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THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION

HELD AT

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St. Louis, Missouri

*(Under the patronage of His Excellency, Most Reverend
Joseph E. Ritter, Archbishop of St. Louis, and the
Catholic Universities, Senior Colleges, and Seminaries of
the St. Louis area)*

December 29 and 30, 1947

CHARLES A. HART, Editor
Secretary of the Association

The Absolute and The Relative

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Natural Law (Presidential Address)	1
Joquin F. Garcia, St. John's University, Brooklyn, New York	
A New Opportunity for Catholic Philosophy (Annual Association Address).	18
Paul C. Reinert, St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri	
A General Survey of the Problem of the Absolute and Relative_____.	29
Stewart E. Dollard, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois	
The Absolute and the Relative in the Metaphysical Order.	40
Charles Denecke, Woodstock College, Woodstock, Maryland	
Absolute and Relative in the Moral Order.	53
Francis X. Meehan, St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Massachusetts	
The Absolute and the Relative as a Problem in Modern Philosophy ..	80
James Collins, St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri	
Round Table Discussions:	
Logic and Methodology:	
Problem (a): An Evaluation of Symbolic Logic	95
Leader: R. A. Kocourek, College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota	
Problem (b): " Essential Relevance " in Whitehead	104
Leader: T. J. O'Mahony, Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts	
Psychology:	
Problem (a): Sensus Communis and the Visual Perception of Distance , ...	113
Leader: Raymond J. McCall, St. John's University, Brooklyn, New York	
Problem (b): For a Thomistic Epistemology.	122
Christian Bonnett, Regis College, Denver, Colorado	
Ethics and Philosophy of Society:	
Problem (a): Relativism and Right	131
Leader: Paul Kennedy, West Baden College, West Baden % Springs, Indiana	
Problem (b): The Prudential Judgment	141
Leader: Marianne Miller Childress, St. Louis University	
Problem (c): Practical Knowledge and Relativity.	151
Leader: Bernard I. Mullahy, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana	

TABLE OF CONTENTS—*Continued*

PAGE

Metaphysics:

Problem (a): Primordial Particles and Hylomorphism 166

Leader: Daniel C. O'Grady, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana

Problem (b): Biological Research and Catholic Philosophy 172

Leader: William T. Powers, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois

Philosophy of Law and Government:

Problem (a): Hans Kelsen and the Problem of Relativism in the Law 176

Leader: R. W. Mulligan, West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana

Problem (b): The Tradition of Realism in the *Philosophic, Perennis* 190

Leader: John F. Callahan, Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.

History of Philosophy:

Problem (a): The Historical Relativism of Ortega y Gasset .. 193

Leader: Mother Marie Louise Martinez

Problem (b): The Past and Being in Jean Paul Sartre. 212

Leader: Lawrence E. Lynch, St. Michael's College, Toronto, Canada

Minutes of the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting 221

Report of the Secretary. 224

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council 226

Report of the Committee on Resolutions. 228

Report of the Treasurer. 230

List of Members of the Association 231

THE NATURAL LAW

(Presidential Address)

THE topic selected for this address is the absolute in the moral field known as the natural law. Much of the technical is being omitted from this address and may be read in the Proceedings by those who may be interested. A few problems for philosophers posed by this subject have been added.

Today we are probably in one of the worse crises of all time. That is the opinion expressed in the statement on secularism issued by the Catholic Bishops of the United States on November fifteenth of this year in which they stated, " Revolutionary forces have brought on what is perhaps the greatest crisis in all history."

When men sit about in international conference today, we find Buddhists, and Mohammedans, and Shintoists, and Confucianists, and atheists, and deists, and Jews, and Christians. For the solution of a problem no appeal can be made to any revelation which will be acceptable to all. Is there any solution? Has philosophy any answer? I think definitely " Yes ". The answer is the natural law, a law known by reason. All have the same reasoning faculty for this law as they have it for physics, chemistry and biology. All men have the same nature, from which this law can be gained. Hence, whether men accept the law or reject it, whether they know it or are ignorant of it—it " is " there, there to be found and known by all.

For all except the atheists there is a God to impose this law. The presence of atheists at a conference table greatly complicates matters. While logically for atheists there can be no natural law as we understand it, there have been some who illogically have maintained that if there were no God, there would still be a natural law, as the Dutch philosopher, Grotius, is said by some to have maintained.

As the bishops of the United States put it in their November fifteenth statement, " In the international community there can be only one real bond of sane common action—the natural law which calls to God, its author, and desires from Him its sanction." They go on to explain our present predicament by indicating the

flouting of this law, stating, " In the international community that law has been flouted more openly, more widely, and more disastrously in our day than ever before in the Christian centuries." As Professor Taylor of the University of Michigan wrote in his book " The Law of Nature " some years ago, " A somewhat noteworthy feature of recent social philosophy is the apparently quite general discarding of the time-honored doctrine of natural right or natural law. And really when one reminds himself that for nearly twenty-two centuries this doctrine had practically universal acceptance, its present forlorn state is certainly somewhat noteworthy " (Taylor—" The Law of Nature," Page 1).

DEFINITION

The natural law may be defined as the law of God made known by reason from an analysis of human nature. It is a law by which man is directed to his natural end.

Human nature is the book which is studied by reason, the manuscript in which is written the precepts of the natural law fundamentally. These precepts are ferreted out of or picked up by human reason which sees in the human nature with which God endowed men, God's plan for men. These precepts, fundamentally imbedded in human nature, become formal precepts of the natural law by being known by human reason. From an analysis of human nature, for instance, reason dictates or commands—" Don't steal ", " Don't blaspheme ", " Honor your parents ", " Live according to your nature ".

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

The natural law according to St. Thomas Aquinas is " nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law " (Iallae, Q. 91, A. 2). The eternal law is " nothing else than the plan (ratio) of divine wisdom as directing *all* actions and movements, as moving all things to their due ends " (1a, Hae, Q. 93, A. 1). God was free to create or not create, but once He decided to create things, His divine wisdom demanded that He have a purpose or end for them and that He " direct " them to that purpose or end. The plan He had for their direction, the law in Himself directing all created things to their ends is called the eternal law.

Some have become confused as to the essence of the natural law because of certain of St. Thomas's expressions on this subject. In some places St. Thomas has spoken of man's nature or natural inclination as the natural law; in other places—of the light of reason as the natural law; and thirdly, at times of the mandate itself of human reason as the natural law. As the Rev. Walter Farrell, O.P., points out in his book on the natural law, St. Thomas considers these as three factors in the natural law doctrine. It is by the light of reason, the second, analyzing man's natural inclinations, the first, that the mandates of the natural reason, the third, are known. Father Farrell thinks that the natural law consists essentially in the third, the precepts of the practical reason.

ETERNAL LAW

St. Thomas explained the relation of the eternal law to creatures in these words: "As with every artificer there pre-exists the plan of things that are set up by art, so in every governor there must pre-exist a plan of the order of the things that are to be *done* by those who are subject to his government. And as the plan of things to be done by art is called a pattern or exemplar, so the plan of him who governs subjects, has the character of a law. Now God by His wisdom is the Creator of all things and stands to them as the artificer to the products of his art. He is also the governor of all the acts and movements that are found in any creature. And as the plan of the divine wisdom has the character of an exemplar, pattern or idea, in as much as by it all things are created, so the plan of the divine wisdom moving all things to their due end, has the character of a law. And thus the eternal law is nothing else than the plan of the divine wisdom, as the director of all acts and movements " (1a, Hae, Q. 93, A. 1).

Man is directed by the eternal law in two ways. In regard to physical, vegetative and animal laws, man is subject to the eternal law as non-rational creatures are subject to it. However in so far as the eternal law binds him as a man, as a rational free creature, directing him to his end, the eternal law is called the natural law. Hence the natural law is the participation of the eternal law in rational creatures.

By the imprint of the eternal law on created things, they obtain their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. By the imprint of the eternal law lions have their natural inclinations,

perform lion acts and so attain the end or purpose God had in placing lions in this world. By the imprint of the eternal law plants have the inclination to produce leaves and fruit and flowers and seed, all different according to the different inclinations and acts which constitute the different species. " Now the rational creature has a share of the eternal reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its *proper* act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law" (1a, IIae, Q. 91, A. 2).

The irrational creatures participate in the eternal law by obeying it. Men participate in it by knowing it, by forming in their minds a dictate of reason commanding them to perform certain acts such as honoring parents, forbidding others, such as blaspheming God. Human reason has both the " native capacity " to express such dictates, a capacity lacking in animals, and the " impulse " to form them, from the very constitution God gave to human reason. Hence we find the precepts of the natural law, at least the fundamental ones, in all men,—in all normal human beings.

It will be noticed that the way God directs non-rational creatures to their respective ends is not by an external impulse or push in the manner a football is kicked by the player or the arrow is driven by the archer, but by an inward impulse, by natural inclinations to an end to which these natural impulses lead. These inclinations are essentially the same for those of the same species. Now God by the eternal law directs rational creatures by the same means, by inward impulses or natural inclinations, and these natural inclinations or impulses lead man to his natural or God-intended end.

THE FOUNDATION—HUMAN NATURE

It is important when we speak of the natural law as a law of reason or a dictate of reason, that we remember that reason does not manufacture its propositions or dictates. It manifests what it learns from nature, from human nature in this case. The precepts of the natural law are in nature. They are fundamentally objective. As St. Thomas put it, " Human reason is not a measure of things, but vice versa" (1a, IIae, Q. 91, A. 3), that is, reason does not determine or measure or limit things, but things determine and measure and limit human reason. " Human reason

is not, of itself, the rule of things; but the *principles impressed on it by nature* are general rules and measures of all things relating to human conduct" (Ia, IIae, Q. 91, A. 4). "Principles imparted by nature . . . are the precepts of the natural law" (Ia, IIae, Q. 91, A. 4).

By human nature as the foundation of the natural law is meant human nature taken "completely", taken "adequately", taken "as a whole". Man's relations to God, to his fellow-men as individuals and to various societies, such as the family, civil society and the state, must be considered.

In human nature itself there is a certain order of higher and lower, a certain hierarchy among man's faculties and inclinations. Man has the duty to keep the higher faculties and inclinations higher and the lower, lower—to prefer the higher to the lower—to maintain the order of faculties and inclinations established in man by the Author of nature. The spiritual faculties of intellect and will, with their corresponding inclinations, wider in scope, dealing with the universal, are higher than sense faculties dealing with the individual. A conflict occurs when the same object will satisfy one appetite or inclination of human nature and impede or prevent the satisfaction of another. "The obvious rule to be followed is that the wider appetite (or inclination), or the appetite corresponding to the farther off end, should take precedence, and the 'good' should be determined by reference to it. For the nearer and narrower end is always conceived as mere means to the wider and more remote, as is evident from the case of 'food' which pleases the palate and injures our life. Such an object could not be regarded as good, for it conflicts with the wider and more fundamental appetite, that, namely, for our life. In the same way many acts, though they satisfy particular appetites, are opposed to our appetite for the final end" (Cronin, *Ethics*, p. 88, Vol. I).

Since, as St. Thomas has put it, the desire or appetite for the last end of man, that object which will render man perfectly happy, is the source of the activity of all the other appetites: "Every act of appetite in respect of the means is derived from the natural appetite in respect to the last end" (Ia, IIae, Q. 91, A. 2), the wider or farther off the end, the nearer it is to the final end of man, the greater is its importance and preferability.

THREE CLASSES OF PRECEPTS

The natural law may be said to comprise three classes of precepts; first, some general or primary principles which are self-evident; then, secondary principles or conclusions derived from the primary by easy reasoning. These are known to practically all, even to the uneducated, but can be missed by a few, particularly in their application; thirdly, tertiary principles which are far removed from the primary principles and which are difficult to learn. These are objectively certain also but are not known to ordinary people but to those who are better trained in ethical matters, to the "wise", as St. Thomas put it.

Examples of these general or primary principles are "Act according to reason", "Maintain order", "Follow nature", "Attain your end", "Good is to be done and evil is to be avoided", "Follow the natural order." These are all substantially the same, the same general principle from different points of view. They are evident to all normal human beings.

All the other precepts of the natural law flow from or are conclusions of these first principles, just as all the theorems of plane geometry are derived from the initial axioms. All the preceding, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, can be reduced to one first principle from which all other precepts of the natural law are conclusions. This first principle is "Good is to be done and evil to be avoided" (1a, 1ae, Q. 94, A. 2). Some of these goods to be done are necessary for the order of virtue, for man's attaining his end, and so are commanded, are precepts. Other goods are but means of perfecting the moral order and so are but counsels.

As St. Thomas Aquinas put it, "Now a certain order is to be found in those things that are apprehended universally. For that which, before aught else, falls under apprehension, is *being*, the notion of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Wherefore the first indemonstrable principle is that *the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time*, which is based on the notion of *being* and *not-being*: and on this principle all others are based. Now as *being* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension simply, so *good* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action: since every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good. Consequently the first in the practical reason is one founded on the notion of good, viz., that *good is that which all things seek*

after. Hence this is the first precept of law, that *good is to be done and ensued, and evil is to be avoided.* All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this: so that whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man's good (or evil) belongs to . . . the natural law as something to be done or avoided " (1a, IIae, Q. 94, A. 2).

To the secondary precepts belong nine of the Ten Commandments, all except the third, when they are known by reason.

The tertiary precepts are difficult of comprehension and are understood only by those well-informed, " as it is not possible for all to consider the particular conclusions of science " (1a, IIae, Q. 100, A. 2).

There is an added reason why some men do not comprehend the tertiary and at times the secondary precepts and that is " the interposition of emotions in the consideration of the conclusions ". Hence among the reasons listed by St. Thomas for missing the truth in these precepts are " concupiscence or some other passion ", " evil persuasions ", " vicious customs " and " corrupt habits " (1a, IIae, Q. 94, A. 6). Men are at times prejudiced, don't want certain answers a priori since such answers mean suffering, mean a change in conduct. Men are inclined to justify the conduct which is pleasing and attractive to them.

It might be added that according to St. Thomas all the precepts of the natural law are in Holy Scripture; furthermore, that all the moral precepts of the Old Law are natural law precepts and so binding under the New Law (1a, IIae, Q. 100, A. 2).

IMMUTABILITY

The natural law has the property of universality and immutability. There is considerable confusion concerning the latter. Since the eternal law is a plan of divine reason, which in turn has its ideas from the divine essence, in this matter indicating the ways the divine essence is imitable, the eternal law possesses the immutability of the divine essence. That God must direct creatures to their end—indicated in the first two precepts of the Decalogue—and that He must require that creatures practice justice in their relations—manifested in the last seven precepts of the Decalogue—are immutable precepts of the eternal law. The natural law participates in the immutability of the eternal law. (See Farrell—The Natural Moral Law.)

Immutability pervades all the mandates of the natural law considered objectively. Under the same circumstances the law is ever the same, and the same objectively for all men, even though learned men may differ subjectively, in their knowledge of it, due to the difficulty of the problems and the weakness of human reason; or malicious men may come to erroneous conclusions due to vicious habits or concupiscence or something similar.

It is important that realization be had of the part played by added circumstances. One set of circumstances may mean that a general mandate still holds and another set of circumstances may indicate that the opposite is now commanded. The case given rather frequently by St. Thomas is the precept that a deposit, or something held in trust, must be returned to its owner. If to this principle we add ordinary circumstances, it will still hold. If, however, the deposit should be a gun and the owner requests the gun for the purpose of suicide or murder, the precept would not hold. The opposite of the original principle would prevail. Under these circumstances the deposit should not be returned. Every one understands that the circumstances must be added before a decision or precept in the concrete can be indicated. In this sense the precepts such as "A deposit is to be returned to its owner" may be considered mutable. In this sense, only the most fundamental principles of the natural law are absolutely immutable. The other precepts after the addition of circumstances will bind in a majority of cases but will not hold in some.

RIGHTS

Man's strongest rights, his inalienable rights, flow from the natural law. Since the Author of nature obliges that men live in accordance with their nature and so attain their natural end, men have a God-given right to fill that obligation and reach their end—and so a God-given right to the means.

PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS

It is very difficult to indicate those who accept and those who reject the natural law. One may say that in some ways everybody practically accepts it, at least implicitly. Nevertheless it has not been fashionable in America in recent years to talk about the natural law.

Many people verbally reject the natural law because they do not understand the true law. Oftentimes they use the natural law, utilize a natural law argument, in seemingly attacking and rejecting the natural law. For some the natural law means the law of a state of nature, as proposed by some Sophists, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, a law which was prior to positive or civil law. Rejecting this state of nature, they reject what they consider the natural law.

Some refuse to accept the natural law because they know how many revolutionists in the past have appealed to this law. Hence they consider it revolutionary and an enemy of order. This appeal is indirectly an argument in its favor. It is considered the norm, the ideal. The appeal in legal disputes and in labor disputes on both sides is often to justice. Now if in some of the preceding controversies some who appeal to justice are actually unjust, one must still conclude that they appealed to the correct norm. The natural law and its precept of justice are actually the standard for revolutionists and conservatives alike and for all others of various types of political thought.

Some have rejected the natural law in jurisprudence because they thought that if a law legally passed could be pronounced unjust by individuals and so not be obeyed, the natural law system would lead to chaos and anarchy. Again they misunderstand the true teaching. Apart from the fact that in doubt, "*Standum est pro superiore*", as St. Thomas put it, if peace and security and order would demand the external observance of a law, in itself unjust (unless it would concern intrinsic evil), the citizens would be obliged to obey it, not because of the law itself but because of the general obligation to maintain peace and security and order. The greater good of these big factors of the common good would prevail over the private good of the individual citizens and in this set of circumstances the citizens would be obliged to sustain the loss.

Among the great opponents of our Scholastic natural law, one must list William of Occam and his followers who averred that the natural law depended on the absolute will of God and that God could have commanded precepts diametrically opposed to the present ones. This is tantamount to rejecting the present natural law and reducing it to positive law. Idealists who have rejected objective nature, Kantians who maintain that we do not know nature as it is, Nominalists who deny a universal nature

and David Hume and his followers, who reject the substantiality of both spirit and matter, must be listed as leading opponents. To these in recent years must be added utilitarians and positivists, with their denial of metaphysics.

Since the name natural law is no longer fashionable with many, some accept and use the law and its contents under other names. They speak of "fairness", "the reasonable", "justice" and "equity". In the United States some have employed natural law concepts under the terms "due process of law" and "equality before the law".

Though pronounced dead many times, the natural law to-day possesses tremendous vitality and is very far from cadaverous. As Etienne Gilson once said, "The natural law always buries its undertakers." Powerful appeals will continue to be made to it whenever men grow exasperated at the chaotic or groan under the lash of the unjust.

UNITED STATES

The United States has been one of the staunchest supporters of the natural law throughout its history—especially defending the doctrine of natural rights, rights which for many of the Founding Fathers of our republic proceeded from natural law. In the Declaration of Independence we read that "all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." Concerning the rights of peoples, we read in the same Declaration of the "equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them." One of the reasons why we fought the Revolution was this natural law principle that no people should be used as a "means" for another people. All are entitled by the laws of nature to "equal station."

All through our history American judges, state and federal, in the lower courts and in the higher, including the Supreme Court, have used the natural law in the forming of their decisions. In recent years, however, American political scientists have largely discarded natural law concepts. In his book, written in 1931, "The Right of the State to Be", Professor Taylor states "It has been forty years since an American political scientist has defended the use of this (natural law) concept in the realm of political theory." According to this testimony not one defended it from **1891** to **1931**. A change has very probably occurred in

some of these men since World War II and no doubt the United States is participating in the revival of natural law in recent years.

WHAT OBSERVANCE WOULD ACCOMPLISH

While the natural law could never beget a perfect world, since this law lacks the perfection of Christianity, with its spirit of love, the observance of the natural law still could renovate the world and largely solve the problems facing mankind to-day.

The observance of the natural law in the world would have individuals leading reasonable lives, virtuous lives in the sense of rational lives.

In marriage we would have unity and indissolubility, no polygamy, no divorce, no artificial birth restrictions, no slaying of unborn innocents, obedient children and dutiful parents.

Where the natural law has tremendous consequences is in political society. The natural law demands that men organize politically and live in a state. The latter is necessary if men are to live as men and perfect their personalities as they should. Since the state is demanded by nature, it has God, the author of nature, as its cause. It has God too as the author of the authority of its rulers, and in some way of its true laws.

Some of these civil laws are merely conclusions from natural law principles and so are still part of the natural law. Others are what St. Thomas calls determinations or specifications of the natural law and are the determining of precepts left undetermined by the natural law. For instance the natural law demands the protection of human life by the state. When a city establishes green and red traffic lights and demands that the mandate be respected, that ordinance is partly of the natural law and partly positive law. The colors could have been reversed. Other colors could have been used. Yet such an ordinance seems to say to the citizen when green appears, "Go now and protect human life"—and when red is there "Stop now and protect human life". So in the positive law there is a natural law element.

The idea of law for many moderns is a positivistic concept that a law is an enactment which is formally instituted by a political authority able to have that mandate obeyed. It is built merely on force. Many of these moderns maintain that lawmakers should be guided by ethics or morals in the making of the law, but moral or immoral, just or unjust, it still is a law. Hence

men could be bound by the state to perform actions already forbidden to them by God and moral law. It makes for chaos. It returns us to the old pagan maxim, "Whatever pleases the prince has the force of law".

It was the natural law, a law of God binding the King, which in the Middle Ages placed a limit on the kingly power and brought in what was known as the "freedom from the arbitrary" and the "reign of law".

It is true to-day that if men reject the natural law as a norm for political authority, there is no limit to sovereignty. Totalitarianism is the logical consequence. Those enactments in recent years by which small nations have been and are being blotted out of existence, and by which millions of innocents have been and are being ruthlessly slaughtered, have all fitted the modern positivistic requirements of law. They were and are true laws. They had been formally decreed by those in authority and the latter had force enough to have them obeyed. It was God's law of nature which labelled them monstrosities, barbarisms, for which the perpetrators will have to answer. Hence it is acceptance of the natural law—or totalitarianism.

It is important to understand that the allegation that acceptance of the natural law impedes political progress is definitely untrue. First of all progress can be made by a better use of our reason on what we already know of human nature. We can come to more reasonable or more logical conclusions. Secondly, progress can be made by our acquiring a better knowledge of human nature itself in all its implications. This latter knowledge is often built on experimentation, on the use of the pragmatic and even on trial and error. Hence in the making of positive laws which seek to specify or determine the virtue of justice, there is great room for the empirical.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In the international sphere it is the natural law which confers on each state its rights and duties, which must guide international conferences in the establishing of their treaties, and which alone can place on those who have signed treaties the obligation to abide by them.

A book entitled "An Essay on the Natural Law", written in 1846 by Father Taparelli d'Azeglio, S.J., has had considerable influence on international thinking since that time. Father Tapa-

relli, developing Vittoria and Suarez, maintained, first, that there is and must be a natural society of nations and, secondly, that nature demands the construction of a world-wide organization of all nations, an "ethnarchy", as he called it, the end of which is the obtaining of the international common good. "It is nature itself . . . which calls all peoples to form among themselves one universal association and at the same time makes it their duty to do so" (Book VI, Chap. III, Art. I, 1297—Cath. Tradition of Nations, p. 269). These ideas are widely accepted to-day.

REVIVAL OF NATURAL LAW

In recent years there has taken place a revival of natural law thinking. Shocked by World Wars I and II, many have sought something to render human life sacred and to limit the power of modern governments. They have located the foundation of the preceding in natural law concepts—under such expressions as the "laws of humanity", "natural rights", the "fundamental dignity of every human being". These all lack a universal foundation if there is no natural law.

Under the chapter heading "present Day Affirmations of the Natural Law", LeBuffe and Hayes, the authors of a recent book, "The American Philosophy of Law", indicate the revival of natural law thinking by giving natural law quotations from the constitutions of Portugal (1933), Ireland (1937), The Philippines (1945), Spain (1945), Japan (1946), France (1946), Dutch-Indonesia (1946), Brazil (1946) and China (1946); and from the Pattern of Peace declaration (1943), the Declaration by the United Nations at Washington (1942), the Draft Declaration of the Pan-American Union (1946), the bills of rights of various international groups, the Potsdam Declaration (1945), the Berlin-Potsdam Conference statement (1945) and the Charter of the United Nations (1945).

PROBLEMS POSED BY CONSIDERATION OF NATURAL LAW STUDY OF THEOLOGY

It is important for us, I think, to understand how much is owed to revelation as a guide for the establishment of the Scholastic natural law. St. Paul had said (Romans II, 14), "When the Gentiles, who have not the law (of Moses) do by nature those things that are of the law; they having not the law are a law to themselves."

The following Christian teachings played a big part in the knowing of the present natural law. First, the existence of God as a creator and one with a providence for men; then, from creation, the idea of human nature as a being wholly contingent. Furthermore, a correct idea of human freedom and of human personality came with Christian revelation.

The contribution of Christian revelation to our philosophical natural law doctrine brings to our minds the part which Christian revelation has played in the establishment of other parts of our Scholastic philosophy.

Etienne Gilson has written considerable on this topic in his "Spirit of Medieval Philosophy." He explains that among the propositions which a Christian believes he finds some susceptible of proof by reason. The latter propositions become for him a part of philosophy, due however to the fact that he first met those truths in Christian revelation. As Gilson puts it "When amongst his (a man's) beliefs, he find? some that are capable of becoming objects of science then he becomes a philosopher, and if it is to the Christian faith that he owes this new philosophical insight, he becomes a Christian philosopher " (p. 36).

In this book Gilson argues very forcefully that there is a Christian philosophy in this sense and that some of our important philosophical doctrines have come to us via Christian revelation. He mentions the opinion of "pure rationalists" who "maintain that religion and philosophy are so essentially different that no collaboration between the two is possible" (p. 3). He then expresses some concern about certain Scholastics, stating "We should deceive ourselves if we supposed that all neo-Scholastics are in absolute opposition to the rationalist position as just described. There are some among them who would admit the premisses of the rationalist argument and some who would even have the hardihood to accept the conclusion" (p. 4).

This matter is mentioned here because it evokes wonderment as to whether this modern trend indicated by Gilson would not have doomed our natural law and similar Scholastic teachings and whether it will not prove a definite handicap for the future development of philosophy for those who hold it, especially since Gilson maintains that Christian revelation is an aid to philosophy to-day and will continue to offer assistance to reason till the end of time.

SCHOLASTICS TO-DAY

It would seem that the Scholastic philosophers of different eras are faced with different problems. To-day nearly all the theoretical problems facing the Church and Christianity have been dropped into the laps of philosophers, as Pope Leo XIII indicated in his encyclical on Scholastic philosophy.

It is not merely that so many modern teachings are theoretically erroneous. They are unlivable. They would blight individual and family and social and political life and would turn this world into a jungle. The fact is that the consequences of these doctrines have not yet appeared. We still have time. We are still influenced in our conduct by principles, Christian principles especially, which have been by many theoretically discarded. Actions however tend to coincide with ideas.

Since revelation has been rejected by so many and only reason accepted—and the validity of even this must be established for some—many important teachings affecting human conduct must be brought back by arguments from reason. Hence—the importance of the philosophers to-day.

Pope Leo XIII brought out clearly in his encyclical on Scholastic philosophy, *Aeterni Patris*, in 1879, the role to be played by Scholastic philosophers. Conditions are probably worse to-day than when Pope Leo wrote. The Holy Father wrote: "The enemies of the Catholic name in their warfare on religion borrow their weapons for the most part from philosophy. . . . Philosophy, if rightly practised, is a means of preparing and smoothing the way, as it were, to the true faith. . . . It is the function of the philosophical sciences religiously to protect the truths of divine revelation and to resist the attacks of those who dare to assail them."

It might be noted that in the preceding quotations Pope Leo seems to assume that the Scholastic philosopher possesses a considerable knowledge of revelation and faith.

Now if Scholastic philosophers are to receive the aid, even in philosophy, which revelation affords and if those who are Catholics are to assume the role outlined for them by Pope Leo of defending the faith, it would seem to follow that a knowledge of theology is indispensable. Many Scholastic philosophers, lay and cleric, are the possessors of this knowledge. One has only to read the works of laymen like Gilson and Maritain to realize the

amount of theology with which they are acquainted. However it is to be obtained, a knowledge of theology is of tremendous value to a Scholastic philosopher.

Whether courses in theology should be conducted for graduate students of philosophy is an interesting question, and no doubt a controversial one as well. Both Catholic medieval institutes in North America teach theology to their students. The same procedure is followed by some on the continent of Europe. The perusal of a number of catalogues indicating graduate work in philosophy in the United States manifested that not one of those read conducted any classes in theology. One can foresee difficulty for some in the executing of the recommendations of recent popes on the work allotted to philosophers.

Furthermore, if our students are to be prepared to meet the onslaught of modern fallacious philosophies and to reveal their sophistical thinking, it would seem necessary for them to be thoroughly acquainted with modern thought, with modern philosophy itself. If one is to answer a Kantian, one really should have studied Kant and his system as a whole and not piece-meal under different questions. The same is true of Hegel and Hegelians and Marx and Marxians. The history of philosophy assumes an added importance since this is the subject most frequently studied in secular universities. Years ago, as far as this writer knows, history of philosophy was a required subject in every Catholic college. An examination of the recent catalogues of many Catholic colleges in the country indicated that some Catholic institutions do not even have a course in the history of philosophy—and that not one of them, with one exception, "required" the students to take that course. One wonders whether this is a wise arrangement of the curriculum.

One might wonder whether Scholastic philosophers to-day give to the practical topics the same consideration bestowed on them by their predecessors—to the preambles of faith, for instance, to philosophic subjects connected with theology, to topics in ethics, jurisprudence and politics. We might take this subject of the natural law as an example. This is definitely a philosophical matter requiring correct answers in almost every division of philosophy before it can be held. Now, although this is a philosophical subject of tremendous importance, the only international bond, as the bishops stated it, very little in recent years has been

written on this subject by Scholastic philosophers. It seems it is the popes and the bishops who speak and write most about it, as well as our Catholic lawyers. Yet for centuries this was a favorite topic for Scholastic philosophers. A big percentage of natural law literature in recent years has been written by men who are not Scholastics and are not Catholics, much by a group of scholars from Harvard University headed by a Professor Haines.

PRODUCTION

If the principles of Scholasticism are to be made known, if certain religious doctrines are to be defended, if the errors of certain of the modern philosophies are to be revealed—effectively—it must be done largely, I think, through production, through the writing of books, articles and pamphlets. Surely this work cannot be entrusted to those who have had only undergraduate training. Those against whom the treatises are to be written are often no mean opponents. The efforts of the masters, of those who have specialized in the field, are required.

It is encouraging to note the progress made by American Scholastics in recent years in the way of production—many translations, works of St. Augustine and of St. Thomas especially, textbooks for nearly all the divisions of philosophy, some treatises on special topics and a few new magazines in philosophy, one published here in St. Louis. There is still, however, a tremendous need.

That more has not been written, in many cases can not be attributed to the individual teachers of philosophy. The great impediment has been the too heavy teaching schedule. From the number of classes assigned, it is evident from the very start of the year that there will be little or no time for research or production.

Now it would seem that deans and superiors must understand, as our present Holy Father stated last Wednesday in his pessimistic Christmas message, that to-day "The gravity of the crisis is unquestionable, its possibilities for good or evil immeasurable, its issue unpredictable." They must know that if we are not vigilant we may have no Catholic schools and no classes to fill. They must realize the role that Scholastic philosophers are fitted to play in this crisis if only the opportunity is afforded them. In times like these, it would seem that every one whose vocation

it is to teach in a Catholic college or university should feel called upon to make a contribution in literature to the solution of the problems facing mankind—and doubly so if the problems are largely in his field.

No teacher of philosophy, it would seem, should be expected by any dean or other officer to spend his life merely going back and forth to class, conducting examinations, correcting papers and figuring marks. While it is all most noble work, provision should be made for something more, that by research and production he may move up front, enter the conflict and do battle with the giants. I think our present Holy Father meant something like this for us when he stated last Wednesday in his Christmas message: "To you all, beloved sons and daughters, we say: Your hour is come. God wishes to make use of your co-operation. In the day of battle your place is in the vanguard, fighting at the front."

JOAQUIN F. GARCIA, C.M.

Department of Philosophy
St. John's University
 76 Lewis Ave.
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHY

(Annual Association Address)

I AM metaphysically certain that throughout the history of the American Catholic Philosophical Association no speaker has ever opened the annual Association address with a quotation from the *Ladies Home Journal*. The use of such an unusual source is probably the only unique contribution I will make this evening. In the April, 1947, issue of this 'Magazine Women Believe In' Gretta Palmer has an article entitled "How to Think a Thought" (page 52). She begins by telling us that recently "a frivolous and worldly visitor returned to her home-town circle with a wide-eyed report on Indianapolis. * It's the strangest city in America/ she said. 'I went to four parties and the people smoked and drank and seemed perfectly normal in other ways. But all they talked about—imagine—was sin! Is sin worse if you do it for the sake of sinning and not for the pleasure that goes with it? Is

it worse to lead others into sin than to sin yourself? In Indianapolis they get *angry* at each other about sin!' The puzzled visitor had stumbled into a circle of Indianapolis men and women whose social life had been transfigured by the Great Books discussions which have come lately to town. She was there in the week after everyone had read St. Augustine's Confessions."

And not only the class of people who have a vigorous social life in Indianapolis has been affected. Gretta Palmer goes on: "A recent visitor to the local Stewart-Warner plant (heating equipment) wandered into the personnel office during the lunch hour and saw a dozen overalled men sitting on the floor, each munching a sandwich, with his nose in a paper-covered book. 'Boning up on Robert's Rules of Order for the union meeting?' he asked pleasantly. One of the men looked up impatiently. 'No/ he said, 'We're reading Aristotle's Ethics.' 'I asked you boys a perfectly civil question,' said the visitor, as he left in a huff. But they *were* reading Aristotle's Ethics."

What is this so-called Great Books movement which is literally sweeping the country? Many of you undoubtedly are well acquainted with the details of its development. I shall, therefore, merely outline a few pertinent facts. The initial impetus to the movement in its modern form is attributed to the novelist John Erskine. As a teacher in the college at Columbia University Erskine became cognizant of the fact that the elective system, in allowing students to take such widely divergent courses, resulted in depriving them of a common core of ideas for discussion and understanding. As a partial answer to this difficulty, he persuaded Columbia in 1919 to introduce a seminar on the *Classics of the Western World* as an honors course. One of Erskine's first students was Mortimer Adler, and due to the influence of his teacher, Adler in 1927 launched fifteen adult education courses in New York City based on the discussion of the Great Books. Later, in 1930, after Adler had come to the University of Chicago, Robert Hutchins, as the new President of the University, inaugurated Great Books Seminars in the undergraduate curriculum. Adler, moreover, started one class for adults in Highland Park, Illinois. Incidentally, this same class has entered on its sixteenth year of activity. Ten years ago Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan went even farther than the University of Chicago and

established the Great Books as the unifying basis of education at the famous St. John's College.

Until about **1940**, therefore, the movement had been chiefly influential in undergraduate collegiate circles. Early in this decade, however, interest among non-university people was awakened. In 1943 a group of prominent Chicagoans asked Mr. Hutchins to set up a discussion class for themselves and their wives. At the end of the first year they voted enthusiastically to continue into a second year. Adult Great Books courses were also being offered in the evening division of the down-town College of the University of Chicago. The demands soon outnumbered the teachers available. Thereupon the Chicago Public Library decided to conduct an experiment. They selected seventy persons who were not professional teachers and put them through ten training sessions. At the end of the experiment they concluded that successful discussion leaders need not be professionally trained educators. Training institutes were requested in Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, New York, Portland, Seattle, and St. Paul. The staff of the University of Chicago was in danger of being crushed by the giant snowball it had started down the hill. At this point a group of men, some of them from the University, others who had become interested from participation in discussion groups, organized the Great Books Foundation, which is now entirely separate from the University. It is a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to provide the books at a low cost, to assist in the training of discussion leaders, and to help local communities in establishing Great Books groups.

Growth has been phenomenal. In Indianapolis, for example, there is a total of over six hundred participants; two of these groups are made up exclusively of streetcar conductors. There are twelve groups in Washington, D. C., thirty each in Cleveland and Detroit, and fifty in Chicago. In all, more than thirty thousand Americans are meeting once every two weeks to discuss and argue about the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Rousseau, and many others.

Recently I have had the opportunity of coming into rather close contact with the Great Books movement in St. Louis, and I think that by recounting briefly what happened here I can give you a rather clear notion of the functioning of the Foundation.

During the past year various people and agencies in St. Louis had written to Chicago expressing a desire for Great Books activity here. As usual, the Foundation first contacted the Public Library and offered to send representatives to a meeting organized by the Library, at which the program would be explained to St. Louisans. The Head Librarian, Mr. Charles Compton, sent notices to all educational agencies, church organizations, social centers, etc., inviting them to a meeting on October 1. Over seven hundred people came to hear Mr. Lynn Williams, President of the Foundation, explain the nature and purpose of the program. Mr. Williams, incidentally, is not an educator. He was Vice-President of Stewart-Warner Corporation, took part in a discussion group in Chicago under Hutchins, became so enthusiastic that he gave up his position to become President of the Foundation. The splendid response at this first meeting made it evident that St. Louis wanted the Great Books. So the next step was the setting up of a training institute. Since Saint Louis University had expressed its willingness to cooperate, soon after the meeting we were asked to offer our facilities for such an institute. The City Librarian informed all interested agencies that they were to choose two people whom they wished trained as their discussion leaders and send them to the University on the evening of November 24.

In a large conference room we arranged long narrow tables around the sides in the form of a large square. The forty people who came to the first institute sat around the square of tables in such wise that everyone could see all others present. These forty participants represented some twenty agencies such as the Y.M.C.A., church organizations, various libraries, and the Ethical Society of St. Louis. Also seated at the table was Mr. Milton Mayer, who was the expert sent from the Foundation to conduct the institute. St. Louis was fortunate in securing this well-known writer who has conducted more Great Books discussions than any other man in the country. I might mention here that before the first institute was finished, we were asked to sponsor another which began on December 2. A new group of some forty representatives came to this second institute. The personnel of these two groups was interestingly different. As was to be expected, the libraries and strictly educational agencies were the first to send in prospective leaders; industrial and commercial agencies

were slower in finding out what was going on. As a result, the first group represented quite noticeably different strata of society than did the second.

How is a training institute conducted? By what we might call the work-shop, demonstration method. The first evening Mr. Mayer made a few introductory remarks, then told the group to read certain indicated passages from the Declaration of Independence. Fifteen minutes later he began asking questions about the passage and soon succeeded in arousing quite a spirited discussion on the nature and origin of the inalienable rights referred to in the Declaration. The last half hour of the two-hour meeting was devoted to reviewing the discussion, pointing out why certain questions were asked, mistakes that Mr. Mayer and others had made, indicating what to do when various situations arise, etc. At present the Foundation recommends that an institute should be held on six evenings with at least one free evening between meetings to allow time for the participants to read the matter assigned for the next discussion. After three general meetings, the group was divided into smaller sections, and at the last minute two participants were chosen in each section to conduct the discussion for an hour. After this intensive training concentrated into six meetings, the prospective leaders are more or less ready to assume responsibility for inaugurating their own discussion groups.

Now to come to the important point. What is the philosophy underlying the method proposed by the Great Books Foundation? If you can spare the time to read the voluminous material in the form of blurbs, pamphlets, and articles furnished by the Foundation, you will discover certain fallacies in their explanation of the system. These apparent fallacies were recognized at once by Catholics and have been the occasion of a number of spirited controversies. One of the best of these controversies is, unfortunately, unpublished. When the Great Books invaded Milwaukee last spring, Marquette University was asked to cooperate. The University agreed to do so, but with several provisos: " First, Marquette would select its own list of great books; secondly, Marquette would select its leaders from among the faculty; thirdly, Marquette, while in agreement with the Great Books Plan so far as it was a method to get issues aired, did not go along with the notion implied and sometimes expressed by its

initiators to the effect that no questions were to be answered, that leaders were better for knowing less, that great problems were great because they were unsolvable, that truth was to be pursued but not reached. Marquette was interested in the plan as a means of raising *and* settling, when possible, the problem® of men, quite as were the authors of the great books themselves."

This forthright statement led to a series of letters between Mr. Lynn Williams, President of the Foundation, and Father Gerard Smith, Head of the Department of Philosophy at Marquette. As I say, it is unfortunate that this correspondence is unpublished since it elucidates the position of Catholic philosophy on one side and that of the Great Books Foundation on the other.

It is impossible here to discuss all the issues involved in this controversy. I shall confine myself to one very fundamental issue. In all its literature the Foundation seems to insist that the discussion leaders are *not* teachers; their role is not that of Mark Hopkins on one end of a log, but of Socrates on one end of a question. The motto for the leader is: Never Answer, Never Tell, Never Lecture, Never Sum Up—Never! ! To prevent any imposition of ideas, the Foundation insists on two leaders in each group. One is to interrupt the other if he even looks as though he might express his own opinion on the subject being discussed. The leaders are there merely to ask questions about the fundamental problems treated in the passage under consideration; to start conversation and arguments in such a way that maximum participation of the entire group will be attained.

But doesn't all this imply a basic fallacy? Why are questions not to be answered? Is it because the Foundation thinks that basic problems are basic because they are and remain unsolved; that inquiry is for the sake of inquiry, not for the sake of discovery; that nonsense spoken about the Great Books is not nonsense, provided we keep on talking about Great Books? If such is the case, then Father Gardiner in his articles in *America* and many other Catholics are right in pointing out that such a philosophy is false, false to the authors of the Great Books themselves. The method proposed is supposedly Socratic. It is not. Socrates asked questions; he also attempted to answer them.

Discussion for its own sake, then, would seem to be the ultimate goal of the Great Books program. The question that occurred to me as to many others was: But is this perhaps only a theoretic-

cal position; do the leaders of this movement actually carry out this theory in practice? This question was uppermost in my mind when Mr. Milton Mayer opened the first night of our training institute. What happened? In his preliminary remarks he emphasized the old theme: never answer questions. I recall that one of his exact phrases was: " We never try to come to the end of an argument." Then he began the actual discussion of passages from the Declaration of Independence. True, he did nothing but ask questions. But the questions he put and the manner in which they were asked indicated clearly that he knew exactly what the answers were himself, and he was very persistent until he secured the right answer from the one he was questioning. It was as clever a piece of indoctrination as I have ever witnessed. Fortunately, the ideas Mayer was injecting into the minds of the group were sound: the existence of God as the source of inalienable rights and so on. As the institute progressed, this subtle indoctrination continued.

There is further evidence that the Great Books leaders honor their theory more in the breach than in the observance. I have heard more than one of them insist that the mental confusion and disillusionment caused by searching questions thrown at people who do not know the answers is strictly a temporary condition. Groups, they say, that work together for a period of time develop a common language of their own. After repeated argumentation on a basic problem the members usually do reach an agreement. Studies on the pioneer Chicago groups show that they now would never dream of maintaining that one system of morals is as good as another. Again, they are convinced, for example, that applied Marxism must lead to tyranny.

Why, we might ask, does the Foundation propose a theory which they then proceed to violate? At least two reasons have been suggested. They are conjectures and are proposed for what they are worth. First, prime movers in the Foundation are so convinced of the fundamental value of their project that they do not want to run the risk of handicapping the movement by having it labelled as an authoritarian, dogmatic, indoctrinational form of education smacking of the Roman Catholic Church. A second possible explanation is this. Knowing that professional, thoroughly competent discussion leaders will never be available in large enough numbers, and fearing that ill-qualified leaders and

fanatics may do untold harm while conducting discussions, the Foundation tells its leaders to answer no questions, and lest they feel unimportant in their task, the Foundation emphasizes that it's bad to answer questions anyhow.

So far, then, we have discussed the historical development and present status of the Great Books movement, the assumptions which seem to underlie the methods proposed, and possible reasons for the inconsistency between the Foundation's theory and its practice. We come now to a final question. What should be our attitude towards this movement? Let me preface this consideration with the remark that we Catholics have done comparatively little about the tremendous field of adult education. I do not say this as a criticism. The Catholic educational system has already shouldered a burden far too heavy to carry in the field of formal education through our parochial and high schools, our colleges and universities. However, I think we should be actively interested in any movement which might help us to raise the intellectual level of our adult Catholic laity.

Specifically, though, what should we think of the Great Books method? It is my opinion that we should have the same attitude towards it which the Church has always taken towards institutions, practices, methods, systems which are in themselves either good or neutral and which can be utilized in the promotion of the Church's objectives. In the early Christian era the Church took even civic ceremonies and celebrations, transformed and incorporated them into the Catholic ritual. I need not tell this group what the Church has done with Aristotelian philosophy. The Church has already recommended what Saint Ignatius calls: "Going in our enemies' door and coming out our own"—the use of any legitimate means for the attainment of worthy ends, either natural or supernatural.

Therefore, I would not only recommend but urge Catholic agencies of whatever kind to take advantage of the splendid services offered by the Great Books Foundation. Our use of these services might be considered under three aspects and I would like to discuss each briefly. First, although the Great Books movement today is concerned chiefly with what we call adult education, still it makes use of a pedagogical method which has far-reaching implications in the more formal education that goes on in our colleges and universities. Many of you will remember the sample

seminar which was presented under the direction of Mortimer **Adler** at the meeting of this Association in Detroit in **1940**. The purpose was to demonstrate a method of teaching philosophy which emphasizes two points: a) the use of a great, original philosophical work in place of a text-book; and b) a dialectical process leading to the formulation of philosophical problems and solutions in place of the dogmatic exposition of achieved conclusions by lecturing. Father Belleperche of the University of Detroit pointed out at that time and has repeated many times since that the chief idea behind the early Great Books activity was precisely a protest against the exclusive use of lectures, text-books, research seminars, and other similar techniques. The discussion method is proposed, not as one to supplant all others, but as a very good educational method, and one far too frequently neglected.

One of the most forceful presentations of the case for the use of the discussion method which I have seen is an article written by Father Francis Wade of the Department of Philosophy at Marquette University. The article entitled "Great Books and Teaching" is soon to appear in an educational journal. The author makes much of the intrinsic difference between teaching philosophy and teaching revealed religion. The teacher of religion teaches by giving answers because the content of each conclusion does not depend on the content of the premises. This unique method, legitimate only in religion, Catholic teachers too easily transfer into other fields. As a result, the educational method of giving answers a place of primary importance and adding reasons as accessories becomes the accepted practice. The great fallacy in this method lies in the fact that answers in religion are good without their reasons, but in other fields answers without reasons, understood as reasons, are only sterile formulas. I submit that the discussion technique, as employed by the Great Books groups, if used judiciously and regularly throughout our college courses might go a long way toward training Catholic students to frame their own opinions and to acquire some feel for independent, defensible thinking. So much for the first aspect of our possible use of the Great Books method.

The second aspect I wish to consider is this: I think it would be highly desirable for Catholic agencies—Catholic colleges and universities, Catholic libraries, Catholic welfare centers, and

Catholic parish organizations—to sponsor Great Books discussion groups. These groups under Catholic auspices should follow as closely and exactly as possible the technique proposed by the Foundation. One difficulty that will arise, of course, concerns the reading of the prohibited books which appear on the Foundation's list. I am not sure I know the best answer to this problem. Certainly the easiest solution is the one being followed by many Catholic institutions, that of simply removing these books from the list. I can see no reason why Catholics would not become just as enthusiastic and profit from these discussions just as much or even more than other participants. To me this would seem to be a marvelous opportunity to bring into focus correct philosophical thought with all its practical, tangible applications in the religious, moral, economic, and social life of the ordinary American adult. Why not take advantage of the prestige of this movement, the present enthusiasm for this fad, if you wish to call it that, and use it as a vehicle for the discussion of philosophical principles among a wide range of people who could never be reached through books or lectures or sermons or college courses dealing with these same philosophical problems?

The third aspect of our possible use of the Great Books Program is one which I present with some hesitation lest it be misunderstood. In each of the training institutes held at Saint Louis University, I asked several of our lay and Jesuit faculty members to participate, to go through the training just as did the representatives of the various interested agencies. My purpose, in addition to showing the University's interest in the project, was to have some discussion leaders ready to aid in conducting the Great Books course which we intend to offer in the evening division during the second semester beginning in February. I was surprised, however, to discover that a number of both lay and Jesuit faculty members began to receive telephone calls from various non-Catholic groups in the city asking them if they would be willing to lead the discussion of their group either regularly or intermittently. These requests made me cognizant of another wonderful opportunity for properly trained Catholics. It is obvious that an atheistic Communist leading a discussion group could inflict fearful harm on the minds of the participants by the questions which he asked, by his subtle form of indoctrination. Isn't it equally obvious that a well-trained Catholic, either as a leader

or a member of a Foundation-sponsored group, could bring many individuals who otherwise would have no dealings with the Church into direct contact with basic philosophical principles as the only true answers to many of the world's problems? I stated that this third use of the Great Books program is proposed with some hesitation. It is clear that a Great Books group is no place for a hike-warm, ill-instructed, complaisant Catholic, nor for a Catholic of the belligerent and dogmatic type. But here is a challenge for Catholic education to produce graduates who possess both a genuine knowledge of philosophy and religion as well as highly developed skill in the discussion techniques to be employed. Here is a field of Catholic Action which is white for the harvest.

I shall conclude by violating what some consider the first and greatest commandment of the Great Books movement—I shall sum up my remarks. The Great Books are here; if the experience in Chicago and other cities is typical, then the Great Books are here to stay at least for many years. The Catholic philosopher has this dilemma to face: either to ignore or oppose the movement because it is non-Catholic in origin, because some of its assumptions seem untenable or questionable, or to participate in the legitimate efforts of this movement as a new opportunity for Catholic philosophy. I propose that we choose this second alternative, that, first of all, we make much more extensive use in our teaching of the dialectical, discussion method; secondly, that we promote to the fullest extent the Catholic sponsorship of Great Books groups; and, thirdly, that we bend every effort to train and encourage individual Catholics to lead or take part in Foundation-sponsored groups as their unique contribution to the cause of Catholic Action.

PAUL C. REINERT, S.J., *Dean*

College of Arts and Sciences
St. Louis University
St. Louis, Mo.

A GENERAL SURVEY OF THE PROBLEM OF THE ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE

A survey of a problem is not a detailed study. The surveyor's task is merely to determine points and make a preliminary investigation; his is not the burden of providing minute specifications, nor to supply qualifications, necessary though they might be.

The terms "Absolute" and "Relative" are variously applied in the various fields of philosophy and culture—metaphysics, morals, law, economics and art; and according to varying contexts they have variously been defined.¹ For this preliminary survey, however, and antecedently to a detailed discussion, it would be difficult to submit definitions sufficiently inclusive. At the risk, therefore, of being a bit vague, we can consider the two terms as labels, indicating basic and opposed philosophical assumptions and pointing out two contrasting attitudes of mind or methods of philosophizing.

The two poles of reality about which the philosophical quest has developed might well be called Being and Becoming. Opposition has been made between the One and the Many, between Monism and Pluralism, between Stability and Change; and philosophical approaches and philosophical doctrines have been determined according as primacy has been attributed to Being or to Becoming or to what might be called, *ail-inclusively*, the Absolute or the Relative.

Over the portal of Plato's Academy, so it is said, was the legend writ large: *δύο κ' ἐπὶ τῷ εἰσοδῷ*. This might freely be translated: "Only Mathematicians Allowed," or perhaps "The Geometers' Club." To Plato and his followers the true reality, the goal of the philosopher's search, was Being, necessary, unchanging, eternal. Substances and forms were fixed; laws and essences were immutable, numbers unchanging, truth a fixed conformity with an ever-same standard, education a learning of the unchanging, God an absolute. Becoming and Change were in-

¹ Definitions in various contexts may be found in Lalande and Eisler. For the thomistic usage of the terms the *lexiconfe*^Schultz and Signoriello may be consulted.

cf. also Sister M. Camilla Cahill's dissertation, "The Absolute and the Relative in St. Thomas and in Modern Philosophy." (Catholic University Press, 1939)

ferior concepts or negative principles, subordinated to the primacy of Platonic Being. Emphasis was placed on numbers, essences and species, all of which were known infallibly by abstractive knowledge; and the philosopher's task was to look back to or up to these standards. Conservatism and traditionalism in all areas of life (politics, education, laws, knowledge and art) were therefore indicated and imposed.

What might be called the Platonic approach of spirit or degree of emphasis (previously to be found also in Parmenides and Protagoras) has survived in many philosophers who have stressed the Absolute at the expense of the Relative. Without making any (perhaps necessary) qualifications and specifications we may mention Avicenna, the Conceptualists and Realists of the Middle Ages, Descartes the mathematician, Spinoza the Absolutist, Kant and his unmoving categories, and the post-Kantians, notably Fichte.

Contrariwise the spirit of approach of the defenders of Relativism is summarized in another phrase: "You cannot step into the same river twice"—whether you are a geometer or not. Here was the first assertion of the primacy of the Relative and the supremacy of Becoming. Heraclitus was not impressed with absolutes. He spoke of the changeless only to accentuate the changing. And in emphasizing the changefulness of all reality he deemphasized the static and stable and fixed nature of being. For him reality was a process of becoming and therefore essentially relative.

This metaphysical insight or approach or starting-point, except in a few instances of skeptical philosophers in ancient times and, to a degree and with qualifications in the case of Erigena (who might be tagged—if it is not a contradiction—a Hegelian Platonist), was almost forgotten until the last century, when once more it became a powerful force in philosophic thought.

Henri Bergson in his counter-attack on mechanistic science and Kantian and post-Kantian absolutes revived this spirit. On a metaphysical (in his terminology) level he eloquently inveighed against essentialism and boldly proclaimed that there are not "things which change, but only change itself." Even the most absolute of beings, God, he described as "a continuity of shooting forth." (Words, it must be remembered, must be interpreted in their context.)

Moreover, in the nineteenth century came the discovery, or at least the popularization of evolution in the biological and paleontological sciences. What was first a hypothesis, then a theory, became with Spencer and the scientists a universal law and dogma. And as there were no fixed species in the realm of life—plant, animal or man—so neither in morality, economics or social thought was there any fixed stability or changelessness. Every being, every thing was emergent, progressive, evolving.

Finally, the discoveries and successes of the mathematical sciences, especially as applied to the natural sciences, also fostered this counter-revolution. The theories of relativity of Einstein, the elaboration of new systems of mathematics, the supplanting or supplementing of Euclidian geometry, the development of mathematical or symbolic logic, the use of the calculus of probability (that is, the combination of rules which make it possible to express the laws of chance mathematically), the pragmatically fruitful application of irrational numbers, theories regarding the nature of matter and hypotheses concerning an expanding universe, the notion of biological time—all these with their dynamic and evolutionary aspect have contributed to the outlook and have stressed the importance of the formula that "you cannot step into the same river twice."

The underlying metaphysical thesis that reality ultimately is not an absolute but a process of change and therefore necessarily relative, brings logically evident corollaries both in philosophical positions and in methods of approach to them. As contrasted with the viewpoint of the Absolutists, Relativism in this sense denies the validity of abstract eternal norms as fixed truth and substitutes practically successful working. It belittles abstractive knowledge and the conformity theory of truth and imposes verification by intuition or personal experiment. It denies the hierarchy of a static order and replaces it with an emergent process of evolution. It emphasizes (in scholastic terminology) the singular, concrete (but growing) reality and plays down the "absolute nature of universal essence." In these basic assumptions and degrees of emphasis all relativists agree; and in this intellectual revolution they are all uniting, since "they will have nothing to lose but their deductive chains."

Historically there have been other causes of this nineteenth century intellectual revolution. The reaction set in, at least

on the philosophical level, because of an obviously natural opposition to the space-time fixities and inadequate categories of the Kantian philosophies: such idealistic abstractions were bound to be exploded. But outside philosophy there were other forces, of which I can mention only a few. From the religious or theological thought of the time came an aversion for fixed dogmas and creeds. Dogmatic formulae signifying objective truth were supplanted by subjectivism and individualism. The same subjectivism with its emphasis on the individual and its fear of the Demon of the Absolute was the rallying cry of the whole Romantic movement. Truth was not final and definitive, but the fruit of a nebulous groping:

" If God held in his right hand the entire truth and in his left the single lifelong pursuit of it, although with the conviction that I should ever and always be in error, and gave me the choice between them, I should in all humility reach for his left hand and say: ' Father, give me this; is not the pure truth for Thee alone?'"

Finally, besides the intellectual revolution, account must be taken of the industrial revolution with its pragmatic pride in doing and making and of the social revolution with its democratization of outlook.

* * « * *

A surveyor's glance fixes on only a few points. He leaves to others the task of development. I intend therefore at this stage to cite what I think are basic texts in the relativist position. These isolated texts, without gloss or comment, shall be chosen as representative of the subjects to be discussed and developed in the different panels and sessions of this meeting.

Logic: Over against the traditional and classical logic, which was to be sure a system of essences, the relativist characteristically reacts. Dewey, in one of his first publications,² called the old logic: "*fortis et origo malorum* in philosophy."

Truth: Similarly and consequently the relativist cannot see truth as a permanent structure of eternal and unchanging principles to which the mind is to be conformed. Peirce, for instance, maintained⁸ that truth is

2 In *The Monist*, II (1891), pp. 1-17.

a *Collected Works*, I I, p. 160.

" . . . that concordance of an abstract statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific belief."

It would be easy to see, then, that, as he says:⁴

" a confession of inaccuracy and onesidedness is an essential ingredient of truth "

Philosophical Method: If these positions are valid, it would follow that the best method of philosophy or the pursuit of truth would be, as has been said:⁵

" a consensus grown from experiment, subject to consent and to constant challenge and revision by the methods of science, which is always a technique of doubt and inquiry, never a grammar of assent."

This pragmatic method in which the individual tests the validity of truth by -application to himself is typically American. To other relativists, however, to those who profess dialectical materialism, this is too bourgeois. Testing of truth is not to be trusted to the individual, but truth is known by its application to social life in revolutionary practice. The Absolutist might answer the question " How< did the power plant at Omsk come to be?" by recalling the four causes; and he would probably emphasize the formal or exemplary cause of the engineers⁷ plans. But to Marxists this would leave out revolutionary history and the social context. Their reply would be:

" Besides the plans of the engineers, a decisive part is also played by the new social organization introduced by the communist revolution and by the new condition of the workers." ^e

Science: There is relativism too in the biological and physical sciences. The section devoted to the discussion of " Particles and Hylomorphism " and " Biology and Substance " will be de-

**Ibid.*

⁵ In " The Scientific Spirit and Democratic Truth " (Kings Crown Press, 1943), p. 6. This is also the Bergsonian conception of philosophical method, a rigid empiricism.

⁶ Frank: *Between Physics and Philosophy*, Harvard University Press (1941), p. 144.

voted to this theme. Here we can note that the opening up of the atomic universe and the concept of an expanding universe have given rise to what are thought to be new philosophical problems. The traced movement of atoms or of their particles indicates, so it is said, complete contingency. Predictability is impossible; therefore there must be a new interpretation of the principle of causality.

"Astronomical and biological sciences were once firmly based upon eternal uniformity. . . . In astronomy it was held that the higher heavens have always had and always will have, with everything in them, an unswerving circular movement. The teachings of present astronomical science would have seemed like a proclamation of chaotic turmoil. In biology, the complete fixity and uniformity of species of plants and animals were taken to be the rational and necessary foundational truths for all scientific knowledge."⁷

In the social sciences we find the same revolutionary viewpoint. Instead of perennial social truth as a standard of interpretation, we find almost exclusive stress being placed on "the power exercised by cultural environment in shaping ideas, beliefs and intellectual attitudes." Truth is not found; it is made by society. It has a cultural matrix.

This revolt against absolutism and formalism and a consequent acceptance of the central importance of historical and cultural analysis has been clearly outlined by Morton G. White, in his article "The Revolt against Formalism in American Social Thought of the Twentieth Century."⁸ Specifically in economics Thorsten Veblen contended in one of his earlier works that economics, like law, must be an "evolutionary science and must present a theory of process, of an unfolding sequence."⁹ In history too, as we shall doubtless hear in the discussion of "The Relativism of Ortega y Gasset," this emphasis on social dynamics is prevalent, notably in the writings of Beard and Robinson.

Ethics: A special paper has been devoted to the discussion of Relativism and Morality. We can expect that there are no fixed absolutes, that morality is determined by evolution, and that the

⁷ John Dewey: in *Fortune* magazine, August, 1944.

⁸ *Journal of the History of Ideas*, VIII, 2, April, 1947.

⁹ "Why is Economics not an Evolutionary Science?" Reprinted in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization*, p. 248.

only method to be followed is the genetic. This was the position of Dewey in a very early article, entitled "The Evolutionary Method as Applied to Morality";¹⁰ and this is his stand in another more recent.¹¹

"The view so confidently put forth about morals once prevailed in natural science. The foundation of both is that the uniform and unchangeable is inherently superior in perfection and truth to anything subject to change."

Law: In another paper of this meeting "The Metamorphoses of the Idea of Justice" shall be treated and the position of Hans Kelsen shall be examined. Here we may cite Chief Justice Holmes, the high priest of relativism in legal theory. He posits as fundamental in his explanations of justice and legality the fact that both are based, not on immutable standards, but on the changing circumstances of time, place and historical context. For him the only valid method is induction, not deduction. "The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience." And again:

"The felt necessities of the time, the prevalent moral and political theories, intuitions of public policy, avowed or unconscious, even the prejudices which judges share with their fellow men have a good deal more to do than the syllogism in determining the rules by which men should be governed."¹²

Art: Even into the more esoteric sanctum of art the same approach has been made. In a popular article of recent date, "A Few Fallacies about Art,"¹³ W. M. Ivens, Jr. reacts against the canons of Greek art and against any static hierarchical order of artistic values. Deploring such fallacies as "the value of the essential and permanent", he protests against the untruth of equating progress and decadence, as the Greeks would seem to do.

"In classical Greek thought order was imposed in the beginning by some lawgiver, a god or a Lycurgus, and change was seen only as a

¹⁰ *Philosophical Review*, XI, 1902.

¹¹ *Fortune* magazine, August 1944.

¹² *Dissertations and Discussions*, IV, p. 161.

¹³ *Harpers* magazine (no. 1167), August 1947, pp. 114-120.

regrettable divergence from it. Time and change were the great enemies of mankind. Never could there be an evolution towards order, never could change bring about a betterment of any kind."

The philosophical reasoning is interesting:

"As to essence, can we know the essence of any thing we have not defined? And if we do define it, is the essence not part of the definition rather than of the thing defined? As to the truth of beauty—with all due respect to John Keats—is it exact to speak of the truth of anything but a purely logical proposition involving no being or thing? These questions seem serious enough to throw the very gravest doubt over every statement in which the existence of permanency, essence and the truth of beauty is asserted or implied."

Education: The last delineation of our survey is not the least important. The school is the analogue of society; and this ivory-towered philosophy has found its way into the ivy-towered campus. We know that in education there are conservatives and traditionalists as opposed to progressives. We might well call them Absolutists and Relativists, for their pronouncements all stem from the philosophies we have outlined. It is the vital opposition between what has been called "Educational Authoritarianism" and "Educational Laissez Faire."¹⁴ Let me cite one sentence from the Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education, issued only a week or two ago:

"That is not to say that education should neglect the past—only that it should not get lost in the past ... to assume that all we need do is apply to present and future problems 'eternal' truths revealed in earlier ages is likely to stifle creative imagination and intellectual daring."¹⁵

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THOMISM AND THE RELATIVE

So far we have contrasted two spirits of philosophy, two points of view, two terms or poles of emphasis; and I believe that little exception can be taken to any remark, excepting perhaps the inadequacy of the survey. So far we have not placed Thomism in either camp. But here the ice becomes thinner. To start discussion I submit that Thomism belongs in neither, but can and

¹⁴ Wynne: *Philosophies of Education*, Prentice Hall, 1947.

¹⁵ *Higher Education for American Democracy*, Vol. I.

should be a synthesis of these opposites. Moreover, I believe that a valid development of Thomism must, without surrendering its grasp of the Absolute, accentuate what we have called the Relative. Let me explain.

First, it must be remarked that I am not advocating the adoption of isolated conclusions of the authors cited, but rather a sympathy with a metaphysical insight or an understanding of a degree of emphasis. If one stresses the immanence of God, one does not necessarily deny His transcendence. If one emphasizes man's freedom, one does not necessarily detract from God's universal causality. Or vice versa.

It is my impression (gathered from a reading of elementary texts) that too many scholastics have become too Absolutist, and unconsciously or subconsciously have become Platonists or Avicennists. This I believe is not genuine Thomism.

In a general way this is manifested in the attitude one takes toward philosophy. There are some complacent souls who think that Thomism is a closed system, fixed, absolutely perfect, and admitting no possibility of new insights and new contexts. A reinterpretation, or at least a fuller interpretation, of basic positions is thought unthinkable. I frequently have found a chariness of anything new, a suspicion of the findings of true science and & too easy satisfaction with the thought that science goes its own way in a different degree of abstraction. Too often, I suspect, philosophy is expounded in the degree of abstraction proper to mathematics. Yet both the philosopher and the physicist must explain reality as it is, *existing*; it is the job of neither to deduce something from a Platonic essence. Moreover, it is often said that science is technical, utilitarian and practical, in opposition to what is "ideal and eternal." But we must remember that evils and defects do not inevitably spring from what is modern—science, technology or contemporary social issues. St. Thomas in his time was not a *laudator temporis acti*, but a modern, a progressive, the iconoclast of his age. Nor must we forget that neither in Greek philosophy nor in medieval philosophy was there a complete separation of metaphysics and science. St. Thomas was a conservative and traditionalist in this sense, that he was not unaware of the intellectual and spiritual heritage bequeathed to him; but this inherited insight did not bring him to a stop. "*Vetera novis augere*" is a well-worn theme in our conventions.

But more important is the fact that on the metaphysical plane Thomism has its dynamic aspects—call them processes or even evolutionary. And these, I believe, have not been sufficiently stressed in the exploration of the real. Let us recall a few basic positions.

In the very concept of Being, Gilson has shown that the emphasis or stress is to be put on existence, not on essence. But existence is a 'process \ is active, not static. Being therefore is not exclusively, nor even primarily, a Platonic essence forever fixed and immovable. And the Highest Being is not "*Ipsa Essentia*" but "*Ipsum Esse*" God is Pure Act, incessant Life, and therefore (with due reverence for the doctrine of analogy) is far removed from the god of Epicurus who lives in sacred, everlasting calm. (Here I do not deny the immutability of God, no more than I would be professing pantheism if I maintained God to be immanent in every creature.)

Thomism also asserts the validity of the principle of finality, applicable as we know not only to each particular contingent being but to the whole universe. If this principle signifies anything, it means there is a process towards the final end, everything is in motion toward it, everything in a sense does flow toward the Supreme Good.

We would resent being accused of holding that substances are substrata of things, inert and static, and totally unchanging and unchangeable. Yet I do not believe that the completely dynamic nature of substance has been sufficiently stressed. It is easy to distinguish and say that a thing changes through its accidents, but remains the same substantially. Yet St. Thomas would seem to indicate that the *thing* changes, that the substance itself is *other* than it was before. (Note well: not *an* other, but *other*.) "*In nomine enim mutationis et transitus designatur aliquid idem, aliter se habere nunc et prius*" (De Pot. q. I 11 a.2). There would be a synthesis of sameness and otherness. Both sides of the coin—reverse and obverse—are necessary to give it value.

We can apply this to the notion of the Ego or Person. I personally am a substance. I exist; I keep on living; I endure. Because my integral nature must grow to live, and since my past lives on in my memory, my very nature is to become other. Accidental changes (ideas, for example) are made in the real unity

of the subject. If I pass from one idea to another, all the reality of the process of becoming affects the subject which I am, for it is I, myself, which am successively affected by the two determinations. That which changes acquires a new taleity and becomes other than it was before, but in a relative fashion, that is to say, within the limits of the potentiality which remains. And that which changes does not cease to remain the same determinable subject, but in a relative fashion, that is, taking account of its new determination. Determinability just as much as determination is at each instant a concrete property of the real subject considered in its integrity. That which is determined is such and not otherwise; but the same subject considered as determinable can become other (not another), still remaining that which it is. " Nam quandoque quidem est *idem* ens actu, *aliter* se habens nunc et prius; sicut in motibus secundum quantitatem et qualitatem." (S. Th. I q. 45 ad 2).

This is not an overthrowing of the validity of knowledge, nor of the primacy of being, nor a yielding to evolutionary modernism in philosophy. It seems to me to be a legitimate interpretation of Thomism and an example of stressing what has been perhaps overlooked. It is a plea not to become too Absolutist when a Relativist approach is not incorrect, and a plea to give the Relativist his just due.

Even Christianity itself is not an abstract essence, timeless and unchanging. It is not a dialectic matter of deduction, but a historical phenomenon related to time and related to place. In fact we might say (and here qualifications *are* necessary) that the reality of its most sublime mystery is understandable only if "Relativism" is given its due. The persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are *only* relations.

STEWART E. DOLLARD S. J.

Loyola University
Chicago, Illinois

THE ABSOLUTE AND THE RELATIVE IN THE METAPHYSICAL ORDER

RELATIVISM is not a modern discovery, but the resurrection of an old and familiar heresy. Only its terminology is new, **for** when it first appeared far back in the history of thought, it appeared as a false solution of the problem of being and becoming, of the one and the many. Recognition of relativism as a revival, however, does not absolve us from the obligation of reconsidering it and of meeting its challenge. Like all other errors, relativism has at least this negative virtue, that it compels us to rethink our own metaphysics with a new emphasis.

The opposition between relativism and what the relativists would term absolutism is a radical opposition that arises first in regard to the very first question that metaphysics must answer, and carries on from there to dictate the solution of all problems, speculative and practical, throughout the course of philosophical thought. Discussion of the opposition at the remote regions of philosophy, where opinion is openly contradictory, is futile. We must go back to the beginnings where the relativist and the absolutist, as well as the idealist and the realist part company.

Prior to any differences there is a common purpose uniting philosophies and philosophers, transcending the disparities of different schools, diversities of method, contradictions in doctrine, and even the animosities of controversy. This common purpose is the possession of truth. A disquiet of soul, an intellectual dissatisfaction with the appearances of truth, is the beginning of philosophy, and its end is the possession of Truth itself. The impulse to question and to seek is natural to all men, but in the mind of the philosopher it becomes an acute and imperative need, not because the philosopher, unlike the rest of men, has not achieved the ordinary certitudes and possessed himself of the common truths of mankind, but because he cannot rest content with these. He must explain certitude and truth itself. He must probe to the unity of thought and the unity of being. All philosophers, even those apparently content with a relativism, must achieve some absolute or first truth in terms of which all else is to be explained. If this unity is not seen to be inherent in the facts as present to the mind, then it will be imposed on the facts by the mind, and attributed to a blind subjective urge, as in psychological relativism, or to some dialectic of development, as

in anthropological relativism. If the absolute is seen to be inherent in the facts, there is a true absolute; if it is imposed on the facts it is a pseudo-absolute.

The correspondence of mind and the reality is at stake in metaphysics, and it is because of their respective answers to this first problem that the relativist and the absolutist go their separate ways.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, the 'problem' of the correspondence between mind and reality is not a problem in this sense, that the actual correspondence must be established. This is a fact. The existence of a reality external to the self, and the reality of the self, and the correlation between knowing subject and object known, are indemonstrable because they are self-evident. The question that arises in respect to these facts is not whether there be things, or whether they be known, but by what right we claim to have laid hold of an absolute at the very threshold of thought.

The possibility of discovering the answer to this question depends upon the manner in which the question is asked. If the question does not imply a complete acceptance of the factual data with which metaphysics begins, the final solution is already prejudiced. So to restrict the grasp of reality to the senses alone or to the intellect acting in complete independence of the powers of sense cognition, is an arbitrary restriction of the facts of human cognition, and can end only by distorting reality. The point of view everywhere supposed by St. Thomas is that neither sensibility alone nor intellect alone is the sole means of attaining the real.¹ Both act together, with a complementary activity, and together they constitute the cognitive power of man. Or to adopt a phrase from Kant, sensation without a concept cannot be classified as objective knowledge; a concept without sensation cannot be objectified in consciousness.² This is not a remote conclusion of philosophical inquiry, but a simple presentation of the facts of intellectual experience, necessary at this point to avoid any possible misdirection of thought.

The purpose of this paper is to present the notion of the absolute in scholastic metaphysics from the positive point of view.

i Cf. *De Ver.*, 2, 6, ad 3tm.

² Cf. J. Marechal, *Le point de depart de la metaphysique*, III, La critique de Kant, Alcan, Paris, 1923, p. 147.

It is not an historical treatment, nor is it, except by implication, a comparative study of the absolutism of Thomistic metaphysics and the relativism of the moderns. Assuming that the absolute, generally, is that which does not depend on anything prior to itself in its own order, and that the relative is that which does depend on something prior to itself, the absolute in the metaphysical order will be that which in no way depends on another in the order of being known. And since the attributes, so to speak, of the absolute, are universality and necessity, the absolute in metaphysics is that which is universally necessary.³ Further, since metaphysics must provide a consistent system, one, that is, which does not grow by accretions from without, but one that develops by its own intrinsic necessities, the absolute will be first grasped at the intersection of the real and the ideal orders, in the act of knowing, and will manifest itself as demanding for its full explanation an ontological absolute. We will be concerned then with the assent to being first, both from the point of view of the assent and from that of being which is known; and then with the absolute character of metaphysics as a whole, by which it asserts its primacy over every other department of human knowledge.

I

The point of departure of metaphysics is experience. But we should not understand experience at this point in too narrow a sense, for that experience in which metaphysics takes its start is not merely sense experience, though it does of necessity include both the fact and the content of sensible contact with the real. Nor can it be a pure intellectual experience, a purified act of self-consciousness devoid of all objective reference. The experience with which metaphysics begins is a *total* experience, in which the sensible interpretation of being and the rational construction of being in the concept are completed, perfected, and unified in consciousness.⁴ This is the moment of assent, that moment at which our knowledge of things achieves the level of rational self-consciousness. That the object of thought *be*, that it be *present* to the intellect, and that the intellect be aware of its grasp of the

³ Cf. J. Marechal, " Abstraction ou intuition ", *Revue neoscholastique*, 1929, p. 29.

⁴ Jn // *Sent*, XIX, 1, 1, Sol. Cf. Raeymaeker, *Philosophie de L'etre*, Louvain, 1946, p. 93.

object, this is the indispensable condition of metaphysical reflection and analysis.⁵

The assent of the judgment is an act, a personal act, but it does not for all that express merely a private sentiment or a subjective view. It speaks, or pretends to speak, for the objective order of things, for reality as it is. The assent says, in effect, "This is what is", not "This is what I think". It speaks with authority. An abstract judgment declares that this is the essential order of things; a judgment of existence says this is what is actually here and now.⁶

This assent is the culmination of the entire cognitive process. Hence human cognition is not to be considered to be a system of abstract truths passing in review before the mind, nor a series of sensible objects perceived in their individual determinations. It does not consist of an object present to a subject. Reality is a whole of which the subject is a part. Our existence, a part of the totality of things, becomes conscious of its own participation in this totality through knowing something other than itself, and the intellect assents not only to what is known, the object, but to itself as knowing. The assent is the common act of knower and known, the active, living, synthesis of the object and the subject.

Thus seeing the assent as distinct from prior conceptualization and sensible interpretation, as the common act of knower and known, enables us to throw into focus the metaphysical significance of the assent itself. It is an act that is dependent upon prior conceptualization and sensible interpretation, and at the same time independent of either. It is a simultaneous recognition of two realities, that of the object and that of the subject, which in the assent achieve a unity in consciousness. And in the assent the mind transcends the relativity of the subject-object relation to affirm being unconditionally, absolutely.⁷

The assent, in other words, considered concretely, is determined by what *is*. The situation of being, the particular determinations under which it presents itself to the mind in a given experience, is

⁵ *De Ver.*, 1, 9, C: *Coram, in de Anim.*, II, 6; N. Herve, "L'intuition de l'etre et les premieres principes", *Revue Thomiste*, 1947, 1, pp. 115-116.

⁶ Cf. Tonquedec, *Critique de la connaissance*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1929, p. 197.

⁷ N. Herve, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

reflected in the particular determinations of the assent given to being. In so recognizing the situation of being assented to, the assent, involving these determinations in its affirmation, does not dismiss them as irrelevant, but recognizes them as relative, necessary for this assent, but not as absolute determinations of the judgment. It recognizes these determinations as the limitations of this particular act of knowing, but not as setting the limits of knowledge itself.

Aware at one and the same moment of its own identity and of its own 'otherness', the intellect in assenting affirms more than the relative position of subject and object, it affirms being, unity. The analysis through which this characteristic of the assent is clarified proceeds through ontological reflection on any judgment in the concrete. Every judgment is an explicit affirmation of an object, directly known, and an implicit affirmation of the subject knowing. The point of the analysis is to determine exactly the formal object of assent, or the precise aspect of the thing in the concrete that of itself determines the assent. Each judgment in the concrete differs from every other judgment; but if in each case there is a judgment or assent, it will be possible to distinguish between what is constant or absolute in judgment, and what is relevant in the particular judgment but not absolutely necessary for judgment itself. In the direct judgment of experience, for instance, the object presents itself as external, as manifesting itself through some definite sensible quality, and as real. Reflection on such a judgment, shows that it is neither the externality of the object, nor its determined sensible appearance, that compels assent, but the reality of the object thus perceived. In the reflex, judgment of consciousness the object appears as internal to the subject, and as a particular kind of psychic activity, and as real. Again it is neither the internality of the object, nor the particular mode of psychic modification involved, that compels assent, but the reality of the object. If any of these relevant but particular determinations were the basis of assent, then the assent itself would formally, that is, necessarily and always, involve that particular determination, just as sight formally involves color. The area of assent would be limited to just this kind of an object. In every case it is the reality of the object and its reality alone that commands assent. What is absolute and absolutely necessary for the judgment, is *being*; and it is *being* that is asserted

absolutely in the judgment, while the particular determinations of being are asserted only in relation to being.⁸

The judgment, then, has its roots in experience, understood now in the restrictive sense of contact with the world of sensible, material being, but in the very act of affirming the sensible real the intellect transcends this experience and attains an absolute, in reference to which all else that is involved in the judgment is relative. The special situation of a particular act of assenting determines the limits of this act of knowing, but, because of the absolute to which they are referred, and in reference to which alone they can have meaning, these determinations do not set the limits of intellectual knowledge as such. Wherever there is being, there can be a judgment, regardless of the individual determinations of being. The intellect is a faculty whose potential is coextensive with being; it is a *facultas entis*.

It becomes immediately apparent that in assenting to being, the intellect is implicitly affirming the law of its own activity, the principle of contradiction.⁹ For the assent is based on a recognition of the conformity of the intellect with the object known; awareness of the object is an awareness of the object as present in consciousness, or, what amounts to the same thing, of the intellect as conformed to the object. The intellect, conformed to the real, knowing its own conformity, cannot at the same time be ignorant of it. Consequently the necessity with which it asserts being, is a metaphysical necessity, or absolute and unconditional necessity. For metaphysical necessity does not designate some special quality of the being of the object in itself, nor some blind subjective urge by which the intellect is compelled to give its assent, but a relation between what is and what is thought to be: that is metaphysically necessary which imposes itself on the mind, without which thought itself is impossible.

The assent, therefore, attains being. It transcends not only this particular experience to which it has an immediate reference, but all experience. The being that it disengages from its concrete determinants can be objectified in anything that is or can be. There is no one experience, no one object, of which the assent is the exclusive affirmation; in any experience and in any object we can claim without fear of possible contradiction that we have

⁸ N. Herve, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

» Cf. *In III Met** lect. 5.

derived an objective reference to the mind to *being* simply. **The** validity of this notion of being neither need be nor can be subjected to the indignity of an inductive verification.

II

So far we have been concerned with the assent, the formal element of the judgment. In discussing the assent it has been impossible to put aside completely consideration of the object of assent, for the very cogent reason that assent and object are inseparable in thought. Having seen that the assent is absolute, that it implies a categorical affirmation of being, at the same time that it depends on certain relative factors, we turn our attention now to being as present to the mind, that is, to the being of the object known.

The reality of the known and the reality of the knower is acknowledged simultaneously in the common act of both.¹⁰ Multiplicity is therefore acknowledged at the very moment that it is transcended in the unity of the act of knowing. This duality of the act of intellection implies that we grasp being always and at the same time in the self and in the non-self; neither can be a *given* apart from the other. Again, this statement is not an inference from the facts, but a presentation of the facts of intellectual experience. To deny the reality, or to deny that we know the reality of either the subject or the object is to compromise metaphysics before we reach the level of proper metaphysical analysis. Thought that pretends to be concerned with itself first, and with being only as an inference from thought, irrevocably commits itself to an ideal order from which it can escape only by embracing a contradiction. Thought that pretends to be concerned only with what is, and not at all with the relation of being to thought, never arrives at a metaphysics.

We have already seen that the assent transcends its concrete situation and implies a categorical affirmation of being. The unity of the assent is not only consistent with, but actually dependent upon the multiplicity involved. Were all judgments an assent to being simply, arid not to being as determined in a particular way, no one judgment would be distinguished or distinguishable from any other judgment. It would be a simple and unlimited act.

¹⁰ Cf. *Summa Theol*, I, 87, 1, C; *Q. D. de Anim.*, 7, C; *Comm. in de anima*, III, 9.

The dependence of the assent on the particular determinations involved, and the independence of the assent in the midst of this dependence, is no more than a reflection of the actual situation of the concrete being which is the term of the objective reference of the judgment. Of the two realities acknowledged in the judgment, we can say that neither is the other, and that neither is necessary for the other in so far as the proper reality of each is concerned; they are relative to each other, dependent mutually, only in so far as they make possible the act of assent. There neither is nor can be any confusion of function: the object remains an object, and the subject remains a subject, and it is precisely by virtue of this relation that the assent is.¹¹ Antecedently to becoming party to the subject-object relation, each of these realities is, and each has an autonomy in being, by reason of which it imposes itself on the mind. The autonomy of each, however, is realized in a manner proper to itself; in each *being* and the *manner of being* are necessarily related, and because of this relativity in the very heart of being each imposes itself on the mind in a particular and determined way. Each is known as an absolute, since it imposes itself unconditionally, and as a relative, since it imposes itself in this special manner. The mind, of course, is not aware of all these implications in its first contact with being, but in the first contact they are nevertheless known in a confused way. Reflection renders them distinct.

In the direct grasp of being two characteristics of the reality of experience are simultaneously attained, the absolute value of being, which this reality manifests, and the finite individuality, by reason of which this particular being is distinguished from other beings. The very fact that this reality imposes itself as a finite individual, distinct from and different than other beings, immediately places it in an extrinsic relation to these other beings, so that together with them it constitutes an order of being.¹²

In one sense we may say that the entire problem of metaphysics is to give an exact account of what we have comprehended in a given experience. It is a knowledge of a particular reality, existing here and now. It is known *to be*. Yet the notion of being, derived from this reality, is not simply convertible with

¹¹ Cf. N. Balthasar, *La Methode eu Metaphysique*, Louvain, 1943, p. 53.

¹² Cf. Raeymaeker, *PhUosophie de UUre*, Louvain, Inst. Sup. de Phil., 1946, p. 34, 320. G. Sohngen, *Sein und Gegenstand*, Miinster, 1930, pp. 77-78.

this particular being, for, while it is true that this reality *is*, it is likewise true that other realities *are*. And they are known to be, confusedly, in the same experience, because this present reality is individual and undivided, one and limited. Hence we may say of this, that it possesses being, not that it is being; that it participates in being, expressing its own being in a particular way, different from the being of any other thing in this, for each thing expresses being in its own particular manner. Each being possesses and reveals the absolute value of being by its own proper reality, by virtue of which it is incommunicable with others.¹⁸ The grasp of being, therefore, in a definite and determined experience, is a grasp of being as objectively multiple. This multiplicity is evident first in the independence of the object and the subject considered in their proper realities. It is evident, in the second place, in the multiplicity of natural realities beyond the self. There are many beings outside the self, and all of them are indeterminately included in the very determinateness of this being, that is, in the grasp of this being as limited being.

The feature that first commands attention is not precisely the universality of being, but the diversity of being, a diversity that affects the constitution of the individual being considered in itself, and a diversity that is evident in the universe of being at large. And this diversity is caught up and unified in thought, for not only is being involved in the notion of being, but all the differences of being as well. The notion of being, then, derived from a particular reality is absolute, since there is nothing, except the pseudo-concept of non-being, that can be opposed to it. Every being *is*, but it is the individual reality in its entirety that is properly said to be.

In the knowledge of the individual reality two elements are present in thought, which are necessarily referred to each other, and inseparably united in the real. Each of these is proportioned to the other, and to attempt to think of either one without an actual reference to the other is to attempt the impossible. They are irreducible because here we are not dealing with concepts and with logical distinctions, but with the metaphysical structure of the concrete real, with reality as it imposes itself on thought. Neither could possibly have any meaning for the mind except in relation to the other; for *being* at the level of finite things

¹³ Cf. Raeymaeker, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

is meaningless except in the context of the individuality which is proper to it; *individuality* in turn is meaningless except in conjunction with the being which is thus individualized. Hence the real unity of these two elements of the concrete is extrinsic to neither, but intrinsic to both, and arises out of the actual correspondence to the two terms of this relation. Since it is the individual reality in its entirety which is said to be, the notion of being involves immediately this proportion of being and the manner of being in the individual. The notion of being therefore is not an abstraction; and being is not univocal. The essential condition of univocity is that the concept prescind perfectly from the differences in the real order by virtue of which one member of a class is distinguished from other members. The notion of being not only includes what is common to all being, that it *is*, but includes also and necessarily that by which being differs from being.

When the mind is concerned with the very elements of the real, abstraction in the proper sense of the term is impossible. This fact guarantees or should guarantee metaphysics from becoming a consideration of essences, or of essential being; to be true to itself it must maintain contact with the real, with existence, not only in the initial stages but throughout its course. And it is because it is impossible to abstract properly from the real that the notion of being is analogical. For if being everywhere and always, except in the unique case of the Infinite Being of God¹⁴ involves a proportion between *being* and being *this*, being will always be known only in terms of its intrinsic proportionality. The attribution of being will include the absolute character of a given being and its internal relativity.

This may be easily seen in the case of the self. To think is to be, to see is to be, and to will is to be; but to think is not the same as to will or to see. Each act of the self pertains to being, but each act is in its own way, and each differs from the others by the precise relation which constitutes it. Furthermore, it is not thought or will or sight that exists, but myself thinking, willing, seeing. The permanent identity of the being of the self is therefore relative, proportioned to the modifications which affect it; and the attribution of being to the real and active self can only be in an analogical manner.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cf. Raeymaecker, *op. cit.* p. 47-48.

In the self there are many states that are irreducible to each other; in the world of natural entities there are many beings that are irreducible to each other. In the external world, however, it is not one being that is active, but many things that are independent of each other. Here, then, there are many subjects to which the term being applies, many things that are independent of one another as the self is independent of realities beyond the self. Each of these things is, and is in its own particular manner, and the notion of being as applied to them is again analogical.

It is apparent now that of the two elements which enter into the constitution of being, it is existence that of itself primarily and *per se* compels the assent to being. The absolute at the level of the sensible real is founded on the fact that this being is, more than on *what* it might happen to be. But because of the very individuality of this being, it is the diversity of being which is first affirmed, and which forces on us the question of metaphysics, the solidarity of being in thought coexisting with the multiplicity of being in fact. This is the problem of the absolute and relative in metaphysics, involving now not merely the recognition of being here and now present to the mind, but the entire structure of metaphysics terminating in the assent to Absolute Being in the ontological order, the being of God.

III

The truths of metaphysics are naturally much more accessible to the mind at the level of the sensible real, yet these truths, clear and certain as they are, cannot be defended in isolation from the higher levels of metaphysical thought. The fact is that metaphysics partakes of the consistency of its object, being, and it is known either as a consistent whole or it is not known at all. It has a dynamism of its own, a natural and insistent principle of development that is not spent until the mind sees all being in the perspective of the Infinite. It develops from within, not by addition from without, for the very first truths contain the data of all further inquiry.¹⁵

We have already seen that existence underlies our recognition of being, compels the assent, and, more than essence, has the capacity of determining a metaphysical affirmation. The exist-

¹⁵ Cf. A. Forest, "Sur la Methode en Metaphysique", *Revue Thomiste*, 1939, p. 342.

ence of the particular being is the ultimate perfection of this being, the perfection of its perfections; yet it is a perfection that is limited and known here and now in its limitations. It is being, but it is not all that being can be.

Hence the very perfection by which this reality is, and is independent from other beings in its own order, since it is known with its own internal limitations, does not fully satisfy the insistent quest of the mind for a final explanation of its being. It is intelligible, because it is; it is not fully intelligible because it is not being in the complete meaning of being. Its being is not of itself, but derived; it is a participation in being.

The reality of the particular being of experience is thus seen to be extrinsically related not only to other beings which are in a manner similar to its own, particular and determined and limited; but it is also seen to be related to a being which is absolute, unlimited, a simple existence. The details of the dialectic by which the mind, beginning with the reality of experience, ultimately reaches a knowledge of Infinite Being, do not fall within the scope of this paper. But it is proper to insist here that the work of the metaphysician is not completed until he has located the reality immediately known in the perspective of Absolute Being. Only then can metaphysics be termed a science of the absolute in the full meaning of the term, for this perspective finally explains the solidarity of thought and the unity of being.¹⁶

A final word on the absolute nature of metaphysics as a science. Once metaphysics touches on the higher ground of the knowledge of God, the metaphysical notions and perfections derived originally from its contact with being in experience, which have served the mind as its natural instruments in its quest for the ultimate, are themselves fully vindicated. This vindication is not a correction, but a fuller understanding; their notional content is not altered, but perfected, for they are not erroneous at the lower levels of metaphysics, but incomplete. In the final vision their real significance and absolute value are confirmed, and metaphysics itself, as a science, an effort of the human intellect, is fully confirmed in its interpretation of being.

IV

Metaphysics may be begun safely only on the supposition that it will be completed. Should the metaphysical process be initi-

ated, and then terminated at some intermediate stage of the process, whatever truth has been gathered in that unfinished science will have that value alone which the individual human intellect can give it. To begin, and then, yielding to some form of agnosticism, to desist is to be condemned to relativism.

The empiricist and the idealist take a false turn at the very first step, the one neglecting the intellectual element in experience, the other neglecting the sensible, and mistaking consciousness for the entirety of thought. Both empiricism and idealism issue in a relativism. The empiricist will eventually come to interpret all being in terms of some particular and positive science, and, if he recognizes any absolute at all, it will be the pseudo-absolute, found by induction, and changing with the expanding horizons of science.¹⁷ The idealist, if he is faithful to his beginnings, will eventually end in solipsism, which is a different but extreme form of relativism.

The forms of relativism with which we are most familiar today, Pragmatism, Instrumentalism, Psychology, measure truth and being by the individual or social requirements of man. As these change, truth itself changes. It proclaims progress, and prides itself on its adaptability; but neither progress or adaptability have meaning if divorced from an absolute. This Relativism would seem to be born of the frustration following on the bankruptcy of empiricism and idealism. It does not even attempt to construct a metaphysics, for it refuses to acknowledge the very facts in which a metaphysics must take its start.

CHARLES DENECKE

Woodstock College
Woodstock, Md.

¹⁷ Cf. N. Balthasar, *La MHhode en Mitaphysique*, Louvain, 1943, pp. 16 ff.

ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE IN THE MORAL ORDER

Introduction;

THE moral order I take to be the order of human actions, of free human actions.¹ Moral philosophy is the science which seeks to discover the rule of human actions, which is directive of human actions towards the final and completely satisfying good of man, which is thus conductive of man to the good life. A.v. moral philosophy, or ethics is the science of the good of man as man, that is, insofar as man is a rational being, who, by reason of the autonomy which results from his freedom governs his life. It seeks to determine as far as possible in what the good life, the total and absolute good of man consists, in what measure particular goods accord with the general good, what are the actions which lead to the total good most directly, what ones cut man off from it, finally in what way it is necessary to group them in order for man to realize his total good, and choose in consequences the acts that lead thereto.² The moral order, which morality discovers and enucleates is of a piece with the metaphysical order, the moral good, a phase of ontological good, morality a prolongation of metaphysics.³

Before considering morality and the moral good as such it is well to look into the metaphysics of morality, to the end that we may see that moral goodness is nothing else than the possession of the ontological good that is proper to man as man.

THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALITY

Good in General:

Metaphysics has much ado about the good, for goodness is a transcendental property of being. Many things there are to which

¹ Even those philosophers who propose a morality and yet whose metaphysics imply a determinism (like those of Epicurus, the Stoics, Spinoza and Leibnitz) and who conclude theoretically against human liberty, in practice treat man as though he were master of his actions, as though he were free. Cf. Jacques LeClercq. *Les Grandes Lignes de la Philosophie Morale*, Paris, Joseph Vrin, 1947, p. 265.

² LeClercq, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

³ A. -D. Sertillanges, *La Philosophie Morale de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris, Felix Alcan, 1922, p. 15: "Systematiquement parlant, la morale thomiste n'est autre chose qu'un prolongement de la metaphysique thomiste".

we daily ascribe the note of goodness; my watch, my pen, my overcoat. A little reflection, however, would convince us of the truth of the elementary principle of scholastic metaphysics that every being is good in the measure that it is. We speak of a watch, or pen or overcoat as good to the extent that they realize their own respective ends, the purpose for which each is made (to indicate time precisely, to function serviceably as an instrument for writing, to protect from the wintry blasts). When this end is fully achieved, when thus a thing has all the qualities we might expect its nature to possess, when it conforms to the ideal type in full measure, when it has the plenitude of being that it should, then we call it *perfect* (that is, thoroughly achieved, fully made). The perfect is nothing more than the complete good that is proper to the nature. (For each nature, the perfect itself is not a relative but an absolute. It is not the very very good, but rather, good is the relatively perfect; complete good, the absolutely perfect for that being.) In the measure, however, that it fails of its purpose, falls short of the ideal type, lacks what is convenient to its nature, it is imperfect, not thoroughly achieved. Even then, however, it is still good in the measure that it possesses something convenient to its nature, and this always means in the measure that it has being. For to the extent that it is being, to that extent it is in act, to that extent is it perfect, to that extent is it appetible and good. This is elementary, but like all elementary things it is fundamental, basic, and for our purposes most pertinent to morality. The idea of the good brings into prominence the notion of a nature, possessed of its good or perfection, or tending towards that good or perfection which is due it and which it lacks. The good cannot be understood save in terms of an end attained or to be attained, that is proper to the nature of the being.⁴ It is no anthropomorphism when we ascribe the note of goodness to natural things as well as human artifacts, to the earth, the plant, the mineral and man as well as to the watch and pen and overcoat. All these are good in the measure that they fulfill the purpose of their nature, to the extent that they fulfill their destiny, their *raison d'être*. All these tend towards their end, their good, their perfection. "All creation groans and travails in pain"⁵ seeking to possess and retain the

⁴ LeClercq, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

⁵ Rom. 8, 22.

plenitude of being that is proportioned to its nature.⁶ The incoercible urge or elan towards this end stresses the note and need for expansion, development in proportion to the nature of each thing. It presents an eminently dynamic conception of the universe, a dynamic finality. Good is the notion which presides over and determines all activity. If good is a transcendental property of being, applicable to every being whatever it may be it is because every being is conceived of as tending to something.⁷ Every being tends towards its perfection which is the same as saying every being tends to be fully itself, to realize itself fully, to be fully what it is.

All that fosters this plenitude of being, everything that contributes to the perfection of the nature, whatever enables the nature to attain its end, its complete good must itself likewise be good. Moreover the quiescence of an appetite in the attainment of its particular good and of the nature in the possession of its total good, is also a good, a concomitant or subsequent good that attends the perfection of faculty or nature. These notions serve as the basis for the distinction of good into what is called the *bonum conveniens*, the *bonum utile* and the *bonum delectabile*.⁸ The *bonum conveniens* is a good befitting the faculty or nature,

⁶ It should be noted relative to this tendency towards an end, this striving towards the good, that the end is not good *because* it is an object of appetency but rather it is an object of appetency because it *is* good and perfective of the being. The classic definition of good given by Aristotle "quod omnia appetunt" should be understood in this sense. It really defines the good in terms of its effect rather than in terms of itself. Things are not good because they are sought; they are sought because they are good. Aristotle's definition then comes down to this that every being seeks something and what it seeks is its perfection, its good, the fullness of its being. (Aristotle Eth. 1.)

⁷ LeClercq, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

⁸ St. Thomas; *8.T.*, I, 5, 6; *ibid.*, 11-11, 145, 3c. The term "conveniens" is here used rather than "honestum", which is more common, because the latter is more properly applied to the good that is convenient to man. St. Thomas speaks of it as that "quod secundum rationem ordinatum" and as being called "honestum" "secundum quod aliquid habet quandam excellentiam dignam honore propter spirituale pulchritudinem." (*S.T.*, 11-11, 145, 3c.) In a broad sense any good that is convenient to any nature whether rational or not may be called *honestum* inasmuch as it can be convenient to it only if it is something "secundum rationem ordinatum" «* least in that it is ordained to that nature by Divine

giving each its perfection, crowning it with its due; it is that which is sought for itself. The *bonum utile* is any that renders service, that abets in the attainment of an ulterior good, this ulterior good being itself a convenient good. The *bonum delectabile* is the delight or joy that attends the possession of a good (convenient or useful) in which the appetite (of faculty or nature) becomes quiescent through satisfaction. It should be clear that it is only the *bonum conveniens* as such that is absolutely and per se good; it alone perfects or informs with perfection, the faculty or nature. The useful and the delectable good formally speaking are relatively good; the useful as such being related to the procuring or acquiring of an ulterior good; the delectable as such being naturally subsequent to and conditioned by the actual procurement or acquisition of a good. Whatever of goodness is predicated of the useful and delectable as such is a participated, derivative goodness; they participate in the goodness of the perfection that is convenient to the being.⁹

Special attention needs be paid to the good-value, by which we label the useful, for it is especially on this level and from this aspect that ontological and moral evil will be discovered.¹⁰ Anything that is judged good in terms of functions or services it renders or can render is always a subordinate good. The useful then supposes a plurality of beings or at least a composition of parts in being of which some are at the service of others (horse, earth, pencil, overcoat, stomach, lungs, etc.). As such their value as good depends on another, which, to the extent that it measures the worth of the useful, is a *bonum conveniens*. Every useful good then supposes another to which it is useful; it supposes an ensemble of coordinated goods forming in some way a whole.

Here the notion of order intervenes. Order is unity in multiplicity. It supposes a due relation of parts to a whole and/or of things to one another in virtue of their unity of purpose. It consists in the fact that several are reduced to unity by reason of a common finality that transcends themselves. The value of being a useful good which we attach to a thing depends not alone on its

⁹ It should be noted, of course, that one and the same thing may be viewed as befitting, useful, and delectable but only under different aspects; either as conferring perfection, conducing to further perfection or as bringing delight and satisfaction in perfection possessed.

¹⁰ Cf. LeClercq, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.

own structure but on the place it holds in the ensemble. All would concede that a stomach is a pretty useful part of man. But its value depends not only on its own structure as a digestive organ but also on its proper relation in being and activity to the whole man. If it is too small or too large, or if it functions too sluggishly or excessively then its utility and its goodness from this aspect is diminished if not nullified. A.v. it must as a part and a subordinate part be properly proportioned to other parts in respect of structure and functioning. Should it be too small so that it cannot accommodate sufficient food for the life of man, should it be too large so that it crowds and inhibits the other organs, should it be eaten away by ulcer or congested by cancerous growth, should it function too slowly so that food is not properly assimilated or too well so that blood is drawn from other organs then it is not useful, it is not good, it is evil. But note it is not evil in itself. It is evil for *man*. The determination of its goodness or its badness as useful is in terms of the total being it should serve, not in terms of itself as such. Utility can never be determined by considering a part or a being in itself. Under this consideration it is and can only be good and it is good in the measure that it is. As long as one considers it only in itself its good is absolute. The good (and the bad) from the utility aspect appears only when one places the part or being in the whole or ensemble, and recognizes it as subordinated and present there in due (or undue) proportion.

Evil is a tributary of order. It is disorder; it consists in the non realization of order. It is, then, not the absence of due perfection alone; it can also be the presence of perfection in undue manner. It is evil not only to be deprived of a congruous perfection but to have too much of it. If I had the nose of Cyrano de Bergerac I would undoubtedly have a most sensitive olfactory sense but like Cyrano I would be most sensitive of its unusual disproportion to related parts of my physique. Evil is not only the absence of something that ought to be present but also the presence of something which ought to be absent or which ought not to be or ought not to be as it is (like having an eye in one's toe). Due proportion then is necessary for the useful good as lack of proportion bespeaks evil.

St. Thomas speaks of two kinds of order (In I. Eth. lect. 1) viz.: the order of the parts of any whole or any multitude to one

another and the order of things to an end. He notes that the latter is nobler, more important (*principalior*). It is that which coordinates the parts and determines their subordination by reason of their reference to it. It brings unity out of multiplicity. The supreme order of all is the orientation of all to their universal and ultimate end. Proximate intermediary ends have no meaning save in terms of an ultimate end and in every order of activity towards a common ultimate end all intermediate terms take their 'ratio' of good from the final term or ultimate end of the tendency.

Now the universe as a whole is a thing of order, order created and established by God. It is mind alone that can create order, it is an Infinite and omnipotent Mind alone that can create the order of *the* universe. It is the source of its order. The universe exists insofar as it is caused by Him and in its measure participates in His Being; it is true insofar as it reflects in an almost infinitely varied way His thought; it is good insofar as it tends toward Him as its summum Bonum. There is every bit as much need of an ultimate in the order of finality as there is of a first in the order of efficiency; and God is the principle, the Absolute in both orders.¹¹ Just as He is the first cause of all things so is He also the common and ultimate end of all, the alpha and omega, the source of their order one to another and to Him. He it is who fashions everything in a divine likeness, with an adumbration of divine being and goodness; He it is who creates natures with their own proximate ends, with proclivities and tendencies towards these ends and ultimately towards Himself as their supreme end; He it is who arranges all in a hierarchy of being and perfection subordinating some to others and orientating all to Himself. Apart from Him they cannot attain to the fullness of their respective beings. Every creature has God as its end; it is towards Him as the Summum Bonum,¹² that all desire and activity tend, towards assimilation with Him¹³ in imitation of His perfection^u which is the compassing of its own—"the end

11 Cf. C.C. I11, 17 Adhuc. in:

¹²C.G., I11, 17: Quod omnia ordinantur in unum finem, qui est Deus; *ibid.*, 18: Quomodo Deus sit finis omnium.

MC.G., I11, 19: Quod omnia in^endunt assimilari Deo.

^{1A}C.G., I11, 20: Quomodo res divinam bonitatem imitentur.

of everything is its perfection."¹⁵ The tendency towards God in the goodness He bestows is in every creature; the movement of the universe is a movement *in Deum*, towards the one and only end, which can be an end of them all, the one good which is the cause of all goodness. As Father Vann expresses it:

Every entity other than God . . . tends to . . . a . . . sharing of the perfection of the Summum Bonum: the relative, by reason of its relativity, has a tendency towards the Absolute; and the potentialities of the entity are actualized in so far as this process comes to completion. The Absolute remains transcendent; the finite can never compass the Infinite; and the end remains outside it; but the *assimilari Deo* which is the end of creatures, the compassing of the likeness of God, is achieved by way of analogous imitation: It is in so far as things have being that they are likened to God, Who is Being Itself, subsistent, whereas all other things are as it were but partakers of being.¹⁶

It is this which results in order, a taxitive confluence of natures towards the ultimate end of Nature. The efficacy of God's wise and ordinative will is seen by the direction and congruous impulse whereby things are moved to prefixed ends, each in its own way, in accordance with its nature and its place in the hierarchy of beings (In De Divinis Nam. C. IV. 1. 6). The marvelous conflux of motions which flow from these natures and whereby each created thing within the limits of its nature concurs in the purpose of all creation, viz., to reflect, and in the case of rational beings, to articulate their recognition of, God's goodness and glory, constitutes the natural order of the universe. This natural order includes the moral as well as the physical order; orders differentiated by reason of the natures so ordered. Both of these orders concur (cf. C.G., III, 1 & 22).

The Good of Man

Man is a part of that universal order. He finds himself with a very determined nature. As with every being his nature reflects the necessary conditions under which he must live and develop himself. He did not create himself; he did not fix the conditions

¹⁵ C.G., III, 16: *Finis igitur uniuscujusque rei est ejus perfectio. Perfectio autem cujuslibet est bonum ipsius. Unumquodque igitur ordinatur in bonum si cut in finem.*

¹⁶ Gerald Vann, *Morals Makyth Man*, Longmans, Green & Co., N. Y., 1938, p. 21.

of his being; he did not and could not determine (in the sense of establish) what is good for him; he simply discovers this and must accept it.^{16a} By analyzing this nature man can ascertain with reasonable clarity what is and was meant to be his good. Good is only the perfection of being and the perfection of any being is indicated by the exigencies of its nature. Man is not simply good as we find him. (We are still speaking here, of course, of metaphysical goodness). He is good only *secundum quid*, after a fashion; good, in the measure that he is. But there is lacking to him much of perfection that he ought to have.¹⁷ To be the man he should be, he must seek his good in other things.¹⁸ It is only in this way that man will attain his full stature. What that stature should be is discernible in faint outline at least in his nature. Man is the rough model of what he ought to realize, of what he ought to become. But it would be too narrow a perspective to view this nature in isolation. One must have an ensemble view, a view of man, in himself, as a man of many parts and in his relations to all else in the universe. For if it be true that man has not made himself, if he must accept himself as he is and not seek a chimerical and distorted perfection but rather that perfection which an all wise and beneficent God has prefixed for him as his own in virtue of the nature that has been given him and of which he is not the author, it is likewise true that he did not

16a Even those who, like W. T. Stace (*The Destiny of Western Man*, Reynal & Hitchcock, N. Y., 1942, pp. 51 ff.) feel that man's nature has arisen through biologic evolution from sub-human levels and who believe that "the human mind has evolved out of the animal mind" and that "morality too must have grown out of the principles of the good life, which existed for our prehuman ancestors" (*I. c.*, p. 52) concede this much that "the principles (do they mean rules and laws?) of the good life for any animal depend on, grow out of, and express the nature of that animal" (*I. c.*, 54) and must therefore admit that human nature cannot establish its own good but can only discover it through analysis of that nature.

¹⁷ This lack of due perfection can be called evil. But let it be noted that this is merely the absence of goodness for which he was born and which he should have. As St. Thomas says: "Malum in substantia aliqua est ex eo quod deficit ei aliquid quod natum est et debet habere". (*C.G.*, III, 6, Ut, autem).

¹⁸ *CO.*, III, 20, Est autem: . . . licet quaelibet earum (creaturarum) sit bona inquantum est, non potest simpliciter bona dici, si aliis careat quae ad ipsius bonitatem requiruntur. . . . Bonitas autem rei non solum in esse suo consistit sed in omnibus aliis quae ad suam perfectionem requiruntur."

make the universe but must accept this also as it is. He must accept himself as an element in the universe, and work towards his good within the framework of the whole. Only through this all-embracing perspective can the good of man be fully analyzed. Only in pursuance of this full-sighted objective can man become what he should be and thus attain the fullness of being that is his destiny.

Therefore man's nature must be completely viewed if we are to judge correctly the integral good. Man is a psycho-physical unit in himself; he is an element in a larger whole; he is a creature of God destined to the good of God. All these relationships must be taken into account. His perfected personality requires due attention to all of these. Enrichment of being is not to be found in the utter neglect of any part of man or any due relationship of man. None is to be repressed as evil in se but only where an expression of it would hinder the good of the whole man or where the suppression of it is ordered to a higher good. Not all of the goods of his being are of equal value and none are of any value save in the light of their reference to an ultimate end, the possession of God by knowledge and love. As Father Vann has expressed it:

There can be no wholeness without the harmonious interadjustment of parts; coordination means subordination; the actualizing of the various potentialities demands a scale of values, to be arrived at through inquiry into the relative claims of each. Body is less than mind. The perfection of the body less adequate to the demands of the person than that of the mind and physical perfection therefore cannot take precedence over the perfection of the mind. And in knowledge itself there is a greater and less; a knowledge of bees and book-keeping is less adequate to the powers of the mind than the possession of philosophical principles; which itself is perfected only in the knowledge of God.¹⁹ The end is not in riches, or power or glory or pleasures, it is God,²⁰ God as known, for only here does the cognitive power find its adequate object. If we are talking philosophy where there is no question of beatific vision or supernatural life, still only in the knowledge of God, in some sense or other, can the true end and perfection be found. The end of man as Aristotle pointed out is primarily in his highest activity, the contemplation of God in so far as He is discoverable. The singularity of man among creatures in the return of the universe to God is thus apparent. God

i» Cf. C.G., III, 25.

zos.T., I-II, qq. 2 & 3; I, q. 103, 2, 3m; II-II, 122, 2; I, 44, 4.

is his end, his own perfection is his end and these two reduce to the one concept, union, assimilation with God to the highest possible degree.²¹

Since man moreover is will as well as intellect this too must have its adequate object. And as in the case of intellect, so also the will's adequate object, the only object completely perfective of it is God, as supreme personal Goodness, to be worshipped as creator of man; to be sought with *amor amicitiae* as object of personal love, in union with Whom man's nature is to be overwhelmingly enriched.

Many other goods there are which enrich man's nature. They are the goods that take cognizance of human nature's social character. A man is more fully a man among men, as member of a family, a society, a state, a fellowship of other human beings. He is enriched by what he receives but also by what he gives to these. Social life is always an element in the means to individual perfection. But it is also an integral element in the end itself. It is an element in the means to perfection for man is incalculably enriched by intercourse with others by their endowments, aptitudes, skills, by their companionship, friendship, sympathy, love, manifested in multitudinous ways which bring more fullness to his being; he is society's debtor. He owes to the community of which he is a part, a great part and often the greatest part of what he values, the various boons that come from its civilization, its culture, its virtues, its intellectual and artistic patrimony without which he would be impoverished indeed. He is himself further perfected by what he contributes to the maintenance of these values, to the amelioration of this civilization and culture, to the enlargement of its patrimony. A debtor to the present and past, he is a creditor to the present and future. Human development or perfectioning is a collective enterprise that may go by the name of civilization, a work by which man and men progress in knowledge and mastery of the world, a work whose object is to develop humanity in man. This in its fullest and best sense can mean only to free man from slavishly serving matter, his inferior, from being unduly exploited by men, his equal, to permit him to live more and more by the spirit and ultimately to deepen in him the sense of the infinite. Societal living then is a definite good of man, a means to his development. It scarcely needs be added

²¹ Gerald Vann, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

that it is also an element in the actual possession of man's end, for his end can never be construed as a state of passivity and quiescence but rather in a continuing manifestation of activity, for action will always be a perfection of man, and his noblest actions can only be exercised in the company of men. Man's nature even in the perfected state will never cease to be social and hence his end must likewise be social.

In all these goods may man find perfection; but in none, save God will he find his full perfection. All else are partial and subordinate goods at best; partial, since no one in itself nor all taken cumulatively are adequate to man's exigency for perfection; subordinate, because their good value lies in their congruity with the total nature of man taken in its ultimate reference in its relation to the Absolute Good of man. He is perpetually unsatisfied in particular goods. His continual unrest, his instability in searching from one to another testifies to their powerlessness to satisfy him. Rich though it is in goods that are congruous with man, "Nature, poor stepdame" as Francis Thompson has well said, "cannot slake my drouth."²² He thirsts for an absolute good. Wanderer, pilgrim for the Absolute he goes through the world seeking that whose perfection corresponds to his need of the Absolute²³ and in whom, beyond measure of perfectibility, his nature will grow to full stature. But the absolute good can only be found in the Absolute Being. This being, the Great Being as the primitives say, the Absolute Being, unlimited, possessing in Himself all perfections, the plenitude of being and the source of all perfections in particular beings, is what tradition calls God.

Just how God, the Absolute, can be the ultimate perfection of man, the concrete Supreme Good attainable by him, philosophy cannot satisfactorily say! It can tell us that man's perfection and happiness lies in the knowledge and possession of objects which increase the power of his mind and of his actions, in the union with beings or persons which enrich him by the communication of values which are in them. It can tell us that man's craving for fullness of being can be satisfied nowhere outside of God, but only in union with Him, a union which supposes a

22 *Hound of Heaven*, 1, 99.

²³LeClercq, *op. cit.*, p. 297: "pelerin de l'absolu, il (l'homme) va par le monde à la recherche de Celui dont la perfection correspond à son besoin d'absolu _____"

reciprocal link, a mutual lien of give and take. But it also discloses that God has no need of man, and, moreover, that He is infinite, transcendent, inaccessible. He may give His gifts to man but can He give Himself? And will man be fully perfect with anything less than God? The transcendent Good of Plato, the impassible God of Aristotle, the ineffable Being of the Hindoos, the undetermined One of the Neo-Platonists, these afford no ready solution of the problem and philosophy falters before the mystery. It is at this point that Christianity steps in to complement the findings of philosophy and with the most precious and precise of *givens*. Man's aspiration for the Absolute, the Perfect is realizable. He cannot of himself lay hold of the Infinite, but God can and will unveil His unspeakable good, allow him divine intimacy, conduct him to a realization of a union that is beyond his own power to conceive or realize. That God is a Father, that He has created through love, that he wills to respond to the aspirations He has placed in us, these are the accessible *givens*, the gifts accessible to human reason from the time that Christian revelation lifted the veils behind which the Absolute was hidden. They provide the answer to the otherwise perplexing and insoluble problem of man's drive for perfection. Philosophy for the Christian cannot be but Christian if it is to answer questions as well as ask them, in terms of ultimate causes. The Christian ethos cannot ignore the fact that man has a supernatural destiny, that only in the attainment of it will he reach his full stature. But the Christian ethos possesses the satisfying character of giving to philosophy the answer to the problem which it has raised and is incapable of solving. Man's supernatural end (good) consists in the contemplation and union with God in the measure that is possible for a finite mind; it is the face to face vision of God in His essence that is beyond his natural aptitudes.²⁴ His clamoring for the Absolute finds its response in the Absolute.

Moral Good

Any metaphysics which fails to explain being in terms of the Absolute Being and good in terms of the Absolute Good is a deficient metaphysics, and any morality which is based on such a metaphysics will be a deficient morality, and give an incomplete

²⁴ CO., III, 37, 38, 39, 40, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54; S.T., MI, q. 3, a, 8; q. 5, a, 5 & 6.

and at least partially distorted, if not, untrue picture of man. For morality in its ultimate analysis is nothing more than an essential expression of the tendency of man towards the Absolute—"motus rationalis creaturae in Deum."²⁵ Moralities which do not admit the existence of God are fundamentally defective and false; they deaden or numb man's need of the Absolute either by confining him to sensation or in giving him succedanea, that is, substitutes which beguilingly misrepresent the Absolute or present some misconceived notion of the Absolute, or some relative that has been mistakenly absolutized.²⁶ These defects will be noted later. For the present, what is to be emphasized is that man along with the rest of creation shares in the Godward movement and only in the measure that this is realized will he reach his perfection: but he does so in a unique manner, as a rational creature, as a being endowed with free will. The tendency towards the good is a peculiar apanage of the will.²⁷ Moral goodness is the will's goodness. The moral order is the order of the will. And inasmuch as morality is related to specifically *human* conduct, to the conduct of humans as endowed with free will, it is to this power that the essence of morality will be attached.

The will's object is the good in general. But the will is a *rational* appetite. It is dependent for its motion on the intellect. It can only seek the good as known. It is in this unique way that every ontological good that is within the conscience ken of his intellect and within the competency of his will, may become transmuted into a moral good. For St. Thomas, moral good is linked up with ontological good in a very direct manner through the simple intermediary of man's rational appetite. A caveat, however, must be interjected at this point. While every tendency towards a known good ipso facto enters into the moral order, still not every ontological good that is known and sought by the will is a moral *good*. It is a moral good only if it is a true good of man. And it is a true good of man only if it is sought in accordance with reason. Human actions must take their proper place

²⁶ Vann, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

²⁶ LeClercq, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

²⁷ Indeed one might say that everything else which is described as tending towards an end and hence towards a good, has the notion of tendency ascribed to it only by analogy with the will. The will is the prime analogue of the expression "tending towards a good or end".

in the harmonious movement of all creation that converges towards the transcendent object that is its final end, God. The human will does so only in being directed by reason. Whereas brutes, in accordance with their nature are led of necessity to the end that is congruous to them, it pertains to the rational being that it should with the help of intellectual knowledge and under the guidance of its nature conduct itself to the good that is congruous with it.²⁸ Man is above all a rational being. In this lies his excellence with respect to all else in the material universe. It is the superior element in him, whereby he is most closely assimilated to God, and it should consequently rule all those movements that come within his conscious appetencies. It was obviously intended by nature and by God to exercise a royal and political sovereignty over his lower appetites and his will. Man is not acting reasonably, in conformity with his nature if reason and will become enslaved to his passions and serve as mere instruments to satisfy their whetted appetites and to compass the difficulty of getting more and more gratification. Concupiscible powers that are natural and which tend to the sensibly and sensually delectable must do so under the regime of reason. As St. Thomas says: "Whatever tends toward its object in unbridled fashion (irrefrenate) is not natural to him (man) insofar as he is human but rather is contrary to his nature as such."²⁹ This mastery of reason should likewise be evident in his relations to everything else, in his usage of things that are inferior to him (for food, clothing, shelter, locomotion)³⁰ in his contacts with his fellow men, in his relations with God. In acting freely he must do so in accordance with reason, otherwise he is not being, or on the way to being, fully what he is and should be. "The good of man is to live according to reason";³¹ "the cause and root of human good is reason".³² These are constant refrains to which

*z**S.T., I - I I , 1, 2; 19, a, 3, 5, 9; *De Vent.*, q. 17.

****** *In H Sent.*, 30, 1, 1, 4m: " Quod in suum objectum (vis concupiscibilis) tendat irrefrenate, hoc non est naturale sibi in quantum est humana sed magis contra naturam ejus in quantum hujusmodi".

3° C.GMII, 22.

⁸¹" Bonum hominis est secundum rationem esse, malum autem quod praeter rationem esse " (*S.T.*, I - I I , 71, 2c; *ibid.*, 18, 5c; *C.G.*, I I I , 9).

32" Causa et radix humani boni est ratio " (*S.T.*, M I , 66, 1c).

St. Thomas gives utterance. Reason is the rule and measure, the prime principle of all human acts.³⁸ Man is not truly himself, he is not true to himself unless primacy is accorded to the superior, the rational, the spiritual in him. The will is ever tending towards the good. But the moral character of human actions appears when this tendency is in accordance with the dictates of reason and only then. Only then do human actions enter the moral order and impart moral goodness to the will.

Reason then must function for man as the criterion of morality or the crucible in which are tested his moral judgments. This is not to mean that it is a magic charm, a touchstone, a ready-made mechanical device applied to our judgments like a T-square to a board. It does not present us a standard or standards ready made. Its possession does not exempt us from making painstaking analysis of reality. Indeed it is not reason if it does not make such analysis at least in the more difficult cases where action is called for and direction is needed. It is liable to error in many instances. But, whether it is true or false, its dictates must be followed. The will is always evil if it departs from the dictates of reason whether these be true or invincibly erroneous.³⁴

For the most part however, at least in simpler and most fundamental instances, man's reason will reflect truth. God has not left man without the necessary correct guidance to his end. And by the native light of reason he can discover the proper means thereto. His reason is not a fundamentally variable and subjective factor. Rather is it a relatively stable power capable of objectively analyzing the right order of the universe and man's place therein. When it does so, reason itself is right. It is not creative of this order, but soundly manifestive and expressive of it. It is not a self-ruling autonomous power but a subordinate and participated likeness of Divine Reason itself, the supremely creative and ordinative rectrix of the world. (As St. Thomas says, while human reason is the proximate norm of morality, the

³⁸ "Regula . . . et mensura humanorum actuum est ratio quae est principium primum actuum humanorum" (S.T., I - II, 90, 1c. Cf. also *ibid.*, 19, 1, 3m; 58, 2c; 100, 1c).

³⁴ In the cases where it is in error in its judgment there is still moral good in following its erroneous dictates, provided the error is invincible, for in such cases the will seeks what it is convinced is a real good. Of. S.T., I - II, 19, 5c; also *In II Sent.*, 39, q. 3, a. 3, sol.

supreme norm is eternal law which is nothing other than Divine Reason.⁸⁵) In its natural function it discovers that pattern of life which is best for man by uncovering in his nature, *complete spectata*, the order imposed⁸⁶ by Divine Reason on his being within the framework of which he can alone reach his destiny, his perfection, his happiness. A.v. his reason discloses to him that he must live *normally*, that is, in accordance basically with the general norm or rule that goes by the name of the natural law. Much has been written on the natural law, but nothing so clearly or succinctly as when St. Thomas describes it as "the participation by a rational creature in the eternal law".⁸⁷ (*Participatio legis aeternae in rationali creatura.*) The eternal law in turn is nothing more or less than "the *ratio* of divine wisdom according as it is directive of all actions and motions."³⁸ The notion of order and plan which such direction entails is emphasized by St. Augustine when he speaks of the eternal law as simply Divine reason or the will of God commanding the observance of the natural order and forbidding its disturbance.³⁹

Strange it is that as soon as the word law is introduced into the discussion of morality, some men, incorrigibly rebellious, recoil. They conjure up the crude notions of commands "arbitrarily imposed by God";⁴⁰ they conceive it "as a sort of strait jacket clapped upon man by an external agency",⁴¹ as something hampering, trammeling humans in their appetency of the good, interdicting their pursuance of it. They speak of it disparagingly as the "impositionist" theory. All this is to misconceive law; it fails to note that law is ultimately the expression of Divine Reason and wisdom about which there is nothing arbitrary. Imposed it is to be sure, but not whimsically, capriciously to

*«S.2\,I-II,71,6c; M I , 21, 1c.

**S.T., M I , 71,6; *ibid.*, 21, 1c.

87 & 7\, 1-11,94, 2.

³⁸ S.T., M I , 91, 1: "Ratio divinae sapientiae secundum quod est directiva omnium actionum et motuum".

³⁹ "Lex aeternae est ratio divina vel voluntas Dei ordinem naturalera conservari jubens et perturbari vetans" *Contra Faustum*, 1, XXII, C. XXVII, P.L. t. XLII. col. 418.

⁴⁰ Stace, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

"*Ibid.*, p. 37.

restrict man and destroy his liberty but to constitute the conditions in accordance with which man may be truly free and freely attain his full stature. Imposed from without, it becomes immanent in nature through its natural expression in the law which St. Paul refers to as the law written in the hearts of all men⁴² and which Pope Leo XIII describes as the "lex . . . scripta et insculpta in hominum animis singulorum".⁴³ It is nothing more than "supreme reason injected into nature" (*Lex est summa ratio insita in natura*) to serve as a guide for man in his pursuit of happiness and perfection, not for the purpose of "cramping his style" or restricting his freedom. It is and always will be the pattern of what we ought to be and⁴⁴ its formulation by God is something necessary for him. It is an expression primarily not of the power, but of the goodness and love of God for us.

To be sure it is obligatory. God would never otherwise have imposed it if He did not will the observance of the natural order. And once He has created man He cannot not will His observance of this order. The Supreme Wisdom that is expressed in man's rational nature by the natural law is simply divine self-consistency "ad extra". And the Divine Will can will nothing save what is in accord with His Absolute Reason. As "rex et legifer noster" He must oblige man to conform to His Will. But He does so in accordance with man's free nature. The obligation consists in a moral necessity, not in a physical coercion. Man remains physically free though he is under a moral necessity of acting in conformity with Divine Reason and Will. This Divine reason and Will expressed in man's nature represents the principles of man's development and perfection.

Human reason can ascertain these principles as it functions normally and correctly. It is a power common to all men, basically the same, though potentially capable of more or less perfect development in different men according to the use to which they

« Rom. 2. 16.

⁴³ Encyclical: *Libertas Praestantissimum*, 20, June 1888, *Actus de Leon XIII*, Paris, *Maison de la Bonne Presse*, I-II, p. 180.

⁴⁴ Vann, *op. cit.*: "Law is the perfection of movement; without it, order and therefore consonantia or harmony . . . is impossible. But it is law regarded precisely in the sense of order flowing from or consonant with the nature of things as the pattern of their proper perfection, not arbitrarily imposed coercion foreign to the nature of things", p. 65.

put it. St. Thomas speaks of it as a "homogeneous" rule or norm for the will of man in regard to his moral judgments and dictates,⁴⁵ and refers to it as the natural judicatory which all men enjoy through the disposition of divine providence⁴⁶ as a directive principle of specifically human actions. This natural judicatory of reason, fortified designedly by God with prime principles of the practical order, just as man's intellect is endowed for other obvious reasons with prime principles of the speculative order, enables him to know what things are good for him and what things are bad, what things must be done, what avoided, which are simply licit or permitted. Not all of these are known with equal facility, not all are known with the same precision by all men. For the apprehension of the goodness or evil of some things man needs the special illumination of God's revelation in the form of positive divine law;⁴⁷ for others there is required calm, diligent, dispassionate and disciplined investigation such as is beyond the ordinary mental capacities of most men⁴⁸ (these concern the more difficult applications of and derivations from the prime principles of the natural law); but in respect to others (and these by far the most fundamental things) only a moderate reflection (*modica consideratione*) such as does not tax the power of any man is required, so clearly expressed in nature is their moral character to the human mind,⁴⁹ and so readily do they flow as immediate consequents of the prime principles that are the common possession of man. As St. Thomas says: "There are certain things which the natural reason of every man, of its own accord and at once judges must be done or not done, such as: *Honor thy Father and Mother*, and *Thou shalt not kill*, *Thou shalt not steal*"⁵⁰ The basic reason, however, why*these are to be done or avoided, is not that they are commanded or forbidden by posi-

⁴⁵ S.T., I - II, "Regula voluntatis humanae . . . propinqua et homogenea (est) humana ratio."

⁴⁶ C.G., III, 129, Praeterea: "Homines ex divina providentia sortiuntur naturale judicatorium rationis ut principium propriarum operationum."

47 S.7\I-n.M, 4c.

48 S.T., I - II, 100, 1c.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., "Quaedam enim sunt quae statim per se ratio naturalis cujuslibet hominis dijudicat esse facienda vel non facienda; sicut: *Honora patrem tuum, et matrem, et; Non occides: non furtum facies*"

tive law (quasi lege positae) but that they are respectively convenient or repugnant to his nature,⁵¹ they are right or wrong in themselves, they are in accord or disaccord with his reason and ultimately with the Divine Reason. A.v. these things are intrinsically right or wrong, good or bad. They are not good or bad because they are commanded or forbidden; rather are they commanded or forbidden because they are respectively good or bad, good or bad relative to man's perfection, good or bad in respect of right reason.

The same holds true of the more difficult and remote conclusions of the first principles of the natural law. Errors of judgment are quite possible here because of the recondite and obscure nature of the matter or because, man blinded by passion or given over to depraved customs or evil habits of nature, does not or cannot exercise his reason properly.⁵² It is due to such conditions that divine positive law and wise human legislation is needed functioning in a desired supplementary role (a reason no doubt why Plato thought that philosophers should rule or govern!). But in any case it will be discovered that it is not the legislation as such that makes actions right or wrong. Their rectitude or turpitude in the last analysis will be found in the fact that they are in accord or disaccord with right reason and that is why they are commanded or forbidden. (We are speaking here, of course, concerning what is commanded and forbidden by natural law, and do not mean to infer that the injunctions and proscriptions of all law have to do with matter that is intrinsically good or evil. Indeed much that is enjoined or prohibited by positive laws is, as such, morally indifferent and becomes good or evil only because of the law, as, for example, the ecclesiastical laws relative to fasting or attendance at Mass on Sundays. Even here, however, right reason must guide the legislator. And the purpose of the

⁵¹ C.G., I I I, 129, Praeterea: "Sunt aliquae operationes naturaliter homini convenientes, quae sunt secundum se rectae et non solum quasi lege positae."

⁶² In such cases reason is corrupt and can no more lead to truth in practical matters than a false syllogism in speculative matters. The norm of human actions is not reason, under any and every circumstance, but right reason, reason operating correctly, unhampered by passion or prejudice. As St. Thomas says: "Corrupta ratio non est ratio, sicut falsus syllogismus proprie non est syllogismus: et ideo regula humanorum actuum non est ratio quaelibet, set recta ratio" (*In II Sent*, 24, q. 3, a. 3, 3m).

law must take into consideration the good of the subjects and should be motivated by some such end as exercising the subjects in obedience, humility, fidelity, restraint, etc., all things good for man.)

To return, however, to those actions within the scope of natural law that are good or evil *in se*—precisely because of this appraisal which right reason must give to them they possess an absolute value. They share in the absoluteness of their proximate and ultimate standard of reference, viz., human reason and the Absolute Reason of God respectively—the former being simply declarative of Absolute Truth and its unchanging principles. Much has been written about the apparent changes and the possibility of change in the natural law. It is not within the scope of this paper to set forth the discussion about this at length.⁵³ This much, however, seems certain: there can be no abrogation or dispensation in the strict sense of the term from any of the precepts of the natural law as long as the matter of the precepts remains unchanged. To the question whether there can be any dispensation from the precepts of the decalogue, St. Thomas answers categorically in the negative.⁵⁴ Divine Wisdom would be denying itself if it were to abrogate or take away the order of justice since God is His justice. God, Himself, cannot suspend, not even for an instant, those obligations which result from the relations which bind the finite to the infinite, the creature to the creator, the means to the supreme end, man to his parents and family, the citizen to his people, a neighbor to his neighbor, because He cannot permit acts that are destructive of goodness and morality,

⁵³ The reader is referred to the following: Heinrich Rommen, *The Natural Law* (tr.: Thomas R. Hanley, O.S.B.), B. Herder Book Company, St. Louis, 1947, pp. 51-57; Karl Kriakamp, *The Metaphysical Foundation of Thomistic Jurisprudence*, Catholic Univ. Press, Wash., D. C., 1939, pp. 18-25, 147-172; F. Suarez, *De Legibus*, Omnia Opera, Vives, Paris, 1865, Tome V, Lib. II, cap. 12, 13, 14, pp. 132-153; E. Leroux, "De Legis Naturalis Immutabilitate ac Indispensabilitate", *Revue Ecclesiastique de Liege*, VII, (1911-1912), pp. 110-114; A. Molien, art, "Loi", *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, Tome IX, part 1, pp. 881-884; O. Lottin, "Le Droit Naturel chez Saint Thomas et ses Predecesseurs", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, Vol. III, 1926, pp. 154-176.

⁵⁴ ST., I-II, 100, 8. St. Thomas assumes, of course, that the precepts of the law are adequately formulated. The formula, e.g., of the fifth precept is not "Thou shalt not kill" but rather: "Thou shalt not kill on private authority outside of the case of necessary self-defense."

whether that be individual, familiar or social. In the case, however, of the secondary precepts of the natural law (the second table, as they are called, those that derive from the mutual relations among men, dealing with the 4th to the 10th commandments of the Decalogue) there is possible what is called dispensation in the improper sense. For all practical purposes this simply means that there is a change in the matter at hand so that it no longer comes under the law, as when, for example, Abraham consented to slay his son. In this case Abraham would merely have been the executor of the sentence of death by the authority of Him who is Lord of life and death and hence who was Master of the life of Isaac. And had he carried out the sentence Abraham would be no more a murderer than God would. The matter was simply abstracted from that covered by the terms of the prohibition. The general principles, however, remain unchanged, though the application may vary in a particular instance.

There is an absolute value then to the dictates of the natural law relative to actions that are intrinsically good or evil. The former must be done (*semper sed non pro semper*); the latter avoided (*semper et pro semper*). They are independent of the human will and indeed, of any will; they cannot change with the changing times. God Himself cannot authorize anyone to be unjust, imprudent, mean-spirited or intemperate. Aristotle recognized this many years ago when he affirmed that there are some actions whose very names imply badness, for example, actions of spite, shamelessness, envy, adultery, theft and murder, and he adds: "It is not possible . . . ever to be right with regard to them: *one must always be wrong*. Nor does goodness or badness with regard to such things depend on committing adultery with the right woman, at the right time and in the right way, but *simply to do any of them is wrong*."⁵⁵ And St. Thomas' brief commentary on this passage states: "*Semper hoc faciens peccat . . . In se, enim quodlibet horum importat aliquid repugnans ad id quod oportet . . . ; qualitercumque operatum est unumquodque eorum vitiosum est*."⁵⁶ And the thing to note about such matters is that what makes such actions absolutely wrong is that they violate man's unchanging nature and they deprive him of perfection he should have and is obliged to seek. As T. Lincoln

55Nic. Ethics, I I, c. 6, 1107a, 9-25.

56In S.T., I I, Nic. Eth. lect. 7, Vives XXV, 308 b.

Bouscaren has well said: "One man or all men together cannot make abortion or adultery right, any more than they can make cyanide of potassium good to eat. The latter is physiologically bad because it disagrees with man's physical nature; the former are morally bad because they wreck man's moral nature."⁵⁷ Unequivocally then, do we adopt an attitude which implies the absolute and which excludes the narrow relativism of the moral and legal positivists.⁵⁸

This is not to say that there is nothing relative in such matters. In one sense all moral actions (and indeed all actions) are relative. They are related to an end; they are means to an end; their perfection consists in their suitability to attain the end; their moral goodness or badness lies in the fact that they abet or frustrate the attainment of an end, that is good for man, and, in the last analysis, that means his final end. Their value then is relative, in the order of utility, and is measured by the end to which they are directed. If this be a true good of man, then they are good; if not, then they are not. The relative thus acquires something of the fixity and stability of the absolute.

In yet another important sense moral actions are relative, relative to human nature as it is found in the concrete. Human nature can be regarded under a two-fold aspect—as it is in the abstract or according to the human species and as it is in the concrete, that is, as it is found with all the individuating notes by which it is realized. In both respects it is the same rational nature which is the norm of moral actions. Viewed in the abstract there can be discovered those immutable principles which are valid for all men in the same way. Looked at in the concrete, it serves to apply these universal principles to particular cases. It is here that some relativity will be observed, for human nature varies in certain respects from individual to individual. For example, if human nature is considered in the abstract we discover the invariable principle that temperance must be observed, that the lower part of man's nature, must be so governed, in the use of pleasurable goods that it serves or at least does not vitiate the higher. This rule is absolutely immutable and valid for all men

»7Of. *The Modern Schoolman*, Vol. XVII (Nov. 1939), "Law; Eternal, Natural, Civil", p. 10.

⁵⁸ Cf. A. D. Sertillanges, *La Philosophie Morale de Saint Thomas D'Aquin*, Paris. Felix Alcan, p. 15.

in every circumstance. But in the application of this rule to individuals as they are differences will be found. What is an act of temperance for one man may be intemperance for another. And even for the same individual the law of temperance in the concrete may well prescribe different things in accordance with varying circumstances and times. However relative these factors may be it is clear that what temperance calls for, namely, the proper subordinate use of pleasure, does not vary.⁵⁹

In all cases, there is and must be the same unvarying proximate norm, namely human reason, the same immutable ultimate norm, Divine Wisdom. Ethics is impossible without absolutes. Human actions draw their ethical or moral value from their relation with absolute value. The contingent in which our life unfolds is without value in itself. Its value depends on the measure in which the Absolute is expressed in it.⁶⁰ The relative requires the Absolute. But there is only one Absolute which can give stability to all that is variable and contingent; that is the uniquely independent, unchanging, all perfect and imperfectible Personal Good that is God, Who is Absolute Reason and Will in Himself.

To deny this Absolute is to cut the foundations from morality. Such denial leads either to the purely sceptical view that absolute values are mere illusions and that an ethics which stresses absolutes is mere "illusion built upon illusion":⁶¹ or else it leads to a purely relativistic view of morals and moral laws as being merely precipitated formulae of customs or social processes, only so relatively fixed as these processes, and hence capable (as John Dewey says) of undergoing "sooner or later, more slowly or more

⁵⁹ Cf. Saint Thomas: QQ.D.D., De Virtutibus in Communi, a. 6. See also Victor Cathrein, *Philosophic, Moralis*, 8th Edit., B. Herder, Friburg, Brissgoviae, 1911, p. 82.

⁶⁰ LeClercq, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

⁶¹ For a surprising and very frank statement of this sceptical attitude confer Albert Kocourek, in *My Philosophy of Law*, Credos of 16 American Scholars, Boston Law Book Co., Boston, Mass., 1941, p. 172: "Such fields as aesthetics and ethics are illusions built upon illusions, comparable in law to presumptions based upon presumptions. They are mere vagrant by-products. The world of reality knows nothing of the good, the true, and the beautiful. It is neither rational nor irrational: it simply exists. Natural law and an ultimate standard of justice, which even conventional reason must recognize as mere constructions of practical ideals created by the human mind are examples of illusion on illusion."

quickly, the attrition of ongoing processes."⁶² (This is the **view** of positivists, utilitarianists and pragmatists in general.) To grant that there is an Absolute, that it is God, but to emphasize His Will over His Reason (as Descartes, Puffendorf and the Medieval Voluntarists did) is to empty morality of all content, leaving only the form of oughtness; it is to destroy the ultimate distinction between good and evil, to reduce morality to the grotesque and unreasoning form wherein no actions are good or evil in themselves but only as commanded. To replace the Absoluteness of a Divine and Personal Intellect with a blind, impersonal absolute will or world force (as did Schopenhauer and Nietzsche) or to regard the Absolute as constantly changing and evolving towards a questionably higher state of perfection (as did Hegel,⁶³ von Hartmann,⁶⁴ Bergson,⁶⁵ Leroy,⁶⁶ Whitehead⁶⁷ and Alexander)⁶⁸ is to give to the relative no mooring, and to morality, no fixity, and to empty the absolute itself of all absoluteness. Finally, to absolutize the relative, to transfer the quality of abso-

⁶² Cf. John Dewey, in *My Philosophy of Law*, p. 78, 79.

⁶³ Hegel, *Grundlingen der Philosophic des Rechts*, nn. 257-272 in his *Wirke* Vol. VIII, pp. 312 f.

⁶⁴ The German philosopher of pessimism, Karl Robert Edward von Hartmann (following Schopenhauer) in his *Phanomenologie des sittlichen Bewusstseins* (Berlin, 1879), assigned no other end to the empiric individual egos (*Erscheinungsindividuen*) than that of contributing to the fulfilment of the absolute end which is "Die Erlosung des Absoluten von seiner transscendenten Unseligkeit durch die immanente Qual des Weltprocesses" (*I c*, S. 870)!

⁶⁵ Henri Bergson, *Evolution Creatrice*, p. 270: "God is not He who is but a reality in the making ... a continuous projection."

«Edouard LeRoy in *Rev. de Met et de Morale*, (1907). God is "an infinite in becoming".

⁶⁷ Alfred W. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, N. Y., Macmillan Co., 1929, p. 528: "God derives a fullness of physical feeling from the objectification of the world". Cf. p. 527.

⁶⁸ S. S. Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, 2 vols., London, 1927, Vol. I I, p. 361: "As actual, God does not possess the quality of deity, but is the universe tending to that quality. . . . Only in this sense of straining towards deity can there be an infinite actual God." *Ibid.*, p. 365: "Does an infinite deity exist? The answer is that the world in its infinity tends towards infinite deity or is pregnant with it, but that infinite deity does not exist. Infinite deity embodies the conception of the infinite world in its straining after deity. God as an actual existent is always becoming deity but never attains it. He is the ideal God in embryo!"

luteness to something finite and contingent and dependent, like the individual human being, or an abstract humanity or the community, the race or the nation, and to repose the ultimate norm of morality therein is to dehumanize man, to stultify his mind, to numb his need of the Absolute and to offer no satisfactory solution to the problem of man's undeniable and incoercible urge for personal perfection and happiness.

Such are some of the more important attitudes with respect to the Absolute, and their effects upon morality are appalling. If there is no God at all, or none that we can know or one that is not remotely interested in us, or one that is Himself changing and perfectible, then as Claire Booth Luce has said, He becomes a damaged "bill of goods" that is the monopoly of licensed practitioners in religion to be high-pressured on the naively faithful one day of the week alone, or a political cliché given honorable but insincere mention at the end of campaign talks in exchange for 'Bible belt votes' to beguile gullible suffragists and suffragettes; and morality, like religion, becomes an opiate of the people. At best it is a man-made device that might be regarded in some form or other as a necessary convenience in human living and a safeguard against social chaos, but it is something that lacks fixity and unalterable form, that changes with changing practices, that comes to be allied with usage or the prevailing customs of a people. Unmoored from its secure anchorage to the Absolute Being, morality loses all permanent objectivity, all necessity, universality, immutability. Sundered from the Absolute Good, morality becomes divested of the absoluteness formerly attached to it. Nothing can be judged finally and definitely to be moral or unmoral, good or evil. Law which is nothing more than the imperated expression of what is to be done and what avoided comes to be regarded as a mere human contrivance, a modifiable experiment in social engineering, a creature of society, an arbitrary dictum of those temporarily in power, a whim of mobocracy, a plebiscite of a plurality, a temporary and necessarily evanescent expression of public will or prejudice, a transitory folkway or conduct pattern which changes with the moods and mores of the people and is at best relatively permanent, a necessary restriction of liberty for the good of societal living with the least possible friction and waste, or finally a compromise which determines when and how much an individual must sacri-

fice for the sake of having his pursuit of individual satisfaction protected or extended.

If, however, God exists; if He is the supremely personal and absolute Intelligence and Will Who has created and rules this world; if He is the alpha and omega of all, the end, in assimilation with Whom man reaches His perfection, then morality is nothing more than the movement of the rational creature towards Him, the moral order is simply the framework within which man rises to his full stature and attains complete happiness and the moral law is his guidance along the way. All that is needed is light. And light is not lacking to us. "The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is seated upon us", says the psalmist.⁶⁹ The impress on that light is reflected within us. By its penetrating and unwavering rays, the darkness is dissipated, the way becomes clear, the signposts stand out; we can walk with firmness in the light as God gives us to see the right and discern what is good and what is bad for us on the high road to our destiny. If we veer from that guiding light then all surety vanished, the good becomes indistinguishable from the bad as one darksome form merges into another and we stumble along in enveloping gloom. Only in the light of the Absolute does man's pathway become illumined. Only by anchorage to the Absolute does the relative receive fixation.

FRANCIS X. MEEHAN, PH.D.

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THE ABSOLUTE AND THE RELATIVE AS A PROBLEM IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

I TRUST that it will not be deemed imprudent of me to call to mind the general subject of our 1946 meeting, even as we address ourselves to a new topic. That Thomistic metaphysics is radically existentialist in character is a standpoint which is acquired only with effort, but once acquired it can never be relegated to a secondary place in philosophical thinking. Because it is held to permeate and govern all the fundamental positions, it should have a definite bearing on the discussion of any important problem or phase of philosophy. In treating of the post-medieval speculation about the absolute and the relative, there is no good reason for avoiding a somewhat wider question. Once the Thomistic doctrine about the nature of being and thought has been interpreted as having an existentialist significance, is there any need to bother about the modern alternative views? Is it not sufficient to tutor ourselves in the existentialist way of think-

ing and, for the rest, be content with attempting to clear up the perplexities of our strict contemporaries who have a moral claim upon us? This question will be examined in the first section of the present paper. In the second section, some suggestions will be made preliminary to a metaphysical approach to one major theme in modern philosophy: the problem of the absolute and the relative. The first question is of particular concern to Thomistic philosophers, whereas the second one has in view the position of John Dewey and more recent American naturalists.

I

Guided by the pioneering example of Professor Gilson, American Catholic philosophers have begun to explore the relations between philosophy and history. There are many phases to this question, ranging from the general possibility of a philosophy of history to the proper role of history in the understanding and teaching of philosophy. To work out a philosophical approach to the history of philosophy is the high goal which has been set. It is not enough to accumulate monographs on particular thinkers and aspects of their systems. One does not produce a genuine history of philosophy by sewing together several such studies in a massive volume. It is not even sufficient to synthesize particular research activities in a general view of the movement of philosophy, important as this latter project undoubtedly is. Something more is required before the philosopher will agree that the lesson of the history of thought has been understood sufficiently and incorporated adequately into the present stage of the inquiry.

At least in the field of medieval philosophy some first-fruits have been harvested in pursuance of the larger aim. The conflicts within the Scholastic tradition itself have been seen to perpetuate basically divergent conceptions of philosophy as first formulated by the Greeks. The contributions of the Greek and Arabian thinkers have been considered from the standpoint of the transformations effected by their assimilation to a Christian wisdom. More and more, the originality of Aquinas has been declared to lie in his balanced stress upon essence and existence in opposition to the various types of essentialism. Taking an existentialist metaphysics as the standard, students have made an encouraging beginning in the work of tracing out the filiation of ideas and the operation of a radical option in medieval thought. The necessary

consequences of opposing metaphysical attitudes are detectable amidst the contingencies of the historical situation. Philosophical judgment cannot be said to be maturely formed unless it takes into account the unavoidable implications of the very first commitments concerning the object of intellect and the method of philosophy.

Yet it should not be supposed that history of itself settles any philosophical issue. Only the individual thinker who is historically well-informed and also directly conversant with the problem as met with in his own situation can do that. At second hand, there can be no formal recognition of philosophical truth and no contribution to its advancement. The constant danger dogging every philosophical school is that the truth will be handed over to the slogan-makers, to those whose professional task it is to proclaim a thesis complacently and uncritically, but with considerable fanfare. We should be on our guard lest the "express-messengers and foot-racers in the world of spirit" spread the good tidings of *existentialism contra essentialism* without having struggled in any personal way with the difficulties or felt the tug of the alternative view of things. No one but a veteran of the front lines can serve as standard-bearer without exposing his cause to unjust ridicule.

There are various methods for forestalling this philosophical parrotry. One way is to join gratitude for what has already been accomplished in the field of medieval philosophy with a steady regard for the questions that still remain unsettled. So far, there has been little inclination on the part of non-Thomistic Scholastics to agree that their own positions can be disposed of as variations of an essentialist tendency proved in principle to be unsound. Even among those Thomists who have not been occupied primarily with Descartes and the epistemological problem, there is felt a need to test and determine more precisely the meaning of existentialism with reference to the whole body of Thomistic wisdom, philosophical and theological. Another way is to call attention to entire areas of investigation where so far only the most precarious beach-heads have been established. It is not difficult to maintain in principle that the metaphysical basis of Scholasticism enjoys a perennial validity not confined to the historical period during which it was first developed. But a claim of this sort does not carry conviction with it until it has

been stated in function of actual detailed cases as well as in principle. The disengagement of leading concepts like cause, hierarchy and change from the Ptolemaic context in which they arose, for instance, demands much more than a reminder about the abiding nature of the evidence and a quotation from Aquinas concerning the possibility of other physical explanations. Positive and detailed analysis must also be made of the logical foundations and philosophical limitations of modern scientific procedures. This has not yet been done in any thoroughgoing way. Yet in a scientific age there is no other available demonstration of the relevance and adequacy of the traditional philosophy of nature, once the challenge has been made.

A similar predicament is faced whenever the great metaphysical and moral convictions are critically examined. It is not always possible to establish immediate contact between the Scholastic standpoint and that of contemporary philosophies. Scholastic criticism of these most recent theories often falls short of the mark by failing to take account of the broader historical background furnished by modern philosophy. The clue to a critical appreciation of many present-day views must be sought in the classical modern treatments which prove to be the admitted point of departure. Because of a concentration of advanced courses and research in the medieval field, many students lack this indispensable acquaintance with modern philosophy. No ready-made remedy for this situation is to be found in the writings of European Scholastics. Leaders like Gilson, Olgiati and Jansen have made excellent starts, but a good deal more spade-work needs to be done both in understanding and in evaluating the modern mind throughout its five-century development. Here the American Catholic universities, associations and scholarly journals have an opportunity to encourage a concerted program in modern philosophy as a supplement to their continuing reclamation of the truths arrived at during the Patristic period and the Middle Ages.

Corporate support should be given to research and teaching activities in the area of modern philosophy. This support ought to find expression in quite concrete ways: in the curriculum for graduate studies, in adequate library facilities and other research tools, and in opportunities for publication. Personal encouragement and the maintenance of high standards of scholarship need to go hand in hand if any real advances are to be made in this

matter. The worthwhileness of endeavors in the modern field should be publicly recognized, thus enheartening those already engaged in the work and attracting younger scholars who might otherwise not respond to the urgent need for co-operative labors along this line. At the same time, the temptation to relax our critical judgment in the case of Catholic contributions to the history and evaluation of modern philosophy must be resisted. Shoddy dissertations and articles are often approved and even published on the mistaken notion that a third-rate job here is better than none at all—especially if it renders an emphatic verdict in favor of Thomism. But mediocrity and doubtful integrity have never won out in the long run in philosophy, no matter what the cause they pretend to serve. The actual consequence of inferior scholarship and intelligence in dealing with modern problems is to produce the conviction that Thomistic philosophy has nothing to offer to the modern mind.

It is sometimes felt by Thomists that all our efforts should be concentrated upon the recovery of the true mind of St. Thomas and that serious work in modern philosophies would only confuse or drain off energies in wasteful fashion. This objection implies a falsely prudential husbanding of talent and a lack of confidence quite foreign to the spirit of Aquinas, Scotus and other great Scholastics. The work of recovery must be undertaken today precisely because so many "well-husbanded" teachers and writers failed to re-think and develop the Thomistic wisdom in reference to the problems and methods of their own age. If our generation in turn adopts a hothouse attitude, it too will fail to grasp and profit by the teaching of Aquinas in spite of all the historical research. The existential direction of this research has in fact been due largely to the concern of students with issues raised by Kantian criticism, philosophy of life, Bergsonian duration and the varieties of contemporary "existentialism." Similarly, impetus was given to the re-examination and development of the doctrinal tradition on analogy, intentionality, finality, *actus purus* and human self-knowledge by the many and often conflicting views of those Catholic thinkers who had attempted to take account of modern insights and legitimate questions. There is well-founded hope that the phenomenological method will eventually contribute a fresh current in the treatment of moral life and in the reintegration of the Augustinian and Thomistic approaches to

philosophy. And finally, the rule of completely separated worlds of discourse for Scholastics and contemporaries would be modified were detailed study made of the intricate historical transformations of key concepts like substance, power, causal law, abstraction, idea, being and understanding. Both Thomism and philosophical thinking generally would profit by broadly conceived investigations in this direction carried out by men trained in medieval philosophy as well.

A major objective of such an enterprise would be the proper application of an existentialist version of philosophy to modern systems. The difficulty is not exclusively one of methodology or one of relating a realistic to an idealistic or critical way of thinking. Fresh trails can be opened up in this regard. The epistemological question can be treated not only in terms of metaphysics versus criticism but also in terms of different ontological outlooks. It may be asked whether there are metaphysically grounded reasons explaining the preference for mathematical and physical standards and models in the great modern conceptions of philosophy. A theory about the necessities governing *all* actual options in philosophy must submit to this test of applicability to the various historical phases of philosophy. How perennially abiding is the contrast between the essentialist and the existentialist philosophical attitudes? Does the same contrast reappear in some form or other in all periods, so that some light is shed by it upon positions worked out in a modern as well as a medieval setting? If pure positions are never or only very seldom found, what method ought to be followed in distinguishing between the various motifs actively present in modern philosophy? Is this the ultimate expression of radical metaphysical antagonisms?

Behind these particular queries lies the root difficulty of making transference of a theory from one historical context to another. That such a transfer is in principle possible follows from the nature of the view in question. It was made available by a close inspection of the medieval experience in regard to general explanations of reality. But what was there uncovered can have relevance for all human attempts at founding or discrediting metaphysical wisdom. There is no intrinsic obstacle against its critical use in the study of doctrinal syntheses elaborated under different historical circumstances. A statement of this sort must be taken, however, as an incentive and a challenge rather than

as a release from the burden of proof. In view of the possibilities for progress and retrogression which history always affords, any detailed comparative application of the criterion of existential metaphysics must be made in an analogical way. Consequently, the chief points in this doctrine must be so understood that no turn of thought or expression peculiar to one situation will be taken as an indispensable and universally valid feature of a true metaphysical view. The correlative requirement is that the historical materials be respected for their testimony concerning the exact sense in which men posed their questions and sought to settle them. Because Spinoza wrote that "the essence of man does not involve necessary existence" is no reason for hailing him as a new thane of Aquin and of Roccasecca. At the same time, the tag of nominalism is not to be affixed to Berkeley merely for his sharp onslaught upon what he knew as abstract ideas of being and existence.

As Americans, we are further asked to bear in mind the philosophical issues that have mattered most in our country. Preoccupation with the practical order has not blinded American thinkers to the factual importance of metaphysical concepts and to the need of taking a definite stand in their regard. This concern about metaphysics was given antithetic expression in the conferences of two American Gifford lecturers, Royce and Dewey. Half a century ago, Josiah Royce saw no better way of dealing with the question of "the world and the individual" than by making a review of the four great historical conceptions of being. And twenty years ago, John Dewey found it necessary to preface his plea for experimentalism with a characterization of the entire metaphysical trend of ancient and modern philosophy. Despite their wide differences in method and result, both philosophers felt obliged to declare their mind on modern philosophical history and on the nature and validity of metaphysical speculation. There is nothing outlandish, then, about an investigation into the general patterns of metaphysical reasoning displayed in modern philosophy.

One further point of agreement between Royce and Dewey is noteworthy here. They single out the problem of the absolute and the relative as a most significant preoccupation of modern philosophy. Dewey indeed bases his whole indictment of metaphysics and the so-called "quest for certainty" upon their neces-

sary connection with a philosophy of the absolute and the relative. This latter distinction is said to entail a depreciation of this finite, changing, visible world of ours and of the practical sort of thinking whereby men control and better their situation in such a world. It is evident that any defence of ontology will have to face Dewey's charge that this problem is a pseudo one which need no longer engage the attention of reasonable men. That is why a recent attempt at vindicating metaphysics assigns so important a place to this question. In his essay on "nature and man," Professor Paul Weiss returns several times to the notion of the absolute, its place in a naturalistic metaphysics and its role in the thoughts of the great modern philosophers. His purpose is to show that philosophy is forced to admit some sort of distinction between the absolute and the relative, and also that the absolute can be conceived in such a way that it does not devour or depreciate the relative. All the more weight is lent to his position by reason of the historical analyses that accompany every stage of the argument. When metaphysics learns to defend itself genetically as well as formally, it will have permanently dispelled the myth about its origin and consequences which Dewey admits to having created "with malice prepense." The evidence of history, although not automatically decisive, can never be excluded from the settlement of philosophical issues.

A first conclusion is now reached. The thesis about essentialist and existentialist versions of first philosophy requires patient historical and doctrinal testing for its applicability to modern as well as medieval philosophy. Both for the fuller understanding of existential metaphysics and for the advance of philosophy today, its further historical and theoretical implications should be worked out. Yet only superficial results will be obtained if it is hastily injected into contemporary controversies about metaphysics and existence without the supporting aid of a careful, critical analysis of the rich vein of modern philosophy generally. Neither Heidegger nor Whitehead nor Lavelle is ready to cut his thought off from the main stream of modern philosophy. Any convincing treatment of their views by Thomistic philosophers must likewise base itself upon a concrete, analogical engagement with this same historical tradition.

II

Turning next to the modern concern about the absolute and the relative, the first remarkable fact is the persistence of this concern. Descartes set the keynote for his successors when he confessed the impossibility of carrying through his *Meditations on First Philosophy* without determining something about the existence and nature of God, along with His role in the construction of the new philosophical edifice. This latter aspect of Descartes⁷ interest in natural theology seemed to Pascal to indicate a scandalous subordination of the living God of Abraham to the designs of mere philosophers. But it remained true that Descartes had to explain the finite and contingent nature of the thinking subject as well as its fallibility and exposure to deceptions, both self-imposed ones and those perhaps devised by higher intelligences. So consistently have philosophers since Descartes turned to an absolute as the ground of human limitations and hopes that Kant could, without serious fear of challenge, call this inclination a natural law and need of our minds. Whatever the warrant for a joint discourse about God and the world, the attempt to think philosophical problems through to this limit marks most of the great modern syntheses. Not even the surfeit induced by absolute idealism could turn the inquiry away permanently from this orientation.

Once the strong attraction of thought towards the ideal of a synoptic understanding of the relative and the absolute has been noted, however, attention must then be drawn to the great diversity among the explanations. A deep line of cleavage is customarily drawn between thinkers in the rationalist line who experience no final hesitation about the mind's ability to penetrate to the absolute and the empirical family of minds, which strictly limits itself to the conditioned, experiential world. The former group admits of several attitudes, ranging from what we now look upon as the comparative caution of Descartes and Leibniz to the utter confidence of Spinoza and Hegel before the task of integrating the finite world with the absolute. Among the empiricists, there is not so much a progressive loss of confidence in reason as a narrower interpretation of the available evidence, the scope of existential judgment and the worthwhileness of certain doctrines. Hume is willing to cast loose Spinoza and the Anglican divines on the same leaky raft, since he believes it to be of little moment

in practical affairs whether we view the divine substance as one with the world or apart from it. Practical consequences take the place of deductive rigor as the new measuring rod of philosophical truth. But Kant has forever raised a doubt about our ability to build either moral life or science upon a purely pragmatic foundation.

Much more enlightening than the conflict in conclusions is the conflict in ways of posing the problem itself. An account of the different positions finally arrived at is worthless if held apart from the different conceptions of where the difficulties lie. Nicolai Hartmann's thesis that "problematicity" is the very heart of philosophical insight reminds us of the importance of this theme in history. In his time, Aristotle was interested not only in which causes, which degrees of abstraction, which principles of change his predecessors had uncovered, but also in the reason why they asked the questions they did and why the complete answer continued to elude them. Similarly, the story of modern philosophy is deprived of dramatic motive and movement unless we consider the how and the why of the problems themselves. In the case of the relative and the absolute, this approach is specially rewarding.

No major philosopher supposes that his own treatment is a mere appendix to or extension of a given body of doctrine. This is strikingly confirmed by those few cases in which this does indeed seem to be the author's conviction. Spinoza's little work, *Cogitata Metaphysica*, for instance, is one of the minor masterpieces of philosophical irony. Presumably, he is offering in this book a Cartesian commentary upon the Scholastic textbooks in metaphysics which were popular then in the Low Countries. At certain crucial stages in the argument—when the Cartesian doctrine on God's absolute freedom and on human freedom is at stake—Spinoza mockingly retreats behind the guise of an objective and humble attitude. Instead of seeking to clear up the difficulties and even the absurdities to which extreme voluntarism leads, Spinoza remarks that although the consequences must be so and must be in harmony with other positions, still we remain ignorant of how this can be. Far from providing a mere introduction to Descartes by way of criticizing the Scholastics, he is preparing the reader in a most effective way for his own version of absolute causality in regard to the finite order of reality.

Radical methodological dissatisfaction with previous procedures also characterizes the great modern contributions. That is why revolutionary claims in regard to philosophical method have regularly heralded new outlooks on the absolute and the relative. Locke's announcement of the historical plain method was intended to discredit the entire deductive manner of settling the problem. He called attention to the prior need to examine the operation and limits of human understanding within the admitted sphere of its competence before going on to speculate grandly in the region of the absolute. He was afraid, as Berkeley after him was, that the philosophical bases of religion would crumble in the wake of the well-deserved collapse of undisciplined imaginings concerning God and the nature of mind and matter. Locke's warning is a good example of the process of immanent criticism and self-correction at work in modern philosophy. Because this criticism has always been directed at the prevailing views on God, scientific method and human nature, it has prevented a widespread dogmatic acceptance of any particular standpoint. The modern experience can best be read as a constant strife between excessive statement and counterstatement about the leading issues. No contemporary theory, then, can claim to convey the single-voiced witness of history, for there is no such unanimous testimony.

Our problem has persisted in dialectical fashion, giving rise to tensions as various levels of inquiry. No simplistic version of these tensions can be admitted, for the aim of such an approach is to lend historical plausibility to prejudices already solidified beyond hope of revision in the light of the outcome. Thus the generalities being popularized by some American naturalists about the deleterious effect of even allowing the problem of the absolute and the relative a place in philosophy fail to cover many relevant points. One of these is precisely the trait we have been stressing: the recognition of excesses and of the need to curb all one-sided explanations, including the empiricist one. Great modern philosophers invariably pave the way for their own teachings by exposing the mote in their brother's eye. Spinoza saw the threat to the order of nature and the mathematical way of thinking latent in the Cartesian doctrine on the divine will and the eternal truths. Leibniz sounded the alarm against Spinoza's own determinism and pantheism, even though he in turn could never

free his system from a similar taint. With Hume, the very notion of systematic deductive thinking is discarded, leaving no other "system" or absolute than that of human nature taken in its stably predictable consequences. This desperate corrective at least seemed to make room for the individual experiences and qualities which were being legislated out of the scientific universe. No other philosophical question has been taken less for granted or answered from so many vantage points with a view to including all the factors.

Why then have the alternations continued, along with the suspicion that none of the historical solutions so far have been radical enough? This question is specially urgent when the comprehensive explanations of Kant and Hegel are kept in mind. The great strength of Kant's philosophy lies in its honest effort to do justice to both fact and law, to the contingent and the universally necessary elements in experience, at least on the scientific level. Because he refused to gloss over or dialectically conjure away the stubborn distinctions present in human experience, Kant was left with a set of dichotomies that refused to reduce to unity. Not even the device of a transcendental unity of apperception was powerful enough to achieve the synthesis of all experience in a single body of knowledge. Kant's attempt to bridge reflectively the chasm between theoretical and practical reason failed, but in failing it exposed the meaning of the crisis which modern philosophy was undergoing in its search for a new synthesis.

Two meanings of "the absolute" had developed in pre-Kantian philosophy without being adequately distinguished. One sense of the term had a vaguely traditional background, connoting the absolute Godhead whether conceived as *Deus sive natura* or as a personal transcendent and moral ruler of the universe. From the theoretical standpoint, Kant could discover no definite content or existential import in the notion of an unconditioned and all-perfect reality. A being free from the spatio-temporal conditions of experience that alone enable us to distinguish between possibility and actual existence could not in principle be known to exist. This special interpretation of actuality and existence in terms of a doctrine on scientific experience is the core of Kant's rejection of all theoretical proofs of God's existence. There is only verbal agreement between him and Aquinas in regard to the invalidity of the so-called ontological argument. To save the

import of religious or rather moral life, Kant transferred to the practical order all discussion about the absolute as an infinitely perfect and holy being. In theoretical philosophy, "the absolute" can be assigned only a regulative function. It designates the systematic search for ever more complete and more unified explanations of the scientific world of experience by means of empirically applied categories and laws. In this second sense, the term refers to the system of scientific knowledge in its ideal completeness and limit. It has application to an order of essential truth in conformity with the Newtonian procedure in the physical sciences. In this context, *esse* means to be an instance governed by law in a space-time system.

It is better, however, to remain on the side of life's irreducible distinctions than to pass over to the earthly triumph of Hegel's absolute synthesis. Hegel pushed to the extreme the tendency to equate the absolute with systematic knowledge. Hence he made of religion only a penultimate moment in the dialectical march toward philosophy, considering the latter to be the plenary expression of both science and actuality. He overcame Kant's dichotomies at the price of compromising both God and man, thought and being. His omnivorous dialectic accounted for all things and for all differences between things as well as between philosophical viewpoints. And, like the fiery dragon of legend, the system was so successful that it ended by devouring its own tail and the rest of itself. Small wonder that a violent reaction was provoked among those philosophers who felt themselves strangely untouched by this double movement of assimilation into the phenomenology and the philosophy of absolute mind. Otherwise widely divergent thinkers like the younger Fichte, Marx, Kierkegaard and Trendelenburg pried through the same chink in the armor of the system. Their common assault was directed against Hegel's subsumption of essence and existence in the higher synthesis of actuality. Their contention was that actuality is not the same as a notion about actuality, especially when the latter is on the way to declaring itself as concept and idea. Moreover, both theist and atheist agreed that it were better to live in a godless world than to submit to being a necessary moment in the self-development of the Hegelian absolute. One can understand also the irrationalism and excessive individualism which were the only defences some minds could devise against the Hegelian

juggernaut. In order that the actual might not fall victim to a systemic view of reason and the order of being, a pathway was made by Nietzsche to the dangerous wasteland where power and biological transvaluation hold sway.

But philosophy need not doom itself to passing forever from one extreme position to another and from one false hope of synthesis to the next. At this point, the problematic approach I have been indicating should naturally lead to a doctrinal revaluation of the modern experience in the light of the perennial philosophy of being and becoming. Instead of dismissing the problem of the absolute and the relative as a *fata morgana*, there is need to re-explore the whole field with the aid of metaphysical principles and insights which had been almost lost sight of in modern discussion. One need not confess to an inordinate lust after certainty in continuing the search for an answer. Yet it is true that the investigation has been hampered by a confusion between the order of being and the logical order. The lesson of history points to the need for a thorough overhauling of method.

Neither God nor the human individual nor the actual world can be encompassed within an absolute system or within an outlook formed by methods drawn only from the physical and mathematical sciences. Systemic explanations are not ultimate or autonomous, but remain tools of human intelligence. They must be integrated with the individual man's act of affirming existent being and with his conduct in the real situation. Yet in the process of liberating man from the pretensions of idealistic absolutism, care must be taken not to deliver him over to an equally inhuman pragmatic naturalism. David Hume's honesty in facing the consequences of this way of treating the world and the personal self ought not to blind us to its arbitrariness and insufficiency. Only an uncriticized residue of common sense and a fraudulent draft upon the fund of the natural sciences and perennial philosophy can make this standpoint seem momentarily plausible. But a view of man is always coordinated with a view of God. The notion of God requires rescuing from the caricature of Him as an immobile locus of perfect essences. By denouncing this caricature, the naturalists are performing a good service. But it should be recognized that the object of attack is indeed a caricature and that the service is rendered primarily to those who are endeavoring to find an adequate conception of God. If

this can be found, then the theory of human nature will be relieved from the need to overstress practicality, action and change. These features of human life will find their proper place in a metaphysic of man's nature and existence, his knowing, working and worshipping. Advance beyond the sterile impasse of " absolutism against relativism " demands this integral recovery of God and man without the loss of historical experience.

JAMES COLLINS

St. Louis University

St. Louis, Mo.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

LOGIC AND METHODOLOGY DIVISION: *Panel:* FRANCIS X. FITZGIBBONS, FRANCIS X. MEEHAN, MUREL VOGEL.

Problem (a): An Evaluation of Symbolic Logic

At the meeting last year Father Gerard Minoque of Brooklyn, New York, concluded his paper with the following statement:

It seems to me that a primary desideratum of the present day is the finding of a metaphysical foundation for mathematical logic, since the keenness and excellence of this new organon are far too precious to lose. I suspect that this can be found, since mathematical logic when applied to reality * works *

In this paper I shall try to explain that metaphysical foundation by an analysis of the instrumentality of mathematical or symbolic logic. Since Scholastic analyses in this field are relatively recent, or at any rate not readily available for reference, it will be necessary to touch on several tangential topics in order that the resolution of the central point may be made clearer. Furthermore, the final conclusion as to the nature of symbolic logic is, for me, still tentative. Again, the limitations imposed by a paper of this kind will necessarily leave the greatest portion of the field unexplored. It is hoped, however, that others will be stimulated to give increasing attention to this most pertinent question.

The following statement by one of the modern symbolic logicians will serve to show the extent of our present analysis:

Symbolic logic has so far been a domain of mathematicians. It grew from the soil of mathematics, it found its first successful applications in mathematics, and it remained accessible only to those who were trained in the mathematical technique.

The present textbook of symbolic logic is written on the assumption that the new logic has a wider meaning, that it is on the march to replace the traditional Aristotelian logic in all fields, and that it can be taught to students who have no special mathematical training. I came to this opinion when I saw that an analysis of science and a general theory of knowledge demand the use of the methods developed in symbolic logic as much as does the analysis of mathematics; and I found overwhelming evidence for it in more than twenty years of academic teaching, which showed me both that symbolic logic is the best initiation to a scientific philosophy and that it can be taught to all who seriously desire to learn it.

Among others, the writer makes the following points:

1. Symbolic logic has been identified with mathematical logic.
2. The 'new' logic is to replace Aristotelian logic.
3. An analysis of science demands the use of such a logic.
4. Symbolic logic is important as an initiation to philosophy.

1 *The Three Fundamental Laws of Thought in Their Metaphysical and Logical Aspects*, Am. Cath. Phil. Ass., Proceedings, 1946.

2 *Elements of Symbolic Logic*, H. Reichenbach, Macmillan, N. Y., 1947, p. v.

Because of the limits of this paper we pass over the second statement, the ⁴ 'new' logic is to replace Aristotelian logic, and the fourth, symbolic logic is important as an initiation to philosophy, with only a categorical denial. The first statement, namely that symbolic logic has been identified with mathematical logic is important only to the extent that it show the dependence of this new logic on mathematics. It is in the third statement, however, that we shall find the clue to the surprising fertility of this method: An analysis of science demands the use of such a logic.

If we contrast the scientific method of Dirac and Milne with that which was in vogue even fifty or sixty years ago, we see more clearly the truth of such statements as the following: 'Physics . . . (is) a correlating of measurements, instead of a deciding of the ultimate nature of anything/⁸ * That science is concerned with the rational correlation of experience rather than with the discovery of fragments of absolute truth about an external world is a view which is now widely accepted/⁴ Dirac and Milne, possibly more than any of the other modern physicists, have made extensive use of matrices and group theory in the development of their physical science. The employment of such 'mathematics' in physical science makes the distinction between classical mathematics and modern mathematics more obvious. In the discussion to follow, if we bear in mind the notion that modern mathematics developed largely from the attempt to furnish a rigorous proof for propositions in mathematics, the present tendency to make it a 'formal logic' applicable to all knowledge will be understandable. The only additional notion required is that of certain of the modern epistemologists who claim that the 'exact' physical sciences are the criteria for all true knowledge.

Both Aristotle and St. Thomas saw the necessity of 'impressing an intelligibility' on things by the use of mathematics. Their development of the notion of a *scientia media* whose object was both natural and mathematical was the first step in the analysis of the eternal dialectic involved in the attempt to know natural things *in concreto*. However, we should notice that the mathematical sciences which they spoke of were those developed by the early Greeks and summarized by Euclid in the *Elements*.

These *scientiae mediae* in the strict sense soon reach their limit. The world is soon perceived, in its further concretion, as non-mathematical. For this reason, while this method in its first steps is scientific, further explanation according to this mode tends to be more and more dialectical.⁵ The light of mathematics becomes too dim to illuminate the natural subject in itself. It is here that the human intellect is able to step in with a super-dialectic already devised by the earlier students of 'pure' mathematics. The development of this organon, which can be traced back to

**Time, Knowledge and the Nebulae*, M. Johnson, Dover, N. Y., 1947, p. 148.

⁴ Quoted by Eddington in *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1939, p. 184.

⁶ Cf. St. Thomas, *De Caelo et Mundo*, Bk. I, lect. 3, n. 6; also *I Posteriora*, lect. 15, nn. 5-6, and lect. 17.

the first applications of mathematics by Archimedes, has given modern mathematics a character entirely different from that of Euclid.^{5*}

This transition from the domain of classical mathematics to that of the modern dialectical construction is easy, once started. There are many similarities between them from the noetical point of view. In fact, these similarities have confused most writers to such an extent that they insist upon identifying them. The first similarity is found in the notion of *constructability' used by modern mathematicians. As Cassirer says:

The logical nature of the pure functional concept finds its clearest expression and most perfect example in the system of mathematics. Here a field of free and universal activity is disclosed, in which thought transcends all limits of the *given\ The objects, which we consider and into whose objective nature we seek to penetrate, have only an ideal being; all the properties, which we can predicate of them, flow exclusively from the law of their original construction.

This notion of the constructability of mathematical concepts has been mistakenly identified with that found in classical mathematics. Such interpreters should be warned by Cassirer's statement that in this modern construction we transcend "all limits of the 'given'". This is not true in Euclidean mathematics. In this latter science we are always held to the exigencies of *quantitas interminata*.

The second similarity between classical and modern mathematics is found in the abstraction by which each attains its object. The objects in classical mathematics are abstracted from sensible matter. This is true also of the entities of modern mathematics. Again, however, the identification on this ground is too facile. The modern mathematician is dealing with *entia rationis*, while the classical mathematician has a quite different object. This distinction has been clearly set forth by John of St. Thomas:

Thus mathematics considers quantity precisely as to its having non-terminated extension and according to what it has from matter, but not according to the termination and mode which it has from form by reason of which it is made sensible. Therefore mathematical quantity has a positive concept of non-terminated quantity in the way in which quantity can be found whether imaginarily or sensibly in the nature of true being. Thus it is permissively related to the nature of real and true being: neither positively including and considering adequately nor positively excluding by repugnance the reality of quantity itself. In this respect it differs from purely imaginary quantity which is *ens rationis*: the latter is repugnantly related to real quantity because it is *ens rationis*.⁷

A third similarity between the classical and modern notions is found in the adaptability of both to the field of experimental science. For example,

^{5a}This is important in any evaluation of modern comparisons between 'Euclidean' and 'non-Euclidean' mathematics. Too often writers assume that Euclidean mathematics is merely an earlier attempt to establish a *rigorous' foundation for its proofs. By so doing, of course, they miss the point completely.

* *Substance and Function*, Open Court, Chicago, 1923, p. 112.

? *Cursus Theologicus* (Solesme ed. 1931), T. I, Disp. VI, a. 2, p. 534a.

we speak of motion in a straight line and we speak of an ideal gas which is a fixed relation of pressure to density and temperature^{J*} Here again we must examine the two more closely. A sensible gas approaches the perfect realization of this fixed relation as a limit, but whether there is such a limit is unknown. On the other hand, a sensible line approaches the mathematical straight line as something known as existing. The case of the ideal gas is comparable to the principle of inertia in this respect. When we call a gas 'ideal' we mean that it is a mental construct suggested by experience but in no way directly based upon experience.

If we pause for a moment and ask why it is that this new and very effective instrument, developed as it was from algebra, analytical geometry, the calculus and number theory, happens to be available, we would find something like the following: The mathematicians had been developing this method in order to overcome the classical dichotomy between arithmetic and geometry. They were trying to 'rationalize' the continuum by reducing it to number.⁸ The mathematical physicist, on the other hand, had been uncritically using the mathematical notions developed by the mathematicians. The recent developments in physics were made by Heisenberg, Eddington, Dirac and Milne when they realized that this mathematics is fundamentally a dialectic.

Historically, the mathematical development begins with algebra which no longer is restricted by distinction between arithmetic and geometry, but considers these as homogeneous.⁹ Following this, the development of analytical geometry and the calculus led Descartes and Leibniz to envisage a universal mathematics which would be an organon for all knowledge. With the 'algebra' of Boole we see "for the first time that a complete and workable calculus is achieved, and that operations of the mathematical type are systematically and successfully applied to logic".¹⁰ Finally the *Principia Mathematica* of Russell and Whitehead defines all arithmetical ideas in terms of 'logical notions'.

As indicated earlier, this organon is exceptionally useful in any further development of experimental science. However, to confuse it with the organon of Aristotle overlooks the fact that, for the latter, problems in logic are problems concerned with proofs and demonstrations. By this we mean,

^{7a} The chemist would rather say that the ideal gas is 'one which would follow a fixed relation of pressure to density and temperature such that:

$$p/\rho = \text{a constant/}$$

⁸ I hope to be able to go into this notion in more detail at another time. Those interested may refer to an article by A. Fraenkel, *Continu et discontinu*, published in the Travaux du IXe Congrès International de Philosophie (Hermann et cie, Editeurs, Paris, 1937) for a fairly complete statement of the problem.

⁹ Cf. *Procedures and Metaphysics*, E. W. Strong, U. of Cal. Press, Berkeley, 1936, pp. 73 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. *Symbolic Logic*, Lewis and Langford, • Appleton-Century, N. Y., 1932, p. 9.

as John of St. Thomas points out,¹¹ that the principal object of logic is the syllogism and, among syllogisms, demonstration. Aristotelian logic, since its end is knowledge, and not just any knowledge, but certain knowledge through causes* places its greatest emphasis on demonstration. This means that the 'Posterior' analysis, concerned with the matter, is an essential and even more principal part of logic than the 'Prior' resolution, concerned with the form. Symbolic logic, on the other hand, as can be seen by its historical development, is primarily concerned with the form of reasoning. This will become more evident when we examine more closely the intrinsic nature of this dialectic.

The metaphysical basis for such a 'formal logic' has already been adequately analyzed in an article by Dr. Charles De Koninck¹² It consists in the construction of a 'rational' system out of the intellect's capacity to predicate a thing of itself with identity. For example, if we take anything whatsoever, we can predicate it of itself. Again, we can predicate the proposition of itself. Then, again, we can predicate the predication of the proposition of itself of *itself*, etc., etc., in infinitum. Such a structure will contain all the so-called 'primitives' used in the construction of modern mathematical systems. In the continued iteration of identity we develop a *system' from which we can derive all the 'logical' notions used by the symbolic mathematicians.

A brief summary of such a construction can be seen in the following exposition. If we start with any object and symbolize it with the letter *A', we can, with iterated, identical predication, derive the following system:¹³

"Cursus Philosophicus (Reiser ed., Marietti, 1930), Logic, p. 265. Respondetur, quod syllogismus, qui fit per tertiam operationem, est principale obiectum Logicae, et inter syllogismos ratione materiae principalior est demonstratio. Ratio est manifesta, quia, ut docet S. Thomas 1. Periherm. lect. 1. et 1. Poster, lect. 1., omnes tres operationes intellectus ita se habent, quod prima et secunda ordinantur ad tertiam ut ad principalem, in qua perficitur ratiocinatio et discursus, qui recte disponitur per syllogismum et certo ac firmiter resolvitur per demonstrationem. Cum ergo scientia Logicae proprie et essentialiter sit directiva rationis, illud est principale obiectum, ubi principalius invenitur ratiocinatio et discursus cum certitudine et sine errore. Contingit autem error vel ex defectu formae vel ex contingentia materiae. Ergo principale obiectum ex parte formae est syllogismus recte dispositus, principale autem ex parte materiae est demonstratio, in qua invenitur processus rationis sine errore tam ex parte materiae quam ex parte formae. De his tamen, quae pertinent ad alias duas operationes, etiam per se agit Logica, licet minus principaliter.

¹² *La dialectique des limites comme critique de la raison*, Laval Theologique et Philosophique, Vol. I, no. 1, pp. 177 ff. 1945.

¹³ For those who may prefer a geometrical image of this process I append an illustration of the same basic construction. This can be seen in *The Open World*, Hermann Weyl, Yale U. Press, New Haven, 1932, p. 65. If

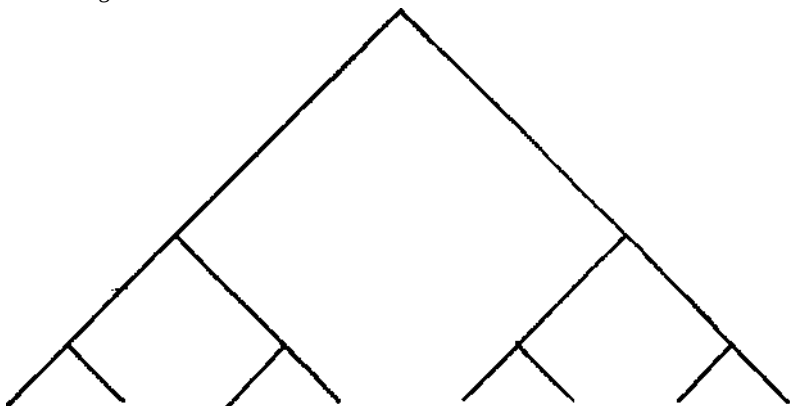
$$\begin{aligned}
 &A \\
 &A = A \\
 &(A = A) = r(A = A) \\
 &[(A = A) = <A = A)] = [(A == A) = <A = A)] \\
 &\text{etc.}
 \end{aligned}$$

Here we have created a purely rational world of relations. As De Koninck says:

The relation of identity of A to A can be turned back on itself to infinity. By so doing, it (the intellect) produces a purely rational order of time and position. It can compare these relations with each other and thus generate all the species of relations: equality, similarity, priority, etc., as well as their contraries, all purely rational. Notice that throughout this proliferation it is always the same object in itself that is being carried over; it is the identity of this which assures the rational purity of the system in question. In itself, it is the same A that we encounter at every point in the system. Between any two terms, however close they may be, we can interpolate any number of relation-terms and make the system as dense as we wish. In all this proliferation, however varied it might be, the object in itself is never separated from itself. Any term of the system is capable of a proliferation identical to that of any other. Each of the terms of the ensemble can be elaborated into an ensemble identical at every point to that of which it is a part. What is said of the whole can then be said, in its turn, of any part. In each member of the ensemble we can encounter the same ensemble, etc.¹⁴

It should be noted that he has said that the intellect "produces a purely rational order of *time and position*". In fact, the very nature of a created intellect imposes this necessity: "In going from one thought to another, every created intellect manufactures time."¹⁵ Obviously the time that we

we use equal angles and maintain a fixed proportion, less than 1 to 1, of the later arms to the earlier, we shall derive the following figure of infinitely increasing infinities:



"Op. at* p. 183.

"/bid., p. 179.

have generated is **not** *numbrus motus secundum prim et posterius*; at least we cannot take motion in the strict sense of *actus entis in potentia in quantum huiusmodi*. Rather is it a time which John of St. Thomas denies as *ilia mensura quae constat ex pluribus indivisibilibus operationibus, quorum una succedit alteri sine motu fluente intermedia*.¹⁶ This is called discrete time because it lacks the *numerus motus* and retains only the *prius et posterius*. The relevance of this for modern physical theory has been pointed out by Dr. Martin Johnson:

The point common to the relativities of Einstein and of Milne is the fixed number 'c'. With Einstein the logical status of such fixing is seen in the empirical fact that the velocity of light as measured is constant for all observers. This includes, for instance, the fact that astronomical data on double stars would never have been capable of coordination if the constancy were not true to high accuracy. On the other hand, in Milne's treatment c is an agreement between observers to use the same numerical factor in building coordinates out of each man's immediate temporal experience. Milne's treatment enables (a) the basis of physics in temporal consciousness, and (b) the ground for communicability of any scientific information, to become interrelated.¹⁷

The facility with which this rational system can be applied to physical science is startling only if we fail to realize the dialectical nature of experimental science. If we understand more clearly that the experimental scientist is never able to abstract the nature of the object which he studies, that his reasoning is always hypothetical, we shall be in a better position to see why this organ on developed by modern mathematics 'works'.

The Victorian experimentalist with his notions of substance, matter, cause, etc. was fairly certain that his progress through theory, hypothesis and law brought him to a real knowledge of the world in itself.¹⁸ The modern scientist's more modest claim is summed up in the following statement:

'Intelligibility' has thus become divorced from fictitious claims to 'know what thing underlies phenomena' in the sense of devising a causal model of mechanism and expecting it to be a picture reduced in size from perceptual experience. If the differential equations and the appropriate transformations provide predictions quantitatively checked in experiment, we have the degree of understanding which is desired for those aspects of Nature interesting to physics.¹⁹

In other words, the modern scientist is content to pose questions which Nature can answer affirmatively or negatively. This is the attribute characterizing the dialectical question, as Aristotle points out in the *Topics* (158a 14-20):

Not every universal question can form a dialectical proposition as ordinarily understood, e.g. 'What is man?' or 'How many meanings has "the good"?' For a dialectical premiss must be of a form to

¹⁶ *Curs. Theol.*, T. II, Disp. 10, a. 3, p. 97a.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁸ Cf. *Science and the Meaning of Truth*, M. Johnson (Faber and Faber, London, 1946), pp. 20 ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

which it is possible to reply 'Yes' or 'No', whereas to the aforesaid it is not possible. For this reason questions of this kind are not dialectical unless the questioner himself draws distinctions or divisions before expressing them, e.g. 'Good means this, or this, does it not?' For questions of this sort are easily answered by a Yes or a No.

This dialectical character of modern science seems to be understood by most of the modern scientists. On the other hand, their conviction on this point seems somewhat doubtful, if we are to believe the following statement by Eddington:

Keeping to physics, the commonly accepted scientific philosophy is that it is not concerned with the discovery of absolute truth about the external world, and its laws are not fragments of absolute truth about the external world, or, as I have put it, they are not laws of the objective world. What then are they, and how is it that we find them in our correlations of experience? Until we can see, by an examination of the procedure of correlation of our observational experience, how these highly complex laws can have got into it subjectively, it seems premature to accept a philosophy which cuts us off from all other possible explanations of their origin. This is the examination that we have been conducting.

The end of our journey is rather a bathos after so much toil. Instead of struggling up to a lonely peak, we have reached an encampment of believers, who tell us "That is what we have been asserting for years". Presumably they will welcome with open arms the toilworn travellers who have at last found a resting place in the true faith. All the same I am a bit dubious about that welcome. Perhaps the assertion, like many a religious creed, was intended only to be recited and applauded. Anyone who *believes* it is a bit of a heretic.²⁰

Thus, while most scientists in their methodological analyses would agree that 'the wave form might better play the part of propositional function', they cannot help feeling that corroboration by experiment should give some 'existence' to electrons, protons, neutrons, neutrinos, etc.²¹

As indicated earlier in the quotation by Hans Reichenbach, most symbolic logicians have been so impressed by the success of their method in the experimental sciences, without understanding just why it works, that they are led hastily to proclaim it as the universal method for all knowledge. The consequences of this are very serious. If this method, lacking a 'Posterior' analysis, is the sole method of arriving at knowledge, those **who** accept this position should be sophists, or at least skeptics. Fortunately, the better scientists and perhaps even some of the symbolic logicians do not go so far.²² Unfortunately, the great distance which exists today between perennial philosophy and the physical sciences has caused the epistemological writings of these better men of science to be poorly received by scholastic philosophers.

However, in any epistemological misunderstanding between philosophers and scientists the onus rests on us. Moreover, although there are many scientists who mistakenly talk about the 'existence' of their dialectical

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

²² Of. Eddington, *op. cit.*, pp. 189 ff.; and Johnson, *Time, Knowledge and the Nebulae*, pp. 130-131.

constructs, almost all scholastic philosophers, with far less reason, insist that protons, electrons, inertia, energy, etc. be interpreted existentially. But, if the classical physicists erred by imagining that the models drawn from a rationalization of our experience in terms of philosophical notions such as 'substance', 'matter', etc. represented the external world; and if later scientists erred by holding that a description in terms of Euclidean mathematics would adequately illuminate natural things in the concrete; the modern error of seeking the external world in the dialectical constructs derived from the intellect's exigence to create a discrete time is much more serious. Truly we are naturally metaphysicians!

I can well imagine that when the import of this analysis of the nature of experimental science is realized the objections will be many and vociferous, both those of the scientist and those of the philosopher. For the scientist, it is all right to call physics a 'set of Functional dependences' provided we do not examine too closely what is meant by a 'set of Functional dependences'. From the philosopher we run the risk of collecting the names 'Kantian', 'Idealist', etc. in their epithetical significance if we ascribe to any such notion of experimental science as the following:

It is the fundamental hope, that the infinite variety of natural facts can be simplified through the physicist's process of abstraction into a manageable finite number of forms, that has given to recent science its striking preoccupation with the mathematical Theory of Groups. Until the last twenty years, few mathematicians and hardly any physicists had taken notice of this simple and beautiful but thought-provoking border-line between pure mathematics and logic. Eddington is the only writer with the audacity to expound it in delightful and readable language. The theory concerns not the grouping of quantities but of 'operations' both logical and quantitative, and of particular importance are the properties of grouping sets of Transformations. I have already explained why the analysis of Transformations is at the root of ascribing any meaning to Nature, because it settles how 'knowing' can become independent of the accident of individual circumstance.²³

However, these objections overlook the paradox that, in spite of the dialectical nature of this method, or rather because of it, we actually are led further and further into the real external world. In one sense the assertions made on the basis of this dialectic are 'truer' than those given by any previous method. We get a more complete picture of the world in its concretion. On the other hand, we 'attain' this more complete picture even less than we did the earlier ones. We have only a *shadow world of symbols*. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this kind of knowledge presupposes, much more than did the previous interpretations, a positive knowledge of the *principles* and *terms* of the dialectic. We can never generate 2 from the series 1, $1 + i$, $1 + i + J$, . . . We must know both the 2 and all the numbers composing the series, the limit and the principle of the 'set' beforehand. However, the mathematical example, using the known 2 as the limit, is deceptive. As applied to experimental science our 'sets' are better exemplified by that for the ideal gas. Here we see that the construction of the notion of the ideal gas and of the series leading

²⁸ *Science and the Meaning of Truth*, M. Johnson, p. 61.

up to it can only be made by an ever increasing knowledge of the nature of the limit and of the terms making up the series. Thus, in practice, this method tends to push the scientist further and further into reality, and also further and further into the field of dialectical construction. It is for this reason that there is a great danger for the symbolic logician who attempts to spin out this web within himself. Cut off from experimental science where this method is applicable, he becomes at best a dilettante, at worst a solipsist.

In the light of this analysis, the problem in modern mathematics between formalism and intuitionism becomes intelligible. Also we can understand the truth contained in the many remarks by Poincare, Hilbert and others classifying mathematics as a game. Mathematics, mathematical logic and symbolic logic, if we consider them in abstraction from the experimental sciences, are only a game; a game in which we do not know what we are talking about nor whether what we say is true. This profound insight into the nature of modern mathematics which led its innovators to call it a logic and to insist upon its formal character, has been largely nullified by an equally profound ignorance of traditional, or more properly* Aristotelian logic.

In conclusion I wish to repeat that this new organon is good, and not only good but, for the experimental sciences, necessary. Insofar as modern scientists persist in developing this dialectic, they will be drawing further and further away from the perverted notion of science as 'applicable' towards a greater appreciation of its speculative character. By so doing they will escape C. S. Lewis' excoriation of the 'magician-scientist' and be able to give an enthusiastic affirmative to his question:

Is it, then, possible to imagine a new Natural Philosophy, continually conscious that the 'natural object' produced by analysis and abstraction is not reality but only a view, and always correcting the abstraction?²⁴

R. A. KOCOURBK

College of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota

Problem (b): 'Essential Relevance' in Whitehead

Alfred North Whitehead makes a contribution which must be considered in any account of American philosophy. After he became a philosopher, his general purpose seemed to be a reinstatement of metaphysics. It was perhaps an impossible task, considering his background in mathematical logic, in empiricism, perhaps most of all in his feelings towards what he often called dogmatism, and what this audience might call perennial metaphysics. But the purpose was there, and the genius of the man brought him far along the way of achieving it, far enough to be instructive for us.

For one trained in scholastic philosophy, Whitehead is stimulating, and

irritating. Let us mention briefly some of the points of basic difference, then put them aside for a time. He is utterly unintelligible unless approached with a certain sympathy or willingness to accept his preconceptions, at least for the sake of discussion.

There is the initial problem of novelty in the use of words. There is a whole new pattern of categories. There is a new picture of God, who emerges it is true as "a non-temporal actuality", but scarcely a personal one. He is described as "the complete conceptual valuation of all eternal objects"¹ Whitehead also repudiates the relation of subject and predicate, and for the subject-object relation he substitutes his subject-superject. Again, for him, "no thinker thinks twice, or to put the matter more generally, no subject experiences twice"² Most important, he is unalterably opposed to substance. "The philosophy of organism", he says, "is mainly devoted to the task of making clear the notion of 'being present in another entity'; . . . and the principle of universal relativity directly traverses Aristotle's dictum 'a substance is not present in a subject'".³ With these considerable reservations I approach the analysis of Whitehead from the point of view of his idea of relevance.

'Relevance' is a transcendent consideration in the organic philosophy of process. You meet it on every page. Three illustrations will do. In the beginning of his metaphysical period, back in 1922, reality was for him a coherence of factors (like the vectors of his mathematics), and the logic of subject and predicate was 'denounced' "If you once conceive fundamental fact", he says "as a multiplicity of subjects qualified by predicates, you must fail to give a coherent account of experience"⁴ At the height of his metaphysical effort, the Gifford Lectures in 1929 (published as 'Process and Reality'). the terms 'prehension' and 'concrescence' received their final forms in the expression of his coherence philosophy. "The sole concrete facts, in terms of which actualities can be analyzed, are prehensions". All the 'fatal bifurcations', in nature, in thought, and in life, are removed.⁵ Again, in what appears to be his last metaphysical effort, the 1941 lecture on Immortality (published this year, 1947, in the 'Essays in Science and Philosophy'), he remains an unrepentant relativist. "The notion of the complete self-sufficiency of any item of finite knowledge is the fundamental error of dogmatism. Every such item derives its truth, and its very meaning, from its analyzed relevance to the background which is the unbounded Universe".⁶ If we must despair of the self-sufficiency of any item of knowledge for the reasons that the things we know and our knowledge about them are inextricably interwoven, and that all entities are

¹*Process and Reality*, by Alfred North Whitehead, Macmillan, N. Y., 1929, p. 50.

²*Ibidem.*, p. 43.

³*Ibidem.*, p. 79.

⁴*Principle of Relativity*, University Press, Cambridge, p. 13.

⁵*Process and Reality*, p. 444.

**Essay in Science and Philosophy*, p. 101.

concretely 'prehended' or grasped into a un'ity with one another, it is **natural** to put this question: What, in such a philosophy, is intelligible, and to what degree?

Well, there is no categoreal substantiality for the mind to assimilate. What is the substitute for substance? It is the concrete activity of prehension, coordinating and unifying the elements of the background of multiplicity into the percipient event. But beware of any bifurcation here, This unity of perceptual event is a novel entity emerging from the act of observation, but it entails no duality of observer and observed. The novel entity is the observing act itself, and the unity is merely the "self-knowledge of our bodily event" *J* In the organic philosophy, these percipient events are the building blocks for its structures of reality and of knowledge. By definition, an 'organism' is the unit percipient event. The constituent elements of an organism are the prehensions or unifications of the multiplicity of relations into the emergent concretion which is the activity of the process. Professor Victor Lowe, probably the most skillful interpreter of Whitehead, tries to simplify it thus: The process, or event, organizes the new fact, or novel entity, out of these three elements: first, the self-knowledge, or awareness; second, the relevance of all other events with respect to it as a focus; third, the emergence of it as a value existing for its own sake.⁸ Knowledge then issues as a process. Indeed, in the philosophy of process, the only categories are categories of becoming. Whatever there is to describe, and your description of it, must be in function of becoming. The occasion, the droplet of experience, the event, the 'novel one'—these you have to work with. It might help here to recall with Whitehead that perishing is a function of every becoming. Rid your mind of its proneness to think of completed things, of enduring, perfected entities. An entity no sooner is than it isn't. It is true that its actualization has made it immortal, but only in the realm of abstract multiplicity into which it has sunk after the percipient moment has elapsed. As a concretion, an actual process, it is no more. Everything flows, and nothing remains. The very notion of completion is foreign to this line of thought. "There is", we read, "not one completed set of things. . . . We can never survey the actual world except from the standpoint of an immediate concrescence which is falsifying the presupposed completion".⁹

'Concrescence' is a key word. We are told it is the "name of a process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity in a determinate relegation of each item of the 'many' to its subordination in the constitution of the novel 'one'".¹⁰ This means that concrescence is the nearest to what is usually meant by the thinghood of the novel thing in question. "Each instance of concrescence is *itself* the novel individual thing. There are not the concrescence *and* the novel thing; when

1 Science and the Modern World (1947, Philosophical Library) (1925 edition), p. 103.

⁸ Lowe, in 'Whitehead' (vol. III of Schilpp's Library of Living Philosophers Series), p. 95.

⁹ *Process and Reality*, p. 322.

¹⁰ *idem.*, p. 321.

we analyze the novel thing we find nothing but the concrescence. 'Actuality* means nothing else than this ultimate entry into the concrete, in abstraction from which there is mere non-entity' ".¹¹ When we remember that the ultimate concrescence is the production of novel togetherness, we realize what is intended. Togetherness is the process of emergence of a complex unity, and it is nature of entities to be disjunctively many in process of passage into conjunctive unity. In process, which is the ultimate 'matter of fact', the many which are the universe disjunctively become the one actual occasion which is the universe conjunctively. Consider, for example, this percipient event which is the knowing of this blue thing. It is an actual occasion, prehending, and grasping into a concrete unity its own awareness, the relevance of it to all else and of all other blues to it, and its value. It says a relation to all other occasions in that the many, or the universe disjunctively, is caught into this emergent unit event which is the universe conjunctively. Nor does the event have to be a bit of knowledge, nor must it be a mind. Any matter of fact, and any matter, is, in its moment of actuality, an 'organism', a togetherness of concrescent prehensions.

Consider his example of the 'objectification' of a chair in 'Process and Reality' ¹² It is a well-known example, and is quoted rather at length. The sense data of the felt and seen chair are eternal objects.

The bare mathematical potentialities of the extensive continuum require an additional content in order to assume the role of real objects for the subject. This content is supplied by the eternal objects, termed sense data . . . (which play) a complex relational role; they connect the actual entities of the past with the actual entities of the contemporary world, and thereby effect objectifications of the contemporary things and of the past things. For instance, we see a contemporary chair, but we see it *with* our eyes; and we touch the contemporary chair, but we touch it *with* our hands. Thus colours objectify the chair in one way, and objectify the eyes in another way, as elements in the experience of the subject. Also touch objectifies the chair in one way, and objectifies the hands in another way, as elements in the experience of the subject. But the eyes and the hands are in the past (the almost immediate past) and the chair is in the present. The chair, thus objectified, is the objectification of the contemporary nexus of actual entities in its unity of one nexus. This nexus is illustrated as to its constitution by the spatial region with its perspective relations. This region is in fact atomized by the members of the nexus. By the operation of the category of transmutation, in the objectification an abstraction is made from the multiplicity of members and from all components of their formal constitutions, except the occupation of this region. This prehension, in the particular example, will be termed the prehension of the 'chair image'. Also the intervention of the pasts not confined to antecedent eyes and hands. There is a more remote past throughout nature external to the body. The direct relevance of this remote past, relevant by reason of its direct objectification on the immediate subject, is practically negligible, so far as concerns prehensions of a strictly physical type.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Idem*, p. 97.

The metaphysical structure of the actual is otherwise described as the sum of its internal relations. Whitehead is careful to include even space and time among the internal relations. Any event is the sum of the complex of its aspects, or of the relatednesses which enter into it, and these are unified by what is called a substantial activity of individualization. Hence, if the actual is an individual, it is so only as an individualized activity. If it has substance, it is only "this underlying substantial activity. For the concept of internal relations requires the concept of substance as the activity which synthesizes the relationships into its emergent character. The event is what it is by reason of the unification in itself of a multiplicity of relationships".¹³ It is a substitute, if a thin one, for substance. The point need not be labored further that the ultimate entity is process, and nothing more.

Matter has an endurance character that wants explaining. In the philosophy of organism, the endurance character derives from the reiteration of the same pattern in a succession of events thatprehend one another. This succession of events is called *nexus\ "On the organic theory, the only endurances are structures of activity and the structures are evolved".¹⁴ Whitehead uses the word 'physical endurance' when the enduring pattern expresses a certain unity of character uniting the underlying individualized activities. The character belongs to a whole route of historic events, and to each event of the route. Physical endurance then is merely a succession of prehensive events which have some principle of unity. The structure of the 'nexus' is of course the same with the structure of its constituent successive events. They are activities; so is the nexus. In the face of his insistence on the thoroughly atomic nature of factual reality,—he constantly describes the world of creativity as incurable atomic,—the permanence of the 'nexus * seems a bogus 'endurance pattern\ Naturally, in questions involving permanence, the process philosopher is hard pressed for satisfactory answers. Let us examine it further. Physical endurance is defined as a "process of continuously inheriting a certain identity of character transmitted throughout a historical route of events".¹⁵ Take, for example, this book. It is no separate existent entity, for there are none such, existing as it were in what Whitehead calls 'vacuous actuality\ The concrete book is a percipient event. But this book has many patterns within the complete pattern prehended or united into the book's unity. The book is a whole universe of 'eternal objects' concentrated here. Think of eternal objects as very like platonic forms. One of the patterns the book shares is the endurance pattern of temporal succession. It is not an important pattern. The book's instant being, as of this instant, is one of its trivial relations. So of all other environmental aspects,—its position, relation to this room, to me, to you. But if the endurance pattern is derived from what Whitehead calls 'direct' aspects of the temporal sections of the event in question (the book), then the permanent character of the sum

wScience and the Modern World (1926 edition), p. 180.

** *Idem.*, p. 158.

TM*Idem.*, p. 159.

of the sections appears. My account here of the endurance character of 'matter'—whether because of lack of understanding or inadequacy of expression on the part of the accountor, or because of internal unintelligibility,—would not merit a high grade for clarity. Perhaps it is because accounts in philosophy must reckon with common sense, a luxury readily dispensed with in some circles. Whitehead said in 1933 in Chicago: "The common sense notion still reigns supreme in the market place, the law courts, the playgrounds, and in fact in the whole sociological intercourse of mankind. . . . (but) the development of natural science had gradually discarded every single feature of the common sense notion".¹⁶ The common sense question persists: Is the physical thing a continuous identity, or made up of temporally discrete sections? Admittedly, such a question betrays one's *substance' and *person' position. It points a basic difference, and I think the impossibility of a reconciliation of the two positions.

'Personal identity' is analyzed briefly in the 1941 essay on Immortality against this background of process. It comes out no stronger a meta-physical construct than did matter in the 'historical route of events' theory. His reasons and his reasoning are unchanged. But in this essay there is perhaps the final expression, and so an important one, of his thought on value, and the manner in which creative action or process derives immortality from value. Perhaps it is just a change of emphasis, but I find a skeptical note in this work, different from the positive tone of his best period. Perhaps the octogenarian was aware of shortcomings in 'process' explanations of enduring things. He says, for example, "Personal identity is a difficult notion. It is dominant in human life. . . . We cannot dismiss Personal Identity without dismissing the whole of human thought as expressed in every language",¹⁷ Perhaps there is a wistful wish that permanence in actual existents were not so persistent a notion. If so, you might attribute the wish to senility or to common sense, according to your viewpoint.

But no treatment of the intelligible in Whitehead is fair to him which neglects value and aim. He conceived the organism, the ultimate percipient event, as an emergent value. Concretions are for their own sake. They are all realizations of values, satisfying unifications into concrete facts from the infinitude of eternal objects. Each creative effort, each fact, in its becoming, exerts a 'persuasion' on each and every eternal object to share itself in that concretion according to the needs of the latter. Each actual would realize a value and an aim. It is something like Pindar's "What thou art, that strive to be" in a modern dress. Value, then, is transcendent. It is the general name for the infinitude of values, some discordant, some concordant. And valuation is an eternal activity in things, "consisting in their adjustment of the potentialities for realization of the World of Value",¹⁸ This preoccupation with aims and values is the most hopeful aspect of this philosopher. It is the field wherein his considerable influence gives least comfort to the mechanist and to the pure empiricist.

¹⁶ *Nature and Life*, p. 15.

¹⁷ (Preceding page.) *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, p. 86.

¹⁸ *Idem.*, p. 80.

The lecture on Immortality, delivered before the Harvard Divinity School, is largely concerned with the two worlds, that of value and that of activity. In the earlier works there were also two worlds, that of eternal objects and that of the concrete. Here there is a slight shift of emphasis. Before the dichotomy, (I almost said bifurcation), had been between the world of multiplicity, the sterile infinitude of eternal objects, and the concretion which was the unit event. The event lapsed after its becoming, and took its place as a mere addition to the abstract world of multiplicity. That provided each entity, and not the personal ones only, with a proper immortality. In this essay on Immortality, the concrescence or novel togetherness is still the ultimate matter of fact. The nature of entities is still their being disjunctively many in process of passage into conjunctive unity. The disjunctive many, that abstract world of possibilities and multiplicity, is now emphatically the world of value. And its counterpart is another abstraction, the world of facts. The concrete is some togetherness of these, so the concrescence is saved, but with far more emphasis on the values. We are told that "the two abstractions (world of fact and world of value) require one another, and together constitute the concrete Universe", and the word evaluation comes to mean: "the elucidation of one of the abstractions by reference to the other".¹⁹

Value is in its nature eternal, and the world of activity has no meaning apart from its relevance to eternal objects. By itself, activity is creativity, or a category of immediate origination. It is nothing more than 'Creation Now', but that is to say it is merely a matter-of-fact which is but one aspect of the Universe. Remember the Universe is the single event, the concretion formed by the meeting of the world of 'sheer active creation' with the world of value. Essential relevance comes up again. "Any adequate description of one world includes characterizations derived from the other, in order to exhibit the concrete Universe in its relation to either of its two aspects".²⁰ Facts and actualities are empty except as they realize values and include or exclude values. It is meaningless to say that this book exists, and pretend to mean just that. It exists as this book, or my book, or this present object trivial or important for me. Judgment always involves the ultimates 'better' or 'worse' and "this character of evaluation is one meaning of the term judgment".²¹ It is difficult to conceive an abstraction as active, but we are bidden to do it. "The World of Values must be conceived as active with the adjustment of the potentialities for realization",²² This activity of internal adjustment is expressed in moral and aesthetic judgments. The world of value is occupied endlessly with consideration of the wants of the emergent organisms. It tirelessly consults the potentialities in itself for realizing the type of entity which the act of creativity demands. The relevance here is compelling on both sides. On the part of the concretion, or entity, there is always a persuasion,

¹⁹ *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, p. 79.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Idem.*, p. 80.

²² *Uem.*, p. 80.

compelling the eternal values to merge into this concrescence according to its demands. The eternal objects, for their part, are always considered to be determinative of the specific matters of fact.

It may be difficult to accept the identification of judgment with value. It is not so difficult to realize that value transcends time, and that "valuation exhibits an immortal world of realized value". And though value is timeless, yet in reference to the world of origination "it assumes the function of a modification of events in time". Likewise facts are in time, but ⁴ 'sheer immediacy of fact' is meaningless without reference to value. He gives an example: "If you are enjoying a meal, and are conscious of pleasure derived from apple-tart, it is the sort of taste that you enjoy. Of course the tart has to come at the right time. But it is not moment of clock-time which gives importance; it is the sequence of types of value,—for instance, the antecedent nature of the meal, and your initial hunger. Thus you can only express what the meal means to you, in terms of a sequence of timeless valuations".²³ The example seems inadequate. Granted the moment of clock-time is not important. What is said to be important is the antecedent nature of the meal, and the initial hunger. Can he mean that these are timeless values? If not, what are timeless values for this example?

The ultimate character of realized value which is the fusion of the two worlds is further pictured as the 'Idea'. The Greeks coined the word, and then tragically misconceived its function. They should perhaps have had another word for it, but they wilfully conceived Idea to be an ideation, representative in the mind of something mind-independent. These somethings were further conceived as fixed, and intelligible, even static! And the tragedy of 'misplaced concretion' implicit in the interpretation of idea as ideation has been only too effective through the centuries. "The misconception", Whitehead says, "which has haunted philosophic literature throughout the centuries is the notion of 'independent existence' \ There is no such mode of existence; every entity is only to be understood in terms of the way in which it is interwoven with the rest of the Universe".²⁴ Again, 'process' philosophy, and 'substance' philosophy come to an impasse.

In process philosophy, the Idea is simply the 'factor' in which the two worlds of fact and of value are merged. The "bridge between the two is the Idea with its two sides";²⁵ one side the world of transitory entities which acquire their realized value from the world of values, the other side the eternal world of 'mere possibility' that is realized in time. The fusion of the two is reality or the realized value. The world of values contains all the ideas as 'forms' (that word seems the best after all). These eternal objects make 'special entry' into the world of fact, and then "we enjoy fact as the realization of specific value"²⁶ Thus the Idea 'Redness' is an

TM*Idem.*, p. 81.

²⁴ *Idem.*, p. 84.

²⁵ *Idem.*, p. 83.

²⁶ *Idem.*, p. 83.

unchanging value in the world of values. It specially enters the world of fact, giving importance, aim, and immortality to the creative action in question. No idea is concerned with the whatness of things, but rather with their 'How? \ What sort of occurrences are they with respect to value? For example, "How did it happen that the motor car stopped? The answer is the occurrence of the 'redness of lighting' amid suitable surroundings. Thus the special entry of the Idea 'Redness' into the world of fact elucidates the special transition of fact which is the stoppage of the car".²⁷ The Idea of redness might be summoned to the world of fact to give special value for many other occasions,—as aesthetic enjoyment of a setting sun, or an intention of an artist to put that redness into his picture, or irritation in the eyes which look directly on that redness. All judgments are value-judgments pointing beyond the immediacy of historic fact. The immediacy of any transitory aspect of the Universe, which is the realized value, is only valuable because it shares in an eternal value. On the other hand, eternal values are but an abstraction, and 'lose their meaning' apart from necessary references to the world of fact. Whitehead conceives the world of eternal values, with this necessary if implicit relevance for the world of fact, to give a sufficient accounting for the 'substantial' aspects in things. "The World which emphasizes Persistence is the World of Value".²⁸

So the worlds are relevant for one another, and merge in their totality. Relevance entails a real fusion, and interpenetration of all in one and of one in all. Perennial metaphysics is always answering this problem, and the answers are worthy of exhaustive study. If a word could summarize the answers, that word would be 'substance \ But Whitehead's philosophical journey has not been along those paths. It might be said that he gives little indication of ever having penetrated along those paths further than looking at the name-posts, and moving on. And that is unfortunate, for this mathematician who ambited to become a metaphysician might have progressed further, and rendered even more effective a contribution, if he had consulted the metaphysicians in the first place. A great part of his effort has been expended in burying 'substance \ The history of philosophy should tell him that is a waste of effort.

T. J. O'MAHONY, S.J.

Holy Cross College
Worcester, Mass.

²⁷ *Idem.*, p. 83.

^{**} *Idem.*, p. 79.

PSYCHOLOGY DIVISION: *Panel:* MARTIN FLYNN, JOHN W. STAFFORD. *General Problem:* The Absolute and the Relative in Knowledge.

*Problem (a): Sensus Communis and the Visual Perception
of Distance*

It is generally agreed that in the Aristotelian-Thomistic psychology *sensus communis* has two principal functions. It is the power (1) by which we are made sensibly aware of our own acts of sensation (*sentimus nos audire, videmus nos videre*, etc.); and (2) by which the objects of the different external senses are distinguished from one another.¹

St. Thomas also assigns to *sensus communis* a major role in distinguishing what is presented to the external senses from what is imagined.² This assignment is important, for it indicates that in St. Thomas' thought *sensus communis* is not only aware of the presentations of the external senses but of the deliverances of imagination as well: that it is not hermetically isolated from the reproductive sensory powers but in vital interconnection with them.

Because its awareness extends to all the objects of external sensation, it is, according to most Thomists, *sensus communis* which gives us the coordinated perception of the sensible *object*, which may appeal to more than one type of sense receptor. As Gredt puts it: "Internal experience likewise manifests to us that we have not only simple sensations, but also perceptions, by which we join the objects of the different external senses into one."³

It is the purpose of this paper to examine certain implications of this notion of *sensus communis* with regard to visual perception. I shall confine myself to one aspect of visual perception, viz., that of distance or the third dimension, and leave aside altogether the more complex problems

*St. Thomas, *In De Anima*, Lib. III, Lect. III, § 599, 600; *Summa Theologica*, I, qu. 78, art. 4, ad 1.

²*Summa Theologica*, I, qu. 84, art. 8, ad 2: "... in dormientibus . . . non solum imaginatio remanet libera, sed etiam ipse sensus communis ex parte solvitur: ita quod homo iudicat interdum in dormiendo, ea quae videt, somnia esse, quasi diiudicans inter res et rerum similitudines. Sed tamen ex aliqua parte remanet sensus communis ligatus." Cf. R. E. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, New York, Macmillan, 1941, p. 125.

For a novel interpretation of the relations of *sensus communis* and imagination, vd. C. Alibert, *La psychologie thomiste et les theories modernes*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1903, p. 111 ff.

³J. Gredt, *Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae*, Freiburg, Herder, 1937, vol. 1, p. 387: "Similiter experientia interna nobis manifestat nos non habere simplices sensationes tantum, sed etiam perceptiones, quibus obiecta diversorum sensuum exteriorum in unum coniungimus."

Cf. T. V. Moore, *Cognitive Psychology*, Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1939, p. 243: "What is presented to the mind for interpretation must be given as a distinct unit different from other things in the field of consciousness. It must be seen in its parts and the parts must be held together as a whole."

Cf. also M. A. Gaffney, S.J., *The Psychology of the Interior Senses*, St. Louis, Herder, 1942, p. 24-25; J. Frobes, S.J., *Cursus Brevior Psychologiae Speculativae*, Paris, Lethielleux, 1933, p. 115 ff.

raised by color perception. Even within this narrowed field it is noteworthy that the volume of experimental work that has been accomplished since the time of Wundt is fairly staggering. Much of this work seems to be of considerable philosophical interest and importance, and much has yet to be done by philosophers in the Thomistic tradition in order to integrate the results of these observations with perennial principles respecting vision and perception. Among Thomistic authors with whom I am acquainted Gredt has made perhaps the most serious effort to synthesize the philosophical and the experimental evidence in these matters. Gredt seems keenly aware that on the problem of where sensation leaves off and perception begins the experimental data are capable of throwing a good deal of light. I cannot say that I am in agreement with all of his views on this question, at least as regards visual perception of distance, but his position seems worthy of profound consideration. Accordingly, I shall take certain aspects of Gredt's analysis as the point of departure for this discussion.

To Gredt the major distinction in a Thomistic system between the external and internal senses is that the former attain their objects immediately, i.e., not through the mediation of other senses, while an internal sense only attains its object through the mediation of others.⁴ "Ita perceptio plures sensationes ope sensus communis coniungit easque complet ulteriusque perficit ope repraesentationum phantasiae, quod fundantur in sensationibus antea iam habitus."⁵

Upon his discussion of vision Gredt brings to bear a distinction between two meanings of the term "mediate sensible" (*sensibile mediatum*). In one sense the "mediate sensible" is the *per se secundo sensibile*, and in this sense the secondarily sensible items are the traditional "common sensibles", size, shape, movement, etc. In another sense, however, the "mediate sensible" is that which falls under the sense mediately, in such fashion that the object is not attained *in se* but *in alio*, in an image by which it is more or less accurately represented. For vision this would mean that the visible thing is sensed *per se* (as opposed to *per accidens*) but *mediately*, by way of the inverted image on the retina of the eye. In the same simple act of sensation by which the retinal image is known, the object represented by the image is also known. The eye sees *both* the retinal image and the object as it is contained in this image, but not as distinct, since a simple sensation cannot institute a comparison between the two.⁶

* *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 375.

**Ibid.*, p. 376.

**Ibid.*, p. 380: "Sensibile mediatum duplex est: 1. id quod mediate sub sensum cadit . . . quia per aliud sensui proponitur prout est in se. . . . Hoc mediate sed per se sensibile est quantitas et ea quae immediate cum quantitate conectuntur. Sensibile mediatum est 2. id quod mediate sub sensum cadit ita, a cognitione sensitiva non attingatur in se, sed in alio, in imagine, qua plus minusve accurate repraesentatur. Hoc obiectum . . . est per se sensibile, quatenus non est sensibile per accidens tantum, sed re vera sub aliquem sensum externum cadit ab eoque cognoscitur, quamquam in imagine, i.e., mediate: eodem simplici actu sensationis, quo imago cognoscitur, cognoscitur etiam id, quod imagine repraesentatur, prout hoc

This in no way implies an indirect perceptionism, since it is not the retinal image *photochemically* considered which the eye sees, but the retinal image considered merely *physically*.¹ The immediate object of vision is not the photochemical change produced in the retina, but the physical image itself which exists anterior to any stimulation of rods and cones by way of the pigment cells of the retina, and which is a literal two-dimensional reflection of three-dimensional colored objects.

Though I cannot attempt at this point to defend the merits of Gredt's theory of the retinal image as the immediate object of vision, I will not withhold my opinion that the theory has the immediate advantage of avoiding both indirect realism and idealism on the one hand, and a too naive realism on the other. Something similar to it would seem, moreover, to be the only intelligible explanation of the established fact that the eye is *both* a *camera obscura* and a physiological mechanism characterized by photosensitivity and a related capacity to translate photochemical stimulation into neural impulses transmitted along the optic nerve.⁸

From this general theory of the pre-sensory image Gredt draws some interesting corollaries. Thus in the simple sensation, the outside object is not known as outside nor the inner object as within. We see the colored thing which is in the eye (the retinal image), but we do not see it *as* in the eye. The outside object is perceived *as* outside, by the same token, only *per accidens*, by means of a "multiple experience."⁹ It follows that vision perceives only two dimensions. The third dimension and consequently distance in depth is not attained by sight *per se*, but only *per accidens*, insofar as colored surfaces and lines are seen as modified by the variations of light and shadow in which they appear. It is through interpreting these modifications by the mediation of *tactus* and estimative sense that the third dimension is grasped. And this tactual experience is immediately co-represented and associated with the visual observation of these modifications. Gredt adds that the binocular character of vision contributes to the apprehension of the third dimension, for each eye because of its different placement obtains a slightly different view of the same object. Again, interpreting this binocular disparity by means of tactual experience, we come to know the third dimension. In estimating distance and depth

in imagine continetur. Videt proinde utrumque: imaginem et id quod imagine repraesentatur, sed non ut distincta; cum simplex sensatio non possit comparationem instituere inter utrumque."

It should be added that Gredt applies this notion of "mediate sensible *per se*" to the objects of all the external senses. I have excerpted only those of his remarks which apply particularly to vision.

Ibid., p. 381: "Imago retinalis physice considerata distinguatur ab imagine retinali photochimice considerata, quae est accidens retinae seu photochimica retinae transmutatio."

⁸ A precisely similar doctrine, as Gredt well sees, is applicable to the inner ear as both a resonator (the basilar membrane) and a neural receptor (the organ of Corti).

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 381: "... in simplici sensatione obiectum foris non cognoscitur ut foris, neque obiectum intus ut intus. Videmus utique coloratum, quod est in oculo, sed non videmus tamquam in oculo. . . . Obiectum foris non est perceptum nisi per accidens . . . nisi multiplici experientia."

the muscular movements involved in the accommodation of the crystalline lens and in the convergence or divergence of the two visual axes are also of assistance. In this regard it is by the muscular sense, i.e., by *tactus*, that we perceive the third dimension and distance. Depending on the position of the eye, the shape and size of things are notably changed on the retinal image. A circle viewed from the side is an ellipse in the retinal image, and very distant objects occupy a very tiny place in this image. But shape and size are accurately discerned by *tactus*, so that it is really by this latter sense that we are able to interpret correctly our visual presentations of distance.¹⁰

Now it may be asked, what part does *sensus communis* play in the interpretation of these various cues or signs of distance? Gredt is not very explicit on this question, but presumably whatever signs of distance are given simultaneously by different external senses can be coordinated only by a superior internal sense which is simultaneously aware of the presentations of both. If the so-called signs of distance are of a purely visual character they would involve no perceptual synthesis of vision and *tactus*, but accommodation of the crystalline lens and convergence of the visual axes are of a tactile kinesthetic nature and are registered consciously as faint sensations of muscular strain.

Therefore, to the extent that tactile and kinesthetic cues *here and now presented* enable us to be aware of distance with regard to objects in the field of vision, this awareness of distance would be a perceptual apprehension, resulting from the coordination of visual and kinesthetic data, and thus properly the work of a *sensus communis* by which we are made conscious of both vision and kinesthesia. An important question, to which the remainder of this paper will be largely addressed, remains: What light does the experimental evidence cast on the simultaneous employment of visual data and kinesthetic cues (like convergence and accommodation) in the apprehension of third-dimensional relations among the objects of vision?

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 382-383: "Ideo visus non percipit nisi duas dimensiones: in longum et in latum. Tertia vero dimensio et consequenter distantia in profundum a visu non attingitur per se, sed per accidens tantum—est visibilis per accidens, quatenus videntur lineae et superficies coloratae et modificatae per maiorem vel minorem lucem et per umbras in quibus apparent. Interpretando has modificationes mediante experientia tactus aut etiam per aestimativam colligitur tertia dimensio, quae proinde ad visionem harum modificationum statim correpraesentatur et associatur eis, i.e., videtur per accidens. Praeterea visio binocularis concurret ad tertiam dimensionem apprehendendam, quia uterque oculus paulo aliter idem obiectum percipit secundum positionem diversam. Interpretando has diversitates utriusque oculi mediante experientia tactus, cognoscimus tertiam dimensionem. Ad distantiam in profundum aestimandum et ad tertiam dimensionem cognoscendam iuvat etiam motus muscularis, quo lentem crystallinam accomodamus distantiae, et quo oculos ad invicem accomodamus ad obiectum aliquod contemplandum. Ita per sensum muscularem, i.e. per tactum, tertiam dimensionem et distantiam percipimus . . . scimus secundum positionem oculi figuras rerum et rationes magnitudinis notabiliter mutari imagine retinali: circulus e latere visus in imagine retinali est ellipsis, et res valde distans ibi continetur sub proportionem valde parva . . . sed haec (magnitudo et figura) tactu accurate diagnoscuntur."

Is it principally by the integration and association of various characters of the retinal image with various tactile or kinesthetic data that we are able accurately to perceive distance in the visual field? ¹¹

Berkeley in his *New Theory of Vision* was certainly of the opinion that the "idea" of visual distance resulted only from association with tactile experience, but his reasons for this contention were principally philosophical rather than experimental. It was not until near the middle of the 19th century, when Wheatstone published his famous researches with the stereoscope, that the effort to settle the problem experimentally took shape. Wheatstone singled out binocular disparity as the most significant factor in the "depth effect", and also stressed the importance of head movement parallax in the perception of distance. As long as each eye is presented in the stereoscope with a slightly different view of the object, the depth effect is present, but when both eyes are given the same view, there is no appearance of depth; and if the views are transposed the depth effect is reversed. As for head movement parallax: if while looking at a landscape we move the head to one side, farther objects are seen to move in the same direction with the head, nearer objects in the opposite direction. Now neither binocular disparity nor head movement parallax has anything very much to do with convergence and accommodation, the tactile and kinesthetic cues we have so far mentioned, and both seem to be pretty reliable signs of the third dimension. Is it possible, then, that muscular sensations have little to do with the perception of visual distance?

The case for accommodation and convergence, however, was to have as its defender one of the great experimentalists of the 19th century, Wilhelm Wundt. In 1862 Wundt published in his *Beitr'dge zur Theorie der Sinneswahrnehmung* the results of a series of experiments on the visual perception of distance. These experiments involved the use of a movable thread, suspended vertically, and seen at varying distances by an observer through a tube and against a background of a smooth wall, evenly illuminated. Wundt's conclusion was that both binocular convergence and monocular accommodation were sufficient to provide accurate indication of the distance of the thread from the observer's eye, but that convergence provided much finer cues. This conclusion was generally accepted for more than thirty years, and still finds its adherents today.

Meanwhile, another significant non-kinesthetic cue of distance was stressed by Hering, Wundt's contemporary and rival. This is the phenomenon of crossed and uncrossed double images. If two objects directly before the subject and at varying distances are fixated in turn, the image of the farther object is doubled when the nearer is fixated, and vice versa. Yet these two sets of double images are, as can be demonstrated geometrically, not identical, for the images of the nearer object are crossed, those of the farther object uncrossed. Thus when the nearer object is fixated, the right-side image of the farther object appeals to the right eye, the left-side image

¹¹ The evidence on this problem has nowhere been better summarized and analyzed than in Robert S. Woodworth's *Experimental Psychology* (New York, Holt, 1938, ch. XXVI). In what follows I have drawn extensively on Woodworth's masterly presentation.

to the left eye. But when the farther object is converged upon, the two images of the nearer object are registered on the opposite retinas. One can obtain a rough check of the validity of this demonstration by arranging any two objects in the line of sight and alternately closing each eye while fixating the nearer object and the farther object in turn. The apparent movement of the non-fixated object, to right or left, indicates whether the double image was crossed or uncrossed.

Wundt was evidently of the opinion that no significant factors other than convergence and accommodation enter into the thread experiment but, as Hillebrand was to show some thirty years later, this was a quite unwarranted assumption. Double images are certain to be present whenever binocular vision is employed and there is more than one visible object in the field. Any of Wundt's subjects who looked at the background of smooth wall before fixating the thread should have crossed double images of the thread which might be subject to modification as the distance between the thread and the wall lessened. When double images were ruled out by employing monocular vision, convergence as well as accommodation were still present, though convergence may not be as strong in monocular as in binocular vision. Under these conditions, it was found by later experimenters, observers could do little or nothing about determining the relative distance of objects until they had learned to use such cues as time of focus and blurring, and slight movements of the head providing parallax. An object like a thread, moreover, has a certain texture which appears coarser to the eye as the object approaches. This coarsening of texture is another purely visual cue of distance by no means eliminated in Wundt's experiment. The thickness of the thread, too, would show apparent decrease with increasing distance.

It was with a view to eliminating this cue of texture that in the early 1900's Bourdon employed as stimulus a single bright spot against a dark field and presented to monocular vision. He found that no observer could tell for certain whether the spot was 6 or 60 feet from the eye. Even with binocular vision the distance of a single bright spot could not be judged accurately, and in some cases a spot 10 meters from the eye was estimated as 500 meters distant. When two bright spots were used one observer was able to achieve a discriminial limen of .2, but this same observer, allowed to work with objects not designed to eliminate visual cues, achieved a difference limen of .0003, which was roughly 700 times as good a performance.

In the 1920's Bappert found that in many cases the eye movements of accommodation and convergence did not correspond to the actual distance of objects. In those cases where the two do correspond the judgments of distance are often extraordinarily poor, only about half as good in fact as one would expect from pure chance. Apparently, increased accommodation and convergence, when these are the only factors operating, instead of making the object look nearer, make it look smaller and therefore farther away.

It seems perfectly just therefore to question Wundt's contentions on the visual perception of distance and to conclude with Woodworth that "the tactile-kinesthetic sensations of accommodation and convergence contribute

very little effect in the perception of depth."¹²

If we were to arrange the cues for perception of distance in the order of importance, so far as this is indicated by the experimental evidence, something like the following might result:

1. Covering of far by near objects.
2. Texture, light and shadow.
3. Binocular disparity including crossed and uncrossed images.¹³
4. Head movement parallax.
5. Perspective, aerial and linear.
6. Focus cues, such as time of focus and blurring.

Convergence and accommodation might be added as of seventh and eighth importance respectively, provided it be recognized that these are of negligible significance in isolation from the other sensory signs of distance. Of the six mentioned only the fourth, head movement parallax, has a kinaesthetic element in it, and that element seems decidedly secondary to the purely visual changes involved in the phenomenon.

If, therefore, we were to restrict the function of *sensus communis* to the coordination of data from different senses in the perception of distance, we should be forced to conclude that *sensus communis* plays a very minor role. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that vision must be linked with tactile and kinesthetic data in *learning* to interpret visual cues of distance. On this score it is no part of the purpose of this paper to question Gredt's contentions. (*Vide supra*, note 10.) There is in fact no certain indication of distance beyond measurement, and that clearly belongs primarily to *tactus*. When the tactile-kinesthetic equivalents of various visual sensations have been once learned, however, vision seems able to carry on in a functionally autonomous fashion. And this learning must be the work of the sensory reproductive powers, imagination and memory, rather than of *sensus communis*.

We are not ready to conclude, nonetheless, that *sensus communis* has an insignificant part to play in the visual perception of distance. On the contrary, we must recognize in the first place that awareness of distance is a

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 674.

¹³ Numbers 2 and 3 in this order might easily be transposed. In 1925 W. Schriever published the results of a series of experimental tests on conflicting cues of distance. It was found that linear perspective was powerless against binocular disparity, while perspective plus shading when pitted against disparity resulted in an unstable figure, though disparity seemed the stronger indicator. In experiments like Wundt's, however, texture seemed to be a more important factor and to apply in monocular as well as in binocular vision. Though superposition did not figure in most of the classical experiments of the 19th century, Schriever's work demonstrated it as the strongest of all cues of distance. Cf. Woodworth, *op. cit.*, p. 665.

For a considerably different interpretation of the evidence cf. E. G. Boring, *Sensation and Perception in the History of Experimental Psychology*, New York, Appleton Century, 1942, chapter 8. The most ambitious attempt to revive the Wundtian position is in H. A. Carr's *An Introduction to Space Perception*, New York, Longmans Green, 1935, which may be compared with Woodworth's views (*op. cit.*, ch. XXVI, esp. p. 678 ff.) which in a general way this paper follows.

perception rather than a sensation. In modern psychological jargon, it is a central or cortical rather than a peripheral phenomenon. In a Thomistic interpretation, would this not mean that it is a function of *sensus communis* rather than of *visus*? Why, after all, restrict the activity of *sensus communis* to the integration of data from the *different* external senses, when some power is necessary to explain the proper coordination of heterogeneous data from the one sense modality? If St. Thomas did not thus construe the function of *sensus communis* might it not have been because he knew so little of what experimentation has made available to us, for instance, the great variety of purely visual cues which must be sensorily interpreted in order to perceive distance correctly?¹⁴

In the Thomistic psychology, as we saw at the outset, *sensus communis* and imagination are vitally linked, so that there is no reason why *sensus communis* cannot profit, so to speak, from past experience. When we have once learned the distance-significance (I mean "significance" in a sensory way) of certain features of the retinal image, we thereupon *perceive* distance visually. There can be no question of our seeing one thing and imagining or remembering another, of "association" in the associationist sense. I do not believe that even the most rabid associationist would say that we see uncrossed double images, *remember* that they mean "object more distant" and then *decide* or *infer* that this object is nearer than that one. We simply see (i.e. perceive) the object as more or less distant. One of the most remarkable features of this whole process is that seeing so vaguely, we perceive so clearly. It is only with difficulty that we become focally conscious of such visual data as binocular disparity, crossed and uncrossed images, even linear perspective. Yet we are constantly and correctly employing these items as *signs* of depth and distance in our everyday lives. St. Thomas, so far as I know, never suspected philosophically the existence of crossed double images, yet he was aware of them in some sense every time he pointed a finger at a distant object.

To Berkeley, the use of signs which were themselves not clearly perceived was inconceivable.

But those *lines* and *angles*, by means whereof *mathematicians* pretend to explain the perception of distance, are themselves not at all perceived, nor are they, in truth, ever thought of by those unskilful in optics. I appeal to any one's experience whether, upon sight of an *object*, he computes its distance by the bigness of the *angle* made by the meeting of the two *optic axes*? . . . Every one is himself the best judge of what he perceives, and what not. In vain shall all the *mathematicians* in the world tell me, that I perceive certain *lines* and *angles* which introduce into my mind the various *ideas* of distance: so long as I myself am conscious of no such thing.¹⁵

Moreover it is evident, that no *idea* which is not itself perceived, can be the means of perceiving any other *idea*. If I do not perceive the

¹⁴ As early as 1613 Aguilonius had attributed binocular fusion of disparate visual images to "the common sense." Vd. Boring, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

¹⁵ George Berkeley, *A New Theory of Vision*, XII.

redness or paleness of a man's face themselves, it is impossible I should perceive by them the passions which are in his mind.¹⁶

But surely no Thomist could be much attracted to a position which rests on the assumed impossibility of a *pure* or *formal* sign. How much closer to a Thomistic view does Woodworth's criticism of Berkeley seem!

But need a cue be noticed to be used? On the contrary, it seems that a sign need not be known except in terms of its meaning. . . . A cue of distance need not be known to the observer except in terms of distance. Binocular disparity, constantly in use as a cue, is seldom observable for what it is—it is observed as depth and relief of the object.¹⁷

It would seem, therefore, that visual sensations may serve to some extent as *formal signs* for the perception of the third dimension—depth and distance. Though the immediate object of visual sensation is a two-dimensional retinal image, we are able to employ many features of this image as means to the perception of the real world in its three-dimensional objectivity. And if this be admitted, we must acknowledge further that there is no power better suited to carry out this sensory synthesis and interpretation than that which St. Thomas designated *sensus communis*. The fact that the elements of this synthesis and the signs of this interpretation are derived from a single sense, vision, rather than from vision and *tactus*, would call for an extension of the Thomistic concept but in no sense for a retraction of it.

If I am not mistaken, a very similar extension of the notion of *sensus communis* emerges from modern studies in cerebral pathology. Since this is related only indirectly to the visual perception of distance I can only mention it here, but the evidence has been well summarized by T. V. Moore.¹⁸ Let us consider a single example. In the pathological condition known as *visual agnosia* there need be no serious impairment of vision as such, while there is an almost total absence of capacity to *recognize* objects presented to vision. That the impairment is not intellectual is shown by the patient's ability to recognize the same objects tactually and to identify

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, X. Berkeley's position seems to admit only blurring and strain, arising out of convergence and accommodation, as acceptable indicators of distance. The connection between these and distance is for him, of course, determined solely by experience and association. "Nor doth it avail to say, there is not any necessary connexion between confused *vision*, and -distance great or small. For I ask any man, what necessary connexion he sees between the redness of a blush and shame and yet no sooner shall he behold that colour to arise in the face of another, but it brings into his mind the *idea* of that passion which has been observed to accompany it." (*Ibid.*, XXIII) "Further, when he has by experience learned the connexion there is between the several ideas of sight and touch, he will be able, by the perception he has of the situation of visible things in respect of one another, to make a sudden and true estimation of the situation of outward, tangible things corresponding to them. And thus it is, he shall perceive by sight the situation of external objects, which do not properly fall under that sense." (*Ibid.*, XCIX)

¹⁷ R. S. Woodworth, *op. cit.*, p. 663-664.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, chapter III.

them correctly. Abnormal as well as experimental psychology thus tend to support, though in quite different ways, the concept of an internal coordinating sense (Moore calls it *synthetic sense*), which is intimately linked to, though distinct from, external sensation, and which has important functions to perform in integrating data not only from the different external senses but within one and the same sense modality. This can only be *sensus communis*.

This paper has presented only very partial evidence for this position, but if its basic contention is correct there is a good deal more to be derived from the experimental literature, evidence which Thomists can employ toward a deeper and more striking understanding of the notion of *sensus communis*.

RAYMOND J. MOCALL

St. John's University
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Problem (b): For a Thomistic Epistemology

The beginner in philosophy, with comparatively few exceptions, finds himself sooner or later faced with a very disturbing doubt indeed, the doubt whether all this splendid construct of philosophical certainty with which he is gradually becoming acquainted has any real satisfactory foundation. True, things hang together nicely once a start is made and certain principles accepted as a starting point. But what of that starting point? Must this somehow be accepted blindly, with a realization, or perhaps only faith, that else no start can be made? Is the whole of philosophy a fine edifice of logic with at best an unknown and unknowable fundament? How can we establish once and for all that the human mind can and does know truth? The problem is a real subjective one, and if it be dismissed as only a manifestation of philosophical "growing pains", then it must also be admitted that these growing pains are too often of all too long duration, and are sometimes never fully outgrown. Modern textbooks in scholastic philosophy seem quite aware of the stumbling-block, to the extent of devoting long sections to a treatment of the "Critical Problem", taking great pains to show, in a negative way, that the initial attitude of doubt and questioning as to whether the mind can know truth can result only in the bankruptcy of all philosophical thinking, can issue only in the state of mind of the universal skeptic. In a word, the beginner is presented with the suggestion that as philosophical truth unfolds before him, his teasing doubt will die a natural death, and all will be lovely. And so, the beginner meekly carries on, living on a hope that "this too, will pass."

Yet, Descartes and Kant were no beginners—but the problem was a very real one for them, so much so that it colored their entire philosophical achievement. (What is better known about Descartes than his "Cogito, ergo sum"? And Kant is best known as the man whose dangerous genius has led to all the uncertainty of modern-day idealism, precisely because he

insisted on the question of whether the human mind was capable of attaining objective truth.) Hardly to be classed as beginners, either, are modern writers such as Gilson, Maritain, Geny, Boyer, Picard, Mercier, Noel, Roland-Gosselin, and many others, who have produced so many splendid pages on the Critical Problem. Some of these, at least, purposed more than a mere easing of the way for a beginner with growing pains!

As a matter of fact, the critical problem goes back to the days of the earliest Greek philosophers. (For Parmenides, it was a metaphysical problem that influenced his whole philosophical system, as, of course, it must affect any metaphysics. For Heraclitus it was the same. The followers of each of these, down to and including Plato and Aristotle, were influenced by their solutions. Plato's whole metaphysic of ideas was thought out, as was Pythagoras' theory of subsistent numbers before it, to answer the problem of whether the mind knows being and where it does find being.)

On the whole, the attitude of these ancient philosophers toward the problem was a healthy one, even though they did not arrive at the ultimate solution until Aristotle partially cleared up the problem in his *De Anima*. They did not ask whether they could know truth, but rather where they could find it. They knew some things for certain, such as their own existence, their own ability to have cognition, but they knew from this only the aptitude of their minds, and did not immediately conclude to the existence of the things that they knew. They did know that wherever the truth was to be found, it would be based on being, for there is nothing that could be known unless it was that which is. Accordingly, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and the rest endeavored to find real being, whether it be in the mind alone, in the material world of becoming, or in the numbers which things represented. Plato brought forth the theory of ideas which had being because he knew that what he knew was that which is. Yet he could know only his ideas. Therefore, the ideas must be that which is. Aristotle, assuming from the evidence of his cognitional machinery that he knew that which is, introduced the critique of knowledge, in the sense of a criteriology which would examine and find out how what he knew was being and how he could know it.

So, fundamentally, the critical problem for the Greeks was the problem of error—the criteriological problem—(for they were assured, all of them, that they knew something, but they were not at all certain how much they know, or when they were knowing truth and not being deceived. Even the skeptics of ancient times did not deny anything; they were content with their "epoche", from which lofty perch they looked upon the world of reality with non-committal assurance of never being wrong. Of course, they were never right either!)

But it was left for the idealists and skeptics of modern times to question seriously the validity of the mind in regard to the apprehension of being. When Descartes announced his dichotomy of mind and body, he split philosophy for the next three centuries into the idealists and the materialists, neither of whom could acknowledge the other, because neither of them believed the other to have being. They were not looking for being, but wondering whether there even was such a thing! Thus again in their

wonderment, the "one and the many" one truth and many answers, blocked all their efforts at synthesis, until Hegel resumed Heraclitus* position and with his dialectic of contradictories spun out an infinite succession of "syntheses."

Thus, Descartes introduced into philosophy a new form of the critique of human reason, asking not what it was that human reason knew or could know, but whether it could know at all. His answer in the "Cogito", unsatisfactory to those who followed him, left metaphysics nothing more than a constant recurrence of problems which could never be solved. Therefore, metaphysics, once supreme among the sciences, was degraded and despised. Locke had tried to support it with a physiology of human understanding which would give metaphysics a foundation for its claim to a transcendent cognition, but in vain. Hume marked the last step in the evolution. His disgust with metaphysics led him to despise all knowledge, and eventually to fall into utter skepticism, even in regard to empirical science. This was the situation when Kant came upon the scene, destined to give a still further meaning to the phrase "a critique of human knowledge."

The startling success of Newtonian physics at this time suggested to Kant an explanation of the decline of metaphysics. Instead of being an indication of the senility of human understanding, the state of affairs then obtaining indicated that the faculty of judgment was only just coming to maturity; and now for the first time was refusing to be content with a mere semblance of knowledge. The day had arrived for reason to know itself, to set up a tribunal which would sift the assumptions which reason made, accept those which were legitimate, and reject the remainder. This tribunal was to be the Critique of Pure Reason. In his critique Kant set out to show for what necessary reasons metaphysics failed where science had succeeded. Of course, the metaphysics he had in mind was the only one he knew, the rationalism of Wolfe, Descartes and Leibniz, abstract and empty of all empirical content and divorced from sense knowledge. It is clear that Kant had forgotten even the existence of a system like that of Aristotle and Thomas. The notion of a rational cognition informed by intelligible data was lost, and in its place there were only a rigorous and empty rationalism, and a concrete empiricism deprived of all necessity. Kant then had no resource but to deduce the intelligibility of experience from an analysis of cognition. He thus obtained an experimental knowledge that was at once necessary and concrete, but he confined knowledge to its own realm and deprived it of any enrichment from outside, because he put in knowledge as the sole source of the intelligibility of experience.

Kant had to prefer a rationalism without empiricism to an empiricism without rationalism, because the only empiricism he knew was that of Hume, which he saw clearly led to skepticism. If his critique was to find knowledge to disprove skepticism, it must confine itself to such knowledge as was independent of experience, pure knowledge, free from all empiric elements, completely a priori. From here it is a logical step to a system of pure reason.

Immediately, however, he was faced with another problem. While it is not hard to find *a priori* judgments—since all analytic judgments, in which the relation of predicate to subject is one of identity, are such—yet these judgments are sterile, and do not extend knowledge. He then turned for an explanation to synthetic judgments, by which he understood those in which the predicate is not identified with the subject, but can be easily found in the subject, because all empirical knowledge is of this sort. Since he had already established in his own mind that the knowledge for which he sought must be *a priori*, he concluded that he had to postulate the existence of judgments that were synthetic and *a priori*. After all, he argued, were not the necessary judgments in all sciences of this sort?

(Having established a criterion by which he could judge the validity of various branches of knowledge, Kant proceeded in the remainder of the *Critique of Pure Reason* to answer three questions. How is pure mathematics possible? How is pure physics possible? How is pure metaphysics possible, at least as a natural disposition and a need of reason? To answer each of these questions is to justify each order of knowledge, and unless one so criticizes, it is impossible to justify these disciplines.) The critique consists then in searching whether or not there are, in the reason, *a priori* principles for mathematics, physics and metaphysics, to determine what those principles are, and, by so doing, to fix the condition which these knowledges must fulfil in order to function as sciences.

Considered in this light, the critique of knowledge is proposed with definite characteristics which fix its position among the other branches of philosophy. It is a distinct science. Moreover, since it deals only with the condition of our synthetic *a priori* judgments in regard to certain classes of objects, it is established on a plane anterior to our experience of these things,—and rightly so. for it studies those conditions which make our experience possible. With respect to experience the critique is a transcendental knowledge. Finally, since it deals with that in reason which is the condition of experience, it is a critique pure from any empiric element. The Kantian critique, then, is completely defined, because it is its transcendental and *a priori* nature which make it a critique. The very possibility of a critique is strictly bound up with the transcendental attitude which consists in looking in pure reason for the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of objects.

(Now both Descartes and Kant were satisfied (or so it would seem) with their respective solutions to the problem of whether the mind can know truth, but not so those who followed them. Much of modern philosophy, outside of scholastic circles, has indeed accepted the fundamental idea of a transcendental critique at the outset of philosophical inquiry, with its starting point in thought rather than objective reality and has consequently developed innumerable forms of idealism and even of skepticism. One of the most important influences in the revival of interest and study in Thomistic thought has been precisely the danger of the modern philosophers of idealism which stem from Descartes and Kant. As a result it is not to be wondered at that the purpose of much of the writings of neo-scholastics has been to refute the arguments of Cartesians and Kantians. At the same

time, most of these men who defend the standard of classic metaphysics realize that many of the modern philosophers were and are men of genius, and hence they try as much as possible to incorporate the various good points of each system into Thomism. This is, in brief, the historical background that explains the emphasis today, in neo-scholastic circles, of the so-called Critical Problem.)

In our own day the defenders of the classic philosophy have attempted to rebuild the metaphysics which Descartes and Kant claimed to have destroyed. Since all the proponents of modern philosophies had started out from the aspect of cognition, present-day Thomistic philosophers to a large extent decided that the best way to answering the difficulties would be first to prove the validity or objectivity of human cognition, and then to proceed from that point. Here we have the birth of what is known as Critical Realism.

It may be well to note here that the historically proved tendency of philosophical terminology to change its meaning in the course of years is well exemplified in the present problem. The idea of a critical attitude, a criticism or critique of human knowledge, originally taken in the sense of the question: what does man know, or to what extent does man know, took on a new meaning with Descartes, so that it came to mean: does man know at all, divorcing itself from any connection with an established objective reality, and seeking its answer in a subjective, undeniable certainty of personal thought, and not in any objective fact as in any sense a starting point. Further, with Kant, the notion of a critique of human reason becomes essentially an analysis of the human reason itself as that alone which can in any sense legitimize any supposed objective reality. Realism too, from its signification common in the Middle Ages of a system which posited the objects of the mind existing in reality precisely as they existed in the mind (in his own day St. Thomas was emphatically not considered a realist!), has come to mean a philosophy which proceeds in its theory of knowledge from things to thought, following the scholastic maxim "*verum sequitur esse rerum*." With the modern meaning of the terms in mind, there is some difficulty in understanding what tour de force can join the two ideas, Critical and Realism!

Of course, those who speak in terms of a Critical Realism are far from making such an elementary blunder. Some will take the term critique in the sense of a careful, step-by-step legitimization of the so-called vulgar or obvious certitudes—which is the age-old method of scholastic philosophy. There is nothing very new in this attitude. But others do take critique in the Kantian sense strictly, and speak of a Critical Realism, not in the obviously contradictory sense of a Critique (with its starting point altogether in thought) which is a Realism (with objective being as its starting point), but in the sense that previous to any realistic development they see the possibility of establishing a true critique of cognition, which, properly handled, will issue in the inescapable conclusion of an objective reality, thus both furnishing the starting point for a realistic philosophy, and satisfying the difficulties of those who, through an incorrect or incomplete handling of that critique falsely conclude to the non-existence of unknown-

bility of such an objective reality. The purpose is indeed a laudable one, and its successful event would indeed solve the problem once and for all. But it is precisely here that conflict begins, and precisely on this point that so much has been so well written on both sides. "Adhuc sub iudice lis est." But who is the judge in the case?

Certainly, we would not presume to pass that judgment, but we can take sides, and that for definite reasons. Alas, the laudable purpose appears to be just that—and no more. The greatest optimism falls short of asserting that the solution proposed is in any way satisfactory to the idealistic philosophers. And as for scholastics, well, the only ones who seem satisfied with the outcome of the attempt seem to be the very ones who have gone to such pains to develop such a Realistic Critique, and these in turn are not at all in full agreement among themselves, proposing, as each one does, a different form of the proposed critique, some clearly Kantian in spirit, and others definitely Cartesian. The entire business appears as most unsatisfactory.

Perhaps Gilson has given the best expression to the fundamental impossibility involved in any idea of a Critical Realism, by suggesting that anyone beginning with such a position can only come to the conclusions which were reached by Kant himself and his followers, that is, to idealism. For a time, one may start from Kant's position and seem to avoid his consequences, but eventually such a doctrine must lead to some sort of idealism. While such a philosophy's position may be legitimate in itself, if developed consistently, still, it is incompatible with a realism, for the two are contraries. The reason why the two are so diametrically opposed is that Kant's position forbids any recourse to reality. While Kant's critique does not deny the outside world, it never bothered itself with proving an outside world. In fact, it could not discuss this problem, since the Critique denies, by definition, any such empirical problem.

But perhaps, and this is really the position of the so-called Critical Realists, there can be a critique, which would not be proposed exactly as Kant's was. If philosophers do this, they are not facing Kant's problem, but their own—whereas the avowed purpose of nearly all the neo-scholastics interested in this question is to answer Kant. Furthermore, nearly all those who try some such device are confusing the Kantian and the Cartesian problems, and their systems cannot strictly be called "critical", since Descartes' position is not a critique in the full sense. The point of departure here taken is something more or less similar to Descartes' Cogito, with the intent of getting out of the doubt which is posited at the beginning. The purpose is to get to the thing in itself, and to prove that the mind really gets to reality. Now this was the line which Cartesianism took—it is not at all in the spirit of Kant. But realism and the Cartesian position are definitely incompatible. In Cartesianism the procedure is fundamentally from thought to thing, while the essence of realism is that thought is conditioned by reality. Anyone who takes the stand of Descartes at the beginning of his philosophy leaves himself open to the final outcome of ending in idealism. The roots of idealism are in the Cogito, because it conditions reality by thought. The simple fact seems to be that all who

have attempted to enter by the Cartesian or by the Kantian door, with the intention of ultimately coming out their own realistic door, have, to a greater or less extent, failed in their purpose. Could this be due to an impossibility found in the very nature of the project?

After all, Descartes and Kant and their followers are recognised as men of keen intellectual powers. Disagree as we may with their premises and presuppositions, we can hardly accuse them of a lack of logical consistency. Now it is a well recognized fact that from false premisses false conclusions can be drawn with strict logical correctness, and that it usually requires an error in logic to produce correct conclusions from those same false premisses. A true critique necessarily conditions reality by thought, reversing the process of "*verum sequitur esse*". Small wonder then that, if the rules of logic be strictly observed, the conclusion from the false premiss should be false! There is really no need of trying again and again—the result is bound to be the same, somewhat as we need not test the morality of each man in order to establish the morality of this individual, and the fact that all men are mortal. The very concept man includes in its comprehension the note of morality. Likewise, the very fact of a philosophical beginning in which thought conditions reality necessarily includes a conclusion of idealism. Besides, when we speak of a Critical Philosophy and a Realistic Philosophy we are confronted with an utter difference in method. Somewhat as the method of one science proves utterly inadequate when applied to another science, so the different methods of these two very different approaches must prove altogether unsatisfactory when applied to one another. We are dealing here with a difference in kind, not degree.

Is this a suggestion then that all the attempts at a "*rapprochement*" between Critical Philosophy and Realistic Philosophy have been nothing but a waste of time and energy? By no means. Besides furnishing trial and error evidence of the radical impossibility of such a *rapprochement* all have, each in its own way, gone deep into the psychological and metaphysical aspects of the problem of human cognition which needs must form a most important portion of a realistic epistemology. All of them have gone deeply into the study of the famous text in St. Thomas' *De Veritate*, question 1, article 9, concerning the reflection of the human mind upon its own act, which admittedly constitutes the core of any Thomistic Epistemology.

When we use the term Epistemology we are paying tribute to the comparatively recent tendency to divide a subject into parts, each of which constitutes a particular course, to be listed and numbered and properly placed in a catalog as furnishing so many credit hours to the student. Perhaps in no field as much as in that of Philosophy is this artificial pedagogical device so unsatisfactory. Philosophical truth, as an organic whole, suffers violence when so partitioned. And of all these partitions, that entitled Epistemology, or *Criteriaology*, or the Theory of Cognition is the most difficult to handle as a unit, including as it does the negative treatment of the so-called Critical Problem, the metaphysics of the true, and the full analysis of judgment, meaningless without a rather thorough under-

standing of the problems treated in the Philosophy of Man. Where should Epistemology be placed in reference to the other divisions of Philosophy? The answer seems to be that it cannot be handled as a strict unit.

The ancients wrote no treatise that they named Epistemology, any more than one named Psychology or Cosmology. They did make profound studies on the nature of the true, and this would constitute the major part of what we would now call Epistemology. As we have seen, the question of the existence of the external world was first asked by Descartes, and is not at all a valid question for one who is thinking in terms of St. Thomas and Aristotle. The point is not that precartesian philosophers were unaware of a "critical" problem. The very question put by the critical problem is an impossible one. The same is true of any critique in the full or Kantian sense of the word. To call epistemology a "critique" is to become involved, more or less definitely, in the unphilosophical and altogether unaristotelian position of the genuine critique, or simply to misuse the word. This, and this alone could be placed at the very outset of the philosophical inquiry, as a sort of negative indication that there can be no possible development of philosophical knowledge if a beginning is attempted along the lines of a true critique of human understanding. The treatment would have to be brief, suggestive rather than exhaustive, with the door left open for more extensive consideration later.

But outside of that, epistemology cannot be regarded as any sort of enquiry to be undertaken in advance of other philosophical enquiries (with the possible exception of formal or minor logic) as if necessary to prevalidate whatever the human intellect may discover in these later enquiries. In the most formal sense epistemology is part of metaphysics, not to be distinguished from it by way of specification (that would make it a distinct science, with a distinct object) but rather with a relation to the first question of metaphysics like the relation that exists between *verum* and *ens*, that is, not adding any specification to *ens*, in the way in which a *differentia* added to a *genus* determines it, but adding to *ens* a relation to intellect in such wise that *verum* is altogether *ens* and is transcendental, actually containing its inferiors, in the transcendental of *ens* itself.

In other words, a Thomistic Epistemology must be far more than an investigation into the conditions of human knowledge alone, but rather an investigation into the fact of knowledge in general, the true, *ens* in quantum *verum*, and therefore not a separate branch of philosophy, but part of metaphysics, *ens* in quantum *ens*, the transcendental, including *ens* in quantum *unum*, in quantum *verum*, in quantum *bonum*. And since of those things which are within the material object of metaphysics, one, God, is being in the pure sense of the word, altogether without mixture of potency, this reality falls *per se* under the consideration of the metaphysician. Whence the ancients rightly considered as the culmination and flowering of metaphysics the study of God, the Pure Act of Being.

Though the objects of some parts of philosophy are not transcendental, e.g., of the philosophy of nature (philosophic psychology, cosmology, etc.) or of the philosophy of mathematics, the object of epistemology is transcendental, as part of metaphysics to which it may be thus compared.

Epistemology in this sense can also be compared to logic, not because both deal with operations of the human intellect—this would limit it to one type of being and was the view of Christian Wollf, who then gave epistemology the misnomer of "major" logic,—but insofar as there is a sort of transcendentality to the object of logic. In a sense too the object of logic enjoys a genuine transcendentality, for nothing of specification has been added to *ens* when we say *ens rationis*, in contrast with e.g. *ens quantum*, *ens materiale et mobile*, etc. Nevertheless, the object of logic does not enjoy the unqualified transcendentality of *ens*, for the logician studies not being as being (nor acts of the reason as acts of the reason) but studies being in that which is its intentional existence in the reason, namely, in concepts, enunciations, syllogisms. This transcendentality founded on the transcendentality of being itself is the complement of the famous principle of Aristotle that the modes of being and the modes of predication are the same. In the strictest sense, however, logic, formal and material, is a science limited nicely by the bounds of human reason itself. There is not and cannot be a science of logic for angelic intellection or for the divine intellection. Epistemology on the other hand can and does consider truth in relation to its formal existence in the intellect as intellect, and so considers how truth is in the divine intellect, in the angelic intellect, and in the discursive intellect which is human reason. It is accidental and a result of the limitations of human knowledge that epistemology has much more to say about truth in relation to human intellection than in relation to the angelic or the divine intellection.

Still, this emphasis on truth in its relation to human intellection, though accidental to epistemology and brought about by the limitations of human knowledge is of exceedingly great importance and often receives the lion's share of attention. Since, for man, truth is to be found in the judgment, the analysis of the human judgment in its relations to truth must come in for its share of attention. It is precisely here that the profound analyses of judgment undertaken by writers like Maritain, Marechal and the others in connection with the "Critical Problem" has its place. It is here too that some have seen the possibility of a Critical Realism, beginning with a quasi-Cartesian or quasi-Kantian starting point and issuing in a true Critical Realism. We have already indicated our conclusions on this question. This is the point where a full consideration of the possibilities would be in order. But this, of course, supposes the fundamentals of Psychology of Philosophy of Man, and so we see our Epistemology cropping up in a third place in the totality of philosophical knowledge, a place which is anywhere but at the beginning!

This is but an indication of the fact before mentioned that the idea of Epistemology as a portion or section of the field of Philosophy is a quite artificial and rather impossible division. Of course, we might consider it as a specialized field of study, to follow the general fundamentals in their totality. As part of a regular course it would have to be handled either in three different places, as suggested, or constitute a special course close to the end of the regular program.

Dare we draw conclusions from all of this? In a perfectly definitive sense, hardly—the question still involves too much difference of opinion

among men of authority in the field. But we can suggest, subject to revision, that altogether too much attention has been given to the attempt to "modernize" Thomism, both because of the comparative unimportance of such a purpose, and because experience seems to prove that the project itself is impossible, a hopeless attempt to harmonize incompatibles. In a negative way, and by all means briefly, the impossibility of the "critical" approach should be indicated, but the really important part of a Thomistic Epistemology is not this negative detail, but a very positive metaphysical study of the "ens in quantum verum", and an equally positive study of truth as found in the judgment. This constitutes the core of a Thomistic Epistemology and it is in this field that there is need of work and research, of a detailing and precisizing of the fundamental facts that we find in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas and his great followers.

It would seem that we are once again face to face with the fact, so often made evident in the past, that the thought of "the ancients" is not so ancient after all, and that we can do nothing better than give more attention to that thought, with a view to making more explicit the truth which, implicit and to some degree incomplete in their writings, is only waiting for someone big enough and clear-minded enough to give it full expression before the philosophical world.

CHRISTIAN BENNETT, SJ.

Regis College
Denver, Colo.

ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY DIVISION: *Panel:* SISTER M. ANNICB DONOVAN, ALFRED HERRIGAN, THOMAS DAVITT.

Problem (a): Relativism and Right

It would be convenient to dispose summarily of the subject of this paper by saying that an absolute ethic safeguards man's rights, a relative ethic imperils or destroys them. But the fact is that man's rights have been denied in the name of an absolute ethic and defended in the name of relativism. One might continue the search for a short cut by identifying absolute and natural law ethics, relativist ethics and positivism, and saying that natural law ethics is the foundation of man's rights, positivism their enemy. But man's rights have been denied in the name of natural law, nor is natural law always understood as anti-relativist. So it will be necessary to devote a little more time to the terms involved before an adequate solution is to be found for the problem implied in the title of this paper.

An ethical system is sometimes said to be absolute when it imposes an absolute, unconditional obligation. In this sense every ethical system worthy of the name is absolute; obligation is of its nature categorical. Again, an ethical system may be termed absolute if it is founded in some absolute, universally valid principle. However, almost all ethical systems profess some such principle, however unstable they may otherwise be. For sociological ethics social welfare is the principle on which all conduct must be based. For the utilitarians the principle of utility is held to be axiomatic, as Jeremy Bentham tried to show by the following argument:

When a **man** attempts to combat the principle of utility, it is with **reasons drawn**, without his being **aware** of it, from that very principle itself. "The principle of utility (I have heard it said) is a dangerous principle; it is dangerous on occasion to consult." This is as much as to say, that it is not consonant with utility to consult utility; in short, that it is not consulting it to consult it.¹

Transmitting other equally unsatisfactory attempts to apply the term ¹ 'absolute' to ethics, and recalling that it was in the name of natural law that Thomas Hobbes constructed his commonwealth in which no man's right survived, we may note that there is some difficulty, too, in applying the term 'relativism' to ethics. Ethical relativism, some one said, is the doctrine that what is right at one time or in one place may be wrong at another time or in another place. This definition at first sight seems to make sense; but it has the disadvantage of blanketing some of our best friends and the objects of our greatest admiration; it includes, or certainly does not exclude, the entire litany of the scholastics.

It may be more useful, therefore, to adopt a more concrete approach; to consider, in their broad outlines, a few systems of morality which today **find** wide favor, to note their attitude, express or implied, towards the question of human rights, and in this way to discover the significance of notions like absolute and relative in morality and right. Worthy of first place in such an investigation is, of course, scholastic ethics, deriving its inspiration as far as method is concerned from Aristotle, most perfectly synthesized in the intellectual atmosphere of Christian civilization by St. Thomas Aquinas, refined and extended by many of his great successors.

Man, according to this system, is by his nature and by his elevation to the state of grace ordained to God as his last end, in whose possession he is to find the satisfaction of all his desires, natural and supernatural, his perfect beatitude. He is ordained by his nature; that is to say, his nature, from the very meaning of this concept, is an ordination, an ordination communicated to him by God by the very fact that God has created him (*infundit creando*, as Fr. Sertillanges neatly puts it²), an ordination to God, the highest common good and last end of all men, and therefore a natural law. Man's nature is this law in a fundamental sense; the natural law has its formal existence in those universal moral principles which reason, on the evidence of that nature, pronounces. By his nature, and the moral principles that arise from it, man is directed to the performance of certain acts necessary to attain his end, and averted from others that obstruct that attainment. The morality of such acts is intrinsic, absolute; they are in themselves immutably good or evil. There are other acts neither postulated nor prohibited in themselves; their morality is relative to circumstance, intention, etc.

Man is not, however, by nature a mere individual person; he is a social person. For it is only by peaceful collaboration with his fellow men in a stable society that he finds it possible to attain the full development of

¹ Jeremy Bentham, *Principals of Morals and Legislation*, chapter 1, section 13, footnote. Oxford University Press, 1907.

² Rev. A. S. Sertillanges, O.P., *Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy*, ch.8.

his personality. He is naturally ordained, therefore, to society; and this natural ordination, or natural law, is the proximate source of the authority needed to govern society. Men, through the society they comprise, must enforce the natural principles which circumscribe their social existence. They must also choose, for the sake of peace and order, between alternative means in themselves equally suitable for the ends intended. And they must adapt the structure and the methods of society to changing circumstances and needs. Natural law is not so rigid a framework as to leave no room for discretion and contrivance; it does not determine everything in detail; rather it encourages men to the utmost ingenuity in solving the constantly changing problems that confront them. Far from being an obstacle to progress, it is the principle of genuine human progress.

An important element of the social order is right. Both the community and individual persons or intermediate societies which compose it have rights, that is, inviolable moral powers, with regard to the means necessary to their purposes. And since these purposes are in accord and complementary, there can be no conflict in principle between the respective rights of community and members, though there is need for an unremitting exercise of political prudence to preserve the proper balance. In a sense these rights can be called absolute; but they are not unlimited, especially in their exercise—limitation comes both from their ends and from their reciprocal relations.

This brief outline of what is in one way or another familiar to you all does scant justice to the profundity, the complexity, and indeed the great beauty of the scholastic philosophy of the moral order (and man's nobler ordination, by faith and grace, to a supernatural destiny is entirely omitted). But it will suffice for its purpose. Here is a moral order which truly gives an account of the nature, the dignity, and the imperishable significance of man, which results in no false antagonism between the human person and society but harmoniously relates them by their purposes and safeguards them by their rights. Ought it to be designated absolute or relative? Well, it has aspects that are absolute, others that are non-absolute. It is founded on a real, existent end, greater than man himself, not a mere abstraction or formula. Man's destiny to this end, which is God, is again in a certain respect absolute, yet attainment is conditional, dependent on man himself. The way to God is marked out inflexibly, yet that way is not static but dynamic, and it admits of wondrous variety. To label such an order relative would be libelous, yet the alternative term is not altogether a happy one. The richness and the depth of this moral order make any such attempt at designation too simplified.

With this background it will be possible to make a more cursory inspection of a few of the other moral systems proposed in modern times. During a good part of the nineteenth century utilitarianism made a wide popular appeal. Pleasure was the only good of man, and the utility of an action in promoting pleasure or diminishing pain was the one test of its goodness. Because the unbridled individualism of naked utilitarianism was so repellant, its proponents spoke of "the greatest good of the greatest number" (Bentham's phrase), or of "social utility" (as Mill expressed it), but in the

last analysis it was the pleasure of the agent that had to be the dominant consideration. Under such a system there could be but one virtue and one vice; moral species vanished; for under easily imaginable circumstances the most treacherous lie, the meanest swindle, the most atrocious murder might in particular cases be more productive of pleasure than of pain to the agent and would have, accordingly, to be adjudged good. Yet the principle on which this system rested was thought to be of absolute and universal validity, as Jeremy Bentham tried to show.⁸

After the success of the Darwinian romance, so ably popularized by the apparent scholarship of Herbert Spencer and the facile rhetoric of Thomas Huxley, the ethics of scientific naturalism come to the fore. Practically this was nothing but utilitarianism propped up by the dogma of evolution. For Spencer as well as for Bentham, pleasure was the only good. But in discussing the embarrassing question of egoism versus altruism, Spencer had the advantage of being able to appeal to the evolutionary process which, he optimistically thought, was gradually producing a sort of man in whom there would no longer be any conflict between selfish and social impulse. Logically the revamped utilitarianism involved the same sort of relativism as the earlier variety, with the additional complicating factor that man himself was changing and relative. Some of its exponents, however, tried to neutralize the evolutionary factor. Spencer, for instance, while admitting that the ethical code of the imperfect man of today was only a relative one, nevertheless argued that the present status of man (and presumably, therefore, his present code of ethics) would endure into the unforeseeable future.⁴ And Huxley, contending against the social Darwinists that

the practice of what is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which, in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence.⁵

maintained that over long periods of time, at least, man and his ethical ideal were not observably affected by the process of change.

I am not aware of a particle of evidence in favor of the conclusion that this evolutionary process has been accompanied by any modification of the physical or the mental characteristics of the men who have been the subject of it. I have not met with any grounds for suspecting that the average Englishmen of today are sensibly different from those that Shakespeare knew and drew. We look into his magic mirror of the Elizabethan age and behold, nowise darkly, the presentment of ourselves.⁶

Their successors were not so worried, and the sociological naturalists did not hesitate to speak of ethical relativity in a racial or tribal sense. According to Friedrich Paulsen, "Every moral philosophy is, therefore,

» Cf. footnote 1.

⁴ Herbert Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, ch. 15.

⁵ Thomas Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 81. Appleton and Co., 1896.

* Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

valid only for the sphere of civilization from which it springs."⁷ And we have William Graham Sumner's word for it that "world philosophy, life, policy, right, rights, and morality are all products of the folkways." * Later writers of the same school acknowledged that tribal morals were really subjective, but denied that this made them "arbitrary" or "whimsical."⁹ Edward Westermarck summed up the case with his thesis that

the moral consciousness is ultimately based on emotions, that the moral judgment lacks objective validity, and that moral values are not absolute but relative to the emotions they express.¹⁰

It is not surprising that members of these cognate schools should find no room in their philosophy for natural rights, though in practice they tended towards exaggerated individualism. It was simply a question of social utility.

Natural rights [said Jeremy Bentham] is simple nonsense. Natural and imprescriptable rights, rhetorical nonsense—nonsense upon stilts.¹¹

And on another occasion, referring to the Declaration of Independence,

Who can help lamenting that so rational a cause should have rested on such reasons, so much fitter to beget objections than to remove them? ¹²

Yet on the utilitarian principle he favored a large measure of individual liberty. The attitude of John Stuart Mill, in his essay *On Liberty*, and of Herbert Spencer in his sociological works, was no different. Thomas Huxley's approach was slightly different; though a liberal, he did not see how natural rights could be reconciled with state sovereignty.¹³

In the case of none of these authors is there an immediate and obvious connection between their moral relativism, express or implied, and their hostility to natural rights. The reason lies deeper, and will be analysed later on.

The moral relativism current today, while not entirely uninfluenced by the evolutionary creed, is more directly the product of a faulty epistemology. One group, whose acknowledged leader in this country was the late Morris Cohen, professed a philosophy which was in the main a modern conceptualism. From Kant they had inherited a systematic agnosticism. This was strengthened in their minds by the conceptualistic tendencies of many recent mathematicians, as interpreted and expounded by Bertrand Russel and Alfred Whitehead in their *Principia Mathematica*. The logical

⁷Friederick Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, tr. by Frank Thilly, p. 25. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899.

⁸ William Graham Sumner, *Folkways*, p. 29. Ginn and Co., 1906.

⁹ Wayne Leys, *Ethics and Social Policy*, p. 180.

¹⁰ Edward Westermarck, *Ethical Relativity*, p. 289. Harcourt Brace and Co., 1932.

¹¹ Bentham, *Works*, III, p. 219. Bowring edition.

¹² Bentham, *Works*, I, p. 154. Bowring edition.

¹³ Huxley, *Natural Rights (in Evolution and Ethics)*.

positivism of the Vienna school played its part. The result was a belief that there were no absolutely and universally valid truths in any field. Principles were mere postulates or hypotheses, and there was no compelling reason why one hypothesis should be chosen rather than another.

Why not admit [asked Cohen] that the suicide of a given individual may be right from one set of assumptions and wrong from another?¹⁴

Professor Cohen, while a bit uneasy about the problem, was content to say that his ideas were "liberal". And that was part of his difficulty. For much modern liberalism derives from Kant's exaggerated theory of personal autonomy; and when one has come to feel himself independent even of God, he is not likely to welcome an objective order of truth which he cannot create but only accept.

This phobic attitude towards the necessary and the immutable is strongly manifested by another group of philosophers, who call themselves naturalists and look to John Dewey for inspiration. Dewey himself never wholly outgrew his early Hegelianism, and after he had absorbed the pragmatism of Charles Peirce and William James it was easy for him to view all reality as a process of becoming. Truth can never be more than an approximation; one starts with hypotheses, tries to verify them by their consequences, and is thus led to formulate new hypotheses. There is accordingly a continuous process of verification, but apparently without any standard by which to decide whether what is verified is good or bad. And since verification can result only through the use of "the scientific method," an order of distinctive spiritual reality is methodologically excluded.¹⁵

The idea that unless standards and rules are absolute, and hence eternal and immutable, they are not rules and criteria at all is childish,

he exclaims.¹⁶ Still he does not want a purely arbitrary morality.

If there is anything confirmed by observation it is that human beings naturally cherish certain ends and relationships, that, in short, they naturally institute values.¹⁷ [And] it requires a good deal of pessimism to assume that vastly improved knowledge of nature, human nature included, cannot be employed or will not be employed to render human relationships more humane, just, and liberal.¹⁸

Values, then, it appears, are natural even though they are not absolute or immutable. The obvious reason is that there is no fixity in nature; and

¹⁴ Morris Cohen, *Reason and Nature*, p. 441. Harcourt Brace and Co., 1931.

¹⁵ On this point the naturalists are not in complete agreement. Some say there is simply no evidence for spiritual reality.

¹⁶ John Dewey, *Nature and the Supernatural*, included in Yervant Krikorian, ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, p. 4. Columbia University Press, 1944.

¹⁷ Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

The American Catholic Philosophical Association 137

this explanation is confirmed by Sydney Hook, who tells us that man has no nature, and that it is all the same what we say his nature is.¹⁹

Other naturalists were more violent in their opposition to absolute principles. Thus in the introductory chapter to *The Scientific Spirit and the Democratic Faith*²⁰ Professor Lindeman affirms that the conference recorded in this volume was called

to register a clear protest against a movement of reaction which seemed to be inimical to both democracy and science.

And what was this reaction?

The answer may be stated bluntly; World War II had, as might have been expected, opened many doors leading to reaction and to claims of authority. . . . Strange voices using masked words were heard throughout the land, voices demanding a new authority in education, in morals, and in government. These voices used the familiar words of the democratic tradition but the ideas were not of that tradition. They asked for allegiance to fixed principles, inflexible rules of morality, and an unquestioned acceptance of a supernatural interpretation of human experience.²¹

Other writers in the volume join in the outcry; but that they do man a service can scarcely be claimed. For example Professor Bland Blanshard contributes a chapter entitled "Theology and the Value of the Individual" in which he vigorously deprecates such phrases as "the infinite dignity of the individual." Man's value, he thinks, must be stated in verifiable terms, not in terms of theological imponderables involving values of a future life. It is no doubt purely a coincidence, with no similarity intended to any living person, to find the late Adolph Hitler recorded as saying,

to the Christian doctrine of the infinite significance of the individual human soul . . . I oppose with icy clarity the saving doctrine of the nothingness and insignificance of the human being.²²

Several disquieting consequences of these attitudes are discernible. In the first place there is found in most of the writers cited a tendency to devote disproportionately little attention to the individual person and to think more in terms of society, humanity, or some other group. This may be an occupational hazard of science, which is more concerned with what is common than with what is individual. But the philosophical explanation is the neglect or denial of man's spiritual soul and his personality; for all non-personal individuals are naturally subordinated to the good of their species. At any rate the tendency is there, and gives point to the late Gilbert Chesterton's ironic proposal of a hymn for the Comptons, "Nearer mankind to thee."

10Cf. Rev. Leo Ward, C.S.C., in "The Review of Politics", October, 1947, reviewing Sydney Hook's book, *Education for Modern Man*. Dial Press, 1947.

²⁰o *The Scientific Spirit and the Democratic Faith*, p. ix. King's Crown Press, 1944.

2i *Ibid*.

22 Cf. Hermann Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction*, p. 25.

Another tendency is towards an uncertainty bordering on scepticism. John Dewey, referring to his foster-child, progressive education, said, "We do not know why we are doing what we are doing nor where we are going." And H. G. Wells frankly confessed,

After all the present writer has no compelling argument to convince the reader that he should not be cruel or mean or cowardly. Such things are also in his own make-up in a large measure, but none the less he hates and fights against them with all his strength. He would rather his species ended its story in dignity, kindliness, and generosity, and not like drunken cowards in a daze or poisoned rats in a sack. But this is a matter of individual predilection to everyone to decide for himself.²³

Strangely enough this uncertainty in moral questions is coupled with an unfounded optimism. Truth crushed to earth, it is felt, will rise again; and there is frequent appeal to James's dictum that the best test of truth is acceptability in the market place, though there appears to be no way of deciding whether what is accepted is good or not. These optimists seem to think that what rises to the surface is the cream; a little experience in the hash houses of the world would be disenchanting. For there is a kind of Gresham's law operative in the field of ideas, with the worse driving out the better.

To put it more bluntly, the lack of an objective moral standard leaves nothing but force as the arbiter of ideas and ideals. Morris Cohen was no doubt a polished gentleman with an abhorrence of violence; John Dewey, it may be, would not hurt a fly; many of their followers, one may assume, would not commit murder save for the most suitable of reasons. But observe how the dialectic of moral uncertainty, subjectivism, and relativism worked in the mind of the late Justice Holmes.

Deep-seated preferences [he wrote] cannot be argued about—you cannot argue a man into liking a glass of beer—and therefore, when differences are sufficiently far-reaching, we try to kill the other man rather than let him have his way. But that is perfectly consistent with admitting that, so far as appears, his grounds are just as good as ours.²⁴

And on another occasion, discussing the first world war, he simplified the moral problem in this persuasive fashion,

When the Germans in the late war disregarded what we called the rules of the game, I don't see that there was anything else to be said except: we don't like it and we shall kill you if we can.²⁵

Granted his premises, his conclusion was logical enough. As Hilaire Belloc has reminded us, Pale Ebenezer thought it wrong to fight; but Eoaring Bill who killed him thought it right.²⁶ If it is just a matter of

23 H. G. Wells, *The Mind at the End of Its Tether*, and *The Happy Turning*, p. 18.

²⁴ Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., *Collected Legal Notices and Uncollected Papers*, p. 311. Harcourt Brace and Co., 1920.

²⁵ Holmes, *Book Notices and Uncollected Papers*, p. 187. New York, 1937.

²⁶ Hilaire Belloc.

personal or tribal predilection, the stronger person or the stronger trifle had better look to victory.

In these modern theories, just as in the earlier ones previously considered, there is no room for a solid defense of men's rights, and the writers whose views have been given either do not mention them, or like Holmes dismiss them with a phrase. But whether this is due to their relativism or to a more profound reason is a question that will be postponed till the final summing up.

At this point a brief reference may be made to a trend of thought found in some European circles of jurisprudence. Many scholars are seeking anxiously a means of escape from the quagmire of juridical positivism and relativism. They have been deterred from thinking in terms of natural law because they know only its caricature by eighteenth century rationalists. Rudolph von Jhering was astounded when he became acquainted with the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and confessed,

The basic ideas I occupied myself with are to be found in that gigantic thinker in perfect clearness and in the most pregnant formulation.²⁷

Intent on finding a satisfactory principle of moral and juridical order, Rudolph Stammler and J. Charmont have suggested "a natural law with a variable content."²⁸ One may entertain the hope that when these men became better acquainted with the genuine philosophy of natural law and its delineation of an order both changeless and changing, they will see there the solution of their problem.

It is time now to formulate the conclusions to which this investigation has led. Man has been menaced in many ways: by certain types of natural law thinking, as in the case of Thomas Hobbes on the one hand and in the case of those well-meaning modern jurists with their variable natural law on the other; by certain types of moral and juridical absolutism, for example Hegelianism and eighteenth century rationalism; and by all types of purely relativist law and morality. Actually there has been only one philosophy which has safeguarded man's dignity and his rights. Why is this? What has this one philosophy which all the others lack? What is the cause, if there be a single cause, of their failure? It is easy to answer that they have shared a false epistemology and a false metaphysic; but we are looking for a more specific answer. It is true, too, that they have not understood man; but the question is, what precise error about man is it that has made such a mess of their morality?

I suggest this response: these errant theories have failed to understand that man is by his very nature ordained to God as his last end; and consequently they have destroyed the possibility of a moral order and substituted for it a mechanical or a physical one.

It is notable, when one stops to think of it, that outside the scholastic tradition there is no discussion of man's objective end. Pleasure, happi-

²⁷ Quoted by Heinrich Rommen, *The Natural Law*, p. 120. B. Herder Co., 1947.

²⁸ Quoted by Charles Grove Haines, *The Revival of Natural Law Concepts*, p. 249. Harvard University Press, 1930.

ness, welfare, social solidarity, etc., are proposed as subjective or formal ends, but the rest of reality is simply a means for man to achieve them. This is highly significant. It makes man, or society, ultimate and independent; it requires that man entirely achieve his end; it denies that in any sense that end is given to him.

From this there follows an important consequence not always realized: the order to that end becomes mechanical or physical, but not moral. This point is well illustrated by Huxley's famous comparison of life to a game of chess:

The chess board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of over-flowing generosity with which the strong show delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without / haste, but without remorse.²⁹

There is, there can be, no allowance made for good intentions. No explanation can be given for the rationality of following the dictates of an invincibly erroneous conscience. There is no one to restore the balance when a man has suffered persecution for the sake of justice. There is no room for the concept of merit, which is the moral link between a good life here and life with God hereafter. Results, secular results alone matter. Man must achieve his end, whatever it is said to be, in this life or be a total failure. What promotes this end, therefore, whether it be betrayal or butchery, whether it be what men would instinctively consider as base, must in logic be pronounced good; the end justifies the means. Nor can anyone claim rights or immunities; the simple rule will logically follow

that he may take who has the power,
and he may keep who can.

We are back to Hobbes's nightmarish state of nature.

If man is a cosmic orphan he will be a victim of cosmic cruelty. He has significance, and dignity, and rights only because he is made in the likeness of God and is directed to union with God according to a moral order which has a certain fixity, else he would have no nature and would not be man, and a certain flexibility, for if it were quite rigid he would be a dead man. This is what exaggerated absolutists and relativists alike have not understood; this is the reason for their failure.

PAUL KENNEDY, SJ.

West Baden College
West Baden Springs, Ind.

²⁹ Huxley, *A Liberal Education*, included in *Science and Education*, p. 77. Collier and Son, 1905.

Problem (b): The Prudential Judgment

Of all the habits prudence is the most difficult to define. Since prudence deals with contingent singulars it is beyond the scope of moral science. It is dignified by the title of "the queen of the moral virtues," and yet it is set apart and made to appear almost unattainable by being called "incommunicable." As Aristotle has warned us, prudence must be acquired through personal effort and experience, and cannot be taught; it is more characteristic of the old than the young, of the "experienced" rather than the merely "learned."

Nevertheless, prudence is directive of the good life and thus has a direct dependence on absolute principles; divorced from these it would have no meaning or function. But the guidance of these principles is accomplished through the medium of the individual's moral estimation of the particular concrete case. Without this application of the moral law through the judgment of conscience, a man could not form a prudent judgment. Is, then, the judgment of conscience the same as the prudential judgment? If the answer is in the affirmative it follows that a man can form a prudential judgment and then act contrary to it, for obviously he can act contrary to his conscience. But if this identity of conscience and the prudential judgment be correct, then prudence confers only the "ability" for doing good and not the "use." In other words, it falls short of being a virtue in the strict meaning of the term, but is a virtue only in the same sense that art is a virtue. Hence the inclusion of prudence among the cardinal virtues would be a false classification.

To put the problem exactly: If prudence requires the judgment of conscience, is it for this judgment that prudence disposes the practical intellect? The answer to this question will serve to clarify the nature of prudence and to show its basic relativity—a relativity greater, indeed, than that of the judgment of conscience.

I. THE NATURE OF PRUDENCE

Prudence is necessary to man in order that he may lead a good life.¹ For the good life consists in good deeds, and good deeds require right choice of means to a good end. Since the means are varied and indeterminate, rectitude of choice is not a gift of nature. Consequently there is need for perfecting habits in the reason in order for it to take good counsel, to judge well, to direct choice and to command efficiently. These habits are the virtues of prudence and its subordinates. This does not limit prudence to the brilliant, however; even those who seem to be simple, through lack of worldly shrewdness, can be prudent.²

The proper rule of human acts is right reason, and man attains to such through prudence, which is the *recta ratio agibilium*.³ Though man has a

¹ I.S.T., I-II, 57, 5, ad 1.

² I-II, 58, 4, ad 2. One having grace, since he has charity, has all the virtues, and consequently that of prudence, for he has enough industry in regard to the things necessary for salvation, even though he may be lacking in the diligence or shrewdness for all things relating to human life. II-II, 47, 14.

³ *De Virt. Card.*, a. 2.

natural appetite for the good in general, and he possesses a natural judgment on right action (*synderesis*), these are not sufficient for right choice. Because of the indetermination of the means and the diversity of operations, man must reduce reason's order into his actions amid the welter of circumstances. In deliberating a man must not deceive himself in examining the reasons for or against the morality of an action in the complexities of its circumstances; he must be skillful in discovering the various acts from among which he may choose. Not only must he deliberate well, but he must have the gift of judgment which should be the fruit of his inquiry. Finally, he must direct the correct choice and command the execution of the action. The possibility of faltering at any one of these steps gives rise to the need for prudence and its allied virtues. In other words, prudence is not innate but must be acquired, for as the means to the end are not determined man cannot have a determined inclination to them.⁴

The subject of prudence is the practical intellect for the prudential judgment is the rational ordination of choice in regard to things to be done.⁵ As the truth of the practical intellect is conformity to right appetite—a conformity to a desire for those things which the nature of the agent demands—the very appetite of the due end presupposes a right apprehension of the end, which is the work of reason.⁶ Rectitude of the will, which is an essential pre-requisite for prudence, demands knowledge of the proper end and the perfection of appetite by the moral virtues; for there can be no good choice of good means without adherence to a good end. They possess only false prudence who dispose well for an evil end, as, for example, the prudent robber, whose prudence is only *per similitudinem*.⁷

Prudence requires the guidance of universal principles which are obtained through *synderesis* or *intellectus*, and by deduction and experience, and from the teaching of others. These universal principles govern right appetite and supply premisses for the prudential judgment.

On the part of the will it is necessary that the intention be directed to a due end and that the act of choice be oriented by reason. So the appetites must be perfected by habits whereby it becomes connatural for man to judge rightly about the end and to choose rightly in regard to the means. Moral virtue also serves to remove the impediment of passion which would destroy the command or rule of prudence.⁸ While prudence is essentially an intellectual virtue, since it perfects reason, insofar as it is considered on the part of its matter—things-to-be-done—it has something in common with the moral virtues.⁹ As it confers not only *ability* for good work, but also the *use*, it is properly named "virtue."¹⁰

⁴ It is true that some may be more apt by individual temperament for the virtue of prudence, but this aptitude is not the virtue. II-II, 47, 15.

⁵ Although the practical intellect be concerned with directing action, it is nevertheless intellect for it is a *consideratio veri*, even though the *verum* be *relate ad opus*.

6I-II, 19, 3, ad 2

7 II-II, 47, 13.

8 I-II, 58, 5, ad 3.

9 MI, 58, 3, ad 1.

10I -III, 57, 4.

Further, moral virtue demands prudence, for the latter judges the correct measure or "mean" for the exercise of the moral virtues of justice, fortitude and temperance. Prudence integrates the movement of will and sense appetites in the moral order. For the "mean" can be achieved only by fully rational action here and now, with knowledge of the particular in human passions and operations. It pertains to prudence to judge how and through what the "mean" may be attained.¹¹

Another necessary requisite of prudence is knowledge of the singular, for actions are in singular matters. So prudence needs sense knowledge, particularly that of the interior senses, for memory, for experience, and for the prompt judging of particular cases.¹² Singulars are indefinitely variable and so the counsels of prudence cannot have absolute certainty; but through experience, the indefinite singulars can be reduced to a certain finite number which will occur as a general rule.¹³ (Here we touch on the basic reasons for the relativity of prudence; its dealing with the singular and its acquisition mainly through experience. Thus the science of moral principles cannot include a definition of the prudential act which always occurs here and now under these individuating circumstances.) The experience of judging rightly here and now is based not only on memory but comes from *exercitio recte praecipendi*.¹⁴ One cannot teach another this exercise, but he acquires it only by his own individual effort; consequently prudence remains basically incommunicable.

We can, however, list the integral parts of prudence. Insofar as the prudential judgment pertains to knowledge we need memory, reasoning, knowledge of first principles, docility—so we can learn from others—and shrewdness—so we may reason well. Inasmuch as prudence is preceptive or commanding, there is need for foresight, circumspection and caution.¹⁵ What these will mean in the concrete as applied to the individual case we cannot determine by universal rules. Finally, the methods open to prudence are those used generally in any reasoning process: arguing from necessary principles, probabilities, or conjectures.¹⁶

Let us now examine the nature of the prudential judgment. In order to clarify the place of the act proper to prudence we must follow the psychological order, for that is St. Thomas' own method. First we shall list the acts of intellect and will in their proper order:

<i>Intellect</i>	<i>Will</i>
Intellectus: apprehension of the end	Voluntas
Iudicium: end known as attainable	Intentio
Consilium et Iudicium Consilii	Consensus

¹¹II-II, 47, 7.

¹²II-II, 47, 3, ad 3.

Mlbid., ad 2.

¹⁴II-II, 47, 16, ad 2.

¹⁵II-II, 48, 1.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

Iudicium Electionis (vel Praeceptum?)
Imperium (vel Praeceptum?)

Electio
Usua
Fruitia

Which of these acts pertain to prudence? St. Thomas asserts that there are three acts of reason in regard to things to be done: counsel, an inquiry in regard to the means; a judgment concerning the things discovered; and the application of the things judged by the practical reason: the *praeceptum* or command. (The relation of this last to the act of *imperium* will be considered below.) Now the worth of prudence does not consist properly either in consideration or in the judgment of counsel, but rather in the application to action; and so it is the third act of the practical intellect that has the place of pre-eminence, and it is here that prudence has its proper function.¹⁷

Now let us analyze each of these three acts in turn, for only in this way can we discover the true meaning of prudence, and also the place of conscience in the formation of a prudential judgment.

Counsel is an inquiry of contingent particulars desired to be known as useful for action. There are two types of things about which we do not need to take counsel: small things, and those which have a fixed way of being done.¹⁸ The inquiry of counsel is one of resolution beginning with what is intended in the future and continuing until it arrives at that which is to be done at once. (That is, that which *should* be done at once; for it may happen that we may choose not to do it.) The principles of counsel are facts received through the senses, and also any principle that is known through a speculative or a practical science, for example, that stealing is forbidden by God, or that man cannot live without suitable nourishment.¹⁹ Of these counsel makes no inquiry. Counsel must take into consideration what is of precept—of the natural law.²⁰

The virtue of good counsel is called eubulia, and it is distinct from prudence though subordinated to it.²¹ It is ordained to prudence as to the more important. While it belongs to a prior prudential judgment to take good counsel by commanding it, it pertains to eubulia to take good counsel by eliciting it here and now.²²

Since counsel is an inquiry it must have a term of conclusion, which term is the judgment of counsel. This is not the act proper to prudence, for St. Thomas remarks, this judgment is ordained to something further.²³ Nor, again, is this judgment to be confused with that of election, for one

¹⁷ H-11,47,1.

¹⁸ 1-11,14,4.

i» I-II, 14, 6.

¹⁹ *De Verit.*, 17, 3, ad 2. More about this below.

²¹ 11-11,50, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, ad 1.

²³ Perhaps the confusion of the judgment of counsel and the judgment of election has been one of the reasons for the faulty identification of conscience and the prudential judgment by some scholastic writers.

may judge well, and yet choose to act contrary to this good judgment.²⁴ Finally, this judgment is not the same as the very inquiry of counsel, for one may take good counsel without having the "good sense" to judge well.²⁵ As the term of the inquiry of counsel is that which we are able to do at once, that which presents itself first to be done holds the position of an ultimate conclusion. Again, we may judge that several things can be done here and now; in this instance there remains room for choice among these means, as well as the decision as to whether the judgment is going to be followed at all—freedom of specification and freedom of exercise.

The judgment that terminates the inquiry of counsel is perfected by the virtues of synesis and gnome. (It is here that the personal norm of conscience is applied, as we shall demonstrate later.) The virtue of synesis insures the rectitude of the judgment in common matters. That the judgment be a right judgment, it must be a correct apprehension of things as they are, and this requires the right disposition of the cognitive power, which disposition is directly from the virtue of synesis, indirectly from right appetite as perfected by moral virtue.²⁶ In regard to certain things to be done beyond the common rule of action—as, for example, that it is wrong to give back a deposit to the enemy of one's country—such a judgment requires some higher principles, and thus the practical intellect needs to be well disposed by the virtue of gnome which gives a certain *perspicacitem iudicii*.²⁷ Finally, that a judgment of counsel be the one that will lead to a prudential judgment, we must judge in regard to good means for the good end of the whole of life.²⁸

Between the judgment of counsel and the judgment of election there may be interposed an act of the will, namely, consent. For if the means found by the aid of counsel be several and each meet with approval in the judgment, consent is given to all of them, and then choice will differ from consent.²⁹ If there be only one means, then the will chooses to act or not to act, and there is no need for consent.³⁰

The proper act for which the practical intellect is disposed by the virtue of prudence is the *praecipere*?³¹ The use of the term *praecipere* raises a problem which is irrelevant to the major question before us: the relation of conscience and the prudential judgment. The problem is precisely this: is the *praeceptum* to be identified with the judgment of election or with the *imperium* consequent to choice? This problem is irrelevant here, because, no matter which way we answer it, it remains that the prudential

²⁴ H I, 57, 6, ad 2.

28 11-11, 51, 2.

²⁶ 11-11, 51, 2 et ad 1.

27 II-II, 51, 4.

²⁸ Cf. II-II, 47, 13.

²⁹ I-II, 114.

³⁰ Cf. Lottin, O., *Principes de Morale*, Louvain, 1947, Vol. II, p. 113, fn. 1, where this is disputed.

³¹ *Praecipere*, quod est applicare cognitionem ad appetendum et operandum. II-II, 47, 16.

judgment is distinct from the judgment of conscience. First of all, the judgment of conscience is in the moral order, the prudential judgment in the order of means to an end, although, of course, the latter has a moral connotation as well. But the formal objects of the two judgments differ, and therefore the two cannot be identified. Conscience is the application of the moral law to this particular act to judge whether it is morally good or bad; the prudential judgment is concerned with the attainment of an end and thus deals with the question of what means should be placed to attain that end, and so it includes conscience but is not one with it. Secondly, it will become obvious upon our analysis of conscience that the judgment of conscience is neither the judgment of election or the *imperium*. Otherwise it would follow that either one could not choose contrary to conscience or could not act contrary to it, both of which conclusions are absurd.

The meaning of the *praeceptum* is not an easy thing to determine. Father Lottin³² has identified it with the judgment of election, or as it is sometimes called the "last practical judgment". He admits that prudence may be extended to include the *imperium*, but holds that St. Thomas has never taught such.

The Thomistic texts on this problem are not too satisfying. In the *Summa Theologica*, I-II, question fifty-eight, article four, St. Thomas does say that good choice requires: good counsel, judgment and a good *praeceptum*. This seems to make the *praeceptum* at least concomitant with choice since it is a requisite. Command in the sense of *imperium* is clearly defined by St. Thomas as being subsequent to choice. However, in the sixty-first question, the third article of the same part, he does use the term *imperium* to refer to the proper act of prudence, only to return to the term *praeceptum* in the next paragraph. Is the *praeceptum* the function of the intellect in the determination of the choice, or is it the command issued by the intellect after the choice has been determined? In many contexts the latter identification seems impossible. The solution is important in order to determine the exact nature of prudence, but not, as we have said, to distinguish the prudential judgment from that of conscience. Therefore we leave aside the problem as to whether the judgment of election or the command is perfected by prudence directly. In any event, prudence perfects both—one directly, one indirectly. We shall take the virtue of prudence as having its function in perfecting both the judgment decisive of choice and the *imperium*, and we admit that this is only a provisional solution.

Since the *praeceptum* is the principal act of practical reason it is also the act directly governed by prudence.³³ Although this practical judgment is in the nature of a command, and therefore implies movement to action, it is an act of reason, not of will, because *praecipere* implies motion with a certain ordination and thus belongs to reason.³⁴

³² *Op. cit.*, Vol. I.

3311-11, 47, 8.

«*/Wd.,ad3.

What is the necessity of postulating this ultimate judgment? St. Thomas answers that one may judge well, but yet defer the action because of negligence or act inordinately. So there is necessary a final virtue which is *bene praeceptivctr-n&mely*, prudence. Hence the rational judgment decisive of choice and the command belong to the virtue of prudence.⁸⁵

Properly, prudence is about matters regarding man's entire life 36 and the last end of human life.⁸⁷ But in some of the arts there is deliberation about matters concerning the ends of these arts, and thus men skilled in taking good counsel in these will be called prudent, as, for example a prudent soldier or a prudent pilot; but this is only imperfect prudence. A second kind of imperfect prudence occurs when one judges rightly after deliberation, but fails to follow this judgment of counsel in the act of choice; and such cannot be without fault.

The species of prudence include prudent action in regard to the ruling of one's own action, and the prudent ruling of the many: military, domestic and politic prudence.⁸⁹

Of the vices opposed to prudence⁴⁰ the major ones are: precipitation or the failure to take counsel, lack of consideration of those things necessary for the formation of a right judgment, and inconstancy or negligence in commanding the act.

2. THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE

For St. Thomas conscience is an act rather than a power.⁴¹ It is really the application of knowledge of the moral law to some particular thing to be done in order to judge of its moral value. In Latin *conscientia* means either a consideration of whether the act has been done or will be done, or whether the act is morally right or not. In English we have the term "consciousness" for the former; it is the latter sense in which we are interested here—the function of moral conscience. Conscience may consider either the act to be done or the accomplished act. The judgment of conscience is reached through the inquiry of counsel.⁴² In regard to thing to be done or omitted, the acts of conscience are: to instigate, to induce or to bind. (Note that there is no mention of commanding, for one can act contrary to conscience.⁴⁸) It is true that St. Thomas accerts that

⁸⁵ St. Thomas never speaks of a "last practical judgment", and, indeed, the judgment of election is not the "last".

³⁶ And thus it very definitely must take into consideration the data of conscience, as we shall show below.

37 II-II, 47, 13.

38 I-II, 57, 4, ad 3.

39 I-II, 48, 1.

⁴⁰ Forgetfulness affects prudence only indirectly, but the passions directly impede the exercise of prudence. II-II, 47, 16.

41 *De Verit.*, 17, 1.

MJbid.

⁴⁸ Cf. I-II, 19, 5, where St. Thomas clearly asserts that the will can be at variance with conscience.

" conscience judges whether something is to be, done or not to be done ",⁴⁴ but it is clear from the context, and from other references to this function,⁴⁵ that this judgment is concerned with whether or not the act *should* be done—whether it is morally permissible, obligatory, or forbidden. As such it is concerned with the moral quality of the immediate action and is clearly a judgment of counsel and the judgment of election.⁴⁶

The second kind of acts of conscience are concerned with the examination of the accomplished act, and are: to accuse, to defend, or to excuse. Such an act would be impossible unless we admit that there is an intermediate judgment between the act of conscience prior to the action, and the judgment following the action. For we are admitting in the examination of the accomplished act that we may have acted contrary to the dictates of conscience in the formulation of our choice.

The basic habit of conscience is synderesis—the natural habit of the first moral principle: the good is to be done and evil avoided. Many other habits may and do enter into the formation of the judgment of conscience.⁴⁷ From what we have seen of the nature of counsel and its judgment, we may conclude that the immediate virtues disposing the intellect to form a correct judgment of conscience are: eubulia, synesis and gnome.

That the judgment of conscience be rightly formed many factors are necessary. Besides the virtues just mentioned, the appetite must also be perfected by virtue, for the conscience proceeds from habits of science, wisdom and synderesis, but the activity of the will enters in—principally in the act of intention. Thus one is responsible for an erroneous judgment of conscience, as, for example in the case of vincible ignorance.⁴⁸

Conscience is personal and related to this concrete act and as such it partakes of relativity. True, it is dependent on absolute principles, but the principles of synderesis and the natural law do not state exactly what must be done here and now; this determination rests with the individual, and is not made by pure reason, but by reason in connection with voluntary activity. While conscience is a legitimate norm only if it be in conformity with right appetite and with objective reality—except in the case of invincible ignorance—its formation, nevertheless, is personal and *i&* an application to the individual case. Hence the judgment of conscience deals with the singular and is never scientific knowledge.

3. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PRUDENTIAL JUDGMENT AND THE JUDGMENT OF CONSCIENCE

Most of the factors needed for this distinction have already been established. We have seen the distinction of the prudential judgment from counsel and the judgment of counsel; we have noted the requisites of

⁴⁴ 1, 79, 13.

⁴⁵ As, for example, in the *De Verity* 17, 1, ad 4.

⁴⁶ We shall return to this point later.

⁴⁷ 1, 79, 13. ad 3.

⁴⁸ Cf. I-II, 19, 6. ad 3.

prudence and conscience; now we must compare the two to see how and why they must differ. (The confusion between the two is frequent among scholastic writers.⁴⁹)

The basic need for distinguishing the two is that the judgment of conscience is not sufficient for action. It states that "I ought to do (or to avoid) this action", not that "I am going to do (or to avoid) this action." The will may choose not to follow the dictate of conscience, as is all too clear from personal experience whereby we recognize that we have acted contrary to the judgment of our conscience. On the other hand, the will must be in conformity with the judgment of election and the command; to deny this is to become involved in hopeless voluntarism.

To distinguish the two is not to divorce them. The prudential judgment must be in conformity with right conscience;⁵⁰ but conformity never implies identity. Both issue a command; but the force of one is morally binding, the other necessitates psychologically. For reason can assert something *should* be done, or, in the order of the prudential judgment, that this *is* to be done.⁵¹ Something may be judged correctly through the inquiry of counsel, and yet not issued as a command in the prudential judgment.⁶² It is that this latter judgment be in conformity with the former that we find the necessity for the proper virtue of prudence. For we may fail to follow the judgment of counsel through neglect or inconstancy.⁵³

St. Thomas asserts that the judgment of conscience and the judgment of election—which, as we have said, is included in the scope of prudence—are in some ways different, and yet alike. Both are concerned with the concrete action. But the way in which the judgment of conscience examines an act differs from the judgment of free will. The former is found to consist in pure cognition, while the judgment of *Hberum arbitrium* consists in application of knowledge, because it is the *indicium electionis*. In other words, conscience is said to be "pure cognition" because it does not influence the will by formally determining it, whereas the last practical judgment does; thus the functions of the judgment of election and the command imply a necessary relation to will not found within the judgment of conscience. Furthermore, the judgment of *Hberum arbitrium* may be perverted, whereas the judgment of conscience remains intact; therefore the two cannot be the same.⁵⁴ Thus when conscience is said to bind it is not coercive, but it binds as an application of a divine precept.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Cf. Lottin, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 152, fn. 1.

⁵⁰ Perfect prudence requires a correct conscience. Right appetite is not sufficient. The truly prudent man does not only what he thinks is right, but what is objectively right as well. The rectification of the judgment by the virtue of synesis insures the rectitude of the judgment of conscience. To say that a prudent man may pursue what is only an apparent good would be to destroy the whole nature of prudence. In emphasizing the relativity of prudence we must not lose sight of its relation to the absolute and to objective reality.

⁵¹ Cf. I-II, 17, 1.

⁵² II-II, 47, 13.

⁵³ I-II, 51, 2, ad 3.

⁵⁴ *De Verity* 17, 1, ad 4.

⁵⁵ *De Verity*, 17, 3.

Is then conscience the same as counsel? It may at first appear strange that in his examination of the pre-requisites of prudence St. Thomas makes no mention of conscience. There are several reasons for this. First of all, conscience is an act, prudence a habit; conscience is in the moral order, while prudence is usually discussed by an analysis of the psychological order; finally, the judgment of conscience is a part of the complete judgment of counsel and is thus included within it. (It is not within counsel as constituting a formal part of counsel, but as directing the formation of a good judgment of counsel. For in a sense counsel is in one order, conscience in another. That is, counsel is concerned with what means will lead to an end, conscience deals with the moral evaluation of the means. Insofar as counsel means simply any inquiry it does, of course, embrace conscience.) For when we take counsel, St. Thomas remarks, we should consider the application of precepts—which application, we may add, is precisely the work of conscience. Thus counsel's judgment will at times be morally binding, as when something is enunciated as obligatory or forbidden. Again, the result of counsel may be simply a permission, as when several things are found good and are judged morally permissible.⁵⁶

What is the relation of the prudential judgment to that of conscience? As we have seen, the judgment of prudence requires that there be a choice of good means to a good end; again, true and perfect prudence cannot be in sinners; finally, imperfect prudence which fails to follow the judgment of counsel cannot be without fault. Thus prudence requires a good conscience, but such is not sufficient for it. Here and now the passions or a vice of the will may pervert the judgment of election or the command. Thus the necessity for the moral virtues. On the part of intellect there is need for a virtue to aid it in this last and ultimately most important direction of appetite so that man may adhere to the dictates of conscience, and thus prudence has its major role here. If the reason fail in controlling appetite at this point, this failure is imputable to it because it can and should direct the will according to reason.⁵⁷ Therefore a prompt and respondent will depends not only on moral virtue but on the rectitude of the practical intellect, which rectitude is accomplished by prudence.

When the conscience binds, the prudent judgment can only conform itself. This is done if one has prudence and exercises it.⁵⁸ Thus the reason will not be perverted by the apparent good in such a way that the delectable good would seem to outweigh the attraction of the moral good opposed to it.⁵⁹

If, on the other hand, conscience tells us that the act is not obligatory but is permissible, or that several acts are permissible, prudence has greater freedom. It must now fix the choice of the will and determine the execution of the act; here, above all, it is intimately personal, relative and incommunicable. It must be in conformity with both right reason and the

⁵⁶ *De Verit.*, 17, 3, ad 2.

⁵⁷ 11-11, 53, 5.

⁵⁸ For one may have a habit and fail to use it. I-II, 52, 3.

⁵⁹ *De Verit.*, 25, 2.

particular and individuating circumstances. This ability to choose well can be acquired only by experience and constant effort. Here we have the mystery of prudence's incommunicability.

Thus the prudential judgment is even more relative than conscience. Both partake of the complexities of temperament, habit, experience and appetitive inclinations. But prudence completes the judgment of conscience by applying its precept to action, or by determining the choice among the various morally good means under these particular conditions. Thus the prudential judgment makes the judgment of conscience effective. Although we have distinguished the two we should not divorce them. Just as prudence depends on conscience, so conscience on prudence. First insofar as prudence includes counsel and judgment through its subordinate virtues it regulates conscience. Further, insofar as any act is voluntary it falls under the direction of prudence. Thus a man must be prudent in forming his conscience so that he can make further prudential judgments in accord with right reason. That is, the judgment of conscience presupposes a prior prudent judgment, although it precedes the formation of the judgment of choice and the command perfected by prudences here and now. Thus prudence gives us the ability for the ultimate rational direction of voluntary activity.⁶⁰

Both remain relative, for only the human individual can form his conscience and determine its application through the formation of the judgment of election and the command. Thus man can by judging and commanding prudently attain to the good life, which is the reasonable life. Hence the difficulties of prudence are compensated by its glory. Rightly it is the queen of the virtues.

MARIANNE MILLER CHILDRESS

St. Louis University
St. Louisj Missouri

Problem (c): Practical Knowledge and Relativity

It is impossible to read St. Thomas* writings on moral philosophy without becoming immediately convinced that in moral matters he is essentially a relativist—not, indeed, in an absolute and unqualified sense, yet very definitely a relativist. And he is a relativist simply because he is an existentialist, because for him the entire moral order is essentially an existential order in which even the most abstract and universal moral problems get their whole meaning from their complete orientation to concrete and singular existence, which in creatures, and especially in human creatures, is a realm of contingency and variability.

Throughout his commentary on the *Nicomachian Ethics*, Aquinas insists upon the relativity of moral knowledge. In the prooemium we find him writing:

⁶⁰ The place of will in the formation of the judgment of election has not been stressed, not because this causal influence is not important, but because this problem is beyond the scope of the present paper.

. . . the same kind of certitude cannot be found, nor is it to be expected, in all discussions. . . . The matter with which moral science deals is such that perfect certitude does not belong to it. And he (Aristotle) brings this out by means of the two classes of things which seem to pertain to the matter of moral science. First and principally, virtuous works pertain to the matter of morals. . . . There is no certain opinion among men about these; on the contrary, there is a vast difference in the way men judge of them. And in this a good many errors occur. For some things which are considered to be just and licit by some people, are judged to be unjust and illicit by other, according to differences in times, places, and persons. A thing looked upon as evil one time or in one locality, is not considered evil at another time, or in another locality. And because of this difference it happens that some think that nothing is just or virtuous by nature but only by law.

Secondly, external goods which man uses as means to an end pertain to the matter of morals. And with regard to these goods the same error is found, for they do not remain the same in all circumstances. Certain persons are helped by them while others find them a hindrance. For many men have perished because of their wealth, as those for example who have been killed by robbers. Others have come to ruin because of their bodily strength, when their trust in it led them to expose themselves imprudently to dangers. And so it is clear that the matter of morals is variable and undetermined, and without perfect certitude.*

Later, in the second book, St. Thomas returns to the same theme:

. . . every discussion which deals with things to be done, as does the present discussion, must be carried on in a figurative way, that is to say, by means of examples and similitudes, and not with certitude. . . . We see that the things involved in moral operations, and other things useful for this purpose, namely exterior goods, do not have in themselves anything that perdures in a necessary way, but all of them are contingent and variable. . . . And since a discourse on morals even in its universal considerations is uncertain and variable, it is even more uncertain when one attempts to descend to a special consideration of singulars. This consideration does not fall within the scope of any art, nor is it susceptible of exact discussion, because the causes of singular things to be done vary in an infinite diversity of ways. Hence judgement of singulars is left to the prudence of each individual. And that is why those who are acting must by their prudence consider the actions it is befitting to perform at the given moment, after due attention has been paid to all the particular circumstances. . . . But though the present discourse is of such a nature, i.e., uncertain in its universal considerations and ineffable with regard to particulars, we must nevertheless attempt to give whatever help we can in this matter so that men will be guided in their actions.²

These texts of St. Thomas are typical, and could be multiplied endlessly. They are a far cry from the writings of many of his modern followers whose absolutism in moral matters leaves little room to suspect that in the practical order genuine Thomism is thoroughly existentialists.³ If modern non-scholastics have to a large extent been guilty of extreme relativism, not a few modern scholastics have been led to extreme absolutism. They

I *In I Eth.*, Lect. 3, Nos. 32-34.

2/n *II Eth.*, Lect. 2. Nos. 258-259.

⁸ Not, of course, in the same sense as current Existentialism.

have been led to it, not only because of a reaction to the opposite excess, but also because, by becoming victims of the modern homogenization of knowledge, they have lost sight of the radical difference between speculative and practical knowledge and have attempted to proceed in the practical order in the analytical way that is proper to the speculative order. That is why there is no better way of getting at the root of the problem of the absolute and the relative in moral matters than by considering it in relation to the nature of practical knowledge.

Speculative knowledge and practical knowledge • differ by their ends.⁴ The end of speculative knowledge is truth; the end of practical knowledge is an operation, a work to be done or made.⁵ The *opus* which constitutes the end of practical knowledge must be something outside the limits of the intellect. Both logic and mathematics construct, and are consequently arts; but they are purely speculative arts and not in any true sense practical knowledge, since the *opus* formed by their construction is completely within the limits of the intellect. It is this going beyond the limits of the intellect, as we shall see in just a moment, that leaves practical knowledge wide open to relativity.

In order to have practical knowledge it is not sufficient that the object considered be in itself an *operabile*, that is, something capable of being done or made. It must be considered precisely *in ordine ad operationem*, or *per modum operandi*.® In other words, practical knowledge must be in itself intrinsically destined to issue into operation. Moral knowledge does not consist in knowing how man acts, but in knowing how he should act. This distinction is important for an exact determination of the relative character of moral knowledge.

But as St. Thomas points out in the *De Veritate*,⁷ there are two ways in which an object may be considered *per modum operandi*. The first consists in knowing how an operation should be carried on without actually carrying it on. The knowledge is essentially orientated towards the end, but there is no actual pursuit of the end. This has sometimes been called formally practical knowledge, and in the realm of morals it constitutes moral science. Complete and perfect practical knowledge, on the other hand, implies the actual pursuit of the end. This is the realm of prudence.

4 Cf. 777 *De Anima*, c. 10, 433 a 10.

s Cf. 77 *Met.*, c. 1, 993 b 20; *In Boeth. de Trin.*, V, 1, c.

6 Cf. I, 14, 16.

⁷ "Sicut dicitur in 777 *De Anima* (com.19), intellectus practicus differt a speculativo fine; finis enim speculativi est Veritas absolute, sed practici est operatio ut dicitur in 77 *Metaphys.* (com. 3). Aliqua vero cognitio practica dicitur ex ordine ad opus: quod contingit dupliciter. Quandoque in actu; quando scilicet ad aliquod opus actu ordinatur, sicut artifex praeconcepta forma proponit illam in materiam inducere; et tunc est actu practica cognitio, et cognitionis forma. Quandoque vero est quidem ordinabilis cognitio ad actum, non tamen actu ordinatur; sicut cum artifex excogitat formam artificii, et scit per modum operandi, non tamen operari intendit; et certum est quod est practica habitu vel virtute, non actu. Quando vero nullo modo est ad actum ordinabilis cognitio, tunc est semper speculativa."—Q. 111, a. 3.

Though both of these types of knowledge are essentially practical, the difference between them is so profound that the very notion of truth undergoes an essential change when we pass from one to the other. In completely practical knowledge truth means the conformity of the mind, not with objective reality, but with a rectified appetite.⁸ In formally practical knowledge, on the other hand, truth signifies conformity with objective norms; in other words, the truth of formally practical knowledge is not practical but speculative. This reveals the essentially paradoxical character of moral science. Though it is specifically practical, knowledge because of its intrinsic orientation to action, its truth is specifically speculative.⁹ Let us try to see what all this implies for the problem of the absolute and the relative in the moral order.

We have seen that in order for knowledge to be practical it must reach out to something beyond the limits of the intellect. As Aristotle points out in the third book of the *De Anima*, the object of practical knowledge involves another faculty besides the intellect; it involves an appetite.¹⁰ The practical order consists essentially in a union of knowledge and love. This means that the object of the practical order is not simply the true, but the good,¹¹ and not the good as true (for that falls within the object

⁸ Cf. **I-II**, 57, 5, ad 3: "Verum intellectus practici aliter accipitur quam verum intellectus speculativi, ut dicitur (Ethic., Lib. VI, cap. 2). Nam verum intellectus speculativi accipitur per conformitatem intellectus ad rem. Et quia intellectus non potest infallibiliter conformari in rebus contingentibus, sed solum in necessariis; ideo nullus habitus speculativus contingentium est intellectualis virtus, sed solum est circa necessaria. Verum autem intellectus practici accipitur per conformitatem ad appetitum rectum; quae quidem conformitas in necessariis locum non habet, quae voluntate humana non fiunt; sed solum in contingentibus, quae possunt a nobis fieri, sive sint agibilia interiora, sive factibilia exteriora. Et ideo circa sola contingentia ponitur virtus intellectus practici; circa factibilia quidam ars, circa agibilia vero prudentia."

⁹ This paradox seems to have misled John of St. Thomas who held that in so far as Ethics is distinct from prudence it is essentially a speculative science, and a part of the philosophy of nature. "Scientia autem moralis si sumatur practice, est idem quod prudentia, et sic non pertinet ad habitus speculativos, sed practicos, de quibus non agimus in praesenti. Si vero sumatur speculative pro scientia ethica, quae tractat de natura virtutum, sic pertinet ad Philosophiam (i.e., naturalem) et est pars illius, quia cum agat de anima intellectiva, consequenter de moralibus actibus eius debet tractare."—*Curs. Phil.* I, pars II, q. 27, a. 1. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 1, a. 4.

¹⁰ "Both of these then are capable of originating local motion, mind and appetite: mind, that is, which calculates means to an end, i.e., the practical mind (it differs from the speculative in the character of its end); while appetite is in every form of it relative to an end: for that which is the object of appetite is the stimulant of the practical mind; and that which is last in the process of thinking is the beginning of the action. It follows that there is a justification for regarding these two as the sources of movement, i.e., appetite and practical thought; for the object of appetite starts a movement and as a result of that thought gives rise to movement, the object of the appetite being to it a source of stimulation."—*De Anima*, **III**, c. 10, 433 a 10.

¹¹ Cf. *In II Eth* Lect. 9. No. 351.

of the speculative order) but the good as good.¹² St. Thomas insists upon the fact that the good which is the object of the practical order is not the good in its universal and necessary aspect, but the concrete good which is essentially variable. "Not every good is appetible and moving, but only the good to be done (*bonum agibile*), which means the good applied to operation; and this is variable, like everything which falls within the realm of our action."¹⁸ In contrast with the indivisible and absolute character of the true, the concrete good has an essential subjective and relative aspect, and when in the practical order the true becomes intrinsically orientated to the good as good, the indivisibility of the one becomes conditioned by the relativity of the other. The following lines of John of St. Thomas are relevant here:

Truth consists in something indivisible, though falsity, since it consists in a withdrawal from the terminus of truth, admits of some latitude. . . . Truth touches an indivisible terminus, namely being or non being—and not in becoming, but in complete act, for it touches being or non being as they are in reality. Falsity, on the other hand, consists in a withdrawal from being and in a tendency to the opposite, and there can be a greater or less degree in this tendency, as for example in sin. The same, however, cannot be said for moral goodness, since it does not consist in a commensuration with an indivisible rule or with something in complete act, but with a conformity of reason which is the mean of prudence. It admits of some latitude since it is not, like art, bound down to determined rules, but is determined arbitrarily according to the circumstances. Hence speculative truth is regulated according to the being or non being of the thing itself, while practical truth is regulated according to a conformity or lack of conformity with reason and prudence.¹⁴

If in practical knowledge the intellect enters into an intimate union with the will to seek the good as good it is because practical knowledge is essentially ordained to putting something into existence. "Practical principles," writes John of St. Thomas, "do not resolve nor illuminate the truth with respect to its formal principles by abstracting, as it were, the quiddity from existence; on the contrary they apply and ordain it to be put into existence, and as a consequence they proceed in a compositive mode."¹⁵ This

¹² This does not mean, of course, that practical knowledge in so far as it is knowledge is specified by the good as good. The object of the intellect is always the true, but in practical knowledge it is always the true with an essential relation to the good as good. Cf. *De Veritate*, XXII, 10, ad 4: "Obiectum intellectus practici non est bonum sed verum relate ad opus." *Sum. TheoL*, I, q. 79, a. 11, ad 2: "Obiectum intellectus practici est bonum ordinabile ad opus sub ratione veri: intellectus enim practicus veritatem cognoscit, sicut speculativus; sed veritatem cognitam ordinat ad opus."

¹³ *In III De Anima*, Lect. 15, No. 827.

¹⁴ *Ars Logica*, Pars II, q. 25, a. 1, Reiser Edition, p. 777, a 1-25. Cf. St. Thomas, *In VI Eth.*, Lect. 2, No. 1130: "Bonae et malae mentis, idest intellectus vel rationis, quae est speculativa, et non practica, consistit simpliciter in vero et falso; ita scilicet quod verum absolutum est bonum ems et falsum absolutum est malum ipsius. Dicere enim verum et falsum est opus pertinens ad quemlibet intellectum. Sed bonum practici intellectus non est Veritas absoluta sed Veritas 'confesse se habens', idest concorditer ad appetitum rectum."

¹⁵ *Ars Logica*, Pars II, q. 1, a. 4, Reiser ed., 270 b 27. Cf. also *ibid.*, 269 a 28.

means that the practical order is essentially an existential order. And this applies not only to completely practical knowledge, but also to formally practical knowledge. The latter is indeed abstract, but it would be a mistake to believe that moral science abstracts from the concrete, existential order in the same way as speculative science. Thomistic speculative knowledge, even metaphysics, its most abstract science, is existential in the sense that the formal abstraction which it employs does not consist in burning bridges behind one,¹⁶ and in the sense that it deals with the real and not merely the conceptual order. But the abstraction found in moral science leaves that science in a much more intimate contact with concrete existence since this type of knowledge is ordained essentially to putting something into existence. That is why John of St. Thomas in the *Cursus Theologicus*, after pointing out that practical knowledge considers its object *ut stat sub exercitio existendi*, whereas speculative knowledge does not, concludes that the type of abstraction employed must be different.¹⁷

All this has important corollaries for the problem of the relativity of moral knowledge. For the existential order is essentially a variable and relative order, and as a consequence this variability and relativity reaches up even into the abstractions of formally practical knowledge. The student of moral science must ever remain in vital touch with concrete existence. That is why Aristotle and St. Thomas insist that a young person cannot, be a good student of this science because of lack of experience: *juvenis non est conveniens auditor*.¹⁸ The good moral scientist will always view his abstractions in direct relation to concrete, singular existence. He will be extremely cautious about *a priori* generalizations and extremely circumspect about absolute, hard and fast judgments.¹⁹

¹⁶ Cf. *De Veritate*, XII, 3, ad 2: "Sed quia primum principium nostrae cognitionis est sensus oportet ad sensum quodammodo resolvere omnia de quibus judicamus; unde Philosophus dicit in */// Caeli et Mundi* quod complimentum artis et naturae est res sensibilis visibilis ex qua debemus de aliis judicare; et similiter dicit in *VI Ethicorum* (cap. VIII in fin.) quod sensus sunt extremi sicut intellectus principiorum; extrema appellans illa in quae fit resolutio judicantis."

¹⁷ In I, q. 1, disp. 2, a. 10, Solesmes ed., pp. 395-396.

¹⁸ In *I Eth.*, Lect. 3, No. 38: "Juvenis autem est inexpertus operationum humanae vitae propter temporis brevitatem, et tamen rationes moralis scientiae procedunt ex his quae pertinent ad actus humanae vitae, et etiam sunt de his. Sicut si dicatur: quod liberalis minora sibi reservat, et majora aliis tribuit, hoc juvenis propter inexperiencem forte non judicabit verum esse: et idem est in aliis civilibus."

¹⁹ Cf. Yves Simon, *Critique de la Connaissance Morale*, Paris, Desclee de Brouwer, 1934, p. 76: "Le vrai philosophe moraliste sera un personnage extrêmement rare. Il lui faut joindre rintelligence abstractive qui est le fait du savant et rintelligence concrète qui ne se trouve parfaitement à l'aise que dans le singulier contingent, et doser leur fonctionnement selon une norme ineffable." Cf. also p. 95: "Une philosophie morale qui a compris que son rôle n'est pas seulement de définir des essences et des finalités, mais encore de mouvoir des volontés, aura toujours en vue, comme le terme vers lequel elle se dirige, encore qu'il ne lui appartienne pas d'y accéder, l'acte concret à exécuter *hic et nunc*, et des lors elle s'interdira l'apriorisme et ces généralisations que les hommes d'action abhorrent à bon

To say that practical knowledge is concerned with bringing something into existence is to say that its object is something essentially contingent. Speculative knowledge may have contingent things as its object, but it considers them not in so far as they are contingent, but in so far as they have some aspect of necessity about them. Practical knowledge, on the contrary, considers contingent things precisely in so far as they are contingent.

But this immediately gives rise to a difficulty. If contingent things are considered in their very contingency, how is it possible to have a habitus in practical knowledge, since steadiness is an essential property of every habitus. The solution is twofold.²⁰ In completely practical knowledge steadiness derives from the fact that in the prudential act an essential role is played by the will which has a steady rectification and proper disposition towards the right end. This steadiness of the appetite in its relation to the good is communicated to the knowledge in the sense that the truth of this judgment consists in a conformity of the intellect with the steady will.

In formally practical knowledge the steadiness is achieved in a different way. Here we find a problem that is in many respects similar to a question which was extremely acute for the ancient Greeks. The question was: how is it possible to have a scientific habitus in the study of nature which is concerned with mobile being and therefore with being that is essentially contingent. The predecessors of Aristotle felt that such a scientific habitus was impossible. For them the study of nature could achieve at best only *doxa*, opinion, and not *episteme*, science in the strict sense. Aristotle showed how the mind could to some extent at least escape the concrete flux of nature by retreating into the higher levels of generality.²¹ In these higher levels *episteme* is possible, but as soon as the mind begins to close in upon its object in the concrete, the *episteme* peters out into mere *doxa*. Something similar to this is found in formally practical knowledge. By retreating into the upper levels of generality the mind is able to save itself in some measure from the flux and variability characteristic of the order of human actions. There is in moral science, however, a profound difference which must not be lost sight of. The upper levels of moral philosophy retain a much closer contact with the concrete existential order than do the upper levels of natural science. Unlike the speculative knowledge of the latter, the practical knowledge of the former, no matter how high its degree of generality, still deals with the contingent precisely as contingent,

droit; elle saura conserver à la plupart de ses maximes leur juste caractère de lois de fréquences, et les entourer de réserves, restrictions et exceptions, enfin de marges d'indétermination qu'il ne lui appartient pas de combler."

²⁰ Cf. Cajetan, *In II-II*, 47, 3, ad 2: "Adverte quod certitudo prudentiae est duplex, quaedam in sola cognitione consistens. Et haec in universali quidem est eadem cum certitudine scientiae moralis, cuius universale est verum ut in pluribus. In particulari autem non excedit certitudinem opinionis, cum de futuris concludit aut absentibus. Et haec non est propria prudentiae. Quedam autem est certitudo practicae veritatis, quae consistit in confesse se habere appetitui recto. Et haec est propria prudentiae, quae non in sola ratione consistit."

²¹ Cf. *In VI Eth.*, Lect. 1, No. 1123; *In Anal. Post.*, Lect. 16; I, 86, 3, etc.

because it is essentially orientated towards bringing something into existence. This means that in the study of morals, science peters out into opinion more easily and more quickly than in the study of nature. On more than one occasion Aristotle and St. Thomas point out the incertitude that is characteristic of the study of mobile being. But they insist upon it far less than they do upon the incertitude and variability of the study of morals. It is interesting to compare the *Physics* and the *Ethics* in this regard. Moreover, while all practical knowledge deals with contingency, the realm of art, for reasons which we shall explain a little later, enjoys a far higher degree of certitude than the realm of morals. The repeated cautioning found in the *Ethics* about relativity and variability is not found in the *Poetics*.

All this helps us to understand why St. Thomas can say in the *De Trinitate* that while the term *rationalis* is characteristic of the study of nature in the sense that this study proceeds in a way that is especially proper to reason, as opposed to intellect, the same term is characteristic of the study of morals in the sense in which it means a dialectical process of reasoning which never arrives at certitude but only at probability, never at science in the strict sense, but only at opinion.²² This text and the one from the *Ethics* cited at the beginning of this discussion in which he says that moral knowledge is uncertain even when it deals with universals might seem to suggest that for Aquinas no real certitude is possible in moral science. That would be an illegitimate conclusion. For elsewhere in the *Ethics* he makes it very clear just how the absolute and the relative enter into moral philosophy. In the fifth book²³ he rejects the opinion of the followers of Aristippus who held that in morals whatever is said to be just is so merely by convention, that there is no absolute basis which would determine things to be just independently of man-made law. He founds his rejection upon a comparison between morals and nature. Just as in human life there are somethings that are determined by nature (e.g., that man should have two feet) and others that are determined by man himself (e.g., the type of clothing he wears) so likewise in the realm of morals. Moreover, even among the things determined by nature a distinction must be made. Though nature is a realm of mutability, the fundamental reasons of mutable things are not themselves mutable. For example, that man is an animal is something absolute and immutable. In the things which follow closely upon these basic immutable truths there is a determination by nature, but the determination is not absolute and there are occasional exceptions. So also in the realm of morals. Some things are determined by nature, others by convention. The former are absolute, the latter relative. But even among the former a distinction must be made. The most basic principles of the whole moral order are immutable and perfectly absolute. In the natural truths which follow upon these basic principles occasional exceptions are possible, and here the absolute character is conditioned by a certain relativity.

²² *Be Trinitate*, VI, 1.

²³ Lect. 12. Nos. 1025-1030.

A further elaboration of this comparison between the study of nature and the study of morals will serve to bring out more clearly the question of the absolute and the relative in the moral order. Because the human intellect moves from potentiality to actuality, it must in the study of nature begin with generalities and move on gradually towards ever increasing specific determination and concretion.²⁴ Because the first generalities are the most abstract according to total abstraction they are the most knowable for the human mind, and as a consequence perfect certitude can be obtained in them. But as the mind moves towards fuller concretion this certitude dwindles. After the basic generalities come propositions which are based upon regularities but which admit of exceptions. Later on it becomes difficult even to seize upon the regularities. In this way science gradually issues into dialectics. As the determinations of nature become less discernible, it becomes increasingly necessary to have recourse to conventions in the form of hypotheses which may be suggested by nature but which actually derive from man.

There is a parallel to all this in the moral order.²⁵ For the same reasons as those just given, the student must begin moral science with the basic generalities which are most knowable to the human mind.²⁶ Following upon them come propositions based on regularities but admitting of exceptions. At this stage moral science is beginning to lose its absolute character and is becoming relative. This relativity increases until the determinations of nature are no longer sufficient and recourse must be had to the man-made conventions of laws which are extremely relative, but not completely so, because they are based upon determinations deriving from nature.²⁷

²⁴Cf. the prooemium to the *Physics* and the prooemia to all the natural treatises.

²⁵ Cf. *In I Eth.*, Lect. 3, No. 35: "Et quia secundum artem demonstrativae scientiae, oportet principia esse conformia conclusionibus, amabile et optabile, de talibus, idest tam variabilibus, tractatum facientes, et ex similibus procedentes ostendere veritatem, primo quidem grosse idest applicando universalia principia et simplicia ad singularia et composita, in quibus est actus. Necessarium est enim in qualibet operativa scientia, ut procedatur modo composito. E converso autem in scientia speculativa necesse est ut procedatur modo resolutorio, resolvendo composita in principia simplicia. Deinde oportet ostendere veritatem figuraliter, idest verisimi liter; et hoc est procedere ex propriis principiis huius scientiae. Nam scientia moralis est de actibus voluntariis: voluntatis autem motivum est, non solum bonum, sed apparens bonum. Tertio oportet ut cum dicturi simus de his quae ut frequentius accidunt, idest de actibus voluntariis, quos voluntas non ex necessitate producit, sed forte inclinatur magis ad unum quam ad aliud, ut etiam ex talibus procedamus, ut principia sint conclusionibus conformia."

²⁶ These basic generalities do not refer to the principles borrowed from speculative science which are usually laid down at the beginning of treatises on moral science. Moral science does not really begin until the propositions cease to be purely speculative and become practical.

²⁷ Cf. St. Thomas, *In V Eth.*, Lect. 12, No. 1030: "Ita etiam iusta quae naturalia non sunt sed per homines posita, non sunt eadem ubique, sicut non ubique eadem poena imponitur furi. Et huius ratio est, quia non est eadem ubique urbanitas sive politia. Omnes enim leges ponuntur secundum

In the following passage, St. Thomas brings out with great clarity the way in which moral science becomes increasingly relative as it pursues its natural course from generality to fuller specific determination:

As we have stated above, to the natural law belong those things to which a man is inclined naturally; and among these it is proper to man to be inclined to act according to reason. Now it belongs to the reason to proceed from what is common to what is proper, as is stated in *Physics I*. The speculative reason, however, is differently situated in this matter from the practical reason. For, since the speculative reason is concerned chiefly with necessary things, which cannot be otherwise than they are, its proper conclusions, like the universal principles, contain the truth without fail. The practical reason, on the other hand, is concerned with contingent matters, which is the domain of human actions; and, consequently, although there is necessity, in the common principles, the more we descend towards the particular, the more frequently we encounter defects. Accordingly, then, in speculative matters truth is the same in all men, both as to principles and as to conclusions; although the truth is not known to all as regards the conclusions, but only as regards the principles which are called common notions. But in matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all as to what is particular, but only as to the common principles, and where there is the same rectitude in relation to particulars, it is not equally known to all. It is therefore evident that, as regards the common principles whether of speculative or of practical reason, truth or rectitude is the same for all, and is equally known by all. But as to the proper conclusions of the speculative reason, the truth is the same for all, but it is not equally known to all. Thus, it is true that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles, although it is not known to all. But as to the proper conclusions of the practical reason, neither is the truth or rectitude the same for all, nor, where it is the same, is it equally known by all. Thus, it is right and true for all to act according to reason, and from this principle it follows as a proper conclusion that goods entrusted to another should be restored to their owner. Now this is true for the majority of cases. But it may happen in a particular case that it would be injurious, and therefore unreasonable, to restore goods held in trust; for instance, if they are claimed for the purpose of fighting against one's country. And this principle will be found to fail the more, according as we descend further towards the particular, e.g., if one were to say that goods held in trust should be restored with such and such a guarantee, or in such and such a way; because the greater the number of conditions added, the greater the number of ways, in which the principle may fail, so that it be not right to restore or not to restore.

Consequently, we must say that the natural law, as to the first common principles is the same for all, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge. But as to these more particular aspects, which are conclusions, as it were, of these common principles, it is the same for all in the majority of cases, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge; and yet in some few cases it may fail, both as to rectitude, by reason of certain obstacles (just as natures subject to generation and corruption fail in some few cases because of some obstacle), and as to knowledge, since in some the reason is perverted by passion or evil habit, or an evil disposition of nature. Thus at one time theft, although it is expressly contrary to the natural law, was not considered wrong among the Germans, as Julius Caesar relates.²⁸

quod congruit fini politicae; sed tamen sola una est optima politia secundum naturam ubicumque sit." Cf. *ibid.*, Lect. 26, Nos. 1084-1085; I - II, q. 94, a. 4; q. 91, a. 1; q. 104, a. 3, ad 1.

28 I - II, 94, 4. (Pegis edition.)

The dialectical limit of this descent of moral science towards the realm of the particular is completely practical knowledge. The former may approach the latter indefinitely but will never be able to reach it because in the latter a new factor is present which makes it unattainable through a purely scientific approach, namely the actual exercise of the will. The appetite is, of course, always engaged in the practical order, even in formally practical knowledge, in the sense that this order deals with the good as good, which is the specifying object of the will. For that reason the part played by the will through the whole of moral science must always be reckoned with. Aristotle insists that "anyone who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just and generally about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits."^{2d} And St. Thomas points out that it is useless for a *sectator passionum*, one who is living an immoral life, to study moral science, because he will not realize the end of this science, which is right action.⁸⁰ Moreover, as we have just seen in the passage from the *Summa*, unregulated appetites make it difficult for the intellect to see and accept the truths of moral science, particularly in that part of it which is somewhat advanced in the direction of concretion. Nevertheless, because in moral science the actual activity of the will is not involved, the truth of this science is speculative, and therefore essentially independent of the concrete and fluctuating dispositions of the appetites. The conclusions of moral science are practical, but the assent to them is speculative. Truth consists in a conformity of the mind with objective norms and that means that there is a very definite absolute aspect to moral science. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the truth of moral science is saved from all relativity by the very fact that it is speculative and not practical. For though the norms be objective, they may in their very objectivity be conditioned and determined by all the variable factors which constitute the existential order. The fact remains, nevertheless, that, however these norms may be determined, there is something objective to which the mind must conform. In completely practical knowledge the situation is essentially different. For here the actual exercise of the will is involved and truth consists in conformity with this will. Paradoxically, it is this actual exercise of the will that accounts for both the relativity and the absolute character of prudential knowledge. Let us try to see why this is so.

In the prudential judgment the mind comes directly and immediately to grips with the concrete and particular contingencies of the existential order. That is why the relativity of moral knowledge reaches its highest degree in this judgment.³¹ This relativity derives from both an objective and a subjective source. Objectively, the concrete factors which go to make up individual cases are so innumerable and so variable that no two cases are ever exactly the same. But even if they were the same, it wouldn't necessarily follow that the actions would have to be the same.

29 *Ethics*, I, c. 3, 1095 b 4.

30 *In I Eth.*, Lect. 3, Nos. 39-40.

31 Cf. II-II, 47, 3, ad 2; II-II, 49, 1, c; MI, 57, 4, ad 2, etc.

In fact, the same objective factors could admit of an indefinite variety of actions, all perfectly prudential. And that for two reasons. In the first place a given set of concrete circumstances does not necessarily make only one line of action morally good even from an objective point of view. But even if it did, there would still be another source of relativity in the prudential judgment. For by the very fact that the truth of completely practical knowledge is not determined by objective conditions but by the right disposition of the will, the good which specifies the prudential judgment is not the true good, (i.e., that which is determined to be such by objective factors) but apparent good.⁸² There are scarcely any limits to what may *appear* to be good to different individuals.

In this connection it is interesting to note the profound difference between the relativity of angelic prudence and the relativity of human prudence.³³ The activity of the will enters intrinsically into the completely practical knowledge of the angel as it does into that of man, but the prudence of the former is, nevertheless, far more intellectual than that of the latter. In angelic knowledge, which is not abstractive, it is possible for the same habitus to be speculative and practical at the same time; the angel can, in and through the universal, attain perfectly to the singular thing to be done. The completely practical knowledge of the angel, unlike that of man, cannot go directly counter to the objective norms of formally practical knowledge and still be prudential. There is, indeed, in the angel a real distinction between these two types of practical knowledge, but in the natural order there can be no opposition between them, because there can be no apparent good which does not coincide with real good. The good represented is always the true good, and the rectitude of the appetite which follows this knowledge is assured in advance.

Because human art is also far more intellectual than human prudence there is, likewise, a profound difference in the relativity of these two types of completely practical knowledge. In prudence there is a far greater gap between objective conditions and the achievement of the goal than in art. If a person uses for food material which he has prudent reasons to believe is wholesome but which in reality is not, his death may result, but the goal of prudence is achieved and the good of the agent is preserved. But if an artist uses material which he considers to be suitable for his work, but which in reality is not, the end of art is not achieved.

Another reason for the vast relativity of prudential knowledge and for the difference between it and the relativity of art is suggested by a closer examination of the nature of practical knowledge. Practical knowledge is intrinsically destined to issue into an *opus*; its purpose is to bring something into existence. Consequently, while the principles of speculative knowledge are in the thing known, the principles of practical knowledge are in the knower. "The practical intellect" says St. Thomas, "has to do

32 Cf. John of St. Thomas: *Curs. Theol.*, In I-II, q. 21. Ed. Vives, t. VI, disp. 11, a. 2, no. 34, p. 25.

³³Cf. Henri Pichette: "Considerations sur quelques principes fondamentaux de la doctrine du spéculatif et du pratique", in *Laval Theologique et Philosophique*, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 67-70.

with things whose principles are in us—not in any way whatsoever, but in so far as they are capable of being produced by us." 84 This means that while in speculative knowledge reality is the measure of the mind, in practical knowledge the mind is the measure of reality. This point has been brought out by Aquinas in the *De Veritate*:

A thing stands in relation to the practical intellect and to the speculative intellect in different ways. For the practical intellect causes things, and as a consequence it is the measure of the things which are brought into being by it. But the speculative intellect, because it receives from things, is in a certain sense moved by the things themselves, and thus they measure it.⁸⁶

One of the most basic reasons why there is so much subjectivity and relativity in the moral order is to be found in this truth that in practical knowledge the mind is the measure of reality. But while this truth applies to all practical knowledge it does not apply to art and to prudence in the same way. John of St. Thomas has brought out the difference in the following passage:

Two things are required for art. First it is necessary that the matter which is to be directed and formed be not completely determined, but that it have a certain degree of indifference—otherwise it will not be susceptible of regulation and art, just as the acts of seeing and hearing are not capable of being directed by art. Secondly on the part of the form which serves as the directing rule, it is necessary that the regulation be done according to certain and determined ways, for if they are not certain and determined means, but contingent, they are not subject to the direction of art, but of prudence which directs by means of counsel and not by means of art because it does not have rules which are certain and determined but rather arbitrary and prudential according to the given circumstances, as St. Thomas teaches in II-II, q. 47, a. 2, ad Z.TM

In other words, in all practical knowledge the mind is the measure of reality because it imposes a form upon plastic and determinable matter. But whereas in art the form is something determined and only the matter is indeterminate, in prudence the form is also in a sense indeterminate. This difference is usually expressed by the phrase "art proceeds *per vias determinatas*, while prudence proceeds *per vias determinandas*?"* The reason for this is that though the fact that in practical knowledge the mind is the measure of reality gives a degree of freedom to the knowing subject, the way in which this freedom is exercised is not the same in art and in prudence. The practical order is made up of ends and means. But whereas art finds its liberty in the ends, prudence finds its liberty in the means. The artist is free to choose his end because the end of art is the good of the work, and this is a limited good, a particular good. But once he has chosen the end there are certain determined means he must use in order to achieve it. He may have to search in order to find this determined

⁸⁴ *De Veritate*, III, 3, ad 4.

⁸⁵ *De Veritate*, I, 2, c.

³ *Ars Logica*, Pars II, q. 1, a. 2; Reiser ed., p. 257, a 30-b 5.

³⁷ Cf. II-II, 47, 2, ad 3.

way, as original manuscripts of Beethoven and Newman, for example, show that they had to search in order to find the right way to achieve the musical and literary ends they had chosen. But the way in itself is determined. Was it not D'Annunzio who once said that every beautiful verse is preformed in the womb of the language? The prudent man, on the contrary, is not free to choose his end because the end of prudence is not, like that of art, a particular, isolated good without any necessary relation to the universal good. But though the end is determined for him, the way to it is not. He is the one who must determine it. No amount of casuistry will ever enable him to discover the way determined for him as it is determined for the artist.

All this emphasizes the profound relativity characteristic of prudence. But this relativity is far from being absolute. Though the prudent man is free to choose one of an indefinite variety of ways which lead to his end, this freedom is limited by the fact that the one he chooses must lead to that end. In other words, though the end of prudence does not, like that of art, completely determine the way, on the other hand, it does not leave it completely undetermined. In practical knowledge man is, indeed, the measure of reality. But he is not the absolute measure. He in turn is measured by something beyond himself. The artist is free with regard to the end, but he is not absolutely free—whatever the surrealists may think. He may choose to produce an ugly work without destroying his artistic habitus, and in this sense St. Thomas is correct in saying that art, as opposed to prudence, has to do with contraries. But that does not mean that in so doing he achieves the end of art. A surgeon may choose to kill rather than to cure without destroying his medical habitus, but that does not mean that in so doing he achieves the end proper to medical art. There is something similar to this in the moral order. The prudent man is the measure of reality because he freely determines the ways which lead to his end. But the relativity which this implies is bound down on all sides by certain absolute determinations. Let us, in bringing this discussion to a close, try to see briefly why this is so.

When John of St. Thomas tells us in the texts cited above that moral goodness is determined *arbitrarie*, he is far from espousing the doctrine of some of our contemporary existentialists who hold that the individual person should be able to determine for himself in a purely arbitrary fashion what is good and what is evil. These existentialists would define the truth of completely practical knowledge as a conformity of the intellect with the will. As we have seen, St. Thomas also defines it as a conformity of the intellect with the will, and this shows in what a profound sense he is an existentialist, for if it were defined in any other way, practical knowledge could not possibly come directly to grips with the concrete existential order. But St. Thomas does not leave the phrase unqualified. He makes it clear that the conformity must not be simply with the will, but with the rectified will, or with the rightly disposed will. In other words, it is not correct to say that in completely practical knowledge the will is free to determine its action in a purely relative way. Only the good will has this freedom. As St. Augustine has remarked, those who love God are free

to do anything they want. Their actions enjoy this freedom and the relativity consequent upon it only because this freedom and relativity are conditioned and guided by the absolute determination of the love of God. Their actions may vary, but their love cannot. And though this love may not prevent them from choosing an apparent good rather than a real good, the relativity is still limited by the fact that the object *must* appear to be good according to other norms than those, of their own choosing. Moreover, love tends to narrow down and even destroy this possible gap between the apparent good and the real good. By establishing an affective connaturality between the lover and the object, it tends to unite the lover with true objective determinations. St. Thomas' teaching on how the chaste man judges unerringly in things that pertain to chastity is well known.³⁸ It was this establishment of direct contact with absolute objective norms that John of St. Thomas had in mind when he wrote: "Amor transit in conditionem objecti."³⁹ Through love one is assimilated to the condition of the object.

The basic reason why the relativity of completely practical knowledge is not complete is that even though in it the intellect achieves truth by conforming to the rightly disposed will, this will must in turn conform to right reason. St. Thomas shows that this is not a vicious circle by pointing out that the rectification of the will has to do with the end, while right reason has to do with the means.⁴⁰ An analysis of the dependence of the will upon right reason shows that the relativity of this type of knowledge is bound down to something absolute because it always retains a vital connection with four distinct types of speculative judgment. First, underlying all the decisions in completely practical knowledge there are certain basic formally speculative truths without which the moral order would have no meaning. "The will orientated towards the right end," says St. Thomas, "presupposes the speculative intellect; hence the speculative intellect is the cause and principle of things to be done."⁴¹ Secondly, these decisions are also based upon the general principles of formally practical knowledge, which are speculatively certain and objective. Thirdly, even though the truth of completely practical knowledge is practical and not speculative, and even though, as a consequence, there can arise a discrepancy between apparent good and real good, the agent is bound to use all the prudent means within his power according to the circumstances to approach as closely as possible to objective truth. He cannot prescind

38 Cf. I, 1, 6, ad 3; I-II, 65, 1 and 2; I-II, 95, 2, ad 4; II-II, 45, 2.

39 *Curs. Theol* I-II, disp. 18, a. 4; Vives, VI, p. 638.

40 in VI EtK Lect. 2, No. 1131.

⁴¹ In V Pol, Lect. 5. Cf. John of St. Thomas: *Curs. Theol.*, t. I, disp. 2, a. 10: "Intellectus practicus supponit speculativum juxta illud quod dicit Aristoteles quod *intellectus speculativus extensione fit practicus*; nam regulatio alicuius non potest fieri nisi cognita natura eius quod ordinandum est: alioquin fiet ordinatio et regulatio imperfecte, et ex subordinatione ad alterum a quo dirigatur: et tunc in illo supponet cognitionem speculativam eius quod dirigendum est. Si ergo practicum supponit speculativum tamquam dirigens et praecedens se, ergo debet supponere speculativum perfecte et sine errore cognoscens, ut ex illo oriatur practicum."

completely from a speculative judgment about objective conditions. He cannot remain indifferent to these conditions, nor can he judge them in any way he pleases. Finally, by the very fact that it is immoral to act while there is a prudent doubt about the morality of the action, the prudential judgment cannot be practically true unless there accompanies it a certain, objective, speculative judgment about the presence in the subject of sufficient evidence to dispel all prudent doubt.

All of these considerations show how closely guarded the relativity of moral knowledge always remains. But the relativity is there, and it must never be lost sight of by the philosopher who wishes to be a true existentialist.

BERNARD I. MULLAHY, C.S.C.

Moreau Seminary
Notre Dame, Ind.

METAPHYSICS DIVISION: *Panel:* ALEXANDER SCHORSCH, ELIZABETH SALMON, HENRI RENARD.

Problem (a): Primordial Particles and Hylemorphism

I

One problem which confronts all Scholastics, and which should be of some concern to all philosophers no matter what their school or system, is the one indicated by the title of our present discussion. It is an aspect of the broader perennial problem of the relation between the special sciences and philosophy, and of course it is a phase of the question concerning the relation between the absolute and the relative which is the general theme of our present meeting.

(a) HYLEMORPHISM

Hylemorphism is the Aristotelian theory that all bodies or material things are ultimately constituted of two components called prime-matter and substantial form, two incomplete substances forming one complete substance. Ordinary or second matter is contrasted with spirit and is related to its own accidents as the prime-matter is related to the substantial form within it, *viz.*, as potency to act. The prime-matter is a generic, homogeneous, inert, static and passive factor while the substantial form is a specific, kinetic, dynamic or active ingredient. The prime-matter is, of itself, undetermined but determinable. Being pure potency, it belongs at the bottom of the scale of reality, at the nadir of perfection, while God Himself as Pure Act represents the acme or zenith of the same scale. This prime-matter is not nothingness or intrinsic impossibility and it is not mere logical being (*ens rationis*). It is even more than mere possibility or abstract essence. On the other hand it is less than actuality but it is still real, that is, it is not a mere thought whether the object of that thought be another thought or even a thing.

The other intrinsic cause of bodies, the substantial form, is the principle of actuality, of existence, of specification, of operation or activity and of finality, inherent teleology or orientation. As we go up the ladder of the grades of being from mineral to man, the higher forms contain their inferiors virtually and these higher forms are then given more dignified names such as entelechy, vital principle, soul, mind, etc. Subsequent to the original creation of the material universe, substantial forma may be said to originate according to their respective perfections by substantial change, biological generation or special creation.

In the orthodox Thomistic version of the doctrine of Hylemorphism, there is only one kind of prime-matter and there are as many kinds of substantial form as there are kinds (species) of bodies or types of matter. Interesting departures from this version were formulated by the Franciscan school of Mediaeval Scholastics. Among the deviant doctrines and unorthodox variations we merely mention as illustrations, the plurality of forms, intermediate entities, rationes seminales, spiritual matter, two or more kinds of prime-matter, prime-matter as a quasi-independent entity with some actuality of its own, the extended 'application or extrapolation of hylemorphism to souls and to angels, etc. etc.

(b) PRIMORDIAL PARTICLES

The electrical theory of matter may be regarded as a new application of older atomic views in physical science and together with the Einstein theory of relativity and Planck's quantum theory it comprised the so-called New Physics. According to the electrical theory which was first suggested in the 1890's and whose more or less complete formulation was not achieved until the past decade or so, all material substances consist of molecules which in turn contain so-called atoms. There are almost one million kinds of material substance known to chemistry today and all of these are made up from 96 kinds of element or atom, the list or table ranging from hydrogen to curium. The atoms are the smallest portions of any of these 96 types of building-block or element which can exist and still retain the identifying traits of that particular kind of element. These atoms are not now regarded as tiny, solid, rigid lumps of reality with hooks for valence and affinity purposes but as systems constituted of infinitesimal particles or corpuscles called neutrons, protons and electrons.

The neutrons and protons are nowadays supposed to make up a core, kernel or nucleus while the electrons are extra-nuclear. If we employ the solar-system model to envisage atomic structure, the electrons may be called planetary or satellite. (Models for the nucleus itself range from a volcano with erupting particles to a water-drop with evaporating particles.)

Since the New Physics has developed into Nuclear Physics during the last two decades, we are confronted with the alleged existence of additional particles whose properties are described by recent and contemporary physicists. These corpuscles we will now briefly enumerate and identify.

Electrons: also known as beta rays and as cathode rays; units of negative electricity; first named by a Dublin philosopher named Johnstone Stoney; these were the first sub-atomic particles; occasionally called negatrons as complements of positrons.

Protons: units of positive electricity; 1800 times more massive than the electron; suspected by Thomson, 1899; postulated by Rutherford, 1911; the nucleus of an ordinary (light) hydrogen atom is a proton.

Alpha Particles: helium nuclei consisting of two protons and two neutrons; so-named because when Henri Becquerel in 1896 discovered natural radioactivity, uranium was found to be spontaneously emitting three kinds of radiation which were tentatively called alpha, beta and gamma rays. The explanation in terms of nuclear disintegration was later offered by Rutherford and Soddy.

Neutron: an uncharged or electrically neutral corpuscle having a mass equivalent to that of the proton; conjectured in 1920 by Rutherford; discovered by Chadwick in 1932. Originally regarded as consisting of a proton and an electron in close combination, it was later, and still is, viewed as a fundamental particle having a spin not typical of a double unit. Nevertheless neutrons convert into electrons and protons and we are told that a neutron minus an electron and a neutrino (tiny neutron) results in a proton. Officially however (as of very recent date) the neutron is supposed to be an elementary, electrically inert unit.

Positron: a unit of positive electricity having a mass equal to that of the electron; postulated by Dirac as an anti-electron or "the absence of negative energy"; discovered experimentally by Anderson in 1936; a lightweight proton; the lightest known corpuscles of positive electricity. Emitted in cosmic rays and ejected during transmutation.

Deuterium: heavy hydrogen; an isotope of hydrogen with an atomic weight of two; discovered by Urey; formerly also called diplogen. Also discovered was an artificial isotope of hydrogen called tritium with atomic weight three.*

* Whereas ordinary helium has an atomic weight of four, there is also a light isotope of helium with an atomic weight of three. Atoms or nuclei with the same mass but different atomic numbers are called isobars.

Deuteron: the nucleus of deuterium; consists of one proton and one neutron.

Mesotron: middleweight particles with masses intermediate between those of electron and proton; also called mesons; some are neutral or uncharged, some are negative, some are positive, some are heavy, others light; described as parents of electrons and neutrinos; they have a very fleeting duration; first discovered in connection with cosmic ray study, later produced artificially by atom-smasher called betatron. Somehow involved in mystery of nuclear binding (Yukawa, 1935).

Nucleon: hypothetical, highly speculative particle (1947) conceived as possibly more primitive and fundamental than the proton and neutron.

Photon: also called (earlier) a quantum; a packet of energy or bundle of force. In the language of physicists this is an immaterial particle or disembodied radiation. It has however been called a corpuscle of light. It doesn't have mass precisely but it does have momentum.

My auditors will here recall the old controversy regarding action at a distance and the long history of aether-theories. They will also be reminded of St. Thomas's insistence that light is not a body but a quality (*S.T.*, P. IaQ. 67) and statements such as that of Robert Grosseteste and the Oxford Franciscans that light is the first corporeal form. We cannot afford the space or time on this occasion to examine the many optical and photological theories in the history of science and cosmology, e.g., the elemental view; the tentacular or subjective projection theory; the corpuscular or objective emission doctrine; the earlier oscillatory or undulatory hypotheses; etc. The whole history of emanation and illumination doctrines would be at least indirectly

involved. Suffice it to say that such a study may yet be of more than simply historical interest. We also ignore for the present such kindred ideas as monads, events, etc.

Perhaps more directly pertinent here and now would be the following ideas. In current physics, light, radiation and energy may be regarded as roughly synonymous. The radiation spectrum or the range of energy, proceeding from very long wave-lengths with the very low frequencies to very short wave-lengths with very high (penetrating) frequencies, includes the following:

Radio or wireless waves (ordinary long, short and micro-).

Infra-red (heat rays).

Visible light (red to violet).

Ultra-violet.

X-rays or Roentgen rays (discovered at Munich, 1895).

Gamma rays (soft or low-freq, and hard)—"natural X-rays".

Cosmic rays (soft and hard).

It is a paradox that although the physicists make distinctions between matter and energy or between mass and radiation, they assure us following Einstein ($E = M \times C^2$) that energy also possesses inertia. It seems that photons convert into an electron-positron couplet and that a collision of positron and electron results in a gamma ray. At very high energies the distinction between mass and energy is very obscure, so that the Millikan-Compton (photon VS particle) controversy of twenty years ago as to the nature of cosmic rays, is today ostensibly irrelevant.

The Field: a region of space full of lines or paths (not connecting links) of force; types of field are magnetic, electrostatic or dielectric, gravitational, nuclear or atomic; this concept resembles the old ether-vortex and the newer solid space; it also suggests prime-matter in some respects, despite T. V. Moore's equation of field-concept and substantial form.

A few equations and formulae taken from nuclear physics and illustrative of transmutation, fission and artificial radioactivity are the following:

Proton	+ Lithium	—————>	2 atoms He
Proton	-f Sodium	—————•	Helium + Neon
Alpha	4- Aluminum	—————•	Phosphorus + Neutron
Helium	-f Nitrogen	—————>	Oxygen -f Hydrogen
Lithium	-f- Hydrogen	—————>	He -f He -f Energy
Deuteron	-f Lithium	—————•	He + He -f Neutron
Deuteron	-f Beryllium	—————>	Boron -f Neutron
Radium	—————	—————>	Radon -f He

Nuclear disintegration and fission have made obsolete the old equation between physical and chemical changes on the one hand and accidental and substantial changes on the other but the patterns or constellations of primordial particles require a principle or law of internal arrangement.

Although the scientists themselves do not call attention to the fact, there is conspicuous in the phenomena they report and in the inferences they derive, a polarity or dualism allegedly manifested by the primitive corpuscles. Thus, some of them are charged and some are uncharged and among those that are electrical or charged some are positive and others are negative in sign. Again, some are heavy in relative mass while others are light. Finally some are stable and others are unstable.

We have already referred to the basic dichotomy in physical science

between matter and energy or mass and radiation. We should also perhaps mention the antithesis between particles and waves, an alleged dilemma solved at least verbally for some by employment of the word *wavicle*. When we consider electrical science in general we are confronted with such suggestive dualisms as attraction and repulsion, conduction and resistance, flux and reluctance, as well as positive and negative, and still others. Perhaps the earliest Greek cosmologists had an inkling of the truth when they attached such importance to contraries, thereby crudely anticipating Aristotle. Indeed, today, perhaps the most satisfactory statement of the difference between chemistry and physics is the assertion that chemistry is interested primarily in matter but must use energy to get at the matter, while physics is concerned chiefly with energy but must use matter to get at the energy. Finally, within the nucleus we find a struggle between cleavage or fission and binding or fusion.

II

The relation between the scientific account of matter and the philosophic view called hylemorphism is the problem assigned to us and we proceed directly now to a consideration of the various possible positions of reconciliation, correlation, contrast and utter opposition. Are these two ways of looking at matter incompatible? Can harmony be established between them? Do they run parallel but totally separate and disconnected? Are they mutually exclusive and antagonistic? Are they two different languages whose respective idioms render translation impossible? These are the questions we must consider and the following are a few of the conceivable answers or at least attitudes toward the problem.

(a) Solution of this problem is inherently impossible because of the differences in the degrees and orders of abstraction or the formal objects represented by the sciences of nature and the philosophy of nature. The role played by mathematics is an especial source of confusion. In short, methodological and epistemological differences constitute an impassable barrier, an insurmountable frontier between the scientific and the philosophic jurisdictional domains and spheres of influence. Thus, there is, it might be alleged, no common ground among these definitions of matter itself:

Einstein: "Matter is a region in space where the field is especially strong" (March 1938).

Aquinas: "Matter is the first subject of movement and change" (S.C.G., II, 20).

Charles E. Dull: "Matter is any substance that has weight and occupies space" (*Physics*, Holt, 1943).

Jeans: "Matter is bottled up waves or congealed radiation" (*Mysterious Universe*, p. 83).

Aristotle: "Matter is the primary substratum of each thing" (*Physics*, 192a).

Barnes: "Matter is a symptom of space-curvature; the statistical average of collections of warpings of space" (p. 308; *Scientific Theory and Religion*; Cambridge, 1933).

Aristotle: "Matter is the substratum receptive of generation and corruption" (*Gen. & Corr.*, 320a).

(b) The question cannot even be formulated properly at the present time because science moves so swiftly and the scientific story is so far from complete that it would be rash and indiscrete to endeavor to correlate such new and recent scientific findings with an historical doctrine and a long philosophic tradition. In short cosmology should deliberately lag a generation or two behind the natural sciences before it attempts metaphysical interpretation of positive and empirical facts and theories.

(c) Solution of this problem is impossible because of such specimens of scientific speculation as these:

1. Hobson: "A scientific theory is merely a conceptual scheme of symbols" (*The Domain of Natural Science*).
2. Eddington: "The electron, like everything else in physics, is a schedule of pointer readings" (*The Nature of the Physical World*).
3. Poincare: "Science is interested in relations not realities" (*Foundations of Science*).
4. Sundry logicians and others: "The atom is merely a symbol, a fiction, a dummy, a model, a scaffolding, a technical device, a conceptual scheme, an imaginal construct," etc.
5. Jeans: "The ether is a frame of reference, a pure abstraction, a creation of thought, not of solid substance" (p. 113f., *Mysterious Universe*).
6. Eddington: "Electrons are waves of probability" (*loc. cit.*)

(d) Solution of this problem is possible because, although science deals with proximate causes and with the accidents and the sphere of the senses, while philosophy treats of ultimate causes and of substance and the sphere of the intelligible, there is nevertheless a connection between these two domains. The accidents reveal and do not conceal the substances in which they inhere. The scientist makes at least oblique contact with substance.

Reconciliation between hylemorphism and scientific views of matter is much more conceivable since the 1890's than it had been for the previous three or four centuries, especially since radioactivity (natural and artificial) and transmutation corroborate the basic ideas of the alchemists. Their theory is now respectable although their procedures and techniques were hopelessly inadequate.

SUMMARY

Regarding the relations between Hylemorphism and the scientific view of matter, at least four broad viewpoints are conceivable, viz., First, that the two have little or nothing in common at all; second, that the two have something in common but cannot be reconciled and that Hylemorphism should be abandoned; third, that the two have something in common but cannot be reconciled and that therefore the scientific story must be repudiated; finally that the two have something in common and can be reconciled.

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DANIEL C. O'GRADY

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Ind.

Problem (o): Biological Research and Catholic Philosophy

The two opposing schools of thought which would interpret the process of embryological development are in opposition because neither will consent to what the other assumes. The Vitalist does not accept only a chemical-physical interpretation of development while the extreme Mechanist belittles the Vitalist because the latter still considers important a directive principle which cannot be quantitatively measured or weighed.

Rather than review the pros and cons for either side, let us consider some recent findings in experimental embryology which the catholic philosopher perhaps can reconcile with his teaching that a unifying principle pervades all parts of the organism while the latter remains alive.

1. Horstadius (1937) placed the developing sea-urchin egg which had reached the four-cell stage in calcium-free sea water. This hypotonic solution caused the disintegration of the membrane which held the four blastomeres together. It was observed that when these four parts which made up the original whole were returned to normal sea water each blastomere underwent normal development which resulted in the formation of a dwarf larva. The experiment produced four larvae from a single egg. When Horstadius repeated his experiments using structures which were in the eight-cell or sixteen-cell or later stages of development he did not succeed in producing anything like normal larva structures from the isolated blastomeres.

The indication from these experiments is that the directive principle is in a labile condition after the second cleavage, and it can be equally divided among the four blastomeres present at this time should any experi-

mental procedure separate the structures. However, beyond this stage* of development the regulative principle is no longer divisible.

2. Similar phenomena can be found among animals higher in the phylogenetic scale. As early as 1895 Endres constricted eggs (in the two-cell stage) of the common newt, which is a vertebrate animal (*Triton taeniatus*), with a hair loop along the first cleavage plane in order, if possible, to separate completely the first two blastomeres. By this method he succeeded in producing twins from the separated blastomeres. The twins were well-developed embryos of half size but of normal proportions. Later the same experiments were confirmed by Spemann (1903), and in addition he showed that with a less effective constriction by which the blastomeres were not completely separated, partial duplication could be obtained. These either involve the fore end only (*duplicitas anterior*) or the whole germ (*duplicitas cruciata*).

Frankhauser (1930), using fertilized *Triton* eggs, constricted them with D hair loop so that a protoplasmic bridge remained between the two halves. At first only the half containing the nucleus begins to cleave while the other half remains undeveloped until, according to the tightness of the ligature, an earlier or a later descendant of the cleavage nucleus wanders across the broad or narrow bridge of plasm and provides the other half of the egg with a nucleus. This half now develops as if it possessed a whole cleavage nucleus; hence, if the constriction lay in a median plane, it develops into an embryo which either can be independent or united with the other in a double formation.

In all the above experiments, the fertilized eggs would have gone on to develop into normal embryos if their paths of development had not been altered by experimental conditions.

3. Let us next consider changes which can be induced in embryos in later stages of development.

Hilde Mangold (1924) removed a small section of the outer layer from a *Triton cristatus* embryo, and implanted it into the outer layer of a *Triton taeniatus* embryo of approximately the same age. Both of these embryos were in the gastrula stage of development. It was later observed that in the region of the implant there was formed additional notocord, somites, and neural tube. These later structures were induced by the transplanted tissue. These induced structures were normally situated with reference to each other and parallel to the primary embryo. Auditory vesicles were formed adjacent to the secondary neural tube, at the same level as the primary ones. In the best case obtained, they lay at the terminus of the neural tube. In later cases, however, where the neural tube extended farther forward, up to the level of the optic cups, the latter were developed and separated from the auditory vesicles by the normal distance. Such embryos could attain sensitiveness and motility of their own and become so similar to the primary ones that they differed from them practically only in their somewhat smaller size.

These experiments indicate that the developmental process can readily be influenced by mechanical variations, and that the fertilized egg which is primarily ordained to develop into a single normal embryo can be influ-

enod to form dwarf twins or monsters. Again the regulating principle must have been affected.

4. Now let us direct our attention to another phase of experimental embryology. According to the scientific and common concept, individual life begins at the moment when the nucleus of the sperm fuses with the nucleus of the ovum. The geneticist insists upon the necessity of the nuclei in order that the characteristics of both parents be present in the offspring and that its sex be determined. The philosopher looks upon fertilization as the time when the directive principle is infused into the new individual.

At present the embryologist knows that the sperm is only one of a number of diverse agents by means of which the egg may be activated. The extensive investigations of the early workers have shown that in practically all the main groups of animals normal development can be obtained by artificial activation of the egg. In several cases the embryos have been reared to the adult condition. The favorite objects for these studies were found among the echinoderms and other invertebrates. A wide variety of physical and chemical agents were used to replace insemination. Some of the effective agents were hypertonic solutions of salts or sugars, fatty acids, and fat solvents (alcohol, benzene, ether). Sea urchin eggs, treated for some time either with one of these agents alone or with a combination of them, and then returned to normal sea water, begin to develop and produce larvae. In the frog, the mere puncture of the egg with a needle was found sufficient to start development, especially if some blood or lymph was permitted to penetrate through the puncture holes into the interior of the egg. Frog eggs activated in this fashion develop into embryos and larvae and have been raised beyond metamorphosis to sexual maturity. Such animals are typical in all major structural and functional aspects. Their viability is reduced, but neither this effect nor the chromosomal aberrations observed in the cells can obscure the importance of the fact that typical development has taken place without the intervention of sperm.

From the mass of work done in the field of parthenogenesis, let us cite in some detail a few of the most interesting cases.

In 1936, Mrs. Harvey ultra-centrifuged unfertilized *Arbacia* eggs. Under the influence of the centrifugal force the egg contents stratify, the egg elongates, becomes dumb-bell shaped and finally breaks into two parts. One fragment is light and it moves toward the centripetal end of the centrifuge tube, the heavy fragment toward the centrifugal end. The nucleus is invariably just below the oil layer in the light fragment. Each of these halves can be broken into quarters upon further centrifugation. The light half gives a clear quarter containing the oil, clear layer and nucleus, and a smaller granular quarter containing the mitochondrial layer and some yolk. The heavy half gives a yolk quarter and a much smaller pigment quarter. Since the nucleus remains intact, there is not much likelihood for a portion of it to be contained in any fragment other than the white half or clear quarter. Cytological studies bear out this point.

The non-nucleated as well as the nucleated fragments can be activated

artificially by placing them in hypertonic sea water. Within an hour or two the fragments begin to divide. In the best cases the divisions follow one another in a more or less orderly sequence. In the non-nucleated fragments cleavages are much slower than in the nucleated fragment, which in turn cleaves more slowly than the fertilized fragment or whole egg.

The most advanced stage obtained by artificial activation of the non-nucleated fragment consisted of about five hundred cells. Some are normal-looking free swimming blastulae.

In other experimental work, egg cytoplasm (nucleus removed) has been combined with a strange nucleus. The procedure of introducing a sperm nucleus into a purely cytoplasmic egg fragment or into a whole egg which has been previously deprived of its nucleus is known as merogony. The chief significance of this method lies in the fact that it permits the combination of cytoplasm of one species with a nucleus of another species of somewhat different character. Such a combination provides a crucial test of the relative contributions to development by the cytoplasm on one hand and the nucleus on the other. Results of these experiments have shown that the viability of merogonic hybrids is very poor; in fact, the poorer, the stranger the parent species are to each other. (Baltzer, 1930)

In mammals the production of at least seven parthenogenetic rabbits has been reported. These experiments are worthy of explanation. Pincus (1940) has demonstrated that heat, hypertonic solutions, exposure to foreign sperm, and a certain type of culture of unfertilized rabbit ova led to ovum activation with subsequent development in a limited proportion of treated ova. He also obtained activation and development of unfertilized tubal rabbit ova by using hypotonic solutions and cooling. The latter methods will be explained.

Rabbit ova were obtained after super-ovulation by pituitary extracts. Activation was accomplished *in vitro* and *in vivo*. The details of the technique of the *in vivo* activation are as follows: By means of a series of injections of pituitary extract, the doe can be made to ovulate at a pre-determined time. The eggs thus shed from the ovary pass directly into the Fallopian tube. The animal is anesthetized and a laparotomy is performed to expose the Fallopian tube. Then the portion of the tube containing the eggs is placed in a cooling jacket. The cooling is done by flowing cold water through the brass jacket which lowers the temperature of the eggs. After sufficient cooling the Fallopian tube is replaced in the body cavity and the incision is sewed. The doe is then allowed to recover from the anesthesia. One hundred per cent efficiency did not mark the results of these experiments, however, using this technique a living parthenogenetic female rabbit was produced. A photograph of the rabbit was taken when it was two and a half months old.

In the human species, cases of what appear to be rudimentary parthenogenesis have been recorded. In women who have died of puerperal peritonitis, eight to ten days after confinement, C. Morel found in the hypertrophied Graafian follicles, segmented eggs divided into about fifty blastomeres. The eggs had undergone fatty degeneration. It is also be-

lieved that certain dermoid cysts of the ovary may arise from parthenogenetic development of the eggs within the ovary.

These experiments indicate to the scientist that the process of fertilization and development are fundamentally physical and chemical. He does recognize that under normal conditions a guiding principle is ever present, and he is now ready to admit that mechanism and entelechy supplement rather than contradict each other. However, should not our Catholic philosophy be sufficiently comprehensive to explain not only the rule but also the exceptions to the rule?

WILLIAM T. POWERS

De Paul University
Chicago, III

PHILOSOPHY OF LAW AND GOVERNMENT DIVISION: *Panel:* MIRIAM THERESA ROONEY, W.M., F. OBERING, PAUL V. KENNEDY.

Problem (a): Hans Kelsen and the Problem of
Relativism in the Law

Contemporary fear of an absolute in any form is probably best summarized in the story of the New England judge who earnestly advised his son that no principle is absolutely true, nervously adding, "Not even that principle."

Historically, however, relativism has always terminated in its antithesis: 19th century European liberalism, with its exaggerated emphasis on the freedom of the individual, led to a choice in the 20th century between the extremes of anarchy or absolutism. The 18th century attack of Kant on reason has led to an equally unreal choice between the discredited natural law theories of Locke and Rousseau and the increasingly popular "power" theories of the realists, pragmatists, and neo-Kantians. At the present moment, the neo-Kantian movement seems to be gaining the upper-hand in America, and in the philosophy of its unquestioned leader, Hans Kelsen, we find summarized all the essential characteristics of contemporary relativistic legal philosophy. It is significant that a treatment of Kelsen's theories logically falls into the following sequence: his epistemological approach, his concept of law, his concept of the state, and, finally, his concept of the person. For this natural sequence in Kelsen's thought brings out strikingly the essential relativism of his method: the primacy of the initial hypothesis, the subsequent subordination of law and state to the hypothesis, and finally the complete subordination of the person to the state.

Kelsen's famous method is based almost entirely upon a frankly relativistic Kantian epistemology modified somewhat by the principles of Hermann Cohen's Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism.¹ Truth in the specula-

¹ Hans Kelsen, *Hauptprobleme* (2nd ed., Tübingen, 1923) xvii: "The decisive epistemological viewpoint for the correct construction of the concepts of law and the state I acquired by means of Cohen's interpretation of Kant." Quoted by William Ebenstein, *The Pure Theory of Law* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1945), p. 23.

tive order is entirely beyond the grasp of the intellect: the infinity of space and time, which mould all being, make truth itself infinite and therefore impossible to attain. As Kelsen himself writes, Kantian critical philosophy makes "knowledge into an infinite, forever inconclusive process; it hides truth in eternity, rendering it as unattainable in essence as does scepticism."² Truth in the practical order is equally unattainable. Values and morality are merely emotional ideologies.³ "Reason," Kelsen writes, "stultifies itself to the extent that it seeks to justify emotion by reference to ultimate ends, for the determination of ultimate ends is a true judgment of value, and, as such, wholly emotional."⁴ "Justice is an irrational ideal. However indispensable it may be for the willing and acting of human beings, it is not viable by reason. Only positive law is known, or, more correctly, is revealed to reason."⁵

Kelsen frankly asserts that "The question whether spiritual or material possessions, whether freedom or equality, represents the highest value cannot be answered rationally."⁶ All values are wish values, and "a moral norm exists for the individual only in so far as he himself creates it and submits himself to it."⁷

Ignoring therefore all ethical values as unscientific, the Pure Theory of Law creates its object by comparing all the phenomena in legal systems and attempting to ascertain common structures and typical forms that remain constant independent of the changing content which these structures and forms exhibit at different times among different peoples. In this manner, the Pure Theory derives the fundamental principles by which any legal order can be comprehended.⁸ One of these fundamental principles, Kelsen asserts, is that scientific physical laws say: If A is, B is (or *will be*). But a rule of law says: If A is, B *ought* to be. "In the one case the connecting principle is causality: in the other it is imputation. The Pure Theory of Law regards this principle as the special and peculiar principle of law. Its expression is the Ought. The expression of the causality principle is Necessity. . . ."⁹

² Kelsen, *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie* (2nd ed., Tübingen, 1929), p. 119. Quoted by Ebenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

³ Kelsen, *Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943). Cf. especially pp. 263-266.

⁴ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law and Analytic Jurisprudence." *Harvard Law Review* LV (November, 1941), 46.

⁵ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law." (Transl. by C. H. Wilson). *The Law Quarterly Review* L (October, 1934), 481.

⁶ Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*. (Translated by Anders Wedberg. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946). pp. 6-7.

⁷ Kelsen, *Hauptprobleme*, p. 35. Quoted by Ebenstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

⁸ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law and Analytical Jurisprudence," *loc. cit.*, 44.

⁹ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law," *loc. cit.*, 485.

Having found in the form of the Ought a form common to all legal systems, Kelsen then differentiates the legal "ought" from the moral "ought" by denning a moral norm as a mere imperative and the legal norm "as a hypothetical judgment expressing a specific relationship between a conditioning circumstance and a conditioned consequence."¹⁰ In other words, although justice and law belong to the formal category of the Ought, they are specifically differentiated in so far as law includes a determinate sanction: the application of force. Justice does not include such a sanction. Kelsen writes: "The legal theory of the 19th century was in the main united in defining the legal norm as a norm of compulsion, that is, as a norm instituting compulsion, and in holding that in this very point it distinguished itself from other norms. In this respect the Pure Theory of Law continues the tradition" ¹¹ Hence in Kelsen's view law is simply an apparatus of compulsion enforcing the prescriptions found in any legal order.

The legal order itself rests upon an assumption: the hypotheses incorporated in a nation's constitution. "If it be assumed," Kelsen writes, "that one ought to observe the commands of a certain monarch or that one should act according to the resolutions of a certain parliament, this monarch's orders and this parliament's resolutions are law. . . . Accordingly, positive norms are valid only on one assumption: that there is a basic norm which establishes the supreme, law-creating authority. The validity of this basic norm is unproved and must remain so within the sphere of positive law itself."¹² Where does the authority of those who drew up the constitution originate? Kelsen replies that this too "is a norm that the jurists pre-suppose, a hypothesis of juristic thinking."¹³ We simply have to pre-suppose the men who drew up a Constitution had the power or authority to do so. The only other solution is to trace the authority to the Will of God—a metaphysical solution and hence beyond experience.¹⁴ Thus Kelsen constructs the second common feature of law: law not only belongs to the realm of the ought but it also possesses a merely hypothetical nature. The individual decree is a hypothesis stating that coercion will be employed *if* a certain delict is committed; the validity of the decree itself is hypothetical since it rests upon subjective, hypothetical values incorporated in a constitution; and, finally, the authority of those who drew up and/or accepted the constitution is a hypothesis—in fact the basic hypothesis, since "it is the foundation of all juristic value judgments possible within the framework of the legal order of a given state."¹⁵ Hence the whole field of law is entirely relativistic; it has no meaning outside of specific hypotheses.

¹⁰ Kelsen, *ibid.*

¹¹ Kelsen, *ibid.*, 486.

¹² Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, pp. 394-395.

¹³ Kelsen, "Value Judgments in the Science of Law." *Journal of Social Philosophy and Jurisprudence*, VII (July, 1942), 324.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 326.

¹⁵ *Ibidem.*

The Pure Theory of Law, however, is also positivistic. Kelsen asserts that the study of law is not a study of what laws ought to be but of what they are. "Cognition can grasp only a positive order evidenced by objectively determinable acts. This order is the positive law. Only this can be an object of science; only this is the object of the pure theory of law. . . . This science seeks the real and possible law, not the just, and in this sense it is realistic and empirical."¹⁶ For although each positive law is stated in the form of a hypothesis, this hypothesis has been incorporated into a real legal system and is enforced by possible or actual coercion according to definite acts of the law-making body. Even the basic assumption that those who drew up the Constitution had the authority to do so is a positive law, for "this assumption . . . is correlated to the Principle of Effectiveness that judges a constitution to have originated in a legitimate authority if the legal order, created on the basis of the constitution, is effective as a whole."¹⁷ In other words, Kelsen is appealing to the generally recognized principle of international law that if a power is established anywhere, in any manner, and is able to insure permanent obedience to its coercive order, the government thus established is recognized as legitimate. On this basis Kelsen concludes that when the Pure Theory of Law "considers a legal norm as valid only when it belongs to a legal order which is in the main effective, it is using a principle of positive law itself, a principle of international law."¹⁸ Thus the integrity of law as a purely positivistic order is maintained. It was not a critic of Kelsen but Kelsen himself who wrote that if we free ourselves from metaphysical thinking, we shall find behind the positive law "neither the absolute truth of metaphysics nor the absolute justice of natural law. He who lifts the veil, if he close not his eyes, will find himself confronted by the Gorgon's head of power."¹⁹

II

Kelsen's epistemology and general method result in a special concept of the state. Just as Kant had taken all material significance from substance and made it a unifying category conditioning the possibility of any synthetic unity of sense impressions, so Kelsen, following Kant, employs the "category of substance" as a principle of unity for law. For Kelsen the state is simply a unifying concept, coterminous with the legal order. The state is the "substance" of the law in the Kantian sense; that is, it is an *a priori* category, empty of material significance. More specifically, in Kelsen's system (and in this he follows Cassirer), the state is merely a functional concept, "a common point into which various human actions are

¹⁶ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law and Analytic Jurisprudence," *loc. cit.*, 49.

¹⁷ Kelsen, "Value Judgments in the Science of Law," *loc. cit.*, 327-328.

¹⁸ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law and Analytic Jurisprudence," *loc. cit.*, 69-70.

¹⁹ Kelsen, *Verpflichtungen der Vereinigung der deutschen Staatsrechtslehrer*. III (1927), 53. Quoted by Ebenstein, *op. cit.*, 110.

projected"²⁰—a *focus imaginarius* serving as a basis of cognitive unity without itself possessing any reality. It is simply convenient to regard statutes, decisions, and administrative acts as variations of a concept called the "state," but since "to know something and to know it as a unity are one and the same thing,"²¹ the dualism of law and state is a superfluous duplication of the object of our cognition, a vestige of primitive animism.²²

The legal concept of person is likewise a vestige of primitive mythological thinking. "In reality, however, the legal person is not a separate entity besides 'its' duties and rights, but only their personified unity."²³ "Person" is simply a personificative expression to symbolize the unity of a bundle of legal rights and duties, that is, norm complexes.²⁴ With this concept of person, of course, Kelsen excludes from the science of law all notion of natural, inalienable rights. It is nonsense, he asserts,²⁵ to say that a person has rights or duties, for this simply means that a set of duties and rights has duties and rights. It is more correct to say that the law imposes duties and confers rights upon human beings. But a human being is not the object of the science of law, and for the philosopher of law no other rights and duties exist than those which have been conferred or imposed by the state. Hence Kelsen asserts that a private individual has no right not to be robbed or killed since criminal sanction is not dependent upon a suit by any private individual.²⁶ And the freedom of the physical person "is rejected as an illusion from the domain of legal theory."²⁷

In this manner both the state and the person are emptied of any material significance in the Pure Theory of Law and are considered merely as unifying, functional concepts. All is reduced to the dead level of positive law which, in turn, is reduced to the nature of a hypothetical proposition stating prescribed conduct in its antecedent and conditioned coercion in its consequence.

Justice (or equality before the law), which Kelsen calls "an irrational ideal,"²⁸ is rationalized by a process of logical construction into the principle of identity. Kelsen writes:²⁹ "The principle that equals deserve equally, *sum cuique*, does not actually proclaim anything more than the logical principle of identity. . . . Since in reality there are no two individuals perfectly equal, equality as a principle of justice means that certain differences between individuals are to be considered as irrelevant." In other

^Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, p. 191.

²¹ Kelsen, *Veröffentlichungen der Vereinigung der deutschen Staatsrecht8lehrer*, IV (1928), 174. Quoted by Ebenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²² Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, p. 191.

** *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²⁴ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law," *he. cit.*, 496.

²⁵ Cf. Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, pp. 95-96.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁷ Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law," *loc. cit.*, 496-497.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 482.

²⁹ Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, p. 439.

words, unless the law treats A, who is "hypothetically" equal to B, in the same way that it has treated B, the principle of identity would be violated, and the idea of the unity of the system destroyed. This process, Kelsen avers, "means the rationalization of the originally irrational ideal of justice, the 'logification' of an ideal originally alien to the *logos*"⁸⁰

Thus law simply becomes another form of logic, and, if we remember Kelsen's epistemological premisses, a relativist-conceptualistic logic that creates the objects of its cognition.⁸¹ If this elaborate apparatus, the Pure Theory of Law, is simply a product of *a priori* forms, of preliminary syntheses and free constructions, how can it claim to be a science? In other words, if law itself is composed of chaotic elements and the science of law is a logification of these elements, an order imposed on these elements arbitrarily and *ab extrinseco*, how can the Pure Theory of Law claim any thing more than subjective validity for its judgments?

Kelsen replies to this objection as follows: "It might appear that a cognition which produces its own objects can only claim subjective validity for its judgments." But, he answers, "Our type firmly wards off this danger by constant emphasis on a knowing which creates its objects in conformity to laws. . . . In place of metaphysical speculation we have a determination of the laws, that is, of the objective conditions under which the process of cognition occurs."³² "Cognition itself creates its objects, out of materials provided by the senses and in accordance with its immanent laws. It is this conformity to laws which guarantees the objective validity of the results of the process of cognition."³³

Kelsen has—like Kant—simply substituted logical consistency for objective reality: any system is objective if it conforms to the laws of thought, which are themselves subjective. Meaning is transformed into non-contradiction, consistency. And it is basically Kelsen's concern for consistency that leads him to separate himself from the legal positivists who are only concerned for facts—no matter how inconsistent they may be with the initial constitutional norm. "With the postulate of a meaningful, that is, non-contradictory order," Kelsen writes, "juridical science oversteps the boundary of pure positivism. To abandon this postulate would at the same time entail the self-abandonment of juridical science. The basic norm has here been described as the essential presupposition of any positivistic legal cognition. If one wishes to regard it as an element of natural law doctrine, despite its renunciation of any element of material justice, very little objection can be raised; just as little, in fact, as against calling the categories of Kant's transcendental philosophy metaphysics because they are not data of

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 440. Cf. also Kelsen, "The Pure Theory of Law and Analytic Jurisprudence," *loc. cit.*, 49.

⁸¹ Kelsen admits that "Positivism and (epistemological) relativism belong together just as much as do the natural-law doctrine and (metaphysical) absolutism." *General Theory of Law and State*, p. 396.

vtIbid., pp. 434-435.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 434. He adds: "Actually there is the danger that, if we fail to anchor truth in a transcendent realm above all human cognition, we fall into the bottomless depth of subjectivism, into a boundless solipsism."

experience, but conditions of experience. . . . The hypothetical basic norm answers the question: how is positive law possible as an object of cognition, as an object of juridical science; and consequently, how is a juridical science possible? Accordingly, the theory of the basic norm may be considered a natural law doctrine in keeping with Kant's transcendental logic."³⁴

Thus, having begun with the Kantian premiss that noumenal truth cannot be attained in the speculative or the practical order, Kelsen has not only attempted to transform justice into the principle of identity (for him a purely conceptual hypothesis) but he has also attempted to create a natural law, a law that is objective because logically consistent and natural because in conformity with an initial hypothesis.⁸⁵

III

But in reality where does the process of logical construction begin in Kelsen's system? His initial method, as we have seen, was to compare all the phenomena in legal systems and ascertain common structures and typical forms that remain constant independent of the changing content which these structures and forms exhibit at different times among different peoples. This, however, is not construction but analytic abstraction. The principle that determines the selection may vary—data may be viewed under different formalities—but unless there is an objective correlate or term to one's selective principle, there can be no selection or generalization. The three basic facts upon which Kelsen constructs his theory are found in every legal order: (1) The effectiveness of the legal order to which a law belongs, (2) the presence of a fact creating the law and (3) the absence of any fact annulling that law.³⁶ If one wishes to restrict his analysis of law to these data, he is free to do so, but he cannot say that he has created either his data or his knowledge of it. Abstraction is not creation. It is selection. Moreover, for a comprehensive philosophy of law the principle of selection must include the significant aspects of its object, and it is highly debatable whether Professor Kelsen has chosen sufficiently significant aspects of legal phenomena in constructing his Pure Theory. Limiting himself to a study of norms only in so far as they belong to an effective order by a positive enactment which has not been annulled by any subsequent fact, he has eliminated from his principle of selection the precise element essential to any science that directs human conduct: the element of reason.

Kelsen is aware, of course, that a judge must often go outside the letter of the law in order to give an equitable decision, but such procedure, Kelsen insists, to be valid must be provided by the legal order itself. He admits,

Mlbid., p. 437.

³⁵ In view of the fact that Professor Kelsen regards justice outside of a legal order as "an irrational ideal" and within a legal order as the principle of identity, his tribute to the United States as a land of freedom and justice is, to say the least, an empty one. Cf. Preface, *General Theory of Law and State*, xvii. Professor Kelsen is an exile from Nazi Germany which carried its initial hypothesis to a perfectly logical conclusion during the chaotic years 1933-1945.

⁸⁶ Cf. Kelsen, "Value Judgments in the Science of Law," *loc. cit.*, 328.

however, that the principles of interpretation—the principle of *lex posterior derogat priori*, the principle that the lower norm must give way to the higher—in short, all the principles essential for the intelligent development and administration of any legal order are outside of positive law itself. "All these," Kelsen writes, "have no other purpose than to give a meaningful interpretation to the material of positive law. They all do this by applying the principle of contradiction in the normative sphere. For the most part, they are not rules of positive law, not established norms, but presuppositions of legal cognition. This means that they are part of the sense of the basic norm, which thus guarantees the unity of the norms of positive law as the unity of a system, which, if it is not necessarily just, is at least meaningful."³⁷ Thus when Kelsen is confronted with the necessity of appealing to reason as a constitutive element of law, he attempts to transform reason into the principle of contradiction simply to guarantee the unity, not the justice, of a system. And he assumes that by safeguarding the consistency of a legal system he has thereby safeguarded its meaning. But since for Kelsen meaning is consistency, he has simply involved himself in an empty tautology. He has merely preserved order for the sake of order.³⁸

And yet for Kelsen this theory of law has seemed to be the only possible solution to the problem of how a dynamic order can become the object of a science. Like Plato he thought that a science could not be found in the fleeting order of reality. To make science possible, Plato postulated subsistent essences; Kelsen postulates *a priori* categories of dynamic synthesis. Possibly it is this preoccupation of Kelsen with the dynamic character of any legal and ethical order that lies at the bottom of his rejection of anything like a natural law and of the concept of law as an ordination of reason. Like Dean Pound,³⁹ Kelsen is familiar only with that seventeenth and eighteenth century caricature of the natural law whose "rules, directly as they flow from nature, God or reason, are as immediately evident as the rules of logic. . . ."⁴⁰ It is this problem moreover that lies behind not only the rejection of natural law by Kelsen but behind its rejection by many other jurists; for it is only too obvious to any one even slightly acquainted with legal history that there have been at different times profound differences in basic concepts such as sovereignty, property, sanction, restitution—to mention only a few. The question then is: if such basic legal concepts are relative to different cultures and different levels of history, are they not purely subjective? And if they are purely subjective, how can we escape accepting a legal philosophy of power?⁴¹

³⁷ Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, pp. 406-407.

³⁸ Cf. excellent criticism of neo-Kantianism by Anton Rohner, O.P., "Natur und Person in der Ethik," *Divus Thomas Jahrbuch*, XI (1933).

³⁹ Cf. Roscoe Pound, *Contemporary Juristic Theory* (Claremont Colleges: 1940), pp. 51-52.

⁴⁰ Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, p. 392.

⁴¹ Thus after attacking Nietzsche, Professor Clare Brinton is forced to admit on the basis of his own positivism: "Is it not silly to maintain that

Paradoxically, by substituting as it does internal categories for objective data and by stressing the logical consistency of cognition rather than the actual condition of the term of that cognition, neo-Kantian relativism cannot provide a rational basis for the inevitable relativistic elements in legal orders. For finding heterogeneous elements in law, it arbitrarily assumes that they are irrational. It is incomprehensible to a neo-Kantian that the same basic principles should find radically different expression in objective reality. And yet—since the logical order is based on the real order, even a neo-Kantian such as Kelsen has gained at least two valuable insights into the nature of law.

The first of these is that the purpose of any legal order is to establish a peace in which the members of a community will be able to attain their highest possible social perfection.⁴² Disengaging this dictum from its Kantian framework, we find its meaning simply to be that the work of justice is peace: *opus justitiae: pax*. This is not, however, a subjective postulate of the legal order. Possessing an intellect and will, with all their potentialities for individual and social perfection, man is intrinsically and objectively ordained to that perfection. And the history of man, the analysis of his weaknesses as well as of his potentialities, shows that he cannot attain that perfection outside of society nor within a society unless it is peacefully ordered.

Moreover, the history of man shows that such a peaceful society cannot exist unless there is *some* kind of authority, *some* kind of property, *some* form of sanction, etc. But to determine *what* is a good type of authority, a good type of property, a good type of sanction, we must turn from the history of man to the history of men: to the study of the concrete conditions existing in a particular culture.⁴³ The history of man tells us that sovereignty is essential to a peaceful society, but the history of men likewise tells us that an elective democracy in a nation where 85% of the people can neither read nor write may easily destroy the peace for which the society was instituted. The history of man tells us that men have a right to sufficient property enabling them to live according to their intrinsic dignity;⁴⁴ but the current legal implementation of that right would be useless and irrational to a Celtic society of the sixth century.

The important thing is that in every society, the broad principles of social life—those upon which the peace and harmony of any society rest—should find rational expression. And they cannot find rational expression

a preference for democracy over totalitarianism can find any justification in the scientific attitude? Certainly we are driven back ultimately to questions of value, of ends, of which we can only say, we want it so." *Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1841), pp. 241-242.

⁴² Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, p. 22.

⁴⁸ Because of complex social, economic, and cultural data, it is often impossible to determine what is the *best* type of property, sovereignty, etc., for a particular people. Rarely is it impossible to ascertain *good* types.

⁴⁴ The cultural constituents of a "good life" are, of course, relative to different levels and types of civilization. Cf. Matthias Thiel, O.S.B., "Kultur und Sittlichkeit," *Divus Thomas Jahrbuch*, X I X (1941), esp. 68-74.

unless they are relative to the social and economic conditions of a particular time and place. This is relativity in law. But not subjectivity. For the end of law is objective and unchanging: to provide a peaceful order to the members of the community. And the very relativity of legal orders is objective in so far as they should correspond to certain facts in reality.

The second insight that Kelsen has obtained into the nature of law is his distinction of the basic norms of a legal order according to the method of derivation prevailing in them. Thus if a norm is directly derived from a basic norm, the derived norm belongs to a static order. For example, from the norm "Truth must be told," inferior norms such as "You shall not defraud," "You must keep your promises" can be derived. Since these inferior norms are obtained simply by deduction, Kelsen points out, they belong to a static unchangeable order.⁴⁵ On the other hand, from the basic norm "Obey your parents" no special single norm can be derived. A parental order with a specific content is needed, and this order has no validity other than from the fact that it is related by a positive act to the general norm. Thus the parental order is a determination of the basic norm, not a deduction from it. This sphere of norms, basic and inferior, is dynamic and the proper sphere of positive law.⁴⁶

It is significant that St. Thomas divides law into practically the same spheres: static and dynamic. In his treatise on positive law, St. Thomas points out that some laws are derived from the general principles of the natural law as conclusions from principles, other laws as determinations of principles. Thus from the principle of natural law "One should do harm to no man" the law "One must not kill" can be deduced. But other laws are derived as determinations of principles; for example, the natural law states that he who offends should be punished, but the type of punishment is ascertained, not by deduction, but by determination. It is this second type of law, the Saint adds, that can be called most properly positive law.⁴⁷

Both thinkers, therefore, make practically the same division of law. But whereas Kelsen has made the two types merely postulates⁴⁸ St. Thomas has rooted them in reason itself and by his division provided for the two essential operations of the intellect in formulating law: the operations of deduction and induction. The basic, static norms of positive law are reached by deduction from man's nature and all his essential, objective relations. Thus they are common in some form to all societies, their comprehension being dependent on the level of intelligence attained in those societies. But the dynamic inferior norms reached by way of determination, that is, inductively, are values relative to particular cultures on the same level of intellectual achievement. Thus to implement the principle "A man has a right to own property," the inductive method will suggest many ways, ways based on the specific experience of the nation, the customs and temperament of the people, the climate of the land and so forth.

⁴⁵ Cf. Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, pp. 399-400.

⁴⁶*ibid.*

⁴⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 95, a. 2, c.

⁴⁸ Cf. Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, p. 401.

Property legislation (to mention only one example), being based on induction is largely relative to the historical and cultural experience of a people. But it is not subjective. Whatever type of legislation is finally chosen, and there may be many ways equally sound, is based on facts and discovered by the intellect—not a "Cartesian intellect," but an intellect whose operations in the practical order are modified by bodily conditions, sense memories of personal, social, and national experience.⁴⁹ For this reason, St. Thomas, in the passage mentioned previously, illustrates the inductive method of legislation by comparing a legislature to an architect whose general purpose is to build* a home, but the home he builds is personal, suited to the climate of the country, the customs and temperament of the people. Even when a legislature resorts to hypotheses, which is often necessary because of complex social and economic data, its hypotheses, as Kelsen himself points out,⁵⁰ should coincide to the greatest possible extent with the factual conditions which they are to regulate.

Thus by insisting on reason as the formal element of law, the philosophy of law can retain its synthetical character as a science without being robbed of its significant content and without impeding social science in its structural development. The philosophy of law retains its "formal" element by insisting that law be always and everywhere a rational ordering to the common good, but it insists on the "material" element of law by seeking the precise sociological, political, and economic factors that not only differentiate one legal order from another but also implement the final purpose of all law: the peace and prosperity of its subjects.

Needless to say, this paper is not an attempt to answer all the problems posed by Kelsen. It has rather sought to present in sharper outlines Kelsen's method and to point out that Kelsen's philosophy of law, like any philosophy of law based on Kantian premises, is largely self-refuting in so far as it is finally forced, to use one critic's expression, to a "surreptitious indulgence"⁵¹ in fact and an equally surreptitious incorporation of reason into its otherwise "pure" system. Finally, Kelsen is quite correct in demanding that even the basic norms of positive law provide for a dynamic order, but this has been amply provided for in the natural law philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas which—to the extent that it is relativistic—is so not in spite of but because of its insistence on reason as the specific and controlling factor of law.

R. W. MULLIGAN, S.J.

West Baden College
West Baden Springs, Ind.

49 Cf. William A. Gerhard, "The Intellectual Virtue of Prudence," *The Thomist*, VIII (1945), 448.

50 Kelsen, *Das Problem der Souveranitat* (Tubingen, 1920), p. 99. Quoted by Ebenstein, *op. cit.*, 115.

⁵¹ Jerome Hall, "Integrative Jurisprudence," *Interpretations of Modern Legal Philosophies*. Edited by Paul Sayre. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 319.

COMMENT ON DOCTOR MULLIGAN'S PAPER

Doctor Mulligan's excellent paper on Hans Kelsen and his relativistic legal philosophy has only forged another link in the chain of evidence reaching back into the distant centuries, that a sound philosophy of law is impossible unless it is based on a sound epistemology and metaphysics. The relativism and scepticism of the Sophists, Protagoras and Gorgias, gave us a Thrasymachus with his brutal tenet that whatever is useful to the stronger is also just. The nominalism of Occam begot his moral subjectivism and his doctrine of the absolute omnipotence of the State in political matters. The materialism and determinism of Hobbes gave us the Leviathan, the biggest brute of them all, the supreme power in the State, whose irresistible will determines the right and the wrong the just and the unjust. The subjectivism of Kant and his juridical amorality, modified by the idealistic pantheism of Hegel, fathered the State-god to whom the individual and even other peoples are to be utterly subordinated. Would we could think that Nuremberg had rung down the curtain on the monstrosity.

Aquinas, with his usual precision, has given the reason for this inevitable revenge of truth on those who flout it. For he writes:¹ "The good and the true include each other; for truth is something good, otherwise it would not be desirable; and the good is something true, otherwise it would not be intelligible. Therefore, as the object of the appetite may be something true inasmuch as it has the aspect of good . . . ; so the object of the practical intellect is good directed to operation and under the aspect of truth. For the practical intellect knows the truth, just as the speculative, but it directs the known truth to operation."

"The good and the true include each other." The truth is good; and the real good, as distinguished from the apparent, is always true. Hence a false principle concerning man's ability to know the truth, or concerning the end and purpose of human existence, inevitably works evil in the practical fields of ethics and jurisprudence. As a matter of history, such false principles have always issued in that "wilfulness" which Dean Pound deprecates and condemns as "the antithesis of law." The same legal wilfulness is also the very essence of tyranny, whether brown, black or red, and in all latitudes and longitudes. Our American legal thinkers, who toss about this legal atomic bomb so carelessly, should be given pause by the observation of Edmund Burke, that no tyranny is comparable to the tyranny of a majority. For the majority is immune to the only inhibitions which put a crimp in the style of the individual tyrant: fear of assassination and fear of public opinion. For no method has as yet been found to assassinate a majority, although our modern Communist genocides have almost succeeded in the quest; and a majority has nothing to fear from a public opinion which it makes.

I was particularly interested in the last section of Doctor Mulligan's excellent discussion setting forth the true relativity of law. This demands an ever increasing emphasis today for a double reason. In the first place, it might exorcise the phobia of God, the phobia of the Absolute, which

¹*Summa Theol.* I, q. 79, a. 11, & reply obj. 2.

afflicts too many of our present-day social thinkers. It might serve the purpose of making more palatable and digestible the evident truth of reason, that human law is no more conceivable apart from the Natural Moral Law and its primary analogate, the Eternal Law of God, than is the creature itself apart from its primary analogate, God, the Absolute Being. For it would show that such a theocentric concept of human law is not only compatible with its progress and adaptation to the infinite contingencies of human existence, but actually demands such progress and adaptation.

In the second place, this emphasis on the true relativity of law would awaken even ourselves to a keener sense of our responsibility in this matter. The great moral principles of justice, commutative, legal and distributive, remain forever unchanged. But the particular and actual exigencies of these principles vary with the ever varying conditions of human existence, whether individual, national or international. As I wrote some years ago in an article in *Thought on Aquinas, Master of Permanence and of change*: 2

The *Semaines Sociales* of France were in accord with Catholic moral tradition, as formulated by Aquinas, when they demanded of writers on moral subjects a statement of secondary moral principles, or proximate rules of action, in closer correlation with present-day facts of the social, economic, and financial worlds, as known by experience. The immediate principles which governed economic transactions and government supervision thereof in a world economically static, where employer and employee were in personal contact, and ownership and control were still associated, and the dominance of the moral law was still recognized, are inadequate to secure social justice, national and international, in a world where these conditions are largely reversed.

A more authoritative voice than that of the *Semaines Sociales* has only recently made the same demand. In his Christmas Encyclical, *Optatissima Pax*, our Holy Father, Pius XII, writes:⁵

It is incumbent upon all to understand that the social crisis is so great at present and so dangerous for the future as to make it necessary for each—and especially he who has greater goods—to put the common welfare before private advantages and profits.

Against this background of want and acute social unrest he places his demand for "pacification of spirits" and "mutual understanding" making way for "*those doctrines and directive norms which are consentient with Christian teachings and the conditions of the present hour*"

We have remained, perhaps, too long ensconced in our ivory tower of general principles refusing to descend into the arena where we might come to grips with the hard, grim facts of human existence. The difficulty of the task, the dearth of scholars adequately equipped with the factual knowledge required to accomplish it, may in part explain our failure. The

² *Thought*, Vol. XI, No. 3, p. 452. *Semaines Sociales de France*, MuU house, XXIII Session, 1931, *La Morale ChrUienne et Les Affaires*, Paris, pp. 39, 68, ff., 77-80, 111.

⁸ AP. Dispatch, Rome, Dec. 20, 1947. Italics mine.

task is admittedly difficult, almost baffling. For, as Aquinas has observed, you cannot apply one thing to another, unless you know both the thing to be applied (principles) and the thing to which it has to be applied, i.e., human conduct in the actual and infinitely varied circumstances of life.⁴ Today, these human realities in the economic and political worlds are complex, often hidden from casual observation, and changing with kaleidoscopic rapidity. They are, therefore, hard to master. Hence, Speaker Jim Reed used to say that, if he had a bill which he wished to kill, he would appoint a financial expert on the committee, and he would be sure of its prompt and decent demise. For money, he added, has this peculiarity, that, if you study it long enough, you can't talk sensibly about it, and if you study it a little longer, you can't talk sensibly about anything else. However difficult the task, our moralists must master these realities, if they are, in the words of Pius XII, to give to the world that so sorely needs them "directive norms which are consentient with Christian teachings and the conditions of the present hour."

Our failure in this matter may be due to another cause. We may have lost something of the bold tradition which animated our medieval forebears, those "sculptors of right," who achieved in the course of a few short centuries the most marvellous transformation of the juridical and economic status quo the world has ever witnessed.

The accomplishment of the task imposed on us by the Holy Father will give us a moral science in close touch, as Pere Sertillanges has phrased it, with "*Vetre humain pris sur le jait*" Such a moral science resting on the foundation of the Absolute, the foundation of God, the First Legislator, will open the way for what Dean Pound demands, but seeks in vain from his philosophy, a "legal order, flexible as well as stable," one possessing "principles of change no less than principles of stability," and fully protected against wilfulness, whether individual or collective.⁵

W M . F. OBERINO, S J.

€09 W. Copper Ave.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

* S. T. Summa Theol. II-II, q. 47, a. 3.

* *Interpretations of Legal History*, p. 1.

*Problem (o): The Tradition of Realism in the
Philo&phia Perenni**

Five years ago His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, gave to a world at war his 1942 Christmas Message entitled "The Holy Season of Christmas and Sorrowing Humanity." It was the purpose of this message "to consider very carefully and with equal impartiality the fundamental laws of the internal order of States and peoples."¹ In his consideration of some of the problems of law and government the Holy Father demonstrates clearly that he is the most recent representative of a tradition in political and legal thought that may be traced back to two of the outstanding thinkers of the western world. On every page of this message we can see reflections of Plato and Aristotle that manifest the continuity of this tradition. The chairman of this program has asked me to make a few comments on this aspect of the Holy Father's political philosophy.²

Although it has been said, and correctly so, that in Plato and Aristotle we meet two different, and perhaps even opposed, methods of philosophical analysis, nevertheless it is often possible to examine the substance of their philosophies on fundamental points and to discover that they think very much alike; this becomes especially clear when we contrast them with other philosophers, such as the ancient sophists or the modern pragmatists. In the history of political thought it is not difficult to distinguish two powerful traditions that have always been and still are in opposition to each other, although the combatants on either side have been given different names in the course of time and have constantly sought new weapons on behalf of their causes. Pope Pius XII, like his predecessors in the chair of Peter, takes his stand in the tradition unequivocally supported by Plato and Aristotle. This can be indicated briefly by looking at two features of the Holy Fathers message, his insistence on the natural as opposed to the conventional, and on the importance of quality as opposed to quantity, in the social order.

In the time of Plato and Aristotle, as now, there existed a purely conventional conception of human society, and even of morality as a whole, which claimed that no natural basis for society or morality could be found. The prevalence of this view was due to a pessimistic attitude toward the possibility of discovering any such natural foundation, and to the readily observed fact that different states were ruled by different sets of laws found satisfactory by them. But it was no less true of Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ than it is today that advances in scientific thought seemed to offer support for the proponents of convention. Democritus, with his atomic philosophy, to take one example, maintained that in nature only atoms and the void existed, along with the basic characteristics of the atoms, shape, position and arrangement. The perception of other attributes than these, such as color and taste, was not founded

i *Catholic Mind*, Vol. 41, No. 261 (Jan., 1943), p. 46.

² These comments were originally intended to be on a paper which the author was unfortunately unable to read.

on nature, but was a matter of usage and convention.⁸ In addition, these scientific views tended to be mechanistic rather than teleological, with no causal power attributed to the operation of goodness in nature.

In the dialogues of Plato we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere. In the *Timaeus*, for example, the physical causes in nature are subordinated throughout the exposition to the power of the good. This applies to the universe as a whole and to its smallest parts as well. The chief cause of sight in man, for example, is the fact that his perception of the harmony and order of the universe can lead to a better ordering of his own life; the various physical causes involved are all auxiliary to this purpose.⁴ In Aristotle too the same teleological spirit is manifested not only in the physical and biological works but in every part of his philosophy.⁵ In both philosophers a natural good, with its own proper teleology, also exists for society and the state. The philosopher-kings of Plato as the most important step in their education should attain to a vision of the good,⁶ a norm which is difficult to grasp but which nevertheless exists objectively and absolutely as a supreme principle. In the light of this principle the rulers are to provide for the government of the state. This statement of an absolute standard follows the refutation of various conventional standards of justice, including the sophistic proposal that the advantage of the stronger provides the ultimate norm.⁷ Aristotle, looking at the matter from a somewhat different point of view, shows that the state arises out of the needs of man's nature and is for the purpose of a good life for man.⁸ Though the form of the state must adapt itself to circumstances that may vary widely, it must always be considered in relation to human nature and cannot escape the moral law that exists for individual men.⁹

The Holy Father stresses the fact that order "is fundamental in an association of men (of beings, that is, who strive to attain an end appropriate to their nature)"/ and "is not a merely external linking up of parts which are numerically distinct."¹⁰ The disorder of society cannot be overcome except by an order which is natural and not merely fictitious and superimposed. The perfection of the human person provides the origin and purpose of the state; there can be no order or tranquillity in human society, therefore, that does not somehow spring from the nature of man.¹¹ The first cause of individual and social life, as well as their ulti-

3Frag. 125.

⁴ *Timaeus* 46e-47c.

⁵ For example, *Physics* II. 8, 9.

⁶ *Republic* 519c-d.

Vbid. I.

⁸ *Politics* I, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* III. 4, 7, 10, 11.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 48

mate foundation, is God, who has set up the ends for man and society to attain,¹² Since morality is relative to an end, the positivistic and utilitarian concepts of law which are prevalent today must be superseded by the conviction that the juridical order ultimately rests on the supreme dominion of God¹⁸ and must be safeguarded against all arbitrary whims, whether they be those of private individuals or of the rulers themselves.¹⁴

The second point, really a corollary to the first, on which the Holy Father clearly manifests his* point of view is the emphasis he places on quality as opposed to mere quantity in the administration of the state. The quantitative standard of government, whether it be of numbers, wealth or power, was not favored by Plato or Aristotle. The men chosen by Plato to be trained as rulers were those who were intellectually and morally superior, those who were most capable of apprehending the good and applying their knowledge to actual problems of government.¹⁵ Aristotle too insists on the good quality of the rulers and speaks of the degeneration that comes about in the state through the inadequacy of those who govern.¹⁶ Moreover, it is the prudent man who supplies the practical standard for action in the ethical philosophy of Aristotle.¹⁷ He is the man who knows the right principles and is able to carry them into practice. Similarly the Pope speaks of the need for "good and farseeing men" to lead the way for people as a whole to correct notions of society, for the order of society does not exclude differences among men that are "founded in fact and sanctioned by the will of God/"¹⁸ It is interesting to note that just as Plato insists upon the duties of men who are superior, saying that those who have escaped from the cave to the world of light should not be content to stay in the upper world but should descend once more into the cave to help their fellow prisoners,¹⁹ so the Holy Father points out that from those men "who are more capable of penetrating and appreciating the beauty of just social norms there will pass on and infiltrate into the masses the clear knowledge of the true, divine, spiritual origin of social life."²⁰

It should be pointed out, of course, that the emphasis placed by the tradition of which we have been speaking on the importance of the absolute over and above the relative in political philosophy is in many respects quite different in Greek thought and in the Holy Father's exposition. The latter very naturally stresses such points as the dignity of the

TM*Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 57.

^u*ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁵ *Republic* 503b-504a, 519c-d.

¹⁶ *Politics* III. 10-17.

¹⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1107a1-2.

w *Op. cit.* p. 47.

¹⁹ *Republic* 519e-520d.

²⁰ *Op. c&.*, p.47.

human person and the fatherhood of God to a greater extent than we would expect Greek philosophy to do. Moreover, the whole perspective has been changed by being raised from the plane of natural philosophy to that of supernatural Christianity. But it seems desirable every so often, especially on a program devoted to the general problem of the absolute and the relative, to pay some heed to the continuity of intellectual traditions in a changing world. Thus the Holy Father speaks not only as a champion of the Christian ideal in social life but also as the outstanding spokesman in the world today for a perennial tradition of philosophic thought.

JOHN F. CALLAHAN

Georgetown University
Washington, D. C.

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY DIVISION: *Panel*: JAMES COLLINS, LAURENCE LYNCH,
PHILLIP MOORB.

Problem (a): The Historical Relativism of Ortega y Gasset

I. INTRODUCTION

As 1947 draws to a close, and with it the celebration of the fourth centenary of Cervantes' birth, it is perhaps not amiss to recall that *Don Quixote* still serves many a Spanish thinker as his favorite meditation book. Wonderful and various indeed are the fruits of such meditation. Some modern critics, with Sr. Americo Castro,¹ will even find in Cervantes an ally of those Renaissance philosophers who "made the human mind not the passive reflector, but the moulder of reality."² According to this view, *Don Quixote* is a study of objective reality, and its message a denial of the

¹ Americo Castro, *El Pensamiento de Cervantes*, Madrid, Hernando, 1925. See especially pp. 81-83, 88, 124, 140-142, 331, 336-337. Also refer to Herbert Grierson, *Don Quixote: Some War-time Reflections on Its Character and Influence*, (The English Association Pamphlet No. 48), 1921, pp. 8-9. My thoughts here have been partly inspired by an article by A. A. Parker, "'Don Quixote* and the Relativity of Truth", in *The Dublin Review*, Autumn 1947, pp. 28-31.

Note that Cervantes, born in 1547, died on the same day as Shakespeare, April 23, 1616. For a good Cervantes bibliography, see Aubrey F. G. Bell, *Cervantes*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1947, pp. 241-246.

² Parker, *Art. CiL*, p. 30. The Renaissance thinkers to whom this article refers are perhaps such philosophers as the subjectivists Nicholas of Autrecourt and John of Mirecourt, Nicholas of Cusa with his relativistic epistemology, and the neo-Platonists of Italy, for example Marsilius Ficino. It is true that neo-Platonism was abroad in Spain during Cervantes' formative years (see *Cervantes*, by Aubrey F. G. Bell, pp. 3-38, "Cervantes and the Renaissance"); however, if Cervantes studied at Salamanca, as Bell thinks he may have done, he might well have been influenced by the Dominicans then so vigorously expounding St. Thomas. At any rate, surely a careful reading of *Don Quixote* will provide proof enough that Cervantes espouses a sane realism.

value of such objective reality. It glorifies rather a man's subjective vision of the general scheme of things; it is a call to autonomous morality, to the heroism of being true to oneself. The "lean and foolish knight" is thus a madman saner and nobler than those about him. Without lingering over points of literary criticism not relevant to a philosophical study, may I suggest that critics of the relativistic school have missed the true import of the Spanish classic? Surely its teaching is a final affirmation of sane philosophy and of Christian values. It does not do to skip the last pages of *Don Quixote* nor to fail to savor the full meaning of the dying knight's penultimate words—"A man must not jest with his soul".³

Now Ortega y Gasset is one who has missed the point in his *Meditations on Don Quixote*, the first collection of essays in his published works.⁴ Seated upon a stone before the grand pile of the Escorial, the young Ortega muses upon the knight of the sorrowful countenance. His conclusion is

³ "... no se ha de burlar el hombre con el alma." *Don Quixote*, Part II, Book IV, Chapter lxxiv.

⁴ *Obras de Jose Ortega y Gasset*, 3d. ed., corrected and enlarged, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1943, Vol. I, pp. 828, and Vol. II, pp. 829-1747. *Meditaciones del Quijote* is the first collection of essays in the *Obras*, see pp. 1-123. Not all of Ortega's work appears in the *Obras*. Some of his early papers appear in *Personam, Obras, y Cosas*, Madrid, la Lectura, 1922. Except for a few additions and omissions, the same essays are also to be found in *Mocedades*, Espasa-Calpe Argentina, Buenos Aires, Ed. Austral, 1941. Since 1942, the *Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, has put out three small collections of papers not included in *Obras*; these are *Esquema de las Crisis*, *Teoria de Andalucia*, and *Tres Prologos*. The last two were not available for this paper, except insofar as individual essays have been included in English translations. Note will be made of this in the course of this paper.

Ortega y Gasset was born in Madrid in 1883. Having completed his secondary studies with the Jesuits of Miraflores near Malaga about 1900, he went on to the University of Madrid where the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters awarded his doctorate in 1904. From 1906 to 1908 he studied in Berlin, Leipzig, and Marburg, where Herman Cohen influenced him. In 1910 he was appointed to the chair of metaphysics in the Central University of Madrid. His teaching during the years 1910-1929 was varied by writing for the newspapers, especially for *El Sol* of Madrid, and for the magazine *Revista de Occidente*, founded by him in 1921. Always much in demand for lectures, he occasionally crossed the ocean to speak in Argentina. For his part in the events leading up to the Revolution of 1931 and for his position in the early days of the Republic, see Salvador de Madariaga, *España*, 3d. ed., Buenos Aires, 1942, especially pp. 128-141, 355, 434, 450, 615. During the Civil War, Ortega traveled about in France, Holland, England, and finally settled down in Argentina for a few years. By 1944 he had returned to Spain, where he is again writing, and editing the *Revista de Occidente*. Some of these facts I owe to the courtesy of the Spanish Embassy in Washington. For more biographical data, see an article by Helene Weyl in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, July, 1937, pp. 461-479, d. 6, no. 4, 1937 (not available for this paper), and another by Mildred Adams in *Forum*, December, 1937, pp. 373-378. For bibliography, see pp. 339-341 in the excellent work by Reverend Jose Sanchez Villasenor, S.J., *Pensamiento y Trayectoria de Jose Ortega y Gasset*, Editorial Jus, Mexico, 1943; and the notes provided by Reverend Joaquin Iriarte, S.J., in "La Filosofia de Jose Ortega y Gasset", *Razon y Fe*, 1941, pp. 102-115 and 318-328; also see the bibliography appended to this paper.

that heroism is defined as the will to be oneself, that "I am I and my circumstances"—an / to be made and *circumstances* to be made.⁵ Poetry must transfuse reality, in order that the latter may be raised to the level of heroic adventure. Truth, justice, culture, are but mirrorings (*espejismos*) of imagination; yet the world thus wrought by fancy is more important for life than is mere inert reality.⁶ The hero then (note that Ortega, perhaps under influences stemming from Nietzsche, appears to view his own life enterprise as the trajectory of a hero),—the hero will engage in activity characterized by struggle and pain; in following his subjective vision, he will strive to liberate himself from habit, from the commonplace, from the level of his own race at this point of history. Such an attempt is made all the more difficult because these are the very elements that give him life. That these themes are perennial with Ortega is indicated by their repetition in the last set of essays in his monumental *Obras** This collection is called *Ideas and Beliefs*.⁷ Here we find him saying that ideas are imagination, that no determined world is given to man, who must produce his own milieu; that only the fantastic is true; that poetry, philosophy, science, are all daughters of imagination, the crazy member of the household, so that Hamlet and the isosceles triangle are of the same lineage. Life is a supreme risk, particularly since somehow the interior world of *ideas* (the realm of personal vision) must be made both to harmonize with, and to prevail over the exterior world of *beliefs* (the region of authentic reality). For such an undertaking there is no promise, and indeed no hope of full fruition. Later there will be more to say about this dichotomy between ideas and beliefs. Here let us only remark that life has two aspects, of which one—belief—is problematical and the other—idea—is a hazardous interpretation of the problem. Life is a problem; where there is no problem, there is no anguish, and where there is no anguish, there is no human life—one of Ortega's "reasons" for disbelieving in a living God and in the beatific vision for men. In spite of all this irrationalism and emphasis upon the dark mystery of life, Ortega claims to be a prophet of light. Philosophy

⁶"Meditaciones del Quijote", *Obras*, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67. "Poetry enters into reality in order to raise adventure to a higher aesthetic potency." (The translation of these excerpts is my own.)

"Also justice and truth, the work of the spirit, are mirrorings that produce themselves in matter. Culture—the ideal phase of things—aims to establish itself as a world apart and sufficient unto itself." p. 69.

On p. 71 occurs the statement that culture, although a fiction, is the most precious thing man has.

"This desire to be himself [*Ortega is speaking of Don Quixote*] is heroism. I do not believe that there is any kind of originality deeper than this 'practical', active originality of the hero. His life is a perpetual resistance to the habitual and the ordinary. . . . Such a life is perpetual pain, a constant tearing oneself away from that part of oneself which is surrendered to habit, imprisoned by matter."

⁷ In this paragraph I am summarizing Ortega's views as expressed in the essays "Creer y Pensar" ("Thinking and Believing"), "Los Mundos Interiores" ("Interior Worlds"), "En el Centenario de Hegel" ("Hegel's Centenary"), papers grouped with various others under the heading "Ideas y Creencias", the last set of essays in the *Obras*, pp. 1657-1729.

he demies as the endeavor to make the world transparent for oneself and others. Yet he admits that only partial illumination can be achieved. In fact, as we shall see, his last watchword will be a call to disillusioned living and thinking.

Before proceeding to a more extended analysis of Ortega's relativism, we **may** take note of several features of his work in general. He views the philosopher as not only a hero, but also a poet. He is reported once to have declared with great glee at a public lecture that people cannot tell whether he himself is a poet or philosopher.⁸ Now whether or not we concur with T. S. Eliot in his opinion that the philosopher cannot be a poet,⁹ no doubt all will agree that a philosopher had better not philosophize *qua* poet. Plato had his reasons for wishing "to banish the poet from the just city." One of the gravest charges to be made against Ortega y Gasset is that his philosophy and his purely literary work are inextricably confused. In fact, he tells us that his philosophy is more or less what other people call literature.¹⁰ Then again, he characterizes himself as a professor of metaphysics *in partibus infidelium*.¹¹ This expression is a two-edged sword, one edge (I suspect) cutting the Spanish people as *infideles* to the modern European thought for which Ortega went shopping in his early twenties, the other humorously turned against himself, for his own inveterate habit of writing "philosophy" for the newspapers. The professor of metaphysics of the University of Madrid was more often out of his diocese than in it, it seems, his favorite haunts being the columns of *El Sol*, his own magazine *Revista de Occidente*, and the lecture halls of Buenos Aires. As if his being a poet and a popularizer were not enough to make us doubt his metaphysical depth and seriousness, we have his own admission that he almost never reads over anything he has written, so that early papers of his own, when accidentally re-encountered, are not familiar to him.¹² His undeniable gifts—the flash of humor, the incisiveness of wit, a brilliant style, wide cultural outlook, clever insights—these sometimes carry him away as he writes a *pidce de circonstance*. He has produced but one book, *The Revolt of the Masses*, and that is unfinished. His other works are loose collections of short papers, while the *opus magnum* on vital reason, many times promised, has never come to light. All this evidence will bear

⁸ Reported by Reverend Joaquin Iriarte, SJ., *Art. Cit.*, p. 104.

• T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, London, 1930, pp. 98-99. Cf. also "Poetry and Metaphysics", by J. M. Cameron, in *The Dublin Review*, Autumn, 1947, pp. 48-60. This article offers a discussion of Eliot's position, with references (p. 49) to another of Eliot's works, *Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca*, 1927.

¹⁰ Ortega, "Renan" in *Mocedades*, p. 44; he here quotes Renan himself, *Nouveaux Cahiers de la Jeunesse*, p. 325.

¹¹ Ortega, Prologue to *Obras*, p. 3.

¹² Ortega's friend and collaborator, Fernando Vela, writes a *Prologo-Conversación* to "Goethe Desde Dentro" ("Goethe from Inside"), *Obras*, pp. 1381-1522. This prologue, ostensibly the report of a talk between Vela and Ortega, covers pp. 1383-1393. On p. 1386 Vela gives us his friend's admission that he hardly ever re-reads his work.

me out when I say that only with the utmost caution may we look for consistency and system in the work of Ortega y Gasset. On his own premises, he need not confine himself to any one philosophical standard, for he says somewhere that the one philosophic crime is the attempt to impose a single viewpoint on anyone, including oneself.¹³ A further complication for the student of his writings lies in the fact that his metaphysical thinking—so-called—evidently remains in the first degree of abstraction. The literary man, who deals with figures, colors, sounds, with entirely concrete and individual things and people, seldom if ever allows the metaphysician to escape into the third degree of abstraction. Ortega's thinking, as far as I can judge from its written expression, is *plastic*, grounded in sense and *terminating* there.

II. LOSS OF THE ABSOLUTE

After all the foregoing reservations have been made, it is still possible to discover several recurring motifs in Ortega's thought, themes which may be summed up under the heading *historical relativism*. We have already mentioned his view of the self and the world as *to be made* rather than as *given*, his belief in the truth of fiction, his stress on *life* as the ultimate reality, if reality there be. These points emerge from his meditations on Don Quixote, who, like Ortega, has been accused of being a poet "whose imagination clothes the most ordinary objects and occurrences in such vivid colors of illusion as compel belief." Ortega holds up such poetizing as philosophizing, and in this is not unlike George Santayana. To hear the latter say—"Does not modern philosophy teach that our idea of the so-called natural world is also a work of imagination?"¹⁵—we might well believe we were in presence of Ortega y Gasset. Or again, "All systems may be used and, up to a certain point, trusted as symbols. Science expresses in human terms our dynamic relation to surrounding reality. . . . Religions are the great fairy-tales of the conscience."¹⁶ Santayana further speaks of his *Life of Reason* as a study of the imagination, of "the adjustment of inner to outer relations; in other words, an adaptation of fancy and habit to material facts and opportunities."¹⁷ For life is a dream and thought is controlled and consistent madness, while again,

"It is not wisdom only to be wise

But it is wisdom to believe the heart

¹³ *The Modern Theme*, p. 92. This is the English translation (W. W. Norton and Co., N. Y., 1933) by James Cleugh of "El Tema de Nuestro Tiempo", *Obras*, Vol. II, pp. 829-912.

¹⁴ Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 8, quoted by A. A. Parker in article already mentioned, p. 28.

¹⁵ George Santayana, "Brief History of My Opinions", p. 243, in *Contemporary American Philosophy*, Vol. II, ed. by George P. Adams and Wm. Pepperell Montague.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine
 By which alone the mortal heart is led
 Unto the thinking of the thought divine."¹⁸

'With the religious nuances of these last lines, we come to the most interesting assertion Santayana makes, an assertion that provides the clue both to his own attitude and to that of Ortega: "I saw the . . . alternative between Catholicism and disillusion; but I was never afraid of disillusion -and I have chosen it".¹⁹

It is really a choice between religion and religion. A man becomes a relativist by cutting loose from the Absolute, that is, God. But creed and code and cult are necessary to man. We shall find Ortega proclaiming a new faith, outlining a new morality, setting up a new object to adore. For all his relativism, we shall see him positing the individual man as an Absolute. Father Sanchez Villaseiior, S.J., is entirely right in viewing Ortega's work as a project of justification of atheism,²⁰ while the shrewd and saintly Basque, Ignatius of Loyola, Ortega's own countryman, could readily discern the *cauda serpentina* disappearing around many a corner of Ortega's zigzag path and hear "Non serviam" hissing in the wind that serves the author as a symbol of life.²¹

What then are the absolutes from which Ortega has broken away? From God, first of all. In his early essay on Renan,²² Ortega espouses a vague pantheism. He speaks here of humanity as the road that leads to God, Who is absolute objectivity. Man is striving to become God by substituting for his individual ego the collective ego, which is humanity and is God. Culture is the great bond among men, the uniting and therefore divinizing agent. It is here that Ortega speaks of weaving a mystic crown of all that is great in literature to bind the temples of the Great Artificer. But then he submits to Renan's dictum that, after all, the substance of all things and their goal is nothingness, and with his master he kneels in adoration before Nothing.²³ Later on, Ortega is more openly atheistic. In the

is Santayana, "O World", Sonnet III in *Poems*, p. 5, Scribner, N. Y., 1923.

¹⁸ "Brief History of My Opinions", p. 243.

²⁰ Rev. Jose Sanchez Villaseiior, S.J., *Pensamiento y Trayectoria de Jose Ortega y Gasset*, Mexico, 1943, pp. 329-322, and 334.

²¹ " . . . its being is its movement, its perpetual self-overcoming, self-transcending, pouring itself out beyond itself. It is hardly body; it is all action; its essence is its inquietude." "Muerte y Resurreccion", *Notas, Espasa-Calpe Argentina*, 2d. ed., 1941, p. 86, trans. mine. This essay is not to be found in the collected works.

²² These lines summarize the views set forth by Ortega in his essay "Renan", *Mocedades*, Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1941, pp. 27-64. This paper, written in 1909, does not appear in the *Obras*. The following quotation (translation mine) is taken from p. 32.

"Humanity is the road that leads toward God, or . . . to the absolute objectivity in which nothing is secret, but everything is revealed, is *thing*."

²³ "Matter is nothing; measure, fiction, conventionality, posture, are everything. We should exclaim, as once did Renan: 'I like to fall upon my knees before Nothing'." *Ibid.*, p. 58.

essay *God in Sight*, lie announces that the modern world is on the verge of a new revelation of God.²⁴ Apparently he means a revelation of a new God, for he says in his *Meditation on the Escorial*:

We search inside ourselves for whatever seems best to us, and then make our God out of that. The divine is the idealization of the best in man, and religion consists in the worship which one-half of each individual renders to the other—the humble and earthly to the sensitive and heroic.²⁵

Finally, in *Concord and Liberty*?* Ortega lets us see more clearly his disbelief in the existence of God. The Christianity of the Middle Ages, he tells us, adored a God Who was pure, arbitrary Will. Before such a God, supremely transcendent as He was, the individual man was worth nothing. The great sin of medieval thought was that it despised life. God's infinity reduced all other things to negligible quantities; the doctrine of eternal life made temporal life value-less. Now to those of us who *know* the loving reverence with which the great Scholastics, notably St. Thomas, viewed man, and especially *redeemed* man, as the beautiful work of God's Hand and the destined companion of His living glory, the repetition of these old clichés by Ortega y Gasset is inexcusable. As Father Henle of this University remarked in a review of F. S. C. Northrop's *The Meeting of East and West*:

²⁴ "There are periods of *odium Dei*, of a great flight far from the divine, so that the enormous mountain which is God almost succeeds in disappearing from the horizon. But, at last, there come times when suddenly . . . there emerges to the leeward the steep slope of the divinity. This our hour is of this lineage and proceeds to cry out from the crow's nest: 'GOD IN SIGHT!' " "Dios a la Vista!" in "El Espectador, Tomo VI", *Obras*, p. 529. Translation mine.

²⁵ *Meditacion del Escorial*, in "El Espectador, VI", *Obras*, pp. 581-588. The quotation in English is taken from p. 204 in the translation made by Mildred Adams and included in *Invertebrate Spain*, W. W. Norton and Co., N. Y., 1937. The English work thus entitled contains not only Ortega's *Espana Invertebrada*, but other papers of his collected by Miss Adams.

²⁶ *Concord and Liberty* is the name given by Helene Weyl to a collection of essays translated by herself. They include: 1) "Del Imperio Romano", published with "History as a System" in booklet form by the *Revista de Occidente*, 1941; 2) "Notes on Thinking—Its Creation of the World and Its Creation of God", which first appeared in *Logos*, publication of the University of Buenos Aires, 1941; 3) "Prologue to a History of Philosophy", the preface to Brehier's *History of Philosophy*, Spanish edition, Buenos Aires, 1942, and later republished by *Revista de Occidente* with two other prologues under the title *Tres Prologos*, c. 1942; 4) "A Chapter from the History of Ideas" (on Wilhelm Dilthey), included in *Teoria de Andalucia*, *Revista de Occidente*, 1944. This compilation and translation by Helene Weyl appeared in 1946, Norton and Co., N. Y.

We refer here especially to "Notes on Thinking", pp. 69-71. Also see *The Modern Theme*, pp. 65-66 for the following lines:

"Christianity does not start with meditations upon life itself, but . . . commences at once with the revelation of a supreme reality, the divine essence . . . The infinity of this summum bonum reduces all possible others to negligible quantities. Accordingly 'this life' is of no value, good or bad."

"A journalist, indeed, may write as he runs, but a scholar, surely, is expected to maintain the integrity and solidity of his scholarship even when explaining things Catholic and Thomistic"²⁷

Far too often Ortega is the journalist who writes as he runs.

Other abiding values that, for most men, provide strong anchorage, have been lost by the Spanish writer. He is in some sense a man without a country; that is, he is blind to the true Christian inheritance of his own Spain. This is partly explicable by the fact that he belongs to the europeanizing group of the Generation of '98. As one of his translators says: "All the agony of spirit, the bitter blow to pride, the fury (deeper because of its impotence) engendered in the Spanish people by that defeat [in the Spanish-American war] he shared."²⁸ With Ortega, as with many others, resentment takes the form of scornful depreciation of his country's past, and indeed that of all Christian Europe. Time and again he indulges in misrepresentation that can only be born of bitterness. Surely we may challenge him when he tells us that the Middle Ages were slaves to revelation,²⁹ for were not then the sons of the Spaniard Dominic fighting hard for reason under the banner of *Veritas*? If he insists that in the Fifteenth Century faith was³⁰ dead, nowhere more than in Spain, which was besides just dead in general, we may certainly remind him of the glorious date of **1492**. Has he forgotten that that year saw a united Spain unfurl the standard of the Holy Cross over Granada, last fallen kingdom of the Moors—a Columbus sail to "evening isles fantastical" in the spirit of a missionary as well as that of an adventurer? In that same year of the despised Fifteenth Century, the Spanish High Renaissance was born in the lexicography of Nebrija, the house of Loyola was already rejoicing in a youngest son by the name of Ignatius, and the friar Ximenes, reformer and university founder-to-be, was forging his fervent heart and iron will among the ranks of the Franciscans. Only if the facts of history are tampered with, can they be made to support Ortega's case. So much for his warped attitude towards his native land, at least as evidenced in his writings up to **1943**. Now that he is once more installed in Spain and publishing there, it will be interesting to see his next pronouncements.

If Ortega is notably lacking in piety towards God, the Church, and Spain, his former teachers, the Jesuits of Malaga, fare no better. It is a bad persona^ note when a man can write with as much ingratitude as does Ortega

²⁷ Rev. Robert J. Henle, S. J., "Professor Northrop's Idea of Thomism", *The Modern Schoolman*, St. Louis, XXIV, No. 2, January, 1941, p. 115.

²⁸ Mildred Adams, in her foreword to the English translation of *Invertebrate Spain*, p. 8.

²⁹ "History as a System", p. 173, in *Toward a Philosophy of History*, edited by Helene Weyl, Norton, N. Y., 1941. She gives credit to a certain Professor Alexander for the translation of "History as a System". This essay is not in the collected works.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172. "In the fifteenth century it [Europe] had lost its faith in God, in revelation, either because man had completely lost that faith or because it had ceased to be in him a living faith."

in his essay *In the Margin of the Book AMD.G.*³¹ for to men of eense and heart, the contact with inspiring and holy teachers is even in memory, one of the most steadying influences of life. Add to all this Ortega's disbelief in the value of reason, which he equates with physico-mathematical reason,³² and his later disillusionment with culture, the star of his earlier days, and it is easy to see from what springs of prejudice his relativism flows.

HI. THE INDIVIDUAL MAN—THE ABSOLUTE RELATION

Having lost his absolutes, man, as Ortega sees him, has only himself. This makes of him a God, second-hand to be sure,³³ but still absolutely independent, *causa sui*, creator of himself and of the world, lord and master therein. Note that Gaos, one of Ortega's disciples, defines philosophy as pride,³⁴ a view present in the work of the master, although never so frankly expressed. Man thus becomes an absolute, but a completely fluid one. "Heraclitus's river has become conscious of its own fluidity",³⁵ The best description of man is *mobiUs in mobile*.^m Neither the *terminus a quo* nor the *terminus ad quern* of changing man and his changing world is indicated by Ortega, although once he admits that both source and goal may

³¹"Al Margen del Libro A.M.D.G.", in *Personas, Obras, Cosas*; it does not appear in the *Obras*.

³²"History as a System", pp. 229-230. "So the loss of faith in God leaves man alone with his nature, with what he has. Of this nature the intellect forms a part, and man, obliged to have recourse to it, forges for himself his faith in physico-mathematical reason. Now, having lost his faith ... in that reason also, man finds himself compelled to take his stand on the only thing still left to him, his disillusioned life."

³³76ic?.; the reference to man as *causa sui* occurs on p. 201, to him as a second-hand God, on p. 205. Note too the following statement: "By a coincidence that is not casual, the doctrine of the living being, when it seeks in tradition for concepts which are still more or less valid, finds only those which the doctrine of the divine being tried to formulate," p. 202.

³⁴ Rev. Jose Sanchez Villasenor, S.J., *La Crisis del Historicismo*, Mexico, 1945, p. 32. Here he quotes Jose Gaos to the effect that philosophy necessarily entails apostasy, theism, self-divinization, and that its name is pride. Father Sanchez refers to an article written by Gaos in *Revista de FUosofia y Letras*, No. 19, Mexico, 1944, pp. 139-145.

³⁵"El rio de Heraclito ha cobrado conciencia de su fluidez." "RevEs de Almanaque", in "El Espectador, VIII", *Obras*, p. 739.

³⁶"Vives", essays published fn *La Nacion*, Buenos Aires, 1941, and now included in *Esquema de las Crisis, Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, 1942, but not in *Obras*.

"Neither man nor the world is: everything is on the march. It comes from—it goes toward—we still do not know where. We know only that all is change, mutation, peregrination. New virtues must be created in man that will permit him to live energetically and jovially in the midst of radical inquietude. Our motto must be this: *MobUis in mobile*" p. 118, translation mine.

be sheer nothingness.³⁷ Man simply finds himself shipwrecked in the world. But what is man? Not a *being* with a fixed essence. No! Man has existence and *consistency*; he is a network of constantly varying relations.³⁸ He has no nature, but he has a history, the mode of being proper to a reality whose "substance" is change. So too man's environment has no static essence; it has only existence, consistency, and history. Now constant variation is life. Man's being is his life. Elsewhere Ortega defines an individual life as a complex of the ego and the environment. Thus life proceeds as a function of our environment, which in its turn depends upon our sensibility. "This means that as the living being evolves, his environment is proportionally modified and that there is, above all, a proportionate variation in the perspective that his environment offers".³⁹

This theory of the point of view or perspective is important in the thought of Ortega y Gasset. He claims that this does *not* involve him in relativism or skepticism and, in an essay on Hegel, points out that a truth which is true for only one time or one person, is not true at all.⁴⁰ He holds that the sum of individual perspectives gives absolute truth, is indeed the absolute reason which used to be attributed to God. Each man is therefore acting according to the highest truth and the highest morality when he accepts his individual vocation, seeing his environment in a very personal way and accepting the labor that destiny assigns him in virtue of his own organism and vital nature. Such a message Ortega considers his own great contribution to philosophy; it is indeed the theme of our time.⁴¹

37 "Las Atlantidas", in *Obras*, p. 943.

Also: "Every tiger is a first tiger; it has to begin from the beginning in its profession as tiger. But the man of today does not begin to be a man, because he inherits the forms of existence, the ideas, the vital experiences of his ancestors, and thus starts off at the level which represents the whole human past accumulated beneath his feet . . . Therefore his life is substantially progress; let us not now discuss whether this progress is headed toward the better, the worse, or toward nothing at all." *Mission of the Librarian*, p. 36, trans. mine.

38 "The essence of a thing resolves itself into pure relations . . . an individual, whether a thing or a person, is the result of the entire rest of the world; it is the totality of relations." "Adan en el Paraiso", *Mocedades*, pp. 84 and 88, translation mine.

"Traditional philosophy distinguishes between the *essence* and the *existence* of a thing. But the term 'essence' bears various significations, which should be kept apart so as to impair one another in more complicated cases. The obvious and least assuming signification of essence would be that a thing not only exists but also *consists* in something. What it consists in I call its *consistency* in contrast with its *existence*" Footnote, p. 167, in the essay on Dilthey in *Concord and Liberty*, translation by Helene Weyl.

39 "Signs of the Times", in *The Modern Theme*, p. 79.

40 "Hegel en America", "El Espectador, VII", *Obras*, p. 594.

41 "It is therefore peculiarly incumbent upon us not to defraud the sublime requirement that depends upon our cooperation for its fulfilment, and, planting ourselves firmly in the position we find allotted to us, to

Let us stress again that Ortega thinks he is escaping relativism. In evaluating the historical significance of Einstein's theory, he says that the denial of unattainable absolutes liberates relative reality from its ambiguous and sinister connotations and makes of it the only reality there is, and therefore absolute. "Relativism is not here opposed to absolutism; on the contrary it merges with it, and, so far from suggesting a failure in our knowledge, endows the latter with an absolute validity",⁴² For it is one of the qualities of reality that it should possess various perspectives. Furthermore there is no such thing as a predetermined subjective personality. Both terms of the knowing process are variables; every appearance thus is true, for appearance is an objective quality of the real, its response to a subject. In knowing as in living, each individual should be loyal to "the unipersonal imperative which represents his individuality".⁴³

IV. MAN, THE CREATOR OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS WORLD

It is now time to return to our individual man shipwrecked upon the shores of life. Like a new Robinson Crusoe, he must take inventory of what stores he has to start with and also investigate the possibilities of his personal island that he may undertake the building of his kingdom. Now, although Ortega does not wish to attribute a nature to man, he sees he must have a starting point for the human vital trajectory. Thus, under the title *Vitality, Soul, and Spirit*,** he gives us the substance of his university lectures in a course called *Philosophic Anthropology*. This analysis reminds us startlingly of the triadic psychology current among some thinkers in medieval times, perhaps under the influence of St. Augustine, Alcher of Clairvaux, and St. John Damascene. *Vitality* is for Ortega a sort of bodily soul, a deposit of living energy essentially fused with the body. *Spirit* is the complex of intimate acts of which each one knows himself the author; this is the realm of thought and of will. Between vitality and spirit lies the *soul* (soul *simpliciter* as distinguished from bodily soul); this is the region of emotions and imagination. Here all is flux and continuity in contradistinction to the discrete and sporadic activity of spirit and the unknown energizing of vitality.

Thus man has three personal centers. The question is, which is the real person? Indubitably the I that is represented by the soul; this is what is most individual in every man. In his imagination and emotions a man lives of and for himself, with no need of the objective world, no obligation to submit either to eternal truths or to eternal norms of morality. At this point we may digress a moment in order to illustrate the criticism made

open our eyes wide to our environment with a profound faith in our own organism and vital nature, and accept the labour that destiny assigns us—the modern theme." "Signs of Our Times", Ch. IX in *The Modern Theme*, English translation, p. 96.

⁴² "The Historical Significance of the Theory of Einstein", in *The Modern Theme*, Eng. trans., p. 137.

***Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴⁴ This paragraph and the next summarize the views expressed by Ortega in "Vitalidad, Alma, Espiritu", in "El Espectador, V", *Obras*, pp. 489-516.

some time back—namely, that even when speaking most philosophically, Ortega often falls into grossly material terms of explanation. Here when we are trying to find out what he honestly thinks human nature is, he tells us that the *spirit* is a point, the *soul* a spheroid euclidian volume ending in a periphery, a thick film which is the bodily soul. This bodily soul "adheres on the one side to the sphere of the soul, and on the other, to the form of the material body".⁴⁵ Ortega will also declare that vitality is immersed in some sort of unitary cosmic stream (this is pantheistic enough) and that spirit also is one identical principle in all individuals. Thus we have a tripartite man, whose uppermost and bottom levels are but pulsations of universal worlds, while in between stands the soul, in which life and reason merge in a very individual way. Only the man in whom soul—or vital reason—has been fully formed, possesses a personal center which is his very own and which enables him to stand forth (to be *ex-centric*, says Ortega) in the face of nature and spirit. On the source of the soul, Ortega is silent. Note, however, that he speaks of soul *as having been formed*. We are back at the old theme—every man must make his soul and with it his world. Man is an auto-creator and a demiurge.

It is by harmonizing his beliefs and his ideas that man engages in his destined task of creation.⁴⁶ The preliminary distinction is that man *has* ideas, but *is* his beliefs. Ideas are occurrences, coming to us off and on, while beliefs are abiding convictions in which our life is fixed. Beliefs spring from our vital depths, while ideas are things of the spirit. Here again Ortega explicitly dodges the issue of what metaphysical basis lies beneath our beliefs. These are our inheritance from history and it is our obligation to start from the present historical level. This does not mean that man must never question his beliefs. They present a certain external world to him, but a world which he must mould. This he will do by elaborating systems of ideas, imaginary figures of worlds, and by then deciding which of these appears ideally most firm. The one thus elected he calls the truth and acts upon it. But why does a man choose one particular ideal system? Always in response to a vital need, to an individual imperative and particular vocation. Doubts and voids, rifts in the tissue of our beliefs, create uneasiness within us; anguish gives rise to thought. Ideas prove to be things that we consciously construct precisely because we do not believe in them. Thought is justifiable only when it thus springs from vital needs; otherwise we lose ourselves in pure otherness and abstract thought. On the other hand, we achieve nothing if we remain imprisoned in our original world of beliefs, wearing the shackles imposed upon us by dead men. The philosopher undertakes the heroic enterprise of living both within himself and outside himself, in the enigmatic reality of his beliefs and the poetic world which has occurred to him. In fact man *is* two worlds, the exterior world of beliefs and the interior world of ideas. This second existence is imaginary, but it is to be noted

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 502-503, translation mine.

⁴⁶ This paragraph summarizes "Ideas v Creencias", the last set of papers in *Obras*, pp. 1657-1729. They were written between 1936 and 1940.

that to have an imaginary existence belongs to man's absolute reality as such. It is by this imaginary existence that man makes himself what he wants to be and lords it over the world. But how is a man to know that the world he chooses is the right one for him? Ultimately the only norm that Ortega has to offer, whereby anyone may be sure of being true to his destiny, is an urgent feeling arising out of a man's vital depths.

In days gone by, when man religious faith, he tried to live in the presence of God and knew himself responsible to God for his actions. Now, according to Ortega's new revelation, man is all the divinity there is—"an occasional God"⁴⁷—and must live in his own presence as responsible to himself.⁴⁸ How there can be any responsibility not based upon responsibility to God Ortega does not explain; this is in line with one of his pontifical assertions, namely, that, while he is on his honor to have proofs of his statements in his head, he need not lay these proofs before the public.⁴⁹ It is with regard to his theory of destiny, of mission, of vocation, that many of these unsubstantiated dogmatic affirmations occur. Thus he tells us in *The Book of the Missions* that the standard whereby a man may know his individual vital program, is the feeling that such a life and no other will give him the most reality, will be most authentically his.⁵⁰ The individual who refuses to follow his own call is subhuman. On the other hand, who has any right to stop those who pursue their vital trajectory under the pressure of vocation? If a man is called to be a thief, he is unfaithful to destiny if he obeys the commandment, *Thou shalt not steal*.⁶¹

⁴⁷ *El Libro de las Misiones*, Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1940. Also reprinted in *Obras*, 1943, pp. 1297-1379. In both cases three essays are printed together: "The Mission of the Librarian", "The Mission of the University", and "The Misery and Splendor of Translation." The second of these is published separately in an English translation by Howard Lee Nostrand. The following reference gives the page number from the Espasa-Calpe edition:

"Cardinal [Nicholas] of Cusa said marvellously that man, in that he is free, creates, but he is free and creates as set within this particular time beneath the pressure of circumstances: it is thus that he merits the title of *Deus occasionalis*, 'an occasional God'." p. 38, translation mine.

⁴⁸ "Sobre la Expresion Tenomeno Cosmico", in "El Espectador, VII", *Obras*, p. 675.

Also: "Disciplined life, if it is religious, demands that the person live constantly in the presence of God, Who, as a spectator and judge, delivers him from laxity and evil deeds. If it is not strictly religious, a proud existence requires that we live in the presence of ourselves." p. 267 in "The Argentine State and the Argentinean", *Toward a Philosophy of History*.

⁴⁹ "Meditaciones del Quijote", *Obras*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ *Mision del Bibliotecario*, Espasa-Calpe edition, p. 18. "Mission is this; each man's consciousness of his most authentic being, which he is called upon to realize . . . without man there is no mission . . . without a mission there is no man." Translation mine.

⁵¹ "At every moment we commit injustices against our neighbors, judging ill of their acts, forgetting that perhaps these are directed towards elements in their environment which do not exist in ours." "Las Atlántidas", *Obras*, p. 922.

Also see *Mision de la Universidad*, *Obras*, p. 1341, for reference to the destiny to be a thief.

Of course Ortega finds himself in difficulties when he comes to consider social relations.⁵² Society too has its mission and each individual besides his private vocation has also a collective one. Not only does the external world provide a repertory of difficulties and facilities which man must skilfully mould to make them fit his program of self-realization, but other difficulties and facilities are set up by society. Undoubtedly too there are *duties*, defined as things we have to do unless we wish to be punished by society. Duty is not a fixed magnitude, but rather something historically variable. There is positively no reason why a man should obey social commandments if these hinder his own vital trajectory and if he can escape punishment. In fact the strong man in politics or the great thinker in philosophy may change the social program and outlook as much as he wills and can manage to do without serious danger to himself. The trouble is that Ortega has a profound distaste for extending this theory to every one. In *The Revolt of the Masses* we find him advocating keeping the common man in his place.⁵⁸ Again he urges in *The Mission of the Librarian* that a strict censorship be established over the production of books, so that only those which spring from a real thinker's or a real doer's vital reason may be published.⁵⁴ Ortega makes no offer to cut down his own thousands of pages of published matter: *he* is a judge in Israel, apparently able to decide which other writers deserve to be silenced for not being true to their own vocation and that of the times. If we have seen that, for Ortega, the philosopher is a poet, a hero, a popularizer, a prophet of pride, we must now add, without the author's permission, that the philosopher appears to be also an egoist and a law unto himself, with no intention of allowing the same liberty to the generality of his fellow men.

In spite of his occasional attempts to overcome relativism, Ortega has shown himself a relativist from the very beginning. Although this relativism is by no means always consistent with itself, in general the following themes recur fairly constantly:

1) The relativism of truth, varying from individual to individual, from group to group, from time to time; this phase of relativism is not overcome by treating perspective as belonging to the object rather than to the subject of thought, for both terms are essentially mobile.

2) A psychological relativism that views the content of consciousness as springing out of past experience, individual and racial, and that explains man's "soul" as a product of history.

3) A metaphysical relativism that denies substance, absolute quiddities, essences, and allows us to investigate only systems of relations, or *consistencies*, as Ortega prefers to call them.

4) An ethical relativism that makes the individual the arbiter of his own morality.

⁵² *Mision del Bibliotecario*, Espasa-Calpe ed., pp. 21-26. Note especially "And this necessity [obedience to duty], like everything properly human, does not consist in a fixed magnitude, but is by essence variable, migratory, evolutionary—in short—historical." Translation mine.

⁵⁸ *The Revolt of the Masses*, English translation, pp. 77-79.

⁵⁴ *Misidn del Bibliotecario*, pp. 44-48.

V. THE HISTORICISM OF ORTEGA Y GASSET

In recent years the historicism of the Spanish thinker has come to be more and more evident.⁵⁵ In 1929 Ortega became acquainted with the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, to whom he acknowledges his indebtedness.⁵⁶ He claims, however, that Dilthey's historicism confirmed rather than inspired his own, which is an original discovery. This great new thought is that history is a life and therefore perfect continuity. Now Dilthey emphasized the necessity for our time to give itself over to historical consciousness or reason; in so doing man will best realize himself. This is so because human nature is variable. Thus, whatever man is at any given moment includes a past and is, indeed, produced by that past. History then is the more or less adequate reconstruction which human life produces of itself; it is the "attempt to bring to possible perfection the interpretation of all human life by conceiving it from the viewpoint of all mankind in so far as man forms one actual and real unity",⁵⁷ Ortega has three criticisms to offer with regard to these views expounded by Dilthey. Mankind does not, for the Spaniard, form one real unity. He has outlawed both the view *sub specie aeternitatis* and the view *sub specie universitatis*. He holds rather that the sum of perspectives would constitute the whole truth of human life, if this sum could be given, which it cannot. Ortega believes too that Dilthey is guilty of "ontophobia" (a strange charge for Ortega to fling at anyone), whereas he himself holds that thought moulds reality and therefore helps to make both man and his history, not only interpretatively but even metaphysically, if you will. In the third place, Dilthey contrasts intellectual rationalism with vital irrationalism. Ortega thinks he has overcome the dichotomy by his theory of vital reason which explains the trajectory both of the individual man and of history, while grounding reason in life. Ortega's position here would be stronger if he had written his promised masterpiece, called precisely *Vital Reason*.

Variations on these themes are played in the essay *Man the Technician*.^{6*} Once again we are told that society, like the individual, is history, an unending aspiration, different essentially in each of its stages. To the objec-

⁵⁵ See for instance *Esquema de las Crisis, Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, 1942; also the essays in *Concord and Liberty*, and *Toward a Philosophy of History*. Most of these papers represent Ortega's thought from about 1935 to 1942.

⁵⁶ "A Chapter from the History of Ideas—Wilhelm Dilthey and the Idea of Life", in *Concord and Liberty*, pp. 129-182.

"I became acquainted with Dilthey's work as late as 1929, and it took me four more years before I knew it sufficiently well. This ignorance, I do not hesitate to maintain, has caused me to lose about ten years of my life." p. 136, translation by H. Weyl.

"When at last I became acquainted with Dilthey's philosophical work, I was struck by a strange and disconcerting parallelism between his ideas and the problems and positions, of a strictly and decisively philosophical character, set forth in my own writings." p. 141.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166. For Ortega's criticisms of Dilthey see particularly pp. 164, 175-182.

⁵⁸ "Man the Technician", in *Toward a Philosophy of History*, pp. 88-164; for Spanish original, see *Obras*, pp. 1546-1596.

tion that there can be no program without some one or some thing *having* that program, Ortega replies with an evasion, to the effect that he cannot take the time to answer because it would mean embarking on a course of philosophy.* Presumably we are simply to make an act of faith in Ortega's postulate of a man who is all mobility and to go on to the next question. When man asks, "What is this solitary thing that remains to me—my life, my disillusioned life?", he is "brought up against himself as reality, as history. And, for the first time, he sees himself forced to a concern with his past, not from curiosity nor in the search for examples which may serve as norms, but because it is all he has ... the present hour is the appointed time for history to re-establish itself as historical reason."⁶⁰ According to this reason all facts are truths of a time, fluid in the *fieri* whence they come and into which they melt away. Man's instincts, faculties, powers, achievements, are but interpretations that man has manufactured at a given juncture of his historical life. Out of the depths of our historical being arises our mission, the call to create our own lives and, in so doing, also to create history. This is the meaning of the seal of dedication which has always marked European civilization. For long centuries people mistakenly linked their ideals with the service of God Who saw all and judged all. But the proud existence of modern man requires that he should answer only to his own inner tribunal for the carrying out of his historical vocation. A man is responsible only to himself and to history; his only duty is to cherish his individual life, "the sole power capable of creation in all fields, from science through politics to love and conversation."⁶¹ And history, we may add.

VI. SUMMARY AND CRITICISM

Ortega stands self-accused of a philosophy of disillusion, for he tells us in one place that historical relativism is skepticism, a suicidal theory, a frustrated enterprise.⁶² Although denouncing the dark mysteries of religion,—mysteries proved, he says, by recourse to other mysteries⁶³—he himself is a prophet of the darkness of the nether regions. He commits what in his own words is the one unforgivable sin⁶⁴—that is, he endeavors to impose upon us *one* perspective, that of his historical relativism where finally all is enigma, problem, anguish. This is the faith to which modern

w *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁶⁰ "History as a System", in *Toward a Philosophy of History*, p. 230.

⁶¹ "The Argentine State and the Argentinian", in *Toward a Philosophy of History*, p. 269.

⁶² "Relativism and Rationalism", p. 29, Ch. III, in *The Modern Theme*.

⁶³ "Meditaciones del Quijote", *Obras*, p. 45.

⁶⁴ "There is only one view-point which is justifiable and natural; to take up one's position in life itself, to look at it from the inside." *The Revolt of the Masses*, anonymous English translation, p. 38.

Compare this with note 13.

Also see "El Espectador, IV", p. 403. "Believe me; there is nothing more fruitful than conscious ignorance of oneself. From Plato until today, the keenest thinkers have found no better definition of science than the title used by the great Cusanus: *De docta ignorantia*." Translation mine.

man must adhere, says Ortega in pontifical language, unless he is to live below the level of the times. This level is not necessarily better than any other, yet conform we must unless we wish to be anti-historical.⁶⁵ This our new faith is matched by a new code, "to your own self be true"—true to a self which is fluid and mysterious, true to a vocation which amounts only to an urgent impulse. This is the code of out and out immoralism. And the cult to which Ortega invites us? The adoring recognition of man as the only absolute, the only divinity; the saddest clue of all is given when, with Renan, he urges us to fall upon our knees before Nothing. Culture, human life, history are insubstantial dreams and poetry of but an hour, yet these are all man has. Fundamentally, the historical relativism of Ortega y Gasset is a philosophy of despair. He remarks at one time that man is left with a burning wound in his soul when he has lost a faith.⁶⁶ It is a matter of biographical fact that the Spanish writer has lost the faith of his fathers in God, in the Church, in the Christian traditions of his own country, in the high destiny of his immortal soul. Like Santayana, he has seen as the only alternative to Catholicism, disillusion. And disillusionment is his whole message, hidden though it be under a brilliant flow of language. Like Don Quixote, he can clothe madness in the beautiful Castilian tongue; but unlike Don Quixote, he has not yet returned to the sanity which sees that if man is to be anything at all, it must be as a contingent creature dependent upon the Absolute God without Whom, "thought's self is a vanishing wing, and joy is a cobweb, and friendship a flower in the dust, and glory a sunbeam."⁶⁷

Ortega's loss of faith is the source of his historical relativism, his pseudo-humanism, his radical skepticism. He belongs with those other thinkers of whom St. Thomas said: "... It becomes sufficiently clear how these great minds suffered from being so straitened on every side. We, however, will avoid these straits if we suppose . . . that man is able to reach perfect happiness after this life, since man has an immortal soul."⁶⁸ Unfortunately, however, the title of "great minds", at least in the sense of great metaphysical mind, must, I think, be denied to Ortega y Gasset. True, Father Iriarte, S.J., writing in *Razdn y Fe?** holds that Ortega has a metaphysics *secundum quid* in that he studies life as entitative immanence and transcendental value. Ortega makes life an absolute reality, as being the

⁶⁵ "History as a System", in *Toward a Philosophy of History*, p. 230.

⁶⁶ "When I was a child, I was a Christian; now I am one no longer." *Ibid.*, p. 208.

"Philosophy is the treatment man applies to the dreadful wound which his faith in breaking off has torn open in his innermost being . . . Loss of faith does not necessarily engender philosophy . . . But the alternative is despair." p. 114 in "Prologue to a History of Philosophy", in *Concord and Liberty*.

⁶⁷ Louise Imogene Guiney, "The Wild Ride", pp. 126-127, in *The White Sail*, Ticknor, Boston, 1887.

⁶⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Oentes*, III, 48; trans. by English Dominicans.

⁶⁹ Rev. Joaquin Iriarte, S.J., article quoted, pp. 319, 324.

sole reality, although one whose essence is motion. Father Iriarte's brother-in-arms in Mexico, Father Sanchez Villasenor, gives, it seems to me, a truer appreciation when he points out that to accord metaphysical significance to pure mutation in which nothing substantial changes, is patent absurdity. Let him then have the last word:

" In conclusion, no positive *datum* in favor of metaphysics is discoverable throughout the whole work of Ortega. On the contrary, hostile statements abound. Metaphysical knowledge is, for the Spanish writer, Utopian and anti-historical. Utopian because it arises above space, on the wings of abstraction. Anti-historical, in that it neglects the individual and concrete fact.

Therefore, if there is nothing of the metaphysician about Ortega at all, only in irony can he be called * an original and precise metaphysician.'"⁷⁰

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⁷⁰ Rev. Jose Sanchez Villasenor, S.J., *Pensamiento y Trayectoria de Jose Ortega y Gasset*, p. 268.

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MOTHER MARIE LOTJISE MARTINEZ, R.S.C.J.

Maryville College
St. Louis, Mo.

Problem (b): The Past and Being in Jean Paul Sartre

In his novel "La Nausee" Jean Paul Sartre relates an anecdote about Antoine Roquentin, the main character of the piece, which is based on one of his most important philosophical notions. As the story opens Roquentin is engaged in writing the history of the Marquis de Rollebon. One day while in the library of Bouville reading certain of the Marquis* letters, Roquentin suddenly realized that in attempting to learn of de Rollebon's historical existence, he had in effect loaned him his own existence. He felt that the one who was actually present there in the library was the Marquis himself—"I felt him", he says, "like a gentle warmth in the pit of my stomach". And yet, he reasoned, if the Marquis were really present, who could this person be who was aware of the wet ink on this pad before him? It could only be Roquentin himself—for the very phrase that appeared there was a thought that he had himself just had. Yet it was no longer his—rather, it was something graven in the very paper before him. It was no longer an actual thought inasmuch as it was now something quite objective out there in front of him. It could no longer be his since it was in the past that it belonged to him. And now, since he *is* present and it *was* his, it is his no longer. Suddenly he realized that nothing of the past belonged to him—all that is his is present to him.

Yet that present is a fleeting thing: it *was* what exists and everything that was not present, did not exist. The present existed and insofar as it existed it was past. But the past does not exist—only the present exists. And not only does the past not exist, it did not exist—what existed was present. And in that case, only things *now* present to a person exist—and being present to him, it is really their appearances that exist. Behind them there is literally *nothing*, for what is behind the present is the past and it does not exist.¹ To be sure this is not an entirely new idea that Sartre is presenting, for we read in St. Augustine's Confessions: "As for the present, should it always be present and never pass into times past, verily it should not be time but eternity. If then time present, to be time, only comes into existence because it passeth into time past; how can we say that also to be, whose cause of being is, that it shall not be: that we cannot, forsooth, affirm that time is, but only that it is tending not to be."²

But if the past does not exist, how could Roquentin existing *now*, as he does, write the history of the Marquis de Rollebon who existed in a past that did not exist? It is literally impossible and Roquentin promptly abandoned his project. De Rollebon is dead and that is that: "*M. de Rollebon venait de mourir pour la deuxieme fois.*"⁸ Now what, we might ask, precisely is Sartre's conception of the past and present that would lead him to cast his hero in such an absurd situation? Why did it become impossible for Roquentin to continue writing his history? Is Sartre merely sharpening his wits in creating such bewilderment, or is the paradox in

i J. P. Sartre, *La Nausee*, Gallimard, Paris, 1938, p. 128.

² St. Augustine, *Confessions*, XI, xiv, Loeb Classical Library, ed. Wm. Watts, London, 1919, pp. 238-239.

s *La Nausee*, pp. 126-128. Quotation p. 128.

which Roquentin finds himself one necessarily involved in Sartre's own thought? To answer these questions let us try to penetrate that mind to see just what Sartre's conception of the past is and what reasons lie behind the position he advances.

* * * * *

In treating of the past Sartre warns against the view that memory is its seat. For if the past is retained in memory, it is present as an image left by perception on the brain. But if it is *present* in the brain, then the past is really quite something present. Why, then, should we call it past?⁴ It is a warning quite reminiscent of St. Augustine's words: "Although as for things past, whenever true stories are related, out of the memory are drawn not the things themselves which are past, but such words as being conceived by the images of those things, they, in their passing through our senses, have, as their footsteps, left imprinted in our minds. For example: mine own childhood, which at this instant is *no* but as for the image of it, when I call that to mind, and tell of it, I do even in the present time behold it, because it is still in my memory".⁵ It is only as something present, then, that we speak of the past. Must we, on that account, relegate the past to some isolated area that simply is *not*?

No, Sartre insists,⁶ the past has not lost its efficacy, it does not continue to enjoy a merely honorary existence—each thing in the past does cease to act but it still occupies a very definite place in time and can constantly insert itself and assert itself as a moment of consciousness. For if a thing is simply past and in no way preserved in the concrete past of something present, it is simply annihilated—to be a past *thing*, the past must always be referred to something that is present and preserved in the being of that present. For example, if we say that John was a student, it is the present-John that *was* and the past-John that *is* a student. And if John no longer *is*, then the past-student-John is in the past of my present actuality. In any event, it is in reference to some present that there is a past: the past must form a part of the concrete past of one who still survives.⁷

Now as indicating the past exactly what does "was" mean? Predicated of a present thing, it is a link between past and present without being entirely past or present—it indicates, rather, an ontological leap of the present into the past, a kind of synthesis of past and present.⁸ In our example, the present-John is bound to his past and that past-being-student *now* forms part of the present-John. In other words, it is by this synthesis

⁴L'etre et Neant, Gallimard, Paris, 1943, p. 151.

⁵Confessions, X L, xviii, Vol. 2, pp. 248-249.

⁶L'etre et Neant, p. 152.

⁷L'etre et Neant, pp. 154-155. As Augustine says: "Tis in thee, O my mind, that I measure my times. Do not thou interrupt me now, that is, do not interrupt thine own self with the tumults of thine own impressions. In thee, I say, it is that I measure the times. The impression which things passing by cause in thee and remains even when the things are gone, that is it which being still present I do measure". Confessions, X I, xxvii, Vol. 2, pp. 272-273.

⁸L'etre et Neant, p. 158.

that the being of the present-John is formed by the past—it is by the synthesis that we *are* our past.⁹ Consequently, when there is no longer a *now*, i.e. when at death the present being becomes past, then the past no longer is. The past, then, is a kind of ever-growing totality of the being we are—before death we are not our totality, we still have *to be it*. The past, then, taken as the totality of what we *still have to be*, in some way defines us. It is only at the very instant of death that we *are* that totality. It is by the present-I that a past comes into the world. I have to be the totality that is my whole past and there is no possibility of my not being it.¹⁰ That is the reason why Sartre calls the past an ontological structure that makes me what-I-am *from behind* and which at the same time makes me be *beyond* what-I-am.¹¹

Now inasmuch as it is past and thereby opposed to the present, the past must always remain at a distance from the present. As such, Sartre calls it "*jactness*" (*jactice*)—what *has been* done. It is something done, over with and quite inescapable. It is the invincible contingency of factual things which the present thing has to be without being able to avoid it. Briefly stated, the past is what the present-I must be in order not to be. In virtue of the necessity which it thereby wields, the past has a necessary influence over the present—it is the very law of the present thing's being, its essence, its substance.¹² Consequently, in trying to write of the Marquis de Rollebon, Antoine was indeed writing of himself and not of the Marquis—as a present-being he could not do otherwise.

Now if the past is the *essence* of the present, how and when does it exercise its necessity? It wields it in the present. For, as Sartre tells us,¹³ the present has often been called that infinitesimal point between past and future, the ideal term of a division of time pushed to infinity. An instance of this is to be found in Saint Augustine's words: "How much so ever is flown away, is past; whatsoever remains is to come. If any instant of time be conceived, which cannot be divided either into none, or at most into the smallest particles of moments; that is the only it which can be called the present; which little yet flies with such full speed from the future to the past, as that it is not lengthened out with the very least stay. For lengthened out if it be, then is it divided into the past and future. As for the present, it takes not up any space".¹⁴ But if it is a term at the extreme of divisibility, the present is *not* something but nothing. And if it is nothing, how can it be present? Does not the very name 'present' require that *something* be present? How, then, can it be nothing?

Sartre's answer is that presence is intrinsically constituted by nothing-

⁹ L'etre et Neant, p. 158.

¹⁰ L'etre et Neant, pp. 159-160.

¹¹ L'etre et Neant, p. 162.

¹² L'etre et Neant, pp. 162-163. Re—the notion of essence cf. L'etre et Neant, pp. 12-13.

¹³ L'etre et Neant, p. 165.

¹⁴ Confessions, X I, xv, Vol. 2, pp. 242-245.

ness.¹⁵ For example, if I am present to this desk in my room in a certain city, I am present to desk, room and city. Those determinations are not simple relations of contiguity but internal relations actually going to constitute my being. So for one thing to be present to another it must be such that there is in it a relation to other things. But for that relation to be possible, I must *not be* the other thing. In a word, presence is constituted by not being the other. It is just this presence that constitutes what Sartre calls being-for-itself which he defines as presence-to-being.¹⁶ It is opposed to being-in-itself which lacks such a relation of presence. But as a presence-to-being, it must be aware of its not being the other. In a word, being-for-itself is intentionally moved outside itself since it is directed outwards in seeing itself as not the other.¹⁷ Non-being, then, constitutes an intrinsic part of being-for-itself, i.e. of a being that is present.

Now if being that is present is not-other, does that mean that it is aware of itself as simply nothing? In other words, is it nothing that is not other? Is it nothing that is? Not at all—being is there but it is not a being that is. The being that is *present* is the past that constitutes the essence of being-for-itself. And as we have already seen that past is *not*. So the thing that is present is always a past and a nothing—the present is purely and simply an escape from being. In a word, the characteristic of being-present, a characteristic we predicate of all reflective being, is nothing less than a constant flight from being, an escape, a shunning of being. It is quite incorrect, then, to say that any such being is. "Is" is properly said only of being-in-itself which is not present to anything—being-for-itself simply is *not*, it shuns the being of the is.¹⁸ Why? What is there about existence that would make us try at all costs to avoid it? What harm might result from seeking instead of shunning it?

Briefly stated, it is because existence, both in ourselves and in the things around us, is a source of the profoundest anxiety and torment. The way Sartre arrives at that conclusion is an excellent illustration of his whole method in operation. Our existence is primarily our being present to and in the midst of the world we inhabit, and the meaning of the very being of that existence will unfold if we analyse human conduct. It is by that conduct that he shows himself in contact with his world. For, Sartre warns us,¹⁹ being must never be bisected into a segment of conscious-being and a segment of phenomenal being—it must, rather, be studied in toto. That is the lesson of Descartes. Being is a concrete whole in which conscious-being is present to phenomenal-being intentionally and phenomenal-being, in order to appear, must be present to conscious-being.²⁰ Being, then, is

15 *L'etre et Neant*, pp. 165-167.

16 *L'etre et Neant*, p. 166.

17 For a fuller analysis of the meaning of "being-for-itself" and "being-in-itself" cf. *L'etre et Neant*, pp. 30-34, pp. 115-120.

18 *L'etre et Neant*, pp. 167-168.

19 *L'etre et Neant*, p. 37.

20 Hence, Sartre's favorite saying: "la conscience est un etre pour lequel il est dans son etre question de son etre en tant que cet etre implique un etre autre que lui". *L'etre et Neant*, p. 29.

fundamentally being-in-the-world, as Heidegger has stated it.²¹ In this way, the notion of our existence will be determined by our answer to this question: how does man conduct himself towards his world?

Proceeding on that basis Sartre investigates man's conduct as exemplified in the very act of asking the question of being. Every question, he tells us,²² expects the answer *yes* or *no*, otherwise it would be an affirmation or a negation, not a question. In asking a question, then, the questioner accepts as a fact the possibility of the non-being of the thing about which he is asking. In addition, he must not himself know the answer, for if he did he would not ask the question. Thus, a question becomes a kind of bridge between the non-being of the questioner's knowing and the non-being of the questioned's being. Non-being then, will condition every question that is asked. As regards the question of being: "What being *will be* will necessarily arise on the basis of what it *is not*. Whatever this reply may be, it will be possible to formulate it in this way: Being it *that*, and outside of that, *nothing*"²³ This is not only true of asking a question but of judging and other acts of men towards their world. No matter what human act is examined, non-being will always be found going hand in hand with being. Or as Sartre, particularly likes to repeat; "The necessary condition whereby it is possible to say *no*, is that non-being is a perpetual presence in us and outside us, it is that nothingness *haunts* being",²⁴

It is a theme that Saint Augustine was quite as fond of discussing in his own way: "It is well agreed amongst us", he says in a letter to Zenobius, "that everything a bodily sense attains to cannot remain in the same manner even for a single point of time. Rather, they slip away, flow off and hold onto nothing present. That is, as I might say in Latin, they *are not*".²⁵ For in the mind of Augustine a thing that has only being (or rather, that is only being) must always remain the same—" *Esse enim ad manendum refertur*"²⁶ A thing that is capable of change, no matter how

As for the phenomenal: "L'etre d'un existant, c'est precisement ce qu'il parait". *L'etre et Neant*, p. 12. Also, "Concevons bien, en effet, que notre theorie du phenomene a remplace la realite de la chose par l'objectivite du phenomene et qu'elle a fonde celle-ci sur un recours a l'infini. La realite de cette tasse, c'est qu'elle *est* la et qu'elle *n'est pas moi*." *Ibid.*, p. 13.

And for consciousness: "La conscience est conscience *de* quelque chose: cela signifie que la transcendence est structure constitutive de la conscience; c'est-i-dire que la conscience nait portee sur un etre qui n'est pas elle". *Ibid.*, p. 29.

And: "En tant, done, que le connu ne peut se resoudre dans la connaissance, il faut lui reconnaitre un etre. Cet etre, nous dit-on, c'est le *percipi*". *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, in *Jahrbuch fur Philosophie und phanomenologische Forschung*, Band VIII, Halle, 1927, pp. 53-54.

²² *L'etre et Neant*, p. 39.

²³ *L'etre et Neant*, p. 40.

²⁴ *L'etre et Neant*, p. 47.

²⁵ St. Augustine, Ep. 11 ad Zenobium, PL. 33, 63.

²⁶ St. Augustine, *De Moribus Manichaeorum*, 11, vi, 8, PL. 32, 1348.

great its excellence, is not truly being. " *Non est ibi verum esse, ubi est et non esse. Quidquid enim mutari potest, mutatum non est quod erat*"? Such things both are and are not—" *Numerum ergo dierum meorum qui est: non istum qui non est, et quod difficilior et periculosius perturbat, et est et non est: nec esse possumus dicere quod non stat, nec non esse quod venit et transit* " ²⁸ In all that changes, then, there is both being and non-being.

But to turn to Sartre once more. Both being and nothingness unite in the formation of every existent, separately they are but two abstractions. They do not, however, unite as thesis and antithesis in Hegel, for that presupposes a certain logical contemporaneity between being and non-being—and Sartre refuses it on the ground that they are not contraries but contradictories. As such, nothingness must come *after* being in order that it may deny it. They are not, then, on the same level, nor does being come from nothing. Being has a certain precedence and it is only in terms of it that nothingness can be examined—the latter is, so to speak, " on the surface of being ". ²⁹ Being, however, is not a background or a substratum for non-being. An object does not possess being and its existence is not a participation in being. The object *is* and its qualities *are*, and that is all—you cannot peer behind them to find being. An existent is simply a phenomenon, an organized collection of qualities and being is the condition for their revealing themselves—it is " *etre-pour-devoiler* ", not " *etre devoile* ". ³⁰ Being is simply that about an existent that makes it possible for it to reveal itself as a phenomenon, as non-being is that phase of it that makes it conceivable. For St. Augustine, on the contrary, it is the eternal that makes the temporal intelligible, it is being that redeems things from non-being. ³¹

But if a thing is conceivable through its non-being must we not logically conclude that it is because of a conscious-being, one able to conceive the existent, that non-being and nothingness come to things? Is it not because of being-for-itself, man, that non-being enters the world? Yes. Precisely that. Only being *is*, nothingness has only a borrowed being, an appearance of being. It is truer to say " *Nothing has been* " or " *It is made nothing* ", than to say " *Nothingness is* ". ³² Consequently, to have non-being there must be some kind of being able to support nothingness and bring it about. But for such a being to produce non-being it must have something of non-being about its own being. And an analysis of human conduct proves that that is precisely a character of human reality. To refer back to the asking of a question as an example of human conduct, we find that the possibility of a negative reply can only arise if men in some way are able to get out-

²⁷ St. Augustine, In Joan. Ev. XXXVIII, viii, 10, PL. 35, 1680.

²⁸ St. Augustine, Enn. in Ps. XXXVIII, 7, PL. 36, 419.

²⁹ L'etre et Neant, p. 52.

³⁰ L'etre et Neant, p. 15.

³¹ St. Augustine, De Moribus Manichaeorum, LL, vi, 8, PL. 32, 1348. Enarratio in Ps. CI, 25, PL 37, 1310-1311.

³² L'etre et Neant, p. 58.

aide the order of being and conceive in the thing questioned a certain phase of that thing which removes it from the necessary determinism of being. **For** to the extent that a being can only produce another being, then only an affirmative answer would be possible. And for a negative possibility the questioner must introduce into the thing the possibility of its escaping the positiveness of causal laws: he must introduce negativity and non-being into it. It is as a result of human conduct, then, that non-being arises in things—" *L'homme est Vetre 'par qui le neant vient au monde* ",³³

If, however, man is able to do that, he must himself be able to escape those positive causal laws in some way: he must be able to stand outside being as a whole and alter his relations to that whole. In producing that nothingness he must be able to isolate himself from being, and that is the very character of a *free being*. Nothingness, then, comes to things through human liberty. The fundamental mark, however, of human reality that makes it possible for man to bring nothingness into being through his liberty is the fact that his own being is marked by the presence within itself of nothingness—there is a cleavage at the very heart of the existence of human reality constituted by the nothingness that separates his present existence from the past that constitutes his essence.

A conscious being like man is constantly aware of himself in his present existence rendering his past nothing. He is ever conscious of his own liberty secreting a sort of nothingness whereby he may *be* by making his past nothing. It is true to say, in fact, that we can only be aware of the fact that we are, i.e. of our own existence, by being aware of that constant annihilation. It is by being aware of that annihilation that I know I *am*—I am conscious of it, I think and so I am. And it is precisely that awareness of his own liberty as a source of non-being that constitutes the anguish and anxiety essential to human existence. Anguish, in fact, is the very consciousness proper to liberty, it is the awareness of being free.³⁴ And the very existence of things about us contribute to that anxiety and uncertainty. All we can say about them is that they *are*, and that existence is a pure contingency—they are simply *there* present to us, and because of the non-being that constantly haunts their being there for us we cannot deduce them or anything about them. Their being is simply gratuitous and their appearance constitutes an absolute.³⁵ For being-in-itself is never either possible or impossible: it simply *is*. That is why it is spoken of as being "*de trop*"—it cannot be derived from anything else, be it another being, a possible being or a necessary law. It is uncreated, without any support from another being and eternally unnecessary.³⁶ And it is precisely as a result of our realizing that fact about them, as well as our own nothingness and constant annihilation, that we are constantly disturbed by existence. Actually existence might better be called change, and then we might say that it is by never-ending change that we are disturbed.

³³ *L'etre et Neant*, p. 60.

³⁴ *L'etre et Neant*, p. 66.

³⁵ *La Nausee*, p. 171.

³⁶ *L'etre et Neant*, p. 34.

St. Augustine was no less disturbed by that phenomenon of human life than is Sartre. "In adversity I desire prosperity", he tells us, "and in prosperity am I afraid of adversity: what middle place is there betwixt these two, where this life of man is free from trial? Woe is threatened unto the prosperities of this world again and again; both for the fear of adversity and corruption of joy. Woe unto the adversities of this world, again and again, yea woe the third time unto them; and that because of the great desire men have unto prosperity and because adversity is hard, and lest it break down endurance. Is not the life of men all trial on earth, and that without intermission?"⁸⁷ But for Augustine, even as being is the salvation of mutability, so is the eternal the hope of things temporal: "*Noli desperare, humana fragilitas. Ego sum, inquit, Deus Abraham, et Deus Isaac, et Deus Jacob* (Exod. 111, 13-15). *Audisti quid sim apud me, audi et quid sim propter te. Haec igitur aeternitas vocavit nos, et erupit ex aeternitate Verbum. Jam aeternitas, jam Verbum, et nondum tempos. Quomodo factum est et tempus? Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil* (Joan. 1, 3). *O Verbum ante tempora, per quod facta sunt tempora, natum et in tempore, cum sit vita aeterna, vocans temporales, faciens aeternos*".³⁸

To Sartre, on the contrary, it is vain and useless to imagine a necessary being to dispel that anxiety. A necessary being such as God is simply contradictory and, hence, an impossibility. In order to be a foundation for the world God would have to be all that is positive about being—He would have to be identical with Himself and hence, being-in-itself. But as a necessary being and the cause of Himself He would have to be aware of Himself and a being-for-itself without the nothingness that separates self from consciousness of self. He would have to be a being Who is not what He is and Who is What He is not.³⁹ In short, He would have to be a contradiction and could aid very little in the understanding of existence. "The existentialist", Sartre sadly admits, "thinks it very distressing that God does not exist".⁴⁰ There can be, then, no recourse for man to alleviate the desperate plight in which he finds himself. He is left alone in the world to face all the consequences of his own freedom.⁴¹ All existence is purely contingent and he must make the best of it. But an existence beset by contingency and bearing within its bosom both being and non-being is what is commonly called becoming or change. It is within becoming, then, that man finds himself, his whole existence is change and he is without any concrete being apart from becoming to which he might look for support. His can only be an existence of intense uncertainty and anxiety.

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It was fundamentally that anxiety and desperation which so perturbed Roquentin in writing his history. "La Nausee" is, in fact, an account of

37 St. Augustine, Confessions, X, xxviii, Vol. 2, pp. 148-149.

88 St. Augustine, Enarratio in Ps. CI, 25, PL 37, 1311.

so L'etre et Neant, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Existentialism, ed. Bernard Frechtman, New York, 1947, p. 26.

⁴¹ L'etr^et Neant, p. 708. Existentialism, p. 25.

that very disturbance. And with his whole attention directed towards the past, it was inevitable within Sartre's philosophical framework that the whole problem of existence should arise. For the past is, as we have seen, the very core of human existence, constituting as it does the very nothingness that makes for the cleavage within being-for-itself. The non-being of that past is demanded by the very nature of the present, it was demanded by Roquentin's own being in the present. For Antoine to be, de Rollebon must *have been* in order that he might think of him and thereby have the Marquis constitute, in his own thought, part of his own past. Not only must be Rollebon, then, not *be* but his own past must also constitute a non-entity for his present being. Sartre was not, then, simply exercising a literary prerogative in casting his young historian in such an absurd role. He was simply presenting in consistent fashion one instance of the absurdity that besets all human existence. Moreover, his whole conception of the past in its relation to the present is but a part of a greater whole, namely, his conception of existence as involving both being and non-being joined together in absolute contingency. It is a conception resulting, as we have noted, from a very definite philosophical method which has as its object an immediate reality constituted by man's subjective consciousness of his own conduct towards the world in which he finds himself. Roquentin's was an awareness of a historical figure in a past that no longer existed and whose existence in the present could only be in the present awareness and existence of an existent for whom that past acted as a necessary core. Hence, his statement, "I felt him like a gentle warmth in the pit of my stomach"—he might have added, in the heart of his existence.

For St. Augustine, however, it is not the nothingness of the past that dwells in the heart of existence, it is the being of an eternally present—"Whatsoever, begins to be, or leaves off to be, begins then and leaves off then, when in Thy eternal reason it is known that it ought to have begun or left off. This is Thy Word, which is also the beginning because also it speaks unto us. Thus, in the Gospel he speaketh through the flesh: and so much sounded outwardly in the ears of men, to that intent it might be believed and sotight for inwardly, and found in the eternal verity: where that good and only Master teaches all his disciples".⁴²

⁴² St. Augustine, Confessions, X I, 8, Vol. 2, pp. 226-227.

PROCEEDINGS OF **THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC
PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING, DECEMBER 29-30, 1947

MORNING SESSION, DECEMBER 29, 1947

The American Catholic Philosophical Association met at the Sheraton-Coronado Hotel, Saint Louis, Missouri, under the patronage of His Excellency, Most Reverend Joseph E. Ritter, Archbishop of Saint Louis, and the Catholic universities, the senior colleges and seminaries of the Saint Louis area, on Monday, December 29, 1947 at 10 A.M. The general subject of the meeting was "The Absolute and the Relative." The Reverend Doctor Stewart E. Dollard, S.J., Loyola University Graduate School, Chicago, Illinois, opened the discussion with a paper on "A General Survey of the Problem of the Absolute and the Relative". The Reverend Doctor Charles Denecke, S.J., from Woodstock College, Woodstock, Maryland, then concluded the morning session with a paper on "The Absolute and the Relative in the Metaphysical Order".

The following committees were appointed by the chair at this morning session:

Nominating committee:

Leo R. Ward
John J. Toohy
Raymond McCall

Auditing committee:

John Doyle
Sister Marina Sheu
Joseph Hogan

Resolutions committee:

Malachy R. Sullivan
Mark Mullin
Brother Benignus Gerrity

THE AFTERNOON SESSION, DECEMBER 29, 1947

The afternoon session met in three sections, each section being called at 2:30 P.M. The "Logic and Methodology" division was under the chairmanship of Rev. Francis X. Fitzgibbons, of St. Joseph's College for men, Brooklyn, New York, with Rev. Francis X. Meehan of St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Massachusetts, and Rev. Murel R. Vogel, S.J., of West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana, as panel members. Dr. Roman A. Kocourek from the College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, read a paper entitled "A Scholastic Evaluation of Symbolic Logic". The Rev. Tknothy J. O'Mahoney, S.J., also addressed the division on the subject "Aspects of the Philosophy of Whitehead". The "Psychology" section with the Rev. Martin J. Flynn of Immaculate Conception Seminary, Hunt-

ington, New York, the Rev. John W. Stafford, C.S.V., of Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., and the Rev. Ernest Kilzer, OSB., St. John's University, CoUegeville, Minnesota, as a directing panel discussed the papers by Rev. Christian Bonnet, speaking on the subject "Initium Philosophandi", and that of Prof. Raymond J. McCall, St. John's University, Brooklyn, New York, on "Sensus Communis and Visual Perception". The "Philosophy of Law and Government" division, directed by a panel consisting of Dr. Miriam Theresa Rooney, Tudor Hall, Washington, D. C., Rev. William Obering, S J., of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Rev. Paul Kennedy, SJ., of West Baden Springs College, West Baden, Ind., heard a paper by Rev. Robert W. Mulligan speaking on "Hans Kelsen and the Problem of Relativism in the Law". Dr. Obering read a comment on the paper. Dr. John F. Calahan of Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., also spoke on "The Tradition of Realism in the *Philosophia Perennm*."

THE DINNER SESSION

The annual dinner was held at 7:00 P.M. in the Club Caprice Room of Hotel Sheraton-Coronado, Professor Vernon J. Bourke, Vice-President, presiding. His Excellency, the Most Reverend Joseph E. Ritter, Archbishop of Saint Louis, extended greetings of welcome from the archdiocese to the members. The Annual Association Address on the subject "A New Opportunity for Catholic Philosophy" was presented by the Rev. Paul C. Reinert, S.J., Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, St. Louis University. The Rev. Dr. Joaquin F. Garcia, C.M., of St. John's University, Brooklyn, New York, had for the subject of his Presidential Address "The Natural Law".

MORNING SESSION, DECEMBER 30

The morning session, December 30, convened at 9:30 A.M. This session heard papers of Rev. Dr. Francis X. Meehan, St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Massachusetts, on "The Absolute and the Relative in the Moral Order" and of Professor James Collins, St. Louis University, on "The Absolute and the Relative in Modern Philosophy".

GENERAL BUSINESS SESSION—12: 15 P.M., DECEMBER 30

The general business session of the Association was held in Club Caprice Room of the Sheraton-Coronado Hotel. In the absence of the Treasurer, Dr. Joseph B. McAllister, the report of the Treasurer was read by the Secretary. The report of the Auditing Committee approving the financial report of the Treasurer was read by the committee chairman, Monsignor John Doyle, (This report of the Treasurer is published in the *Proceedings* under heading "Report of the Treasurer".)

The Chair announced the following committees to have charge of the Round Table Discussions in the various divisions of philosophy at the next meeting of the Association at Hotel Somerset, Boston, Massachusetts, April 19 and 20, 1949.

Philosophy of Education—Francis X. Meehan, 1 year (chairman); Mufel Vogel, 2 years; Roman Kocourek, 3 years.

Ethics and Philosophy of Society—Alfred Horrigan, 1 year (chairman); Thomas Devitt, 2 years; Bernard Mullahy, 3 years.

Psychology—John W. Stafford, 1 year (chairman); Raymond McCall, 2 years; James Van der Velte, 3 years.

Metaphysics—Thomas G. O'Mahoney, 1 year (chairman); Elizabeth Salmon, 2 years; Carl Grindel, 3 years.

Philosophy of Science—Remy Bellperche, 1 year (chairman); Mark Mullins, 2 years; Charles Mahony, 3 years.

History of Philosophy—James Collins, 1 year (chairman); Lawrence Lynch, 2 years; Brother Benignus Gerrity, 3 years.

The Chair announced the Committee on Research: Charles McFadden, 1 year; R. J. Henle, 2 years; Daniel O'Grady, 3 years.

The Committee on Resolutions, through its chairman, Rev. Malachy R. Sullivan, O.S.B., made its report. (This report is published in the *Proceedings* under the heading "Committee on Resolutions".) The Committee on Research received one manuscript during the year, but as it was a doctoral dissertation it was not considered for publication.

The Secretary's report for the year 1947 was read by Secretary Hart and accepted as approved by the membership. (The report of the Secretary is published in these *Proceedings* under the heading "Report of the Secretary".)

The special Committee on Publications to review the status of the publications of the Association, which had been appointed at the previous meeting, made an oral report through the Chairman, Dr. Vernon J. Bourke of St. Louis University (the Rev. Gerard Smith, S.J., of Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the Rev. William Kane, O.P., of River Forest, Illinois, being the other members of the committee). This committee also had previously made its report to the Executive Council. (A summary of this report is given under the heading "Meeting of the Executive Council".) After extensive discussion on the report, Dr. Elizabeth Salmon made a motion, seconded by Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Phelan, to suppress the publication of *New Scholasticism* temporarily. After a lengthy discussion on this motion the membership voted 36 to 31 to revoke the motion. A committee, appointed by the chair, consisting of Dr. Vernon J. Bourke, Rev. Joaquin Garcia, atad Prof. Louis J. A. Mercier of Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., was authorized to consider the matter of the Editorship of the Association's journal *New Scholasticism* for a term of three years. A motion of Rev. Martin Flynn authorizing the Committee on Publications to consider the advisability of suppression of publication of *New Scholasticism* was defeated.

Chairman Leo R. Ward of the Nominating Committee reported the following nominations for officers for the coming year.

For President—Dr. Vernon J. Bourke
For Vice-President—Rev. Ernest Kilzer
For Secretary—Rev. Charles A. Hart
For Treasurer—Rev. Joseph B. McAllister

f James A. McWilliams

For Executive Council (3 years)—

Upon vote of the membership, the Secretary was instructed to cast an unanimous ballot for the nominees as offered by the Committee, the nominees thereupon to be considered duly elected. The Chair named a Committee to escort the new president to the chair. Dr. Bourke made a brief address thanking the Association members for the honor conferred upon him, and pledging his support to the work of the Association.

AFTERNOON SESSION—DECEMBER 30

The last afternoon session met in three divisions, each being called at 2:30 P.M. The "Ethics and Philosophy of Society" division heard a discussion on "Relativistic Ethics and Natural Rights" led by Rev. Paul V. Kennedy, West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana; on "Relativism in Prudential Judgment" by Marianne Childress; and on "Practical Knowledge and Relativity" by Rev. Bernard Mullahy, C.S.C., Moreau Seminary, Notre Dame, Indiana. Sister M. Annice Donovan, C.S.C., St. Mary's College of Notre Dame, Holy Cross, Indiana; Rev. Alfred F. Horrigan of Louisville, Kentucky; and Rev. Thomas E. Davitt, S.J., St. Louis University, were panel members. The "Metaphysics" division considered the papers of Prof. Daniel C. O'Grady, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, on "Primordial Particles and Hylomorphism", and that of Rev. William T. Powers, De Paul University, on "Biology and the Scholastic Doctrine of Substance", with Rev. Alexander Schorsch of De Paul University, Chicago, Charles Willis, and Dr. Elizabeth G. Salmon as panel. The "History of Philosophy" division was addressed by Mother Marie Louise Martinez of Maryville College, St. Louis, Missouri, on "The Historical Relativism of Ortega y Gasset", and by Dr. Lawrence E. Lynch of St. Michael's College, Toronto, Canada, on "Historical Prospective? on Being and Becoming". The chairmen for this division was Dr. James Collins. All divisions adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

CHARLES A. HART,
Secretary

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

The Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the American Catholic Philosophical Association was held at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Canada, December 28 and 29, 1946 under the patronage of His Eminence, James Cardinal McGuigan, Archbishop of Toronto, and the Catholic Senior Colleges and Seminaries of the Toronto area. The *Proceedings* of this meeting were published in Volume XXI entitled *Proceedings of The American Catholic Philosophical Association* and were distributed to all members in April of 1947.

The membership of the Association as of December 30, 1947 was as follows:

Life	17
Constituent	285
Associate	141
Student	46
Institutional	84

The *New Scholasticism* was published in quarterly numbers during the past year as volume twenty-one. The distribution was as follows:

Members of the Association	573
Subscribers of <i>New Scholasticism</i>	231
Exchanges	46
Complimentary	12

The Association acknowledges free facilities, file and office space as well as free use of office equipment from the Catholic University of America.

In accordance with the direction of the Executive Council at its Toronto Meeting the Secretary sent post-card ballots to the members to ascertain the mind of the membership on the request of a group of members addressed to the Council that the annual meetings be changed to Tuesday and Wednesday of Easter week. The ballot provided for a vote on the retaining of the present time, a change to Easter week, and a change to some other time to be suggested by the voter. The vote was 135 for Easter week; 69 for retaining the present time; 15 for various other times. The Secretary reported the vote to President Garcia. The President then had the Executive Council take a vote by mail of formal approval of the decision of the voting membership, and also requested the Council to decide whether the Twenty-third Annual Meeting should be in Easter week of 1948 or 1949. The Council voted unanimously to give formal approval to the change of annual meetings to Easter Tuesday and Wednesday of each year. It voted 7 to 1 to hold the Twenty-third Annual Meeting for Easter Tuesday and Wednesday (April 19 and 20) of 1949, it being the view of the Council that an Easter week 1948 was too close to the December 29 and 30, 1947 meeting to give sufficient time for arranging the next annual meeting. In view of this decision, the Secretary urges all local conferences to hold several local meetings during 1948 as no national meeting will be held during this year. Indeed it is most desirable at all times that the local conferences be more active, and that the memberships in the region of cities such as Toronto, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and elsewhere form such local conferences if our Association is to be truly effective. The Secretary requests that he be informed of names of officers elected at local conference meetings, together with data on proposed meetings, for publication in *New Scholasticism*. The Secretary will also be glad to have any other news of interest to the membership for publication in his column, "From the Secretary's Desk".

As noted in the July issue of *New Scholasticism*, the Secretary received an invitation from President Kruse of the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, for the membership of our Association to attend the Second Annual Inter-American Congress of Philosophy at Columbia University, December 28-31, 1947. President Garcia contacted President

Kruse with a view to the active participation of our Association in the Congress, but was informed that the Congress program had been completed. The Secretary calls attention of the membership to the resuming of the International Congresses of Philosophy, the Tenth Congress to be convened in Amsterdam between August 15 and September 15, 1948. It is hoped a good representation of our Association members will be in attendance. The Secretary also received an invitation from Professor Raymond Bayer of the Faculty of Letters, Sorbonne, and Administrator of the International Institute of Philosophy inviting the Association's affiliation with and active support of an International Federation of Philosophical Associations throughout the world. Professor Bayer asks consideration of the question at our Annual Meeting.

The Secretary calls to the attention of the members the proposed reprint of the Parma Edition of the *Opera Omnia* of St. Thomas by the Musurgia Co., 4 E. 41st St., New York 17, N. Y., in twenty-five volumes, a volume to be published each month, and payable in monthly installments at \$15.00 per volume—the total price to be \$375.00 if subscribed for in advance of publication. The Secretary urges members to subscribe or secure subscriptions for this worthy project. He will be glad to accept subscriptions and forward the same to the Musurgia Company.

Dr. Charles DeKoninck of Laval University informed the Secretary that the Society for Thomistic Philosophy at Nymagen, Holland, projects a meeting for all Thomistic and Allied Societies on the occasion of the Tenth Annual International Congress of Philosophy in Amsterdam during August, 1948. The Association should appoint a Committee to cooperate with the Committee on the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy at Amsterdam between August 15 and September 15, 1948.

CHARLES A. HART,
Secretary

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

There was one regular meeting of the Executive Council during the past year, held at the Sheraton-Coronado Hotel, December 29, 1947 at 12:35 P.M. Present were Doctors Garcia, Hart, Meehan, Richard Thompson, John B. Kelly, and Vernon Bourke. Doctors O'Neil and McAllister had written asking to be excused. Applications for membership during 1947 as listed by the Secretary were formally approved by the Council as follows: Constituent and Associate—71, Institutional—29, Student—28, and Life—1.

The Council voted unanimously to accept the invitation of His Excellency, Archbishop Cushing of Boston, the Boston area colleges and seminaries, and the Boston Chamber of Commerce to hold its Twenty-third Annual Meeting at Boston, Easter Tuesday and Wednesday, April 19 and 20, 1949 at the Somerset Hotel. #

After considering various subjects proposed to the Council as to the general subject for the Twenty-third Annual Meeting the Council voted to accept the theme suggested by Dr. Vernon Bourke, *Philosophy and Finality*.

The Secretary informed the Council of a number of requests for sectional programs in the fields of philosophy of education and philosophy of science at the annual meeting. The Council was of the opinion that more than the present six sectional meetings would be inadvisable from the standpoint of difficulty of securing enough separate meeting places and of dividing the assembly into very small sections. The Council, however, felt that the fields mentioned should be covered and therefore voted that philosophy of education should hereafter be given in alternate years with the section on logic and methodology, and that the philosophy of science should similarly alternate with the philosophy of law and government, with philosophy of education and philosophy of science being inaugurated at the next annual meeting.

The Secretary informed the Council of a letter from the Treasurer stating that the very great increase in the costs of printing over the past three years, especially the printing of *New Scholasticism*, the cost of which had increased by more than eight hundred dollars (\$800.00) since 1944, would result in a deficit as of December 1, 1947 of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00). This would be met by a withdrawal of a sum in that amount from the assets of the Association. He asked the Council to consider ways and means of overcoming this deficit. The Council voted to accept the proposal of the Secretary that each member be assessed two dollars (\$2.00) for his copy of the *Proceedings* of the Twenty-second Annual Meeting. The Secretary noted that the Constitution provided only for the distribution of the quarterly journal of the Association to all members. When times were normal it was customary also to send copies of the *Proceedings* without extra charge, as well as any monographs. That would now be impossible in view of rising costs.

Dr. Vernon Bourke filed with the Council two proposed Amendments to the Constitution as follows:

1. Amendment on *individual dues*—change article on individual dues from \$5.00 to \$7.00.

2. Amendment on distribution of publication—change this article to read: Copies of the official journal of the Association, *New Scholasticism*, shall be distributed to all members to read: The quarterly review of philosophy, *New Scholasticism*, and the *Annual Proceedings* will be distributed free to all members.

The Secretary was directed to send a notice of the proposed amendments one month before the next annual meeting for action at that meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Dr. Bourke, Chairman of the Committee on Publications, made a report of a survey of the last ten volumes of *New Scholasticism*. The Committee urged the securing of a higher type of article, urging that a plea be made to the general membership for more active cooperation in this regard. The Secretary pointed out that our publications can only be as good as the members wish to make it by contributing worth-while papers. The Committee urged much more careful editing. It noted the decline in the number and importance of book reviews and number of reviewers assigned, the reviewers frequently being from the vicinity of Washington. The report commended the inauguration of the news feature, "From the Secretary's

Desk," by the Secretary as serving a useful purpose. It commended the editing of the volumes of the *Proceedings*, considering them as a creditable activity of the Association.

The Council voted to make the term of Editor in Chief of *New Scholasticism* a definite one of three years, by appointment of the Council. It voted to extend a vote of thanks to Dr. Ignatius Smith for his ten years activity as Editor under most trying conditions and instructed the President to tender Dr. Smith the title of Editor Emeritus. The Council continued the Committee on Publications with the appointment of Dr. Bourke as Chairman, the other members being Dr. Garcia of St. John's University, Brooklyn, and Professor Louis J. A. Mercier, Dunbarton College, Washington, D. C. The Council adjourned at 2:40 P.M.

CHARLES A. HART,
Secretary of the Council

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

Whereas the recent and continued inability of the leaders of the nations of the world to reach agreement on sound measures for world peace,

and *Whereas* the lamentable lack of community of thought on the natural rights of individual men and on the obligations of governing bodies to protect those rights,

and *Whereas* prevalent corrupted notions of moral goods and moral ends, resulting in a purposeful neglect of adequate consideration of man's ultimate end, are due primarily to the spirit of secularism which obtains among individuals and in society today, making it impossible for even men of good will to find any solid basis of agreement in regard to the primary laws of justice and human brotherhood upon which any sound and effective measures for peace must be founded,

and *Whereas* our Holy Father, Pius the XII, and our Bishops have called attention to the imperative need of Catholic principles in modern life,

and *Whereas* the American Catholic Philosophical Association recognizes that only the widespread knowledge of the fundamental laws of human nature, relations and conduct, as those laws are discoverable by human reason, can combat this spirit of secularism and replace it with agreement of all reasonable men on primary moral principles,

Be it resolved that the members of the American Catholic Philosophical Association provoke a consciousness of the immediate necessity of fostering a more general acceptance of the concept of the natural law through the classroom, platform, radio, printed word, and other means of communication at their disposal.

Be it further resolved that these same members seek out means to lead the more influential members of their communities, such as educators, political leaders, lawyers and men of other professions, to an understanding of the concept of the natural law, so that this concept, so fertile for good in the past, may again become a vital force in human society.

Whereas since our last convention the Most Reverend James H. Ryan, S.T.JD., Archbishop of Omaha, a most active leader in the founding of our Association, its first Secretary and third President, the first Editor of our official journal, *New Scholasticism*, has been called to his eternal reward,

Be it resolved that this Association at its Twenty-second Annual Meeting express its profound bereavement in the great loss which his passing means to this Association, which through the years of its existence has profited so much from his wise direction and counsel, and that the Association also express its deep regret at this loss to the cause of Neo-Scholastic Philosophy in America and throughout the world.

Whereas the American Catholic Philosophical Association has experienced the cordial hospitality of the City and Archdiocese of St. Louis,

Be it resolved that the American Catholic Philosophical Association extend its gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency, Most Rev. Joseph E. Ritter, Archbishop of St. Louis, for his gracious patronage and to the following institutions in that area: Fontbonne, Kenrick, LeClerc, Maryville, Passionist Seminary, Quincy, St. Henry's, St. John Cantius, St. Joseph's, St. Louis University, Webster, for their generous hospitality and untiring efforts in support of this annual meeting of the Association.

Be it further resolved that the Association place on record a formal expression of gratitude to its Officers, especially Dr. Joaquin F. Garcia, President of the Association; to Reverend James A. McWilliams, SJ., the Chairman of the local committee on attendance; to the local newspapers and radio stations for publicising the details of the meeting; and to the management and staff of the Sheraton Hotel for their courtesy and efficient service; and *be it resolved* that a copy of these resolutions be sent to the persons above named and to appropriate representatives of the above mentioned groups and institutions.

Committee on resolutions.

BROTHER BBNIGNUS GERRITY, FJ3.C.

REV. MARK J. MUIXIN, CM.

MALACHY SULLIVAN, O.SJ3.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR DECEMBER 1, 1946-
NOVEMBER 30, 1947

RECEIPTS

Balance (Second National Bank of Washington) November 30, 1946.	\$ 998.33
Membership dues in the Association.	2116.42
Subscriptions to New Scholasticism.	561.13
Sales of New Scholasticism.	223.74
Sales of Studies.	201.86
Sales of Proceedings.	150.25
Miscellaneous.	175.34
Withdrawn from savings to cover running expenses . . .	1000.00
Total receipts.	\$5427.07

EXPENDITURES

Printing—New Scholasticism.	\$1781.10
Proceedings.	1071.97
Studies (Vol. II) McWilliams, Physics and Philosophy.	364.22
Miscellaneous.	114.31
Typing services for New Scholasticism.	428.00
Clerical services and office supplies for the Association	710.03
Miscellaneous, postage.	165.85
Total expenditures.	\$4635.48
Balance on hand (Second National Bank of Wash- ington).	\$ 791.59

TOTAL ASSETS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Investments—

Deposits:

First Federal Savings and Loan Association, Washington, D. C.	\$3638.75
District Building and Loan Association, Washington, D. C.	5000.00
Five \$500.00 United States Government Bonds (Series G) ..	2500.00
Balance on hand.	791.59
	\$1193034

Respectfully submitted,

JOSEPH B. MCALLISTER, *Treasurer*

LIST OF MEMBERS

(To December 31, 1947)

LIFE MEMBERS

Dillon, Rt. Rev. William T., 253 Clinton Avenue, Brooklyn, New York
Hart, Rev. Charles A., Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.
Hoff, Very Rev. Norbert C, 1150 Caledonia St., Butte, Montana
Lilly, Mr. Joseph T., 50 Plaza St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
McGavick, Most Rev. Alexander J., 1419 Cass Ave., LaCrosse, Wis.
McNeill, Dr. Harry, 125 E. 26th St., New York 10, N. Y.
McNicholas, Most Rev. John T., 5870 Belmont Ave., College Hill, Cincinnati 24, Ohio
Molloy, Most Rev. Thomas E., 241 Clinton Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Murray, Most Rev. John G., 244 Dayton Ave., St. Paul 2, Minn.
O'Connor, Most Rev. William P., 1201 Hughitt Ave., Superior, Wis.
Shaughnessy, Most Rev. Gerald, S.M., 907 Terry Ave., Seattle, Wash.
Smith, Very Rev. Ignatius, O.P., Catholic University, Washington 17, D. C.
Tracy, Rev. Joseph V., 321 Market St., Boston, Mass.
Trunz, Dr. Cecelia A., 245 Clinton Ave., Brooklyn 5, N. Y.
Wemple, Rev. L. A., St. Peter's Seminary, London, Ont., Canada.
Wolfe, Mr. Joseph, Catholic University, Washington 17, D. C.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS

Academy of the Sacred Heart, Kenwood, Albany, N. Y.
Albertus Magnus College, New Haven 11, Conn.
Alma College, Alma, California
Alvena College, Milwaukee 4, Wis.
Basselin Foundation, Catholic University, Washington 17, D. C.
Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass.
Caldwell College, Caldwell, N. J.
Canisius College, Buffalo, N. Y.
Cathedral College, 555 West End Ave., New York 24, N. Y.
Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.
Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa
College Misericordia, Dallas, Pa.
College of Chestnut Hill, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pa.
College of Mt. St. Vincent, Mt. St. Vincent on Hudson, New York 63, N. Y.
College of Notre Dame of Maryland, North Charles St., Baltimore 10, Md.
College of St. Albert the Great, 6172 Chabot Road, Oakland, Calif.
College of St. Elizabeth, Convent, N. J.
College of St. Francis, Joliet, Ill.
College of the Holy Cross, Worcester 3, Mass.
Commissariat of the Holy Land, Franciscan Monastery, Washington 17, D. C.
Creighton University, 25th and California Sts., Omaha 2, Nebraska
DePaul University, Chicago, Ill.
Dominican College, San Rafael, Calif.

Dominican House of Studies, Harlem and Division Sts., River Forest, 111.
 Dominican House of Studies, 487 Michigan Ave., N.J.E., Washington, D. C.
 Duns Scotus College, Detroit 19, Mich.
 D'Youville College, Porter and Prospect Avenues, Buffalo, N. Y.
 Fordham University, New York, N. Y.
 Georgian Court College, Lakewood, N. J.
 Good Counsel College, White Plains, N. Y.
 Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles 27, Calif.
 Iona College, New Rochelle, N. Y.
 Jesuit Seminary, 403 Wellington W., Toronto 2B, Ont., Canada
 John Carroll University, University Heights, Cleveland 18, Ohio.
 Kenrick Seminary, 7800 Kenrick Road, St. Louis 19, Mo.
 Loras College, 14th and Alta Vista Streets, Dubuque, Iowa
 Loyola University, Chicago 26, 111.
 Loyola University, Baltimore 10, Md.
 Loyola University, Los Angeles 45, Calif.
 Manhattan College, New York 63, N. Y.
 Manhattan College of the Sacred Heart, New York 27, N. Y.
 Maryknoll Seminary, Maryknoll, N. Y.
 Marymount College, Tarry town on the Hudson, N. Y.
 Mary wood College, Scranton, Pa.
 Mater Dolorosa Seminary, Hillside, 111.
 Mercyhurst College, Erie, Pa.
 Montezuma Seminary, P.O., Montezuma, New Mexico
 Mt. Carmel College, Niagara Falls, N. Y.
 Mt. St. Agnes College, Baltimore 9, Md.
 Mt. St. Mary's College, 12001 Chalon Road, Los Angeles 24, Calif.
 Mt. St. Mary's College, Emmitsburgh, Md.
 Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, Seminary Square, Norwood, Ohio
 Mt. St. Scholastica College, Atchison, Kansas
 Mt. St. Vincent College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
 Nazareth College, 402 Augustine St., Rochester 10, N. Y.
 Nazareth College and Academy, Nazareth, Ky.
 Niagara University, Niagara University Postoffice, New York
 Notre Dame College of Staten Island, Grymes Hill, Staten Island, N. Y.
 Notre Dame Seminary, 2901 S. Carroll ton Ave., New Orleans 18, La.
 Our Lady of the Elms College, Chicopee, Mass.
 Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind.
 Pontifical College Josephinum, Worthington, Ohio
 Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto 5, Canada
 Redemptorist House of Studies, Esopus (Ulster Co.), N. Y.
 Regis College, Weston 93, Mass.
 Riggs Memorial Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.
 Rivier College, 429 Main St., Nashua, N. H.
 Rosary College, River Forest, 111.
 Rosemont College of the Holy Child, Rosemont, Pa.
 St. Alphonsus Seminary, Woodstock, Ontario, Canada

St. Anthony's House of Studies, Butler, N. J.
 St. Augustine's Seminary, Kingston Road, Toronto, Ont, Canada
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 St. Cyril and Methodius Seminary, Orchard Lake, Mich.
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 St. John's University, 75 Lewis Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.
 St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia 31, Pa.
 St. Joseph's College for Women, 245 Clinton Ave., Brooklyn 5, N. Y.
 St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, Yonkers 4, N. Y.
 St. Mary's College, St. Mary, Ky.
 St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.
 St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind.
 St. Mary's College, St. Mary, Ky.
 St. Mary's Seminary, North Paca St., Baltimore, Md.
 St. Mary's Seminary, 1227 Ansel Road, Cleveland 8, Ohio
 St. Meinrad's Abbey, St. Meinrad, Ind.
 St. Michael's College, Winooski Park, Vt.
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 St. Thomas College, Cleveland and Selby Avenues, St. Paul, Minn.
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 Seton Hall College, South Orange, N. J.
 Set on Hill College, Greensburg, Pa.
 Siena Heights College, Adrian, Mich.
 Teachers College of the Athenaeum of Ohio, 28 Calhoun St., Cincinnati,
 Ohio
 Trinity College, Washington 17, D. C.
 University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio
 University of Detroit, Detroit, Mich.
 University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.
 Ursuline College, 3105 Lexington Ave., Louisville 6, Ky.
 Ursuline College, 2635 State St., New Orleans 15, La.
 West Baden College, West Baden, Ind.
 Xavier University, Evanston Station, Cincinnati 7, Ohio
 Xavier University, Washington Ave. and Pine St., New Orleans, La.

CONSTITUENT MEMBERS

Adler, Dr. Mortimer, 227 E. Delaware Place, Chicago 11, 111.
 Anderson, Dr. James F., 820 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, III.
 Ankrah, Rev. Aflah-Cofie, P.O. Box 23, ACCRA, Gold Coast, West Africa
 Antes, Miss Ruth, 5457 Hirsch Street, Chicago, 111.
 Arden, Mr. Richard E., 217 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

- Baisnee, Rev. Jules A., S.S., 401 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington 17, D. C.
 Baker, Mr. Richard R., 720 Homewood Avenue, Dayton, Ohio
 Bamhardt, Rev. Hyacinth, OJF.M., Siena College, Loudonville, N. Y.
 Bassich, Rev. Joseph, S J., 6363 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans 15, La.
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 Bittle, Rev. Celestine, O J.M., Cap., 1004 N. 10th St., Milwaukee, Wis.
 Bogdanski, Rev. Augustine, P.S.M., 5424 W. Blue Mound Road, Milwaukee 13, Wis.
 Bohner, Rev. Philotheus, O.F.M., St. Bonaventure College, St. Bonaventure, N. Y.
 Bourke, Dr. Vernon, University City 5, Mo.
 Brady, Miss Mary L., 254 W. 71st St., New York 23, N. Y.
 Brennan, Rev. Eustace, Veterans' Administration, Wood, Wis.
 Brennan, Rev. Robert E., 831 Avenue Rockland, Outremont, P. Q., Canada
 Brighton, Professor Edgar S., Box 35, Newton Center 59, Mass.
 Bryde, Thomas, 119 95th Ave., Richmond Hill, N. Y.
 Buckley, Rev. George M., M.M., Maryknoll Seminary, Maryknoll, N. Y.
 Buckley, Rev. Joseph W., S.M., 2901 S. Carrollton Ave., New Orleans 1, La.
 Burbach, Rev. M., O.S.B., Conception Seminary, Conception, Mo.
 Burke, Very Rev. D. M., (O. Praem.), St. Norbert College, West de Pere, Wis.
 Burns, Rev. John V., C M., St. John's University, 75 Lewis Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Burns, Rev. Malachy, O.S.B., St. Joseph's Abbey, St. Benedict, La.
 Byrne, Dr. Martin J., 416 Valley Road, W. Orange, N. J.
 Byles, Mr. W. Esdaile, 574 West End Ave., New York, N. Y.
 Cain, Rev. T. M., O.P., Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, 111.
 Californie, Frere Robert, Academie Commerciale, Quebec, Canada
 Callahan, Very Rev. J. L., O.P., Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, 111.
 Callahan, Dr. John F., 700 E. Woodbine St., Chevy Chase 15, Md.
 Campbell, Very Rev. Bertrand J., 135 W. 31st St., New York 1, N. Y.
 Cangemi, Rev. Dominic, M.S.S.T., Box 30, Silver Spring, Md.
 Caponigri, Dr. A. Robert, Notre Dame University, Notre Dame, Ind.
 Casassa, Rev. Charles S., S.J., University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, Calif.
 Clark, Rev. Joseph T., S.J., 300 Newberry St., Boston, Mass.
 Clarke, Mr. Francis Palmer, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 4, Pa.
 Coffey, Rev. James F., Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, L. I., N. Y.
 Collins, Dr. James F., 4405 W. Pine Blvd., St. Louis 8, Mo.
 Collins, Rev. Russell, St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Mass.
 Collins, Rev. William B., Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa
 Connolly, Rev. F. G., St. Joseph's Seminary, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
 Connor, Major James Thomas, Jackson Barracks, New Orleans, La.

Cooper, Right Rev. John M., Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.

Cox, Rev. John F., Our Lady of Providence Seminary, Warwick Neck, R.I.

Craugh, Rev. Wilfrid, St. Bernard's Seminary, Rochester, N. Y.

Dallaire, Rev. Jean-Paul, S.J., 1855 Rachel E., Montreal 34, Canada

Dates, Rev. Ralph, S. J., Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md.

Davitt, Rev. Thomas E., S. J., St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.

Dearden, Rev. John F., S.T.D., 1227 Ansel Road, Cleveland 8, Ohio

Degelman, Rev. George, S.J., Rockhurst College, Kansas City, Mo.

DeGroat, Rev. James, Carroll College, Helena, Montana

Demjanovich, Rev. Charles C, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Ramsey P.O., N. J.

Denecke, Rev. Charles, S.J., Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md.

Dignan, Very Rev. P. J., 714 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles 15, Calif.

Dollard, Rev. Stewart E., S.J., 820 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

Donaghey, Rev. J. P., Incarnate Word College, San Antonio, Texas

Donohue, Dr. Francis J., University of Detroit, Detroit 21, Mich.

Donovan, Rev. Joseph P., C.M., Kenrick Seminary, Webster Groves, Mo.

Dore, Rev. Vincent, O.P., Providence College, Providence, R. I.

Dorzweiler, Rev. Edwin, St. Fidelis Monastery, Victoria, Kansas

Doyle, Rev. Charles I., S. J., 6525 Sheridan Road, Chicago, Ill.

Doyle, Rev. John J., Marian College, R.R. 17, Box 56, Indianapolis 44, Ind.

Drake, Mr. Henry L., Empire Life and Accident Ins. Co., Indianapolis, Ind.

Driscoll, Mr. John J., St. Charles Seminary, Overbrook, Philadelphia, Pa.

Druhman, Rev. Alvin W., C.P.P.S., 912 Market St., LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Dubray, Very Rev. Charles A., S.M., Marist College, Washington, D. C.

Dufault, Rev. Lucien, O.M.I., Oblate Fathers College, Natick, Mass.

Dufault, Rev. Wilfrid, A.A., Assumption College, Worcester, Mass.

Duggan, Mr. Joseph C, 139 Mt. Pleasant St., New Bedford, Mass.

Dupuis, Rev. Albert, S.J., College du Sacre, Sudbury, Ont., Canada

Duzy, Brother E. Stanislaus, F.S.C., LaSalle College, Philadelphia, Pa.

England, Mr. Edward L., 741 S. Scoville Ave., Oak Park, Ill.

Eschmann, Rev. I. Th., O.P., Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada'

Esser, Rev. Gerard, S.V.D., St. Mary's Mission House, Techny, Ill.

Fitzgibbon, Rev. Francis X., St. Joseph's College for Women, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Flynn, Rev. Martin, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, N. Y.

Foley, Rev. Charles J., S.J., Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.

Foley, Rev. Leo, S.M., Marist College, Harewood Road, N.E., Washington 17, D. C.

Friel, Rev. C. Q., O.P., Providence College, Providence 8, R. I.

Friedel, Rev. Francis J., S.M., Trinity College, Sioux City, Iowa

Franz, Rev. Edward, Gannon College, Erie, Pa.

Fritz, Rev. Henry, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio

Gabel, Rev. Richard J., 36 Melmore St., Tiffin, Ohio

Gagne, Rev. Herne, University Laval, Canada

Gallagher, Dr. D. A., Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Gallagher, Mrs. Idella Smith, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.

Gallik, Rev. George A., College of St. Scholastica, Duluth 4, Minn.

Gareia, Rev. J. F., St. John's University, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Garvey, Rev. Edwin C, OSB., Assumption College, Sandwich, Ontario, Canada

Gasson, Rev. John, S.J., Spring Hill College, Spring Hill, Mobile, Alabama

Geisser, Rev. Eugene J., 5222 Hooper Ave., Los Angeles 11, Cal.

Gibson, Mr. Jerome, 336 Richmond Ave., Dayton 6, Ohio

Giguere, Rev. Raymond M., Institute of Medieval Studies, Outremont, Montreal, Canada

Ginsburg, Rev. Norbert D., CJ3.V., **6219** Sheridan Road, Chicago, 111.

Glose, Rev. Joseph, SJ., Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md.

Golata, Rev. Walter, S.M., Maryhurst Normal, Kirkwood 22, Mo.

Gorman, Rev. Charles F., 1130 S. 52nd St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Gorman, Mr. Frank A., 47 Harvard St., Newtonville, Mass.

Graham, Rev. James, 3169 S. Superior St., Milwaukee, Wis.

Grajewski, Rev. Maurice J., St. Francis Monastery and College, Burlington, Wis.

Grindel, Rev. Carl W., C.M., St. John's University, 75 Lewis Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Gurian, Dr. Waldemar, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.

Gustafson, Rev. G. J., S.S., St. Edward's Seminary, Kenmore, Washington

Hamel, Rev. Edmund J., SJS.C, St. Michael's College, Winooski Park, Vt.

Hammond, Dr. Francis M., Seton Hall College, South Orange, N. J.

Hanrahan, Rev. Edward, S.J., Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md.

Harrington, Rev. Edward T., Regis College, Weston 93, Mass.

Hartman, Rev. Sylvester, C.P.P.S., Joseph's College, Collegeville, **Ind.**

Hebert, Rev. Thomas, a.a., Assumption College, Worcester 6, Mass.

Heidenreich, Rev. Thomas Aquinas, O.F.M. Cap., Capuchin Monastery, Garrison, N. Y.

Heiman, Rev. A. J., C.P.P.S., St. Michael's College, Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada

Heiser, Rev. Basil, O.M.Conv., S.T.D., Our Lady of Carey Seminary, Carey, Ohio

Henle, Rev. Robert J., S. J., St. Louis University, St. Louis 3, Mo.

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Herscher, Rev. Irenaeus, O.F.M., St. Bona venture College, St. Bona venture, N. Y.

Hertel, Mr. Francois, 822 Sherbrooke St., Montreal, Canada

Hilton, Rev. Robert C, St. James Rectory, 161 Federal St., Salem, Mass.

Hoban, Rev. James H., Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, Norwood, Ohio

Hoeger, Very Rev. Frederick T., Holy Ghost Missionary College, Cornwells Heights, Pa.

Hogan, Rev. James H., Mt St. Mary Seminary, Norwood 12, Ohio

Holioran, Rev. Patrick, SJ., St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.

Horrigan, Rev. Alfred F., 443 S. 5th St., Louisville 2, Ky.

Huetter, Rev. Norbert J., SJ., Loyola University, 6525 Sheridan Ave., Chicago, **111.**

Hug, Rev. Pacific, CFJVf., 1881 College Ave., Quincy, 111.
 Hughes, Mr. Vincent A., Mt. St. Mary College, Hooksett, N. H.
 Jankowski, Mr. Marchi G., 65 North Avenue, Rockland, Mass.
 Jasinski, Rev. Walery J., Seminary, Orchard Lake, Mich.
 Johnson, Mr. Alfred, 66 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.
 Johnston, Mr. Herbert, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Mich.
 Joubert, Rev. R. G., O.P., Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, 111.
 Kane, Rev. William H., O.P., Dominican House of Studies, River Forest,
 111.

Kelly, Rev. John M., St. Michael's College, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
 Kendzierski, Miss Lottie H., 1945 S. 30th St., Milwaukee, Wis.
 Kennedy, Rev. Paul V., S.J., West Baden College, West Baden Springs,
 Ind.

Kern, Rev. Cletus, C.PPJ3., St. Joseph's College, Collegeville, Ind.
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 Kleinz, Rev. John, Pontifical College Josephinum, Worthington, Ohio
 Kocourek, Dr. R. A., 3401 17th Ave., S., Minneapolis, Minn.
 Kohl, Rev. Walter J., 905 Decatur Street, Watkins Glen, New York
 Kohls, Rev. Henry H., S. J., Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.
 Kramer, Dr. Grace A., 319 E. 25th Street, Baltimore, Md.
 Krzesinski, Rev. Dr. A. J., 184 E. 76th Street, New York, N. Y.
 Laroche, Rev. Gerard, M.S., LaSalette Missionary College, Box R, Milford,
 Iowa

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 Lucks, Rev. Henry A., C.PPJ3., St. Joseph's College, Collegeville, Ind.
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 Ontario, Canada

McAlister, Rev. Daniel, S.T.L., 1104 Fifth Ave., San Rafael, California
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McAvoy, Rev. Bernard L., CJS.C, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame,
 Ind.

MoCall, Dr. R. J., 123 South Bay Ave., Freeport, N. Y.

McCarthy, Rev. L. J., St. Paul's Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

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McDonald, Rev. William J., Catholic University of America, Washington,

i.e.

MacDonnell, Rev. Joseph F., S.J., Weston College, Weston, Mass.

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- McLaughlin, Rt. Rev. Lalor, St. Elizabeth's College, Convent Station, N. J.
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- McMorrow, Dr. George, Nazareth College, Kalamazoo, Michigan
- McNamee, Rev. Stephen F., SJ., 720 N. Calvert Street, Baltimore 2, Md.
- McSweeney, Rev. Alan, CP., Passionist Monastery, W. Springfield, Mass.
- McWilliams, Rev. James A., SJ., St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.
- Madden, Mr. Arthur G., Mt. St. Agnes College, Mt. Washington, Baltimore 9, Md.
- Madden, Dr. Marie R., 78 Eighth Ave., Brooklyn 15, N. Y.
- Maguire, Rev. James J., C.S.P., 5165 Second Blvd., Detroit 2, Mich.
- Mahoney, Rev. Charles J., 50 Chestnut St., Rochester, N. Y.
- Maksimik, Rev. A., St. Mary's College, Orchard Lake, Michigan
- Mallette, Rev. Francois, C.S.C., Oratoire Saint-Joseph, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- Malvey, Rev. J. B., O.P., Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, 111.
- Manning, Rev. William J., S.J., Fordham University, New York 58, N. Y.
- Marcotte, Rev. J. Normand, Cherry Meadows, Framingham Centre, Mass.
- Mark, Brother, St. Joseph's College Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- Markham, Rev. Daniel H., 454 Western Ave., Albany 3, N. Y.
- Marling, Rev. Joseph M., St. Charles' Seminary, Carthagen, Ohio
- Martin, Brother H., F.S.C., St. Mary's College, Winona, Minn.
- Martinelli, Rev. Lucien, S.S., 1000 Cremazie Blvd., East, Montreal 10, Quebec, Canada.
- Maziarz, Rev. Edward A., C.PPJ3., St. Joseph's College, Collegeville, Ind.
- Mehan, Rev. Francis X., St. John's Saminary, Brighton, Mass.
- Meyer, Rev. Gratian, O.F.M., 1798 Queen City Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio
- Middleton, Rev. John S., 460 Madison Ave., New York, N. Y.
- Miller, Rev. Francis, S. J., Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.
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- Minogue, Rev. Gerard, St. Joseph's College for Women, Brooklyn, N. Y.
- Morissette, Rev. Joseph T., O.M.I., Oblate Fathers' College, Natick, Mass.
- Mother M. Bernard Bonhomme, O.S.U., Ursuline College, New Orleans 15, Louisiana
- Mother Cora E. Brady, R.S.C.J., Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, W. 133rd St., New York 27, N. Y.
- Mother Gertrude V. Brady, R.S.C J., Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, W. 133rd St., New York 27, N. Y.
- Mother M. Burke, Barat College of the Sacred Heart, Lake Forrest, 111.
- Mother Elizabeth Farley, R.S.C.J., Manhattanville College of the Sacrfitt Heart, W. 133rd St., New York 27, N. Y.
- Mother Vera Rogers, R.S.C.J., Duchesne College of the Sacred Heart, Omaha, Neb.
- Mullahy, Rev. Bernard, C.S.C., Moreau Seminary, Notre Dame, Ind.

- Mulligan, Rev. Thomas C, S.B., St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park, Cal.
Murray, Rev. J. Clayton, S.J., Canisius College, Buffalo 8, N. Y.
Nash, Rev. Wilfrid J., Gannon College, 106 W. 6th St., Erie, Pa.
Nolan, Rev. Peter, S.J., University of Detroit, C. and F. Bldg., Detroit 21, Mich.
Norton, Rev. A. A., O.P., Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, 111.
Obering, Rev. William F., S.J., 609 W. Copper Ave., Albuquerque, N. M.
O'Brien, Rev. John A., S.J., Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass.
O'Brien, Rev. Marcus, Box 7967, Pittsburgh, Pa.
O'Donnell, Dr. Alan, 21 Elmgrove Ave., Providence 6, R. I.
O'Grady, Prof. Daniel, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.
O'Grady, Rev. Francis T., Scarboro Foreign Missions, Scarboro Bluffs, Ontario, Canada
O'Hara, John G., Manhattan College of the Sacred Heart, W. 133rd St., New York 27, N. Y.
O'Leary, Rev. Joseph M., C.P., 5700 N. Harlem, Chicago 31, 111.
O'Meara, Rev. Daniel C, S.M., 2901 8. Carrollton Ave., New Orleans, La.
O'Neill, Dr. Charles J., 4540 N. Bartlett Ave., Wilwaukee, Wis.
O'Neill, Miss Sara B., 1600 E. 156th St., Chicago 37, 111.
Osniach, Rev. Augustine, O.S.B., St. Martin's College, Lacey, Ore.
O'Toole, Rev. Christopher J., C.S.C., Provincial Offices, Notre Dame, Ind.
Pascal, Brother, O.S.F., 41 Butler Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Payzs, Mrs. Kato Kiszely, University of Detroit, Detroit 21, Mich.
Payzs, Dr. Tibor, University of Detroit, Detroit 21, Mich.
Pegis, Dr. Anton C, 312 Spadina Road, Toronto 10, Ontario, Canada
Peters, Rev. Sylvester P., Mt. Mary College, Milwaukee 13, Wis.
Petit, Rev. Gerard, C.S.C., Holy Cross College, Westmount, Montreal, Can.
Phelan, Dr. Gerald B., University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.
Pinfold, Rev. Andrew S., Scarboro Foreign Missions, Scarboro Bluffs, Ontario, Canada
Pollock, Prof. Robert C, Fordham University, New York 58, N. Y.
Powers, Mr. W. E., Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Overbrook, Philadelphia, Pa.
Raphael, Very Rev. Fr., S. A., Graymoor, Garrison, N. Y.
Reardon, Rev. John J., C.P., St. Gabriel's Monastery, 1592 Washington St., Brighton, Mass.
Regis, Rev. L. M., O.P., 831 Rockland Ave., Montreal 8, Canada
Renard, Rev. Henri, St. Louis University, St. Louis 3, Mo.
Richter, Rev. Joseph N., M.S.C., Sacred Heart Seminary, Shelby, Ohio
Robert, Rev. Patrick, 33, Rue de Talverne, Quebec, Canada
Rolbiecki, Rev. John J., Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.
Rooney, Dr. Miriam Theresa, Tudor Hall, Washington 1, D. C.
Russell, Rev. Robert P., St. Mary's Hall, Villanova, Pa.
Ryan, Rev. Edmund J., CJPP.S., St. Charles Seminary, Carthagen, Ohio
Salmon, Dr. Elizabeth G., 644 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y.
Sattler, Rev. Henry, C.S.S.P., Holy Redeemer College, Washington 17, D. C.
Schlitzer, Rev. Albert L., C.S.C., University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.

- Schnorr, Rev. Joseph A. M., 103 8. Seventh Ave., West Reading, Pa.
 Sehorsch, Rev. Alexander P., C.M., DePaul University, Chicago 8, 111.
 Schulien, Rev. Dr. John, 3257 S. Lake Drive, Milwaukee 7, Wis.
 Schumacher, Rev. Matthew, C.S.C., St. Mary's College, Holy Cross, Ind.
 Schwarz, Mr. Baldwin V., 446 Central Park West, New York 25, N. Y.
 Senerchia, Mr. H. W., 257 Parker St., Newark, N. J.
 Shay, Mr. Wendell, 1080 Warburton Ave., Yonkers 3, N. Y.
 Shea, Rev. George A., Our Lady of the Elms College, Springfield, Mass.
 Sheen, Rt. Itev. Fulton J., 4646 Hawthorne Lane, Washington, D. C.
 Sherlock, Dr. Joseph Russell, 2685 Briggs Ave., New York 58, N. Y.
 Sherrin, Rev. Francis L., S.J., Alma College, Alma, Calif.
 Shevenell, Rev. Raymond Henry, O.M.I., University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada
- Shircl, Rev. Cyril, O.F.M., St. Mary's Seminary, Lemont, 111.
 Sister Agnes Theresa McAuliffe, Nazareth College, Louisville, Ky.
 Sister Cyril Edwin Kinney, O.P., Muldoon High School, Rockford, 111.
 Sister Francis Augustine Richey, College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, N.J.
 Sister Jane Frances Leibell, Georgetown Visitation Convent, Washington 7, D. C.
 Sister Jean Marie Bonnett, College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minn.
 Sister Julia Marie, S.C., College of Mt. St. Joseph on the Ohio, Mt. St. Joseph, Ohio
 Sister M. Redempta, Marygrove College, Detroit 21, Mich.
 Sister M. Xaveria, Regis College, Weston, Mass.
 Sister Rita Marie Bushman, C.S.J., Fontbonne College, St. Louis 5, Mo.
 Sister Rose Emmanuella, College of the Holy Name, Oakland 12, Calif.
 Sister Mary Frances, Ursuline College, New Orleans 15, La.
 Sister M. Francisca, Loretta Motherhouse, Nerinx, Ky.
 Sister M. Frederick, Dunbarton College, Washington 8, D. C.
 Sister M. Gonzaga Udell, 1607 Robinson Rd., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich.
 Sister M. Jeanette, College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn.
 Sister Marie Jeannette, College of Mt. St. Vincent, New York 63, N. Y.
 Sister M. Jerome Smithers, 1607 Robinson Rd., S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich.
 Sister M. Jocelyn, O.P., Rosary College, River Forest, 111.
 Sister M. Julianne, Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wip.
 Sister Mary Angele, St. Xavier College, 4928 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, M.
 Sister M. Annice Donovan, St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind.
 Sister M. Basiline, Mundelein College, 6363 Sheridan Road, Chicago, 111.
 Sister Mary Camilla, St. Ann Convent, Melbourne, Ky.
 Sister Mary DePaul, Nasareth College, Nazareth, Mich.
 Sister M. Dominica, St. Xavier College, 4928 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, 111.
 Skinner, Rev. P. J., C.J.M., Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
 Slavin, Rev. Robert J., O.P., 487 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington 17, D. C.

- Sleva, Rev. Victor E., St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee 7, Wis.
Smith, Mr. Charles D., University of Detroit, Detroit 21, Mich.
Smith, Rev. Gerard, S J., Marquette University, Milwaukee 3, Wis.
Smith, Rev. Thurber M., S J., St. Louis University, St. Louis 3, Mo.
Smith, Dr. Vincent, Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.
Sparks, Very Rev. Timothy M., O.P., S.T.M., Convento S. Sabina (Aventino), Rome 147, Italy
Speltz, Rev. George H., 275 Harriet St., Winona, Minn.
Springmann, Rev. Louis A., O.P., St. Mary's Priory, 5 Hillhouse Ave., New Haven, Conn.
Stacey, Dr. Paul S., 111 Broadway, New York, N. Y.
Stafford, Rev. John W., C-S.V., Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.
Stakelum, Rev. J. W., C.M., St. John's Seminary, San Antonio 4, Texas
Sullivan, Rev. Malachy R., S.B., St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kansas
Supple, Rev. J. M., O.M.I., Box 708, Newburgh, N. Y.
Tallon, Mr. Hugh J., 1660 New York Ave., Brooklyn 10, N. Y.
Teran, Dr. Sisto, C. Alvarez 465, Tucuman, Republica Argentina
Thompson, Dr. Richard J., University of Detroit, Detroit, Mich.
Toohey, Rev. John J., S.J., Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.
Tyrrell, Rev. Francis M., Seminary of Immaculate Conception, Huntington, N. Y.
Vanier, Rev. Paul, S.J., College Jean-de-Brebeuf, Montreal 26, Canada
Viau, Rev. Roger, Precious Blood Rectory, 56 Cabot St., Holyoke, Mass.
Vogel, Rev. Murel R., S.J., West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Ind.
Vogt, Rev. Bernard, O.F.M., St. Anthony's Monastery, Butler, N. J.
Vollmer, Rev. Plazidus, O.S.A., Mt. St. Joseph College, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pa.
Ward, Rev. Leo R., C.S.C., University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind
Wellmuth, Rev. John J., S J., Xavier University, Evanston Station, Cincinnati, Ohio
Wien, Miss Clementine, 1833 N. 26th St., Milwaukee, Wis.
Wrocklage, Rev. Bernard, S.V.D., St. Mary's Seminary, Techny, 111.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Albers, Most Rev. Joseph H., 223 Seymour Ave., Lansing 15, Mich.
Becnel, Rev. Daniel, 908 East Boulevard, Baton Rouge, La.
Bergen, Most Rev. Gerald, 2000 Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa
Binz, Most Rev. Leo, 275 Harriet Street, Winona, Minn.
Boyle, Most Rev. Hugh C, 125 N. Craig St., Pittsburgh, Pa.
Brady, Most Rev. Matthew F., 151 Walnut Street, Manchester, N. H.
Breines, Rev. Andrew R., St. Rose Church, Brodhead, Wis.
Brown, Dr. Brendan F., Catholic University, Washington 17, D. C.
Browning, Mr. Donald C, 124 Bast Tenney Ave., Louisville 9, Ky.
Bruce, Mr. Frank, Jr., 540 N. Milwaukee St., Milwaukee, Wis.
Buddy, Most Rev. Charles F., 1528 4th Ave., San Diego, Calif.
Caillouet, Rev. Louis Abel, St. Joseph's Church, 423 Main St., Baton Rouge 8, La.

Cashin, Mr. John Lewis, 331 Lake Shore Road, Grosse Pointe Farms, Be-
troit 30, Mich.

Cassidy, Mr. Edward A., 850 pfewport Drive, Pittsburgh 16, Pa.

Chaput, Rev. Gerard, 88., Bxternat Saint Sulpice, 1000 Cremazie est.,
Montreal, Canada

Cogan, Rev. John F., Mt. St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, Md.

Conway, Rev. James I. , S.J., Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md.

Cushing, Most Rev. Richard J., Archbishop's House, Lake St., Brighton 35,
Mass.

Danna, Dr. Joseph A., 401 Chaille Bldg., New Orleans, La.

Delahanty, Miss Mary T., 3151 Perry Ave., New York, N. Y.

Dodd, Rev. Francis J., C M. , St. Joseph's College, Emmitsburg, Md.

Donohue, Rev. Hugh, 125 Twelfth St., San Francisco, Calif.

Dougherty, Rev. George V., 729 Thayer Street, Philadelphia 31, Pa.

Doyle, Mr. Leonard J., St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn.

Driscoll, Very Rev. John A., O.P., Dominican House of Studies, River For-
est, 111.

Dwyer, Mr. Francis X., 4207 Oakridge Lane, Chevy Chase, Md.

Fearon, Dr. Arthur'D., 2335 Pacific Ave. #205, San Francisco 15, Calif.

Floersh, Most Rev. John A., 1118 South Third St., Louisville, Ky.

Foehman, Very Rev. Vincent A., O.F.M., 3644 Rocky River Drive, Clevel-
land 11, Ohio

Francis, Right Rev. Abbot, O.S.B., St. Leo Abbey, St. Leo, Fla.

Galliher, Rev. Daniel, O.P., Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island

Gerbig, Miss Ruth, Van Antwerp Circulating Library, Detroit 26, Mich.

Gerow, Most Rev. Richard O., 107 South Union St., Natchez, Miss.

Goossens, Rev. Emile J., St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Mary-of-the-
Woods, Ind.

Grady,"Right Rev. Joseph E., St. Bernard's Seminary, Rochester, N. Y.

Greco, Most Rev. Charles P., Box 927, Alexandria, La.

Griffin, Mr. John J., 12 Landers Street, Somerville 43, Mass.

Hagerty, Prof. James L., St. Mary's College, 1261 28th Ave., San Francisco,
Calif.

Halpin, Rev. John, Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St., New York 27,
N. Y.

Hamm, Dr. Victor M., Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.

Hannan, Rev. Jerome D., Catholic University of America, Washington 17,
D. C.

Harvanek, Rev. Robert F., S J., West Baden College, West Baden Springs,
Ind.

Heelan, Most Rev. Edmond, Box 746, Sioux City 4, Iowa

Hess, Mrs. Albert G., Cazenovia Junior College, Cazenovia, N. Y.

Hillenbrand, Mr. Martin J., American Consulate, Bremen, APO 751, c/o
Postmaster, N. Y.

Hinchey, Rev. John F., S.J., Fordham University, New York 58, N, Y.

Hogan, Mr. John R., 27 Custer Street, Rockland, Mass.

Horan, Dr. Ellamay, 7355 Crandon Ave., Chicago 49, 111.

Hunter, Mr. Robert K., Room 16, Ferry Bldg., San Francisco 11, Calif.

- Hurley, Miss Lucy, 68 Sylvan St., Rutherford, N. Y.
Ireton, Most Rev. Peter L., P.O. Box 25, Richmond 20, Va.
Johnson, Dr. George, 706 Nottingham Rd., Wilmington, Del.
Kennedy, Miss Marie, The Shereton, 19th and Walnut Sts., Philadelphia, Pa.
Koenig, Rev. Harry C, St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, 111.
Lang, Rev. Anthony, Immaculate Conception Rectory, Lansing, Iowa
Leddy, Prof. J. F., University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Sask., Canada
Lemieux, Rev. Albert, Gonzaga University, Spokane 11, Wash.
Lenk, Rev. Merwin, 2701 Chicago Blvd., Detroit 6, Mich.
Lilley, Miss Helen, 6727 12th Ave., Kenosha, Wis.
Lincoln, Miss Natalie, 1410 36th St., N.W., Washington, D. C.
Lyons, Rev. Avitus E., 2544 Parkwood Ave., Toledo 10, Ohio
McAllister, Hon. Thomas F., U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Grand Rapids, Mich.
McCormick, Right Rev. P. J., Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.
McCurkell, Very Rev. E. J., C.S.B., 21 St. Mary Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
McDonald, Rev. Lloyd P., S.S., 401 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington 17, D. C.
McDonough, Right Rev. James M., 1212 Bunts Road, Lake wood 7, Ohio
McGinnis, Rev. Raymond, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.
McGloin, Rev. Daniel L., S.J., Jesuit Seminary of Philosophy, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
McKian, Mr. John D., 820 Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, 111.
McKinnon, Mr. Harold R., 220 Bush Street, San Francisco 4, Calif.
McQuade, Mr. Frank P., 1116 Green St., Harrisburg, Pa.
Maguire, Miss Dorothy, 7030 Chappel Ave., Chicago 49, 111.
Majda, Rev. F. A., 240 44th St., Pittsburgh 1, Pa.
Mercier, Prof. Louis J. A., 3364 Tennyson Street, Washington, D. C.
Moreau, Rev. John W., S.J., Spring Hill College, Mobile, Alabama
Mother Agatha, St. Elizabeth's Convent, Cornwelis Heights, Pa.
Mother M. Aloysia, Good Counsel College, White Plains, New York
Mother M. Angelique, Our Lady of the Lake College, San Antonio 7, Texas
Mother M. Aquinas Norton, The Convent, Rochester, Minn.
Mother M. Athanasina, College of St. Scholastica, Duluth 2, Minn.
Mother Mary L. Martinez, Maryville College, St. Louis 18, Mo.
Moyle, Rt. Rev. Francis T., Marianopolis College, 3547 Peel St., Montreal, Canada
Nickerson, Major Hoffman, West Shore Road, Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York
O'Connor, Rev. Edward M., St. Ambrose College, Davenport, Iowa
O'Conor, Rev. William R., St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, Yonkers, N.Y.
Ottonnell, Rev. Clement M., St. Anthony-on-Hudson, Rensselaer, N. Y.
O'Hara, Most Rev. Gerald P., 222 E. Harris St., Savannah, Ga.
O'Leary, Most Rev. Thomas M., 68 Elliot Street, Springfield, Mass.

O'Leary, Rev. Timothy F., 24 Clark St., Boston 13, Mass.

O'Mahony, Rev. Timothy J., S.J., College of the Holy Cross, Worcester 3, Mass.

Palmer, Mr. Benjamin W., 426 McKnight Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.

Parent, Rt. Rev. Alphonse-Marie, University Laval, Quebec, Que., Canada

Pillsbury, Miss Louise M., 6 Colon Street, Brighton 36, Mass.

Pitt, Rev. Felix M., 206-209 Southern Trust Bldg., Louisville 2, Ky.

Presseault, Rev. Laurent, Seminary of St. Theresa, County Terrebonne, Quebec, Canada

Quinn, Mr. James R., 1 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, 111.

Rehring, Most Rev. George J., St. Mary Church, Cincinnati, Ohio

Rooney, Rev. Edward B., 49 E. 84th St., New York 28, N. Y.

Rummel, Most Rev. Joseph F., 2809 S. Carrollton Ave., New Orleans 18, La.

Saintonge, Rev. Frederic, S.J., Scholasticat de rimmaculie-Conception, Montreal, Canada

Schmitt, Very Rev. Adolph, C.M.M., St. Bernard's Seminary, Brighton, Mich.

Schmieder, Chaplain Lawrence R., U.S.N., UJ3.S. Missouri, F.P.O. New York, N. Y.

Schwitalla, Rev. Alphonse M., S J., St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.

Secondo, Rev. Louis, T.O.R., Highland Hall, P.O. Box 289, Hollidaysburg, Pa.

Seng, Rt. Rev. Boniface, O.S.B., St. Bernard Abbey, St. Bernard, Ala.

Sister Inez Eucharía, 226 West Market Street, Newark, N. J.

Sister Marcella Marie, College of St. Teresa, Kansas City 2, Mo.

Sister Marina, 11407 Edbrooke Ave., Chicago 28, 111.

Sister Mary Dolores Hayes, Holy Name College, Spokane 11, Washington

Sister M. Patricia, R.S.M., Mercy College, Detroit 19, Mich.

Sister M. Philomene, O.S.B., Mount Marty Junior College, Yankton, S. D.

Sister Mary Rachael, College of St. Teresa, Winona, Minn.

Sister M. Regis, Mt. Mercy College, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sister Mary Vincent, O.P., St. Mary's Dominican College, New Orleans 15, La.

Sister St. George, C.M.D., Marianapolis College, Montreal, Canada

Sister M. Helen, St. Elisabeth's Academy, Allegany, N. Y.

Sister M. Lioba, Mt. Mary College, Milwaukee 13, Wis.

Sister Mary Amelberga, Marylhurst College, Marylhurst, Oregon

Sister Mary Aquinas McLaughlin, Briar Cliff College, Sioux City 17, Iowa

Sister Mary de Paul Cogan, Maryknoll Teachers' School, Maryknoll, N. Y.

Sister M. Eugenia, Mary wood Seminary, Scranton 9, Pa.

Sleva, Rev. Victor E., St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee 7, Wis.

Spencer, Rev. James P., SJ, St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Md.

Stearns, Mr. Foster, Hancock, New Hampshire

Sullivan, Rev. James B., 216 W. 68th St., New York, N. Y.

Swint, Most Rev. John J., 13th and Byron Sts., Wheeling, West Virginia

Taylor, Rev. Vincent G., OJS3., Belmont Abbey, Belmont, N. C.

Thill, Most Rev. Frank A., Box 999, Salina, Kansas

Thuis, Rt. Rev. Columban, OJSJB, St. Joseph's Abbey, St. Benedict, La.

- Tobin, Rev. Thomas J., 2053 Southwest Sixth Ave., Portland, Oregon
Toolen, Most Rev. Thomas J., 400 Government St., Mobile 15, Ala.
Trudeau, Rev. Emile, Seminary of St. Theresa, County Terrebonne, Que.,
Canada
Walsh, Rev. John P., O.M.I., DeMasenod Scholasticate, Route 10, Box 41,
San Antonio, Texas
Whalen, Dr. Frank D., 102 W. 183rd St., Bronx, N. Y.
Whitney, Mr. Hugh, 42 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.
Zedler, Miss Beatrice Hope, 125 W. Locust St., Milwaukee 12, Wis.

STXJDBNT MEMBERS

- Allutinus, Rev. Felix, O.F.M., Franciscan Monastery, Washington 17, D. C.
Angers, Mr. William P., 1232 Newton St., N.E., Washington 17, D. C.
Baldwin, Mrs. Geraldine Steiner, 4285 Katonah Ave., New York 06, N. Y.
Bartosic, Mr. Florian, Pontifical College Josephinum, Worthington, Ohio
Bayne, Mr. Howard R., 2002 California Ave., Santa Monica, Calif.
Bode, Mr. Roy, 1800 Ft. Davis St., S.E., Washington 20, D. C.
Buehler, Rev. Walter J., S.M., 1017 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington 17,
D. C.
Carr, Rev. H., C.S.B., St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon, Sask., Canada
Chapman, Miss Cynthia, 40 N. Dearborn St., Chicago 2, Illinois
Connors, Miss Dorothy, Catholic University of America, Washington 17,
D. C.
De la Vega, Rev. Frank, ORSA, Catholic University of America, Washing-
ton 17, D. C.
Demers, Rev. Romeo, St. Etienne de Bolton, Co. Brome, Quebec, Canada
Dugan, Miss Lee Ann, 1054 Wrightwood Avenue, Chicago 14, Ill.
Fisher, Mr. Franklin, 1585 E. Cumberland Blvd., Milwaukee 11, Wis.
Grassi, Mr. Joseph, 60 Girard St., N.E., Washington 17, D. C.
Hurley, Miss Mercedes E., 11316 Linnet Ave., Cleveland 11, Ohio
Kahle, Mr. Herman, Rohrbacherstr. 795, Heidelberg, Nord-Baden, U. 8.
Zone, Germany
Kegel, Miss Nora Ellen, 3602 Highland Blvd., Milwaukee 8, Wis.
Lapati, Mr. Americo D., St. Mary's Seminary, Roland Park, Baltimore, Md.
Lodato, Mr. Francis J., 04-17 133rd Ave., Ozone Park 16, Long Island, N. Y.
McCall, Rev. Robert E., St. Joseph's Seminary, 12th and Varnum Sta.,
N.E., Washington, D. C.
McDonald, Brother Vincent, M.O.Carm, 1600 Webster St., N.E., Washing-
ton 17, D. C.
McRoberts, Mr. William, Catholic University of America, Washington 17,
D. C.
Michener, Miss Norah E., 5 Rosedale Road, Toronto 5, Ont, Canada
Mikus, Rev. Frank P., Box 15, Catholic University of America, Washing-
ton 17, D. C.
Mullen, Mr. Walter P., 1218 W. 78th St., Chicago 20, Ill.
Murphy, Mr. Edward P., Jr., 1635 N. 60th St., Milwaukee 8, Wis.
Naughton, Mr. E. Russell, Box 442, Catholic University of America, Wash-
ington 17, D. C.

- Nilles, Mr. Allan F., 401 Michigan Ave., NJE, Washington 17, D. C.
Parsons, Miss Evarne, 629 Monroe St., N.E., Washington 17, D. C.
Papadakis, Mr. Basil, 2063 Park Road, N.W., Washington 10, D. C.
Paone, Mr. Donald V., 537 Ninth St., Brooklyn 15, N. Y.
Phillips, Mr. Charles William, 87-22 118th St., Richmond Hill 18, N. Y.
Powco, Mr. Rocco E., 2929 Mills Ave., N.E., Washington, D. C.
Quick, Mr. Charles Henry, Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.
Reid, Rev. David J., 718 Somonauk St., Sycamore, 111.
Reiter, Miss Audrey J., 1807 N. 56th St., Milwaukee 8, Wis.
Rothfeld, Mr. Leonard, 401 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington 17, D. C.
Royce, Mr. James E., Alma College, Alma, Calif.
Scott, Miss Jean, 2945 Macomb St., N.W., Washington, D. C.
Sister Mary Alethea Brennan, Sisters College, Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.
Sister Elizabeth Marie Houlihan, College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, N. J.
Sister Kevin O'Hara, St. Francis House of Studies, 8th and Varnum Sts., Washington 17, D. C.
Sister Marian Dolores, 923 W. 50th Place, Chicago 9, 111.
Voels, Rev. David, Dyersville, Iowa
Walton, Mr. William M., 16 St. Joseph St., Apt. 13, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
White, Mr. Miles T., Jr., 1521 Larchmont Ave., Lakewood 7, Ohio
Wilkerson, JVfr. Jerome, Kenrick Seminary, 7800 Kenrick Rd., St. Louis 19, Mo.
Williams, Rev. W. A., S.V.D., St. Augustine Seminary, Bay St. Louis, Miss.
Wilson, Mr. John C., 88 Walker Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Woerdeman, Rev. Jude, O.S.B., Catholic University, Washington 17, D. C.

