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Re-examination of the Philosophy Curriculum in Catholic Higher Education

By EULALIO R. BALTAZAR

At no time in our modern era have philosophy and theology in our Catholic Colleges been in a state of greater ill-repute than at present. In educational conventions of Catholic schools, the state of philosophy is a paramount problem. Academic deans are deeply concerned about revamping the philosophy curriculum. For the facts are these: the students abhor philosophy and would have nothing to do with it if left to their own choice of courses. Those students who have gone through the curriculum consider it abstract, arid, academic, even pedantic, and out of touch with reality. But the bigger student complaint is that Catholic schools present only one philosophy — the Thomistic. The students are not so undiscerning as to miss the obvious purpose of this so-called Catholic philosophy which is to indoctrinate, to save souls by keeping Catholics in the Faith and perhaps win others to it. Philosophy is used for an apologetic purpose rather than as a liberalizing discipline; it produces a ghetto mentality rather than an openness of mind which is one of the main purposes of education. The non-philosophy professors are cold, even frankly hostile towards philosophy. It is considered as so much wasted time which could have been devoted to more useful subjects.

In spite of these criticisms, we of the philosophy department have exculpated ourselves by explaining this antagonism in terms of the positivistic, materialistic and pragmatic attitude of modern society — attitudes which are radically opposed to philosophic thinking. There are those among us who look back nostalgically to the Middle Ages in which philosophy was supreme.

While it is true that the mental attitude of modern man is not particularly conducive to philosophic pursuit, it is unfair, we think, to lay the whole blame on this attitude. It is in the interest of truth that we philosophy teachers look at our own field and re-examine courageously the philosophic premises by which we have traditionally justified the content of our philosophy curriculum and the method by which we teach it. If change is to be made at all, it will be because the nature of education and philosophy itself demand it and not because the students wish for such a change.

The method of re-examination we will institute here is a radical departure from that followed in departmental meetings where Thomistic philosophy and theology are taken for granted, unquestioned and treated as sacred cows such that whatever changes and recommendations are made are done within the context of Thomism itself. Freedom of inquiry and research are thus curtailed by an authoritative fiat. The possibility that the true way towards the revitalization of philosophy lies elsewhere is forever closed to us.

Our method is to start without any sacred cows. The nature of the philosophy curriculum — its content and the way it is taught — must be sought from two sources: 1) a re-examination of the nature of education, and 2) a re-examination of the nature of philosophy itself.

A Re-examination of the Nature of Education

Everyone will agree with Maritain when he says that “the question, ‘What is man?’ is the unavoidable preamble to any philosophy of education.”¹ Thus we cannot re-examine the nature of education and make a radical change in our view of it without ultimately instituting a re-examination of our traditional philosophy of man.

Many Catholic authors who write on the nature of education take the Thomistic philosophy of man for granted. They believe that this view of man is true and unchanging. Therefore a theory of education based on it is also taken to be true and unchanging. Let us here give a very brief description of the Thomistic notion of man and the implications for a Thomistic theory of education.

It is common knowledge to those familiar with Thomism that in it man is approached universally and not contingently, according to the axiom, *scientia est de universalibus*. In other words, man is approached from the side of the universal unchanging human nature and not from the side of the unique personal existent which existent is grasped only in the context of the temporal and existential situation. As Robert Johann notes, man as *subject* has been ignored by scholastic philosophers, Thomists included.² Johann elucidates: “When the scholastic mind meets the person, how does it seek to understand him? Not in terms of his unique exercise of existence, but simply in terms of the structure according to which that existence is exercised. The person is simply a certain kind of supposit, rational as opposed to non-rational. Viewed thus from the outside, the subject is not only conceptualized but strictly ‘objectified.’”³

The Thomistic philosophy of man has two implications: 1) human nature in its essential being is outside history and temporality, and 2) human nature in its phenomenal being which is observable by our modern science of observation and measurement is in time.⁴ Thus the real and full man is the man outside time. From these implications are derived the primary and secondary aims of education.⁵ Following from the first implication is the primary aim of education which is to form the real man, i.e., the man above time, possessed of eternal and unchanging truths and whose primary activity is that of contemplation. Philosophy and theology which convey, supposedly, eternal and unchanging truths, are the instrumental agents for the achievement of this primary aim. The other aims proceed from the second implication, namely, “to convey the heritage of culture of a given area of civilization, to prepare for life in society and for good citizenship, and to secure the mental equipment required for implementing a particular function in the social whole, for performing family responsibilities, and for making a living.”⁶ The agents for these secondary aims are the so-called *profane* sciences which are of secondary importance to the sacred and

philosophical sciences.

As contrasted to this view, we wish to present here a more adequate and more genuinely traditional view of man. This view goes back to the Scriptures, formulated by St. Paul and St. John, expressed by St. Augustine in his *City of God*, confirmed by the best of modern thought in psychology, anthropology and existential philosophy, and freshly formulated by Teilhard de Chardin in his book, *The Phenomenon of Man*.

The more traditional view as presented in Scriptures sees man as historical and temporal. To use the words of Scriptures, man is a tent-dweller. He is a "Hebrew," i.e., a traveller. From St. Paul and St. John, man who is portrayed as a traveller by the Old Testament, is now seen as on a journey towards Christ as the Omega and Fulness of Time. Man's journey towards Christ is presented as a history of salvation.

St. Augustine conforms to the Scriptural view of man as historical by showing in his *City of God* that man is not outside time but in time, tending towards the City of God. The best of modern scientific and philosophical thought also conforms to the Scriptural view. Thus the meaning of man is being sought today in the context of time which consists of man's evolutionary past (pre-history), his history, his present existential situation, and above all in his future. Man is seen as the crowning point of evolution. Man is evolution conscious of itself.⁷ This is the deep insight of science. Following on this insight we see that man's meaning is bound up inextricably with this world. As the best of existential thought observes, man is not a foreigner to this world such that his meaning can be sought apart from this world, but that man is man-and-his-world. Teilhard de Chardin by his vast scientific knowledge fills in the bare outline of man's origin, nature and destiny as given by revelation. He shows that man is evolution conscious of itself, hence intrinsically historical, a process that finds its term in Christ-Omega.

We do not have the place here to elaborate more fully this more traditional view of man, but from the sketch we have made we are able to draw two implications as to the nature of education. The first is that to know man is to know his history. This is not merely to know what Maritain calls the phenomenal aspect of human nature. It is to know man in his deepest meaning, in his essential being. The Hellenic mentality cannot understand how the universal could be in time. Hence to attain the full man one goes outside time. But the whole truth for Christianity is expressed in the philosophical statement, absurd thought it may seem, that the Universal is in time. The Incarnation is just this truth, this universal. Christ is the Fulness of Time as the Scriptures attest.⁸ Since the fulness of man is union with Christ, we must insert ourselves in time in order to participate in redemptive time which is the basis of universal, unchanging truth and existence for the individual. Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Education then which is the attainment of the full man is an involvement in time, involvement in the affairs of this world, involvement in present society. What was a secondary aim of education in Thomism becomes the primary and only aim of education. *Education is incarnational, historical.* This is the first implication for

education based on the more traditional view of man.

The second implication is that education has for its purpose the formation of a man who, in the words of St. Paul, is all things to all men. In other words, he must have a mind and heart as large as the world. Education must destroy insularity, parochiality, prejudice. It must form a man who is able to understand peoples of different races, creeds, cultures, philosophies, and eras. In short, we must have the mind and heart of Christ whose concern was the unification of splintered humanity into one single human family. For we are all sons of the same Father in Heaven. *Education then is unitive, catholic.*

From the nature of education as unitive, we can see that the true idea of a University is that it is one of the agencies for the unification of humanity. Where the Church or religion tries to unify humanity in love, a University unifies humanity in truth. Truth is One. And when men possess the whole Truth, then are they one in mind. A University is not merely a place where we learn truth, but more essentially a place for the discovery and search of truth. It is in a University that man can destroy his insularity and parochiality, his prejudices and hates in the most efficient and economical way.

The agents or instruments which a University uses for the formation or education of a "universal" or internationally minded man are science and the humanities, philosophy and religion. Since as we said earlier, knowledge is ultimately for unification, then the three levels of knowledge: the scientific-cultural, the philosophic, and the theological partake of this character. We have looked on these three disciplines merely in a compartmentalized way. We have not been able to integrate them and see that their ultimate meaning and function is the unification of mankind.

Science and the humanities have shrunk the world, so to speak. They have brought the evolutionary past closer to the present, they have shown the evolutionary unity of the world and man, they have brought the distant stars and galaxies to the purview of consciousness and in the near future the planets will be physically present to man; they have brought peoples of different places and cultures and eras closer together. But science, too, contrary to its very meaning and purpose, has been used for war, deceit, for dissension and hate; and culture separates one group from another.

Philosophy is the expression of the spirit of a people. It unifies a people, a culture, a civilization at the deeper level: a pattern of thought, a way of life, a *Weltanschauung*. But when a particular philosophy is absolutized and considered true and unchanging so that other philosophies are taken to be false, then philosophy becomes an instrument of disunity and deep hate.

Religion is obviously a principle of unification, and that at the deepest level of the human psyche. It can unify peoples of different nationalities, races, sexes, ages, cultures, etc. Because it is the deepest principle of unification, different religions can also provoke lasting dissensions and schisms.

Since at this stage of the human process we still have differing scientific theories, philosophic systems, systems of religious thought, a University cannot be partial

to one without being untrue to its purpose. A university teaches the disciplines as a means for the unification of humanity. Therefore it cannot use these disciplines as a means of dissension. But when a university chooses one philosophy and one theology as a matter of policy and ignores other philosophies and theologies as in Catholic universities, or over-emphasizes science and ignores philosophy and theology as in secular universities, then it produces a man who is insular, parochial. For Catholic Universities, to justify the teaching of only one philosophy and theology in the name of Christ and truth is in fact to bring dishonor to Christ for Christ could never sanction a policy that puts an obstacle to open-mindedness, to mutual understanding of peoples. Christ wants us to go out into the world, to cooperate with others and work with them towards the unification of mankind. Clearly to accomplish this mission which is intrinsic to the very meaning of man, it is the job of education to help us know the minds of others, especially the values which they hold most highly, namely, the philosophic and religious.

The ghetto policy of Catholic Higher Education is based on an individualistic notion of man. This notion holds that the fulness and perfection of an individual is not bound up in the perfection and fulness of the totality. Perfection whether intellectual or spiritual is an individual affair, and one does not have an essential relation, responsibility and obligation to the whole, merely an accidental one. If we look back historically, we find that the medieval and post-medieval Christian, who was an Aristotelian, conceived salvation as an individual affair. He did not see his personal destiny as bound up in the destiny and perfection of the Mystical Body. The doctrine of the Mystical Body could not have been developed at that time, although this doctrine was always present in the Scriptures, due to an individualistic outlook. Perfection was wholly in terms of indulgences and graces. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament which is purely an individualistic act was given precedence over communal service of the Mass. Liturgy which is the adoration by the whole Body waned. It is only today that we have become conscious of ourselves as part of the Mystical Body; it is only today that we are having a liturgical revival.

In the educational field, we are still operating on this individualistic notion of man, an Aristotelian-Thomistic notion based on the category of substance which separates rather than relates. The notion of the Mystical Body, of corporate personality, of apostolicity and the priesthood of the laity have not yet influenced our Catholic universities and their curricula. We are unable to realize yet that our meaning, fulness and perfection as an individual is bound up in the meaning, fulness and perfection of humanity as a whole. Our own history is bound up with human history. The truth of human history is the Incarnation which unifies all history. Hence human history has eternal and unitive value. Education is incarnational — an involvement in history, not a withdrawal from it, in order to attain unity.

We have sufficiently treated, we believe, the nature of Education as unitive and from it derived the function of a University and the role of the disciplines. Since today we have not yet arrived at unity on all levels, it is the function of the University

to do research. Consequently, all the sciences, all the major philosophical systems both of East and West, all the major religions should be taught and the University's task is the unification of the disciplines in and among themselves, and the students should take part in the enterprise.

Thomists object to this democratic view of the disciplines. They claim that Thomism is the one and only true philosophy, hence in philosophy the absolutistic approach must necessarily be followed. Of course, if this be the case, that is, if Thomism be the one and only true philosophy, then it is also the principle of integration of mankind, of all peoples. To teach it then would not be to be parochial but to be universal and one. But is it the one and only true philosophy? The answer to this question brings us to a re-examination of the nature of philosophy itself, a task which we will put off till later. Right now we would like to draw a conclusion from the second characteristic of education, namely, that it is essentially historical.

From our analysis of man we found out that he attains his fulness historically. Education which is one of the agencies for this end must therefore be essentially historical. The conclusion for the disciplines is that they too must be historical. By historical we mean that science, philosophy and theology are not just a systematized body of truths to be known and contemplated; rather, they are to be seen dynamically and in the context of time or history. Since man's goal is ultimate unity to be achieved in the future, the disciplines are directives, guides, by which we attain the future. We have to realize here that we are instituting a revolution in the way we think of the disciplines. Where before we looked at truth as something to be contemplated, now we have to look at truth as a guide for the future. Truth is a light that shows us the true way to our goal. This view of truth is definitely Biblical. Christ who is the Truth is also called the light — the Light of the World. Christ is symbolized by that pillar of light that guided the Israelites through the desert at night. Knowledge is not so much to be known in and for itself as rather to be used for action.⁹ Knowledge is power; knowledge is for the way. Truth is not ahistorical but historical. This switch we are instituting is from the Aristotelo-Thomistic view of truth to the Scriptural-modern view. Modern, I say, because we are coming around to this way of looking at the disciplines.

Instead of looking at Revelation as a body of static propositions enshrined and formulated finalistically in our scholastic Summas we are now beginning to see it as a history of salvation. Instead of looking at the Bible as a book, we now see it as an account of God's salvific acts or saving events in history. Instead of looking at the Church as a static juridical structure, we see it as a collective historical process which process the Scriptures call the Mystical Body. Revelation is a path, a way that unerringly leads us to Christ. Its unerring *direction* is its absoluteness. Christ Himself, is not analyzed statically in Scripture, i.e., in terms of His nature but functionally, as Oscar Cullmann well observes. Thus He is the *Way*, the *Omega*, the Light, the Redeemer — dynamic concepts that have meaning only in a historical context and process.

Philosophy is also historical. It is the expression of the spirit and outlook of a people. It is a *way* of life; a guide for the future. It influences our whole outlook in life, one's daily routine, the goal that we aim for and consequently the direction and choice of our activities. Philosophy determines the way science and its discoveries and inventions will ultimately be used. Modern philosophy has moved away from the circle of the eternal and unchanging, from the realm of essences and substance where we keep hearing the same old stories; it has incarnated itself in time and proved most fruitful not only for itself but for the sciences: anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc., through the use of its phenomenological method.¹⁰ This method is also proving fruitful for an increased understanding and clearer expression of the biblical message.¹¹

A historical and dynamic presentation of theology and philosophy in our curriculum will affect the way our textbooks are going to be written. At present, our textbooks are perfect examples and illustration of the Aristotelo-Thomistic view of truth, namely, that it must be totally divorced from the concrete and contingent. As a matter of fact, the relation to the concrete is purposely erased in order to present theological and philosophic truths as universal and non-contingent. The result are books that are arid, impractical, out of touch with reality and which abound in antiquated and medieval terminology that isolates us from the present world in which philosophy and theology can be living and meaningful for us. In our philosophy textbooks, the connection between the answers we give to philosophic questions and their practical consequences should be shown. For example, students must see how the present Communistic society in its economic, political and moral structure is ultimately deducible from the Communistic answers to the philosophic questions: What is man: his origin, nature, destiny? Philosophy is a difficult discipline to teach and a difficult profession to practice, for its task is to reveal and unearth the hidden and implicit premises on which societies are built. But just as in the individual, an understanding of the unexpressed and unconscious premises that motivate one's actions are essential for the control of personality, so it is for collective consciousness. In spite of this inherent difficulty in philosophy, we philosophers cannot afford to lay aside the task of showing the practical influence of philosophic premises. To divorce philosophy from time is to make it meaningless and uninteresting. To the students, our present textbooks in philosophy are nothing else but a collection of idle speculations.

At this point, let us summarize our reflections so far. We derived two implications from our re-examination of the philosophy of man, namely, that education is essentially historical and, in its finality, unitive. From these two implications follow the character of the disciplines, namely, that they are also historical and unitive. By historical we mean that we have to relate the disciplines to the present affairs and problem of modern society; by unitive we mean that all theological and philosophical systems be presented impartially. After these conclusions which apply to the disciplines in general, we would like now to re-examine the nature of philosophy in particular,

to seek confirmation for the implications we have drawn, viz., that the curriculum should present philosophy in a historical manner and in a unitive way, i.e., by presenting all the major systems. Our re-examination will also give an answer to the question which we put off a while before, namely, whether or not Thomism is the one and only true philosophy and therefore there is no need to teach other systems.

A Re-examination of the Nature of Philosophy

The Thomistic claim that Thomism is the true philosophy arises from its methodology. It believes that the intellect can arrive at the essences of things. It believes consequently that it has the metaphysical method of arriving at the essences of things. Hence by using this method, it arrives at the essential meaning of reality and the systematic formulation of the data gathered by this metaphysical method must necessarily be true. Note that everything follows so long as we stay within our own camp, so long as we identify our camp with reality itself and so long as we consider our premises as self-evident. In practice we have not bothered to re-examine our premises because having been handed down for centuries they have acquired the force of dogma. Furthermore, since we think that our philosophic truths are universal and unchanging, they are thus unaffected by scientific changes. What we fail to see is that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* stands or falls with his *Physics*. In other words, the metaphysical premise that the intellect can arrive at the essences of things depends on the scientific postulate that reality is substantially finished, that the species of things are fixed and unchanging, that reality does not substantially evolve.

We know today that creation is going on even now, that species evolve, that reality is in process, hence unfinished and that the fulness and essential revelation of reality will be at the end of the process. Philosophically this means that the intellect cannot arrive at the essential meaning of reality. It would be a falsification of reality to present it as finished when it is still evolving, unless perhaps the intellect has prophetic powers that can transport it to the end of the process and see what is the fruit of the process. If truth is conformity to reality, then conformity to present reality has to pre-no means. The absolute truth of evolving reality is its Omega and that Omega is fixed. It determines once and forever what this process in which we are and which it is our mission to direct is.

sent it as evolving. All our philosophical formulations must necessarily be evolutionary to conform to evolving reality. Does this mean that there is no absolute truth? By

In face of our analysis, no philosophy can claim to be the true one. Philosophies can not claim to be finished. In this sense, we do not have *yet* an absolute formulation of reality. The philosophical systems are but partial formulations of reality, valid for a certain age of collective human consciousness which is in process of evolving towards maturity. We are in effect submitting a view on the nature of philosophy which contradicts the old individualistic view. In the old view, each philosophic system is independent and autonomous of other systems. In this view which we believe to be more traditional we introduce the notion of corporate personality or collective human

consciousness. The evolution of this consciousness is philosophy. In this view, the various philosophic systems are not independent of one another, but are related as stages of one philosophic consciousness.

The study of philosophy, given the more traditional view, cannot but be unitive. For to study philosophy as a process is to study the early philosophical formulations of collective human consciousness beginning from the East to the West and going on to the more evolved formulations of medieval and modern times. Given this view, the claim of Thomism that it is the philosophy for all times cannot be justified. We can only say that it is valid and true for a stage of philosophic thought, the way the psychological framework of an adolescent is valid and true for that age. The truth and validity of philosophic systems must be seen relative to a given age whose spirit and *Weltanschauung* it expresses. Thus the Platonic system was valid and true for the Early Christian society; the Aristotelo-Thomistic system, for Medieval society, etc. The genius of St. Thomas was to take over Aristotelian philosophy, which had already integrated the mathematical and physical sciences and added theology to obtain a coherent and closely-knit view of the universe.¹² The Medieval *Weltanschauung* was Ptolemaic and Euclidean. The earth was the center and the planets at the periphery. At a higher level of being, that of life, species were eternal and unchanging and placed at the center to conform to the position of the earth. Around the stationary species were the contingent particulars or individuals. To conform to this pattern, philosophy made substance the prime category, situated it at the center as permanent and stationary while at the periphery we have the nine accidents that inhere and revolve around substance. In theology, theological or revealed truths were placed at the center. They were called the *substantia fidei* to show their permanent and unchanging character. At the periphery were the empirical and contingent truths of science. From this framework, we can see why the theologians thought they had the right to pronounce judgment on scientific matters for they possessed the center on which peripheral truths depend. Unfortunately, reality does not conform to this pattern.

Our world today is different. The sun is now the center, and the earth revolves around it. Biological species are no longer static but are in evolution. The prime category is no longer substance but process, history, evolution. Theology is no longer a *substantia fidei*, a body of truths to be contemplated, but a history of salvation. And yet many, especially among those in positions of authority, are blind and insensitive to the need for a new *Weltanschauung*. They are unable to see the aversion of students to medieval formulations and terminology as tell-tale signs that our world is not a medieval world; that ours is Copernican, Einsteinian, Darwinian, Teilhardian. They go on in the belief that the human mind is intrinsically conformed to a Thomistic *Weltanschauung* and therefore that the philosophical actuation or perfection of the human mind is pure unadulterated Thomism. Any other philosophical system, it is claimed, is injurious to the human mind and contrary to nature.

In the view on the nature of philosophy we have presented, the study of philosophical systems is a must. Philosophy has the function of directing present society towards

its ultimate goal. But to know the spirit and *Weltanschauung* of present society, to be able to formulate it and thus more intelligently control our society, there is need to know the past; for we cannot know our present without knowing the past. Hence, there is need to know thoroughly past philosophical systems, not only to understand the spirit of the past, but more importantly, to know our present and direct it with greater sureness towards its proper goal.

At this point, we believe that we have now confirmed by our re-examination of the nature of philosophy, that the philosophy curriculum be taught historically and unitively. By our re-examination, we have also shown by intrinsic reasons why the teaching of only one philosophy is not only against the very meaning of education, but against the nature of philosophy itself. Our last step before we conclude is to show that the extrinsic reasons for teaching only Thomism are untenable.

The reason commonly adduced in favor of Thomism is that Leo XIII made Thomism the official philosophy of the Church for all times. However, there are many prudent and wise theologians who say that the Encyclical, *Aeterni patris*, did not mean this at all, that it must be understood in its time context. As one eminent theologian says, "The Church's preference for the work of Aquinas is primarily intended to provide, at a time of spiritual dissolution, a sound philosophy by which the abiding, naturally known antecedents of the faith are eminently validated; it is not aimed at forcing theology into a determined form."¹³ In another place Ratzinger notes, "The Church did not mean at all to put an impassable obstacle in the way of reshaping theology by the search of new philosophies."¹⁴ And one of the foremost theologians of Europe today says that "Thomism does not exhaust the liberty of Christian thought."¹⁵ That the views here expressed are correct may be gathered from the present practice of great and respected theologians and philosophers who have extended the fields of theology and philosophy by departing from Thomistic categories. One can cite the theology of Karl Rahner whose vitality and inspiration come from his contact with Heidegger under whom he studied.¹⁶ As Danielou remarks, "When Karl Rahner, S.J., suggests that existential philosophy helps us to understand the hypostatic union, when André Fessard, S.J. shows us that dialectic is a valuable instrument for understanding history and free choices, when Father George Morel finds an anthropology that articulates the facts underlying the experiences of John of the Cross — they accomplish excellent theology and are eminently traditional."¹⁷

The teaching of Thomism only, is also justified by reason of apologetics. The Catholic laity must be preserved in the faith by keeping them ignorant of other philosophies and religions which could seduce their minds and wills. This way of thinking is based on two false premises. The first one is the premise that the laity are to be treated as children, second class Catholics, not quite mature. They are forever to be protected. What they think, how they act must always come from the top. This policy of paternalism which is still dominant today is largely responsible for the killing of any creativity, originality and initiative among the laity. In the field of philosophy and theology, the ordinary Catholic layman is a fearful individual, afraid to speak out,

unable to carry on a dialogue with his non-Catholic friends. If we complain of the lack of Catholic intellectuals today, the real culprit is the false educational policy of paternalism. It is time we re-examine our stand and see if this is not contrary to the very nature of Christian formation. For clearly the mind of Christ is for every Christian to be an apostle, i.e., a mature individual, well-trained and informed on philosophic and theological matters. The Catholic we produce in our Universities does not know any other philosophy except Thomism, any other theology except Thomism, and yet the Church is supposed to embrace the whole world and we are her apostles, a world which is philosophically and theologically non-Thomistic!

The second premise is based on a pharisaical and self-righteous attitude that we are possessed of better formulation of theology and of philosophy than others. Hence there is no need to study other theologies and philosophies. But do we really have this claim? If our scholastic theology were basically sufficient why was the modern advance in theology today spearheaded by Protestant Scripture scholars? Why are they the top exegetes today and from whom we are learning much? If our philosophy were the true one why was it a departure from this ahistorical and static philosophy that opened up for us the important and tremendously fertile category of the historical and the temporal? Why was it the Protestant Kierkegaard who directed our philosophic gaze towards that forgotten aspect of man, namely, his personality and his subjectivity? Is it not that we have been imprisoned in our own formulations which we have absolutized and consequently have been unable to see the truth? And in the field of science, our philosophy and theology not only ignored Galileo's heliocentric view and Darwin's evolutionary view, but opposed them in the name of philosophic and theological truth. Our practice of absolutizing the categories of one philosophy and theology and identifying them with Catholic theology and philosophy certainly bears re-examination in face of its sad and embarrassing consequences.

Conclusion

The need to revitalize our philosophy and theology curriculum is not an isolated ill in Catholic Higher Education. The whole of Catholic Higher Education is ill and this sickness is again merely part of the general sickness of the Church. The great and influential Julius Cardinal Döpfner has correctly diagnosed this sickness. In a speech at the Munich Congress¹⁸⁷ he said:

Masses of the faithful have been lost because to many the Catholic Church appeared as 'an institution that enslaved freedom' and as a 'superannuated souvenir from a past age.' It spoke to man in an ancient tongue, through incomprehensible rituals, *in preaching concepts that have no relation to current life. Instead of penetrating the world, the church seemed to sit 'in a self-imposed ghetto, trying to build its own small world adjoining the big world.'* Tied to 'antiquated forms' Catholicism often gave the appearance of resenting the inescapable presence of ideological pluralism, political democracy and modern technology. (Italics mine).

We Catholics can say *amen* to the foregoing diagnosis. And it is in our seminaries and in our universities that we create a wrong picture of Catholicism by conforming

to the very things which Cardinal Döpfner has criticized. And observe again whether our seminaries and universities do not conform to and produce the false notion of a Christian which Karl Rahner, the outstanding theologian of our generation and whom both Pope and laity listen to with respect, has reprehended:

The task of the Christian is concrete history — the hour of history into which he has been born. Certainly, he should be able to master it in a way other than that of the non-Christian. But it is this concrete world which he has to live through and no other one. Whenever we flee into the imagined world of yesterday, into the dead corner of history, which was powerful and alive yesterday, we not only miss our task in this world, but Christianity itself suffers from such artificial existence and the unreality of such a fictitious world.¹⁹

As I have mentioned elsewhere in the paper, our seminaries and universities are educating the modern Christian to live in a medieval world. In the words of William Lynch, S.J., in his book, *The Integrating Mind*, we suffer from an absolutizing instinct. We try to be more Pope than the Pope himself and interpret an encyclical like *Aeterni patris* as applying eternally. Filial piety is laudable, but it must be kept within bounds. We must not endow a Pope or a medieval saint-philosopher the power to foresee all future situations. Where, may I ask, do we find in any Church decree justification for absolutizing the Middle ages — its philosophy, theology and education? If there were, then Cardinal Döpfner and theologian Rahner are mistaken and our universities and seminaries are right. I agree with Leslie Dewart that the source of this absolutizing of the Middle Ages is not from the Church but from a Hellenic complex.²⁰ He explains that by adopting Greek and Roman cultural forms, Christianity acquired a Hellenic complex. But now, he continues, it has wrung them dry. They have become inadequate for the continued life and development of the Christian faith. He concludes that the Christian crisis of this age is definable in terms of the inadequacies of the Hellenic complex.²¹

The solution to this crisis is a return to the historical perspective of the Scriptures. A renewal of historical perspective is, according to Dewart, the message of the late Pope John XXIII:

The renewal of the Church in every sphere as well is bound up with the renewal of the collective historical self-concept of the Church. The *revolutionary* character of Pope John XXIII's opening address to the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962, seems to me to be given, above all, by the adoption of a *historical* perspective, by its conviction that "history . . . is . . . the teacher of life." It would not be an exaggeration, I believe, to say that the substance of the Pope's exhortation to the Council Fathers was to adopt the historical perspective of *time*.²²

The lack of historical perspective, instead of having been seen as a shortcoming, has been given a rational justification by a basic philosophical attitude which is typically Hellenic, namely, that truth is outside time, that the historical is contingent and hence lacks truth. This Hellenic complex and metaphysic pervade not only our lives but our constructions. In our lives we withdraw from the temporal. For many the world is just a time of waiting. Time itself has no value. How, may we ask, can

we square this Aristotelo-Thomistic view with the Scriptural view that Christ is Incarnate, that time is redemptive, that Christ Himself is the Fulness of Time? In our constructions, we have presented theology ahistorically, and our metaphysics as a going outside time. Our education partakes of this ahistorical character. How can we reconcile this ahistorical character with the counsel of Pope, cardinal, theologian, philosopher, that we adopt an historical perspective of time?

The change to an historical perspective is an immense task due to the conditioning of centuries. But if we want to think with the Church, then we must follow the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John XXIII, the man whom God chose to be Pope for our time and to open the Council, precisely because he had a keen historical sense — a gift which, ironically, majority of the clergy who go straight from the seminary to the Roman Curia or to the University do not have because they have never travelled or done missionary work.²³

Once an historical perspective has gotten hold of the Christian conscience, then an historical perspective in education is not too much to hope for. But I am realistic enough to know that this educational change will not be in the near future.

NOTES

¹ Jacques Maritain, *The Education of Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), p. 51.

² Robert O. Johann, S.J., "Towards a Philosophy of Subjectivity," *Twentieth Annual Convention of the Jesuit Philosophical Association*, (Woodstock College Press, 1958), p. 19.

³ *Loc. cit.*

⁴ Maritain, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷ An expression of Julian Huxley and borrowed by Teilhard de Chardin. Cf. *The Phenomenon of Man* (Harper, 1959), p. 220.

⁸ There is no passage that explicitly says that Christ is the Fullness of Time, but this can be gathered from the Hebrew notion of time. Time for the Hebrew means *chronos* (genesis) or *kairos* (maturation or fullness). Christ is the KAIROS the Old Testament prophesied about, prepared for, longed for and lived for. (Cf. C. Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, pp. 27-28.)

According to Oscar Cullmann in his book *Christ and Time*, eternity for the Greeks as *atemporal*, for the Scriptures (Hebrew thought) it is *limitless time*. For the Greeks, eternity is qualitatively different from time; for the Hebrew, time and eternity are in the same plane. According to Greek thought, time is negative, it is a degradation, a fall from the One (Plotinus) *katebe chronos; exepese chronos*. It was time that spoiled everything. Time is but a moving imitation of eternity (Plato, *Timaeus* 37d). Time is the cause of destruction. (Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 222b). With this view of time, the eternity of God must necessarily be conceived as qualitatively different from time. Christianity which had to pour Revelation into the Greek pattern of thought in order to convert the Greeks, had to show that salvation is a liberation from time, that to attain to eternity is to be *atemporal*.

Today with the revival of Scriptural studies and with the discovery of evolution which shows time to be oriented, creative and directed, time acquires a positive meaning rather than a negative one. (Cf. Tresmontant, *Etudes de Metaphysique Biblique*, pp. 33-34) Biblical time is essentially positive and good. (P. 27, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*.)

In Scholastic Theology we identify eternity with God's Essence for there could be no distinction in God. God does not have eternity, will, intellect. Rather eternity, will, intellect, etc. are one with his Essence. Thus it is proper to say within the pattern of Greek thought, that God is Eternity. But suppose we move now from the Greek pattern of thought to the Hebrew pattern where timelessness is death and limitless time is

life, being and truth. Then God has to be identified with limitless time. It is therefore proper to say that God is the Fullness of Time. This appellation would have been scandalous to the Greeks, but in the context of a history of salvation, it is most proper and logical.

In the Scriptures, we are not given God's atemporality but God's eternal procession. Procession implies movement, rather than lack of movement as is the Greek notion of eternity. Hence procession is more properly grasped as the fullness of time. Fullness of time does not mean contingency, for when one has the fullness of time or *is* the fullness of time, there is no evolution — the basis of finitude and contingency.

Exodus 3/14: I am who am, has been interpreted atemporally by Greek thought. But exegesis guides us in understanding the meaning of this statement by comparing it with other passages denoting God's description of himself. The Apocalypse was deliberately intended by St. John to be the fullness of the first book — Genesis. The Alpha is the Omega. In the Apocalypse we have talk of the New Creation, where in Genesis we have the first creation; we have the woman and the child which recapitulates the woman and child of Genesis. So too, the "I am who am" of Exodus is recapitulated and further elucidated in the Apocalypse. Thus: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty." (1/8). Again: "And the four living creatures have each of them six wings; round and within they are full of eyes. And they do not rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is coming." (5/8).

From the above passages, time is more apparent than timelessness. The mention of past, present and future together and simultaneously is not so much timelessness as the fullness of time.

I believe therefore that there is a foundation for saying of Christ that he is the Fullness of Time, so long as we understand this title in the Hebrew pattern of thought.

⁹ Cf. *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 249.

¹⁰ Cf. Pierre Thevenaz, *What is Phenomenology?*, ed. James M. Edie (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1962), p. 8.

¹¹ W. J. Filch, O.F.M., "An Existential Approach to Sacred Scripture," *Theological Studies*, 23 (1962), 406-418.

¹² F. Crowe, S.J., "On Method of Theology," *Theological Studies*, 23 (1962), p. 638.

¹³ Joseph Ratzinger, "Theologia Perennis?", *Wort und Wahrheit*, 15 (1960), 179-188. For a digest see: *Theology Digest*, 10 (1962), 71-76.

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁵ Jean Danielou, "Unite et pluralite de la pensee chretienne," *Etudes*, 312 (1962), 3-16. See also: *Theology Digest*, 10 (1962), p. 69.

¹⁶ Cf. *Time*, (Dec. 14, 1962), p. 60.

¹⁷ Danielou, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-70.

¹⁸ Cf. *Time*, (February 7, 1964), p. 66.

¹⁹ Cf. *Schriften zur Theologie*, Bd. 5, (1962), pp. 175ff.

²⁰ Leslie Dewart, *Christianity and Revolution* (New York: Herder, 1963), p. 286.

²¹ *Loc. cit.*

²² Leslie Dewart, "Christians and Marxians in Dialogue," *Continuum*, (Summer, 1963), p. 144, footnote.

²³ I agree with the opinion of perceptive Catholics, that the best educators are those who have travelled and done missionary work in Latin America, Africa, the Middle and Far East. Would that all Catholic educators had such backgrounds. Then there would not be so much of the Hellenic complex and the identification of Christianity with its Hellenic formulation. Then there would not be the opposition such as for example is going on now in the present Vatican Council between the missionary Bishops who know the present world from actual experience and know the right means to evangelize and educate it and those Bishops who think that all the answers are found in scholastic Summas and who speak a language totally out of touch with present reality and its problems.