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Reminder: Membership dues will be mailed out the first of the year and are based on a calendar (not academic) year.

THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Reasonable Rules

by Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.
President, Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

A Jesuit friend of mind was recently given an assignment to the Silicon Valley. A well-published scientist himself, he was sent to do a kind of missionary work among the "techies." Their biggest problem with organized religion, he quickly realized, was resentment at rules that made no sense to them.

The problem was not the existence of rules. Rules, after all, are precisely their livelihood. What they do all day long in writing computer programs is to operate according to various rules and to generate new rules as needed. Their frustration with religion arose from a sense that the rules were arbitrary. Computer programs involve long strings of rules. But the techies can see how these rules make sense. The rules they work by might well be algorithms whose complexity and obscurity will long befuddle the rest of us. But rules that make their computers do what they want them to do are, in their eyes, just fine.

Like Paul in Greece, or Patrick in Ireland, or Boniface in Germany, or Xavier in India, my friend spent his time in Silicon Valley as a missionary. The missionary needs to know the lay of the land. To preach the saving truths of Christ effectively, one has to learn how to navigate the local terrain and how to avoid certain obstacles that can risk obscuring people's access to understanding the truths of the faith.

What my friend learned to do was to be ready to explain why the Church holds what she does and why she teaches what she teaches. Most of the Faith, of course, does not consist in rules, but in his case rules were generally the problem. So, in those cases where something with the character of a rule was at issue, whether a moral norm or a disciplinary practice, he found that the best thing he could do was to explain why "the rule" was "the rule." Without needing to explain all of theology, or to be at all defensive about a given rule, let alone embarrassed about it, what he would do, with grace and good humor, and with knowledge of the faith, would be to explain how some rule that was in question actually made some sense.

To his delighted surprise, resentment generally fell away. For computer nerds ("like himself"), it proved quite enough to show that what they had perceived as an "arbitrary rule" was somehow reasonable. Doing simple things like this for them made the Church as a whole seem reasonable. Would that it were always quite this easy!

But there is a lesson here, and especially a lesson for Catholic scholars. Knowing the Faith, and knowing why the Church holds what it does, and finding good clear ways to explain things may be just what it takes to help someone with difficulties about the Faith. It will be helpful in defending the positions of the Church by showing them to be reasonable rather than arbitrary—and thereby opening a space for God’s grace to work the rest.



In the past six months I’ve been asked to speak on various end-of-life topics, including the use of brain death as a criterion for determining the permissibility of organ transplantation. The above lesson played a crucial role in thinking out my strategy. One part of the goal, of course, when speaking on these topics, is to address a preliminary matter: defending the very right of the Church to form the conscience of people. In as rationalist an age as our own, the notion that the Church has a duty—and therefore a right—to form consciences cuts deeply against the grain. Because of a sometimes unspoken assumption that what the Church teaches is a set of arbitrary rules, the objections made to the Church’s teaching authority is one of the greatest obstacles to be overcome in many areas of discussion. It is certainly prominent in end-of-life discussions.

As in the situations faced by my Jesuit friend in Silicon Valley, I found that the objections to the Church’s right to teach on controversial matters like these were in part laid to rest by being ready to show forth the reasoning that the Church can offer. That is, people really do recognize in their heart of hearts that an organization like the Church does have a duty and thus a right to instruct her members. But when no reasons are provided in explanation, it is all too easy to raise the objection that the Church has no right to impose arbitrary rules on her members.

Admittedly, there are many aspects to the complex questions that occur in regard to end-of-life issues. When I have the opportunity to lay out a set of principles, I generally work at developing the following points:

1. All human life is sacred, from the first moment of conception to the time of natural death.
2. All human beings, regardless of physical or mental abilities, share an equal human dignity meriting both respect and protection.

3. Catholics are free in accordance with Catholic moral teaching to make health care decisions forgoing the use of extraordinary means that prolong a life in a terminal illness.
4. Suffering is a mystery. The role of medicine is to relieve the suffering of the sick by diligent research and compassionate treatment. Suffering that cannot be alleviated can become redemptive when united with the suffering love of Christ.
5. Persons are obligated to take reasonable care of their own health by preserving and nurturing it with appropriate and ordinary (proportionate) means. But, no one is obligated to use extraordinary (disproportionate) measures to prolong life in this world; that is, measures offering no reasonable hope of benefit or measures involving excessive hardship.
6. Nutrition and hydration should always be provided when they are capable of sustaining human life, as long as this is of sufficient benefit to outweigh the burdens to the patient.¹
7. Because this life has inherent dignity, regardless of its visible “quality,” it calls out to us for the normal care owed to all helpless patients. In principle, food and fluids (even if medically assisted, as in tube feeding), are part of that normal care. Such feeding, [Pope John Paul II] said, is “a natural means of preserving life, not a medical act.” This means, among other things, that the key question here is simply whether food and fluids effectively provide nourishment and preserve life, not whether they can reverse the patient’s illness. Even incurable patients have a right to basic care.²

On the specific question of the legitimacy of using brain death as a criterion for determining the death of the person, there are additional complexities. At the heart of the issue, in my view, is the history of the efforts to re-define death in such terms as “irreversible cessation of total brain-function” as a replacement for traditional definitions of death using cardio-pulmonary criteria that rendered the desired organs less useful, or even altogether useless, for transplantation. This new definition was constructed in 1968 in response to a desire to obtain new sources of usable organs for purposes of transplantation, following the news about heart transplants in 1967.³

Happily, there is an ever increasing scholarly literature available to help make the case about the moral impropriety of using the brain-death criteria that have become so prevalent today.⁴ In addition to becoming familiar with the technical aspects of the medical and

scientific questions, there are matters of basic ethics and of fundamental moral theology that one needs to bring into the discussion. It will be important, for instance, to show that in making a proper analysis of the morality of an action, using the guidance provided by the Catholic Church, a benevolent intention does not make acceptable an intrinsically immoral activity like killing an innocent person who is already dying, however much “good” doing so might come of it on a utilitarian calculus.

But in my experience, one of the points that often goes unmentioned in the discussion proved to have far importance than I would have initially thought to assign it. To win a hearing for the effort to show that the Church's right to teach in these matters is reasonable and not an arbitrary imposition of its authority, it has proven crucial now in several venues to make sure that I address a question of a profoundly anthropological sort: do any of us own our bodies?

It may seem odd to ask the question in this way, I admit. But I would urge that it is crucial to ask the question in this manner in order to uncover an assumption that makes it hard for many people even to hear the rest of the discussion. Do we own our own bodies? Are they our property, that we may do with what we like? Or are these bodies, and our very lives, something given to us as a trust? Something to be used and cherished and honored as part that trust, but ultimately not something that we may dispose of at will?

Interestingly, Plato shows Socrates already alert to this theme in the *Phaedo*, for it is at the basis of his argument against suicide. Bringing out that point has disarmed more than one critic ready to chafe at the far more telling claim that the Church makes by teaching that it is God who gives us life by creating a rational soul for each of us at the moment of our conception. In fact, the Scriptures make numerous references to the

doctrine, as when St. Paul reminds us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that we are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19). While making this point does not by itself win the argument about the moral impropriety of using brain death criteria as a rationalization for removing unpaired vital organs from a person who is still living, it begins to show why it is reasonable for the Church to be concerned in the matter. Doing so can clear up certain roadblocks to discussion, for it helps to show that the Church has a reasonable interest here. We do well to remember: our lives are not our own. We belong to God. ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Introduction and numbers 1-6 excerpted directly from “Appointing a Health Care Agent in Massachusetts: A Catholic Guide from the Massachusetts Catholic Conference” (1999). See, macatholic.org/sites/macatholic.org/files/assets/MCC%20Proxy%20FINAL%20APPROVED%201.18.2012.pdf.
- 2 Excerpted directly from “Human Dignity in the ‘Vegetative’ State” by Richard M. Doerflinger. © 2004, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. See old.usccb.org/pro-life/programs/rlp/04doerflinger.shtml
- 3 It included in the recommendations for new diagnostic criteria for determining death that were devised in 1968 by the *Ad Hoc Committee to Study the Problems of the Hopelessly Unconscious Patient* at Harvard Medical School. Their report was published in *Journal of the American Medical Association* as “A Definition of Irreversible Coma,” 337-40.
- 4 E.g., Paul A. Byrne, Sean O'Reilly, and Paul M. Quay, S.J., “Brain Death: An Opposing Viewpoint,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 242 (1979): 1985-90; Roberto de Mattei, ed., Paul A. Byrne M.D., update ed., *Finis Vitae: Is 'Brain Death' True Death?* [conference papers from the conference “The Signs of Death” at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, held in Vatican City, 2005] (Oregon City OH: Life Guardian Foundation, 2009 [2006]); Scott Henderson, *Death and Donation: Rethinking Brain Death as a Means for Procuring Transplantable Organs*. Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011; Steven J. Jensen, ed. *The Ethics of Organ Transplantation*. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011); D. Alan Shewmon, “The ‘Critical Organ’ for the Organism as a Whole: Lessons from the Lowly Spinal Cord” in *Brain Death and Disorders of Consciousness*, ed. Calixto Machado and D. Alan Shewmon (New York: Kluwer, 2004, pp. 23-41). pp. 23-41).



“Stir Up Thy Might and Come”

Advent sermon in the Cathedral of Trier, preached by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on December 4, 2003, based on the following texts of Scripture: Is. 26:1-6; Ps. 118 and Mt. 7:11-27

Dear brothers in the episcopal, priestly and diaconal ministry! Dear sisters and brothers in the Lord!

“Stir up thy might, O Lord, and come.”

In this way the Church prays today in her Collect with the summons that she has taken from Psalm 80: “Stir up thy might!”

This was the cry of Israel in exile, in an hour in which God seemed to have withdrawn from history and his promises were apparently no longer valid, an hour in which God seemed to be sleeping and Israel was left alone: “Stir up thy might and come, show us also that you are here today.”

This was the cry of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee in the boat that was tossed here and there as the water poured in, while the Lord was sleeping in the same boat: “Wake up, O Lord, and help us!”

This was the advent cry of the Church in the time of the persecution in which the whole might of the Roman Empire stood against the small flock of the faithful who were handed over and crushed by the political authority and the military might: “Stir up thy might and come!”

And throughout all history the little boat of the Church travels in stormy waters and is in danger of sinking, at least that is how it seems. Again—in the times of the migration of peoples—she could only cry out: “Stir up thy might and come,” but then even in the period when the Church was a political force, she was even more in danger of losing her way and had to cry out more insistently: “Stir up thy might and come!” And today, when the faith silently trickles away, when the Church seems to be a concern of the past and without a future, when God seems to have abandoned her, we must cry out with new urgency: “Stir up thy might and come, O Lord! It is about time. Come, and do not be a God of the past, but a coming God who opens up the future and leads us into the coming centuries.”

“Stir up thy might and come!” But if we take a closer look at this prayer, it must occur to us: We are

not simply saying to God: “Wake up,” as if we would assume that he is sleeping. We say: “Stir up thy might.” Therefore, the question is: What is that really, this might of God that seems to be asleep and must be awakened?

St. Paul gives us the answer in 1 Corinthians when he says: Christ, the crucified One who is foolishness and weakness to men, is the wisdom and the power of God. Therefore, when we ask for this real power of God, then we are not asking for more money for the Church, for more buildings, for more structures, for more political influence. We are asking for this special, very different power of God. We are praying with the conviction that he comes in the way of a power that to the world seems to be weakness and foolishness.

So it was—if we briefly wander through history again—already in Israel that, even in defeat and apparently extinguished as a political entity, for the first time faith in the one God obtained its pure form and for the first time the tremendous vision of salvation was awakened, that actually the song of praise of the living God came out of the fiery oven of affliction. And so it was again in the old Church that, in the midst of external weakness, God’s might was the witness of the power of the faith given by the martyrs, the witness of love for one another and for all the weak and oppressed, the witness that came out of the heart of the Church; this is the way in which he comes with his might, with crucified might—and so it is throughout history.

He does not come with military divisions, but he comes with a wounded heart that apparently has nothing more to say and that then manifests itself as the true, wholly other might, the might of God. But if we now see how God has awakened his might in the suffering and believing men in Israel, in the martyrs and in the great witnesses of love and truth in the old Church, and again in Francis of Assisi and in Dominic and throughout the centuries, then this cry affects us physically, then it concerns us personally, for then it becomes visible that God has conferred his holy might on us abundantly through the holy sacraments of Baptism, of Confirmation and through his word and that this might sleeps in us. So this prayer concerns us: Lord, wake us up from our sleepiness in which we are not able to pay attention to you, in which we conceal and prevent the arrival of your holy might which is here for us.

Christianity is not a moral system according to which we would like to roll up our sleeves and change the world. We see how wrong that is in those movements that have promised us a better world. But just as God constructed the world and man, so also Christianity is not stamped by an exclusive effectiveness of God in which we would be only observers and would have to wait; but he includes us; he desires to be effective in us and through us—through us to give value in the world to his holy and new might, the might of truth and love. And so in this prayer we ask him for ourselves and allow ourselves to be touched in the heart: Your might is in us, stir it up and help us that we may not be an obstacle to it, but witnesses and living power.

Now let us take a quick look at the Reading, the Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel for today. The Reading begins with a word full of confidence: “We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks”. It is the same thing that the Lord says when he sends us the words: “The power of the Evil One, the power of death will never overwhelm you—my Church, my living house, my holy city”. And it is the same thing he says to us also today in the Gospel: The house that is built on my word is built on rock and the storms and floods of this world will not be able to wash it away. The Advent Liturgy gives us this holy confidence in the midst of all confusions, in the midst of all affliction, in the midst of all human wretchedness and sin that is found in the Church—she remains his house. She stands on rock and we can be confidently certain: This house will not be destroyed. The Church will pass through these storms too and prove herself once again to be God’s living city in the world.

But then there is the next sentence that, according to our usual reckoning, seems to be a contradiction of the first one. For next it is stated: The Church, the house of God, the city of God has strong walls, ramparts and towers and is unconquerable. And then follows immediately as the next sentence: “Open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in”. The feasts, the trustworthy Church, the house of God is indeed an open house and an open city—open so that the Lord can enter in and so that we can meet the Lord.

Closely related to this verse from the book of the prophets is then today’s Responsorial Psalm 118 which is an Entrance Psalm and speaks again about entering into the holy city. It was the psalm for the Feast of Tabernacles, for the solemn entrance to the light festival of God. But it was also the psalm that belonged to the Paschal Liturgy and as a psalm was prayed after the

fourth cup of wine—the psalm that Jesus sang with his disciples before he went to the Mount of Olives and to suffer; it was his way to open up the gates of the world.

“Open the gates of this city so he can enter in and so we can meet him.” At the same time in these verses is indicated what liturgy is. Liturgy is opening the gates of this world so that God can enter in, so that believing men can enter in and can meet God. Both movements belong together: the breaking open of the people, the breaking open of men, the procession of history in order to meet the Lord in his own city—and the coming of the Lord who meets us; and thus there is the meeting in the mystery of the Eucharist in which we are on the move to follow him and in which he comes to us and gives himself to us so that we can go farther with him and can open wide the gates of the world for his entrance and for our going to him.

In conclusion, let us return one again to the Church’s prayer: “Stir up thy might and come.” In the second part of this prayer we are told more exactly what kind of “coming” we are asking for. In German, the text says: “Send help that thy salvation, that we resist, may come more quickly.”¹ The Latin text is still more discreet and does not at all say exactly what should come; it leaves it up to God and says only “quod nostra peccata praepediunt”.² We say to him: Let that come which you will to come and in what and how you will to come. We leave up to God the way of his coming—that is what is right for us.

The Church’s prayer does not ask simply for the Parousia, for the final coming of Christ. That would be a prayer, it seems to me, that would be too lofty for all of us, that we would not really dare to utter seriously. No, we simply ask God to come in such a way that is right for us and we leave it up to him how this coming should be. Thus it becomes clear in this prayer that there are many ways of God’s coming in history, not just the first arrival in Bethlehem, not just the second arrival at the end of the world.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux explained very explicitly what before him had already been thought out more or less clearly. Between the first and the last, definitive advent of Christ, so he says, there is a “medius adventus”, a “middle advent of God”. He comes continually, he comes into souls, but he also comes into history in new ways. He entered into it in a new way in the 12th century through Francis and the new movement of the Orders of Mendicant Friars who wanted to bring the Church again close to the Lord, to be a simple and humble people. He entered into it in a new way in the

great mystics of the 16th century. He entered into it in a new way in the midst of the enlightened world of the 19th century by the great movements of the religious orders which were now concentrating on social questions and education. We ask him: “Come today, Lord, come to each one of us, and also come thus: visibly, historically, in a new way, as this time requires and in a way suitable to it. Yes, Lord, come and help us—that we

may open the gates to you, that we may go with you when you enter. Amen. ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Hilf, dass dein Heil schneller kommt, das wir aufhalten.
- 2 “That which our sins hinder”.

Translated by Kenneth Baker, S.J. July 2010.

The Study of Rhetoric as a Stepping Stone to Wisdom

by Anne Carson Daly
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On the face of it, rhetoric and wisdom might seem to be polar opposites. After all, is not wisdom the pearl of great price, the gift God gave King Solomon, and the treasure the Queen of Sheba came from the ends of the earth to find? On the other hand, isn't rhetoric widely recognized as the refuge of scoundrels, and the preserve of shady politicians, opportunistic used-car salesmen, and unscrupulous marketers? Don't we dismiss much of what we hear as “mere rhetoric”? And by “mere rhetoric,” don't we mean drivel, lies, and even malicious attempts to defraud and mislead?

Since wisdom is greatly to be revered, and rhetoric—as commonly understood—is to be both execrated and avoided, how can anyone suggest that the study of rhetoric can be a stepping stone to wisdom? In making such a suggestion I am not attempting to perpetrate a fraud. In fact, at Belmont Abbey College, we have actually replaced *Composition* and *Argumentative Prose* with *Rhetoric, Logic, Grammar, and Writing I and II*. Yes, that's right. We've gone back to the Trivium—to Rhetoric, Logic, and Grammar—the three subjects that any medieval student getting a B. A. was required to study.

In my talk this afternoon, I'd like to do four things. First, share with you why the study of rhetoric is more likely to lead students to wisdom than that of composition. Second, explain why the habits of heart, mind, and soul that rhetoric can inculcate are conducive to the cultivation of wisdom. Third, elucidate why such hab-

its are crucial to the flourishing of the human person, to success in business and education, to the health of a democracy, and to spreading the Gospel. Finally, I will touch on how rhetoric's relationship to wisdom was radically transformed when Christ was identified in the Gospel of John as the Logos or Word Incarnate.

Before embarking on this ambitious agenda, let me define the terms “rhetoric” and “wisdom.” For the purposes of this talk, rhetoric is simply the study of how to communicate effectively—whether in speech or writing. For our purposes, “wisdom” means living in full recognition of reality and responding to it with *agape*—or altruistic love. I derive this definition from the exchange between Christ and the young man in the tenth chapter of Luke, when the young man asks Christ, “Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replies, “What is written in the Law? What do you read there?” The man answers, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” “You have answered right,” Jesus says, “Do this and you will have life” (Luke 10:25–28). What could be wiser than the kind of behavior that leads to the fullness of eternal life?

Why is the study of rhetoric more likely to lead to wisdom than that of composition? Well, to begin with, composition is usually taught as Rhetoric Lite—a dumbed-down version of its more illustrious ancestor. Composition is less comprehensive because it deals only with writing rather than with both writing *and* speaking. Whereas classical rhetoric focused on five elements: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery, composition typically focuses only on invention and

arrangement, usually neglecting style and totally ignoring memory and delivery. A further limitation is that college composition classes typically try to teach students how to write only academic essays. This means that style gets short shrift and other genres are frequently not even mentioned. To make matters worse, students are often taught to write academic essays in a very limiting format—often featuring an introductory paragraph, three paragraphs developing the argument, and a concluding paragraph that attempts to deliver a verbal knock-out punch that will vanquish all doubt in the beleaguered reader's mind. Although the five-paragraph template can serve as useful training wheels, unfortunately, many student-writers never cast them aside so that they can graduate to verbal all-terrain vehicles.

Some of you may be thinking that you'd be grateful *if only* students *would* master this form, and I can certainly sympathize with those sentiments. But I am convinced that if we teach students how to write *only* academic essays, we are shortchanging them in ways that may stunt their ability to think and write, as well as their capacity to understand others, to empathize with them, and to develop emotional intelligence—essential qualities for those who would be wise. Not teaching students to speak and write in other genres also puts them at a distinct disadvantage in what is euphemistically referred to as “the real world.”

After leaving school, students will rarely communicate via academic essays. The young man penning a thank-you note to his prospective in-laws will do himself no good by writing in academic prose. The young lady applying for a job in the business world would be ill advised to wrap herself in the stiff mantle of scholastic diction. The young person asked to give the eulogy at a grandparent's funeral or the toast at a friend's wedding will need to know more than how to cite sources according to the MLA. Whether speaking to fellow members of a home owner's association, addressing the PTA, giving a political speech, writing a sales report, composing an employee newsletter, or drafting talking points for the boss, our students will need training in something other than how to write academic essays, and that *something* is rhetoric.

Studying rhetoric will teach them how to communicate effectively—a skill they will need every day of their lives. Properly taught, rhetoric will teach them that communicating effectively depends always and everywhere on thinking not only of themselves but also of those to whom they are speaking or writing. Once students learn that they should not open their mouths

or pick up their pens without first thinking of their audience or readers, they are already on their way to greater wisdom. Why? Because being less self-absorbed and more focused on others helps one to get a clearer grasp of reality, and to grow in emotional intelligence—the *sine qua non* of wisdom.

In a particularly felicitous spiritual calculus, students of rhetoric learn that their own success as speakers and writers is directly proportional to how well they understand—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—those to whom they are speaking or writing. Whereas in composition, students can succeed by merely expressing themselves, in rhetoric, they can succeed only by taking others into account. In composition, self-expression is often the aim, whereas in rhetoric it is always communication with others. This is intellectually and spiritually where rhetoric beats the daylight out of composition. In composition classes, writers can pen a creditable essay about Hamlet, hockey, or Hungary without consulting anything other than their own thoughts—without ever leaving “the wonderful world of me.” Too often composition classes concentrate on what students think or feel rather than on analyzing a subject dispassionately. This can encourage students to think themselves the measure of all things—resulting in writing that is reflexively self-referential, and enclosing students in the fun house of narcissism—where everything they write or say is a solipsistic reflection of themselves.

Happily, rhetoric offers a way out of this narcissistic fun-house and an escape from such solipsism. Properly taught, rhetoric provides a passport out of “the wonderful world of me” and into the infinitely greater universe of others and of objective reality. Whereas composition often closes one in on oneself, rhetoric immediately demands that its practitioner enter into an “I-Thou” relationship. Hence, the practice of rhetoric requires both greater intellectual breadth and emotional imagination than does that of composition.

Happily, the “golden triangle” of rhetoric—consisting of the speaker or writer, the speech or text, and the audience or reader—turns out to be an important stop on the way to the Golden Rule. After all, isn't it hard to do unto others as you would have them do unto you if you aren't even aware they exist, can't imagine how they think or feel, and haven't been taught to care? Part of the genius of rhetoric is that it helps its practitioners relate to others and care about them, and the penalty for not doing so is abject rhetorical failure. This fact has terrifically important ramifications not only for

our students' intellectual development but also for their emotional growth—in other words, for their habits of heart, mind, and soul.

The study of rhetoric stretches students both intellectually and emotionally by teaching them to analyze their audience, to imagine how its members think and feel, and to empathize with them. Since rhetoric is a practical as well as theoretical art, students learn that they cannot simply speak or write in their own comfort zone, compose in their preferred style, and cite arguments that they personally find reasonable, emotionally satisfying, and ethical. On the contrary, they must speak or write in a manner that resonates with the reasoning, the emotions, and the spiritual principles of their auditors or readers.

Aristotle—who defines rhetoric as the ability “in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion”—points out, rhetoricians must choose the means of persuasion that will convince their audience. He identifies these three means as appeals to *logos* or reason; *pathos* or emotions, and *ethos* or morals. Executing appeals to the audience's reason, emotions, or morals further deepens and intensifies students' ability to understand and identify with others—intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

Students get a further tutorial in these abilities when they make decisions concerning context, decorum, genre, style, tone, voice, and mood. In rhetoric, as in life, it is almost impossible to overestimate the importance of context or occasion—*kairos*—in classical rhetoric. For example, in poker, four aces is usually a winning hand. But as the saying, “A Smith and Wesson beats four aces,” reminds us, there can be a meta-context that we ignore at our peril. In Don Schlitz's song, “The Gambler,” memorably sung by Kenny Rogers, the old card-sharper codger emphasizes the importance of being able to read and respond to context appropriately. As you remember, he says, “You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away and know when to run.” Significantly, the gambler not only gives the younger man advice on reading context, but models it himself. The gambler successfully “reads” his interlocutor by persuading the younger man to give him a drink in exchange for some advice. “Son,” the gambler says:

...I've made my life out of readin' peoples' faces,
And knowin' what their cards were by the way
they held their eyes,
So, if you don't mind my sayin',

I can see you're out of aces,
For a taste of your whiskey I'll give you some advice.

Like the gambler, successful rhetoricians quickly learn to analyze context and determine the appropriate genre. Context dictates genre, and each genre carries with it certain expectations—what rhetoricians call decorum. Decorum requires not only saying or writing what is appropriate for the audience and occasion, but also for the genre one is using. A graduation speech, for example, is no time for a dirge. A funeral oration should not be delivered in a limerick—even for a drinking buddy. It would be incongruous to include risqué *double entendres* in a sermon. Virtually everyone knows that Valley-Girl speak has no place in a business report. It's true that the person asking for a raise might want to start with a panegyric—either about himself or his boss—but everyone knows that he would be ill advised to begin with an apostrophe to the gods or an address to the muses.

In some cases, selecting the wrong genre and violating decorum can land one in jail or even endanger one's life. Think, for example, what might happen to a modern-day Oscar Wilde who, in a post-9/11 world, announced to custom officers, “I have nothing to declare but my genius!” What of a woman who sent a love letter to the IRS along with her tax return? And what would happen to the poetry-loving bank teller who responded to a stick-up note with “O my Luv's like a red, red rose/That's newly sprung in June”? And yes, that *is* a rhetorical question because we all know the answer!

No matter where our students go or what they do, they will benefit from being astute analysts of context, competent selectors of genre, and assiduous practitioners of decorum. They will also profit—intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually—from the other kinds of distinctions that rhetoric requires them to make. Will the student of rhetoric use the low, the middle, or the grand style? Which tropes and figures of speech will the speaker or writer employ? Will he employ parallelism? Will she use antithesis? Will he or she employ hyperbole or understatement? Will simile come to the fore, or will chiasmus—à la “Ask not what you can do to rhetoric but what rhetoric can do to you”?

Style grows out of the choices the rhetorician makes concerning tone, voice, and mood. Will the tone be elegant, imperious, dictatorial, aggressive, cavalier, seductive, respectful, sincere, or genial? Will the voice of the speaker be passive or active? Grammatically,

which of the three moods—indicative, subjunctive, or imperative—will dominate? Imagine, for example, how unsettling it would be if MapQuest were to give directions in the subjunctive: “If you were to go to Boston, pray that you be on the right road.” If instructions were given exclusively in the subjunctive, they literally could never say, “Turn right” or “Take a left.” Students of rhetoric learn that the choices they make concerning tone, voice, and grammatical mood determine whether the speech or text seems melancholic, phlegmatic, choleric, sanguine, pathetic, flighty, flippant, energetic, dynamic, stolid, serious, elegant, or truthful.

Making decisions about context, genre, decorum, style, voice, tone, and mood, as well as about the method of appeal, the student of rhetoric learns to examine and to discriminate among myriad possibilities. Ideally, these powers of discrimination eventually yield a discerning mind and spirit that give its possessor an enhanced ability to think, feel, and express him- or herself in diverse ways. This understanding promotes the ability to read people and situations, as well as to have empathy and compassion for them. Cultivating these faculties gives students of rhetoric a passport to other times, places, and cultures, and bestows on them one of life’s greatest gifts—the possibility of relating to others by imaginatively transcending themselves and their own personal circumstances.

Cultivating these habits of heart, mind, and soul is conducive to wisdom because they help one to see reality as it is, to judge various contexts accurately, to react to them appropriately, and to analyze and respond to one’s audience with empathy and compassion. This, in turn, makes it more likely that students will be able, at least on some occasions, to be self-forgetful and to be open to the possibility of self-sacrifice. Being able to communicate with others effectively, imaginatively, empathetically, and compassionately is also crucial to success in business and education. One of the first maxims in business is “Know your customer.” Likewise, in teaching, one of the first requirements is to “Know your students.” Masters of rhetoric automatically tailor their communications to their audience—obviously a distinct advantage in both business and education. Rhetorical training is also critical to the health of a democracy since a democracy depends on discerning citizens’ being able to convince others to vote for good candidates and policies.

If rhetoric is important to democracy, it is absolutely crucial to evangelism. Clearly, Christians cannot fulfill the “Great Commission” Christ gives the

apostles in Matthew, 28:19, when He tells them, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” if they cannot connect—logically, emotionally, and morally—with those to whom they speak and write. St. Paul endorses this approach when he says in Romans 12:15, “Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow.” One of St. Paul’s most outstanding examples of connecting with his audience rhetorically—based on what they already thought and believed—is his speech to the Athenians in the Aeropagus when he says, “Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters, because I noticed, as I strolled round admiring your sacred monuments, that you had an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. Well, the God, whom I proclaim is in fact the one whom you already worship without knowing it” (Acts 17:23).

And now, in my closing remarks, I would like to touch on how rhetoric’s relationship to wisdom was radically transformed when Christ was identified in the Gospel of John (1:14) as the Logos or Incarnate Word. As you know, the study of rhetoric is much more often linked to corruption than to wisdom. Many notable thinkers have catalogued the ways in which each element of the golden triangle is subject to rust—whether through the malign agency of an unscrupulous speaker, a fundamentally immoral speech, or a flawed audience. The coming of Christ did not automatically make all speakers angels, all speeches gospel, and all audiences members of the heavenly host. However, Christ’s identity as the Incarnate Word does offer a solution to some of these moral problems.

Christ provides such a remedy by being—perfectly—in a sense—each of the elements of the golden triangle. As the incarnation of the Father’s promise to send a Savior to mankind, Christ is Himself the Father’s speech or gospel—literally “good news” to man. Since, as Jesus tells us, He and the Father are one (John 10:30), Christ is also Himself the speaker of that word. Since, in Christian thought, man is made in God’s image and likeness, Christ is also, in some manner, present in the souls of his audience members. In addition, Christ as the Incarnate Word provides the “cure” for the other two great scandals that have beset rhetoric from the beginning. The first has to do with the corrupt speaker who either deliberately or inadvertently, through his lack of knowledge and virtue, corrupts his audience. The second has to do with the “space”—between the word and what it represents and the word’s inability either to be

what it names or to effect what it symbolizes.

As the Incarnate Word, Christ offers an antidote to both situations. He is the absolute antithesis of the speaker who leads his listeners astray or manipulates them for his own good. Infinitely more than “the good man” Aristotle, Quintilian, and Cicero found to be the most compelling speaker, Christ can neither deceive nor be deceived. Moreover, Christ’s discourses epitomize what Socrates in the *Phaedrus* identifies as the highest form of rhetoric—that in which the speaker leads souls for their own benefit. Christ’s identity as the Incarnate Word also enables Him to heal the ordinary breach between the word and what it represents and to remedy the fact that words do not ordinarily cause what they mean to happen. In fact, when they do, we call it magic!

As the Incarnate Word, Christ incarnates what He symbolizes. Just as a pilot pilots or a writer writes, the Incarnate Word incarnates. In Jesus’ ministry to the sick, when He says to the paralytic, “Get up and walk” (Matthew 9:5), the man gets up and walks. When Jesus says to the demons, “Come out of him,” they come out (Luke 4:35). When Jesus tells the centurion that his servant will be healed, the centurion subsequently learns that it was at that very moment his servant was healed (Matthew 8:13). Christ’s identity as the very incarnation of the healing Word is made even clearer in the case of the woman with a hemorrhage. Just by touching the hem of Jesus’ garment with faith, she is physically healed (Matthew 9:20–22). Likewise, in the sacraments, Christ’s words continue to have this incarnational effect. When the minister or priest baptizes a believer saying, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” those words—Christ’s words—not only symbolically release the baptized person from Original Sin, but actually, through the power of God’s Incarnate Word, effect what they signify.

God’s word demonstrates this same incarnational power in Genesis when He literally speaks creation into existence. As Genesis 1:3 records, when God says, “Let there be light,” “there was light.” Later, Christ reveals himself as the embodiment of Light itself when he says, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), and of Truth itself when He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). As true man and true God, Christ is perfection itself, hence Wisdom Incarnate.

The verses of John 1:1–14, in which Christ is revealed as the Logos, the Word made Flesh, illuminate the path that we must follow if we are to become “sons of God” and to embody divine wisdom ourselves:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through Him;
and without Him was made nothing that has been made.
In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.
And the light shone in the darkness
and the darkness grasped it not.
There was a man, one sent from God, whose name was John.
This man came as a witness to bear witness to the light
so that all might believe through him.
He was not himself the light,
but was to bear witness to the light.
This was the true light that enlightens every man
who comes into this world.
He was in the world and the world was made by Him,
but the world knew Him not.
He came unto His own and His own received Him not.
But to as many as received Him, He gave the power of
becoming sons of God, to those who believe in His name;
Who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,
nor of the will of man, but of God.
And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us:
and we saw His glory, the glory of the only begotten
of the Father, full of grace and full of truth.*

According to this passage, the wise are those who become sons of God, who believe in Christ’s name. But since Christ is the Incarnate Word, believing in His name requires also incarnating His word and imitating His deeds (John 14:15). The goal of all Christ’s words is to lead His followers to wisdom and, through that wisdom, to eternal life. As Jesus explicitly says in John 6:63, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

Christ makes very clear that those who seek the wisdom that leads to eternal life must become students, lovers, and practitioners of the Word. There are many paths to achieve that end, but one of the finest is the study of rhetoric—which properly approached—should always involve the study of the Incarnate Word. As Thomas Aquinas reminds us in his commentary on the Gospel of John, after the coming of Christ, all words are, in a sense, connected to and potentially transformed by His identity as the Word Incarnate. It is in this sense that the study of all words can serve as a stepping stone to wisdom. What could be a more fitting prelude to becoming one who incarnates the Word with a capital “W”—an *alter Christus*—than wisely studying the word with a small “w”? ❧

Chesterton and the Pickpocket: A Fresh Look at Distributism

A paper delivered at the Australian Chesterton Society Conference, Faith in the Marketplace: G. K. Chesterton's Social Catholicism Revisited
Campion College Australia, 10 September 2011

by Karl Schmude

In 1927, G.K. Chesterton was especially active in the promotion of distributism. In that year he published his principal book on the subject, *The Outline of Sanity*, and engaged in a major public debate with George Bernard Shaw entitled *Do We Agree?*

In *The Outline of Sanity*, Chesterton acknowledged that distributism was an “awkward but accurate name” for “a policy of small distributed property.”¹ He invoked the image of the pickpocket as a way of capturing the truth about present-day economic philosophies and practices. He pointed out that the pickpocket “is obviously a champion of private enterprise.” But he admitted that it would perhaps be an exaggeration to think of the pickpocket as “a champion of private property”!¹ Thus he highlighted what he believed was the essential focus of the capitalist system, which is on making *money* rather than making *goods*—what he called “the extension of business rather than the preservation of belongings.” In doing this, said Chesterton, capitalism disguises the pickpocket with some of the virtues of the pirate—in particular, the enterprise of taking other people’s goods and creating a monopoly of control on the high seas.

By contrast, the aim of socialism—what Chesterton specifically referred to in *The Outline of Sanity* as Communism—is to solve the problems of private enterprise by abolishing private property. “It only reforms the pickpocket,” he wrote, “by forbidding pockets.”²

In essence, Chesterton saw capitalism and socialism—the Big Business of capitalism and the Big Government of socialism—as highly similar. Both involved the *concentration* of wealth and power—its lying in the hands of the few, whether they were capitalists or bureaucrats. Chesterton was a lifelong Liberal, in the nineteenth-century sense of the term, and he harboured a deep distrust of the state and of bureaucracy which was

the instrument of the state, for he saw this as part of the organized injustice of his society. If people were unjust and cruel when they had the advantage of economic power, as they did under capitalism, how much more unjust and cruel could they be under socialism, when they had the additional advantage conferred by political and legal power? In his pithy way, Chesterton said that, under both systems, the ordinary person is not minding his own business—he is minding someone else’s!

In his debate on distributism with Shaw in 1927, which took place in London with Hilaire Belloc in the Chair, Chesterton argued that property ownership was the basis of economic and social freedom. This perspective was strongly articulated by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, the Church’s first social encyclical of the modern era. By contrast, Bernard Shaw argued that only state ownership would bring about the widespread distribution of wealth. Chesterton pinpointed a crucial difference. Shaw, he said, proposed to distribute *wealth*. But distributists, said Chesterton, proposed to distribute *power*.³ Unlike the socialists, Chesterton did not patronize the poor by advocating the distribution of money among them. He advocated the distribution of *power*—power in the form of property, as wide as possible a spread of ownership, with the laws designed to check any growth toward monopolization. Thus, private ownership, as Andrew Greeley once put succinctly, is the means by which the poor can be helped without making them dependent.⁴

Chesterton and Belloc and others promoted distributism tirelessly in the first decades of the last century—and yet today it would seem to have become almost entirely forgotten. Chesterton’s influence in other areas has continued to be felt—for example, his religious apologetics (books like *Orthodoxy* and *The Everlasting Man* have endured and are often reprinted), and also his literary criticism (perhaps especially *The Victorian Age in Literature* and his biography of Charles Dickens, still hailed as one of the best books ever written on Dickens). However, his political philosophy has fallen into an abyss of neglect. Yet this was an area of writing and public advocacy to which he gave substantial attention—and a great deal of his financial resources as well.

Many have lamented this about Chesterton, believing that it absorbed too much of his time and creative energy and distracted him from other, more lasting works. Chesterton himself did not share that view. He felt that his writing on distributism was of supreme importance, and I think it can be argued that time may prove him right. Distributism has assumed new and pressing importance in the early years of the twenty-first century, as we struggle with global financial and political woes, notably in Europe and the United States but also in Australia (though ours is somewhat disguised, and distorted, by a boom in one area of our economy, the resources sector, and a sluggishness in other areas).

In the words of one modern writer, John Médaille, this is “the distributist moment.”⁵ Why is this “the distributist moment”? What has happened in recent decades to make distributism more sharply relevant than before?

In brief, the past twenty years or so have brought two critical developments in the economic and political order. The first was the collapse of Communism in Europe, so that socialism as a political ideology and totalitarian system is no longer, in large measure, credible. More recently, the so-called Arab Spring, the widespread protests against centralized, dictatorial regimes now sweeping across the Arab world, is a sign of the continuing demise of state-controlled systems. Even where a totalitarian regime remains entrenched, as in China, the economic and to some extent social system has been liberalized in the direction of a market-based culture.

Yet at the same time—and this is the second major development in recent years—capitalism as a system of so-called free enterprise has faltered, if not failed. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008 triggered a collapse in the housing and stock markets, and provoked governments in America and Europe to bail out, or underwrite, giant financial institutions and other private companies. The burden of debt in various countries has now reached unimaginable levels, and there is a mounting tide of concern that countries such as Greece or Italy or Portugal—and most recently, of course, the United States—are about to default on even the interest payments due on their massive loans.

Possibly the most striking development is a deeply ironic one—that of Big Government bailing out Big Business: of one form of concentrated power and wealth supporting and salvaging another, as though they were in collusion rather than competition. This is reminiscent of the “conspiracy” of apparently dissimilar

organizations that Chesterton (and Belloc) predicted a century ago. In his 1912 book, *The Servile State*, a work which George Orwell judged as prophetic,⁶ Belloc argued that the growth of capitalism went hand-in-hand with the growth of government—in fact, one was a natural transition to the other, and they were mutually interdependent. Chesterton, for his part, in *The Outline of Sanity* (1927), made a powerfully prophetic remark, I think—as if he could foresee, eighty years later (in 2008), following the bankruptcy of the investment bank Lehman Brothers, that many financial institutions—not to mention other huge companies such as the big car makers—would only avert collapse by government bailouts or guarantees. In 1927, Chesterton described the paradox in these words:

Apparently Big Business must be accepted because it is invulnerable, and spared because it is vulnerable.⁷

As John Médaille has noted more than eighty years later, we have a cult of bigness in both the political and the commercial realms. Big Business is apparently “too big to fail.” Or is it that it is “too big to succeed”—that is, without public bailouts?⁸

I would like to suggest that the transformed circumstances of our time are prompting a fresh look at distributism—and raise new opportunities for its application. Let me look briefly at its philosophical and political roots. I will do this through the personal intellectual history of Chesterton, for I think this will help us to understand more fully the nature of distributism, and assess more clearly how relevant it is to today’s economic and social conditions.

A key background factor in Chesterton’s conviction about widespread ownership was his historical sense. As the American writer Russell Sparkes has pointed out, Chesterton had a vital interest in the English past—especially its political, social, and economic history.⁹ He felt acutely for the ordinary people of England (the “secret people,” as he said in a famous poem of that name, who “have not spoken yet”), and he resented deeply the dispossession which they suffered from the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

There was a different historical experience in other countries in which Chesterton’s ideas attracted popular attention, such as Australia and America, where private property—particularly home ownership—received greater social recognition and financial support. In both countries, we can observe a living alliance between what Andrew Greeley called the “high” and the “low” traditions of social Catholicism—that is, between the theoretical tradition of papal encyclicals which was explored

at length by social philosophers such as Jacques Maritain, and the practical experience and example of Catholic social leaders, such as trade unionists, in families and neighborhoods shaped by the social ethic of their religious faith. They may not have read *Rerum Novarum*, but they lived it—in their communities. The “high” tradition of social principle expressed and validated the “low” tradition, reflecting the bond between a spiritual and intellectual vision and its organic expression at the grassroots.¹⁰

An important part of Chesterton’s intellectual history is the extent to which his social philosophy was influenced by both *literary* and *political* writers—by the vein of social commentary in Charles Dickens, almost all of whose great characters were found among the poor; and by the campaigns for the poor of England by the nineteenth-century journalist William Cobbett, who was really an early distributist. Chesterton wrote appreciative biographies of both these figures. In their different ways, Dickens and Cobbett were his political heroes.

In addition to these intellectual models, Chesterton was also inspired by a practical example of distributism; namely, that of Ireland where a land reform program took place, peacefully and successfully, as a result of the Wyndham Act of 1903—this Act being put through by the Conservative Minister George Wyndham, who became a great friend of Belloc’s.

A final factor in the formulation of a distributist philosophy, which Russell Sparkes reminds us of, is the inspiration which Chesterton and Belloc, as Catholic laymen, received from the formidable figure of Cardinal Manning. Manning’s influence was both personal and intellectual. He combined a sturdy doctrinal orthodoxy and fidelity to the Church with a bold social radicalism. He was instrumental in the Catholic conversion of Belloc’s mother, Elizabeth, and his thinking on social issues decisively shaped Belloc’s thinking—and through Belloc, Chesterton. Chesterton kept a portrait of Manning in his home study at Beaconsfield.¹¹

Manning was closely linked with Pope Leo XIII and played a key part in the preparation of *Rerum Novarum* (1891). He was, as a present-day Chesterton scholar, Dermot Quinn, has put it, a friend of the Pope and a friend of the poor.¹² His funeral through the streets of London was the largest in Victorian England, testifying to the great love which the poor of London had for a Catholic Cardinal, especially after his settling of the London Dock Strike of 1889.

There was another factor of significance in shaping Chesterton’s social and political thought, and that

was the cultural climate of Edwardian England. The Edwardian age was quite short (extending from Queen Victoria’s death in 1901 to the First World War), but it coincided with Chesterton’s rise to public prominence as a writer and Chesterton himself became a leading figure in the popular debates of the time. The cultural climate of the Edwardian Age was marked by an extraordinary intellectual energy, a vigorous contest of ideas. It is important to emphasize that this contest of ideas, the debates of this time, were *popular*. They were not confined to academic circles or a cloistered intellectual elite. John Coates, in his impressive study of this era, *Chesterton and the Edwardian Cultural Crisis* (1984), suggests that we would have to go back to the pamphlet wars of the 1640s in England to find “a comparable engagement of the popular mind in disputes about rival views of life, images of society or possible futures.”¹³ The Edwardian era was a time of mass-circulation journalism—in London’s Fleet Street and elsewhere—when life-changing ideas were being popularized among a vast public of eager and inquisitive readers. Chesterton himself wrote at first for a newspaper, the *Daily News*, whose readers did not share most of his views. The paper was Nonconformist Protestant in general religious outlook, and it favored certain attitudes like temperance and appeasement toward Imperial Germany, which Chesterton was far from endorsing. As Cecil Chesterton, G. K.’s journalist-brother, noted:

*Thousands of peaceful semi-Tolstoian Nonconformists have for six years been compelled to listen every Saturday morning to a fiery apostle preaching . . . War, Drink and Catholicism.*¹⁴

But in writing for such a disparate audience, Chesterton saw that it had unrecognized needs which he could address effectively by his distinctive style of playful paradoxes and sharp-edged aphorisms.¹⁵ The *Daily News*, in fact, proved a crucial testing ground for Chesterton’s lifetime of intellectual controversy, including his great struggles in the cause of distributism.

The Edwardian Age was also a period of substantial social reform, when the foundations of the modern welfare state were being laid. How did all this affect Chesterton—and contribute to his advocacy of distributism? I think that it provided him with two great challenges. One was what he saw as a new embodiment of social dependency and servitude—the welfare state, against which he reacted. The other was the atmosphere of cultural upheaval and crisis which helped to enliven and sharpen his own ideas, and also to shape his style of rhetoric. Chesterton was, in John Coates’s argument,

“above all an author of cultural crisis”¹⁶—and his analysis of this crisis was both original and penetrating.

Margaret Canovan argues, in her study of Chesterton as a “radical populist,” that he conceived of human need in an intensely personal way. He did not fall into abstractions like “humanity,” or harbor feelings of elitist superiority which tended to characterize his contemporaries like Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. He opposed the new welfare state legislation, which involved various compulsory measures affecting education, health, and insurance, because he thought it was paternalistic and repressive. It was an affront to the liberty of the poor, who were being treated by a new system of organized compassion as though they were a problem demanding a solution, a social problem, rather than a society of people in need—in need of freedom and independence, just as the rich enjoyed. The reformers, as Canovan succinctly puts it, added the insult of regimentation to the injury of exploitation.¹⁷ Thus, Chesterton found himself—and I think this continues to be a relevant issue for all of us, 100 years later—opposed to both the oppressors and the reformers: that is, on the one hand, the entrenched upper class rich, who tolerated a society in which one-third of the population was perpetually on the verge of starvation; and on the other hand, the humanitarian idealists, whether they were Liberals (who introduced the welfare state) or Socialists (who believed the solution was to abolish private property rather than distribute it).

Over the years, especially since World War II, we have become used to the pervasiveness of the welfare state in the form in which it has now developed; but a reaction has set in. There is the testimony of social thinkers such as the Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson, who has consistently lamented the damaging grip of dependency which the welfare state has imposed on Australia’s indigenous people.¹⁸ And most recently, of course, we have witnessed the mob riots in the U.K. These have been dubbed, with rather bitter humor, “the first bludger uprising”; enacted, not by the poor and those in extreme material need, but by the welfare-dependent and the unemployed, which represents a savage verdict on a society that, often with the best of intentions, has produced a culture of powerlessness—and also purposelessness.

At a deeper level, the cause of the U.K. riots—and they are but a dramatic instance of a broader social and spiritual malaise—is the fragmentation of the family. This process of disintegration continues apace, and it imposes a growing burden on the welfare state, not only

in direct allowances of one kind or another, but in indirect costs, especially the salaries of an expanding army of experts—counsellors, special needs teachers, medical and legal functionaries—who are enlisted as substitutes for the family. The precarious condition of the present-day family, I think, is a basic issue—a huge challenge, in fact—in contemplating the feasibility of distributism in our society.

There is a final dimension of the debates of this period which I would like to highlight—and that is the remarkably good-humored nature of them, particularly on Chesterton’s part. Hilaire Belloc, in one of his poems, wrote: “There’s nothing worth the wear of winning, but laughter and the love of friends”; and this was an encouraging feature of the intellectual exchanges of the Edwardian era. When we think of how polarized and embittered debates now tend to be, how easily arguing descends to quarrelling, it is heartening to engage in a contest of ideas about supremely important matters without its being engulfed by rancor.

The atmosphere of cultural crisis during the Edwardian era appealed to Chesterton’s debating skill and power of repartee, as well as his ready wit. For example, in the “great debate” in 1927, which was attended by a huge crowd with many people having to be turned away, Shaw tried to show the audience that the legal right attached to private property was limited, and he demonstrated this by referring to the umbrella he had with him. This umbrella, he admitted, he had borrowed that evening from his wife. Shaw said, in a jocular way, that he was goaded by some of Chesterton’s speech, and that he was tempted to get up and smite him over the head with his umbrella. When Chesterton rose to his feet, he responded that Shaw had fallen into a simple fallacy. The reason he refrained from hitting him over the head, Chesterton said, was not because Shaw did not own his umbrella but because he did not own Chesterton’s head!¹⁹

While the lively intellectual climate of Edwardian England played a key part in the cut and thrust of debate and the presentation of ideas, there was something of significance about Chesterton’s own mind that gave his philosophy of distributism a special quality and rhetorical edge—and that was the highly *integrated* nature of his thought. Chesterton’s social and political philosophy formed an integral part of his total philosophy, his overall view of life. His economic philosophy was intrinsically related to his political philosophy, and his social thinking was an essential part of his spiritual outlook.

The integration of Chesterton's thought is reflected most plainly, and revealingly, in the titles of his books of applied philosophy. His definitive statement of sociology is called *What's Wrong with the World*, and his key book on distributism carries the title of *The Outline of Sanity*. Thus they are not simply about his social and political thought, but rather about the extent to which human nature is itself integrated, and conditions in the *economy* are linked to the condition of the *society* and of the *soul*. As Dermot Quinn, has pointed out, Chesterton's social philosophy is not distinct from his wider sacramental vision. He did not have a separate category of thought marked "economics" or "social science." He had a reverence for the material universe and could see ordinary things as carrying the sacramental quality of a divine gift—the world of matter being blessed and uplifted by a divine incarnation—by what Christ had done to elevate and redeem his human creation. In Chesterton, we are always conscious of the *moral*, not just the material, economy he is addressing.

Distributism [writes Dermot Quinn] *chimed with the rest of Chesterton's thought. . . . The point and pith of Chestertonian economics is integration. Ask a Distributist the purpose of work. He will reply with unconscious wisdom that it is to keep body and soul together. Chesterton explored that insight, made it a motto.*²⁰

In *The Outline of Sanity*, he argued that real social reform—by which he meant the recovery of a distributist or ownership society—would have a *moral* effect, not just a social one. It would bring about a *more normal society*, giving rise to conditions more in harmony with human nature, and therefore more conducive to human goodness and happiness.²¹

Chesterton thought that social reform would not only have a *moral effect*, but that it could only spring from moral motives. There must be, he argued, "a moral movement," and it must be inspired by "the spirit of a religion."²² One of the chapters of *The Outline of Sanity* is called "The Religion of Small Property," in which he connects the land with spiritual life, urging a respect for the "soil" as well as for the "soul." He even advocates a "reverence" for the soil, not in any pantheistic way, but as holding an association with "holy things"—"carrying holy things with us and taking them home with us." There is here a powerful sense of consecrated matter—of the ramifications of the Incarnation of Christ; that God's assumption of human nature had a profound and pervasive impact throughout the world of created things.

There is almost a Eucharistic hint as Chesterton writes: "In the most exalted phrase, we need a real presence."²³

In a later chapter of *The Outline of Sanity*, he speaks of the recovery of a balanced social order being dependent on a spiritual vision, which will give new meaning to the old phrase, "the sacredness of private property."²⁴

Thus Chesterton's social vision had spiritual roots. He saw a deep connection between the institution of property and the Incarnation of Christ. He believed that, in creating man, the greatest gift which God had given him was *freedom*—and property, he thought, was "the essential insignia of freedom."²⁵

In his linking of social reform with a moral impulse, Chesterton is reflecting the tradition of the social encyclicals of the past century and more—beginning with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, and extending right through to Benedict's first encyclical in 2009, *Caritas in Veritate* ("Charity in Truth"). The social encyclicals are not just social. They take full account of the spiritual as well as the material nature of human beings and place the Church's social teaching at the service of human dignity. For example, Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* affirms, in the introduction, that "charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine." The social encyclicals need to be linked with the total corpus of papal teaching. There is a long-standing integration in Catholic thought, which reveals the *communitarian* vision of the Popes, the ideal of an integrated human community, so sharply at odds with the secularist notion of self-interested autonomy. This integrated vision emphasises the key principles of Catholic sociology—namely, the crucial importance of, firstly, human *solidarity* in society and, secondly, of *subsidiarity*; that is, the principle of power being exercised, and of services being provided, at the lowest practical level—beginning with the family, and only extending to larger and higher social units when necessary.

The Catholic vision combines economic thinking with spiritual and social understanding—and what God has joined in the human person should not be put asunder. A salient example, highly relevant to the development of Campion College Australia, in fact, is the public witness of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Joe de Bruyn. Joe is a well-known trade union leader who devotes the bulk of his time to improving the conditions of ordinary working people, but he is an industrial leader who has publicly opposed proposals for same-sex marriage and, at an earlier time, IVF facilities for lesbians. These have not been an irrelevant insertion of moral views into the industrial arena, but rather

a recognition of how deeply connected economic and social welfare are—that the *economic* condition of a society finally rests on a solid *family-based social* foundation. Again, the recent mob riots in the U.K., arising from destroyed family life, have graphically demonstrated this under-appreciated truth.

Thus, when we examine Chesterton's social thought, we find a mirror of papal teaching, both in the content of Chesterton's and the Church's philosophy, and in the fact that his social thought can be found in any and all of his writings, not just in those works expressly devoted to social and political themes. This is reflected, if I might emphasise it again, in the titles of Chesterton's main books on distributism—*What's Wrong with the World* (1910) and *The Outline of Sanity* (1927). These are not specialist-sounding titles but ones of general philosophy which have a social application. (Incidentally, this is what, in my experience, makes so difficult the tracing of a Chesterton quotation. He could have said what he said virtually anywhere—and so often did!)

There is one final observation I would like to offer about Chesterton's espousal of distributism—and that is, the *psychological* motives and memories from which it flowed. From his earliest childhood, Chesterton cherished a love of smallness. From his earliest years, he was, as he relates in his *Autobiography*, much more attracted by the microscope than the telescope. He wanted to understand reality in all its teeming tangibility, all the life he could touch and feel, rather than as part of a contrived intimacy. He wanted to study it through the microscope rather than the telescope. Thus his psychological experience of family life in his youth prepared him intellectually in adult life for his political imagining of distributism.

In the face of what Chesterton saw, nearly a century ago, as the trend toward totalitarian conformity, he proposed the solution of small and elementary units as the basis of human freedom and happiness. As Margaret Canovan pointed out, Chesterton wanted to cut down political units to a size compatible with democracy.²⁶

His later philosophy was grounded in childhood experiences and insights. And this psychological preparation enabled him to recognize that capitalism and socialism were not only damaging in a social sense, but that they were psychological failures as well. As Lawrence Clipper has noted, they failed psychologically because “the human mind cannot comprehend, criticize, or love human organizations on such a vast scale.” The trend of the times, he believed, should be reversed—

from ever greater concentrations of property ownership to a spreading of such ownership to ever larger numbers of people. The gain would be twofold. The *psychological* benefit would be a return to a scale of life that the individual could see and comprehend; the *social* gain would be a rebalancing of powers among numerous people. Chesterton always emphasised the psychological basis of distributism—that it was a “human” system, while other economic programs were dehumanised and “abstract.”²⁷

Having explored the intellectual and psychological roots of Chesterton's social thought, that is, the origins of distributism, I would now like to return to the issue of how applicable it is to our own time and consider what it has to say of value to us living in the early part of the twenty-first century. To do this, I will focus on two authors who have written extensively on distributism in the context of our present-day history and society. One is the American author John Médaille, whom I've already mentioned, the other is an English writer Phillip Blond.

John Médaille is the editor-in-chief of an American journal, the *Distributist Review*. He is a businessman and an academic at the University of Dallas. His recent book, *Toward a Truly Free Market* (2010), is something of a primer on distributist philosophy. It offers a practical perspective on present-day economies, particularly the United States, providing suggestions on such areas as taxation, employment, and health care.

Médaille's principal achievement, I think, is to present the *economic* case for distributism, as distinct from the moral case. He does not question the importance of a moral underpinning for a just social order—in fact, he wants economics to be seen again as a *humane* science, which is embedded in human institutions and concerned with human dignity and social justice, not a physical science uninfluenced by human intentions and needs or devoid of social meaning and impact. But he believes that the moral principles have already been elucidated. What is now needed is a presentation of distributism in economic terms. Is it *economically* feasible—and beneficial?

For example, an important chapter in Médaille's book is his distributist proposals on health care. Health care is an extremely vexatious area, especially in America, but Médaille believes that distributism can provide some useful answers to practical problems. The U.S.A. spends vast amounts on health care—proportionally more than any other country—and yet a significant percentage of the American people (nearly 50 million)

lack medical insurance and, by the usual measures (life expectancy, infant mortality, preventable diseases, etc.), the U.S.A. falls behind most other developed countries. There is not time here to go into the details of Médaille's proposals, but they are focused on the underlying causes of dissatisfaction with the health care system—in particular, the need to curb the monopolistic nature of medical patents and the monopolistic power of professional treatment—especially where this is unduly, Médaille believes, reserved for doctors when it could be spread across a range of health professionals as a new approach to “first-line care.”²⁸

To turn now to Phillip Blond. He is an English philosopher and theologian who is increasingly recognized as an international social and political thinker. He is quite young—in his 40s. After studying politics and philosophy he did his doctorate at Cambridge where he met John Milbank, the founder of the theological school known as Radical Orthodoxy (an Anglo-Catholic movement which is highly critical of modern secularism), who became a friend and mentor of Blond.

In a short time, he has attracted enormous public attention as a distinctive intellectual, starting with a series of articles in the British press and culminating in a book called *Red Tory* (2010). “Red Tory” is “Red” in the sense of wanting economic justice, especially for the poor, and it is “Tory” in its belief in “virtue, tradition, and the priority of the good.”²⁹ Red Toryism is, in Blond's understanding, a revival of an old and radical tradition of political and social conservatism applied to the twenty-first century. It combines social and economic strands—the *social* vision of a communal and co-operative culture with a *political economy* of widespread ownership of property.

Blond has won particular favour with David Cameron, who before his ascension to Prime Minister in the U.K. launched the think tank which Blond founded in 2009, ResPublica. Blond is a key intellectual architect of Cameron's reform movement known as “Big Society”—which, despite its name, favors small ownership and local action as the means of reinvigorating civic society.

Blond strikes at least two important connections with the Chestertonian heritage of social thought. One is the fundamental insight that true freedom and responsibility rest decisively on broadly based ownership—on a breaking up of concentrated wealth and power, in the economy and in the state. The second is that the economy is intrinsically connected with society, and that it is impossible to separate economic decline and social breakdown.

*The real crisis in Britain [Blond says] is the destruction of human relationships, [which is] the foundation of society... [The] poorer you are, the lonelier you are, the more costs you incur for the state, because human sociability is linked with wealth, health and all sorts of indicators from mental illness to obesity.*³⁰

Thus, Blond believes that economics needs to be reunited with ethics—as it once was. He reminds us that Adam Smith, the eighteenth-century author of *The Wealth of Nations* and often regarded as the father of modern economics, was a professor of moral philosophy.

While Blond draws on these earlier insights about the importance of private ownership and the interdependence of the economy and society, I think he has developed this tradition of social thought in important new ways. Moreover, he has achieved a distinctive rhetoric, a defining language, for expressing this tradition to a new generation. He generally avoids the term “distributism,” for example, sharing Chesterton's view that it is “awkward” and inelegant. He uses the term “ownership” rather than “property,” as denoting more fully the condition which forms the basis of economic and social freedom.

In developing this tradition of social thought, Blond reveals sharp insight into the connections between the market and the state, and the ways in which they tend to conspire, now on a global scale, to pervert the functioning of a truly free market. Blond believes that the emblems of today's “free market” are monopoly finance, big business, and a deregulated system of global capitalism. The benefits have mainly accrued to the top, the middle class has experienced a rise in income but it is offset by huge debt, and the poor have sunk lower. “This type of free market,” says Blond, “has effectively stripped the poor of capital, converted them into a new serfdom and gradually increased the number of that class by debt and low wages.”³¹

Blond has, of course, as we also have, the great advantage of experiencing fully what Chesterton could only foresee—the unfolding of economic trends with huge social and even spiritual consequences. He has been able to see, in the hundred years since Chesterton began writing, the impending collapse of two states—the old welfare state (born in the time of Chesterton) and the new market state (which developed after Chesterton died, and is an extraordinary alliance of political and financial power). Both of these states are proving unsustainable. The welfare state cannot survive in its present form because the demographic decline of the West means that the recipients of the welfare state are

growing at a faster rate than the taxpayers who support them. The market state can only continue, weighed down as it is by massive and growing debt, by being bailed out by governments. Private debt becomes public debt, with taxpayers' money propping up failed private enterprises of concentrated wealth—what Blond calls “a massive public underwriting of private risk.”³² The private risk, of course, was finally not accepted by those who lost money, as they did not hesitate to seek government handouts—and thereby become dependent on the state. Thus, in both cases, the welfare state and the market state, the essentially monopolistic condition of the economy has not changed.

Blond recognizes the fundamental affinities between Big Business and Big Government which Chesterton and Belloc perceived, but he has seen new manifestations of their essential likeness. He believes that the ruling ideological orthodoxies of recent decades, whether based on government control or market license, have failed. Both the Right and the Left, as traditionally defined, have run out of steam. These conventional divides—of the Right and the Left—are increasingly obsolete and irrelevant. The subtitle of Blond's book, in fact, is “How the Left and Right Have Broken Britain and How We Can Fix It”; and the motto of his think tank, ResPublica, is “Changing the Terms of Debate,” a clear indication of the radical nature of its purpose. The Right is essentially pro-market and the Left tends to oppose everything except the state. In practice, as Chesterton argued, they both ultimately fail because they share a common flaw—the market-driven Right and the statist Left have both conspired in concentrating wealth.³³ They have both caused ordinary people to be disempowered and disenfranchised. The social effect of this succession of mistakes—of an unrestrained market, on the one hand, and an unlimited state, on the other—is profound. Blond believes that we have become “a bipolar nation,” which involves the state and the citizenry in a perverse relationship—a state that is centralized and bureaucratic, presiding over a citizenry which is fragmented and disempowered, and increasingly made up of isolated people and groups that no longer constitute a community. The result is a highly dysfunctional society.

How to combat these conditions which now seem so entrenched? As an alternative to this combination of an unrestrained market and an unlimited state, Blond proposes what he calls “a new political settlement.” He advocates a “conservative radicalism,” a social philosophy which is largely distributist in its inspiration and

intention. He recalls Edmund Burke's famous statement on the importance of the little platoons of family and civic association, which are, Burke said, “the first principle of public affections.”³⁴ So Blond sees the need for a self-organizing citizenry—networks of self-help which can transform a community. (In Australia, we think of the manifestations of this after the Brisbane floods last January, when huge numbers of volunteers emerged to help communities clean up their houses and streets.) Blond sees emerging, as a successor to the welfare state and the market state, a new social entity, which he calls the “civic state.” Such a state challenges the passive dependency of state welfarism, on the one hand, and the entrenched imbalances in access to capital, on the other hand, which have characterised the neo-liberal market philosophy. He believes that the civic state will begin to rebuild a spirit of social cohesion and an approach to decision-making which takes account of social as well as economic factors.

Blond proposes specific solutions, mainly aimed at freeing the poor from welfare dependence through the generation of asset independence—of ownership of property. He recommends recapitalizing the poor, and helping ordinary people gain new assets; relocalizing the banking system, and breaking up big business monopolies and developing local capital so as to open the pathways to asset ownership. All of these initiatives are designed to foster a spirit of local participation, leading to new and vibrant local communities and creating what Blond calls “a myriad of reciprocal and mutual duties and responsibilities.”³⁵ The ultimate purpose is to create multiple centres of wealth, innovation, and ownership.

How is the breaking up of large entities, whether public or private, to take place in practice? The challenges are unmistakable—in particular, the extent to which the ideal of distributed ownership can be reconciled with present-day commercial and political realities. On the one hand, the broadening of ownership and the spur to active citizenship at the local level, such as the “Big Society” in Britain is promoting, has to allow for the economic aspirations of the most ambitious and hard-working, and not act as a brake on entrepreneurship. On the other hand, the political need for large public entities, providing vital services such as electricity, and the community value of large private companies offering economies of scale, such as car manufacturers, are clear and difficult to deny.

Chesterton himself recognised these commercial and political realities. In *The Outline of Sanity*, he noted

the importance of “a sense of proportion” in any social and economic order, and in his debate with Bernard Shaw, he accepted the need for balance between individual ownership on a wide scale and public ownership in certain areas of corporate enterprise and service.³⁶

In contemplating a future in which distributism could be applied effectively, John Médaille and Phillip Blond focus on the economic and social factors. This emphasis is entirely appropriate—and making the economic case (as distinct from the moral one), showing how distributism could work in a modern economy, has probably been underplayed in the 120 years since *Rerum Novarum* appeared. The social factors, too, are obviously crucial, and as Chesterton himself did, and Phillip Blond is now strengthening, the connections between society and the economy need to be more clearly and fully laid out. However, apart from the economic and social realities, there is another factor of importance—and that is the *psychological* aspects of distributism. How open to such change—the wide distribution of property—is the community at large? At first this may seem a ridiculous rhetorical question. The focus on private property and on the wide distribution of ownership is plainly appealing. Yet, at a deeper level, it may find huge psychological resistance. Both Chesterton and Belloc addressed this psychological obstacle in their writings on distributism. They felt that a servile attitude had gained hold in the minds and hearts of their people, after several centuries of Big Business, with its relentless advertising that promotes the conversion of wants into needs, and then the foreseeable triumph of Big Government, with its pervasive provision of services and support systems. The force of Big Business had stimulated a culture of high—and rising—expectations that would be formidably hard to dampen, and the emerging culture of Big Government would heighten these expectations, creating a culture of entitlement, so that the availability of pensions and payments from the state would become an unquestioned right, expected and guaranteed, and not just a powerful aspiration, applied and paid for.

In the early writings of distributists, especially Chesterton and Belloc, there is a lurking fear that many people may have become so inured to the experience of security, of the sanctuary of dependence, that they would resolve the tension between security and liberty by surrendering liberty—and finding a certain satisfaction in being servile. Chesterton, in *The Outline of Sanity*, noted the existence of a “servile disposition,” and he invoked a memorable phrase to describe this condition—“a catastrophe of contentment,”³⁷ as he put

it, which can envelop large numbers of people. Belloc, in *The Servile State* (1912), argued that the people at large retain what he called “the instinct of ownership,” but that our society had now reached a point where its modes of thought and habit were permeated by collectivist assumptions and expectations which did not readily lend themselves to a distributist solution. The shift from a capitalist to a collectivist arrangement—with the state taking over private entities—is easily understood. But to go from a concentration of property to a broad distribution of ownership is, in Belloc’s words, “working against the grain.” Will men want to own?, Belloc asks dramatically, almost as if it were a question he is afraid to answer—though is nonetheless brave enough to ask.³⁸ Ordinary people must desire economic freedom sufficiently to undertake its burdens.

What burdens are those? Essentially, I think, they are the burdens of personal responsibility and risk-taking. For private property implies the acceptance—and even the enforcement—of personal responsibility. It is not necessarily an easy path to happiness, for freedom is a fraught condition—and a perpetually endangered gift. Both Chesterton and Belloc nursed the fear that the psychology of a society conditioned by capitalism and socialism might induce people to yield on liberty—to trade liberty, as it were, for security and sufficiency. We can become so used to passing on responsibility (and especially blame) to others, especially the state, that it could require a radical reawakening of the appetite for freedom to prepare us to exercise it once again.

Are there signs of hope today as we ponder the possible future of Chesterton’s—and the Church’s—social philosophy? Apart from the practical examples of “distributism in action” which are presented in John Médaille’s book, it is possible to see, in the changes that have taken place in recent decades, signs of power being redistributed. The signs, of course, are mixed, but let me briefly mention two—one in the political sphere, the other in the area of technology.

In politics, we see in many countries the growing phenomenon of centralized power under challenge, whether in the Western democracies or the nations of the Middle East. The Canadian political scientist Donald J. Savrie has argued that the age of the mass party has ended and splinter groups of various kinds are arising which enter into temporary alliances in order to exercise power.³⁹ Where party government continues, leadership is becoming more personalized—even to the point of celebrity-like status in societies saturated by 24-hour news and entertainment media.

Yet there are countervailing forces to this breakup of traditional power, forces which do not favor arrangements along distributist lines. We can cite the huge influence now exercised by financial markets, so that power in the traditional political arena is diminishing and temporary alliances are emerging. There is an intermingling of government and commercial companies in public-private partnerships and other mechanisms—shared arrangements between two sectors, the public and the private, whose values are different and perhaps incompatible, but which have arisen as a result of government sclerosis, of the growing inability of government and its bureaucratic instruments to deliver public services and produce policy results.

We can note the force of globalization, which is transforming the nature of politics—and of political decision-making, now international in its scope rather than simply national or local. At times these new configurations of power and interdependency find expression in new structures, such as the European Union and a common currency (the Euro), or they are relatively unregulated, as in the case of Australia's relationship with China.

A great deal more could be said on this topic, the changing nature of politics and power, but let me turn to the area of technology, especially personal technology and social media, and consider what developments there may be favoring a distributist approach to contemporary society.

In recent decades, we have seen, of course, an explosion of communications media and a certain breaking up of concentrated power. From the advent of television more than half a century ago, when only a few networks were dominant, there has grown a multiplicity of channels through pay television—the phenomenon of narrowcasting as well as broadcasting. But the newer media are even more striking—the Internet, the spread of laptops and iPads, and the use of social media like Facebook and Twitter. These personal and social technologies, it seems to me, are double-edged in relation to a distributist philosophy. On the one hand, they are private and personal, giving individuals freedom to access and store what information they wish and communicate with whomever they like. But on the other hand, they are public instruments, dependent on vast networks and global vendors (such as Google) and extremely vulnerable to commercial manipulation and social mischief. This ambiguity is reflected in the old saying that technological devices have the countenance of a servant, but the heart of a slave master. It is an

intriguing question as to whether or not they represent a new and more subtle version of the “servile state.”

This is also a topic for further exploration and discussion, but the pervasiveness of social media is clearly relevant to future possibilities for distributism as a social philosophy.

So, what is to become of the pickpocket? Do we continue to accept him as a private operator in the marketplace (the capitalist approach), or do we legitimize him—and enlist him as an agent of the state (the socialist solution), perhaps working as fresh recruits for the Tax Office or Social Security? Or do we free all pickpockets from their practical addiction and make them distributists, so that they own their own pockets and can start making their own trousers? ❧

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ENDNOTES

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- 24 *Ibid.*, 265. "...I confess I know only one thing that will thus give to a new soil the sanctity of something already old and full of mystical affections. And that thing is a shrine—the real presence of a sacramental religion."
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- 38 Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State* (London: T.N. Foulis, 1912), 108, 111. In *The Crisis of Our Civilization* (1937), 205, Belloc made the point even more tellingly: "The task [of restoring private property as a general institution in society is impossible unless there be still left in the mass of men a sufficient desire for economic independence to urge them towards its attainment. You can give political independence by a stroke of the pen; you can declare slaves to be free or give the vote to men who have hitherto had no vote; but you cannot give property to men or families as a permanent possession unless they desire economic freedom sufficiently to be willing to undertake its burdens." See also Ward, *Return to Chesterton*, 228, 230.
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Cameron: The Liberal Society and Its Defense

by Jude P. Dougherty
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In a speech delivered at the 47th Munich Security Conference early this year, British Prime Minister David Cameron addressed the threat of terrorism in Western Europe. "Europe," he said, "needs to wake up to what is happening in our own countries. We won't defeat terrorism by the actions we take outside our own borders."

He goes on to discuss the motivation of those who commit acts of violence. He recognizes that the motivation is ideological and identifies it as "Islamic extremism," which he is quick to distinguish from Islam itself. "Islam," he says, "is observed peacefully and devoutly by over a billion people." True enough, but then Cameron goes on to tell his listeners that Islam, as a religion, and the political ideology that motivates terrorists are two different things. "We need

to be clear," he insists, "Islamist extremism and Islam are not the same thing."

Of course any honest student of the Qur'an, the Hadiths, the Sunna, and the history of Islamic conquest, who knows as well the present treatment of Christians within Islamic lands, knows that the distinction is false. It is difficult to believe that Cameron could be ignorant of the many studies that attest to Islamic aggression and its subjugation of conquered peoples. Should Cameron be accused of ignorance, duplicity, or mere cowardliness? Rightly he calls on Europeans to recognize the domestic threat, yet political considerations prevent him from speaking the whole truth. So it is then: a misinterpretation of Islam is the problem, not Islam itself. Defined as such, how then to confront the problem? Cameron, of course, is living with the result of past immigration policy. In the year ending September 2010, for example, 586,000 immigrants came to live in Britain, most from Islamic countries. One source estimates

that Britain has experienced an increase of 2.8 million Muslims since 2001.

Cameron acknowledges that Muslim immigrants find it difficult to identify with British culture. The fault is ours, he argues: “Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they belong.” By leaving young Muslims rootless, bereft of something they can believe in, we render them vulnerable to a process of Islamic radicalization. Cameron notes that in some mosques preachers of hate build upon this sense of alienation among the youth. “Dynamic leaders promote separatism by encouraging Muslims to define themselves solely in terms of their religion.”

What can be done? We must, Cameron continues, confront and undermine extremist ideology. “We must ban preachers of hate from coming to our countries. We must proscribe organizations that incite terrorism.... Governments must also be shrewder in dealing with those that, while not violent, are certainly, in some cases, part of the problem.... Let us give voice to those followers of Islam in our own countries—the vast unheard of majority—who despise the extremists and their world view.”

Cameron then recommends the building of “stronger societies and identities at home” through the promulgation of liberal values, i.e., freedom of speech,

freedom of worship, democracy, rule of law, equal rights, regardless of race, sex, or sexuality. This defines us as a society. Immigrants must not only learn the language of their new home but become educated in the elements of our common culture. “At stake are not just lives, it is our way of life.” Here Cameron may have abandoned the moral high ground. It is one thing to insist that immigrants learn the language of their adopted country, another thing to insist that they embrace the common culture. The culture which Cameron invites the immigrant to adopt is largely a liberal, secular, anti-Christian, and materialistic culture.

It is by no means certain that European culture can withstand even a peaceful Islamic threat. Absent Christianity what is there to defend? The battle for the soul of Europe may have already been decided on the demographic plain. Europe’s Muslim population is rising ten times faster than the rest of society. At present rates, some predict an Islamic majority by mid-century.

Cameron is rightly worried that the culture of what was once called “Christendom” may be lost. Obeisant to the liberal left, he can’t defend Europe’s Christian roots; subservient to political correctness, he cannot identify Islam as a threat. The enemy is identified as Islamic extremism. Some future historian may find that terrorism was but a minor threat on the way to Islamic dominance at the polls. The fragility of democracy in Britain is ever more evident with each passing census. ❧

The Loss of Maritain’s America

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As Prime Minister Nicholas Sarkozy grapples with the issue of French identity, one is drawn to the work of another Frenchman, Jacques Maritain, who attempted to take the measure, not of France but of American society in a similarly troubled time. In his 1958 work, *Reflections on America*, Maritain, in the spirit of Tocqueville, attempted to capture the American temperament as distinct from that of his native France, indeed, as distinct from that of Europe as a whole. Maritain was lecturing

in North America when World War II broke out, and he remained in the United States throughout the war. His *Reflections* may be read as a love letter to America, as an expression of gratitude to his host country and to the people he came to appreciate. Sadly, the America described by Maritain in his 1958 assessment no longer exists. Some may say that, given Maritain’s romantic account, it never existed.¹

Maritain characterizes the American spirit as “one grounded in a sense of community, not in a set of abstract slogans or lofty ideals.” He viewed the country as “a swarming multiplicity of particular communities, self-organized groups, associations, unions, sodalities,

vocational and religious brotherhoods in which men join forces with one another at the elementary level of their everyday concerns and interests.”² In that light he could praise Martin Luther King for his Southern leadership and Saul Alinsky as a community organizer. With the principle of subsidiarity in mind, he saw in the “organic multiplicity” of these self-generated independent communities not only efficiency but a check on the power of the federal state.

Maritain found America to be a classless society in spite of an obvious disparity of income between rich and poor. The common man, in his experience, was neither servile nor arrogant. Maritain praised the ability of the country to integrate newcomers into the larger society, immigrants who entered the country by virtue of their own free choice. Recognizing that the country was comprised of men of different spiritual lineages, he nevertheless spoke of the United States as a religious commonwealth. He was appreciative of the insight of Will Herberg, a Jewish sociologist who was writing at the time.³ Herberg is remembered for his dictum, “To be an American is to be religious, and to be religious is to be religious in one of three ways, as a Protestant, Catholic or Jew.” Maritain, himself, singled out the Jews for playing an essential and indispensable role in the dynamic ferment of American life.

Maritain acknowledged a growing trend toward secularism but hoped for an intelligent cooperation between church and state. He feared a “temporalized religious inspiration” that could over time become institutionalized in the civic structures themselves, so much so that it would lose its essential supernatural character. With his friend, Barbara Ward, he believed that a recovery of faith in God is a necessary condition of Western freedom.⁴ “There is,” he wrote, “a possibility that in the course of centuries, America may become *embourgeoisée*—a nation interested only in its own material welfare and power.” Having said that he adds, “The realization of such a possibility is, to my mind, improbable.” He concludes his tribute with, “The great and admirable strength of America consists in this, that America is truly the American people.”

Today, more than 50 years later, any reflective person is apt to notice the difference between Maritain’s America and that of the present. A largely uneducated

public has instantiated an anti-Christian, socialist regime at the federal level. A number of states now prevent the display of the Ten Commandments in classrooms and in the halls of the judiciary. Saul Alinsky’s community initiative, perhaps never fully understood by Maritain, has been used to achieve ends Maritain never envisaged. Martin Luther King’s laudable movement inspired Lyndon Johnson’s affirmative action legislation with disastrous effects that are now frequently acknowledged. The American character which Maritain lauded has been subverted by a flawed immigration policy and by the intellectual elite’s embrace of what we know as “multiculturalism” and “globalization.” The public influence of Christianity has been muted. The once strong Catholic institutions of higher education are barely distinguishable from their state-supported counterparts. Religion has become so identified with almsgiving that Sunday worship seems at times merely a backdrop for yet another charitable appeal.

The picture would indeed be bleak were it not for the leadership of Benedict XVI, who in multiple addresses has called attention to the time-transcendent teaching of the Church and to her intellectual and moral role in the shaping of Western culture. His is a call for an intellectual revival that recognizes the Church’s past role and its continuing necessity as a unifying element.⁵ Indeed, it is the Church which has carried the intellectual mainstream through the ages, against which the bogus canons of the contemporary academy are to be measured. From a historical perspective, the moral and social teaching associated with Christianity not only provided the unifying principle of Western nations in their founding but also, to the extent observed, guaranteed family stability, the backbone of any nation. ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jacques Maritain. *Reflections on America* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958).
- 2 *Ibid.*, 162.
- 3 Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (New York: Doubleday, 1955).
- 4 Cf. Barbara Ward. *Faith and Freedom*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1954).
- 5 A recent example is Benedict’s reflection on the role which the Church played in the unification of Italy. Cf. “Pope Reminds Italy of Its Catholic Identity: Reflections on the 150 Anniversary of *Il Risorgimento*,” As reported by Zenit.org, 3/16/11).

Anarchists among Us

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Do we dare call them “anarchists”—environmentalists, federal regulators, whimsical judges, and other officials who seem to have abandoned the rule of law, if not reason itself? Without doubt the most serious form of anarchy is that perpetrated by the intellectuals. By definition an anarchist is one who disregards law and order, challenges inherited and cherished traditions, or in the case of the intellectual, one who embraces a political or social ideology at the expense of reasoned and unbiased examination of cultural phenomena. That a state of cultural and political disorder exists within both the European Union and the United States is widely acknowledged and hardly needs illustration. Western nations on both sides of the Atlantic are confronted by massive immigrations of alien peoples who refuse assimilation within their adopted country and demand accommodation for the customs they bring. The host countries themselves find it difficult to agree with respect to what may be demanded of the newcomer. Confusion abounds even with respect to what constitutes the national identity that the newcomer is encouraged to adopt. No one has asserted this more clearly than Pierre Manent in his book, *Democracy without Nations?: The Fate of Self-Government in Europe*.¹ Manent is convinced that Europe is on the verge of self-destruction. The democratic nation, he fears, has been lost in Europe, the very first place it appeared. “The European Union’s political contrivances,” he writes, “have become more and more artificial. With each day they recede further from the natural desires and movements of their citizens’ souls.”² A nation, he holds, is the same people living in the same place, observing the same customs, abiding by the same moral principles. In Manent’s judgment, Europe’s governing classes, without explicitly saying so, aspire to create a homogeneous and limitless human world. In fact, given its intellectual climate, what distinguishes Europeans from one another and others cannot be evaluated or even publicly discussed.

Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, both Canadians, in a recent work claim that “[o]ne of the most important challenges facing contemporary societies is how to manage moral and religious diversity.”³ Taylor

and Maclure find that a broad consensus exists to the effect that “secularism is an essential component of any liberal democracy comprised of citizens who adhere to a plurality of conceptions of the world and of the good, whether these conceptions be religious, spiritual, or secular.”⁴ Secularism they define as “a political and legal system whose function is to establish a certain distance between the state and religion.”⁵ But as conceived by Taylor and Maclure, it is more than that. The state in their view must be neutral toward the multiple values, beliefs, and life plans of citizens within modern societies. The state must be the state of all citizens and not identify itself with one particular religion or world view. And yet, “[a] liberal and democratic society cannot remain indifferent to certain core principles such as human dignity, basic human rights, and popular sovereignty.”⁶ Several questions are clearly begged. Is the human intellect so impoverished that it cannot discern what leads to personal freedom and social equanimity? How can there be a society unless there is a certain cultural unity among the people who presumably form it? The core principles alluded to are not universal or found in the culture of all who seek asylum in the West. Still, Taylor and Maclure maintain: “In showing itself to be agnostic on questions of the aims of human existence, the secular state recognizes the sovereignty of the person in his or her choice of conscience.”⁷ This amounts to an invitation to civil war, as like-minded individuals group for ascendancy. Even within a Muslim country, where Islam is proclaimed in common, Sunni and Shi’a vie for control.

A compelling response to Taylor and Maclure is to be found in a recent work by Marcello Pera, former president of the Italian Senate, now professor of political philosophy at the Pontifical Lateran University, Rome.⁸ Pera takes the title of his book, *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians* from an essay by Benedetto Croce, a professed atheist who nevertheless said of *we Europeans*, “Why We Cannot but Call Ourselves Christian.” Croce, in spite of his materialism, was convinced that the objective and transcendent formulation of man’s dignity and freedom was to be found in Christianity. Pera is specific: “We should call ourselves Christian if we want to maintain our liberties and preserve our civilization.... If, as Thomas Jefferson claimed, our liberties must have, or must be felt as if they had,

a religious foundation in order to bind the union together, then today's secularized Europe, which rejects that foundation, can never be politically united."⁹ Pera continues, "Unlike Americans, Europeans cannot adopt a constitution beginning with the words *We the people* because 'the people' must exist as a moral and spiritual community before such a constitution could be conceived and asked for."¹⁰ The version of the European Constitution that was finally adopted after being rejected in popular referendums by the French and the Dutch made no reference to God or to Christianity and amounted to no more than a treaty among nations.

In addressing the moral decline which he finds on both sides of the Atlantic, Pera writes: "Liberal civilization was born in defense of the negative liberties of man. When the positive liberties of citizens burgeoned forth, everything started changing. The liberal state first became democratic, next paternalistic, and finally entered the totalitarian phase of the dictatorship of the majority and the tyranny of absolute authorities. No aspect of life today, from cradle to the grave, has been left untouched by legislation, and most of all by the verdicts of judges or supreme courts, or by the decisions of supranational institutions."¹¹ He fears that within democracies decisional authority is today being

handed over to powerful interest groups and bureaucracies. Good and evil, he maintains, in the absence of an authoritative moral tradition tend to be determined by parliamentary vote.

Pera lauds Benedict XVI for his effort to awaken European intellectuals to the Christian roots of the order and freedoms they take for granted. The Holy Father himself has provided a foreword to this volume. ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Pierre Manent, *Democracy without Nations?: The Fate of Self-Government in Europe*, translated from the French with an introduction by Paul Seaton (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2007).
- 2 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 3 Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, translated by Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).
- 4 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 8 Marcello Pera, *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians* (New York: Encounter Books, 2011).
- 9 *Ibid.*, 8–9.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 11 *Ibid.*

Prenatal Adoption: Did the CDF Close the Door on Debate?

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I remember vividly my excitement three years ago the day *Dignitas personae* was made public. I had recently written a position paper on the question of "embryo adoption," and I rushed to the document hoping to find the definitive answer I had long been looking for. I was immediately disappointed to find a lacuna—the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) had left the question open! Thinking surely I had misread, I found source after source that confirmed my understanding that theologians were still free to debate the morality of "prenatal adoption." So, for the last few years, I have discussed this question

with theologians and students alike. Indeed, the topic has been debated at length in a spirit of collegiality—and with a shared understanding that we were free to do so because there existed, to our understanding, no definitive Magisterial teaching that had closed the issue.

In recent months, a number of people have articulated a different opinion. They argue that not only is prenatal adoption immoral, but that the CDF deliberately and explicitly closed the issue. This assertion generally flows from the following line of thought: "The norms established by *Dignitas personae* n. 19 were issued by the CDF in order to end the long debate amongst ethicists concerning the matter of prenatal adoption. This document," they claim, "put an end to the discussions that were legitimate prior to its release, because

in it the CDF definitively stated that embryo adoption should not be allowed.” Furthermore, Catholics, so the argument goes, must assent to this teaching at the peril of their union with the Magisterium of Pope Benedict XVI. Interestingly, I have found that this position is defended with great vigor by many of those who are actively involved in the pro-life movement and who are deeply passionate about the defense of human life.

I will attempt here to bring some clarity to this matter. It is important first of all to distinguish between the two separate questions at hand: first, whether “prenatal adoption” itself is objectively good or evil, and second, whether the question of “prenatal adoption” was definitively answered in the negative by *Dignitas personae*, such that to support the practice is to dissent from Magisterial teaching. These are related but distinct questions. The former is the primary issue that so many have vigorously debated prior to and following the publication of *Dignitas personae*. This article, however, will focus exclusively on the latter. I will argue that absent a deliberate, explicit, or implicit condemnation of the object of “prenatal adoption,” it remains, without a doubt, an open question. I arrive at this position based on the shared understanding of Catholic theologians who are faithful to the Magisterium, and by means of an examination of the internal structure and argumentation of *Dignitas personae* itself.

The Doctrinal Weight and Authority of *Dignitas Personae*

In response to the manifold technological advances since *Donum vitae* was published in 1987, the CDF recognized the need to respond to the new bioethical questions that had emerged, and so in late 2008 issued *Dignitas personae*. This document affirmed the dignity of every person, and provided the instruction necessary for the proper formation of consciences. “Addressed to the Catholic faithful and to all who seek the truth,” *Dignitas personae* is a doctrinal work which participates in the ordinary Magisterium of Pope Benedict.¹ As such, the faithful are to respond to “the contents of this Instruction with the religious assent of their spirit.”² “Prior to the publication of a definitive statement such as *Dignitas personae* (as well as in the midst of any debate), the mark of faithful Catholic theologians is a readiness and a willingness to amend an erroneous opinion. This was the very attitude of the theologians who debated the question of prenatal adoption prior to the publication of

this document.³ Similarly, I wish to express my own willingness to abandon my position if the CDF or the Holy Father were to state that the issue of “prenatal adoption” is no longer up for discussion. For that matter, I remain open to abandoning my position if compelling arguments were to prove it to be inadequate or contrary to Magisterial teaching.

The Question Remains Open: An Argument from Consensus and Authority

From the beginning, the understanding of the academic community was that this debate was not yet closed. As a matter of fact, among the official statements made by the four experts during the December 12, 2008 press conference that introduced *Dignitas personae*, there was not one speaker who claimed that the issue was closed. Maria Luisa di Pietro, who addressed the relevant section (n. 19) in her statement, simply quoted the document itself, and added no personal interpretation, observation, or clarification of the matter. It was for this reason that, during a question and answer period following the official statements, Monsignor Fisichella was asked if the matter was still open. Monsignor (then President of the Pontifical Academy for Life, the primary advisory body to the CDF on this issue) stated very plainly that “the discussion is still open.”⁴ The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops articulated the same understanding:

Proposals for “adoption” of abandoned or unwanted frozen embryos are also found to pose problems, because the Church opposes use of the gametes or bodies of others who are outside the marital covenant for reproduction. **The document raises cautions or problems about these new issues but does not formally make a definitive judgment against them.**⁵

That there was no objections made to the statements made by Monsignor Fisichella or the USCCB lends credence to the claim that the Congregation, as a matter of fact, left the issue open. This is the understanding of an overwhelming number of members of the academic community who are demonstrably faithful to Magisterial teaching.⁶ For this reason, the question of the morality of the issue continues to be debated in the most prestigious and faithful bioethics journals. For example, *The Linacre Quarterly* and *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* both continue to

receive submissions from and publish authors who wish to weigh in on the morality of the act. If it were a settled question this would not be the case since these journals are “committed to publishing material that is consonant with the magisterium of the Church.”⁷ Consider, for example, the work of Luke Gormally, who believes “it would be quite inappropriate for anyone to recommend, approve, or engage in embryo adoption.”⁸ Nonetheless, Gormally states, “*Dignitas personae* can hardly be construed as offering well-defined teaching.” Consider also, the recent statement by William E. May:

I have discussed this issue with many colleagues—in particular, colleagues who think that it is not morally justifiable to “adopt” frozen and abandoned embryos. Even though they hold this view, they agree that DP’s teaching on the matter is not at all clear, that the question is not closed, and that one can adopt such embryos so long as there is no complicity with those who “produced” them *in vitro*.⁹

This understanding is so widely held that the National Catholic Bioethics Center has even staged a debate in a non-academic web forum in order to illustrate to the common person in the pew how some questions remain open with faithful theologians disagreeing on the issues.¹⁰ In the debate, John Haas argued that “prenatal adoption” is immoral while Stephen Napier, his employee, argued that it is not. Would John Haas, a member of the governing council of the Pontifical Academy of Life and President of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, permit such public positions by his employees if said position was contrary to the expressed Magisterium of Pope Benedict? At best, one might argue that a small minority of theologians believe *Dignitas personae* deliberately ended discussion of the issue, but the indisputable conclusion of the vast majority is clear: the CDF “does not formally make a definitive judgment against” prenatal adoption itself.

Three Arguments from the Document Itself

Despite the almost unanimous agreement among faithful ethicists, it is important to examine evidence within *Dignitas personae* itself. I would like to offer three distinct but related arguments derived from the text: 1) When *Dignitas personae* condemns human acts it does so clearly and unequivocally. The Congregation does not

offer such a condemnation with this issue. 2) *Dignitas personae* only criticizes problems with prenatal adoption which are circumstantial, but not the object of the act itself. 3) In addressing solutions to the problem of frozen embryos, the document does not offer a substantive new development in definitive teaching concerning the moral quality of the object of the act.

Dignitas personae offers a moral evaluation of a host of human acts. It addresses all three elements of the human act—object, intention, and circumstances—but it tends to do so unevenly, as it is often unnecessary to address all three elements at a given point. The document, however, is very clear when it declares that an act is evil and not an open matter. When the object is evil, the language allows for no equivocation. A sampling of the phrases used to offer a clear negative evaluation of the object of an act include “truly deplorable,” “intrinsically illicit,” “not ethically acceptable,” “shameful and utterly reprehensible,” “an absolutely clear prohibition.” The CDF does not use such negative language to condemn the object of prenatal adoption. Conversely (though more rarely), when the Church offers a positive evaluation of the moral object of an act it uses such phrases as “in principle morally licit” and “no moral objections.” *Dignitas personae* does not use such language to describe the object of prenatal adoption. As a matter of fact, the document seems to give no explicit moral evaluation of the object whatsoever. As John Grabowski has pointed out, “it does not mention the moral status of the object in embryo adoption at all.”¹¹

It is noteworthy, however, that the Congregation introduces, for the first time in a Magisterial document, a new phrase: “prenatal adoption.” This choice of words is not unimportant since it implies that this act is not considered to be an act of surrogacy. If the CDF had used the word “surrogacy” it would have indicated a clear prohibition of the act chosen because of the Church’s clear teaching against surrogacy.¹² Furthermore, the Congregation’s choice of wording serves to distinguish this act from three other human acts discussed in n. 19, “*use of embryos for research*,” “*use of embryos... for the treatment of disease*,” and use of these embryos “*as a treatment for infertility*.” The CDF gives a very clear negative evaluation of each of these three acts saying they are “obviously unacceptable,” “not ethically acceptable,” and “illicit.” As to the use of embryos as a means to treat infertility, the CDF says this object is “not ethically acceptable” because it is “illicit” for the same reasons *in vitro* fertilization and surrogacy are intrinsically evil.¹³ No such explicit language is used in describing

prenatal adoption. The CDF had the opportunity to clearly condemn the object of prenatal adoption and it chose not to do so. Surely this cannot be considered accidental?¹⁴

The CDF Criticizes Circumstances, Not the Object

Nonetheless, it would be disingenuous to suggest that the Congregation is completely neutral toward prenatal adoption. They write, “This proposal, praiseworthy with regard to the intention of respecting and defending human life, presents however various problems not dissimilar to those mentioned above.” The problems “mentioned above” represent a reference to the congregation’s final critique of the use of embryos as a treatment for infertility, “problems of a medical, psychological and legal nature.”¹⁵ It is important to note that these problems are of a circumstantial nature, and are not *per se* ordered to the object itself—they are contingent to the means chosen, or, the object of prenatal adoption and thus circumstances that surround such a choice. As such, the *criticism of the CDF is directed toward the unjust situation which is concomitant to the object of prenatal adoption, not prenatal adoption itself*. These problems are related to the “situation of injustice” and the environment of absurdity that the entire IVF industry has created through production and freezing of embryonic human beings outside of the marital act.

This understanding (that the problems which concern the CDF are circumstantial in nature) is further indicated by the final paragraph of number 19 cited below, in full.

All things considered, it needs to be recognized that the thousands of abandoned embryos represent a *situation of injustice which in fact cannot be resolved*. Therefore John Paul II made an “appeal to the conscience of the world’s scientific authorities and in particular to doctors, that the production of human embryos be halted, taking into account that there seems to be no morally licit solution regarding the human destiny of the thousands and thousands of “frozen” embryos which are and remain the subjects of essential rights and should therefore be protected by law as human persons.”

Here what cannot be resolved are the circumstances; the situation itself is deemed unjust. The object chosen by prenatal adoption is not mentioned here. If it had been—if the Congregation had employed language along the lines of “All things considered, and in spite of

a good intention, prenatal adoption, like in vitro fertilization and the freezing of embryos, is an unjust act which offends the dignity of the person”—we would have a clear indication that prenatal adoption is intrinsically immoral. But no such language is used, indicating that while the circumstances are problematic, the object of prenatal adoption itself may not be.

Lack of Negative Development in Church Teaching Regarding the Moral Object

It has been claimed that the final paragraph of no. 19 was inserted into *Dignitas personae* so as to close the question. If it was not for this end, it is argued, the paragraph would be without purpose. The final paragraph contains two sentences. The first sentence, as I have argued in the previous section, does not condemn embryo adoption itself; its purpose is to condemn the circumstances surrounding this choice—the situation of injustice. As such, it does not offer new definitive teaching and is a summary of what we already knew prior to the issuance of *Dignitas personae*. The final sentence of n. 19, cited above, adds weight to this understanding. Those who claim embryo adoption is a closed issue have relied on the phrase “seems to be no morally licit solution” to argue their point. However, two things need to be mentioned here. First, “seems to be” is not the sort of language that is used to condemn the object of human acts in Church documents. To say “seems to be” is to deliberately leave “wiggle-room,” and to indicate that there might still be a solution. This is no absolute prohibition made by the CDF or Blessed Pope John Paul II, the original author of the sentence. Secondly, this is a restatement of the late Holy Father’s position from a 1996 speech, and does not offer a development in teaching. As such, this citation implies that we are, as regards the intrinsic morality of prenatal adoption, in the same place we were prior to the issuance of *Dignitas personae*. That is, this citation makes it clear that this is an open question.

Conclusion

We are limited here to addressing whether or not the moral quality of the object of prenatal adoption is an open question. We have not been concerned with whether prenatal adoption is intrinsically moral or

immoral or if a couple can, in good conscience, pursue this act now. As has been argued, the preponderance of evidence more than suggests that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith did not deliberately, explicitly, or implicitly close the door on the question of the intrinsic moral quality of prenatal adoption. This is the understanding of the overwhelming majority of Catholic theologians, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and institutions that are firm adherents to the Magisterium of the Church. Moreover, a careful reading of *Dignitas personae* indicates that while it raises concerns about the circumstances surrounding the act, the Congregation never explicitly condemns prenatal adoption itself, and does not offer any new development in Church teaching regarding the object of adoption of frozen embryos as a remedy for their unjust plight. Unless and until such a condemnation is made official, faithful Catholic ethicists may continue to debate the question without fear of transgressing the Magisterium of Pope Benedict XVI. ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Regarding the Instruction *Dignitas Personae*."
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 See for example, *Human Embryo Adoption: Biotechnology, Marriage, and the Right to Life*, eds. Thomas V. Berg., Edward J. Furton, (Philadelphia, PA and Thornwood, NY: The National Catholic Bioethics Center and the Westchester Institute for Ethics and the Human Person, 2006).
- 4 Interestingly, some in the pro-life community discount this statement by Monsignor Fisichella because of the "Recife affair." While I do not wish to make any comment on this matter, the claim that Monsignor Fisichella's statement is insignificant and does not hold much weight because of a perceived later error in judgment, has no bearing on this matter. Such arguments amount to an *ad hominem* or poisoning the well.
- 5 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Questions and Answers on *Dignitas personae*, usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/upload/nfp-forum-newsletter-winter-spring-2009.pdf While the interpretation of the USCCB is not definitive in any proper sense, this statement, nonetheless, does offer clear evidence to support the position articulated here.
- 6 Note that there are some ethicists who argue that the principles delineated by *Dignitas personae* necessitate the conclusion that prenatal adoption is immoral, but they acknowledge that this was not the intention of the CDF. Nonetheless, this is a different kind of claim than my focus for this essay. Consider, Christopher Oleson who writes "I am not saying that the authors of *Dignitas personae* are implicitly or indirectly or ambiguously intending to render a judgment that HET [heterologous embryo transfer] rescue is illicit, but that, regardless of what their explicit intention was regarding that specific judgment, they have, based upon what they clearly said in the document, logically committed themselves to the conclusion that HET rescue is illicit." Christopher Oleson, "Dignitas personae and the Question of Heterologous Embryo Transfer," *The Linacre Quarterly* 76.2, (May 2009), 135.
- 7 Cited from the Mission Statement of the *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*.
- 8 Luke Gormally, "The 'Various Problems' Presented by Embryo Adoption (n. 19)," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 9.3, (Autumn 2009), 471.
- 9 William E. May, "Response to Letter to the Editor," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*, (V.11 N.2), 217. For my argument, see the forthcoming Arland K. Nichols, "Colloquy," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 11.4 (Winter 2011).
- 10 "Dignitas Personae and the Question of Embryo Adoption: A Debate on *Dignitas Personae*, Part Two, nn 18-19," ncbcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=1010 The goal of this debate is explained thus: "The National Catholic Bioethics Center offers the following exchange between two of its ethicists to illustrate how certain moral questions are still open to further theological reflection."
- 11 "Grabowski and Gross, "Dignitas Personae and Embryo Adoption," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 10.2, (Summer 2010), 315.
- 12 Concerning surrogacy, *Donum Vitae* states, "Surrogate motherhood represents an objective failure to meet the obligations of maternal love, of conjugal fidelity and of responsible motherhood; it offends the dignity and the right of the child to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up by his own parents; it sets up, to the detriment of families, a division between the physical, psychological and moral elements which constitute those families." Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae*, II.A.3.
- 13 The CDF also criticize the circumstances of this act by addressing various problems concomitant with this act.
- 14 See for example, Ted Furton, "Embryo Adoption Reconsidered," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 11.2 (Summer 2011), 330. He writes, "As to the object, we find no statement in the document that embryo adoption, as an action chosen by the will, is intrinsically immoral. It seems reasonable to suppose that if the Vatican had decided that the action was intrinsically immoral, it would have said so. Instead, it said nothing."
- 15 Some authors have suggested that the primary moral evaluation against use of embryos as a treatment for infertility also should be considered as one of the "problems" of prenatal adoption. (See Luke Gormally, "The 'Various Problems' Presented by Embryo Adoption (n. 19), 471). If this were the intended/stated meaning of the CDF, it would indicate that prenatal adoption is intrinsically evil. However, such a reading is not in keeping with the clear purpose of this passage. Furthermore, if this were the intention of the CDF, this would be a rather odd and unclear way to express a negative evaluation of the act itself, especially considering that it never explicitly does so. This is noted by a number of authors. Consider Ted Furton who argues that the structure of the paragraph indicates only one reasonable understanding; "Indeed, the Italian specifically uses the same word, *problema*, in both this and the preceding paragraph. These are not the 'same reasons' that make IVF and surrogate motherhood intrinsically immoral, but are other problems that attend IVF and embryo adoption alike." (Ted Furton, "Embryo Adoption Reconsidered," 334). It seems rather unlikely that the CDF would rely on a vague and unclear reference to declare prenatal adoption to be intrinsically immoral when they were fully aware of the debate surrounding the matter.

“Natural and Necessary”: Catholics and the State

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The Catholic understanding of the state cannot support any variety of libertarianism, or any other view of the state so negative as to see it primarily as an organ of force or coercion.

To see the state as an opponent or antagonist is to owe a heavy debt to modern political ideas, and to carry the heavy burden that comes with it. The Libertarian Party expresses that perspective in a pithy way: “Minimum Government, Maximum Freedom.” But Catholics know this cannot be true. We know that freedom comes from somewhere other than the absence of government. This is why we are not surprised that, though it did not reach its familiar expression until the twentieth century in the United States, libertarianism finds its roots in liberalism and the Enlightenment. To see the state as, at best, a necessary evil requires willfully averting one’s gaze from classical and Christian traditions that predate and forcefully contradict the claims of modernity.

Yet this libertarian mistrust of government is common among many American Catholics in our time. In a way, it is understandable. At one time, during the high middle ages, the Church enjoyed such a close relationship with governments that there seemed to be less opportunity that laws of the state could become independent of the moral law. (The history of that time, with its Inquisitions and defenses of slavery, should dampen too much enthusiasm for easy alliances between the Church and political authority, and any hope that allying state with Church can assure that the positive law adheres to the moral law.) In our time, even the Church has acknowledged it should not intrude on civil government, calling the distinction between the political and religious spheres “a value that has been attained and recognized by the Catholic Church [which] belongs to the inheritance of contemporary civilization.”¹ For this reason it is worth dwelling on what consequences in-

dulging our discouragement to seek comfort in modern political ideas can have for Catholics once we begin to see the state through the prism of coercion and power.

To look to just one particular example, the United States Supreme Court reached its decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) by identifying an altogether unprecedented constitutional right to privacy. This remains a controversial ruling today because, among other reasons, the Constitution of the United States makes no use of the word privacy at all. But the decision has a more evident internal logic when we consider that the lawfulness of contraception became a contested issue in the climate of modern political thought that sees government as an organ of force and coercion, and which understands freedom only in its negative dimension. What the Catholic tradition would see as a question of positive freedom to experience marital intimacy or to enlarge the human family is cast by the Warren Court, instead, against the question of whether we should “allow the police to search the sacred precincts of marital bedrooms for telltale signs of the use of contraceptives.” Inevitably, because freedom from the coercive power of government is its highest good, modern political thought must conclude, as the Supreme Court did conclude, that Connecticut’s prohibition of contraception was wrong only because, “The very idea is repulsive to the notions of privacy surrounding the marriage relationship.” There must be a right to privacy because the modern understanding of rights and freedoms recognizes nothing more certainly to be avoided than “all invasions on the part of the government and its employees of the sanctity of a man’s home and the privacies of life.” Force and coercion are evils to be avoided, government is the instrument of force and coercion, and goods are possible only when government’s efforts to force or coerce can be thwarted by our negative freedoms. Those negative rights may be transgressed only in the presence of “a compelling subordinating state interest,” a high barrier against all claims of government power over the private preferences of individuals. The *Griswold* decision is a realization of the highest hopes that modern political thought can express for restraining government, and it expresses

a typically libertarian reaction against all of the coercive intrusions government might make against our privacy, our negative right to resist the force of government.

Of course, the *Griswold* decision also was the necessary legal predicate upon which the *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision was built. This can come as no surprise. The Libertarian Party platform asserts that, “we believe that government should be kept out of [abortion], leaving the question to each person for their [sic] conscientious consideration.” After all, why should government be permitted to regulate something so private as abortion if government is described best as an organ of force and coercion? If government is only an antagonist, an adversary in our struggle for freedom, why should it have a power, for example, to speak on behalf of unborn persons who have no voice against the rights of “born and naturalized” citizens? Modern political thought that sees the state only as coercive leads quite ineluctably to the conclusion that, the “right of privacy ... is broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy,” as the Court ruled in *Roe*.

Our conclusion should be, at this juncture, equally inescapable. Catholics who resort to libertarian arguments against the power of the state also cast aside the foundation of political arguments against abortion-on-demand. Once the state is seen to be first and foremost an organ of coercion and force, the imperative becomes finding a mechanism of resistance in order that there can be some exercise of liberty. There is no sure ground left to stand on from which to argue for the positive role of the state as the teacher of virtue. The Catholic understanding of the state has been exploded, and all that remains is the desiccated remnant of modern liberalism, its soulless insistence on freedom as license and not as grace.

Our Catholic understanding of the state has a different pedigree. In the mid-twentieth century, a Catholic political theorist wrote that:

To the Christian philosophers, following the classical scholars, the state is not a necessary evil but a positive good. It not only makes day-to-day existence possible, but it makes that existence good.... For the Christian the state becomes a holy order with an end and purpose of its own. It is a perfect society like the Church itself. It therefore has a sanctity above all other human institutions.²

This is the constant understanding and teaching of the Catholic tradition: government is a positive good, always and everywhere. In the same way that persons

always are incontrovertible goods (even if some people are bad) particular states may be (often, they are) bad. However, government as such is always essentially good. Like persons, government is full of boundless capacities for human goods that, in our world of temptation and sin, sometimes can be a bit difficult to notice. Still, we who hold the Catholic faith bear a responsibility when we deal with states, as when we deal with people, to be a sign of the Gospel at work in the world, and to call states and persons to something better through our living witness. We never give up on the state, any more than we give up on people.

Catholics understand this because it is our tradition. A different tradition is summarized well by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), who wrote in *The Elements of Law Natural and Politics* that “no man in any commonwealth whatsoever hath right to resist him, or them, on whom they have conferred this power coercive, or (as men use to call it) the sword of justice” (II, 1). The formation of a commonwealth comes about when citizens consent to surrender to the state their natural liberty through a covenant, a social contract, and in return the state makes promises to provide security against violent death. Different modern philosophers dealt with this understanding of the state in various ways. John Locke, for example, agreed that the state begins from a contract, but prized a guarantee of civil liberty over mere security and held to an affirmative right to end the social contract that creates government if rulers should prove to be untrustworthy and ambitious. Yet what holds all modern political philosophers together is their common beginning from understanding the state primarily as an organ of force that exerts a negative power to coerce citizens, not as a positive good and teacher of virtue.

Understanding the state in this way yields predictably necessary results. Hobbes’s preoccupation with violent death prevented him from worrying about how force and coercion could be abused by rulers, relying as he did on that power of the state to prevent the violence all around man in the state of nature. Because he did not share all of Hobbes’s fears, John Locke, James Madison, and others later saw quickly that a state understood in its nature to be oriented primarily toward force and coercion could pose a threat to law-abiding citizen as much as to criminals. To guard against the encroachments of the state with its power against the private citizen, Locke concocted his civil liberties, understood as a “freedom from” the intrusion of the state on conscience, property, etc., and which may be

described in their atomistic consequences, according to Isaiah Berlin's familiar criticism, as negative freedoms. (We also might liken this view of liberty to Benjamin Constant's distinction between the liberties of the ancients and the liberties of the moderns.)

The distinction between negative and positive freedom corresponds rather well to Blessed Pope John Paul II's distinction between false freedom, a unilateral freedom of license, and true freedom that brings us closer to God, sees us live according to the Gospel. As far back as 1964, Bishop Wojtyła had said, "There is no freedom without truth."³ Later as pope, he wrote that truth is "a condition for authentic freedom" in contrast with a "superficial, unilateral freedom," and condemned a "false notion of individual freedom" that sees freedom only as a matter of personal preference.⁴ These condemnations were rehearsed in *Veritatis Splendor* and again in *Evangelium Vitae* because the topics of those encyclicals were linked insuperably to the problem of a negative freedom that licenses us to do only what we want and recognizes no obligations beyond the private will.

It is worth spending a moment further with Pope John Paul, whose anthropological account of human freedom encompassed several different categories, all oriented toward understanding the human person in the light of the Gospel. In his first encyclical letter, the Holy Father wrote that, "Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning," Christ "brings man freedom based on truth, frees man from what curtails, diminishes and as it were breaks off this freedom at its root, in man's soul, his heart and his conscience," and, for these reasons, the Church is "the guardian of this freedom," given by God, "which is the condition and basis for the human person's true dignity."⁵ This freedom, a "creative subjectivity," expresses itself through subsidiarity in a network of relationships which are religious, social, economic, and more.⁶ Yet, finally, "*Vari-ous circumstances may make it advisable that the State step in to supply certain functions,*" in order to safeguard the freedom and dignity of human persons.⁷ It is, for example, "the State that must conduct a just labor policy."⁸ The state "has the task of determining the juridical framework within which economic affairs are to be conducted."⁹ Finally, "*The responsibility for attaining the common good, besides falling to individual persons, belongs also to the State, since the common good is the reason that the political authority exists.*"¹⁰ The state is charged to promote and attain to "the requirements of justice."¹¹

To bring Pope John Paul's account of freedom back

to the state is appropriate not only because it returns us to our subject—the Catholic understanding of freedom as it corresponds to the Catholic view of the state—but also because it demonstrates the necessity of understanding freedom in a different way from modern political writers. In *Veritatis Splendor*, Pope John Paul gave the problem of freedom his most thoughtful treatment, distancing the Christian tradition from the modern understanding of freedom and finding that true freedom has a positive character: we are called not to a freedom of ego and will that must resist all interference from anyone, but instead we find our true freedom through adherence to the moral law. As the Holy Father argued in *Evangelium Vitae*, it is the particular obligation of Catholic Christians to participate "in social and political life... to ensure that the laws and institutions of the State in no way violate the right to life, from conception to natural death, but rather protect and promote it."¹² This presupposes that the state plays a vital role we must not indulge our discouragements to overlook because, in fact, "[t]he real purpose of civil law is to guarantee an ordered social coexistence in true justice."¹³ Government is good, essentially. Simply to treat it as a menace to true freedom as the moderns regard it, an antagonist that frustrates us, is to rip something integral from the chest of the Catholic tradition, still beating.

Yet, as self-evident as this conclusion really is, and as entirely devastating as absorbing those modern political ideas is to the Catholic moral argument in politics, it should surprise us little that so many Catholics have turned to libertarianism in recent decades. While even the Church has recognized secularization as "a value that ... belongs to the inheritance of contemporary civilization," it does place new burdens on those of us who attempt to live out the Gospel. That difficulty has sown confusion and frustration among Catholics confronted by legalized abortion and other evils, leading many to despair and to give up entirely on the possibilities for good found within the state. The editors of *First Things* went so far in 1996 as to ask "whether we have reached or are reaching the point where conscientious citizens no longer can give moral assent to the existing regime." The question has hung in the air for fifteen years, and it lies at the root of efforts to diminish the state, placing a growing emphasis on subsidiary institutions such as the market.

However, there are costs to viewing the state that way. To prize the institutions of civil society above government is to ignore the consistent teaching of our tradition across millennia, beginning with Pope Saint

Gelasius's admonition to Emperor Anastasius that there are "two powers," the Church and the governing authority. Only two. To unseat the governing authority from this privileged position in favor of subsidiary civil institutions not only subordinates the state but, by implication, multiplies authorities so far as to diminish the role of the Church as well. The same modern political ideas that conceive of the state so negatively also see the Church as a voluntary association, relegate it to being "merely one of the many organizations within a democratic society," of little more consequence than a book club or a bowling league.¹⁴

Catholics possess the armature in our tradition to avoid these problems. St. Robert Bellarmine, S.J. rejected Reformation critics of Christian participation in governing, observing that, "if subjection or civil rule is opposed to Christian liberty, Ecclesiastical subjection or rule is more opposed to it, since Christian liberty pertains more to a Christian as a member of the Church than as a member of civil society" (*de Laicis*, 3). Certainly Bellarmine was aware of the possibility of "corrupt political magistracy," but that possibility did nothing to diminish the grandeur of "Political rule," or the fact that it "is so natural and necessary to the human race." Bellarmine adds that "it is false to state that most rulers are evil," but even "the examples of evil rulers do not prove that authority is evil" (chapter 4), which was as shocking a statement in his time as ours. No matter how shocking, Bellarmine offers a potent reminder of how far persuaded the Catholic tradition is of the goodness of government.

The secular state gives no guarantee to the Catholic point-of-view and, yes, that creates troubling situations.

So much greater the need for evangelization and hope. For, if not to the state when we seek justice for the poor, for the worker, for the stranger, for the sick, or for the unborn, "To whom shall we go?" We have the Church to form our consciences for citizenship, and to give us the language to describe the justice we seek in the world. We have the state, now more than ever that we can vote and speak our point-of-view freely, to bring forth the Kingdom as we seek justice on Earth. "Two powers there are," whose benefit we have been given, the Church and the governing authority. How could we have hope or freedom without either? ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* (24 November 2002), 6: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 2002, p.11.
- 2 Jerome G. Kerwin, *Politics, Government, Catholics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1961), 9.
- 3 Bishop Karol Wojtyła, "Intervention of 25 September 1964," in *Acta synodalia Concilii Vaticani II, Period III*, 2:531.
- 4 Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, §12. Also: Pope John Paul II, Homily at an Ecumenical Service at the University of South Carolina Williams-Brice Stadium (11 September 1987), §6.
- 5 *Redemptor hominis*, §1, §12.
- 6 See a discussion in: Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §15ff.
- 7 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, §188. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, §§47-48.
- 8 Pope John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, §17.
- 9 Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §15.
- 10 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1910.
- 11 *Ibid.*, §1908.
- 12 Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, §93.
- 13 *Ibid.*, §71.
- 14 Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at the Olympic Stadium of Berlin, 22 September 2011.



Maintaining Equilibrium at The Catholic Law School

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Ave Maria school of Law (AMSL), which recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, was founded with the hope of preserving the Catholic legal tradition in our country. In this essay, I hope to present how AMSL has thus far successfully lived out its mission, and to identify some of the dangers it (and other institutions) must guard against. I hope that my observations may help other law schools be faithful to their Catholic heritage.

After the Land O'Lakes Conference of 1967, many Catholic colleges and universities separated themselves from the life of faith. Many such schools have diverged so far from their religious roots in the name of academic freedom that they are no longer recognizable as Catholic (Gleason, 1995). This has allowed the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), from whose control Catholic schools had always been exempted for fear of compromising religious freedom, to assert that Manhattan College in New York and Xavier University in Chicago are not in fact religious schools (Garvey, 2011). Although this is a dangerous precedent, as President John Garvey of The Catholic University of America points out, the NLRB's assessment of these schools begs the question: What is it that makes a school Catholic?

There is no doubt that "academic freedom is an essential component of a Catholic university" (John Paul, II, 1992) or a Catholic law school. But while all positions theological or legal must be open to academic inquiry and discussion, not all have equal intellectual or moral worth. In a Catholic academic environment current thought, social trends, and positive law must be examined in light of the Catholic philosophical tradition and faith (John Paul, II, 1998). This is not indoctrination or proselytizing, but rather a true reflection of the Catholic intellectual heritage—as Blessed John Paul II put it, a matter of "proposing not imposing"

the truth. The greatness of Catholic education lies in the belief that once the truth is spoken, its attractiveness forms minds and hearts. These are the two weights that a Catholic law school must balance in maintaining equilibrium—the natural and the supernatural. Both reason and faith are necessary in the pursuit of truth.

How does a faith-based law school attempt to do this?

It must be clear that all law schools are, first and foremost, professional schools where aspiring attorneys come to learn a trade. Religiously affiliated law schools are not schools of theology. Nevertheless, certain assumptions about man and society must ground their programs, informing the students how law is to be made, read, and applied, and how a lawyer is to live out his or her vocation. Such schools should also provide opportunities to grow in the spiritual life.

For Catholics this starting point has always been the natural law which holds its ground in the *philosophia perennis*. This of course requires metaphysics, which presumes that, "Law exists prior to jurists and legal philosophers" (Rommen, 1946, p. 118). Natural law philosophy holds that through the senses, which are in contact with reality, the intellect comes to discern universal truths which are immutable. Furthermore, Saint Paul posits that the natural law is "inscribed in the heart" which affirms by intuition a certain order of being. These truths provide the foundation for inalienable human rights—life, liberty, property, justice, the pursuit of happiness—which cannot be taken away by any state.

Because human reason is flawed, due to original sin, but not completely obliterated by the Fall, divine revelation aids us in our quest for truth (Aquinas, 1265–1274, I, Q. 1, A. 1). Supernatural revelation highlights and completes the natural knowledge discerned by reason. Since the Church possesses the fullness of truth, handed down by the Apostles, she has the obligation to share it with humanity.

How is this to be accomplished?

First, the Catholic law school must make supernatural revelation available to its students. The teachings of the Church must be instantiated in the school's overall program and coursework. Courses should reference

Church documents, especially those that provide insight into human anthropology by answering such questions as, “Who is man?”; “How should he act?”; and “What is his final end?” These questions are indispensable to forming a just society. Documents, such as *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), a moral treatise, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), a defense of human life, and *Fides et Ratio* (1998), an explanation of how faith and reason cooperate in knowing the truth, as well as *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965), which speaks of the inviolable rights of the human person—especially religious liberty—and the constitutional order of society, are vital teachings for a firm Catholic legal foundation and worldview.

Second, the majority of the faculty must be Catholic, in fact an *overwhelming* majority, at least 90 percent. The faculty, including the non-Catholic members, must conscientiously and enthusiastically support the school’s mission. They should be familiar with the religious documents mentioned above. And, of course, they should have a Catholic understanding of natural law. This will help them to train their students to guard against the pervasive relativism that now guides our legislation and positive law. It is also vitally important that Catholic professors be *practicing* Catholics. Their example is invaluable in creating a Catholic culture at a law school (Miscamble, 2007).

Third, there must be a strong chaplaincy on campus. Daily mass, frequent availability of confession, and the promotion of major feasts should be highlighted. On special occasions (for example, holy days of obligation), no classes, faculty meetings, or other school events should be permitted so as not to detract from liturgical participation. Retreats and days of recollection should be scheduled each semester for faculty and students alike. The chaplain should work directly with the dean to assure a Catholic environment at the school. He should also be vigilant as to any opposition to Catholic teaching and conduct on the part of either faculty or students. And he should have ready access to the dean to ensure the effectiveness of his guidance in preserving the Catholic identity vital for the school’s survival as a Catholic entity.

Fourth, the ideal proportion of Catholic students should be about 75 percent. At the moment, AMSL is at 63 percent. This is almost twice the percentage of Catholic students at other Catholic law schools (in an unofficial survey of six Catholic law schools, the Catholic population has been determined to be between 30 and 38 percent). A preponderance of Catholic students enhances the Catholic environment. It also allows for

peer evangelization among fellow Catholics and also with the non-Catholics. Many self-identifying Catholic students are poorly formed in the faith and perhaps only understand the rudiments of their religion. Others have never been confirmed. But this Catholic school culture into which they are immersed and the one-on-one relationships they build with fellow students who are strongly steeped in Catholicism bring many to more fervent religious practice. Needless to say, these also provide strong incentives for non-Catholics to learn more about the Church. We have seen this happen here at AMSL every year since our founding—converts among faculty, staff and students.

There are, of course, dangers which could jeopardize a highly focused Catholic law school’s credibility in the legal academy. A Catholic law school must not be viewed as a sectarian oddity. In the best tradition of Vatican II, especially in light of *Gaudium et Spes* (*Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*), the Catholic law school must engage the culture. Therefore, the school must protect itself against right-wing political zealotry, from the so-called *uber*-Catholics, as well as against the temptation to teach the Catechism instead of the law. These are, again, the two weights that a Catholic law school must balance in maintaining equilibrium—the natural and the supernatural. The Catholic law school must teach its students to be *in* the world (Mt. 28:19-20), and yet not *of* it (Rom. 12:2); to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Mt. 10:16).

Regarding politics, a truly Catholic law school may be seen as a natural refuge for political conservatives. And it is true that many right-wingers—Catholics and non-Catholics—are seeking either refuge from the culture wars or ammunition for anticipated legal and political battles. (For example, Mormons and Evangelicals, many of whom are politically motivated, have felt a degree of comfort at our school.) But it must be remembered that Catholicism is not a political theory or a political party. It is the Body of Christ, commissioned to preach the truth of the Gospel. As *Lumen Gentium* states, “the Church must be leavening in the dough of society.” And, as Saint Paul admonishes Christians, truth must always be spoken in love (Eph. 4:15).

Catholicism has a broad social consciousness, a respect for all people, even for those with whom we disagree. It encourages a spirit of cooperation with civil authorities in order to promote good order in society. This is all based on a concern for the common good, a central pillar of Catholic social teaching. Recently, for example, many conservative law students have become

enamored with Libertarianism, which promotes individual freedom but tends to ignore one's obligations to society. It endorses a moral code that knows no limits on self-expression as long as no one else is hurt (Stephens, 2008). This is not political conservatism, nor is it Catholic, and administrators must be vigilant that their school is not taken over by such an ideology.

Similarly, there are many orthodox Catholics who are frustrated and angry with perceived laxity of religious practice in parishes and instruction in Catholic higher education. They fear the "politically correct" and ideologically driven curricula of many law schools which are often focused on social engineering (Olson, 2011). AMSL has been a refuge for people with these concerns. But we must be vigilant that the school does not take on a ghetto mentality and allow the ultra-orthodox to gain hegemony. The Catholic law school must remain in the mainstream. It must be discerning in its teaching and careful with its clinical and pro-bono work, in order to fend off extremism.

The following will suffice to make my point.

One of AMSL's students helped to process a few divorces during his internship in a pro-bono program (in consort with Catholic Charities), which caused quite a stir among some faculty and students. A good legal education requires familiarizing students with the process of filing papers for divorce. Accusations that AMSL was cooperating in evil and disloyal to its mission were tossed about. This required due diligence on the part of the dean and the chaplain to make sure that we were indeed being faithful to the Catholic mission of the school, and necessitated our explaining the school's position to everyone who expressed concerns.

Although divorce is contrary to the Gospel, it is unfortunately a fact of life. Catholic lawyers must, therefore, deal with it. The Church cautions lawyers, however, not to promote a divorce culture, and encourages them to discourage divorce if possible. She also "recognizes that the incompatibility of spouses in a valid marriage sometimes makes it necessary for them (the couple) to separate, even permanently.... A civil divorce may be necessary to protect certain civil rights of the spouses and their children." This does not contradict the sacramental indissolubility of marriage which a Catholic law school must uphold (McMahon, 2010).

There is also a tendency for religiously motivated faculty members to perceive themselves as theologians or catechists. This is not what professors of law are hired to do, nor is it something they should do. Professors have only a fixed amount of class time to cover the

material vital to helping students pass the bar exam and becoming proficient at their trade. Of course, mention should be made of Church teaching in, for example, a family law or property class. A professor at a Catholic law school must be versed in the Church's teaching on difficult topics, such as in-vitro fertilization and same-sex marriage, and ready to explain them in class. This is especially true in cases where positive laws contravene the natural law. But this should not be the meat of the class or distract from the specifically legal issues at hand. Students who wish to extend their inquiry should be encouraged to meet with professors outside of class.

Topics such as those mentioned above engender heated classroom arguments, and often reflect personal issues that require pastoral guidance. Students with moral questions or concerns should be sent to the chaplain's office. On certain occasions, the chaplain should be invited to a class to explain the Catholic understanding and the religious implications of an issue. For example, I have recently spoken to a criminal law class on the inviolability of the seal of confession, and to a wills and estates class on end-of-life issues. But for a professor to take up valuable class time in extended dialogue with students on Catholic morality is tantamount to a breach of contract. Law students must be taught the material necessary to pass the bar exam and become good lawyers.

Student organizations also require scrutiny, with a faculty advisor to monitor their activities. It is inconceivable that a Catholic law school can support a club that promotes, for example, abortion or same-sex marriage. This would be inconsistent with any truly Catholic mission, and adherence to the school's mission supersedes freedom of expression. For example, a few years ago here at AMSL, some students wanted to start a Democratic club on campus. Permission and funding would only be granted on the condition that within the group's constitution anything contrary to Catholic teaching (e.g. abortion advocacy) would not be part of the agenda. The organization met that condition and was approved.

The same caution must prevail with groups that seem unabashedly Catholic. For instance, at AMSL we have a pro-life organization known as *Lex Vitae* (Law of Life). It was founded to protest prayerfully the evils of abortion. For many years its members remained loyal to the original constitution. Recently, some students wanted to amend the constitution and add anti-contraception language as a requirement for membership. This was not allowed, since it confused two very different issues

(we are not talking about RH486 or the ‘Morning After Pill’). Certainly, artificial contraception is wrong, but to add this to the organization’s purpose would severely curtail membership and, therefore, hinder the work of saving the lives of the unborn.

Perhaps there is a need not only for pro-life groups at Catholic law schools, but also for groups to form that would help educate the students on the evils of contraception and how it contradicts a Culture of Life. As a matter of fact, such organizations may now be necessary in light of “ObamaCare,” which mandates that all insurers cover contraceptives. But at a Catholic law school, the problem should be addressed in the Religious Liberty (First Amendment) course. The bill includes a very narrow conscience exemption that would protect few religious institutions, including colleges, and would leave insurers or individuals who have moral objections completely vulnerable. The recent bill violates Catholic moral principles and the Church’s religious mission. Discussing the bill in class would provide an opportunity for a reference to and a short discussion of *Humanae Vitae* (1968). (Gomez, 2011)

What is it then, in brief, which makes an institution of higher learning Catholic? Firstly, a “Catholic” institution must live in harmony with Church teaching, as is demanded by the Vatican document, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1992). Therefore, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition should be integrated into the various programs of study, without neglecting the primacy of knowledge and learning essential to each discipline. The majority of faculty should be Catholic or, if not, at least be in wholehearted agreement with both the mission and philosophy of the institution. Likewise, the student body should be around three-fourths Catholic. Finally, a Catholic institution should devotedly assist the students on their spiritual journey and formation, enabling them to fulfill their vocation and achieve their final end: heaven. If an institution of higher learning meets these criteria, I think it is safe to say that it is truly a Catholic institution.

The NLRB’s recent ruling on Manhattan College

and Xavier University *should* be a wake-up call to other religious schools that are in danger of losing their status. What has been proposed in this essay would go a long way toward preventing a declaration that a Catholic school is no longer Catholic. By maintaining equilibrium, a Catholic law school can remain faithful to its mission, train competent lawyers, and even provide the means for them to attain the graces needed to be truly virtuous practitioners. After all, consistent with the natural law is its teleology— man’s final end is to be with God. The Catholic lawyer should be not only legally ethical, but always morally upright, in other words, one who adheres to a higher law requiring him “to do what is beautiful and just.”

In the end, a Catholic law school has the obligation to help its students become saints (Wright, 2010). ✠

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Further Reflections on “Brain Death”

by William G. White

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This is a response to Professor William E. May’s article, “Responding to Teachings Proposed Authoritatively but not Irreformably by the Magisterium and the Criterion for Determining that a Human Person Has Died” (*Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly*, Fall, 2011). Professor May points out that the Church defers to the scientific and medical professions in establishing the criteria for declaring death. “Note that in this address [to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society] John Paul II makes clear that ‘the Church does not make technical decisions’ with regard to the scientific criteria for determining death.” He further quotes the Holy Father: “...the criterion...for ascertaining the fact of death, namely the *complete* and *irreversible* cessation of all brain activity, if rigorously applied, does not *seem* to conflict with the essential elements of a sound anthropology” (emphasis added by Dr. May).

In recent years, however, for utilitarian reasons including the desire to transplant vital organs, the medical profession has gone well beyond its competency to make technical decisions, such as developing criteria for the diagnosis of death, but instead has sought to manufacture new *definitions* of death. This present response to Dr. May’s article questions whether the medical profession has indeed rigorously developed and applied criteria for ascertaining the fact of death, and whether medical science possesses the tools to conclude, on neurological criteria alone, that the “complete and irreversible cessation of all brain activity” has occurred.

The determination or diagnosis of death and the definition of death differ. The determination or diagnosis of death is the application of the observational tools of the medical arts to achieve “moral certainty” that death has occurred. But this practical judgment depends not only upon the observation of certain physical signs, but also upon the correct understanding of what death is. This *definition* of death is the separation of the soul from the body. To borrow Blessed John Paul II’s term, the correct definition of death is one of “the essential elements of a sound anthropology.” Sound anthropology,

informed by Christian doctrine and Aristotelian philosophy, teaches that human beings are creatures comprising a material body and a spiritual, immortal soul. The soul (Latin: *anima*), is the spiritual substance that gives life to (“animates”) the body. At the time of conception, the parental germ cells unite into a single, new, totipotent cell, animated by the newly created human soul, and a new person comes into being. At the other end of life’s span, the moment of death, the soul and body separate. The person has “departed”; only “remains” remain.

Since the soul is a spiritual substance, undetectable by the senses and by the tools of the physical sciences, it cannot be directly observed leaving the body. The physician, therefore, must look for secondary signs that indicate that the body is no longer animated, i.e. that the body’s living systems no longer function in an integrated way. These functions include sensation, movement, and cognition; the circulation of the blood by the heart; the oxygenation of the blood by the lungs; the oxygenation of the tissues by the blood; the regulation of the body’s chemistries by the endocrine system; the maintenance of body temperature by the skin and the autonomic nervous system, and many, many other functions, all of which interact with and depend upon one another. They all ultimately depend upon the soul, which animates and vivifies them, and without whose presence none of them could function.

Brain-based criteria for declaring death (so-called brain death) assume that the brain is the only integrating organ and that, once it has completely and permanently stopped functioning, the functional unity of the body has been lost and the person is no longer present. But the brain is only one of many “integrating” organs. The soul is the true integrating principle of the living body, and the soul’s presence is detectable not merely by the functioning of the brain, but by all the many physiological functions mentioned in the previous paragraph that manifest that life is present.

Another consequence of the fact that the soul cannot be directly observed leaving the body is that the precise moment of death cannot be determined. Although it cannot be detected, there *is* a precise moment of death. Death is not a “process.” Dying is a process, but a dying person, until the actual moment of death, is a *living* person. The moment before death, the soul is present and the person is alive; the moment after death

the soul is absent and the person has died. The physician can achieve certainty that death has occurred by the signs of disintegration of unified bodily functioning that take place only after the soul has left the body. In other words death can be diagnosed with certainty only in retrospect.

Rigor mortis is a certain sign that the body's systems are no longer functioning in an integrated way. However, the malfunctioning of a single organ, even a vital organ like the heart or the brain, is not a sufficient sign that death has occurred. Death may be imminent; but, as long as the rest of the body continues to function in an integrated way, the patient may be dying, but he is not dead. This persistent functioning in a fully integrated way of the systems mentioned above is evidence of life, that is, of the presence of the soul.

It is popularly assumed that cardiopulmonary arrest was once considered a certain sign that death had occurred. On the contrary, physicians have long used other signs to diagnose death, e.g. fixed pupils, venous pooling, bodily cooling, lack of reflexes, etc. Cardiopulmonary arrest is a *necessary* sign of death but is not sufficient to make a certain diagnosis. Even though cardiac arrest was at one time considered equivalent to death, the advent of successful cardiopulmonary resuscitation during the twentieth century should have put that fallacy to rest forever. The resuscitation of a person who has suffered cardiopulmonary arrest demonstrates definitively that the person was not dead. The statement, "I was clinically dead, but they brought me back," is inaccurate. Apart from true miracles, which we are not considering here, the return from death is impossible. Death is, by definition, permanent.

If "the complete and irreversible cessation of all brain activity" is to be considered a valid criterion for diagnosing death, the key word is "irreversible." As a physician I know that, in the case of cardiopulmonary arrest, the heart and lungs have stopped "irreversibly" only by observing the cessation of function of all the other integrating systems of the body. Until that time, the heart and lungs may be capable of resuscitation, and if so the person is still alive.

Similar considerations apply to the definition of "brain death" as "the complete and irreversible loss of all brain function." The *irreversibility* of brain function, like the irreversibility of cardiac arrest, is a retrospective diagnosis. As in cardiac arrest, the lack of brain function alone, without other signs of bodily disintegration, is not sufficient to diagnose the death of the person. There are certain conditions, for example, such as hypothermia or

barbiturate intoxication, where the neurological criteria for "brain death" are in every other way met or exceeded, including complete neurological unresponsiveness and a flat electroencephalogram, and yet such individuals have made full recoveries. Although their loss of brain function was apparently complete, it was not irreversible, a fact that was discovered only by the occurrence of their recovery. Their potential for recovery or lack thereof could not have been detected prospectively on the basis of physical examination or medical testing during their deep coma. Just as in the case of cardiac arrest, the *irreversibility* of the loss of brain function can be known with certainty only in the presence of the corroborating signs of bodily disintegration and decay. Thus, in those patients who meet the criteria of "brain death," it is impossible to state with that moral certainty necessary to diagnose death that the brain has *irreversibly* ceased to function. Until those signs of decay and disintegration that occur only after death are detectable, the diagnosis of *irreversible* loss of brain function is an attempt to make a *prospective* diagnosis (i.e. a prognosis) of a condition that can be diagnosed only in retrospect.

Even in the absence of such conditions as hypothermia and barbiturate intoxication, there is reason to doubt that the so-called "brain dead" patient is really dead. As a physician, I find it both medically and ethically problematic to be called upon to declare dead a patient whose living lungs are absorbing oxygen into the bloodstream; whose living heart is pumping without artificial stimulation; whose living kidneys are producing urine; whose living intestines are absorbing food; whose living skin is warm, moist, and pink; and whose living limbs, innervated by a living spinal and peripheral nervous system, recoil when painful stimuli are applied. This complex interplay of vital functions, which can persist for days or weeks, is a true homeostasis, not the inexorable process of decay that takes place after death has occurred.

The declaration of death in such a situation, i.e. following the criteria for "brain death," would imply that the death of the person can occur without the death of the body. This dualism is, I believe, inconsistent both with sound anthropology and with Christian doctrine. The integrated functioning of the many living, physiological systems of the "brain dead" body, even in the absence of some neurological functions, cannot occur in the absence of the soul.

Many, both lay and professional, understand that the gravely injured and dying "brain dead" person is not really dead, but is alive. Such intuition, "common sense," or

sensus fidelium, may deserve greater attention than it often gets. Even physicians, in unguarded moments, betray their intuitive understanding. I once heard a physician say, “The neurologist declared the patient brain dead, so we took him off the ventilator and let him die.”

The assumption that, unless a person can be declared “brain dead” he must be left to languish indefinitely on a ventilator, is false. The Church requires neither starting nor continuing futile or excessively burdensome “extraordinary” treatments. It is perfectly in keeping with humane treatment and Catholic morality to withdraw a ventilator in certain circumstances and to allow natural death to take place. This is in no way euthanasia. The objectionable feature of such a scenario is the false pretense that a person must be declared dead before he can be allowed to die.

Even the transplantation of human organs, for which the concept of brain death was invented, may not necessarily require such ethical gymnastics. Transplants from living donors of paired or multiple organs like the kidneys or the lobes of the liver pose little ethical difficulty. Even the transplantation of a heart from a living donor who is in the last moments of his life may in certain circumstances be ethically permissible. If the person is nearing death and resuscitation to further prolong his life is deemed inappropriate and morally dispensable, if spontaneous cardiac arrest has occurred, and if the appropriate consent has been obtained, might it be ethical to transplant the still living (not still beating) heart from his still living body? How could this be? Once the heart has spontaneously arrested, it is no longer a *vital* organ, i.e. it no longer performs its life-sustaining function. It remains a *living* organ, that is, it can be resuscitated and will resume its function in the recipient, but because it no longer serves its circulatory function in the dying donor, it is no longer a *vital* organ. Once it has arrested, it no longer maintains or prolongs the life of the donor. Removing it, therefore, does not cause the person’s death, a death that is fully anticipated and ethically permissible. In those few minutes between cardiac arrest and death, the transplantation of the non-vital (i.e. non-life-sustaining), non-beating, but still living heart is ethically and medically equivalent to the transplantation of a living kidney from a living donor. Thus even heart transplantation may be ethical without resorting to the

fictions of either “cardiac death” or “brain death.” Note: this description is *not* the “Pittsburgh Protocol,” which depends upon the fallacious concept of “cardiac death.”

In fact both “cardiac death” and “brain death” are misnomers, unless we are somehow to believe that there are two new classes of dead people, one with functioning brains and nonfunctioning hearts, and the other with functioning hearts and nonfunctioning brains. In both cases, in the absence of life-saving intervention, the individuals involved will die very soon, but they are not dead yet. In fact, without the life-saving “interventions” of food, fluids, and oxygen, we would all soon be dead. But being dead *soon* and being dead *already* are two very different things.

In conclusion, I consider the concept of “brain death,” that is, the declaration of the death of the person on neurologic criteria alone, to be invalid. In isolation from other corroborating findings, brain-based findings are insufficient to achieve moral certainty of the death of the person.

As Pope John Paul II pointed out in his address of 20 March 2004 to the International Congress on “Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State...,” “...even the simple doubt of being in the presence of a living person already imposes the obligation of full respect and of abstaining from any act that aims at anticipating the person’s death.”

I am grateful to Professor May for his conclusion that

...theologians (and other learned persons) who withhold or suspend assent from the teaching of Blessed John Paul II on the criterion for determining that a human person has died are not dissenting from a teaching authoritatively but not irreformably proposed, and that they ought *not* to be accused of being disloyal Catholics or dissenting theologians or philosophers. (emphasis in original)

The Church defers to the judgment of physicians to diagnose death, but physicians must be informed by that sound anthropology which guides us to a proper understanding of what life and death really are. It is we physicians who bear the responsibility to clarify the proper criteria for the diagnosis of death. We have yet to do so. ✠

Edward Feser. *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism*. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2008. xi + 299 pp. \$27.00

Reviewed by D. Q. McNerny, *Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary, Denton, Nebraska*

In recent years we have borne witness to an outburst of books written by a coterie of true-believing atheists, the intent of which was twofold: to attack theism as fundamentally irrational in all its forms, and to promote atheism as in every way the superior alternative. Christianity was singled out for special attention, for, to hear the tale told by most of these authors, while apparently having contributed nothing of real import to Western culture, Christianity must be held responsible for at least ninety-eight percent of its woes. This, supposedly, is to be allowed to pass for history.

The books I have principally in mind are Daniel Dennet's *Breaking the Spell*, Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion*, Sam Harris's *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation*, and Christopher Hitchens's *God Is Not Great*. The peculiar genre represented by these books could be said to have its genesis, at least in modern times, in Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*—a work which has nothing to do with the essence of Christianity. Of more recent vintage, there was H. L. Mencken's *Treatise on the Gods* and Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian*. There are two things about the more recent books that the reader cannot help but find especially striking. First, there is the highly nervous, almost frenetic, tone which seems to dominate the style in which they are written; second, the arguments of these books, with but few exceptions, are sustained by a logic which is shaky at best, and, at worst, of the most questionable kind. I would add a third point. These books are rather wonderful for their stark humorlessness.

As to the first point, one has the impression that these men are not especially confident in their atheism; they protest too much, and too stridently. As to the second point, it would seem that

any disinterested observer, if one could imagine such (let's call on that accommodating fellow who has just dropped in from Mars), would not be exactly swept off his feet by the case these books make against religion, and still less by that made on behalf of atheism. In some instances the arguments are so glaringly inept that one could imagine a self-respecting atheist being positively embarrassed by them. As to the third point, perhaps it's simply a matter of there not being very much in atheism capable of bringing joy to the human heart.

For every action, we are told, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Let this recent spate of atheist literature count as the action; this drew a reaction in the form of several books written in direct response to it, a reaction which, the laws of physics notwithstanding, was appreciably more than equal to the initiating action. Indeed, in light of the reaction, the action pales in comparison. The books I have in mind are Father Thomas Crean's *A Catholic Replies to Professor Dawkins*, David Reuben Stone's *Atheism Is False: Richard Dawkins and the "Improbability of God" Delusion*, Dinesh D'Souza's *What's So Great About Christianity*, Mike King's *The God Delusion Revisited*, David Berlinski's *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions*, Alister E. McGrath and Joanna Collicut McGrath's *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*, and David Bentley Hart's *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*. And this is only to name those books with which I am personally familiar. Each of them is impressive in its own right—those by Father Crean, David Berlinski, and David Bentley Hart are especially distinguished—and all of them taken together amount to a fairly thunderous reply to the atheists. If the atheists have not been reduced to silence (that would be asking altogether too much), their dubious methodology and their limping logic has now been given full exposure.

But there is another book which is to be added to the above list, the book to which this review is devoted, Professor Edward Feser's *The Last Superstition*:

A Refutation of the New Atheism, published by St. Augustine's Press in South Bend, Indiana. In his previous publications Professor Feser has shown himself to be a philosopher of the first rank, and in this work he has given us a document of singular importance. Of all the books written in response to "the new atheists" (that designation, I believe, originates with Feser), this one has to be counted among the very best. There are three principal reasons why this is so. The first has to do with the style in which the book is written; it is direct, clear, forceful, and—no small matter—witty. Secondly, the arguments which carry the substance of the book are of the highest quality; they are tightly constructed, masterfully controlled, and compelling. Thirdly—and I take this to be the book's strongest feature—there is the manner in which Professor Feser sets the phenomenon of the new atheism in a larger historical/philosophical context, and thereby gives it sharper identity and makes it more fully understandable. He shows that the new atheism, and the secularism of which it is a particular manifestation, did not come out of the blue, but that it has its roots in our philosophical past; to know that philosophical past is to have a firmer grip on the philosophical present.

By the frank admission of its author, *The Last Superstition* is a polemical book, an angry book, and he makes no apologies for its being either. The occasion often dictates the response proper to it. If one is confronting serious error, the triumph of which could prove to have a completely unraveling effect on the already tenuous status of Western civilization, a spirited approach is called for. Secularism and atheism now run rampant; the cost, should they gain the day, would be altogether too high. "What is needed to counteract the antireligious and libertine madness of the present time," Professor Feser writes, "is not a crude populism or short-term political strategizing, but a rethinking of the relevant issues back to first principles" (ix). And a rethinking of relevant issues back to first principles is precisely what he does in this book, and with telling success.

The book is divided into six chapters.

The first is given over to a comprehensive critique of the new atheism, in which Professor Feser shows that it represents an important part of the spirit of secularism, a spirit which has its proximate historical sources in the positivism and scientism which came to the fore in the nineteenth century. The second through the fifth chapters of the book are dedicated to what Professor Feser describes as a crash course in the history of Western philosophy. Chapter Two provides an account of the Greek foundations of Western philosophy, giving special emphasis to the thought of Aristotle. Chapter Three contains an especially accomplished working through of the classic Scholastic arguments for the existence of God, and here we have a definitive response to the new atheists' treatment of those arguments. Chapter Four treats of the Scholastic understanding of the soul, the natural law, faith, reason, and the nature of evil. Chapter Five provides us with a lively and pointed critique of modern philosophy. The final chapter of the book, which focuses on formal and final causality, argues forcefully for the need of Western philosophy to return to the fundamental principles of Aristotelian metaphysics.

One of the central arguments of the book is that what we have in the new atheism, and the secularism within which it is enfolded, is something which bears all the earmarks of a religion. But if atheism is a religion, it is of the feeblest kind, for its whole *raison d'être* is to stand in opposition to true religion; it is defined by that opposition. However, it is the quality of that opposition which reveals the utter poverty of atheism. The new atheists can count among their numbers some rather flashy rhetoricians and golden-tongued proselytizers, but they fall markedly short of making anything like a convincing case for their position. They are very good at ridicule and deprecatory name-calling, at hurling impassioned anathemas at what they regard as benighted theists—tactics well calculated to draw lusty guffaws and raucous applause from the groundlings (slapstick or its equivalent always sells)—but this serves as no substitute for serious discourse.

Professor Dawkins evidently believes that he has neatly disposed of St. Thomas Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God, but he has done no such thing, and that for the simplest of reasons—he did not respond to St. Thomas's arguments at all. He was jousting, with a valor worthy of Don Quixote, against scraggly straw men of his own concoction. Professor Feser puts his finger on the nub of the problem. Devotee of scientism that he is, Dawkins, taking the methodology of the empirical sciences to be the only way to truth, misapplies that methodology to the realm of metaphysics, with the unfortunate consequences which were completely predictable. Judging from his own writings, one can only conclude that Dawkins is quite innocent of metaphysics. Though this is not in itself, perhaps, a criminal offense, it becomes at the least a very serious matter when one rushes headlong into a field the geography of which one is a complete stranger. Much of the crusade to which Dawkins has dedicated himself is fueled by his conviction that there is a war on between science and religion, and he sees himself as right in the thick of it, battling on behalf of science. But if science and religion are rightly understood, it becomes immediately evident that there is no war between the two, nor was there ever one, nor will there ever be one. To be sure, there *is* a war going on, but as Professor Feser points out, it is not between science and religion; it is between two philosophies, "the classical philosophical worldview" (13), on the one hand, which Professor Feser so ably explains and defends, and the philosophy which was ushered in by the likes of Descartes, Hobbes, Kant, and all the rest of the moderns.

In his survey of the principal tenets of the Western philosophical tradition, Professor Feser deals in an especially illuminating way with, among other things, the venerable "problem of universals," gives us nine trenchant arguments against nominalism, and, in treating of the thought of Plato, makes an apt observation in recommending that, instead of talking about "values," we make "the good" the subject of our conversation. Although it figures prominently in con-

temporary discourse, there is reason to shy away from the term "values," for the fact that it is too suggestive of the subjective. A value is something to which we attach worth, sometimes for reasons that are entirely subjective. The good, on the other hand, has objective status; it is what it is, regardless of whether or not we value it. Much of Professor Feser's efforts in this book go into explicating the thought of Aristotle, and for good reason. He rightly laments the fact that modern philosophy has effectively abandoned Aristotelian thought, to the decided detriment of modern philosophy. "Abandoning Aristotelianism," he writes, "as the founders of modern philosophy did, was the single greatest mistake ever made in the entire history of Western thought" (51, emphasis in the text). The extent of that mistake is best appreciated when we realize that Aristotelian ideas "provided the most powerful and systematic intellectual foundation for traditional Western religion and morality—and for that matter, for science, morality, politics, and theology in general—that has ever existed" (52).

Within the context of discussing the concepts of act and potency, matter and form, and the four causes—all key elements of Aristotle's philosophy—Professor Feser provides a pointed critique of David Hume's position on causality, and in a crisp, cogent way makes explicit its elementary flaws. That so many philosophers have succumbed so thoroughly to Hume's errant reasoning on this matter surely has to stand as one of the marvels of modern times. To break the spell, as Professor Feser has done, one has only to call attention to the obvious—that the Emperor David is liable to philosophical arrest for indecent exposure.

In his careful working through proofs for the existence of God, Professor Feser chooses to focus on the first, second, and fifth of St. Thomas's famed Five Ways, that is to say, respectively, the argument from motion, the argument from efficient causality, and the argument from finality. He properly calls attention to the fact that Richard Dawkins entirely misconstrues the argument from finality, taking it to be an argument from design, and then, supposing himself to

be attacking the thought of Thomas Aquinas, is actually attacking the thought of William Paley. In his *Natural Theology*, the eighteenth-century divine William Paley offered to the world one of the most elaborate and detailed versions of the argument from design that we have. Professor Feser finds the argument from design to be problematic, which explains his less than enthusiastic attitude toward the current Intelligent Design movement. He sees that whole approach to the existence of God to be seriously debilitated by the fact that it effectively accepts a mechanistic view of the universe, a view shared by the atheists. I think his criticisms of the argument from design are warranted, up to a point, but it seems to me that there are certain positive aspects to that argument which can be put to good purpose if the entire argument is made subordinate to the argument from finality, and taken as a corollary to it.

Professor Feser tracks the beginnings of modern philosophy back to the fourteenth century, specifically to the nominalism and the voluntarism which welled up out of that century. Interestingly, he identifies William of Ockham, whom we regularly label as a nominalist, as a conceptualist, and there is something to that. It is a fairly common supposition, which our histories of philosophy do not always take pains to correct, that modern thought, both philosophical and scientific, decided to dispense with formal and final causality, and make do with material and efficient causality only, because formal and final causality had been clearly refuted. But no such refutation ever took place; it was simply a matter of choosing to ignore the reality of formal and final causality, a choice driven by the ideological commitment to a mechanistic view of the universe. Though never openly admitted, it was understood that, once formal and final causality were acknowledged, the existence of God had to be acknowledged. But reality has a way of having the last say, and while formal and final causality were denied on the theoretical level, they were everywhere tacitly recognized on the practical level. As Professor Feser makes clear, one cannot subscribe to the reality of efficient causality, which of course

every empiricist readily does, without at one and the same time subscribing to the reality of final causality, for the first is unintelligible without the second. And he notes that the whole process of inductive reasoning, which is the engine that runs the empirical sciences, is only defensible in terms of formal causality.

It is refreshing to hear the celebrated mind-body problem—which we owe to the universally recognized father of modern philosophy, René Descartes—referred to as the pseudo-mind-body problem. For such it is. It is one of any number of pseudo-problems that modern philosophy has invented for itself in attempting to make sense of a world in which sound psychological and metaphysical principles have been carelessly pushed aside. As the result of M. Descartes's splitting man right down the middle, troublesomely making two substances where there can be only one, philosophers started wringing their hands and wracking their brains in trying to figure out how there could be any communication between the material (the body) and the purely immaterial (the soul). And then, as materialism eventually came to prominence and the very notion of soul was regarded as no longer philosophically acceptable, the next logical move was to reduce mind to brain. We have an extreme version of the materialistic position expressed in what is called "eliminative materialism," two of the more prominent proponents of which are Paul and Patricia Churchland. The basic thesis of eliminative materialism is the very soul of simplicity: all reality is material, period. Commitment to this thesis entails surrendering naive folk notions such as that which would hold, for example, that our ideas are immaterial. Not so, for to be immaterial is to be nothing. Our ideas are to be reduced to purely material phenomena, such as synaptic activity within the brain. Professor Feser demonstrates conclusively that this position is fundamentally incoherent. In spite of itself, eliminative materialism, cannot avoid relying on what it wants to deny.

The consequences of the rejection of formal and final causality are as wide ranging as they are damaging, opening

the door wide to skepticism, creating serious problems relating to personal identity, free will, and natural rights. The general consequences for morality are given prominent display in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Despite his best efforts to develop an ethics founded on objective criteria, Kant ended up giving us a system that ultimately amounts to just another kind of subjectivism, though admittedly a very classy kind, and once subjectivism has been given center stage relativism waits impatiently in the wings.

In the final chapter of *The Last Superstition* Professor Feser makes a convincing case for what he calls irreducible teleology. Try as we might to get rid of final causality, it refuses to cooperate with our intemperate and irrational designs. By a focused analytic examination of biological phenomena, of complex inorganic systems, and of the basic laws of nature, he gives us incontrovertible evidence that final causality is an integral and inextricable fact of nature, and not to recognize it is as such is simply to be content with a profound incomprehension of nature. In reviewing a book one seldom calls attention to the notes that are attached to the text, but in this case there is reason for doing so, for they represent a rich store of references pertaining to the many subjects which are dealt with in the book. In sum, this is an important and weighty work, which addresses vigorously and deftly what is very likely the single most serious problem of our age. It is a book which the new atheists could benefit much by reading, but they doubtless would be reluctant to do so, out of fear, perhaps, that it might prove to be an instrument of conversion.



Nicholas E. Lombardo, O.P. *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011. xiii + 319 pp. \$34.95

Reviewed by D. Q. McNerny, *Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary, Denton, Nebraska.*

There has been a marked deficiency of attention given to the ethical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, specifically with respect to the prominent emphasis it gives to the emotions, a circumstance all the more unfortunate for the relevancy of that thought for the times in which we live. So argues Father Nicholas E. Lombardo, O.P. in his book, *The Logic of Desire*, and then, in that book, he makes no small contribution toward remedying the deficiency, and demonstrating the relevancy of the emotions for ethical behavior. His principal thesis, which provides the basic structure for the book, is that, for St. Thomas, emotions, as manifested in the sense appetites or passions, and as those are treated in the *Summa theologiae*, act as “the guiding principle around which Aquinas organized his most mature thought” (xi). The special value of the approach which Aquinas takes here is to be found in the fact that it represents a rich synthesis of psychology and ethics. The most telling aspect of Aquinas’s treatment of human emotion is his repeated affirmation of its fundamental goodness. Human emotion can go wrong, but when it does so it departs from an elementary, natural orientation.

The term “emotion” proves to be quite elusive, and the psychologists have not been able to pin it down with the kind of precision that its critical importance in human psychology would seem to warrant. Because of his commanding influence, William James’s understanding of emotion, by which he effectively reduces it to feeling, that is, to physical sensations, held sway among the professionals until the middle of the last century, when a cognitive account of emotion began to gain prominence. The hallmark of the cognitive approach is to regard the emotions as intentional, which is to say that they are object oriented and consist of a combination of sense experience and cognitive evaluation. When we respond emotionally to something (emotion always has an object toward which it is directed), we respond both as feeling creatures and as thinking creatures. Our “emotion,” as Father Lombardo points out, has no reliable equivalent in the thirteenth-century

Latin of St. Thomas. Even so, that does not mean that there are not significant conceptual connections between our common understanding of the term, and what Aquinas has to say about the passions and affectivity in the *Summa*.

The Thomistic texts on which Father Lombardo’s study is centered have come to be known under the collective title of the *Treatise on the Passions*, which is made up of Questions 22–48 of the First Part of the Second Part of the *Summa theologiae*. Aquinas divides the passions, or sense appetites, into two basic groups, the concupiscible passions (love, desire, pleasure; hate, aversion, pain) and the irascible passions (hope, audacity; fear, despair; anger). Considered generally, a passion “is a physiological and psychological response to the apprehension of a sensible good or a sensible evil” (20). “Appetite” designates a larger category, and besides the passions it takes into account the will as well, which Aquinas refers to as the intellectual appetite. An appetite is “the principle in being that aims toward what is perfecting or completing” (26). It is common to both the passions and the will that they are ordered toward and seek to attain the good. What differentiates the concupiscible and the irascible passions is that the first represent simple and direct responses to what is perceived as either good or evil, whereas the irascible passions are responses to a good which is difficult to attain, or to an evil which is difficult to escape.

There is an especially fresh and lively quality to Father Lombardo’s explication of and commentary on the passions, which is explained by the fact that he brings to his analysis a broad knowledge of current trends in the psychology of the emotions. He has thus ably equipped himself to show the specific ways in which Thomistic thought has germane application to an array of contemporary issues. He makes several thoughtful and potentially productive criticisms of Aquinas’s thought, as when, for example, he questions if there is a legitimate basis for a real distinction, given Aquinas’s description of them and the part he has them play in his system, between love and desire, as well as between despair and fear or aversion. Although I believe a case

can be made for the legitimacy of those distinctions, even so, Father Lombardo is rightly calling attention to real difficulties in the texts we have to deal with.

If we were to take our lead from the Stoics, we would look upon the passions with a jaundiced eye, regarding them as deadly enemies which must be overcome as we travel the high road leading to the ultimate victory of virtue. No attitude could be more alien to the thought of St. Thomas. “For Aquinas,” Father Lombardo appositely observes, “the passions are not a threat to human virtue, but an essential component, and the ideal relationship between the passions and reason is more fluid” (101). The passions exercise a certain degree of autonomy in their operations, and our ordinary experience tells us that they are capable at times of functioning in a damagingly disordered fashion, but for all that it remains the case that they have a natural orientation to reason. We could say that the passions have a built-in propensity to cooperate with reason, and do cooperate so long as reason itself fulfills its proper role in the ongoing drama of man’s ethical life. When everything within the person is ordered as it ought to be, that is, toward the attainment of goods that are truly perfective of the person, then (*pace* the Stoics) “virtue does not eradicate the passions, that is, passions actively oriented toward human flourishing” (106).

Man is naturally ordered toward the good, and all the particular goods which we strive to attain in this life can be said to have their summation—certainly their basic intelligibility as goods—in man’s ultimate good, which is of course God Himself. But we need supernatural help, in the form of grace, in order to enable us to live virtuously and thus properly direct ourselves toward our culminating final end which is beatitude. Hence the need for that specific manifestation of grace which are the infused virtues, which Aquinas regarded as the only perfect virtues, properly speaking, and which, though gratuitous gifts of God—it is that which distinguishes the infused virtues from the acquired virtues—nonetheless require human cooperation, for, after all, gratuitous gifts

require an attitude of active receptivity on the part of the recipient. In calling attention to the disputed question whether Aquinas, in the Second Part of the Second Part of the *Summa* (wherein specific virtues are considered) is dealing with acquired virtues or with infused virtues, Father Lombardo gives the altogether reasonable response, and argues conclusively on its behalf, that Aquinas is dealing with both. And he makes a point worth pondering when he cites what he regards as a less than adequate treatment on Aquinas's part of the relation between the acquired virtues and the infused virtues.

In his discussion of Aquinas's treatment of the theological virtues, Father Lombardo shows how the notion of affectivity guides the Common Doctor's thought, as when, for example, he stresses the inseparableness of affection and faith, and by his characterizing charity as friendship with God. The passions play a prominent role in Aquinas's treatment of the cardinal virtues, as evidenced by his placing the irascible passions under the governance of fortitude; and he assigns the same task to temperance with respect to the concupiscible passions. Furthermore, justice too involves affection, and cannot be regarded as the mere mechanical meeting of the standards of a bloodless equity.

In treating of the affectivity of Christ, Aquinas had the difficult task of trying to strike the right balance between the facts that, while Christ was fully man, He was fully God as well. Christ enjoyed the Beatific Vision, and though He possessed infused knowledge of a very special kind, He nonetheless, Aquinas argues, gained knowledge through those ordinary means common to all human beings. Not only does Aquinas reject Hilary of Poitiers's contention that Christ suffered no physical pain (*dolor*) on the cross, but argues that, precisely because He was perfectly human, Christ crucified suffered the most intense kind of pain. However, Christ's sorrow (*tristitia*) was in the sense appetite only. Though Christ underwent temptation, it was related to Him only extrinsically, not intrinsically; he was not subject to the *fomes peccati*, an innate susceptibility to sin.

Chapter Eight of *The Logic of Desire* is devoted to a preliminary evaluation of Aquinas's thought on emotion, and in it Father Lombardo explains that "Aquinas's category of affection [*affectio*] corresponds to the category of emotion, and therefore Aquinas's account of affection should be seen as Aquinas's account of emotion" (224). He goes on to provide us with a succinct summary of the findings of his study in the following terms: "When Aquinas's account of emotion is put in conversation with contemporary theories, Aquinas should be seen as advocating a theory of emotion that equates emotion with intentional feeling, views emotion as intrinsically dependent on cognition (including perception) and usually but not necessarily involving the body, and limits emotion's extension to discrete psychological events, thus excluding long-term affective dispositions from being considered emotions (but not as moods, as long as a mood is understood as a more or less continuous series of similar emotions)" (229).

Because of their intrinsic orientation to the good, Aquinas regards both the sense appetites (the passions) and the intellectual appetite (the will) as basically trustworthy. When we go wrong morally, it is because, with the loss of grace, we are beset by a complex of desires which are in competition with one another, and so we experience a war within. Desire ceases to be properly focused. It is a particularly perspicacious observation on Father Lombardo's part that Aquinas's grouping of the passions into the concupiscible and the irascible is "one of the most important structural features of Aquinas's account of emotion." For St. Thomas, every passion is good unless corrupted, and his conviction that passion is naturally oriented to reason "is the foundation of Aquinas's account of how virtue and grace perfect human activity" (239). Freedom, for Aquinas, is meant for the perfecting of the human person. Because of desire's rooted orientation toward the ultimate good, when we sin we are thereby frustrating our deepest desires.

Father Lombardo cites what he identifies as four problematic areas in Aquinas's system as it relates to emotion. First, Aquinas does not provide a description

of emotion. Second, apart from his treatment of vice, he does not address the issue of psychological pathology. Third, he pays little attention to the important role which memory plays in human psychology. Finally, he gives insufficient attention to interpersonal relationships. While all of these criticisms are defensible, I wonder if the first, given the still unresolved problems regarding the very definition of emotion, might not be faulting Aquinas for not meeting a concern which is more ours than his.

In the final chapter of the book Father Lombardo offers a number of stimulating suggestions for the formulation of a contemporary theology of emotion. He begins by considering the matter of discernment, and with reference to St. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, cites interior peace and consolation as very reliable indicators that one has discerned in a manner which is in accord with the will of God. He next proposes forgiveness as the proper antidote to a tenacious and debilitating anger. "Because the passions respond to the direction of reason," he writes, "useless anger can be redirected through forgiveness and dispersed" (253). In view of the homiletic blandness to which, by and large, Catholics have been subjected in recent decades, Father Lombardo has some especially pertinent things to say about emotion and preaching. A sermon must be substantive, to be sure, and its sound doctrinal content directed principally to the intellect, but "good preaching presents objects for consideration that naturally awake the intended passions or affections" (257). His analysis of boredom, that peculiarly modern malaise, contains any number of pregnant insights. There is no inner rest for the bored, no joy, no real love. The seat of the problem is to be found, not in cognition, but in desire, a desire bereft of a proper object. He quotes Tolstoy's pointed description of "boredom as the desire for desires" (264), and fittingly associates boredom with Aquinas's *acedia*. "Working within the context of Aquinas's anthropology," he writes, "boredom might be described as the emotion that ensues when the will finds nothing it desires and nothing worth seeking" (264).

All in all, we have in *The Logic of Desire* a work which is truly seminal for the large span of productive possibilities it opens up for future research in Thomistic studies. One can readily agree with Father Lombardo's view that Aquinas's thought is eminently applicable to our times, and more readily applaud the success with which he developed that view in his book. That Aquinas's psychological and ethical thought is relevant to our times should not be cause for wonder, for, in his meticulous examination of the passions and of affectivity in general, Aquinas was dealing with certain basic constants of human nature, which remain in the twenty-first century what they were in the thirteenth. But it was Father Lombardo's singular contribution to have made explicit in this book, in any number of significant ways, the application of Aquinas's thought to prominent concerns and problems in contemporary psychology, especially as they relate to the emotion. Viewed in a larger perspective, this book provides additional and impressive evidence of the vitality and promise of the renewal of Thomistic studies to which we are now happily bearing witness.



St. Thomas Aquinas. ***Treatise on Human Nature, Summa Theologiae I, Questions 75 - 102.*** Translated by Alfred J. Freddoso. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2010. xiii + 353 pages + xiii. \$20.00.

Reviewed by D. Q. McNerny, *Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary, Denton, Nebraska.*

In the First Part of his *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas devotes several questions (a question in this work can be considered to be roughly comparable to a chapter) to a thorough examination of the nature of man. There is a fairly long-standing practice within Thomistic circles of excerpting this set of questions and publishing them as a separate book, two of which I have before me on my desk, one entitled *Treatise on Man*, the other simply *On Man*. The most recent book comprising this set of

questions to be translated into English and presented to the public has been done by Professor Alfred J. Freddoso of the University of Notre Dame, and he has assigned to his volume the particularly apt title, *Treatise on Human Nature*.

Within the scope of this work St. Thomas discusses an array of subjects relating to man's basic identity, to what he is in terms of his essential nature. Those subjects can be roughly grouped together into five broad categories: the nature and powers of the human soul; the nature of human knowledge; human sensation, emotion, and appetency; the creation of man; man in the state of innocence.

Relying on philosophical terminology he adopted from Aristotle, St. Thomas regarded the human soul as a substantial form, that is, as the determining principle which constitutes man precisely as man. "It is through the soul," he explains in more concrete terms, "that [the body] is a body" (35), and specifically a human body, the fit and adequate corporeal expression of the animating principle which is the soul. The human person is body and soul together. Man is not his soul alone; that would be Platonism. Nor is man his body alone; that would be materialism. "It is clear," St. Thomas writes, "that man is something composed of a soul and a body and is not a soul alone" (14). In another place he had put it in a particularly pointed way: *Anima Petri non est Petrus*, "The soul of Peter is not Peter." If we were to opt for the Platonic position, and claim that man was essentially soul, we would have no ontological basis on which we could distinguish the essence of man from that of angel.

All living creatures, plants, animals, and man, can be said to have souls, that is, animating principles, which explain the fact that they bear within them that astonishing reality called life, but there are radical differences to be noted among the vegetative soul (that of plants), the sensitive soul (that of animals), and the rational soul of man, the distinguishing feature that, besides possessing all the powers proper to the vegetative and sensitive souls, possesses as well the surpassing powers of intellect and will. Man not only nourishes him-

self, grows, and reproduces, as do plants and animals; he not only has the powers of sensation, appetency, and locomotion, as do animals; but as a rational creature he also has the capacity to know the truth and love the good. Though his intellect is no match for that of an angel, he nonetheless shares with the angel what is proper to intellect as such. Another and most significant way in which the rational soul differs from the vegetative and sensitive souls is that it is subsistent, which is to say that, although its natural condition is to be united to the body and serve as the body's animating principle, it can exist apart from the body, which is precisely what it does after death takes place. Man as man, that is, as the composite creature of body and soul, is mortal, but the human soul, as soul, does not suffer death. And, St. Thomas teaches, though the soul, in its separated state, does not have the peculiar kind of knowledge which was provided to it through sensation, it retains the powers of intellect and will, and will be able, through preternatural means, to exercise the knowing powers of intellect. For St. Thomas, there is something about the bare fact of being a rational creature that seems somehow necessarily to imply immortality, and apropos of that he remarks interestingly, "everything that has an intellect naturally desires to exist always" (14). And there would be something fundamentally incongruous about the circumstance of a natural desire which existed only to be frustrated.

When we think about body and soul and how they relate to one another we tend to think of the soul as being "in" the body. But St. Thomas suggests that it would be more appropriate to reverse that mode of thinking, for "it is the soul that contains the body and makes it to have oneness, rather than vice versa" (31). The soul can be regarded as "containing" the body in the sense that it has the whole body, in all its particulars, entirely within its animating embrace.

As rational creatures we can be said to have been made for the sake of knowledge, for "the proper operation of man *qua* man is intellectual understanding" (22). The human mind is potentially all things, for theoretically there are no

limits to what the mind is capable of encompassing. And what makes human knowing so wondrous a thing is the peculiar kind of intimacy which is established between the knower and the known, in that the knower in a mysterious but significant way becomes what he knows. In a root epistemological sense, man can never be alienated from the world all about him, given the manner in which he is bound to it through knowledge.

Whence comes our knowledge? How do we, as intellectual beings, come to know what we know? It all begins with the senses. Sense knowledge apprises us of the existence of concrete particulars, of the *that-ness* of things. Then the intellect takes over, and through acts of abstraction, working on the raw material supplied by the senses, is productive of ideas, and through ideas we are apprised of the *what-ness* of things. We thus come to know things in terms of their innermost identities, their specific natures. We are not born with ideas, but we are born with the capacity to give birth to them. These ideas are the absolutely necessary means through which we come to know things, but it is those things themselves, not the means through which we come to know them, which are the proper objects of the human mind. Let us say “rock” represents the idea in question. Then, St. Thomas would remind us, “what is understood is the rock, and not a likeness [i.e., the idea] of a rock” (28). We can of course focus our attention on ideas just as ideas, but in most instances we look right through our ideas, as it were, without even being aware of them, focusing on the things of which they are the formal signs.

St. Thomas links man’s signal character as a rational creature with that arresting scriptural claim which tells us that he was made in the image and likeness of God. Because man, through his capacity for knowledge, is potentially all things, he thus “comes close in a certain sense to a likeness of God” (109). Though the human intellect is infinitely distant from and inferior to the divine intellect, man’s mind, by the creative choice of God Himself, reflects, however remotely and dimly, something of the

divine mind.

The two great powers of the human soul, intellect and will, are interrelated in the closest possible way. The two powers include one another, for “the intellect understands what the will wills, and the will wills what the intellect understands” (127). We can say that the intellect is prior to the will in that it provides the will with the information upon which it acts. But the influences between these two powers is reciprocal, and the will can exercise directive and disciplinary power over the intellect, as when it commands the wandering mind of the scholar to dispense with the distractions and give full attention to the subject at hand. The proper object of the intellect is truth, and that of the will, goodness, but these are really two sides of the same coin. “The true and the good include one another” (103). We love truth because it is a good—indeed the highest good—and we pursue the good because it is true.

It is through *synderesis*, which we might regard as the intellectual ground for conscience, that man comes to know the basic principles that govern the moral life. Man is possessed of free will, without which he could not qualify as a moral agent. To say that the will is free is simply to say that it is an initiating cause, and that, as such, with regard to concrete cases, “it can take one thing while rejecting another” (135). That God is the principal cause of every act of man—“without me you can do nothing”—does not negate the freedom of the will, for God enables man to act precisely as a free agent. The human will is determined *vis-à-vis* beatitude, which is to say that man, in every choice he makes, is ordered toward the ultimate good. He is constitutionally incapable of choosing evil as evil; he always opts for what he perceives to be good, but his perceptions, alas, might be, and too often are, quite erroneous.

It is a token of St. Thomas’s abiding interest in the nature and capacities of the human intellect that he returns to that subject in the later questions of the treatise, discussing such matters as the pervasive reliance of the intellect on phantasms (sense images), our

knowledge of contingent things, and the knowledge of separated souls. And he explains how it is that the human intellect has direct knowledge of universals but not of singulars.

The human soul was created directly by God, and because it is the substantial form of the body it would be unreasonable to suppose, as some have done, that it was created separate from and antecedent to the body. In arguing that “it was necessary for the first human body to be formed directly by God” (244), St. Thomas would presumably not be sympathetic with the views advocated by those committed to the notion of the *istic* evolution. Considering the sexual distinctions of human nature, and having in mind the potent truth that man was created in the image and likeness of God, he writes: “The image of God is found in both the man and the woman with respect to what the character of an image primarily consists in, viz., an intellectual nature” (266). And a couple of pages later he expands upon that line or reasoning: “the image of God is common to both sexes, since it stems from the mind, in which there is no distinction between sexes” (271).

Turning to the subject of man in the state of innocence, that is to say, before the Fall, St. Thomas develops a number of points. Man in the state of innocence, though he then had true scientific knowledge, did not know the essence of God, for if the latter had been the case he would not have been capable of sinning. Man in the state of innocence had been created in full possession of sanctifying grace; he possessed all the virtues, most particularly that of original justice, and he had perfect integrity, which is to say that his passions were completely under the control of reason. Man, the human person, the composite of body and soul, was, before the Fall, immortal. Are we to suppose that there was sexual union between man and woman in the state of innocence? St. Thomas argues that it would be unreasonable to suppose otherwise. Furthermore, and quite interestingly, he contends that “in the state of innocence celibacy (*continentia*) would not have been praiseworthy” (320).

The above represents but a sketchy

and highly selective account of St. Thomas's *Treatise on Human Nature*, a work whose worth and richness can only be adequately appreciated by direct and active engagement with it. This is something which can now be done with especially beneficial results for any reader, thanks to the excellent translation of the work provided to us by Professor Freddoso. This must be regarded as a superior work on several different counts. Earlier in this review I mentioned two other translations of the treatise which preceded this one, but that was not quite accurate, to the extent that I left the impression that those earlier translations and Professor Freddoso's all deal with the same basic text. This is not the case. The work entitled *On Man*, begins with Question 75 and ends with Question 79; the work entitled *Treatise on Man* begins with Question 75 and ends with Question 88. Professor Freddoso's translation begins also begins with Question 75—this is the logical starting point—but carries on through Question 109, thus giving us the full account of the nature of man as St. Thomas conceived it to be and intended to communicate it. The quite accurate subtitle attached to Professor Freddoso's translation is, "The Complete Text," which indeed it is, and which makes it especially valuable, and superior to the earlier translations.

As to the translation itself, it reads wonderfully well. The text, as we would expect, is entirely faithful to St. Thomas's Latin, and is rendered into an English which is not at all strained; it is clear and vigorous, and flows along smoothly throughout the entire book with steady assurance. It is a particularly happy feature of this translation that the language is not in the least bit obtrusive; it does not distract or stand in the way of the reader as he attempts to engage with the ideas presented to us by St. Thomas. The language has to it the kind of transparency which the best prose is always marked by, so that the reader is unaware of its presence, and has the sensation that he is dealing with the ideas directly. Especially helpful, I think, was Professor Freddoso's including here and there throughout the text, as parenthetical additions, the Latin for a particular word

or phrase which he had just translated, allowing the reader who is familiar with the Latin to make quick comparisons between the original text and the translations. One of the consequences of these inclusions, taken all together, is to give accent to the felicity and accuracy with which Professor Freddoso rendered certain words or passages. Just a few examples illustrate this point. The Latin: *non ex collatione*; the translation: "not by comparing alternatives." The Latin: *secundum quas rationes*; the translation: "in accord with these conceptions." Latin: *non cognoscit nisi propriam passionem*; translation: "for if a power has cognition only of what it receives within itself." Latin: *cogitando interius verbum formamus*; translation: "we form an interior word by thinking." St. Thomas's Latin is highly compressed, and to attempt to translate a word or phrase of his in a rigidly literal way would be almost inevitably to miss the full import of what he is attempting to say. The peculiar strength of Professor Freddoso's translation is that, besides fulfilling the basic obligation of bringing across the denotative import of St. Thomas's language, it conveys its significant connotations as well.

What makes this work particularly interesting is that it is a part of a much larger and very important project. In 2009 St. Augustine's Press published Professor Freddoso's translation of St. Thomas's *Treatise on Law*, comprising Questions 90 through 108 of the First Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae*. (Incidentally, once again in this case he gives us the full text; which other translations I have at hand failed to do.) These two works represent very promising indications of what is yet to come, for Professor Freddoso is in the process of translating the entire *Summa Theologiae*. He has thus set himself to a task which is as commendable as it is needful. The translation of the *Summa* by the English Dominicans represents a distinguished enterprise, and it has done good service over the years. But we stand in need of a new translation, and in his *Treatise on Law* and *Treatise on Human Nature* we have proof positive that Professor Freddoso's will be of the highest quality. But there is something more

to be said on this matter: this new rendering of the *Summa* into English will prove to be most timely, for it comes at a time when we are experiencing a heartening revival of interest in St. Thomas and Thomistic studies. The forthcoming work will constitute a substantial contribution to that revival.



Etienne Gilson. *Medieval Essays*. Trans. from the French by James Colbert. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011. 222 pp.

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Etienne Gilson needs no introduction to readers of the *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly*. We remember him as the medieval historian who produced lasting works such as *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* and specialized studies of St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, and Dante. It is said of him that he would do research at the drop of a hat on any subject he was asked to address. Thus we have *Heloise and Abelard*, *Choir of Muses*, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back*, and *Painting and Reality*, the Mellon Lectures delivered at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. All are worth revisiting. The present volume is a newly translated collection of lectures and essays directed to professional audiences, essays nevertheless accessible to the layman, presupposing only a minimal knowledge of philosophy and theology. Gilson brings to life what he calls "the glorious age of metaphysics." Clearly, metaphysical treatises from the Middle Ages have much to do with how today we think about God, ourselves, our relation to God, about faith and reason, and about morality.

In 2012 Paris will mark the 850th anniversary of the founding of Notre Dame Cathedral. In preparation for an anticipated celebration, four bells from the North Tower of the Cathedral will be removed, melted down, and recast, with the new ones intended to recreate the sound of the present seventeenth-century ones. The point of the recasting,

explained the rector of the Cathedral, is authenticity. "We are not destroying the bells," he said, "we are only intensifying the sound of Notre Dame." Apparently bells cast from a bronze alloy may look indestructible, but they can wear down and fall out of tune. Something like that occurs as each generation recasts inherited texts.

Notre Dame, it may be mentioned, was approximately 100 years old when St. Thomas Aquinas studied and taught there. Thomas, having begun his studies with the Benedictines at Monte Cassino, continued his studies at Naples and eventually with Albert the Great at Paris and Köln. At Paris Thomas earned degrees from both the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Theology. As a Master of Theology, he was empowered to teach.

Gilson's extensive scholarship reminds us that the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries not only produced great cathedrals but great theologians as well. If Notre Dame Cathedral is deemed a cultural legacy, so too are the works of many theologians of medieval Europe. The roll call would include Anselm, Bonaventure, Scotus, Albert, and Occam among others. Like the bells of Notre Dame, they are often recast in the interest of authenticity. Etienne Gilson has done a bit of recasting himself. He finds that for a century or more historians of medieval philosophy have tended to represent the Middle Ages as inhabited solely by philosophers rather than by theologians. He humorously remarks, "Medieval theologians who never wrote any philosophy in life seem to have composed a great deal after their death."

Medieval Essays consists of two essays devoted to an overview of the medieval landscape, followed by studies of Anselm, Peter Lombard, William of Auvergne, Maimonides, and Avicenna. They show clearly that Thomas, for example, did not work in an intellectual vacuum. His recasting of Aristotle profited from contact with the Islamic theologians, al Farabi and Avicenna, and from his beloved Rabbi Moshe (Maimonides).

Gilson finds that Thomas's appropriation of the distinction between essence and existence, that is, between what a thing is, its essence, and the act of ex-

istence whereby it is, constitutes one of the "most solemn moments in the history of Western thought." Thomas, meditating on a passage from Genesis 3:13, wherein God in response to Moses, reveals himself as I Am Who I Am, finds God revealing himself in the language of being. God is envisaged as Pure Act of Existence, uncomposed, Being Itself. This conjunction of Scripture and Greek philosophy, Gilson is convinced, brings us closer to a metaphysical understanding of divine being than any available in antiquity. "Christian thought," writes Gilson, "did not simply use the peripatetic (Greek) universe, it metamorphosed it from within."

Obviously one would have to read further to grasp the full meaning of Gilson's reading of Aquinas. Suffice it to say, Gilson in any of his essays or books is an unrivaled intellectual companion. The reader, professional theologian or not, can be grateful to James Colbert for making this collection available in the English language.



G. F.W. Hegel. ***Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Volume I: Manuscripts of the Introduction and Lectures 1822-3.*** Edited and translated by Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2011. 562 pp.

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Students of Hegel who find it sometimes difficult to read him in the original German may welcome this translation based on a critical edition of the lectures. The sixty-three page "Editorial Introduction" provided by Brown and Hodgson is a valuable guide to Hegel's own introduction to the lectures. Hegel in these lectures is not inaccessible to the lay reader. As a matter of fact, Hegel himself, in addressing his audience, says: "Those of you gentlemen who are not acquainted with philosophy, I could perhaps appeal that you approach these lectures on world history with a faith in reason, with a desire and thirst for knowledge of it." Hegel

lectured on world history for the first time in the winter semester of 1822-23 in Berlin. The lectures were repeated on four occasions and rank among the most popular of his writings. Much of Hegel's philosophy of history is surprisingly relevant in an age of globalization. His survey of world history begins with China and successively deals with India, Persia, Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt, the Greek world, the Roman world, and finally the *Germanic* world.

Hegel, early on in the lectures, makes a distinction between what he calls "original history" and "reflective history." Original history is written by historians such as Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Caesar in his *Commentaries*, who have themselves witnessed, experienced, and lived through some of the events described. Such historians are immersed in the material and do not rise above it to reflect upon it. Reflective history goes beyond what is simply present to the author of an historical account. The reflective historian comes to the historical record with his own spirit, and in his reflective account everything depends on the maxims and representational principles that he brings to his material. When a reflective historian attempts to depict the spirit of an age it is usually his own spirit that is heard. Hegel also speaks of "philosophical world history" whose focus is the spiritual guide of peoples, the principles which inform individual actions and events and the history of those principles. Hegel admits that it is difficult for a writer to transport himself completely and vividly into times past. As much as we may admire the Greeks, we cannot truly share their feelings.

A further distinction is made among several modes of reflective history. One may be called a "survey," that is, of a people or a country. Another is what Hegel calls "pragmatic," for example, history that focuses on the totality of the interests of a state, a constitution, or a conflict, determining perhaps how a people becomes a state, what the ends of a state are, what institutions are needed to bring true interests to actuality. Whatever the mode adopted by the historian, an assumption must be made that reason

governs the world and that the unfolding of world history is a rational process. The alternative would be to attribute everything to chance, and this Hegel's overarching system will not permit.

Moving into his subject matter, Hegel writes, "In all world-historical peoples, we encounter poetry, fine art, and also philosophy. But these differ not only in tone, style and orientation as such, but in their substance." And yet similarities cannot be ignored: "Since the Europeans have become acquainted with Chinese morality and with the writings of Confucius, it has received the highest praise and the most flattering acknowledgement of its merits from those who are familiar with Christian morality." He goes on to say, "The Chinese took their moral rules as if they were laws of nature, positive external commandments, mandatory rights and duties, or rules of normal courtesy," further comparing Confucian morality with that of the Stoics.

In speaking of the *Orientalis*, Hegel says they did not understand the human being as essentially free. "The consciousness of freedom first awoke among the Greeks and accordingly they were free; but like the Romans, they knew that only some are free, not the human being as such." Although the principle of freedom was recognized from the start in Christianity, it is obvious that it did not find immediate expression in laws, government, and political organizations. "The *Germanic* nations were the first to come to consciousness, through Christianity, that the human being as human is free, that freedom of the spirit constitutes man's inherent nature."

By way of comment, it must be said that Hegel's view of world history has to be seen in the context of his metaphysics, an a priori system that is inseparable from his teleological view of nature and the course of history itself. History, for Hegel, is an extension of his general theory of the Absolute Spirit as it unfolds and informs the realm of human, temporal happenings. The historical process has an end, and this end is advanced through the necessary law of events. Put another way, from the world historical point of view, all events and

actions are to be understood as mere episodes, or moments, in the self-manifestation of the Absolute. Even Hegel seems at times uncomfortable with this deterministic viewpoint. "When viewing the ruins of ancient splendor, a profound sadness passes over us, a sense that everything passes away and nothing endures." But he recovers his perspective because this regret applies only to natural life, to the material order, and not to the spiritual order.

On the whole, history has not been kind to Hegel. Influential in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it became evident early in the twentieth that Hegel's system could not account for the remarkable advances in the natural sciences. Idealism soon gave way to naturalism and other forms of materialism. In the political order there may still be right-wing and left-wing Hegelians, but his system is largely of antiquarian interest only. That said, there is reason to explore with him, if not in fidelity to his word, the large issues he deals with that forever remain contemporary to the life of the spirit.



Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy, Edited by James Hankins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. xvi + 432 pp.

*Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty,
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This is the paperback edition of a volume first published in 2007. James Hankins's introductory essay is followed by seventeen other essays, including two by the editor himself. To say that the volume is a valuable contribution to an understanding of Renaissance philosophy is almost an understatement. Hankins is professor of history at Harvard University, and the sixteen other contributors to the volume are without exception recognized as distinguished scholars of the movement. In the opening pages of the volume, Hankins offers a chronology of the period under consideration that begins with the birth of Francesco Petrarca in

1304 and ends with the publication of Pierre Gassendi's *Syntagma philosophiae Epicuri* in 1655. In the roll call, the names fly by: Petrarca, Lorenzo Valla, Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino, Lorenzo de' Medici, Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus, Machiavelli, Thomas More, Luther, Calvin, Bacon, Galileo, Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Descartes, and Tommaso Campanella, to name only the most prominent.

Much that is new in the seventeenth century, we are told, is the victory of Copernican cosmology coupled with the success of mechanical philosophy and the rejection of established authority. Hankins acknowledges the influence of Ernest Cassirer in tracing the origins of modern philosophy back to the Renaissance. Cassirer dated the rise of modernity to Nicholas of Cusa, whom he regarded as the first to place the problem of knowledge in the foreground over that of being or nature. Cusa is also cited for understanding the proper role of mathematics in analyzing nature. With Cassirer, Hankins believes that Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa deserves the title of the first "new philosopher" of the Renaissance.

In his overview, Hankins finds that recent Renaissance scholarship can be classified in a three-fold manner, depending on its focus, i.e., on humanism, on scholasticism, or on the new philosophies (in the sense of non-Aristotelian) of the period. The new philosophies, in substituting a Baconian emphasis on power over nature for the scholastic tendency to pursue knowledge for its own sake, in effect, served as a precondition for the emergence of science and technology in the modern period. The humanists wanted philosophers to give up their rationalism, their pursuit of the ultimate reach of reason, and confine themselves to the modest task of moral formation. Petrarca's critique of scholasticism is one case in point. Hume in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* similarly places moral philosophy first because it "considers man chiefly as born for action." Moral virtue thus becomes the most valuable of objects for study for Hume.

In an overview of the period,

Hankins suggests that the great merit of Renaissance philosophy is the common conviction that classical antiquity constitutes a reservoir of excellence, literary, artistic, intellectual, and moral, to which debased and decadent “modern times” could turn in order to repair the barbaric and corrupt *medium aevum* that followed the fall of the Roman Empire. The Renaissance, Hankins believes, did not produce great philosophers. At its best, in the case of writers like Valla, Machiavelli, More, and Montaigne, it produced witty subversives and incisive *provocateurs*. “In short,” Hankins writes, “Renaissance philosophy offers many parallels with the philosophy of our own time. In our era, too, we have the fracturing and crisis of authoritative traditions, a new pluralism of philosophical perspectives, an unsettling information revolution, and passionate aspirations to integrate into philosophical discourse the literature of non-Western traditions.”

In this brief notice, it is impossible to cover the remaining contributions to this volume, but one datum stands out. Luca Bianchi, in his essay, “Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition,” calls attention to the fact that more than 3000 editions of Aristotle’s works were published between the invention of printing (c. 1440) and 1600, of which hundreds date to the fifteenth century.



Mary Jo Nye. ***Michael Polanyi and His Generation: Origins of the Social Construction of Science***. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. xxi +405 pp.

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty,
The Catholic University of America

This is a chronicle of the scientific achievements of Michael Polanyi, but it is more than that. It is a description of the scientific, political, and cultural landscape of Europe from World War I to the Cold War. Nye follows Polanyi’s life and career from his birth (1891) in Budapest to his death in Manchester at the age of 84 (1976).

She documents Polanyi’s many scientific achievements, but the strength of the volume is her description of the scientific communities in which he flourished, first in Budapest, then in Weimar Berlin, and finally in Manchester. Polanyi earned a medical degree in 1913 and a Ph.D. in physical chemistry in 1917 at the University of Budapest. With the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following the Great War, many Hungarian scientists trained in Budapest found it expedient to leave Hungary. Eugene Wigner, John von Neumann, Leo Szilard, and Edward Teller were among the Hungarian émigrés. Some found refuge in Germany, others in England. Polanyi chose to further his study of physical chemistry at Karlsruhe but in 1920 moved to Berlin to work at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Fiber Chemistry. Berlin of the 1920s was the city of Einstein, Planck, Fritz Haber, Walter Nernst, and Lisa Meitner. Weimar Berlin had become the cultural center of Central and Eastern Europe. Besides the Humboldt University, suburban Dahlem was the site of seven scientific institutes.

The racial policies of the National Socialist Party eventually forced Polanyi to leave Germany. After first declining, Polanyi accepted a chair in chemistry at the University of Manchester in 1933. By 1940 his interests had shifted to economics and social and political philosophy, and he exchanged the chair in chemistry for one in social philosophy. In 1951 he was offered a chair in social philosophy at the University of Chicago, a position that he was unable to accept because he was denied a visa by the U.S. State Department, no doubt because his name was associated with the leftist politics of his brother Karl who had supported the Soviet economic policies of the 1920s and 1930s.

Nye is especially interested in the social nature of science, in the close-knit families of physicists and chemists who comprised the scientific communities of Budapest and Berlin. Polanyi’s views on the nature of science are worthy of a treatise unto itself. Science, he held, is a community of dogmatic traditions and social practices, not a march of revolutionary or skeptical ideas. Polanyi de-

scribes his own scientific investigations as ordinary, typical of science, “natural science,” in Thomas Kuhn’s use of the term. “The popular notion of a straightforward relationship between empirical data and scientific discovery or verification is rooted in a misunderstanding of how science really works.” Good evidence is often ignored when a community of opinion favors one opinion over another. He describes as pernicious the simple prescription of nineteenth-century positivism and logical empiricism as naïve. Bertrand Russell is a target for Russell had written, “The triumphs of science are due to the substitution of observation and inference for authority in intellectual matters. Every attempt to revive authority in intellectual matters is a retrograde step.” “Nothing could be further from the truth,” argues Polanyi, citing his own experience, his career, and authority structures in science.

The scientific community of Weimar Berlin was in a sense detached from the social and political turmoil that was destroying the Republic. In describing the situation, James Crowther, a reporter for the *Manchester Guardian* upon visiting Berlin in 1930, wrote: “I was left with the impression the brilliant scientific effervescence ... had an intellectual life of its own, above that of industry and the people, in spite of the integration of the scientific research with industry. This division of high intellectual life from the rumblings underneath was one of the most striking features of the Weimar Republic.” Polanyi’s mother had a different perspective: “The times in Berlin are beginning to be frightful,” she wrote to a friend in Budapest, “unemployment, privation, and disheveled economic, political and emotional life. One says the worst will come in January, the other in February ... but that it will come, they all believe” (67).

Nye devotes an entire chapter to the reception of Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge*, a book based on his Gifford Lectures of 1951–52. Of the book, Nye writes, “Polanyi’s realism appealed to many scientists who found his account of scientific life and scientists’ behavior more recognizable than most philosophers’ or historians’ analyses. The religious tone of

the realism was also congenial to many scientists. The spiritual dimension of *Personal Knowledge* found favor among Christians, and his discussion of cosmic evolution proved useful to proponents of teleology and intelligent design in arguments against mainstream evolutionary biology.”

With respect to economic theory, Polanyi took the side of von Hayek and von Mises. The economy, he maintained, is not to be used for social engineering. Economic theory based on political preferences is no substitute for natural laws. He agreed with von Hayek that if a depression seems underway, any attempt to cure it by monetary and fiscal policy will likely worsen the situation. A slump in a trade cycle is a sign that the system will head back to equilibrium and should be left alone. Patience must reign during inevitable periods of unemployment, and an elastic supply of currency makes the situation worse—not better.

No brief review can do justice to this densely packed book. Those interested in Polanyi’s insider account of the nature of scientific investigation can be grateful for Mary Jo Nye’s painstaking research.



The Relevance of a Neglected Volume:
Maritain *On The Church of Christ*

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At a time when the Church is accused of clerical malfeasance on both sides of the Atlantic, Maritain’s treatise on the Church and her personnel is worth revisiting.

Maritain’s last complete book, *On the Church of Christ: The Person of the Church and Her Personnel*, was published in English translation from the French in the year of his death (1973).¹ It was ignored by the secular media and given scant attention in the Catholic press. It followed by seven years the publication of *Le Paysan de la Garonne*,² which had earned Maritain the enmity of the Catholic left for its critique of some of the theology developing in the wake of

Vatican II. John Courtney Murray in *We Hold These Truths* (1960),³ noted happily that the Church in North America was not divided between left and right as it was with destructive consequences in Europe. By the close of Vatican II, the European virus had spread to North America. Maritain, who had been the darling of the liberal Catholic intelligentsia because of his social philosophy, was suddenly ostracized, his later work ignored. For Maritain a liberal social policy did not presuppose a liberal Catholic theology, certainly not one at war with the intellectual heritage of the Church. Many American scholars, otherwise cognizant of Maritain’s vast oeuvre, remain unaware of the publication of *De l’Église du Christ*.

In *The Church of Christ*, Maritain speaks of the “profoundly troubled moment” at which he was writing.⁴ He calls himself “an old Christian philosopher who has thought about the mystery of the Church for sixty years.” He is appalled by the appreciable number of Catholic intellectuals who in his judgment employ themselves to destroy the treasure of truth which is the Church’s responsibility to transmit. He would “have done with the tempest of widely diffused foolish ideas that have caused confusion among the faithful.” He would “have done with the demythologization of doctrine and the secularization or profanization of a Christianity which our new doctors and spiritual guides would like to entrust to the hands of the sociologist, of the psychoanalysts, of the structuralists, of the Marcussists, of the phenomenologists, and of the pioneers of technocracy.”⁵

The subtitle of *On the Church of Christ* is indicative of a distinction that is crucial to an understanding of the Church. “Churchmen will never be the Church,” writes Maritain. “One can take a detached view, making positive and negative assessments of the activity of Churchmen throughout the centuries while remaining confident of the holiness of the Church itself.”⁶ This distinction runs through the work, that is, the difference between the “person of the Church” and “her personnel,” i.e., the difference between the Church

visible to the intellect and the Church as visible, one can say, in the eyes of the public who know it only through the media. “The person of the Church,” writes Maritain, “can be holy while being composed of members who are all sinners to some degree.” Indeed, we can agree with Maritain that members who are holy can be guilty of gross error in their prudential judgments. Noble purposes can be pursued by ignoble means or frustrated by actions gone awry or by miscalculations and adverse circumstances.

The distinction made, Maritain defends the person of the Church while admitting the evils perpetrated in her name, in his account, by the Crusades, by the Inquisition, by the suppression of the Albigensians, by the imprisonment of Galileo, by the execution of Joan, and by the burning of Savonarola and Giordano Bruno. No critic or cynic is likely to draw a longer list of the “sins of the Church,” for the most part grievous errors of judgment by otherwise noble-minded “Churchmen.” Maritain’s indictment of Churchmen in many cases may be a bit too harsh. Serious scholarship largely published since Maritain wrote has shown that most of the episodes he addresses are a bit more complex than he makes them out to be, and in some cases the Church comes off honorably even by secular standards.

There is one area where Maritain forcefully comes to the defense of the Churchmen—namely, the treatment of the Jews. “The hatred of the Jewish people in the Middle Ages was the deed of the populace and of many in the bourgeoisie and in the nobility and many in the lower clergy. The high personnel of the Church, the Papacy above all, remained free of it.”⁷ He continues, “The Popes, even the ones most severe in their legislation, never knew this hatred.” It was in the papal states that the Jews fared best. “During the whole of the Middle Ages and the darkest periods of the latter, it was the Popes who were their greatest protectors and defenders.”⁸ The Bull of Calixtus II (1120) condemning the violence against the Jews and their baptism under constraint was confirmed at least twenty-two times up to the middle

of the eighteenth century. That defense was continued through the much maligned papacy of Pius XII and is implicit in *Dominus Iesus*, published on August 6, 2000, with the approval of John Paul II and signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.⁹

Maritain acknowledges that inexactness of language often leads some to attribute to the Church an act or decision of her directing personnel without distinguishing whether the act belongs properly to the perpetrator as its sole cause or as an instrument of the Church herself. He reminds his reader that “it is only the solemn magisterium of the Pope speaking alone (and not through a Roman Congregation) or when he speaks conjointly with the bishops assembled in General Council (Ordinary Magisterium) that it is the Church speaking and acting, the Church one, holy and infallible.”¹⁰ Although Maritain wrote forty years ago, his words remain timely as we witness individuals and associations with the aid of a willing media to present themselves as an alternative Magisterium.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jacques Maritain, *De l'Église du Christ*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (*On the Church of Christ: The Person of the Church and Her Personnel*) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).
- 2 *Le Paysan de la Garonne* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966).
- 3 John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960).
- 4 Maritain, *On the Church of Christ*, v.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 241.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 138.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 167.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 168.
- 9 Available at: vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents.
- 10 Maritain, *On the Church of Christ*, 239.



F.A. Hayek. *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. xii + 581 pp.

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Shortly before the end of World War II, F.A. Hayek (1899–1992) published a short work, *The Road to Serfdom*, a book that has never lost its relevance. Sixteen years later in 1960 he brought out *The Constitution of Liberty* wherein he returned to discuss in detail many of the topics addressed in the previous work. The University of Chicago Press has now reprinted the latter work in what it calls “the definitive edition” under the valuable editorship of Ronald Hamowy, emeritus professor of history at the University of Alberta.

The Road to Serfdom was the result of Hayek’s reflection on the socialist drift in Europe that facilitated the rise to power of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. When the Anschluss Österreichs took place in March 1938, the Austrian economist was lecturing at the London School of Economics. Granted British citizenship, he remained throughout the war years in England, where he continued to teach until 1950 when he accepted an appointment to the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago.

Written when the outcome of World War II was still uncertain, *The Road to Serfdom* may be fruitfully read as an historical review of the social and economic policies that prevailed during the first decades of the twentieth century, but that was not Hayek’s primary purpose in writing the book. It was issued as a prophetic warning, yet, as Hayek modestly wrote, one does not need to be a prophet to be aware of impending disaster. “When one hears for a second time opinions expressed and measures advocated which one has met twenty years ago, they assume a new meaning as symptoms of a definite trend: they suggest that future developments will take a similar turn.” He continues, “It is necessary now to state the unpalatable truth that it is Germany whose fate we are now in danger of repeating. The danger is not immediate,” he wrote then, “and conditions in England and the United States are still so remote from those we have witnessed in Germany as to make it difficult to believe that we are moving in the same direction.” Still, he warns, the socialist policies endorsed by our “progressive” intellectuals are the same

as those of the twenties and thirties that created National Socialism.

The Constitution of Liberty may be read as one gigantic footnote to Hayek’s earlier volume. If *The Road to Serfdom* was written for a general audience, this may be considered to be the scholar’s edition. Written with the academic sector in mind, Hayek examines in great detail notions such as “freedom,” “liberty,” “liberalism,” “the rule of law,” and “the regulative value of a constitution,” and makes distinctions where differences in meaning are often overlooked. The book is divided into three parts: I, “The Value of Freedom,” II, “Freedom and the Law,” and III, “Freedom in the Welfare State.” Throughout the work he challenges many commonplace notions that one hears repeatedly in the leftist media of our own day.

Hayek is convinced that in the pursuit of an egalitarian society, a silent revolution has gradually whittled away most of the guarantees of individual liberty for which at one time people were willing to fight. In his discussion of liberty, he insists that liberty is not one particular value but the source and condition of most moral values. Liberty in practice depends on very prosaic matters, and those anxious to preserve it must prove their devotion to it by their attention to the mundane concerns of public life. Political freedom may permit a choice of government, but it does not guarantee a society of free men. “We have seen millions voting themselves into complete dependence on a tyrant.”

Alarmed by the spectacular growth of government in Great Britain and the United States, he warns that welfare socialism is just as pernicious as National Socialism. “What socialists have sought ever since the French Revolution is not equality before the law but equality of outcome.” In contrast to socialism, “liberalism,” in the nineteenth-century meaning of the term, is concerned with limiting the coercive power of all government, whether democratic or not. Liberalism, as Hayek uses the term, is a doctrine about what the law ought to be, whereas democracy is about the manner of determining what the law will be. The “dogmatic” or “doctrinaire”

democrat acknowledges only one limit to government, namely, current majority opinion. Liberalism accepts majority rule as a method of deciding in those instances when immediate action is required and the conflict between left and right is not otherwise resolvable. It does not accept majority opinion as a reliable guide as to what the decision ought to be. “To the doctrinaire democrat the fact that the majority wants something is sufficient ground for regarding it as good.” The crucial principle of the doctrinaire democrat is that of popular sovereignty: the current majority has the right to decide what powers it has and how to exercise them. This conception of law goes by the name of “legal positivism” and is used to justify appeals to a “living constitution” when the constitution itself may prohibit a certain course of action. Hayek points out that the doctrines of legal positivism have been developed in direct opposition to a tradition which for 2000 years has provided a conception of a law that is not man-made but found in nature. From the vantage point of the positivist, every single tenet of the traditional conception of law is represented as metaphysical superstition. By 1930 legal positivism had so conquered Germany that “to be found guilty of adherence to natural law theories [was] a kind of social disgrace.” Hayek adds, “The possibilities which the state of opinion created for an unlimited dictatorship were already seen by acute observers at the time Hitler was trying to gain power.”

By contrast, the liberal, in Hayek’s sense, insists that the powers of any temporary government be limited by long-term principles, such as in the United States by the Constitution. In addressing the safeguards of liberty, Hayek maintains that the rule of law is more than constitutionalism: it requires that all laws have to conform to certain principles. The rule of law is law concerning what law ought to be. It presupposes a moral tradition, a common ideal shared by the majority, that is, a firm element of public opinion. If people cease to honor that moral tradition or fail to strive for its realization, respect for law will rapidly disappear. Such a society will quickly lapse into a state of arbitrary tyranny.

One of the gravest threats to freedom, Hayek identifies as governmentally established regulatory agencies that are essentially removed from the rule of law, insofar as they possess legislative, executive, and judicial authority in one body. Every agency has marked out for it a certain area of jurisdiction, and within the boundaries of that jurisdiction, the agency can act without exterior constraint. “Every public officer can act freely according to his own discretion, and the courts will respect his action as final and not inquire into its rightfulness.” The only issue that any court is likely to recognize is one of jurisdiction. In a free society, Hayek maintains, government edicts, unlike those of a regulatory agency, must take the form of general rules, applicable to all, rules that prohibit specific action and are not instituted as ad hoc commands. One is free when one is not coerced, and coercion occurs when one man’s actions are made to serve another man’s purpose.

In his discussion of fundamental values, Hayek laments, “A large part of the peoples of the world borrowed from Western civilization and adopted Western ideals at a time when the West has become unsure of itself and has lost faith in the traditions that have made it what it is.... So far as the West is concerned, we must hope that there still exists wide consent on certain fundamental values.” In a poignant passage he writes, “Although I still regard myself as mainly an economist, I have come to feel more and more that the answers to many of the pressing social questions of our time are ultimately to be found in the realm of principles that lie outside the scope of technical economics or any other single discipline.” Many thoughtful readers will undoubtedly concur.



Matthew Levering. *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity*. Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2010. 340 pp.

Reviewed by John Gavin, S.J.,
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In today’s world the concept of hierarchy is likened to slavery or feudalism: hierarchy is an unjust form of governance that limits freedom and empowers a small number of privileged persons. The Roman Catholic Church’s refusal to abandon this seemingly corrupt and antiquated system therefore grates at modern sensibilities. How can the Church—with her unelected pope, bishops, priests, and deacons—maintain any credibility before contemporary democracies and popular notions of equality? Or more importantly, how can the Church impose a top-down system of authority when St. Paul himself writes that in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28)?

In *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood*, Matthew Levering takes on the daunting task of defending the Church’s hierarchical system before its contemporary critics. This exceptional work makes two major contributions to the contemporary debates. First, Levering, like his great teacher Thomas Aquinas, summarizes and responds to some of the best critiques of the Church’s governance, thereby offering the reader a clear understanding of the issues in play. Second, he composes a compelling and cogent theology of a hierarchy rooted in Trinitarian theology, Christ’s Pasch, and sacramental mediation. In doing so, Levering avoids the obfuscations of so many current discussions that focus on issues of functionality and power. He successfully reveals the truly liberating and humbling role of hierarchy in Roman Catholicism.

In the first chapter, he establishes the ecclesial hierarchy as a reflection of the substantial relations of Father, Son, and Spirit. In part, this chapter responds to Miroslav Volf, who believes that the ecclesologies of Josef Ratzinger and John Zizioulas, in particular, fail to maintain the equiprimacy of person and communion, thereby leading to a monarchical conception of Church governance. Levering turns to Thomas Aquinas and his understanding of substantial Trinitarian relations as gifting and receptivity, e.g. “The Father’s role as ‘principle’ is therefore a gifting that is already bound to the ‘receptivity’ of filiation” (45). Hierarchy

reflects and sustains this Trinitarian pattern of receptivity-gift that unites the faithful in the Body of Christ: “When the Father gives the gift of his Word and human beings receive the gift in the Holy Spirit through faith and the sacraments of faith, this divine gifting is sacramentally mediated by fellow human beings in the Church. The believer’s adoptive sonship is experienced as active reception of a gift within the matrix of a sacramental communion shaped by gifting/receptivity” (52). This pattern is also Christological, since it reveals Christ’s own *kenosis* (gift) and receptivity before the Father as the Paschal Lamb. Thus a hierarchy based upon a Trinitarian and Christological model does not harm persons or communion since “it is the Eucharistic unity of the mystical Body, in which persons come to indwell each other in Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit, a unity-in-communion that transcends the opposition of the one and the many” (52).

Next, Levering seeks to demonstrate that Jesus himself understood his death upon the cross as a priestly action that he shared with his disciples in the Last Supper. His argument requires this demonstration in order to establish a divinely intended mediation through the perpetuation of Christ’s priesthood in the hierarchy of the Church. Here, Levering makes a clever move by drawing his description of the significance of Jesus’ death from four contemporary historical-critical commentators: Jesus understood his death as an eschatological sacrifice (N.T. Wright), a sanctifying sacrifice (Steven M. Bryan), a Eucharistic sacrifice (Scot McKnight), and a unitive sacrifice (Brant Pitre). Such an understanding of Jesus’ death clearly indicates the priestly nature of the self-offering on the cross. Levering then moves from the scriptures to Thomas Aquinas, showing how the Angelic Doctor illuminates these four aspects of Jesus’ priesthood and the manner in which Jesus’ priestly action inserts time into divine eternity, removes sin, draws man into God’s peace and unites man to God’s glory. Jesus shared this priestly action with the apostles at the Last Supper, forming the basis of a hierarchical

priesthood that “sacramentally mediates to all believers the power of Jesus’ Pasch” (119).

Yet, did a hierarchical priesthood emerging from the priesthood of Christ exist in the early Church, or did it come later as a concession to the need for greater structure and governance? Or worse, is it a perversion of the divine intention for freedom in Christ? The third chapter, addressing this question, begins with a summary of the work of James Burtchaell and Francis Sullivan. Burtchaell maintains that the early Christian community emphasized “more egalitarian and diverse modes of leadership in the pursuit of *caritas*” without authoritarian structures (128), while Sullivan understands the episcopate to be a functional form of governance that emerged later, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to preserve unity in the struggle with the Gnostics. Neither author understands the ecclesial hierarchy to be a form of mediation that finds its mandate in the priesthood of Christ.

Levering musters a variety of sources to offer an alternative explanation. He begins with the Scriptures, specifically Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians and the Gospel of Matthew, in order to support a conception of priestly mediation in the Church’s origins. St. Paul, in explaining his apostolic mandate to the Corinthians, demonstrates that participation and mutual self-subordination in Christ is not impeded by the mediation of the apostle (in this case, Paul himself): “By faith, Baptism and the Eucharist, the Corinthians participate directly in Christ’s cross and Resurrection. Yet this direct participation does not occur without apostolic mediation” (141). Matthew’s Gospel shows the nature of the apostle’s mediation and his mission to sanctify the world, to teach, and to follow Jesus through abandonment of all things for Christ. Moreover, the apostle’s authority, according to Matthew, does not come from the apostle himself, but from Jesus alone.

After a brief consideration of John Zizioulas’s Eucharistic ecclesiology, Levering concludes with a consideration of St. Thomas’s emphasis upon the mediating role of the priesthood: the end

of the priesthood is the sacraments, the faithful dispensation of divine gifts. In short, if “the ‘ministries’ are intrinsically connected to what they mediate, then leadership in the Church will be more than a functional leadership” (177). The hierarchical mediation in the Church provides “an antidote to pride and the autonomy it seeks” since Christ “wills that his followers *receive* him from others” (180).

Chapter four deals with the problem of primacy, a key issue in current ecumenical dialogues. Here Levering engages the critiques of Nicholas Afanasiev, who rejects Roman Catholicism’s adherence to a “universal” ecclesiology that sees the Church as an “organic, universal whole”, and Olivier Clément, who opposes a juridical primacy in favor of a more kenotic and Eucharistic authority. Levering finds his response once again in St. Thomas, who highlights the Church’s unity in faith and love in the Eucharist, which is served by the special charism of Peter. “Aquinas thus begins not from the standpoint of a universal institution that must be run in a sane and functional manner, but from the standpoint of the Person and graced humanity of Jesus Christ, who, in the Holy Spirit, lovingly shares himself with his Church” (222). Furthermore, this primacy ensures a unity of faith and teaching, since this teaching “rests on Christ and the Holy Spirit, not on Peter, on the pope, or on any merely human theological expert” (219). Once rightly understood, the primacy of Peter is not an exercise of juridical power or oppression, but one of mediation, teaching, and service as the instrument of Christ’s headship.

Finally, he returns to the main objections of Miroslav Volf, who accuses hierarchy of suppressing individual gifts and undermining Christian personalism. Here Levering develops his response through a surprising selection of interlocutors: Moses Mendelssohn, Johann Georg Hamann, Franz Rosenzweig, and Pseudo-Dionysius. The answer that comes forth from this eclectic group of sources stresses the radical receptivity and divine gifting that takes place in hierarchy. The hierarchical order based

upon efficacious, theocentric dispensation of the sacraments and the passing on of divine teaching allows for the flourishing of divine gifts in the body of Christ. "As a participation in the gifting and receptivity of Christ, this hierarchically structured unity allows for true diversity, the many individual participations in Christ's love" (288).

One may criticize Levering's approach in this volume on two points. First, the book leaves aside some of the more concrete issues that concern ecumenical dialogue today, such as the manner of governance entailed by Papal primacy or the exact role of the laity within hierarchical governance. Some readers desiring chapters on these issues may be disappointed on this ground. Second, though he marshals an impressive variety of sources—both critics and defenders of ecclesial hierarchy—Levering always uses them to support what is ultimately a Thomistic thesis. This, of course, is a great and just tribute to the timeless teaching of the Angelic Doctor and in many ways may be considered a virtue of the text. Yet, every chapter tends to follow a tedious pattern: a posing of the question, a reading of sources and critiques, and a reading of St. Thomas for the formulation of a response. Thus the voice of the St. Thomas tends to drown out some of the other essential thinkers that Levering discusses. One may wish for a greater engagement with the Church Fathers and with some of the important contemporary thinkers such as John Paul II and Benedict XVI, which might open up other paths for discussion.

Yet, one volume cannot treat all of the issues that the current debate surrounding hierarchy requires. In the end Levering admirably limits his book to the explication of the theological grounding for the Church's hierarchical mediation, which may serve as the basis for discussing such concrete matters as the manner of the exercise of authority, the role of the laity, and the problem of dissent and scandalous behavior on the part of some members of the hierarchy. This book would make an excellent text for a course on Ecclesiology or Priesthood, as well as a superb source

for those interested in one of the fundamental questions in contemporary Christianity. This is a work for which we should be truly grateful.



The Appalling Strangeness of the Mercy of God: The Story of Ruth Pakaluk. Edited by Michael Pakaluk. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011. 272 pp. ISBN 978-1-58617-451-4.

*Reviewed by John Gavin, S.J.,
College of the Holy Cross*

"The world crises are crises of saints." With these words St. Josemaria Escriva gave a profound diagnosis of our violent and blood-soaked age. The lack of saints, individuals of courage and faith who seek union with God above all things, has allowed the multiplication of atrocities at an unprecedented scale throughout the world. When ordinary people rendered extraordinary by grace fail to appear, the culture of death freely devours the most innocent victims of society.

A book such as *The Appalling Strangeness of the Mercy of God*, however, gives the reader hope in these days of crisis. This volume consists of letters and talks composed by a remarkable woman, Ruth Pakaluk, who died of cancer in 1998. Ruth was one who stood out through the ways in which she sanctified the ordinary and accomplished the extraordinary. A convert to Catholicism, a wife and mother of six children, a leader in the pro-life movement and a superb speaker and debater, she gave fully of herself in response to God's call. And it was through her self-emptying love and suffering that lives were touched, lives were born, and lives were saved.

The volume begins with a general biography by her husband, Dr. Michael Pakaluk, now professor of philosophy at Ave Maria University. Born in East Orange, New Jersey in a Presbyterian family, Ruth rejected early on the faith that she knew as being "incoherent and confused." A bright and successful student, she would go on to Harvard

University, where God would reenter her life through, surprisingly, a reading of an account of the Pilgrims' first winter in the New World. The Pilgrims' care and support for one another in the harsh conditions awakened Ruth to the power of love and inspired her to set out on a new journey of faith with her fellow student and future husband Michael.

This journey would bring them, at first, to a vibrant evangelical community of the Intersarsity Christian Fellowship, along with participation in the local Presbyterian Church. Yet, Ruth and Michael found both approaches to Christianity unsatisfying. The conversion to Catholicism of a friend, the study of Catholic doctrine and history, and an important meeting with the philosophy professor and Catholic convert Peter Kreeft would lead them to the truth of Catholicism. They would enter the Church after their marriage and graduation in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, where Michael had a post-graduate fellowship.

From there the account of Ruth's life unfolds in the United States. She, Michael and the growing family would spend some years back at Harvard, where Michael completed his doctoral degree, and eventually in Worcester, where Michael had a position at Clark University. During these years both husband and wife would grow in the faith and love for the Church, especially through their participation in Opus Dei.

Ruth was always deeply committed to the divine gift of life: of her own, of her husband's, of her children, and of the unborn. In fact, it is as a pro-life advocate that many remember her today. She became the president of Massachusetts Citizens for Life, worked for the pro-life education of youth, and gave talks throughout the state. As a public debater, she clearly, charitably, and successfully refuted the arguments of her pro-choice interlocutors. She was, quite simply, one of the most remarkable pro-life voices in New England.

But Ruth was a woman who also knew suffering. She had lost one child to crib-death, an agony that perhaps shaped her deep commitment to the protection of the innocent. Then the

suffering invaded her own body in the form of breast cancer, first diagnosed in 1991. In the years following the diagnosis Ruth experienced the pains and indignities of chemotherapy, but never succumbed to despair. Instead, she continued in her vocation as a mother and activist in a heroic manner, until her death in 1998.

This volume includes a selection of letters from the period of Ruth's undergraduate years (1978) to her moving final messages left to her children (1998). Some of the letters offer a glimpse into her personal life and soul, including missives to friends and family. Others are correspondence with important figures in the pro-life movement, giving the reader a fascinating glimpse into the struggle for the defense of the unborn during the eighties and nineties. Overall, however, it is Ruth's Christian personality that shines forth in this collection, whether she is sharing a recipe for steamed pudding or explaining the dignity of the unborn to Senator Edward Kennedy.

Ruth's acceptance of suffering deeply impresses the reader. She made her own trials and agony a sharing in the Cross of Jesus for the sake of the redemption of the world: "We want to be like Him, we want to share His suffering with Him, to keep Him company, not falling asleep like Peter, James, and John. He will accept our patient endurance of trials and turn them into glory, like His Resurrection" (173). Her union with Christ in the passion undoubtedly converted hearts even more effectively than her powerful words.

The book also includes a small collection of Ruth's talks to pro-life groups and spiritual conferences. The brevity of this section will leave the reader hungering for more. Fortunately, Michael Pakaluk has promised a more substantial biography in the near future. For now, however, this volume provides a fine introduction to an ordinary saint for our times.



Leszek Kołakowski. *My Correct Views on Everything*. Edited by Zbigniew Janowski. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2010.

Reviewed by Kevin Walker

If there is an Intellectual History Museum in Heaven, we should expect Leszek Kołakowski to be its tour guide. This great Polish philosopher is best known for his powerful attack on communism, his own former creed. But his mind was never limited to mere criticism. His other writings reveal a thinker concerned with the broader trajectory of culture, the consequences of ideas, and the state of the modern soul. His work is always unified by the truth that "the greatest deeds are thoughts": far more than biology or economics or psychology, Kołakowski taught that only philosophy gives the truest insights into the heart of man. Only philosophy could show us the ancestry of our opinions, and keep us from being mere products of our time. The path between ancient philosophers and "the contemporary philosophy of hippies and flower children, often called postmodernity, is convoluted and twisting"—but he assured readers, with an infectious excitement, that "it can be traced" (233). His accessible prose has guided many readers through the twisting and turning story of ideas, including all of its detours, cycles, glorious achievements and terrifying dead ends.

It was, of course, much like the story of his life. Kołakowski was a lively and brilliant student who wrote his thesis on Spinoza at the University of Warsaw in the 1940s, and went on to be chair of his department. He was wholly devoted to strengthening the intellectual groundwork of Marxism: having lived through Nazi occupation, he saw communism as the truly humane and enlightened alternative to barbarism. But a visit to the horrors of Stalinist Russia ended that. He quickly revised his earlier views, and became a strong critic of communism in practice, accusing the Soviets and his own Polish Communist Party of distorting and misusing Marx's teaching. He made his criticism public, and it earned

him an expulsion from the university. His writings banned and his teaching forbidden, Kołakowski finally left Poland in 1968. He made his way to the United States where he taught at the University of California at Berkeley for many years. While there, he soon concluded that Marxist thought and Stalinist totalitarianism really were inseparable—that Soviet statism was indeed a direct outgrowth of Marxist thought. The depravity of the Left became most apparent in the new generation of campus radicals, who featured "a mental degradation of the kind I had never seen before in any Leftist movement" (17). The West needed complete rethinking, and Kołakowski devoted himself wholly to that task for the rest of his life. He was later invited to the illustrious All Souls College in Oxford, where he lived and wrote until his death in 2009.

The new volume from Saint Augustine's Press provides a fine survey of Kołakowski's philosophy as it appeared in a variety of lesser-known essays and interviews. The book consists of his powerful anti-communist writings, as well as his theological dabbling and philosophical explorations into the pressing questions and issues of our times, written both before and after his defection from Marxism. It features many succinct and brilliant essays devoted to a variety of neglected questions: "Concern about God in an Apparently Godless Age," "The Demise of Historical Man," "Neutrality and Academic Values," and "Where are Children in Liberal Philosophy?"

The book's peculiar title is named after his famous open letter to the *Socialist Weekly* where he gave his final farewell in 1973. While others scrambled to condemn Stalinism and redeem "true Marxist teaching," Kołakowski announced that the entire scheme was beyond repair because it was rooted in a major philosophic error: it made itself "absolutely irrefutable because it was able to neglect all empirical facts as irrelevant." It was therefore pointless to criticize socialism by exposing practical failures, because, in the end, it was "nothing else but the expression of an ideological commitment, incapable of being either

validated or disproved empirically.” Marxism was only a series of symbols and theories, which did not even try to relate with reality. Communism was “total,” Kołakowski wrote, “in a much stronger sense, at least in its claims, than any religious faith has ever achieved” (69). Rigid old traditions could indeed be oppressive, but at least they offered a way out of the present, which could be far more tyrannical. With communism, the inclination of man to cling to tradition would be fulfilled by a false tradition, engineered and constantly modified by social planners.

For all its closedness, however, it was remarkable what a “cultural force” Marxist theory was among the Western intelligentsia. Individual free thought was still the norm for artists, musicians, and philosophers, and thoughtful people would defend it fiercely; yet somehow, Marxism was the theory of choice, and all seemed to flock to it. How was it that the greatest minds aligned themselves with an ideology which, in practice, would either force their talents into propaganda campaigns, or make them disappear? It was because of communism’s tendency to usurp revolutionary fervor, Kołakowski wrote. Communism was a “parasite” that “efficiently exploited all social ills, attaching itself to causes that were not only important but also worthy, and supported by much of an intelligentsia nurtured on the ideals of enlightenment and humanism.” Great movements, however just and wise, still lacked the simplistic clarity of communism, with its animosity toward the rich, and sanctimony of the poor, and rationalizations for mob violence. Once a revolution began, communists became the only leaders who could “impose their own rule on a demoralized and disorganized society” (82). A truly just revolution took a decent respect for the old regime—despite its flaws—wisdom enough to frame a new government, and sufficient public virtue to receive it. Modern nations like Russia who lacked such character were easy prey for the simplistic appeal of Bolshevism, and the demagogues who could use it.

For all his criticism of the Left, Kołakowski never called himself a

“conservative,” nor did he allow himself to be identified with any conservative movements in the United States. He had good things to say about the free market, but he recognized that it was little more than the normal order of life. Marxism and capitalism were not conflicting notions at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, because “[c]apitalism developed spontaneously and organically from the spread of commerce,” he wrote. No one had planted greed and selfishness in the human heart; the free market simply recognized it as a constant in human behavior, and turned it from a vice into a practical virtue. Upsetting as that might be, it was “incomparably better than a society based on compulsory brotherhood” (96). Depending on selfishness was a much better thing than trying to engineer love—a love of which human beings are incapable. An alteration of human nature necessarily called for the absolute power of a totalitarian state.

Kołakowski knew that Marxism was a symptom of a much deeper shift in our self-understanding. It came from a habit of radical skepticism, in both intellectuals and in the minds of regular people. Tracing the history of ideas, Kołakowski taught that such uncertainty came from an equally radical *certainty* of the Enlightenment era. Once, the age of faith was found too unreliable compared to the power of almighty Reason. Enlightenment rationalism, or the new science, gave us a clear view of nature—not as a participation in God’s nature, as it was previously understood, but Nature as it was in itself. Science could crack Nature’s codes, discover its secrets, and settle comfortably on rock-solid absolutes, thus allowing mankind to free itself from the faiths, opinions, and superstitions that had dominated it for eons.

But the Enlightenment was doomed to failure: for all its discoveries and advances, it could not justify itself in the most necessary way—i.e., it could not say that it was good, since “good” was a fundamentally unscientific concept. Moreover, by rejecting God, or at least a role for God in the world, it deprived the intellect of its highest end. “The

self-assurance of unbelief, too, has been shaken,” Kołakowski wrote; “the Nature of the atheistic Enlightenment, the godless world of today is perceived as an afflicted, endless chaos. It is robbed of all meaning, all direction, all road signs, and all structure” (174). Enlightenment Reason, it seemed, led into a vast and terrifying void. Gone were the days of the “cheerful atheist”; the only ones left were usually fools, struggling to ignore the terrible nothingness that lay beneath the surface of their most sacred values.

The wise thing, it seemed, was to just keep “doing science,” and not be troubled by such concerns, which were miniscule compared with accurate predictions of what was once uncertain, and technological power over what was once open chance. Others, though, took the question seriously, and began to formulate a new approach: perhaps “God is dead,” and Nature gives no guidance—but we still have History, evolution, and “progress.” For many, it seemed that History could do even better than the Enlightenment did: right was right because of the place we had arrived at in our development, as we moved toward universal liberal democracy, which stood as strong as Church teaching once did. In this, “History became a substitute for the substitute—a newly discovered infallible foundation on which meaning could be built, and the binding power that could reconstruct a meaningful whole from disconnected pieces and define our place in it” (220). The obvious problem, of course, is that History is not the kind of thing that can give values. God and Nature had been immutable and unchanging; they gave moral constants that did not come and go like fads. History, though, was “mutability itself”: it offered no indication that it improved or got worse. All that could be said for sure was that it “changed”—that all things were historically relative. “Thus universal relativism no longer has any need for history,” Kołakowski wrote. “And the path from historicism in this sense to simple, all-embracing, all-engulfing relativism is a straight one” (223).

Modern man is entirely unconcerned with this, of course, since he finds “opening before him the perspective of

divine self-creation,” Kołakowski writes, “where all things are regarded with equal indifference” (272). No one is indifferent about the need for indifference, however. People speak of expressive individualism (particularly with regard to sex) with the same moralistic gravity of “rights” and “values” that previous generations spoke about virtue and holiness. Meanwhile, we find philosophers and ethicists whose work is wholly devoted to covering up the nihilism that lingers beneath the surface of it all, working overtime to ignore the angst and confusion we all know is there.

Religious faith continues, of course, as a popular choice of many. But it is difficult to distinguish from the broad array of other personal choices. Most Christian thought occurs almost entirely on the terms that modernity has set for it. Theology, once the highest science requiring years of preparation in logic and Scripture, now gives its voice of authority to whatever political or social interest captures it first. In a way, this is nothing new, since it is in “the nature of Christianity” to adapt itself to the philosophic and cultural frameworks it finds most useful. “Christianity, while considering itself a repository of divine grace, at the same time remains an organism that exists in this world—culturally and historically determined, and forced to act with the temporal means at its disposal” (179). Early Christians used Plato to shape a statement of orthodoxy, and medieval theologians thought like Aristotle to defend the faith; this was acceptable, though, because the ancients were metaphysical theists of the highest order. It is a different activity entirely, however, to allow the spirit of the times to dictate how we know God and ourselves. Modern Christianity found itself unable to avoid the latter approach, and it was therefore complicit in the drift into nihilism.

The Roman Catholic Church was the lone exception: it alone maintains a tradition, both spiritual and intellectual, designed to prevent such a drift. In this, it proves to be a haven for all Christians, as indicated by the new attitudes among Evangelicals toward the Church’s teaching. But the Church is a lone institution,

which is itself under great assault even from the inside. Kołakowski looked at Vatican II as a tremendous weakening (however inadvertent), and surrender to modernity. “The Church is more than ever before reconciled with the liberal-democratic order,” he writes in an essay on the *Catechism*, which attempts to bend its authority to what has emerged as the much higher authority of modern relativism (146). Christ still meets the faithful, to be sure, but they do not necessarily receive and participate in Him in the way they used to.

Christianity’s greatest institution—the university—finds itself in the same situation. Once, teaching was the true role of the university, as John Henry Newman insisted. Professors were mentors and guides, who helped instill a liberal sense into their students—an ability to appreciate and understand all interpretations, and then use those to ascend upward to the good, the true, and the beautiful. Liberal education holds “that some values are universal in the sense of being independent of social and ethnic divisions” (249). But once relativism became the norm, it was clear that there was nothing to teach because there was nothing that merited study (aside from what the professor himself declared important). Research became the greater priority—even though the vast majority of studies and publications “disappear, so to speak, into nothingness ... without any contribution to the general culture” (238). Rather than shaping and influencing the general culture, preparing students for liberty, and elevating public tastes, the relationship is now the other way around: universities are totally captured by current cultural and political trends. They had always been vulnerable to such political attacks, Kołakowski writes, but they were able to rest on their own “intellectual dignity,” knowing that the pursuit of truth would give them a purpose that no political power or social movement could take away, and which could justify their resistance when necessary. But a university that gives up that defense is inevitably little more than the tool of the regime.

It is trite to say that we can only be saved by a “spiritual revival,” as Max

Weber imagined it. But Kołakowski proposed a far more specific remedy when he wrote that “the survival of our religious heritage is the condition for the survival of civilization.” Vibrant, serious, orthodox Christianity was the true savior of the West, as Christ had been for mankind. Religion, after all, was not about “spirituality”; it was about the “meaning of Being, about the meaning of the universe and our place in it” (271). Being was eternal and timeless, and the closest thing to timelessness from our point of view is oldness; Being could only be known by “historical explanation, by paying homage to origins and foundational events,” which the Catholic Church had been devoted to for centuries (272). Apostolic succession makes the Church a gift to the future, and a blessing even to those who hate it.

For all his praise, however, Kołakowski only saw the pragmatic value of the Church. For him, it was not old because it was good; it was good because it was old, and not much else. It was simply the more humane and gentler alternative to totalitarianism, and an incidental friend to human dignity. He was never formally Catholic, and he dismissed much of the spiritual disciplines as too goofy and strange for a true philosopher to take seriously. In this, he never considered how intimately connected Catholic spiritual disciplines—particularly the Mass—are to the Catholic intellect. It is indeed the last standing pre-modern institution, but it is more than that. The Church maintains the meeting of revelation and reason—reason understood as teleology, which the Enlightenment so disastrously rejected. Still, for all his misunderstanding, Catholics can count Kołakowski a friend, whose writings are more of a treasure than perhaps even he knew.

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T. M. Doran. *Toward the Gleam*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011. 467 pp.

Reviewed by Stephen Mirarchi
Instructor of English and Theology
at Jesuit High School Tampa
Stephen Mirarchi holds a Ph.D. in American literature

What if *The Lord of the Rings* and *Orthodoxy* are true? Sure, any catechism-trained Catholic can discern something about exorcism from Gandalf's silencing of Grima Wormtongue, and many Christian adults do indeed appreciate the world according to the "Ethics of Elfland." But what if Tolkien and Chesterton had proof of a prehistoric society, were able to understand those documents, and embellished them into ... well, you know the rest.

If this preposterous idea sounds as if it would make an adventure tale to rival the books you used to read as a teen late into the night, you're not far off. Throw in a healthy dose of the twentieth-century Catholic intellectual tradition—including appearances from Chesterton himself and Edith Stein—and you've got *Toward the Gleam*, an utterly fantastic and completely unbelievable genre-crossing novel that manages to impart ancient wisdom while playing the cat and mouse games usually reserved for the hard-boiled *noir* set. Difficult to put down and easy to laugh with, the book delivers suspense and horror in a combination that embraces both the impeccably erudite training of the romantics and the seedy, exhilarating grotesquery so deservedly associated with masters of the gothic.

While I dare not reveal too much of the well engineered plot, I will say that the book has some breathtaking moments. A face-off with deadly, unseen foes late in the novel had my blood pumping and my telltale heart pounding in my ears. A surprise attack by a female spy caught me totally off-guard, almost as much as it did her intended victim. That the latter scene comes off with all the right notes of the Catholic legitimate defense tradition speaks volumes to Doran's skill in crafting an enrapturing narrative true to its proclaimed allegiance. Indeed, students of apologetics will revel in the intellectual combat exhibited in several scenes—skirmishes in which the "good guy" doesn't always prevail.

For all its strengths, the book has one sacramental flaw so glaring that I cannot recommend the novel for unsupervised reading by even older children. At one point the protagonist spends time with a dashing woman not his wife and, finding himself smitten, agrees to commit adultery with her. To his credit, the protagonist thinks it over later and never meets her for the tryst—an ironic no-show, by modern standards. He has, however, objectively committed mortal sin, and not even the idea of confession comes up, much less the sacrament. For a book that claims to impart Catholic teaching especially in the face of captivating, meretricious philosophies, the sacramental privation in this key scene seems like a nod to the more dangerous temptation of presumption.

Whom does Doran have in mind for his audience, anyway? The book's very structure has an unfortunate answer. If religious and non-religious readers alike

don't "get" one or two key secrets, they risk missing the thrill of the book. Nowhere, for instance, not even in its publicity materials, does *Toward the Gleam* explicitly announce its primary narrative sleight-of-hand (which I will not reveal). Even fans of Tolkien and Chesterton can be in the dark through most of the novel. For those who don't "get it," the book comes across as a thoroughly mediocre exercise at best—proselytizing propaganda at worst.

To those who do "get it," then, what gives with the weak sacramentality in the aborted adultery scene? Has Doran himself become an unsuspecting victim of unintentional accommodationism? How frustrating that in a few scenes the novel backs away from the very moments of conversion that have the power to convince. Ought not Catholic fiction wish to rise above something more than an entertaining in-joke; to broaden its appeal without diluting its message? To put it bluntly, "profane" literature figures out how to do just that in every age. A Catholic writer must take very seriously Christ's injunction to learn from the dishonest stewards of this world; an author must be much more shrewd in attempting to reach a wider audience while clinging to the truth.

If Catholic fiction wishes to aspire to great literature, it must take great literature seriously. Doran's novel takes a step in that direction, but we have a great chasm to gulf, one that is widened by both self-righteous certainty and lukewarm pusillanimity. To paraphrase Chesterton, Catholic fiction must have just enough faith to write adventures, and just enough self-doubt for readers to enjoy them.



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BOOKS RECEIVED

If you would like to receive one of these books to review for the Quarterly, please email Alice Osberger—osberger.1@nd.edu

Battle-Scarred: Justice Can be Elusive. John F. Kippley. (2011), LaVergne, TN, 250pp. paper

Preach the Word: Homilies on the Sundays and Feasts of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. Kenneth Baker, S.J. Staten Island, NY: St. Paul's, (2010), paper.

Both Sides of the Altar. Frank Morgan. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, (2011), 214 pp., paper.

The Pope's Soldiers: A Military History of the Modern Vatican. David Alvarez, University Press of Kansas, (2011), 429 pp., hardcover.

Happiness, God & Man: "We Were Created to be happy." Christoph Cardinal Schönborn. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, (2010) 189 pp., paper.

Fire of Love: A Historical Novel about Saint John of the Cross. José Luis Olaizola. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, (2011) 217 pp., paper.

Into Your Hands, Father: Abandoning Ourselves to the God Who Loves Us. Wilfrid Stinissen. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, (2011), 105 pp., paper.

The Desert Fathers: Saint Anthony and the Beginnings of Monasticism. Peter H. Görg. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, (2008), 131 pp., paper.

Cicero: In Defence of the Republic. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Siobhan McElduff. London: Penguin Books, (2011), 315 pp., paper.

Abandonment to Divine Providence: With Letters of Father de Caussade on the Practice of Self-Abandonment. Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade, S. J. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, (2011), 453 pp., paper.

The Uganda Blessing: An American Catholic Encounters the African Church. Gus A. Zuehlke. Light to the Nations Press, (2008). 112 pp., paper.

Living the Call: An Introduction to the Lay Vocation. Michael Novak & William E. Simon Jr. New York: Encounter Books, (2011), 191 pp., paper.

In Defense of Sanity: the Best Essays of G. K. Chesterton. Selected by Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce, Aidan Mackey. San Francisco: Ignatius Press (2011), 387 pp., paper.

In Memory of Me: A Meditation on the Roman Canon. Milton Walsh. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, (2011), 197 pp. paper.



If you would like to receive any of the books listed below to review for the Quarterly, please email Fr. Joseph Koterski—koterski@fordham.edu

A Year with the Angels. Michael Aquilina. Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict Press/Tan Books, (2011)

The Life of Sr. Marie de Mandat-Grancey and Mary's House in Ephesus. Rev. Carl G. Schulte, C.M. Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict Press/Tan Books, (2011).

What The Saints Said About Heaven. Ronda Chervin, Richard Ballard, and Ruth Ballard. Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, (2011).

Shakespeare's Catholicism: A Critical Analysis of the Bard's Life and Plays: an eight-part video course. Joseph Pearce. Charlotte, NC: Catholic Courses. (CatholicCourses.com)

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Fr. James Schall's new book, *The Modern Age*

by J. Brian Benestad
Editor

Fr. Schall's new book, published by St. Augustine's Press, is a meditation on the characteristics of the modern age, modern politics, and the drama of human existence, that is to say, the eternal significance of the life of every person who has ever lived. To achieve his purposes Fr. Schall also discusses philosophy, political philosophy, revelation, theology, "the brighter side of hell," and Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, which is especially concerned with "the positive relation of religious authority to reason, to philosophy" (167).

The "modern age, at its core, is an effort to re-define the transcendent purposes of man initially outlined in revelation so that man's happiness is now to be achieved solely by human effort for the benefit of human beings who still exist on this earth" (12). Otherwise stated, the modern age proposes to establish the Kingdom of God by human means, especially by science and politics. "The modern age is itself charged," writes Schall, "with the responsibility of outdoing revelation by showing what it can produce that is better. Thus, universal brotherhood and peace, non-ending life, avoidance of suffering and death, complete correspondence between nature and man, and complete liberty to do as we wish to demonstrate our 'autonomy' became secular, not religious or philosophical goals. They were now seen to be goals that could be brought about by will and scientific organization" (110). The modern age proposes to achieve its lofty goals without educating people to be just and charitable human beings. It does not see that universal brotherhood cannot be attained if all people are encouraged to assert their untutored autonomy.

The modern age takes its bearing by rejecting the Christian and classical view that all human beings have a common human nature which must be perfected by the pursuit of wisdom and virtue during the course of one's life. The alternative proposed by

the modern age is autonomy or choice. "The modern age is characterized by the claim that man can propose his own final end, can decide the content of his own happiness" (31). I would argue that, as of yet, not everyone lives his or her life by embracing choices unguided by revelation and reason. But everyone is affected by the tone set by the emphasis on autonomy and choice in the modern age.

Recall to mind a presidential debate between Al Gore and George W. Bush. Mr. Gore approached Mr. Bush and asked, "Do you believe in choice?" He was, of course, referring to the right of a woman to choose abortion. I don't recall Mr. Bush's exact answer, but he didn't say, "Of course, I believe in choice, because choosing in the light of standard established by faith and/or reason is necessary for anyone who wants to act in accordance with his dignity as a human person." Or as Fr. Schall puts it, "[God] knew that we could not love Him or anyone else without our choosing to do so. How we choose thus still remains the central point in the drama of human existence" (43). These kinds of a common-sense statements cannot be made in a presidential campaign because of the deference people pay to the autonomy celebrated by the modern age. That is to say, we bow before the proposition that we ought "to create our own rules, our own world," even if we don't consistently live this way. (42). Most of my university students would never think of saying that marriage can take place only between a man and woman. They say that it is up to each individual to decide what marriage is for him or her, whether they believe this or not. The ethos of the modern age has even affected the practice of medicine. A student of mine who went to an elite medical school came back to visit and told me that he was taught to accept patient choices even if they were not the best way to restore health or relieve suffering. My former student was not taught to persuade patients to choose what his medical knowledge indicated was best for them. The rationale for this teaching was respect for

patient autonomy. Fr. Schall says that the “**modern** doctor ... asks the patient what he wants done to him” (23, my emphasis). The subjective request, then, is more important than the objective validity of the request. The ultimate example of a groundless patient request is physician-assisted suicide (PAS), which is now legal in Oregon and Washington. PAS may soon be approved by a referendum in Massachusetts next November, even though most Massachusetts doctors are against it. Under the influence of the modern age, many American citizens believe it is their right to have doctors give them a lethal dose of medicine so that they can end their lives by the exercise of their autonomy.

Modern politics in service to the modern age “proposes to identify the causes of human evil and to eliminate them. They are located outside the human soul in institutions and things” (129). Science and politics will eliminate the causes of evil, not love and justice in the souls of individual citizens brought about by the conversion of hearts. Science and politics will, in addition, bring about “personal dignity, abiding love and friendship” (129). This mindset, of course, leads many Christians to put more emphasis on political and economic solutions than on the good and destiny of their souls, which would have a more profound impact on the struggle against evil in the world.

The primary means used by the modern state to accomplish its purposes is to protect rights. “The ambiguity surrounding the word ‘rights’ is notorious. Many classical ‘vices’ are now political ‘rights.’” In the modern age rights are quite flexible since they serve the autonomy of every individual. “The word ‘right’ is used to oppose tyrants as well as to justify overturning of the natural law” in matters pertaining to the protection of life and marriage (27). Schall is, of course, referring to the argument that there are rights to abortion and same-sex marriage. As one age succeeds another, rights will come and go as the majority abolishes and creates human rights by an act of will. While this looks like freedom, it is really the dictatorship of relativism. All are expected to give their assent to the creation and destruction of rights in the modern age and to march in lock-step, no matter their religious beliefs.

While Schall recognizes that the modern age and modern politics have brought good things such as protection from tyranny, protection of freedom,

better health and prosperity, modernity, with its emphasis on rudderless autonomy and ungrounded rights, has ill served the good of the human person. Modernity, in brief, has made more difficult the acquisition of the virtues, especially justice and love, in view of communion with God and neighbor in this life and the next.

As a beginning of a solution to problems caused by modern politics, Schall echoes Pope Benedict XVI’s argument that politics must serve ethical ends and give up its eschatological pretensions to solve all human problems and produce happiness for all. Politics must be liberated “from the burden of having to substitute for transcendence” (135). It really serves human beings when it deters and punishes unjust acts. “Politics deals primarily with justice, the relations of ourselves to others within an order. Politics also contributes to making possible things beyond justice. Politics is important primarily for what else it makes possible, things beyond politics” (102). For example, politics can serve the ultimate good of human persons and society by protecting the religious liberty of individuals and churches. Schall quotes an important statement by Pope Benedict XVI on February 28, 2009, indicating the principal contribution that Catholic social doctrine makes to civil society when the Catholic Church has and exercises its religious liberty: “The Church has never simply denounced evils; it also shows the paths that lead to justice, to charity, to the conversion of hearts. In the economy as well, justice is established only if there are just persons. And these persons are assembled through the conversion of hearts” (113). Politics, of course, can make possible other fine things such as philosophy, art, literature, a thriving economy, the relief of poverty, and the protection and promotion of human dignity.

Though his reflection on “The Brighter Side of Hell” in chapter five Schall brings out the greatness of human dignity and the significance of every single human life. C. S. Lewis expressed this point in a memorable way: “There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Natures, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to us as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors” (*The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, rev. ed., 18–19).

All are called to participate “in the inner life

of God” (42). That is the full realization of human dignity. The drama of human existence is the choice that each individual makes to accept his or her destiny, or to separate from God and thus from all other human beings. A positive decision for God not only leads to eternal happiness, but also to good social and political benefits, while a negative decision causes the loss of eternal happiness and more injustice and lack of love in this world.

The doctrine of hell teaches everyone that meaningful freedom exists and that our free choices have everlasting significance. “[H]ell is the guarantee that our lives are really and ultimately important.... Thus hell has the paradoxical function of enhancing our awareness of the meaning of our lives. They are not insignificant wherever or whenever they are lived.... Our lives are ultimately so important that we can lose

them if we choose” (78). The choice to love God and neighbor, with all that this decision entails, “remains the central point in the drama of our existence” (43). To make good choices, of course, the mind must be able to come in contact with reality and discern the good. Hence Schall logically says, “The very defense of civilization begins with and depends on a defense of the integrity of the mind itself. A mind that cannot tell the difference between burglars and police is no mind” (168). God could not fairly judge human beings if they could not discern truth from falsehood and good from bad.

In sum, Schall is arguing that the fleeting culture (the modern age) and political order in which we live must be judged and reformed according to their success or failure in helping individuals become “everlasting splendors.” ✕



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