, such as faith and reason, grace and nature,

sacred and profane, divine and human, etc.¹¹ In Western thought, God, the humans and the world have been identified, as a result of which they are separate, and can only be separately considered. In contemporary Western philosophy we note a gradual distancing from the *either/or* of truth and falsity, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, sacred and profane, etc. This is reflected in the relation between philosophy and theology. According to Heideggerian thought,¹² in the thinking of Being, the Divine, too, gets thought; ‘thinking of Being’ and ‘thinking of the Divine’ belong together.¹³ World, man and God mutually imply and involve one another; one cannot *be* apart from the other.¹⁴ In such a thought structure theology and philosophy cannot be thought separately. Many thinkers find themselves in this predicament of the inability to be a philosopher without being a theologian, and vice versa; a search into *secular reality* is a search into the *sacred reality*. Truth as openness to the Open will enable humans to be open to *reality* – which is both secular and sacred at the same time.

In short, the scenario of the relation between philosophy and theology is this: in the East a difference between them is *unthinkable*, in the West an identity between them is *thinkable*. Should the philosophers and theologians of India be more Western than their Western counterparts in taking philosophy and theology as separate sciences? A legitimate fear that they are gripped with can be the possibility of falling into ‘pantheism’ – not separating the Divine from the humans and the world. Is not the notion of the Divine as permeating the dimensions of the human and the cosmic richer than a thought pattern that separates and entifies God, humans, and world? In this case, are not philosophy and theology identified in the sense of ‘belonging together’? In this postmodern age and thinking, humans have come of age to consider philosophizing as theologizing and poetizing, and as belonging to mysticism and aesthetics.

NOTES

1 Tertullian, who lived in the third century, is one of the Fathers of the Church, who has written at length on the relation between faith and reason, highlighting the priority of faith over reason.

2 In fact the distinction between philosophy and theology is a Western heritage. Hence the East never wasted its intellectual energy on finding out the exact difference and relation between them.

3 *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Bangalore: TPI, 1989, s.v. “philosophy,” by Richard Schäfler.

4 Cf., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards, vol. VI, 1972 edition, s.v. “Philosophy,” by John Passmore.

5 It was Plato who for the first time considered at length the meaning of philosophy. According to him the philosopher, with his philosophical wisdom, can face the test of critical discussions. Only philosophers are able to explain why they are doing what they are doing. Again he says that philosophers have direct access to the ‘true reality’ as

different from the world of change. Besides, they know the ‘ideals’ that one ought to do. These stray statements of Plato are indicative of the way he considered philosophy.

6 Plato’s distinction between philosophy and the worldly pursuit of knowledge is generally accepted. But his distinction between philosophy and poetry, or philosopher and sage has not won the same degree of acceptance.

7 *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1993 ed., s.v. “Theology,” by William J. Hill.

8 Cf., J.J.Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger: Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1987), pp. 277ff.

9 It became common to accuse proponents of rival doctrinal views of playing the sophist and being the victims of the allurements of the prevailing philosophies. The history of the church has been turbulent with such accusations leading to fights and bloodshed.

10 *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1st Indian Edition, (1993), s.v., “Philosophy and Theology,” by James P. Mackey.

11 According to postmodern philosophy, traditional Western thought (philosophy as well as theology) has been characterized by this either/or structure. They are called binary opposites, of which the first one is positive, the second is only a denial of the first. Thus, falsity is what is not true, evil is what is not good, etc. For a general understanding of the postmodern trend, cf., Johnson Puthenpurackal, ed., *The Postmodern...: A Siege of the Citadel of Reason* (Delhi: Media House, 2002).

12 Heidegger did not want to take his thought onto the question of God; but then as he grew in his non-rational thinking, the question of the Divine crept into his thought, so to say, unawares.

13 Johnson Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger: Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity*, pp. 277ff.

14 Raimon Panikkar, one of the creative thinkers of our times, considers such an approach as *cosmotheandric* vision, where God, humans and world are thought together.

PART IV

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

CHAPTER IX

**INTELLIGENT DESIGN,
SCIENCE, AND RELIGION¹**

WILLIAM SWEET

I

One thing we do not lack for today are discussions of the relation of religion and science. Many books, articles, and book reviews explore the relation at length – and, unfortunately, in a sometimes intemperate way. One focus in the recent discussion of science and religion concerns accounts of biological origins – what might be called the Evolution vs. Intelligent Design (hereafter abbreviated as ID) debate. And while this debate, which seems to have picked up where the Creationism/Evolution exchanges of the 1980s and 1990s left off, is actually quite distinct from the general discussion of science and religion, it nevertheless is instructive. First, it is useful in reflecting on how science and religion relate to one another² but, second, it serves to help us respond to the challenge of science – to begin to construct “a positive faith.”³

What I wish to do here is to outline some of the issues raised in the Evolution versus Intelligent Design debate, and briefly note some problems that arise for both those who defend and those who challenge Intelligent Design. But I will also claim that both sides share certain presuppositions about the character of religious and scientific propositions – and that it is the failure to understand the distinctive character of these propositions that has hindered arriving at a resolution of the ID debate. I will argue that if we understand religious and scientific propositions rightly, we can see how to make progress in the discussion of ID and, more broadly, how to address the issue of the relation of science and religion.

II

Some have argued that, since both religion and science are in the world, and since both talk about the world, they offer not only distinct but (at least to some extent) competing hypotheses about the world – about its origin, its guiding principles, its growth and development, and so on – and that both of them cannot be right. And a paradigm example of this seems to be the recent debate concerning evolutionary theory, ‘Intelligent Design,’ and Creationism. (ID is, to be sure, distinct from creationism, but there is clearly an affinity between the two.)

On the one hand, we have the work of contemporary ‘Intelligent Design’ theorists like William Dembski, Michael Behe, and others.⁴ ID

theorists focus on the following question: “How can we ‘explain the complex, information-rich structures of biology?’” They answer that “intelligent causes are necessary [...] and that these causes are empirically detectable.”⁵

They offer, then, what they say is a scientific claim – that is, an account of the origin of these structures that is based on observation, a public method, an account of what had to be the case, in nature, for this complexity to arise or exist, and arguments for what the best explanation for these complex structures might be. Thus, these advocates conclude that ID is at least a plausible, if not the best, explanatory hypothesis for the complexity and order in the biological world we observe. And they say that a refusal to take ID seriously is not really based on scientific grounds, but on prejudice – and, specifically, anti-religious prejudice or atheism.

On the other hand – and, in part, in response to ID – we have recent volumes by Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Robert Pennock.⁶ Putatively following in the steps of Darwin, these accounts propose materialistic, naturalistic, and reductionistic accounts of reality – accounts that may differ, but which would seem to agree that what exists is only contingently so – there is no inevitability in the (biological) world being exactly as it is – and which seem clearly to exclude explanatory hypotheses of intelligence or purpose.

Now the claim of evolutionary theory here is that whatever it is that is to be explained – the existence of life, the characteristics of different species, consciousness, and so on – does not require us to look for anything outside of nature. In fact, these authors go further – and that is that they insist that there is simply no room for an appeal to the non-natural or the divine. As one proponent puts it: “Whether pushing us or pulling us toward his desired end, the Christian God [and the Jewish and Muslim God as well] is utterly extraneous to evolution as Darwin and his modern successors have understood it. Evolution is an undirected, reactive process [...] or it is nothing at all.”⁷

When it comes to their views on ID arguments – which (apparently) not only allow for, but insist on, a non-natural explanation – Dawkins, Dennett, and others make three basic claims. First, they argue that ID is *not* a *plausible* hypothesis – that either the alleged evidence for ID is not sufficient (or can be reasonably accounted for by a naturalistic evolutionary hypothesis or a similar naturalistic explanation), or that the ‘scientific’ evidence on which it is based is simply erroneous. Second, such critics frequently claim that ID is not a genuinely *scientific* hypothesis – that it doesn’t offer any experimental method for testing its truth, it isn’t predictive, *and* it doesn’t provide a clear explanation of all of the data to be explained. And, finally, these critics of ID maintain, any conclusions we might want to derive from ID – say, conclusions about the existence and characteristics of a supernatural intelligence – are *unnecessary* hypotheses; that we ‘have no need for that hypothesis.’⁸

What is presupposed here – by both camps – is that ID and evolutionary theory are competing hypotheses. They are ‘on a par’ and, in the form presented in the preceding paragraphs, they both cannot be true. Critics will argue that since ID fails as a hypothesis, the best account of what needs to be explained (i.e., biological complexity) is that provided by evolutionary theory. ID theorists will argue that evolutionary theory fails to provide a (statistically) plausible account of the phenomena, and so we have to allow for non-natural elements or a non-natural explanation.

There are several comments that should be made here.

First, and most obviously, the way that this debate has often been presented has created the impression of there being a conflict between a ‘pure, neutral’ science and a ‘religiously influenced’ science (if not religious beliefs masquerading as scientific hypotheses). But one should see that there very well may *not* be any real conflict. For example, the definition of ‘evolution’ given above – that it “is an undirected, reactive process [...] or it is nothing at all” – is a stipulative one, and one of which we are told: ‘Take it or leave it.’ But the definition of ‘evolution’ is *not* so simple – as the history of the concept so readily reveals. The phenomena described by the term ‘evolution’ have been, and can be, understood as illustrating gradual or even periodic accelerated [punctuated?] development, *without* the additional claim that such change is ‘undirected’ or entirely ‘reactive.’

Second, at least some of the above objections to ID theorists providing genuinely scientific hypotheses are misplaced. It may well be that ID is not a theory in the way in which evolution is a theory (or, to be more precise, set of theories). But that is because, for example, we have to distinguish between ‘theories’ and ‘hypotheses.’ ‘Naturalistic evolution’ is both a theory and a hypothesis concerning, among other things, the origins of species; ID is a hypothesis about species origin, though it may not be a theory. But this doesn’t make ID non-scientific. We have hypotheses in history, in psychology, in archeology, and so on, and we have hypotheses in sciences like biology, as well. Some of these may also give rise to theories; others may not. In this sense, then, evolution and ID *can* be competing hypotheses.

Is ID a plausible hypothesis? Whether ID is plausible – whether it provides a good or ‘the best’ explanation – is something that presumably must be decided on scientific grounds (e.g., how far it is successful in accounting for the phenomena to be explained, and what sorts of evidence would confirm it, or tend to disconfirm it). Now it may well be that ID does not offer much of an explanation – that it not only isn’t testable or repeatable, but doesn’t provide much, if any, of the mechanics of how things came about (e.g., that God intervened at point X, or that God set things up such that, at point X, phenomenon Y would result). And it may not offer much of a theory, or show how we might corroborate the hypotheses it makes. So it may provide an explanation, but not a good one. Nevertheless, as far as the matter goes, one thing should be emphasized –

that this ‘conflict’ between ID and naturalistic evolution need not be (and as ID’s defenders insist, *is not*) an example of *religious belief* and science constituting competing hypotheses. Even though it may be true that ID has been articulated and defended by religious believers, that the inspiration for it was based on a prior conviction which was fundamentally religious, and that religious denominations champion it, to accuse ID of being a ‘religious belief’ or a ‘religious’ account is arguably to commit the genetic fallacy. In other words, it is *not* a religious belief – though religious believers may believe it, and though its conclusion or guiding hypothesis may resemble what *is* I think a religious belief – namely that ‘God created and designed biologically complex organisms.’

ID, then, claims to be a scientific hypothesis and that the discussion of ID should take place at the level of science; accusations of atheism or of religious belief should not enter the debate. This does not mean that ID cannot be challenged or shown not to be as comprehensive a theory as evolution. But such challenges must take place on scientific terms, not as *ad hominem*.

Still, is it possible to extend the conclusions of ID to defend religious beliefs? If ID arguments are successful, do they prove that there was a creation? Do they prove that there is, or could be, a ‘God who created and designed the biological organisms in the universe’? In other words, can ID as science prove, or give us good reason to believe, a religious belief? As just noted, it may seem that the proposition ‘There is a God who created and designed the biological organisms in the universe’ is just a slightly more explicit version of the conclusion of ID (i.e., that there is a purposive/intelligent designer); that ID, as science, can in principle establish a religious belief; and that thus, just as ID science and evolutionary science compete, so also do the claims that (on the one hand) ‘The universe always existed without any intelligent design’ or ‘The explanation of apparent design in living beings is that of a process of evolution driven by natural selection,’ and (on the other) an explicitly ‘Creationist’ hypothesis. And if *this* is so, then it might not only suggest that there could be a complementarity between science and religion,⁹ but would entail that scientific explanation and religious belief here *are* commensurable, if not on a par, and that the former can provide evidence for the latter.

I would argue that such conclusions go too far – that such an approach misconstrues the relation between science and religion, and that ID cannot – and ought not – attempt to make or defend religious claims, even though there is plausibly some relation between the conclusions of ID and of religious belief. Despite some affinities between the conclusions of ID science and religious belief, my claim is that there is a fundamental epistemological difference between a religious belief and a proposition or conclusion of ‘science’ – that science and religion are not offering competing hypotheses, and that believers should not hope for too much, even if ID arguments prove to be successful. Nevertheless, the proximity

between, for example, the conclusions of ID and religious belief can give us some clues about a much more fundamental and, arguably, more interesting question – and that is, how science and religion are related.

But to defend these claims, I have to clarify some concepts. Specifically, I need to explain what religious belief is, what makes a proposition or hypothesis a *scientific* hypothesis, and in what ways religious beliefs might be related to propositions expressing scientific hypotheses.

III

What is a religious belief? What makes religious belief *distinctively* religious? In earlier papers,¹⁰ I have given what I would call a phenomenological description of religious belief. I suggested that what makes a religious belief distinctively religious is not (just) that it refers, directly or indirectly, to certain persons (such as Jesus, or God) or events (such as the Virgin Birth or the appointment by Muhammad of Ali), but that it “must i) have an expressive role or function in a person’s life, ii) indicate one’s disposition or intention to act in a certain way that is tied to a particular set of practices (e.g., a language, prayer, or worship), and iii) be such that the persons or events referred to (are claimed by the speaker to) have a relation to a reality which is not restricted to the empirical, observable, and material. In other words, what makes a religious belief religious is not just its subject matter – i.e., that it is a belief about certain beings or events – nor is it just that it is a belief or set of beliefs that is held in a certain way – i.e., in a way that expresses a trust or commitment that shows that the beliefs are fundamentally significant to one’s life. It is the holding of a particular set of beliefs in this latter way that makes them religious.”¹¹

On this account, a religious belief has both descriptive and dispositional elements; nevertheless, (as I have argued elsewhere¹²), the presence of this necessary dispositional element does *not* prevent us from speaking of religious beliefs as true. But this is because the conditions for ‘truth,’ here, are not unique to religious belief. We can speak of religious beliefs as ‘true,’ then, when they meet general standards for all truth (in the sciences, morality, and so on). “These conditions are that i) they are not selfcontradictory or inconsistent, ii) that they meet standards set by not just the practices, but the traditions and institutions in which they appear,¹³ iii) that they are consistent or coherent with other true beliefs (e.g., moral and empirical ones) in other discourses and practices, and iv) that they reflect both ‘the world’ – ‘what is’ – and dominant ideas in human consciousness.”¹⁴ The meaning and truth of particular religious beliefs are *initially* determined within a religious discourse or tradition (e.g., as being coherent or incoherent with other beliefs in that discourse or tradition), but they must ultimately be consistent with or meet standards that exist outside of that discourse. And since religious belief is a *response* to the world, and because particular religious beliefs have a cognitive and descriptive

character, there must be commensurability between religious beliefs and other beliefs, and even some kind of commensurability between one religious tradition and another.

I would make parallel or contrasting claims about scientific propositions. What makes a proposition a distinctively scientific proposition? Again, to begin with, it must meet the usual standards of meaningfulness – that it is not self-contradictory or jibberish, that it generally affirms or denies something, etc. More substantively – and in the sense in which we would usually understand the term – it is generally either an empirical proposition or it normally has a place within a broader scientific practice or theory, or both. Its function is to describe – either particular matters of fact (e.g., persons, events) or the way in which matters of fact exist (as we might when we articulate a ‘scientific law’).

In principle, a scientific proposition is a proposition that purports to be ‘publicly’ testable, and it is related to generally agreed-on procedures for how we would carry out such tests. Such scientific propositions claim to be neutral – that is, they generally don’t require that one ascribe a particular value or importance to them. Here, I would take as examples such propositions as “The surname of the mayor of Chennai, India, on August 15, 2002, was ‘Stalin’” or the formula in physics for velocity – Average Velocity is equal to Distance divided by Time: ‘ $v = d/t$ ’ – or for momentum: ‘ $p = mv$ ’ (Momentum is Mass times Velocity).

A critic might object that there cannot be neutrality – that one who knows or utters these propositions values the kind of enterprise in which such propositions have a place. But I disagree.

Having this ‘attitude’ is not an essential part of understanding the meaning of the proposition. To put it slightly differently, it normally doesn’t matter who utters these propositions; the meaning remains the same. And once we are assured about matters of its ‘meaning,’ its truth is independent of the other beliefs of the speaker. (In fact it may not even matter to the person expressing these propositions whether these propositions are true – except so far as one wants to hold propositions that are true.)

It also normally doesn’t matter what metaphysical or religious beliefs are held by the person who tests a scientific proposition or hypothesis. By itself, its meaning or truth doesn’t imply any particular metaphysical or religious commitment. And nothing value oriented specifically follows from it. And so – rightly or wrongly, and unlike religious or ethical or aesthetic beliefs – scientific propositions are generally held to be propositions that possess ‘objectivity.’

(I think it is fair to say that a scientific proposition *may* carry with it a dispositional dimension – that one seeks to act on the propositions one holds. But this is not an essential part of what the particular proposition means or whether it is true. And it is also fair to say that, in scientific investigations, meaning is determined within a set of practices – for example, within a discourse. *Still*, it isn’t clear that these practices somehow

reflect trusts or commitments or beliefs that are fundamentally significant to one's life – that they are fundamentally expressive or that they necessarily indicate one's disposition or intention to act in a certain way.)

It is this 'public' character, this neutrality, and this objectivity that seems to characterize (most) scientific propositions and that no doubt explains the appeal of a scientific explanation.

Now, it is clear from the preceding description that religious beliefs and propositions expressing empirical fact or scientific hypotheses are distinct – e.g., about whether a proposition has a genuine and an observable significance (such as an expressive role or function) in the life of the person who holds it; about whether a proposition indicates one's disposition or intention to act in a certain way, based on underlying sets of practices; about what sorts of events or objects these propositions presumably refer to; about the extent to which the personal stance of those who hear it or test it is relevant to its meaning and truth, and so on.

But they are *not radically distinct*. For, as we have seen above, and as we see in religious practice, (and as I have argued in earlier papers), religious beliefs are *in* the world and in the very same world in which scientific hypotheses and statements of empirical fact exist; they are often made in response to experiences or events that are said to have taken place in the world; they profess to tell us certain things about the world (perhaps, things that we could not otherwise know or discover)¹⁵; they commend us to act in certain ways *in* this world, and so on. And I have said that, for a religious belief to be true, it must meet at least some core criteria that scientific propositions must also meet in order for one to understand their meaning and truth. And so religion and science will inevitably affect one another and have a relation. But 'What exactly is this relation?' is a question I want to defer for a moment. Instead, I want first to ask 'What is the consequence of this account of utterances of religious belief and of science for the ID debate and, more broadly, for our understanding of 'truth' in science and religion?' This is more complex than one might think.

IV

Earlier, I discussed the question of whether those who defend ID are following a genuinely scientific approach. First, if the debate concerning ID is to be scientific, then the hypotheses or conclusions of ID have to fit the model of scientific propositions, raised above. What does this mean? Thus, for example, when ID theorists hold a hypothesis or make claims, what they say would have to be broadly consistent with a larger set of scientific theories and the standards appropriate to them. Such a hypothesis would describe a matter of fact (e.g., complexity in phenomena) and try to provide a causal account of it. One would expect that such hypotheses or conclusions were adopted, or could be adoptable, by scientists, regardless [or independently?] of their (prior) commitments to a particular set of values or metaphysical or religious commitments. (In other

words, if ID is scientific, then one's religious or ethical views should be irrelevant to one's recognition of it as scientific.)

And, of course, for the hypothesis to be taken seriously, the evidence for it would have to be that it is not only possible, but plausible – that there is corroborating evidence that suggests its chances of being true are at least roughly the same as or greater than the chances of other hypotheses being true. [One hypothesis of the origin of the universe, difficult to refute, is that it came into existence exactly five minutes ago, and that all of us have false 'memories' of whatever we think happened more than five minutes before – but the evidence *for* this is slim, to say the least, and other hypotheses seem (non-circularly) to be more probable.] It may well be, I admit, that we can't actually calculate these probabilities except in a very rough and ready way – e.g., It is more probable that I am here, writing in my office, than that I am at home, asleep in my bed.

So, if ID avoids conclusions that are clearly religious beliefs (e.g., claiming that the source of ID is a being called God, or that this establishes a particular metaphysical claim, or that one therefore might infer from this a particular religious belief – and engage in a certain set of religious practices), then while one may fault ID for its science, it is a red herring to raise issues of religious belief.

Still, even though ID is science, not religion, it would be consistent with – and perhaps lend some psychological support to or even confirm – a religious belief about the origins of life (namely, that it was created by God). Thus, what this instance of ID illustrates is that we do see how science and religion, while distinct, have a definite relation to one another.

Second, this gives us some indication of how we could know whether certain religious beliefs are true. (Let me begin, though, by saying parenthetically that in both science and religion, 'truth' is something that can be determined only after we have understood what a proposition (e.g., a proposition expressing a belief) means. Here, the burden is both on the person expressing the proposition to make the belief clear, and on the 'listener' to be open to seeing what it means in the context in which it is expressed. One should be open to investigating the believer's discourse or 'form of life' before deciding what a particular belief means, or whether the belief means anything which the listener could affirm or deny. But we also have to consider that, for those who take the propositions seriously, 'meaning' 'within a context' isn't enough. Propositions expressing religious beliefs (or scientific beliefs) must meet general criteria for meaningfulness. This is partly determined internally to a discourse, but it must also respect general regulatory principles of any discourse.)

V

So let me now turn back to the question I deferred a moment back, sc., 'What exactly is the relation between science and religion?' First, from what we have seen, I think it is clear that scientific propositions – what can

be known through the use of scientific method – do bear on religion and religious belief. How?

To begin with, religious beliefs (or propositions expressing religious belief) must ‘fit’ – i.e., not contradict, and (at least to some extent) cohere with – what is known empirically, morally, etc. – i.e., with either a proposition itself, or one of its implicates. (These ‘implicates’ are not just propositions analytically implied, but they could be propositions suggested by other propositions – e.g., ‘Jesus is the son of Mary’ implies that Jesus was human.)

Now, if such beliefs do not obviously fit with what we know otherwise, then we may have to re-examine both – reconsider whether we have correctly understood what each means. Further, what is known through science can force religious believers to be clear what they are committed to (e.g., it may get them to reassess whether what they believe really is a religious belief, or whether they have the right to hold it as a religious belief). For example, is a six-day creation, or Jesus changing water into wine *religious* beliefs? Or are these beliefs that are scientific (i.e., about the world)? If so, they have to meet the conditions described above. And I would say that the reverse is true as well – that religion may force us to consider what, exactly, our scientific views are, and whether they are not disguised philosophical views (e.g., whether we might implicitly hold that all that is real is material).

Scientific beliefs cannot, however, prove *religious* beliefs. At most, scientific beliefs can ‘confirm’ a religious belief – and even here, they never do so in their entirety. Consider, for example, an event such as the crucifixion of Jesus. We could imagine that, in principle, a historian or an archeologist might be able to give us evidence that could prove that someone named Jesus was crucified on the very site that is identified in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Still, that would still not prove the *religious* belief that Jesus – the Christ, the Messiah, whose coming was prophesized in the Hebrew Scriptures, and so on – was crucified. Nor would it show that the appropriate response to such knowledge is to engage in certain religious practices, to accept Jesus as Lord, to thank or praise Jesus’ name, and so on.

Conversely, science or scientific method will not normally be able to disprove a religious belief – though, it might be able to show that something on which the religious belief depends is simply false, and that therefore – as generally understood – the religious belief cannot be true. (Thus, if it could be proved that there was no man named Lazarus [brother of Mary and Martha, living in Bethany, near Jerusalem] around 30 BC, then it can’t be true that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead – although this does not deny that Jesus might have raised *someone* from the dead, etc.)¹⁶ (But could science disprove that Jesus was conceived without a human father? – which can be a religious belief. Here I think it cannot – but, on the other hand, if science found out that such things could happen, it wouldn’t mean that they proved a religious belief.)

Finally, we must nevertheless admit that, concerning some beliefs – e.g., that God is three persons in one – science can have nothing to say. But this is in the same way in which we must allow that, for some beliefs – e.g., that the smallest particle of matter is the lepton – religion can have nothing to say. (As the old saying goes, ‘The Bible tells us how to go to heaven, but not how the heavens go.’ This, of course, can be applied to many different systems of religious belief.)

Now if religious beliefs don’t fit with science in the way just described, what are our options? Either we must, I think, admit that the beliefs are ‘not true’ (though they are not necessarily false), or second, say that they may be superstitions, or third, maintain that they may be ‘true,’ but in some larger, non-propositional, non-cognitive sense of ‘true’ (such as when we say that literature may be true) In short, then, to say that scientific propositions bear on religion and religious beliefs means that science can judge religious beliefs. (As just said, in some cases it challenges their grounds; in other cases, it calls believers to reconsider what, exactly, their beliefs mean, and so on.)

But we should also note that the relation between science and religion is not one-sided. And so, just as science can bear on religion, religion can bear on science. For example, religion can gauge and guide science – in at least two ways. First, for those who hold religious beliefs, it may be that some of those beliefs indicate that certain courses of scientific investigation are dead ends – e.g., such investigations that propose to provide a purely materialist account of consciousness, or that deny the existence of consciousness entirely. Or it may guide science to areas that are socially responsible or helpful (e.g., concerning ‘green’ power) or into areas that improve the well-being of the community. But, more generally, religion may ‘press a point’ – though the point is in fact a theoretical or philosophical point – that scientists (or philosophers) have no right to determine that explanations of all phenomena or all events must be naturalistic in character.

Moreover, religion *can* judge science. For example, in a recent statement concerning evolutionary theory, made in an address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, John Paul II said, “Theories of evolution which, in accordance with the philosophies inspiring them, consider the mind as emerging from the forces of living matter, or as a mere epiphenomenon of this matter, are incompatible with the truth about man”¹⁷ – and are, presumably, therefore false. More concretely, then, religious claims can challenge scientific claims (or principles), although not within science itself, i.e., not *qua* a scientific claim.

Nevertheless, religion cannot show that a genuinely scientific proposition is false. Because to be able to show this, it must be part, and subject to the principles, of a scientific model – and thus cease being religion altogether.

VI

In this paper I have argued that, the example of the evolution and intelligent design controversy suggests that to object to the ID hypothesis on the ground that it provides a religious hypothesis, or is religion disguised as science, etc., is irrelevant – a red herring. But my interest in this paper is larger than the evolution vs. ID debate; it concerns the general relation of science and religion.

I have argued that there *is* a relation between science and religion. It is one that can be supportive where science may confirm or corroborate the direct or implied *descriptive* element of religious belief, though it cannot prove religious belief. And science can be critical, where it challenges just this descriptive dimension of religious belief, and forces the parties to reconsider what the belief means. But I have suggested that it cannot – or cannot normally – be said to refute a religious belief qua religious belief.

This statement of the relation of religion and science presumes, of course, that science is working within its proper sphere (this is something that we can determine through a *philosophy* of nature, as Jacques Maritain would have it). But even here, challenges to or allegations of meaninglessness or of the falsehood of a religious belief may be only temporary – i.e., so far as the science on which we depend is in fact correct. And this is to leave aside altogether the fact that challenges to religious belief might also come from non-scientific realms as well (e.g., morality, aesthetics, etc.)

But religious belief as a whole is not to be subject to scientific methods, and this is at least in part because religious beliefs are non-scientific in a way analogous to moral propositions, the propositions of ideologies, aesthetic propositions, and so on. Moral theory, political theory, aesthetics, etc., are what we can call ‘non-science’ – but this is not to say that they fit A.J. Ayer’s category of ‘nonsense,’ because they *are* sensible and they are the kinds of beliefs that are held by beings we recognise to be reasonable.

I have also argued in this paper that, conversely, there is a relation between religion and science. It is not that religion confirms or corroborates science, but that true religious beliefs may contain descriptive claims that might guide or suggest options that scientists, engaging in science, might or should pursue. Or it might present a different way of looking at the world that scientists know qua scientists. But, as noted above, a religious belief, as such, cannot disprove a genuine scientific proposition.

In general, then, the propositions of religion and science, so far as they are true, must ‘fit together – they must cohere; but I am not proposing the recent quasi-scientific view of religion of Michael Ruse¹⁸ (where certain claims, often held to be religious beliefs, are given purely naturalistic explanations). The propositions of science and religion are not of the same order, and they do not directly imply one another, but they can be related –

and this is something that we must determine, not generically, but on a one by one examination of propositions of believers and of scientists.

We cannot deny the presence of science, but neither do we have to adopt “a strictly scientific humanism”¹⁹ that reduces all religion to scientific hypotheses. In the world and in our understanding of what is true about it, there can be room for the propositions of science and of ‘non-science’ and, therefore, for a genuine and positive relation among the propositions of science and propositions expressing religious belief. For in ‘assimilating’ the lessons of science, we may learn more about what religion is and stands for. And both religion and science must be subordinate to truth. The right relation between science and religion, then, is one that maintains the compatibility, but not the reducibility, of one to the other.

NOTES

1 This paper was read as the Presidential Address to the Canadian Society of Christian Philosophers in Toronto, Canada, in May 2002. I am grateful to those in attendance for their comments and suggestions. A longer version will appear in *Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, ed. William Sweet and Richard Feist (forthcoming 2003) and in my *Science, Religion, and Non-Science*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publishers, 2003.

2 I confess to an unease about this ID debate, partly because attacks often focus on tangential matters, and partly because those who defend it seem either to claim too much or commit themselves to claims for which evidence is lacking. Still, the ID debate provides a useful example or illustration for a discussion of the relation of science and religion.

3 See Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, “Science and Religion,” in *Art and Thought*, ed. K. Bharatha Iyer, London: Luzac and Co., 1947, pp. 180-185.

4 Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, New York: Free Press, 1996; *Mere Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design*, ed. William A. Dembski, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998; William Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology*, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999, and *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Phillip E. Johnson, *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000; Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth? Why Much of What We Teach About Evolution Is Wrong*, Washington, DC: Regnery Pub. 2000.

5 Access Research Network, “Frequently Asked Questions about Intelligent Design” http://www.arn.org/id_faq.htm

6 Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (1986; revised edition; Norton, 1996); Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution*

and the Meanings of Life New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995; Robert T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence Against the New Creationism*, Cambridge MA: Bradford/MIT Press, 1999. A hyperbolic defense of these views, principally at the level of *ad hominem*, can be found in Frederick C. Crews, "Saving Us from Darwin," *The New York Review of Books*, October 4, 2001 and October 18, 2001.

7 Frederick C. Crews, "Saving Us from Darwin," *The New York Review of Books*, October 18, 2001

8 This remark is attributed to Pierre Simon Laplace, French mathematician and author of the five volume book, *Celestial Mechanics*. When presented with a copy, Napoleon allegedly commented, "I see no mention of God in this work". Laplace is reputed to have replied, "Sir, I have no need of that hypothesis."

9 Attempts to find common ground – because of the 'incompleteness' of science in providing a comprehensive explanation of reality – take a wide range of forms. See *Darwin: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Philip Appleman, 3d ed., Norton, 2001, pp. 525–533, 613–623. For some of the recent discussion, see Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*, New York: Cliff Street Books/HarperCollins, 1999; Robert Pollack, *The Faith of Biology and the Biology of Faith: Order, Meaning, and Free Will in Modern Medical Science*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000; John F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000; Michael Ruse, *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship Between Science and Religion*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Stephen Jay Gould, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, New York: Ballantine, 1999.

10 "Discourse and the Possibility of Religious Truth," in *Sophia*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1998): 72-102.; "Scientific and Religious Truth in a Cross-Cultural Setting," in *Buddhi* [Ateneo de Manila, Philippines], Vol. VI (2003); forthcoming.

11 Think of how a Muslim's denial that 'Jesus is God' differs from an atheist's.

12 "Empiricism, Fideism and the Nature of Religious Belief," in *Sophia*, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, (1992): 1-15. [with Colin O'Connell].

13 For example, the claim that the consecrated bread of the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ is not just 'true' in the 'practice' of communion, but is part of the Christian tradition and – some theologians would say – true regardless of the practices around it.

14 E.g., the concept of person.

15 Of course, the fact that a religious belief might tell us something that we wouldn't otherwise know doesn't make it a religious belief.

16 See *John* 11.

17 John Paul II, "Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences," reprinted in "The Pope's Message on Evolution and Four Commentaries,"

The Quarterly Review of Biology, Vol. 72, No. 4 (December 1997), pp. 382–383.

18 See Michael Ruse, *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship between Science and Religion*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

19 Radhakrishnan, “Science and Religion,” *op. Cit.*, pp. 181-182.

CHAPTER X
SCIENCE AND RELIGION

MARIA NORMA REBELLO

“Science is any of various intellectual activities concerned with the physical world and its phenomena and entailing unbiased observations and systematic experimentation in general. A science involves a pursuit of knowledge covering general truths or the operations of fundamental laws.”¹

The civilization in which we live today is the product of the discipline of the human mind known as modern science. When we study science at close quarters, in the way the great scientists have applied themselves to the pursuit, we find two aspects to this discipline. The first is pure science, science which tries earnestly to understand the truth of nature through a dispassionate inquiry, and the second is applied science, in which the truth discovered by pure science flows into the technical inventions for the enhancement and enrichment of human life. These two, science as *lucifera* and science as *fructifera*, science as light and science as fruit or result, are intimately related. Knowledge leads to power and power leads to control and manipulation of the forces of nature, enabling man to condition his life and environment with deliberation. Every new discovery in pure science, at some stage or other, becomes converted into applied science, into control and manipulation of the forces of nature. And the result, as revealed in recent history, is the great saga of modern scientific discovery and invention resulting in the worldwide technological civilization of today. It is a most fascinating study, how the human mind disciplined in this pursuit of science develops the capacity to wrest from nature truth after truth, hidden and jealously guarded by her, leading to our extraordinary modern age of nuclear science and space travel.

Modern environmental and ecological problems may be making for the unpopularity of technology, or rather of over technology, especially in advanced countries, but pure science, with its passion for truth and human welfare, will always remain one of the noblest pursuits of man.

Science in the modern age has lengthened man’s intellectual tether, but this has only helped to bring into sharper focus the mystery of the unknown and the significance of *paravidya* (higher knowledge or wisdom) of which the Upanishads speak. In the words of J. Arthur Thomson: “At the end of his intellectual tether, man has never ceased to become religious.”²

Thus several scientists during the last few decades have been forced to overstep the limits of their sciences and tackle the problem of the unknown at closer quarters in a mood of humility and reverence, illustrating the dictum of Indian wisdom: ‘*vidya dadati vinayam* – knowledge bestows humility’, and the saying of Coleridge, quoted by J. Arthur Thomson: “All

knowledge begins and ends with wonder; but the first wonder is the child of ignorance, the second wonder is the parent of adoration.”³

Religion is human beings’ relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual or divine. Religion is commonly regarded as consisting of a person’s relation to God or to gods or spirits. Worship is probably the most basic element of religion, but moral conduct, right belief, and participation in religious institutions are generally also constituent elements of the religious life as practiced by believers and worshippers and as commanded by religious sages and scriptures.⁴

The Indian thinkers discovered by their investigations that there are two fields in which man lives and functions; one, the external world, the other, the internal. These are two different orders of phenomena. The study of the one alone does not exhaust the whole range of experience. Also, the study of the one from the standpoint of the other will lead to satisfactory results. But the study of the one in the light of the conclusions from the study of the other is helpful and relevant.

Referring to this approach in the course of a lecture on ‘Cosmology,’ Swami Vivekananda said: There are two worlds, the microcosm and the macrocosm, the internal and the external. We get truth from both of these by means of experience. The truth gathered from internal experience is psychology, metaphysics and religion; from external experience, the physical sciences. Now a perfect truth should be in harmony with experiences in both these worlds. The microcosm should bear testimony to the macrocosm, and the macrocosm to the microcosm; physical truth must have its counterpart in the internal world, and the internal world must have its verification outside.⁵

Sri Ramakrishna talks of the meditation technique of all religions, through the illustration of fishing. What do we do when we want to catch fish? We take a fishing rod and line, fix an attractive bait to its hook, go to a lake, and cast the line with the bait into the lake. We then sit calmly, watching. We may not have actually seen any fish in the lake, but we have the basic faith that there is fish in the lake, having heard that others have caught fish there. Sometimes we may have to sit for a long time. After an hour or two, if we fail to catch any fish, we will not conclude that there are no fish in the lake. We will heed the *Sraddhasva Somya* exhortation of the Upanishad and come again the next day, and, again, the day after. We may not have caught any fish, but we continue our effort. What is it that sustains our dogged efforts? A basic faith that the lake contains fish is further strengthened by the knowledge that others had come before us and had succeeded in their efforts to catch fish. That means that there are fish in the lake, though we ourselves have not discovered any yet, and that we shall also achieve success if we persist and persevere. This positive attitude, and action inspired by that attitude, is behind all discoveries of truth in physical sciences and religion.

The Sages of the Upanishads belong to this category. Day after day, year after year, they persisted in their search for the truth of the human

soul, for the truth of God. They faced all humanly impossible obstacles, disciplined their senses, calmed their minds, concentrated the energies of both and made penetration into the inner world, and then discovered their joy, and to the joy and welfare of the rest of humanity, the universal spiritual truths which have reached us through Vedanta and Buddhism.

To continue Sri Ramakrishna's parable: After long watching, we see the float trembling; this is the visible part, from which we get the intimation about the invisible happenings below, that surely a fish is nibbling at the bait below. But soon it goes away, leaving us waiting and watching, but more strengthened in our initial *sraddha* (faith). And the next time, we watch the float tremble; we feel a pull at the rod and conclude that a large fish has swallowed the bait. And we pull up the line and hook, and there comes the fish into our hands! In spiritual life, the bait that we fix to the hook of our mind is love of God and purity of character and sincerity in our search for God, which alone can attract God.

Religion is a profound discipline of the human mind in search of the immortal and the divine, through the penetration of the outer sensory crust of reality. We achieve this, in its early stages, through the discipline of physical sciences and through the ego-expanding ethics of socio-political discipline, making for progress in man's psycho-social evolution with its character – fruits of love, dedication, and service. But the highest truth, which lies at the deepest level, is obtained only by the experimental dimension of religion, in the higher field of the science of spirituality. And, being the birthright of all, this truth is realized within man himself as the infinite eternal Atman, which is realized also outside as the infinite Brahman, the one self in all nature and man.

The subjects of science and religion are getting more and more important to man in the modern age. They are two great disciplines which, in the light of Indian wisdom, reveal that, when relied on separately, they can be counter-productive in the long run, but, when combined harmoniously, can bring about an all-round expression of human genius and total fulfillment. But, unfortunately, for the last few centuries, the relationship between the two in the Western context, and everywhere else also due to the worldwide impact of Western culture, has not been happy.

In the twentieth century, however, a new approach became evident, and the representative thinkers among scientists and religious people are beginning to discern a close inter-relation between them. They are slowly veering to the point of view that science and religion can heartily embrace each other, without detriment to the cause for which each stands, and work for the good of humanity. It is being realized more and more by both that there are elements in science that religion can adopt in order to fortify itself, and elements in religion that can deepen and strengthen science.

In his lecture on *Religion and Science*, Vivekananda says:

Experience is the only science of knowledge. In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a

small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ. They are all similarly constituted and similarly situated. Their experience is the same; and this becomes the law. ... Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world, just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science, because he reads the wrong book – the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he too reads the wrong book – the book without.⁶

Religion expounded as a verified and verifiable science has a message for all humanity. Physical science, through its technology, may build for man a first class house, and equip it with radio, television, and other gadgets; the social security measure of a modern welfare state may provide him with everything necessary for a happy fulfilled life in this world, and even, through the official Church, in the world beyond; the man himself may give his dwelling arresting names such as *Santi Kunj* (Peace Retreat), or *Suka Vilas* (Happy Home). Yet none of these can ensure, by themselves, that he will live in that house in peace or happiness. For that depends, to a large extent, on another source of strength and nourishment, another type of knowledge and discipline – the knowledge and discipline proceeding from the science and technique of religion. If man can have the help of positive sciences to create a healthy external environment, and with the help of science of spirituality to create a healthy internal environment, he can hope to achieve total life-fulfillment, not otherwise.

But, today, this is not the picture that modern civilization presents. Man in this technological civilization is feeling inwardly impoverished and empty in an environment of wealth, power, and pleasure; he is full of tension and sorrow, doubt and uncertainty, all the time. Juvenile delinquency, drunkenness, suicide and an increasing variety of other maladies and individual and social distortions, are ever on the increase. Why? Because man is not inwardly satisfied; he is smitten with *ennui* and boredom arising from the limitations of his sense-bound *Weltanschauung*.

Viewing faith from the point of view of scientific reason, Sir Arthur Eddington says, “In the age of reason, faith yet remains supreme for reason is one of the articles of faith.”⁷

Albert Einstein in his essay on “Science and Religion” says, “Now, even though the realms of religion and science in themselves are clearly marked off from each other, nevertheless, there exist between the two strong reciprocal relationships and dependencies. Though religion may be that which determines the goal, it has, nevertheless, learned from science, in the broadest sense, what means will contribute to the attainment of the goals it has set up. But science can only be created by those who are

thoroughly imbued with the aspiration towards truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs the faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image. Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.⁸

The Indian thinkers also say that *jnana* needs *sraddha*; and *sraddha* needs *jnana*. It is thus that knowledge matures into wisdom. Otherwise, that *jnana* will be dry intellectual knowledge, and that *sraddha* will be blind beliefs or cheap sentimentalism. Our great spiritual teachers warn us against that kind of one-sidedness. *Sraddha* in religion is the basic reverential attitude that the unknown, the unseen, the imperishable exists, behind the known, the seen, the perishable. Reality as revealed by the five senses is so little; yet it is fascinating to the human mind. How much more fascinating and rewarding must be the search and discovery of reality that lies beyond the sensory level! All techniques of spiritual research and realization proceed on the strength of this basic *sraddha*, or faith, with its ingredient of initial creative doubt, as well. Such a research will be fruitless; it is obvious, if undertaken with an initial cynical attitude and its uncreative and sterile kind of doubt.

Somebody, I think it was Oscar Wilde, has defined a cynic in one sentence, 'A cynic is one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.' He has all information about things; but he does not have the insight into the value of anything. Value system lies at a deeper level. To sense it, there is need for this positive attitude indicated by the word *sraddha*. A scientist is not a cynic, he has a positive attitude. He may be cynic in other fields of life, but not in his own field of research. The cynical attitude devalues all things of value, and drains life of all worth and meaning. To it, one's own mother is only the person that gave birth to this body, that as all. The cynical mind has drained away all feeling and emotion is just logical, and assesses men and things with that cold logic. Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in his famous book *Gitarahasya*, gives the following definition of one's mother from the point of view of such a cynical logical mind: "*Garbha-dharana-prasavadi stritva-samanya-vacchedaka-vacchinna-vyakti-visesah*" – "a particular individual, associated with pregnancy and delivery of children, etc., belonging to the general class of individuals limited by the characteristic of femininity." The mother so defined cannot be recognized by anyone as his or her mother! For, all the values associated with motherliness have been drained away from it. But such is the view of things, persons, and life itself held by a cynical mind. It knows not the mother; but it knows that it costs this much or that much to maintain that unproductive individual! It can never understand the value system pervading and filling particular individuals and things. This type of cold, logical, utilitarian attitude infects millions of people today, due to the dissociation of values, which is the gift of faith, from facts, which is the gift

of intellect or reason. That is what makes reason and intellect sterile, and unfit to be the sole guide of man to truth and life fulfillment.

The spirit behind both pure science and religion, therefore, is the same, namely, persistent search for truth; the difference is only in the field of the search. The physical scientists seek for truth in the physical universe, in the world revealed by the five senses, and by the instruments helpful to the senses. The seeker of the science of religion seeks for it in the field of experience that lies beyond that world revealed by the five senses, beyond 'where the organ of speech (and other senses), and the mind (dependent on mere sense data), do not reach.' Soul and God belong to that category.

Some Indian thinkers feel that for the production of physical food and clothing and shelter, man has to resort to the physical sciences. But, for the production of love and kindness, compassion and dedication, peace and fulfillment, man has to resort to the science of the inner life, which is religion.

In the words of Professor Capra:

The modern physicist experiences the world through an extreme specialization of the rational mind; the mystic through an extreme specialization of the intuitive mind. The two approaches are entirely different and involve far more than a certain view of the physical world. However, they are complementary, as we have learned to say in physics. Neither is comprehended in the other, nor can either of them be reduced to the other, but both of them are necessary, supplementing one another for a fuller understanding of the world. To paraphrase an old Chinese saying, mystics understand the roots of the Tao but not its branches; scientists understand its branches but not its roots. Science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science; but man needs both.⁹

When we go deeper into the nature and scope of physical science, its limitations become apparent. To illustrate, two branches of science, namely, physics, including astronomy, and biology, and behaviouristic psychology have given us a vast body of knowledge regarding the nature of the universe and man. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, physics was warped in its final judgments. It saw materialism and mechanism reigning supreme in the universe. There was then a cock-sureness in its pronouncements; but, in the twentieth century, an element of humility is discernible in the attitude of the great physicists of the age. In the nineteenth century, knowledge of the physical world was not deep enough, and scientists looked only at the surface of things. But, along with the discovery of such facts as radio-activity and insight into the nucleus of the atom, the realization has come that there is a severe limitation placed on our knowledge regarding the truth of the external world. Science acknowledges

today that it deals only with the appearances of things and not with the reality behind these experiences. Some of the greatest modern physicists tell us that what science has revealed of the world around us is only the outer aspect of things. Behind this observable universe, there is an unobservable universe, as well as the observer himself. This is a confession of the limitations of sciences and its methods. Science is dealing with phenomena revealed by the senses or by apparatuses helpful to the senses. But these senses reveal so little, and what they reveal only tells us that there are realities behind the sense-world, determining and controlling it.

The universe was a mystery to man in the primitive age; it has not ceased to be so for the civilized man even in this century. We find scientists like the late Sir James Jeans writing books on the scientific view of the universe with such titles as the *Mysterious Universe*. If, after all these marvelous scientific discoveries and inventions, the scientist still treats nature as profoundly mysterious, if, in spite of all the vast knowledge that he has gained, the scientist feels that he has only scratched the surface of nature, that he is yet far away from the heart of the problem of the universe, we have to pause and ask the question as framed by Sankaracharya: *tatah kim, tatah kim* – what else, what else? What next? Sir James Jean says:

Physical science set out to study a world of matter and radiation, and finds that it cannot describe or picture the nature of either even to itself. Photons, electrons and protons have become as meaningless to the physicist as x, y, z are to a child on its first day of learning algebra. The most we hope for at the moment is to discover ways of manipulating x, y, z without knowing what they are, with the result that the advance of knowledge is at present reduced to what Einstein has described as extracting one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible.¹⁰

Twentieth century physics is turning its face away from thorough-going materialism, twentieth century biology is not behind it in this orientation. The whole of modern scientific thought is in the throes of a silent spiritual revolution with the emergence, on the horizon of scientific thought, of the challenge of mind and consciousness and the consequent need to develop, what Jeans terms, a new background of science in the light of what he says further: The old philosophy ceased to work at the end of the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century physicist is hammering out a new philosophy for himself. Its essence is that he no longer sees nature as something entirely distinct from himself. Sometimes it is what he himself creates or selects or abstracts; sometimes it is what he destroys. Thus the history of physical science in the twentieth century is one of progressive emancipation from the purely human angle of vision.’

Sir Arthur Eddington in his lectures on the Nature of the Physical World said:

In the world of physics, we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow of table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. ... The frank realization that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances.

Looking at modern man and the problems that he experiences, it is clear that science has not been able to give man true happiness. He may have a lot of material wealth, but amidst material wealth man feels hollow, which clearly shows that he is unhappy. This hollow feeling makes him reflect and in this reflective mood the realization dawns wherein it becomes clear that the views of some people like St. Augustine have deep truth. In one of his famous statements Augustine says: "Our hearts were created for you, O Lord, and they are restless until they find their rest in you."

Yes, man is restless today. In spite of progress and growth in science, it can't satisfy man's thirst for truth. At this juncture I am reminded of Sri Aurobindo's views about science. In his opinion science and technology cannot perfect our life. They can at best organize and stabilize our environment. Sri Aurobindo in his book, *The Life Divine*, clearly mentions that, "Our science itself is a construction, a mass of formulas and devices but ignorant of the foundations of our being and of world being. It cannot perfect our nature and therefore cannot perfect our life."¹¹

It has its own limitations. Like most other mental and external knowledge, it gives us only the truth of process and the real truth. In the words of Aurobindo one might ask whether science itself has arrived any ultimate truth. On the contrary ultimate truth even on physical plane seems to recede as science advances.

It is true that science cannot satisfy man's thirst for truth. He finds that the answer is provided in religion, and hence he cannot afford to live a life without religion.

NOTES

1 The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th Edition, Vol. 10, p. 552.

2 J. Arthur Thomson, *Introduction to Science*, Home University Library edition, 1934, p. 205.

3 Ibid. p. 208.

4 The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition, Vol. 9, p. 1016.

5 Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, ninth edition, Vol. II, p. 432.

6 *Complete Works*, sixth edition, Vol. VI, p.81.

7 Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 222.

8 Albert Einstein, *Out of My Later Years*, p. 26.

9 Fritjof Capra, *The Tao Physics*, p. 306.

10 Sir James Jeans, *The New Background of Science*, p. 68.

11 Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, 1965, p. 917.

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THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

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A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

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