Discourse in Dialogue

Discourse in Dialogue: Reflections in Fundamental Philosophical Theology

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PREFACE

In his novel *The Name Of The Rose*, Umberto Eco presents in a finely crafted historical fiction of spy-like proportions, a marvelous panoramic survey of Catholic medieval life, specifically, its institutions and underlying intellectual traditions. At one critical point in the novel, Eco, with characteristic irony, has a blind monk "Old Jorge," an antagonist of the "corruptive" learning introduced into the Christian West by the recently translated works of "The Philosopher," deliver a direful soliloquy, on the state of the intellectual life. This sermon is delivered just prior to the impending conflagration, which will not only destroy the corpus of the translated works of Aristotle, but the monastery itself.

At one point in his locution, Jorge presents an interesting, if not perhaps somewhat myopic view of the nature of the intellectual life, when he states that the work of his order is essentially, the "preservation of knowledge," and not a "search" for it. Advocating as this does a characteristically essentialist and less developmental view of the nature of tradition, Jorge argues that there is in "the history of knowledge," no "progress, no revolutions of ages, but at most a continuous and sublime recapitulation."

Given the possession of the fullness of truth, as such is present theoretically to the divine intellect, it is theologically possible, according to a classical-essentialist perspective, to so define truth. Within the context, however, of a more developmental-historical perspective such a view of tradition, as simply a "continuous and sublime recapitulation" of what is already known, fails to consider the properly progressive advancement of theology as a living science; a science which can evidence the properly adaptive and assimilative character of the insights of tradition, as it faces those challenges posed to it by contemporary thought and problematics.

A work such as this, which attempts to consider fundamental theological and philosophical perspectives in Catholic-Christian theology, may in some sense appear to be "continuous and (probably not a) sublime recapitulation" inasmuch as there are undoubtedly a number of specifically intellectual themes, which the subject matter itself, namely, fundamental theology, necessarily constitutes. Such themes as pertains to the interrelationship of philosophy and theology, theological method and

pluralism, the interpretation of scripture and its underlying hermeneutical principles, Christian anthropology in relation to philosophy of person, the Christological mystery and soteriology as well as the nature of Christian Philosophy, all represent themes proper to fundamental-philosophical theology.

Such themes also imply an understanding of the nature of tradition, as expressive of both the preservation and continuous presentation, of what constitutes the collective memory and wisdom of the Catholic-Christian Church. Although these themes are representative of perennial questions in the context of the Catholic-Christian intellectual tradition, the manner of their presentation, as well as the insights employed to furnish their clarification, do admit of something more than simply a "continuous recapitulation."

The present study attempts to offer a certain "recapitulation" in that each of its six chapters serves to outline a particular theme in fundamental Catholic-Christian theology. Whether representative of either a papal or conciliar document, each of the selected documents present an outline of a number of interpretative points of review which are proper, to a given theological theme or question, in the Catholic-Christian tradition. Despite its recapitulative character, however, the present project attempts to demonstrate that continuity does not of itself necessarily preclude sublimity in that the insights of the Catholic-Christian tradition are of enduring value. Such value can be found precisely in the tradition's ability to represent particular questions, to both individuals and community, which are of themselves essential to a proper understanding of philosophical and theological truth; undoubtedly, a truth which is contained in sacred scripture, clarified by sacred tradition and presented anew through the living magisterium of the Church, as implied in the *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.

If the present work can offer a modest contribution to the interpretation of its selected documents, while simultaneously presenting a preliminary reflection upon fundamental themes proper to contemporary Catholic-Christian intellectual thought, the author's intention, at least will have been served. The project's recapitulative quality, in the context of its thematic presentation, will hopefully not compromise, through any fault of the author, the sublime character of what constitutes the enduring value of the truth; a truth, which although eternal, may nevertheless, in the contemporary context, be of inestimable value.

CHAPTER ONE

PASCENDI: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Introductory Critique of the Doctrine of Immanence

On September 8, 1907 the Encyclical Letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, was promulgated by Pope Pius IX. In a somewhat lengthy and rather cumbersome document, the papal magisterium decisively and effectively, condemned what was then seen as the pernicious error of Catholic Modernism. Undertaking to "guard with the greatest vigilance the deposit of faith," the Pope maintained the encyclical's purpose was to bring together in a compendium the teaching of the modernists not only to show "the connection between them," intellectually, but also to examine collectively the sources of their error so as to effectively "prescribe, in turn, remedies for averting the evil" then confronting the Church.[1] Underlying the encyclical's apologetically, was a definite confidence that "the deposit of faith," which was to be guarded from criticism, likewise possessed, as a received tradition of philosophical truth, dogmatic clarity and moral certainty, an inherent capacity to adequately address the intellectual challenges being posed to both the Church and contemporary culture.

In the opening sections of *Pascendi*, the encyclical introduces a number of significant philosophical critiques, which are directed at both the philosophical methodology as well as at the framework of modernist thought. The primary critique, which is made of the then prevailing modernist philosophical approach, is that its immanentist methodology, its underlying subjectivistic epistemological starting point, tends to limit human reason "entirely within the field of phenomena," to that which is perceptible only to the senses."[2] This limitation of the range of human cognition exclusively to the sensible-material order leads inevitably, according to the encyclical's line of argumentation, to an implicit agnosticism which, of its very nature, questions the possibility of

validating philosophically, the existence of that order of reality which is immaterial.

It is apparent that *Pascendi's* criticism is understandably directed toward any philosophical approach which would either explicitly or tacitly reduce the nature of religious experience solely to a personal-subjectivistic order or perhaps propose, in those questions pertaining specifically to the problem of knowledge, a reductionistically empiricist approach. Both approaches to the question of religious experience are viewed as problematical in that they either view the nature of religious experience as derived from, or perhaps exclusively attributable, to the needs or dynamics of human consciousness or, through a reductionistically empiricist methodology, limit the exercise of human reason to philosophical position derived solely from the methodological conclusions of empirical science.

In both of these cases the underlying presumptions, as well as the fundamental methodology of scholastic metaphysics, arguably those of realistic epistemology, causal metaphysics and the analogy of being would be viewed as untenable and hence meaningless. By limiting either religious experience to the subjective character of human consciousness or to the exercise of human reasoning to that which is "perceptible only to the senses," *Pascendi* implicitly critiques both the empiricist tradition, whose empirical methodology leads inadvertently to philosophical idealism, as well as Kantianism whose transcendental critique leads inevitably to philosophical solipsism, despite its effort to validate the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the nature of human freedom, according to the dictates of practical reason.

Critical philosophy, which is undoubtedly one of the focal points of *Pascendi's* critique, was an attempt to mediate a reasoned course between the philosophical tradition of both rationalism and empiricism. In attempting to reconcile the claims of both rationalist and empiricist philosophy, Kant was willing to accede, compromisingly to each tradition. As concerned the claims of rationalism, Kant maintained that the intellect had the capacity to know only the phenomenal order, more specifically that which pertained to the order of sense experience or perception. According to Kant, the intellect could not, however, attain to the knowledge of the noumenal order of reality, namely to that which would enable the intellect to know "things in themselves," the essences of sensible-material reality.[3] Such knowledge was, for Kant, unattainable due to the fact that this knowledge necessitated that the intellect move beyond that which was available, as well as verifiable, through sense experience.

As pertained to the claims of rationalism, a philosophical position advanced earlier in the history of modern philosophy with Cartesian

school, Kant asserted that the human intellect could attain certain knowledge of the order of reality, a knowledge necessary to validate the claims of science and ethics, through its transcendental, *a priori*, categories. Understood by Kant essentially as active faculty, which through both its transcendental intuitions of space and time and its inherent categories actively structured the manifold of sense experience, the intellect could properly attain to the order of both understanding and judgment.[4] Within this framework of critical analysis, Kant proposed what he viewed was a transcendental solution to the stringencies posed, methodologically, by Hume's empiricism which, if followed to their logical stringently empirical conclusion, would have resulted in a radical skepticism the effect of which would have resulted not simply in the invalidation of the import of speculative metaphysics, the value of which was already discredited, but also in the undermining as well the possibility of an empirical science.

Although Kant was in agreement with the empiricists that speculative metaphysical questions concerning the existence of God, the divine attributes and the immortality of the soul were extrinsic to the order of sense experience and, therefore, incapable of objective verification, he was reluctant to allow such a rigid empiricism to jeopardize the validity of claims of science. According to Kant, scientific knowledge of the world was theoretically possible because that order of reality, which is known through the methodology of empirical science, is one already shaped by, or conformed to, the intellect. Through its transcendental categories the mind, as seen by Kant, was able to structure reality, according to its inherent processes. It is precisely this methodological presupposition of transcendental philosophy, its immanentist correspondence of reality to the intellect, rather than the intellect's correspondence to the real *adequatio intellectus et rei*, as proposed in the synthesis of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy, which led Kant's integralist critics, the authors of *Pascendi* included, to maintain that his subjective-immanentism essentially devalued the realist-objective character of knowledge and, consequently, led to an eclipse of the metaphysical order the result of which would be a pervasive agnosticism.

Concerning this question of agnosticism, *Pascendi* attributes such directly to the very nature of Kant's methodology. Having asserted earlier that Kant restricts reason to "the field of phenomena," the encyclical notes as well that, within this framework, reason has "no power to transgress these limits" and is, therefore, "incapable of lifting itself up to God and of recognizing His existence… by means of visible things."[5] As was noted earlier, Kant, who followed the methodology proposed by the modern

empiricist tradition beginning with Locke and culminating with Hume, limited knowledge to that of sense experience and thereby discounted the possibility of attaining certain knowledge, in the order of metaphysical attestation.

Despite disavowing any metaphysical demonstration for positing the existence of God in the order of speculative reason, according to the order of such demonstration, which was avowed by classical metaphysical argumentation supported by *Pascendi*, Kant nonetheless maintained that belief in God was justifiable according to the demands of practical reason. Practical reason, which pertained to the order of ethics and to that of Kant's categorical imperative, necessitated from both the moral and practical point of views, the existence of God, free will and the immortality of the soul, if the ethical life as such was to have any objective character or meaning.[6] Notwithstanding his denial of any validity to the claims of natural theology and to its traditional mode of apologetics, which maintained particularly in its scholastic expression that God's existence as well as the divine attributes could be reasonably demonstrated by arguments furnished by realist epistemology, causal metaphysics and the analogy of being, Kant did assert the importance of the practical necessity of asserting God's existence, according to the categorical imperative, the necessity to act ethically, with a view toward ethical valuation.

The disavowal of cosmological argument for God's existence, with its concomitant framework of demonstration within the methodological framework of philosophical theology, had been previously and rigorously challenged by Humean skepticism. Denying that causality be viewed as a law a reality, as more than simply a convention of thought, Hume's argumentation negated an assertion of the existence of God as an inference from the visible effects of reality within the order of secondary causality. Considering Kant's position within this received empiricist philosophical tradition, *Pascendi's* objection to both his methodology and its conclusions is understandable particularly given the teaching of the First Vatican Council (1869 – 1870), which had earlier defined both the demonstration of God's existence and the divine attributes through the exercise of human reason. Within the framework of the encyclical's critique, the prevailing tendency, of the epistemological tradition of modern philosophy, which included transcendental initiatives, was one seemingly directed toward a "transition from agnosticism… a doctrine of pure nescience, to scientific and historic atheism… a doctrine of (the) positive denial" of God.[7] Kantian epistemology, with its relegation of the traditional claims of the cosmological argument from speculative to practical reason as pertained to the existence of God was viewed as that

immanentistic tendency the acceptance of which would serve only to compromise the objective character and claims of both natural, or philosophical theology, and those, ultimately, of the nature of historical revelation.

Concern with compromising the objective character of philosophical theology and historical revelation, which *Pascendi* viewed as a logical consequence of the earlier cited epistemological positions, is specifically cited in the letter. Following its somewhat succinct and uncompromising critique of Kantianism, *Pascendi* then outlines what it perceives to be the specific theological consequences of transcendental methodology, namely, the evisceration, implicitly of all traditional arguments for demonstrating the validity of the First Principle through the exercise of human reason and explicitly, the conclusion that "God can never be the direct object of science" nor seen as "an historical subject."[8]

The invalidation of approaching the question of the existence of God scientifically, according to the criteria presented within the context of the science of classical metaphysics supported by *Pascendi*, is viewed as one of the dire consequences of an essentially errant philosophical approach. When taken to their logical conclusion the premises, which underlie Kantian methodology, can only relativize the importance of those principles necessary to affirm both the rational basis of belief in God's existence as well as the possibility of asserting the character of historical revelation. Related to this point, *Pascendi* asserts that there is an irrefutable connection between the questioning of the valid claims of metaphysics as a proper speculative science and the denial of the unique character of divine self-disclosure in historical revelation. As *Pascendi* states when: "natural theology has been destroyed, the road to revelation closed through the rejection of the arguments of credibility, and all external revelation absolutely denied" the inevitable consequence is thereby to reduce the character of religion as well as the nature of religious experience to that situated exclusively "in the life of man."[9] After formulating this conclusion, the letter continues with a criticism of "the principle of religious immanence" here considered as a philosophical and theological doctrine likewise embraced by the proponents of Modernism.

Criticizing as his methodology did, the validity of the claims of natural theology, which traditionally affirmed the ability of human reason to validly demonstrate the existence of God, the divine attributes, the immortality of the soul, the dictates of natural moral law and the "motives of credibility," Kant had in effect, according to the interpretive critique of *Pascendi*, shifted the focus of the philosophy of religion away from causal-metaphysical demonstration to a more distinctively subjective

origination, wherein metaphysical arguments, such as, those once again formulated within the context of realist epistemology, causal metaphysics and the analogy of being, are viewed as tangential considerations to those philosophical perspectives furnished by critical epistemology, scientific empiricism and the primacy of personal religious experience. This impulse toward and emphasis upon the subjective character of religious experience would achieve further development and fuller expression in the thought of Schleiermacher and Bergson. In the history of the philosophy of religion, these two figures can be seen as representatives of that distinctively subjectivistic and immanent approach, within the philosophy of religion, which both continued, as well as further developed, the Kantian initiative.[10] Such figures may be representative of that approach to the philosophical theology of which *Pascendi* cautions when it critiques those tendencies which not only question the possibility of historical revelation but which likewise subjectively reduce the character of revealed religion to that situated solely "in the life of man."

Similar to Kant before him, Schleiermacher was concerned with attempting to secure a place of respectability for religious thought and expression, within a scientific and intellectual milieu, deeply pervaded by the then prevalent empirical tradition. In contrast to Kant, however, Schleiermacher, as a principal figure of the German Romantic tradition itself indebted to such figures as Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, did not situate religious claims within the order of practical reason but rather within the consciousness of the human person. Within this context Schleiermacher spoke of religion in terms of the fundamental dynamics of the human mind and hence proposed in effect an essentially psychological explanation as the cause of the religious impulse.

Although religion may be seen by some theorists as "a way of thinking, a faith, a peculiar way of contemplating the world… a way of acting, a peculiar desire and love, a special kind of conduct and character," it remains primarily, according to Schleiermacher, a "secret by those who love it,"[11] a pervasively interior sense, an "immediate feeling" or "immediate consciousness" of the divine.[12] When describing religion in these terms it is important to note that Schleiermacher is not equating this feeling with a particular sentiment or emotion. What he is rather proposing is, however, a theoretical premise whereby this "immediate feeling or consciousness" is understood as representative of a specific faculty of human consciousness which is, by its very nature and inherent operation, oriented toward the perception of the infinite understood as God.

In describing the specific nature of human consciousness, that which comprises the constitutive reality of the human psyche, Schleiermacher

speaks of three particular operations of human consciousness which, although "not identical," are "yet inseparable."[13] These delineated operations or faculties of human consciousness are those of perception, activity and feeling. According to Schleiermacher, the faculty of "perception" enables one to acquire knowledge or "power" in relation to that which pertains to the order of science, whereas the faculties of "activity" and "feeling" pertain, respectively, to the undertaking of those practical decisions proper to the ethical life and to those distinctively "contemplative moments" which constitute the very nature of religion.[14] Despite reference to these faculties as separate entities it is important to note that they constitute, according to Schleiermacher, that which is constitutive of the one human consciousness which in turn comprises the totality of an individual's psychic life.

In proposing that the faculty of feeling can be equated with an "immediate consciousness of the Infinite, Schleiermacher's theoretical assumption gives further expression to that immanentist imperative seen earlier in Kant's critical philosophy itself subject as well of *Pascendi's* critique. Schleiermacher's psychological immanentism had, in effect, reduced the God question, theoretically, to a distinctively anthropological problem, to a profoundly subjective, orientation of the human person, as a finite and morally free creature, who is oriented toward the possibility of God as infinite horizon. This theoretical position, the substance of which is characteristic of a so-called transcendental theology, raises as well a theoretical question as to how the faculty of feeling can be viewed, according to this analysis, as a faculty of apprehension through which it is possible to attain to a knowledge of the Infinite through that which is finite.

In attempting to propose a preliminary answer to this question, it must be pointed out that, according to Schleiermacher, religion is to be understood essentially as a "contemplative" activity in which the human person is directed not toward an understanding of the finite order of nature, which pertains specifically to the faculty of perception proper to empirical science, but rather to "the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all things, in and through the Infinite… in and through the Eternal."[15] As such, theological reflection is not concerned, as Schleiermacher views it, with "the nature of the first cause, in itself and in relation to every other cause and operation," a theoretical consideration found in the framework of the causal and participatory metaphysics of philosophical theology, but rather in "an affection, a revelation of the Infinite in the finite."[16] The nature of this experience becomes, for Schleiermacher, a deeply personal realization, seemingly suggestive of an

intuition of being, whereby an individual becomes acutely aware of his own finitude, temporality, contingency and dependence on that which is Infinite, Eternal, Necessary and Other. This all defining experience which implicitly affirms non-categorically the affirmation of the divine within human consciousness, presupposes, as Schleiermacher notes, "an idea… which is nothing more than the expression of the feeling of absolute dependence," the "co-determinant" of that which is signified by God.[17]

In recognizing the finite character of both the temporal order of reality as well as the contingency of human life, the human person may also "feel" the presence of the Infinite and likewise an "immediate feeling" of dependence, a "feeling of reciprocity" on "another."[18] This "another," who is recognized within this "feeling of dependence," is God whose presence is seemingly recognized, within the context of an immediate intuition of divine presence to human consciousness, outside the context of any specific historical revelation. It is this experience of "absolute dependence," wherein an individual becomes acutely aware of the nature of one's finite contingency, immediately conscious of the finite character of human life in relation to the Infinite, which constitutes, for Schleiermacher, not only the nature of relation but also what may be viewed as that "original revelation" of God both "to" and "in" the human person. "Absolute dependence," which thereby characterizes "not only man but all temporal existence," becomes, within this philosophical perspective, not only an apt description of the provisional character of all temporal-finite reality but also a possible apologetic for demonstrating, within the framework of characteristically personalistic philosophical perspective, a validating premise for asserting the existence of God apart from the stringencies of classical-causal metaphysics.[19]

In examining the proponents of an immanent doctrine of religious experience, whose thought would have drawn the criticism of *Pascendi*, one might also include that of Henri Bergson. Unlike Kant who questioned the possibility of undertaking a study of metaphysics through arguments provided through speculative reason, Bergson did acknowledge the value of metaphysics, as a science worthy of proper consideration, albeit in terms undeniably at variance with those of the classical-medieval approach supported by *Pascendi's* authors.

According to Bergson, metaphysics is to be seen as that "science which claims to disperse with symbols," without extrinsic reference, inasmuch as it seeks, methodologically, to appropriate an understanding of reality "from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis."[20] Drawing a distinction between knowledge of an object that is "relative," namely, a perception derived from an outside description or empirical analysis and

knowledge which is "absolute," specifically, an insight into the very nature of a given reality, Bergson affirms that metaphysical knowledge is without "symbols." As such metaphysics, for Bergson, is seemingly without mediation, in that it dispenses from description and hence penetrates to the very nature of a given reality. Prescinding as such from mediation, metaphysics for Bergson, focuses philosophical reflection not on outside reality, namely, knowledge of first causes, but rather upon that one reality which can be known indubitably "from within, by intuition," namely, one's "own person...(as) flowing through time," wherein it is "the self which endures."[21] For Bergson, the starting point of epistemological and philosophical reflection is rather with an intuitive awareness of the unique and singular character of one's own personal existence in relation to the inexorable unfolding of time.

Within his philosophy of vitalism, Bergson draws a distinction between intellect and intuition. According to Bergson, the intellect, which is empirical or practical in nature, facilitates our comprehension of experience by dividing experience into "those fragmentary elements" which enables it to conceptualize, fix, isolate, quantify and measure experience so as to resolve practical problems.[22] Intuition conversely is seen by Bergson, as a faculty which takes one into "the inwardness of life" that gives one "access to the living reality which the intellect has broken up and made static" and hence, "by the sympathetic communication which it establishes between us and the rest of the living," expands our "consciousness" by introducing "into life's own domain" a "reciprocal interpenetration" of "endlessly continued creation."[23] Reality, within this philosophy of vitalism, is understood as a vital impetus, an *élan vital*, which is disclosed to the human person in a "dynamic, creative (and) continuous becoming," which we experience "in ourselves when we act freely."[24] Considering the non-essentialist character of reality, which is not understood as a "given" composed of creative and, therefore, of determined essences but rather as an order continuously being created through the exercise of will and freedom, Bergson's understanding of metaphysics becomes more comprehensible. On this point, Bergson asserts that "metaphysics… through a dilation of the mind… (must) go from reality to concepts and not from concepts to realty" (as it must necessarily) proceed by intuition (which) has as its object the mobility of duration."[25]

Consideration of this methodological approach to the science of metaphysics, leads to the theoretical assumption that reality, according to Bergson, is not to be found in those essences, forms or intelligibilities which are abstracted from the data of sense experience and later known to the intellect, as concepts, spoken through a mental word. Rejecting such as

a form of essentialist conceptualism, Bergson views reality not as "made" but rather as "mobile," in a continuous process of becoming, in an ongoing "process of change," grasped in the intuition of duration.[26] As such the intellect "proceeds by solid perceptions… and by stable conceptions" and, as a consequence of this inexorable mobility of intuition, it does not "obtain (either) an internal (or) metaphysical knowledge of the real" due to this continuous process of "creative evolution."[27]

Consequently, for Bergson, metaphysical knowledge, true knowledge of the real is not conceptual knowledge. Such knowledge is, as was pointed out earlier, static, fixed, determined and unchanging and gives to the intellect that which is required in order to acquire some measure of empirical knowledge. This knowledge is proper only to a limited, practical or scientific understanding of the real. Asserting the progressive character of reality, Bergson views reality as a process and, therefore, known only through a seemingly mystical, sympathetic, non-conceptual appropriation[28] of the absolute, as viewed in the context of an ever "moving reality," and not conceptually.[29]

According to Bergson's this *élan vital*, which is disclosed in an individual's awareness of both "duration" and "becoming," can lead one toward that "living and still moving Eternity which would be the concretion of all duration as materiality in its dispersion." [30] This "living" and "still moving Eternity," is that power of love operative in the universe, namely "God," who has not, according to Bergson, created the world but who has rather been manifested as that infinite reality the character of which underlies the ceaseless process of duration and becoming which constitutes the very nature of reality. God is, therefore, manifested within the eternal impetus of the *élan vital* as such is operative both within the processive unfolding of human consciousness as well as in the progressive, evolutionary, becoming of the order of reality. God can be seen, within this context, as unceasing life, action, freedom and love whereas, the human person is viewed as that being, who through the exercise of human freedom and will, is most worthy of God in that he is able to be transformed through love.[31]

From what has been seen thus far in the preceding analysis, it can be said that the thought of both Schleiermacher and Bergson are representative of two philosophical approaches in the philosophy of religion, whose immanentist presuppositions and methodology would be representative of that "principle of religious immanence" which views religion essentially as "a form of life, the explanation (of which) must certainly be found in the life of man."[32] Whether having its "origin in a movement of the heart," in which "faith… consists in a sentiment of which originates from a need

for the divine… latent with the consciousness," as in the thought of Schleiermacher, or whether "history hides some unknown element," whereby "religion… is the product of (a) progressive development," as seen in the thought of Bergson, each position is viewed as theoretically and methodically skewed, according to the philosophical and theological framework presented by *Pascendi*. Any attempt to explain the nature of religious experience within a subjectivistic, immanentist and essentially historically conditioned horizon[33] is categorically rejected by the authors of the encyclical as proposing a doctrine of immanence which would effectively "destroy the supernatural order"[34] by denying, in effect, accessibility to such an order through those principles inherent to realist epistemology, causal metaphysics and the analogy of being.

The philosophy of immanence, which reduces consideration of the problem of God to either a profoundly personal-subjectivistic experience of such within human consciousness or to an intuition of that which is understood as eternal within the inexorable process of becoming, is vigorously critiqued by *Pascendi*. The corrective for such errant tendencies, according to the letter's integralist authors, is to be found in those principles, methodologies and insights proposed by "scholastic philosophy" and by the preceding classical-philosophical tradition, whose perennial philosophical truth, adequately presents an apologetic more effectively conducive to the realist, historically extrinsic character of both philosophical theology and to that of Christian revelation.

Classical and Medieval Philosophy: Historical Overview and Perspectives

In view of what has been proposed thus far it is evident that the scholastic, the integralist authors, of *Pascendi* are pointedly critical of those philosophical initiatives, within the context of modern philosophy, which are representative, either theoretically or methodologically, of a turn epistemologically toward the human subject as the starting point of philosophical reflection. *Pascendi* critiques such a philosophical starting point in its tendency toward a reductionistic subjectivism ultimately toward a "philosophy of immanence," from which the human intellect is unable to attain to the order of real. Considering the epistemological question of whether the intellect knows the real because the real exists, the methodological presupposition of epistemological realism, or whether the real exists because the mind knows it, the methodological *tour de force* of critical philosophy, it can be said with certainty that the sympathy of *Pascendi* lies undoubtedly with the former. That philosophical tradition,

which serves to inform the fundamental argumentation of the encyclical, is that of the classical-medieval tradition, namely, one whose methodological premise begins philosophical reflection with an understanding of reality as a "Given" and which possesses as well an abiding confidence in the capacity of human reason to effectively acquire, both evaluative and normative insights, into the enduring questions of human knowledge, the nature of reality, the mystery of the human person, ethics and the problem of God. Despite the potentially diverse expressions within the tradition of such a philosophy, *Pascendi's* argumentation implicitly supports the validity of those perennially valued philosophical insights, which are derived from the ancient and the medieval tradition.

The formative insights of this tradition within the history of the western philosophy originate with the emergence of the pre-Socratics. The pre-Socratics, among whom are included the Milesians, the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics, the later Ionian school and the Atomists, attempted to discover that fundamental principle, that primordial element, the postulation of which would help to explain the underlying pervasive unity evident within the manifold of sense experience. Reflecting as they did on the material order of empirical reality, these theorists sought to explain how within constantly changing panorama of sensible-material reality there could be perceived as well a perduring order characterized by a certain unity, harmony or purposefulness. Whether proposing a particular material cause as the underlying explanation of reality, a philosophical-mathematical interpretation of reality, a principle of immanent reason understood as "nous," or a materialistic derivative of elemental particles, the pre-Socratics collectively maintained that reality was fundamentally intelligible and that there was consequently a necessary explanatory principle which could, therefore, be seen as operative within the order and structure of the universe.[35]

The Sophists, the classic antagonists of Socrates, later challenged this confidence in and necessity for the human intellect to appropriate a comprehension of the sensible-material order. Proposing an essentially relativistic, subjectivistic and skeptical position toward the possibility of achieving such a rational explanation of reality, the Sophists, through their emphasis upon "man as the measure of all things," helped to redirect philosophical speculation away from a materialistic explanation of the cosmos and rather toward the attainment of those rhetorical and individual skills necessary to achieve both personal and material success.

In the person and thought of Socrates this "turn toward the individual" continued as a philosophical orientation not, however, within the skeptical tradition of the Sophists but rather within the context of a search for those

fundamental principles of individual and societal life and social life which were of themselves necessary for maintaining proper ethical conduct and attaining virtue.[36] Socrates' philosophical quest, as presented in the dialogues of Plato, was one, therefore, directed toward the acquisition of those objective ethical norms, which were not only known through reason and hence universally demonstrable, but likewise normative in evaluating ethical decisions; specifically, individual human conduct and societal norms. Socrates possessed an undeniable confidence in human reason and also in its inherent capacity to ascertain, through dialects and inductive reasoning, certain universal definitions knowledge of which would lead to wisdom and to a life of virtue. Not directly concerned as were his predecessors with furnishing theoretical-materialistic explanations regarding the nature of reality, Socrates maintained that the philosophical life should rather be directed toward knowing and thereby embracing the good.

The inauspicious trial and death of Socrates occasioned the rise of unquestionably one of the most significant systematic philosophers in western philosophy, namely, that of Plato. In the thought of Plato can be found, within the Greek philosophical tradition, a distinctively integrative and effectively comprehensive view of both reality and person. Plato's integrative approach can be seen metaphysically in his creative solution to the pre-Socratic problem of the "one" and the "many," specifically, of unity in difference, of permanence and change. Plato's solution to this earlier philosophical problem of unity in diversity was to propose an essentially dualistic metaphysical world of unchanging forms or essences, (episteme) and a sensible-material world of changing sense impressions the order of mere opinion (doxa).[37] According to Plato, the human person, who was understood as a tripartite soul imprisoned in a body, was to ascend intellectually, through the exercise of human reason, from less to more perfect knowledge so as to attain, at last, a return of the soul to the perfect contemplation of the forms, in that purely intellectual order itself constitutive of intellectual generation from the "Good." Within this framework of epistemological and metaphysical thought, the human soul, which preexisted in this transcendental realm prior to its temporary confinement in the body, could through the proper exercise of reason, the soul's higher faculty, and a life of virtue attain ultimately to that intelligible order which has its origin in the One, the True and the Good, Plato's "God."[38]

The systematic philosophical approach, which was initiated by Plato's attempt to integrate into a unified architectonic whole the philosophical sciences of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and politics, was later assumed and modified by Aristotle.

In the metaphysical thought of Aristotle, only one world is posited; specifically, the empirical-sensible world of material reality itself composed of a multiplicity of individual substances. This empirical world is characterized by change and also, as was cited earlier, by a plurality of substances each of which is composed of both form and matter, which is understood by Aristotle, as "first substance." The human person, who is likewise composed of form and matter, is capable of acquiring knowledge of sensible reality not through recollection, as Plato had earlier proposed, but rather through the process of abstraction of form, the universal, from the data of sense experience, Aristotle's "second substance."[39] According to Aristotelian epistemology, the active intellect, which abstracts form from matter, impresses this intelligibility on the passive intellect, which then speaks the concept in the act of knowledge. Through the process of abstraction, the human intellect, according to Aristotle, can attain certain knowledge of material substances and is, therefore, able to attain certain knowledge of the natural world as well, according to a proper division of the sciences.

In contradistinction to Plato who maintained a dualistic metaphysical system in which the highest ontological principle was the "Idea of the Good," the primary principle in Aristotle's world was that of the "Unmoved Mover," namely, a "Pure Form," understood as "God." Underlying Aristotle's reason for positing the "unmoved Mover" as the most fully actualized principle in the universe is his understanding of the universe as a primarily teleological system. According to this view of the universe's finality, each substance, as pertains to its individualized immanent form, is ordered toward the full actualization of its potency. This actualization of potency, according to form, was understood by Aristotle, in reference both to living substances as well as to the total movement of the universe.[40] As each natural substance possessed an immanent form, which denoted its essence or nature as well as its principle of inner activity and development, so too was the movement in the universe was understood as attributable to a "Pure Form," itself in act, free from all potency. Within the Aristotelian universe, all actualization of potency could only be explained by a Being already in act, one possessing no potentiality, for if this Being did possess potentiality it would likewise require an outside agent to actualize it. This "Unmoved Mover" is, therefore, a Being in Pure Act itself the first and final cause of motion in the universe; specifically, a Pure Mind whose primary activity is that of perfect self-contemplation which ineluctably moves the universe toward itself.[41]

As an earlier concern with speculative reflection on the nature of the material world in the thought of the pre-Socrates yielded to an emphasis upon the human subject in the thought of both Socrates and Sophists, so too, following the decidedly more systematic approaches of both Plato and Aristotle, one notes once again, historically, an inward philosophical turn with a reemphasis on those questions pertaining to both the human person and ethics. In the Hellenistic Era, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Skepticism and Neoplatonism emerge as the primary philosophical systems. With their emphasis, respectively, in attaining human happiness and avoiding human pain and suffering, according one's life to the attainment of virtue and the governance of divine providence, abandoning the search for truth so as to avoid disillusionment in not attaining it, and emphasizing the soul's ascent to the "one" through a life of virtue, each of these philosophical schools focused their philosophical reflection on the human person's search for inner harmony and peace.[42]

If it is historically correct to maintain that Neoplatonism represents the last significant philosophical movement in ancient philosophy then one may perhaps also say that Plotinus' fundamental insights into the nature and immateriality of spiritual substance, the doctrine of emanation, the capacity of the human soul to attain liberation from the impediments imposed upon it by materiality, the imperative to achieve virtue through wisdom and the soul's ascent to as well as possible union the "one," all profoundly contributed to both the intellectual and later spiritual conversion of perhaps one of the most significant figures in medieval philosophy, namely that of Augustine.

Following his conversion to Christianity, Augustine formulated a philosophical and theological approach to Christian faith that would profoundly influence the subsequent course of both medieval philosophy and Christian thought. Seeking to attain a possible integration between the insights of Platonic thought and that of Christianity, Augustine's epistemology did not give to Plato's forms an independent ontological status but rather placed them within the divine intellect wherein they become, according to Augustine, the ideas or archetypes by which the Christian God brought into being the order of created reality.[43] Accepting according to the order of faith the doctrine of creation as presented in Genesis 1 and 2, Augustine viewed God as the creator *ex nihilo* of all that exists in the order of reality. Although the ancient philosophical tradition was willing to accede to the possibility of matter having been fashioned or perhaps ordered according to a principle of immanent reason, by a "Nous" or "Demiurge," the Greek philosophical tradition posited belief in the eternity of matter. Within the Christian tradition and consistent with the

perspective of revealed faith, all matter was created and, prior to the exercise of God's creative will and power, "no-thing" existed until it was called into existence by the divine word. Augustine's conversion to Christianity placed him within the teaching of the Judaeo-Christian tradition regarding the doctrine of creation as well as the intrinsic goodness of all created reality as a visible manifestation of God's creative intellect and will.

Likewise consistent with the insights of this tradition is an understanding that through His creative word, God freely and not by virtue of any necessity brought into the order existence a multiplicity of beings all of which had existed first in the divine intellect before they came into existence within the order of reality. Accordingly, creation can be seen essentially as an "idea in the mind of God" and inasmuch as all substances came to be according to the divine will, all that was created is metaphysically good as it is derived, ontologically, from God.[44] The human person, who was created in God's "image and likeness," is likewise viewed, according to this tradition, as a rational-spiritual creature, which is ordered toward God in the dynamism of both intellect and will, yet unable to attain to such without God's free gift of self-donation through grace. Although he understood the human person as both body and soul, Augustine, indebted to an essentially Platonic understanding of person, viewed the soul as a separate substance clearly superior to the body. The soul, which informed the body, had, according to Augustine, knowledge of itself as life, intelligence and love. It likewise possessed the capacity to discover absolute norms, which were ultimately grounded in God and, therefore, could also acquire knowledge of its own immortality. Characterized as it was by the operation of both sensation and intellection, Augustine drew a distinction between the "outer" and the "inner" man, namely, between *ratio* and *intellectus*.[45]

As Plato and the Neoplatonic tradition differentiated, epistemologically, between opinion (doxa) and true knowledge (episteme), so too is seen, in the thought of Augustine, a separation between knowledge, which is acquired through sense experience, and that which is known through the intellect's higher power of operation. According to Augustine knowledge, which pertains to *ratio* is that which the human intellect obtains through sense knowledge and judgment. Judgments, which refer to the order of sense knowledge, are those that are in accordance with sensible material reality, according to the facilitating power of divine illumination. This illumination, as Augustine explains, refers to that light which comes from God and enables the intellect to see, within the created order, the changeless, eternal and necessary truths by which certain knowledge of

created intelligibilities is possible. It is important to note that this illumination does not create images in the mind, which would be indicative of ontologism, but rather provides the means by which the intellect can make certain and true judgments, as concerns the discernment of that which is intelligible, within the sensible order.[46] Underlying this process of divine illumination is Augustine's epistemological premise that within the divine intellect is to be found those divine ideas or exemplars through which God created all that is. These divine exemplars, which correspond to the Platonic forms, give to the order created reality an intelligibility, which the human intellect can come to know through the process of sense experience and judgment. That which the intellect comes to know through divine illumination, is that intelligibility, within the order of the sensible, which corresponds to those ideas and intelligibilities, as found in the divine intellect.

When speaking of the *intellectus*, namely, the "inner man," Augustine notes the operation of both the intellect and will. Such operations of the inner man (mens) are also seen, by Augustine, as bearing an expressed likeness to God in that the threefold faculties of memory, understanding and will, operations within the human soul, are analogically representative of three persons in the mystery of the Triune God. Corresponding to this model, memory denotes the souls implicit self-awareness of its own activities, understanding pertains to the soul's ability to know changeless norms through divine illumination, whereas the will denotes the soul's love for itself through which it can seek its own good and the perfect love for God. Memory, understanding and will, which are indicative of the threefold faculties characteristic of the *mens*, are spoken of by Augustine, in terms of eternity, truth and love, and analogically related in turn, respectively, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[47] As there are three distinct relations in the mystery of the Triune God, each of which share fully yet uniquely in the one divine substance, so likewise do the three faculties of memory, understanding and will constitute the one life characteristic of the human soul when understood as the "inner man." It is through the exercise of "higher reason," *intellectus*, that the human soul possesses that capacity to reflect on the divine ideas, in the act of contemplation, and thereby achieve union with God.

Having an ability to know changeless and necessary norms within the impermanent, contingent and finite world, the intellect, as Augustine understands it, already possesses an implicit knowledge of God who is "Self-same," namely, the eternal, infinite, immutable, and necessary Good, who revealed Himself as Pure Existence in Exodus 3:14. The human person, through the free gift of grace, can come to attain union with God

(Ipsum Esse Subsistens) in the beatific vision, which is the final destiny and beatitude of every rational-spiritual creature.[48] In asserting that the beatific vision is the final destiny of the rational-spiritual creature both angelic and human, Augustine's philosophy, shaped as it is by the insights of Catholic-Christian thought, yields to a distinctively theological imperative when it maintains that the human person is called to a supernatural destiny, through a personal union with God, who is understood as infinite life, truth and love.[49]

Fundamental to this characteristically theological imperative, within Augustine's philosophical perspective, is his understanding of the human person as *capax Dei*, specifically, a being created in God's image and likeness and one, whose inner activities of intellect and will, are ordered inexorably toward God. Through original sin the *mens* has, however, lost its essential likeness to God and now labors under that disorder, which was introduced into the human condition, by the effects of original sin. Although the intellect and will cannot lose its essential likeness to God (imago Dei), it is unable to attain its supernatural destiny without the gratuitous gift of God's self-communication. Unlike Plotinus who likewise proposed a doctrine of ascent, albeit which was intellectual in nature, Augustine asserted to the necessity of grace as providing that means by which human nature, despite being wounded by pride and concupiscence, is able to achieve divinization, namely, likeness to God, through intellectual and moral conversion. Such a conversion of both mind and heart is possible only when the human person directs his vision, through an act of will, toward God.[50]

The considerations presented thus far outline a review of those aspects of Platonic philosophy, which Augustine integrated into his understanding of Christian philosophy. Some eight centuries later, with the influx of the Aristotelian corpus into medieval Europe through both Arabic and Jewish commentators, a significant challenge to the Christian West's undaunted confidence in faith and revelation would arise. Confident that there could be no contradiction between faith and reason since all truth, as derived from God as its one source can never be contradictory, Aquinas formulated similar to Augustine before him, a synthesis between faith and reason which, in the context of Catholic-Christian apologetics, would become the hallmark of Christian philosophy.

In the thought of Aquinas, is found a philosophical methodology that is both realist and existential. Like that of Aristotle, Thomas' philosophical reflection begins in the order of the sensible-material reality, with a distinctively realist epistemology. Reflecting upon this order, Aquinas' philosophy is an "existentialist" one in its concern with the comprehension

of the order of being. The order of reality is one which is immediately present to the human intellect and, through a consideration of secondary causes, the intellect can proceed, inductively not only to the assertion of the existence of God as the Prime Mover of Aristotelian philosophy but more importantly as the source of all existence in the order of being in which all created reality participates. Metaphysics is, for Aquinas, directed to a rational understanding of the order of being and is as such an activity proper to the human intellect by which it can attain certain knowledge of the natural order and of God's existence. Although metaphysics may lead the intellect to the acquisition of such knowledge it cannot lead the human intellect to attain the beatific vision without the operation of grace inasmuch as union with God, the final end of the rational-spiritual creature, is unattainable by the exercise of human reason alone.[51]

Assimilating as he did those aspects of Aristotelian thought which could be reconciled with Christian revelation, such as Aristotle's teleological understanding of nature, the human soul as the substance form of the human person, the hylomorphic theory of material substances understood as form and matter, the inception of philosophical reflection within the framework of realist epistemology and the attainment of natural happiness through a life of virtue, Aquinas effectively demonstrated how faith could elevate reason to a more perfect understanding of reality, the human person and God.[52]

When speaking more particularly of God's self-communicability, the doctrine of creation, the personal immortality of the human soul, and the human person's supernatural destiny in the beatific vision, Thomas sought to show the compatibility of both faith and reason without compromising the unique character of revelation in relation to the insights provided by reason philosophically to such questions. Aquinas' underlying confidence in the capacity of the intellect to know the real, as well as in its ability to rationally assert the existence of God through a consideration of visible effects in the sensible-material reality, is evident in the argumentation that is presented in his "Five Ways." Whether demonstrating God's existence through an argument from motion, causality, contingent and necessity, degrees of perfection or design, Aquinas maintained that belief in God was a reasonable and philosophically demonstrable assertion on the part of the human intellect.

Theorizing from the reasonable assertion of the existence of God, Aquinas was later able to formulate, by means of the doctrine of the analogy, the divine attributes.[53] The manifestation of God's self-communication in the act of the creation revealed his infinite power, wisdom, goodness and love. Through the creative will, God brought all

into being *ex-nihilo*, thereby giving, to created reality, a limited yet real participation in the divine act of pure existence, *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. The created order of reality is viewed, according to Aquinas, as constitutive of a distinct number of created substances each of which possesses its own essence, namely an immanent and final form, through which its particular nature and activity is both attributed and directed.[54] The human person, who is in possession of a rational-spiritual soul, is likewise endowed with various faculties or powers, the highest of which are those of intellect and will. As for Augustine, so also for Aquinas, the final goal of the human person is union with God who is understood as that infinite truth, goodness and love the possession of which will bring, to the dynamism of the human spirit, perfect and final beatitude.

Despite being ordered toward God through the exercise of an obediential potency, Aquinas affirmed the absolute necessity of grace if the human person was to actually achieve the beatific vision as final end. Consistent with a distinctively Christian anthropological paradigm, the final destiny of the human person was viewed, by Aquinas as a supernatural one. As each created essence in the order of reality has its own immanent form, through which its activity is ascribed and by which its nature is realized, so too is the human soul ordered toward God and, through the supernatural gift of grace, is able to achieve the perfection of its created nature as *capax Dei*. As created substances are to achieve the fulfillment of their natures within the natural order, so too is the rational-spiritual creature to achieve the fulfillment of its nature within the supernatural order of grace. With his assertion of the necessity of grace as the necessary means for the rational-spiritual creature to achieve its supernatural end, Aquinas departed from the thought of Aristotle in that an essentially natural beatitude acceded to, within the Christian vision of person, to that of the possibility of the supernatural order of union with God.[55]

Thematic Philosophical Conclusions

Within this thematic consideration of some of the more salient philosophical themes found in the classical-medieval tradition are a number of those which would be seemingly compatible with the philosophical sensibilities of *Pascendi's* integralist authors. Firstly, one might note that both the classical and medieval tradition, notwithstanding the skepticism of the early classical period and the nominalism of the late medieval period, did assert overall as an underlying confidence in the ability human reason to acquire certain knowledge of reality. Essential to

this philosophical premise was an understanding of reality as a "Given" which, as an epistemological locus, presented itself to the intellect as an order not only of experience but also of intelligibility. According to the Greek tradition of philosophical rationalism, "the world is an ordered cosmos" and is "expressive of a pervasive intelligence" which not only "gives to nature its purpose and design" but which likewise makes possible "a rational analysis of the empirical world."[56] The human mind is, therefore, seen as capable of undertaking an "intellectual analysis" of sensible-material reality and, through such an analysis, is able to comprehend that "timeless order" which "transcends" the world's "temporal concrete manifestation."[57]

Within the Christian worldview, the rationality, order, purpose, intelligibility and harmony, which reason is capable of attaining in the panorama of the cosmos, is attributable, because of faith in revelation, to God who, as creator, has brought all being into existence by the expressed power of the divine intellect and will. The possibility of achieving certain metaphysical knowledge of reality, namely the underlying cause of its intelligibility, instrumentality, purpose and end, was a common philosophical search in the pre-Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Augustinian and Thomistic traditions. As was noted earlier, within the medieval tradition, specifically in the context of Christian philosophy, such confidence would wane in the high middles ages with the epistemological challenges, which were posed to the received rationality of the classical and medieval traditions, with the rise of nominalism. Within this philosophical tradition, emerged a mode of argumentation which questioned the ability of human reason to properly mediate a true comprehension of the order of reality as such intelligibility is rendered to the intellect through knowledge of the intuited or abstracted form.

Secondly, there can be found within the classical and medieval tradition a belief in the capacity of reason to attain to the knowledge of particular ethical norms, which are to direct human life and conduct. Both the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition emphasized, within their respective consideration of ethics, the possibility of the attainment of happiness through the ability of reason to know absolute moral norms and through such knowledge to embrace a life of intellectual and moral virtue. Fundamental to these ethical approaches is the premise that reason, either through its contemplation of and conformity with the divine purpose communicated through the Forms, or through its inherent potential to guide human activity to the attainment of happiness through virtue, is a faculty which governs human conduct toward the good of the human person and society. Later, in the thought of Aquinas, knowledge of the

natural law, which is essentially an expression of God's eternal law in creation, will provide to human reason those norms, accordance with which, will in turn lead to virtue and natural beatitude. The human person's final beatitude, understood as union with God, can only be attained, however, when grace elevated the human will, albeit weakened by sin, to live not only in accord with the demands of natural moral law and beatitude but also with those moral precepts which pertained to the order of divine positive law known through revelation. Lacking certain knowledge of the precepts of natural law, which could be known through the exercise of human reason upon the intelligible structure of reality, both human conduct and societal norms would be without a fundamental metaphysical foundation and hence subjected to ethical relativism. The ethical presuppositions, which are found within the classical medieval tradition, presupposed the intelligibility of reality as either imbued with a transcendent intelligibility and purpose or inscribed by its creator with a law both known to reason and binding upon human persons and society. *Pascendi's* concern with those philosophical approaches, which deprecated the presuppositions of philosophical or natural theology, can be seen more clearly in this context inasmuch as eviscerating arguments for reasonably asserting the existence of God likewise has, as its ethical and moral corollary, the evisceration of argumentation supportive of natural law as an expression of God's eternal law in creation.

Thirdly, one may take into consideration, from the classical-medieval tradition, a methodological point of review, which would have been compatible with the philosophical methodology formed by *Pascendi*. Alluded to earlier, was the realist epistemological approach, that was assumed by both the classical and medieval tradition, specifically, to the question concerning human knowledge. Within the context of this approach, the intellect is in contact with a reality whose objective verification is assumed and in need not of demonstration but of understanding. In both the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition it is by virtue of the communicability of intelligibility through the form that knowledge of reality is acquired by the intellect. The subsequent rise of late medieval nominalism will call into question the epistemological value of the form as providing verification of the order of the real as immediately present to, as well as potentially cognizable, by the intellect through the mediation of the intuited or abstracted essence of material reality. Following the doubts introduced epistemologically into the history of western philosophy, which rendered meaningless the intelligibility of the form in the act of knowledge, was the problematic of Cartesian closed consciousness. This problematic served to introduce the epistemological premise of reestablishing