

CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHY IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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Abstract: “Catholic philosophy” has a threefold meaning. First, it refers descriptively to the understanding of philosophy throughout the history of Catholic Christianity. After the decline of Hellenism, philosophy in the Greek sense did not survive anywhere else than in Catholicism; the works of the Latin Fathers, the theologians of the Middle Ages, and the Catholic philosophers of the Renaissance and modern periods thereafter not only saved philosophy from historical disappearance but contributed to its revival and new developments. “Catholic philosophy”, in the second sense, is the historical matrix in which philosophy of our time has emerged. That is to say, the modern and contemporary meanings of philosophy are marked by their difference from theology properly so called. Thirdly, Catholicism has always considered philosophy as centrally important to the Catholic doctrine. No other Christian denomination has ever shown such an intense, complex, and systematic interest in maintaining and developing philosophy. Thus, “Catholic philosophy” has the third meaning of a historic achievement in which philosophy could grow into its modern forms. In this essay, I investigate the historical development and the contemporary possibilities of Catholic Philosophy.

Keywords: history of philosophy, Catholicism, Catholic philosophy

1. Introduction

Can we justifiably speak of a philosophy that is “Catholic”? The answer depends on the precise meaning of the terms we use. Philosophy can be defined as the most general reflection on the main structures of our experience, reality on the one hand and concepts on the other. Reality and conceptuality, or world and mind, are linked together not only in experience, but in reality too; experience *is* a realm of reality. Experience is submitted to

the analyzing and synthesizing processes of thinking; and while experience appears to be decisive in many ways, the structures of experience are co-generated by reflection. "Reflection" shapes language and language shapes reflection; just as language, reflection too is simultaneously individual and collective, traditional and innovative, enduring and changeable, analytic and synthetic. Just as language, reflection too has the tendency to become separated from experience; just as language, reflection too is inclined to closing itself into abstract systems.

"Philosophy" is the traditional name of the systematic, rational, and methodological way of exposing language to reality, reflection to experience, or mind to world. Thereby philosophy has hoped to revise, evaluate, and restructure our grasp of reality with the purpose of achieving a good life. While philosophy has changed significantly throughout history, the universality of its endeavor has not been altered since the times of Hellenism and still contributes decisively to our understanding of philosophy today. Even today, it is the philosopher that is most likely to offer a grand theory of everything; and while special sciences are usually satisfied with competent yet partial theories, philosophy attempts from time to time to offer more than that on the world, mind, history, or society.

"Catholic philosophy" has a threefold meaning. First, it refers descriptively to the understanding of philosophy throughout the history of Catholic Christianity. After the decline of Hellenism, philosophy in the Greek sense did not survive anywhere else than in Catholicism; the works of the Latin Fathers, the theologians of the Middle Ages, and the Catholic philosophers of the Renaissance and modern periods not only saved philosophy from disappearance but contributed to its revival and new developments. "Catholic philosophy", in the second sense, is the historical matrix in which philosophy of our time has emerged. That is to say, the modern and contemporary meanings of philosophy are marked by their difference from theology properly so called. Thirdly, Catholicism has always considered philosophy as centrally important to the Catholic doctrine; no other Christian denomination has ever shown such an intense, complex, and systematic interest in maintaining and developing philosophy. Thus, "Catholic philosophy" has the third meaning of a historic achievement in which philosophy could grow into its modern forms.

I use the expression of Catholic philosophy in the unity of the above three senses. Thereby I do not wish to suggest that the structures and contents of philosophical reflection are dependent on Catholic doctrines strictly speaking. Nor do I wish to claim that philosophy should be confined to the

descriptive and historical dimensions. I merely signal that historical philosophy is dependent on the history of Catholicism in a complex fashion; and secondly that there is a sense of philosophy crucially important for Catholicism again in a complex way. Philosophy is indeed important descriptively, historically, and in the wider sense of analyzing and synthesizing contents of the Catholic doctrines by way of specifically philosophical means.

Philosophy can thus contribute to the deeper understanding of Catholicism in its doctrinal, moral, liturgical, and practical dimensions. More importantly, philosophy can help Catholics to understand in an accurate and intricate way the age in which they live. Catholic philosophy, in this sense, directs our attention to the most important features of our time, features that very often signal future developments of historic importance. Inasmuch as philosophy is able to call our attention to such developments in our world, we may even attribute to it a prophetic role—in harmony with the traditional understanding of the source of wisdom, *Sedes Sapientiae*, who is at the same time called the Queen of the Prophets in the Litany of Loreto. True philosophy in the Catholic sense is not only able to call attention to important developments in a given age, but can identify weighty, not easily recognizable, developments influencing the life of humanity and therein that of the Church in fundamental ways. The prophetic role in question is certainly just a metaphor; but philosophy, inasmuch as it opens its horizon and considers the future in its own, philosophical terms, is able to contribute to predictions of some probability about the developments of our world today.

If I may use an illustration here, then that is the paintings on the Isenheim Altarpiece created by Matthias Grünewald during the early 1500s. On the first view of the altar, standing on left to the Crucified One, St. John the Baptist can be seen as pointing with his right hand finger to the Cross. In his left hand, John holds an open book: the Old Testament. John may be seen here as an allegory of philosophy. Philosophy holds the book of traditions, works of great thinkers in her left hand; but with her right hand, as it were, philosophy points to the embodiment of the central occurrence of history, the incarnated, tortured and murdered God in a human form. In my view, Catholic philosophy is fulfilled inasmuch as it realizes this relationship between John the Baptist and the Cross.

2. Catholicism and Philosophy

Historically, philosophy has always been an important part of intellectual Catholicism; in some periods, it played a more, in others a less important

role. The critical rejection of a certain understanding of philosophy, present in one verse of the New Testament (Col 2,8), is counterbalanced by some other loci where Greek philosophy is put into a more favorable light (for instance, St. Paul's sermon to the philosophers on the Areopagus). Clement of Alexandria, nevertheless, did not find many confident followers with his view that philosophy, and not only the Old Testament, was a *paidagogos* of humanity to Christ. The early Fathers certainly knew Greek philosophy very well and used its results in many ways, but refused to attribute it a sacramental role similar to the Old Testament writings. Still, most of the central terms of Patristic theology remain incomprehensible with a sufficient knowledge of then contemporary philosophical traditions and discussions. Philosophy, especially Middle and Late Platonism, was indeed the element of the language, culture, and general philosophical orientation of the Fathers.

Many of the patristic writings indicate, nevertheless, that their authors were not familiar with the sources of Greek philosophy as we know them today. For instance, St. Augustine's criticism of "philosophy", especially of Platonism, shows that the judgment of the Church Father was not based on the study of original texts but rather on popular Latin summaries; still, a genius like St. Augustine could grasp the important points, which he did not only criticize but, in some respects, praised too. What escaped his attention escaped the attention of many till today: namely the fact that philosophy in its popular forms was merely a façade of a deeper knowledge, a closed tradition of universal mysticism originating in Hellenistic cultural syncretism. What we know of Plato on the basis of the Platonic dialogues today is relatively far from the charges the early Church Fathers leveled against Plato and Platonism. The Platonic writings, in the form we possess them now, are in many ways as close to Christianity's self-interpretation as they could possibly be in their own, Pre-Christian Hellenistic context.

Following Protestant historical criticism of the 19th century, Patristic Christianity was seen for a long time as a synthesis of Hellenism and Judaism on the basis of spiritual movements related to the Gospel events and texts. Underlying this idea there is the presupposition, frequently inarticulate, that Hellenism and Judaism constitute historical and cultural antipodes. Hellenism in a well defined sense, that is to say, had hardly anything to do with the Mosaic faith in its core as represented in the Old Testament writings. A synthesis of Hellenism and Mosaic faith, thus, had to be a strained endeavor. Nevertheless, such a sharp opposition between Old Testament faith and Hellenism is an exaggeration; the process of the unification of the Old Testament faith cannot be separated from the general cultural processes of

the neighboring peoples living around the Mediterranean; and the more we approach the beginning of our epoch, the less such a sharp separation appears realistic. From our perspective today, it is not the difference that is striking between religious forms of these times, but much more their similarity. Philo Judaeus, living in Alexandria during the 1st century AD, was not only a Jew of traditional convictions but, by education and general outlook, an authentic Hellene, too. The effects of Hellenism, even of philosophy, are shown not only by the Old Testament writings composed originally in Greek, but by other writings too edited and reshaped during the centuries of Hellenistic cultural hegemony.

Pope Benedict XVI, therefore, rightly calls our attention to the importance Hellenism played in the formation of Christianity. If philosophy is considered the highest intellectual expression of Hellenism—and I have in mind especially the Platonic corpus as inherited from the school of Thrasyllus in Alexandria—then philosophy indeed contributed to the emergence of the intellectual building of Christianity during the first six centuries. Catholicism is not popular Platonism, as many tended to believe, among others Franz von Brentano. But Catholicism used in many ways the Platonic understanding of reality in the shaping of its doctrinal, moral, and liturgical dimensions. St. Augustine's theological understanding is clearly influenced not only by his own mystical experiences, but also by the Neo-Platonism of his age and especially of his intellectual circles. Augustinianism has been the most important vehicle of transmitting Platonic and Neo-Platonic influences throughout the centuries: Duns Scotus, Bonaventure, Malebranche, Fénelon, or—to mention a more recent example—Eric Przywara serve as excellent illustrations of this fact. Classical Phenomenology was seen already at the turn of the last century, for instance by Johannes Hessen, as a revival of Platonic and Augustinian thought.

Just as Platonism had characterized the first millennium of the history of the Church, so St. Thomas Aquinas' reception of the thought of Aristotle had too a lasting influence on the second millennium. I underline two factors in this influence. On the one hand, Thomas Aquinas needed to have not only the talents of a philosophical and theological genius to work out his *summae*, but an exceptional intellectual courage too. Thomas was aware of the opposition of traditionalist theologians who found the wave of the new Aristotelian rationalism threatening. Still, Thomas kept working on his great contributions which synthesized Augustinian Platonism, Dionysian mystical theology, and Aristotelian science. Aristotelism was in the air in the 13th century; Thomas Aquinas responded to the new attitudes

and new interests with his great synthesis. The other factor is this: by the 13th century, Catholicism entered a new phase of its development. The fall of Constantinople in 1204, as the result of the 4th Crusade, signaled the end of a great cultural power, and the West continued the search for its own ways of the understanding of the legacy of Patristic Christianity. In this search, philosophy was again of crucial importance; it helped scholars like Thomas Aquinas in capturing the changes of the age and developing a new, universal conception of reality by means of Aristotelian philosophy.

In the historical evolution of the relationship between Catholicism and philosophy, two important improvements have to be mentioned here. Renaissance Platonism contributed to the diminishing of the grasp of Aristotelian science on theology and thus prepared the way for Protestant Reformation in which Augustinianism had an important role to play. The influence of Platonism was mirrored in the new, mathematical-geometrical ideal of philosophy, which came to the fore especially in the works of Descartes. Rationalism in general, however, proved to be a closer ally of intellectual Catholicism than it initially appeared, for it was intimately related to the scientific mind of Aristotelism. The theological rationalism of the 17th and 18th centuries was at the same time abstractly Platonist and analytically Aristotelian.

While in rationalism Catholicism and philosophy had a harmonious co-existence, the ever stronger agnostic and atheistic tendencies of the philosophers of the Enlightenment led to the first conspicuous collisions between philosophers and the representatives of the Church. Not philosophy itself came to such a collision with theology, and especially with Catholicism, but a certain kind of philosophy, the skeptical, self-centered, externalist and atheistic philosophy of *les philosophes* in French intellectual circles. It was against their skepticism and atheism that Pascal started out to write the new intellectual and moral defense of Catholicism in his *Pensées*. While this ambitious work remained a fragment, Pascal at least attempted to reconcile the highest intellectual efforts with the requirements of Catholic religion; in many parts of his manuscript he forcefully argues for the priority of the faith in Jesus Christ. The God, who addressed Pascal in a decisive mystical experience, revealed himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not as the God of *les philosophes*.

Catholic Romanticism, in which Clemens von Brentano played a crucial role, was the appropriate framework where the achievements of the new German philosophers could have been processed from a Catholic perspective. Kant and his most important followers attempted to overcome the

difficulties caused by skepticism and dogmatism in philosophy; and they hoped to be able to contribute to a new understanding of faith as well. Even Kant himself wished to make place for faith—while destroying however fundamental pillars of a traditional view of the world. German Idealism, nevertheless, influenced Catholic philosophy in a number of ways, so much so that some decades later new patterns of the relationship between philosophy and Catholicism became possible especially in the works of the theologians belonging to the Catholic Tübingen School (Johann Sebastian von Drey, Johann Adam Möhler). In such patterns, a strong criticism of a number of views of the German Idealists was counterbalanced by the use of their other views for the benefit of a new philosophical understanding of Catholic Christianity. Besides the Tübingenians, Anton Günther, one of the most interesting figures of Austrian philosophy (and a lover of the Hungarian parts of the Monarchy) successfully combined the critique of some tenets of German idealism with the use of Cartesian and Hegelian notions in his interpretation of central Christian doctrines.

Many of the important Catholic thinkers of the 20th century—from Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand to Joseph Maréchal, Karl Rahner, or Hans Urs von Balthasar—not only criticized certain tenets of German Idealism, but used important insights at the same time to develop an updated form of philosophical Catholicism. In these developments, the relationship between philosophy and Catholicism was again revitalized and elaborated into new, synthetic forms of thinking. The general thesis of this historical summary—that philosophy and Catholicism have an intrinsic and genuine relationship—can be reinforced on the basis of the latest development of the 20th and the 21st centuries too. Specific attention is to be given to realist phenomenology which I shall consider below.

The promising rise of Neo-Thomism and Neo-Scholasticism from the end of the 19th century created a new impetus in the relationship between Catholicism and philosophy. In consequence of the Encyclical letter *Aeterni patris* of 1879, the most influential Catholic theologians of the 20th century, and a number of the most important philosophers too, received and processed the influence of Thomism. Even such authors as Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Whitehead, Russell, or Sartre showed the effects of the Thomistic renewal in their works. In Catholicism itself, the decisive importance of Neo-Thomism, however, became counterbalanced by a number of other interests from the 1930s, and especially after the 2nd Vatican Council. Pope John Paul II's *Fides et ratio* of 1998—the second encyclical letter on philosophy ever written by a pope—shows a variety of ways as to how the

priority of Thomasian and Thomistic thinking is sought to be completed by motives borrowed from German Idealism, Phenomenology, and Existentialism. *Fides et ratio*, while maintaining some of the central emphases of *Aeterni patris*, goes beyond the horizon of Thomism and opens the way to new evaluations of the relationship between Catholicism and philosophy.

3. Notions of Philosophy Today

“Philosophy”, as I mentioned, used to be the name of a radical way of life, the central endeavor of the most influential personalities of the Hellenistic age. In its fully cultivated form, this way of life carried in itself the entire building of the sciences of Hellenism, from rhetoric to astronomy. A corresponding ethical practice was based on moral purity and simplicity and centered on the practice of contemplation of the universe, and especially the very source of the universe or nature (the original meaning of “natural theology”). The author of the most important Platonic writings must have been precisely such a person: this man possessed not only exceptional mathematical, geometrical, astronomical, and musical knowledge, but an extraordinary artistic talent as well and—last but not least—a kind of knowledge of contemplation that could be derived only from a life-long practice. Philosophy, in such a form, defined itself not as one part of human knowledge and practice but as their full synthesis. While Plato often speaks of “two kinds of arithmetic” (*Philebus*) or of “two kinds of astronomy” (*Republic*, *Epinomis*), yet the relationship between the two kinds is not antithetical but complementary. In its highest form, philosophy is “dialectics” for Plato, that is to say the practice of taking part in the universal discourse of the Godhead as expressed by the general and particular movements visible on the sky for the naked human eye.

Even though, philosophy has become ever more narrowly defined in its later history, first as against theology, then as against the emerging mathematical and natural sciences. In spite of recurring attempts to restore the synthetic scientific and moral significance of philosophy, it is its growing insularity that characterizes philosophy. In this development, the role of theology as the science based on divine revelation, played the crucial role; philosophy had to be subordinated to such a science. And just as the specific sciences, developed in the matrix of philosophy, strived for independence during modernity, so too particular fields of philosophy—such as epistemology, ethics, or political thought—have achieved a substantial self-sufficiency during the 20th century.

To state the problem briefly, philosophy has lost its universality and become fragmentary and overspecialized in its form (methodology) and matter (subjects). One may be right in thinking that, even in this form, we deal with philosophy in a weak sense. Yet the question must be asked whether such an understanding is still about philosophy in the genuine sense; and whether this genuine sense, once properly understood, can be restored in some way.

Among the more remarkable attempts to renew philosophy's importance for human life, phenomenology distinguished itself by a number of interesting results in methodology and subject matter. Franz Brentano's descriptive psychology became seminal for later developments in psychology and philosophy. Husserl phenomenology as a "rigorous science" attempted to re-establish philosophy's paramount importance in the entire field of human knowledge. Heidegger's fundamental ontology assumed the task of finding a new approach to the most important question of philosophy, the question of being. Existentialism and hermeneutics delineated structures from which new methodologies evolved in many ways determining not only the human sciences, but even the theory of the natural sciences too. Realist phenomenology applied some of the central results of phenomenological research in the reshaping of traditional realism in its relationship to theology. Even in theology, the methods and the results of phenomenology have become influential, as is shown by the works of leading theologians—e.g., those of John Paul II.

The main difficulty of contemporary philosophy consists in the question as to whether the universal significance of philosophy in all walks of human life can be restored. The ancient notion of philosophy was bound to the understanding of a geocentric universe in which the Earth did not only stay in the center, but it was the point from which everything could be seen and conceived. With the tremendous changes of our science, mathematical, technological as well as cosmological and astronomical, the traditional notion of philosophy appears to have lost its scientific relevance. The most popular way of maintaining some importance of philosophy is to attribute to it a methodological role in which philosophy acts as philosophy of scientific thinking.

The other possibility apparently open to philosophy is its power of criticism: the criticism of history, culture, religion, technology and science, even of philosophy itself. While philosophy as the general methodological reflection of the scientific endeavor seems to undervalue traditional philosophy, especially in the mirror of the earlier role of philosophy, critical philosophy

remains on the level of mere formalism. In the notion of philosophy as universal criticism no positive content is articulated on the basis of which this critical role may appear theoretically legitimate. The problem of legitimacy surfaces too in the methodological role of philosophy: if a mere theory of science can do the job, what would be the role of a philosophy of science?

These problems receive even sharper contours when we look at the all-important role philosophy used to play in human life in earlier epochs. It can be argued that the main feature of traditional philosophy was not merely its scientific implications, but rather its emphasis on the ambivalent limits of human knowledge. For Plato—as it appears for instance in the *Theaetetus*—human knowledge cannot be the final instance in the universe, for it presupposes what it ultimately wishes to know, namely the nature of knowledge itself. Philosophy, as this early and vague formulation of the Gödelian theory says, cannot go beyond its axiomatic presuppositions. In this sense, even the ancient conception of philosophy points to its heteronomy, its dependence on a higher instance. This notion of philosophy appears more central to the Platonic corpus than any, more precisely defined, eventually more scientific understanding of philosophy.

In emphasizing this crucial notion of philosophy we can receive assistance in our endeavor to reinterpret the role of philosophy today. Along the lines of this understanding we can say that the most important task of philosophy today is the new understanding of philosophy's limits or heteronomy; the new understanding of its dependence on a higher instance in reality. This higher instance stands by principle beyond the realm of the knowable; that is to say, no possible expansion of knowledge can invade its territory. Philosophy is knowledge; thus philosophy as such depends on the conditions of possibility of knowledge. These conditions are not completely hidden from us, but cannot be known in the proper sense. In traditional language, this is the realm of faith.

What philosophy is able to do is to point out its heteronomy; it is able to refer to the limits which are in principle unsurpassable for philosophy. Through this reference, philosophy is able to introduce us to a realm in which faith can be our only guide.

4. Models of Relationship

On the basis of the above summary of historical developments and the notion of philosophy I offer a list of models of the relationship between Catholicism and philosophy. I am using the expression “Catholicism” in-

stead of “theology” as I believe that philosophy is important for Catholicism in its entirety, not only in its theological dimension. There are two perspectives in which we can speak of models here: either from the point of view of philosophy, or of Catholicism. The list of the models I offer can be understood in both ways.

1. The Model of Hidden Presence.
2. The Model of Supremacy.
3. The Model of Fulfillment.
4. The Model of Partnership.
5. The Model of Challenge.
6. The Model of Prophetic Significance.

In Model 1, one of the factors is the determining perspective in which the other factor is envisioned. Philosophy, as historical analysis shows, was for a long time such a perspective; it was, to mention only one important point here, the language of Greek philosophy in which the doctrines of Christianity were formulated. On the other hand, it is often said that a certain philosophical conception is based on its underlying, inexplicit notion of the absolute, God. In such cases, this underlying notion forms the perspective in which philosophy is conceived and proposed.

In Model 2, one of the factors, philosophy or Catholicism, is used as a means to reach a certain unity. When philosophy is considered “*ancilla theologiae*”, it is Model 2 that we apply. Christianity, however, can be used too as a means in a philosophical conception, as for instance ideological constructs show which borrow central conceptions of Christianity and use them for political or generally secular purposes.

In Model 3, either of the two factors is understood to be the fulfillment of the other. In the traditional conception, philosophy is fulfilled in theology, reason in faith, pagan thought and Old Testament preparation in the revelation of Christ. Catholic Christianity considered itself the fulfillment of the long history of humanity, as Jesus Christ arrived in the fullness of times. On the other hand, there are views which claim that Christianity was merely instrumental to a higher level of philosophical awareness, to a new philosophy of rationalism, idealism, or existentialism.

In Model 4, philosophy and Catholicism are perceived as mutually supporting each other. This can be done either by refusing to arrange them into

a general order of value or by emphasizing the many dimensions in which philosophy or theology respectively have a certain priority. As a general principle it is maintained that philosophy and Catholicism, or philosophy and theology in a narrower sense, are mutually supportive of each other in various fields; thus it is the positive, supporting element that is stressed in their relation.

Model 5, however, does not emphasize the harmony of the two factors, but rather the mutual challenges they prepare for each other. Philosophy is seen here as challenging theology, and thus Catholicism too, by its critical force; and theology is considered a threat to the supposed autonomy of philosophy. This view of their relationship can be conceived in extreme terms as a mutual exclusion. This happens in fideism, or on the other side in straightforward atheism, existential atheism, or in some forms of idealism.

Model 6 describes the relationship of the two factors in terms of intrinsic importance for each other. By “intrinsic importance” I mean the essential contribution without which none of the two factors, philosophy or Catholicism, is capable of performing its proper functions. The most important form of such contribution is the emphasis on the limits of the other factors in a well defined sense. Thus, Catholicism as the most general form of religious faith and practice calls our attention to the limits of philosophical autonomy in the intellectual and moral senses. On the other hand, philosophy by its realistic and analytic capabilities is apt to point out the importance of paying appropriate attention to new developments in culture, the sciences, and in the history of societies. I call this model the model of prophetic significance as philosophy, thus conceived, is able to point out the importance of the timely rethinking and restructuring of traditional conceptions in view of changes in our world. Philosophy has a prophetic role in the more natural sense too that it points our current developments in the world of culture, society, and the sciences that are becoming important for Catholicism in general or for theology in particular. Philosophy, in fulfilling this role, points to the growing probability of the weakening plausibility of theological notions in technological societies.

On the other hand, Catholicism can play a similar, prophetic role with respect to philosophy. Philosophy very often has the tendency to conceive of human knowledge as the absolute point of reference in understanding reality. Nevertheless, no form of knowledge is able to escape the circle of presupposing the validity of its mode of knowledge; and thus no philosophy is able to make itself thematic as philosophy in its entirety. Philosophy, as I mentioned, is by necessity points beyond itself; or else it points out,

inevitably, its own heteronomy. Catholicism as a form of religion with faith in its center, a sort of theology in the narrower sense with its emphasis on an ultimately heteronomous realm, can help philosophy to recognize its limits. Catholicism can help philosophy to look forward to a more encompassing *eschaton* in which things reach their end.

5. The Unity of Models

Which model shall we adopt in an appropriate description of the relationship between philosophy and Catholicism? In many analyses, we find one or another model declared to be the only solution. In my view, however, it is more promising to link all models into a single one. This new model I term the unity model. The unity model is a combination of the other models in a complex way. Philosophy and Catholicism, variously conceived, can be envisioned as related to one another in terms of perspective, supremacy, fulfillment, partnership, challenge, and prophetic significance. The guiding principle of such unity is that the validity of one model cannot be stretched beyond the limits of the validity of the other models. That is to say, philosophy can be seen as the perspective in which Christianity was conceived in the world of Hellenism, but this does not mean that Christianity did not become the perspective in which philosophy came to understand itself during the coming centuries, in the matrix of Christianity. The other models can be combined in a similar way.

The central feature of the unity model is its amicability: each model is included in it just to the extent it does not exclude the other models.

The unity model, however, cannot be properly conceived if the moment of unity is not understood properly. By unity, I do not only mean the simple combination of the individual models, but rather their fusion. A fusion is an organic unity of several parts where the organism has its own functionality beyond the particular functions of its parts. The function of the unity model is the ever more needed renewal of the relationship between faith and reason, theology and philosophy. In this sense, the unity model suggests the intrinsic importance of philosophy for Catholicism and vice versa; it suggests their presence in each other, their mutual subordination to one another in certain respects, and their mutual fulfillment, partnership, challenge, and prophetic significance at the same time.

The unity model is about the dynamic unity of these particular relationships, a dynamism which is simultaneously historical and conceptual, cultural, and scientific. By dynamism here I especially mean that, in certain

ages, one or more of the particular relationships come to the fore. In our age, most importantly, I believe that it is the features of partnership and prophetic significance that are particularly important. It is through partnership and prophetic significance that we may have the appropriate view of the unitary relationship between Catholicism and philosophy.

The unity model, thus, is present to us in these particular features; which is not to say that I deny the proportional importance of the other features. Nevertheless, in earlier ages it was important to stress the point of the general priority of theology over philosophy. Theological supremacy is of an essential nature; but the way in which it was presented was dependent on historical circumstances, such as the importance of the idea of a new, universal science surpassing the science of Hellenism, philosophy. The origin of theological science was seen not in the human mind but in Divine Revelation; and philosophy, based on the unassisted human mind, was embraced as only a preparation of Revelation. While the essential relationship between philosophy and theology do not change, there are periods in which philosophy has a particular significance, such as in the age of High Scholasticism. Similarly, in our age too, philosophy in the proper sense has a special relationship to theology, in particular to the central questions of faith, as is shown by the intense reflections of leading theologians throughout the 20th century. Today, in accordance with the radically altered situation in culture an science, it appears more prudent to emphasize the model of partnership and prophetic significance.

6. The Unity Model and Phenomenological Realism

Phenomenological realism emerged as a reaction to the insufficient and often misleading formulations of Husserlian phenomenology with respect to the exact nature and relationship of the two realms of reality, mind and world. For Husserl, mind is centrally the transcendental ego, that is the ego postulated by empirical experiences; the world is a dimension of this ego. This position is called transcendental idealism by Husserl. This idealism, however, cannot properly answer the question of the *being* of the mind or the ego, as was clearly recognized and formulated for the first time by Max Scheler.

The being or reality of the mind became the focus of the investigations of realist phenomenologists. Beyond the reality of the mind, phenomenology offered itself as a unique means of the discovery of such moments of reality that are undeniably or apodictically evident. Such evident moments

form evident structures, the analysis of which leads the realist phenomenologist to an ever higher level of phenomenological truth. The universal hierarchy of such truths makes up the texture of phenomenological realism; truth itself thus appears the central and newly conceived notion of such realism. The notion of truth of phenomenological realism is a realist notion; the reality of truth is identical with its ultimate objectivity, that is its complete independence from the human mind. Truth, thus conceived, has a certain independence of the mind of God too, as phenomenological realism refuses theological voluntarism. Truth and divine mind are, rather, correlative and complementary; truth is not true because God thinks it, but God thinks it because it is true.

Realist phenomenology is a form of phenomenological realism which sees the problem of reality in accordance with the cosmological realism of Classical metaphysics. Just as objective reality exists, there exist in a very similar way moments of reality which can be called essences; these essences are of the same sort of reality, although in a more concentrated form, as the objective reality of everyday experiences. Realist phenomenology attempts to grasp the plurality of such real essences, their relations and structures, and their origin in the ultimate reality of the personal source of the universe. The method of grasping is close, in this tradition of thought too, to intellectual intuition of German philosophy. Realist phenomenology is thus capable of throwing new light on the importance of traditional realism by means of a new methodology; this phenomenology is apt to fit in with Model 2 where theological supremacy requires the instrumental role of philosophy.

Phenomenological realism is realism too, but in a synthetic way; it does not ask for the specific features of reality but for reality in its entirety. Phenomenological realism asks the question of the origin and nature of what is real in our world and mind; and while phenomenological idealism points out the aspectual nature of everyday reality, phenomenological realism stresses the importance of the absolute originality ('Unhintergebarkeit') of what is real. In the perspective of the relationship between theology and philosophy, phenomenological realism can be construed as a way from, and a way to, theology. In both cases, theology appears as the ultimate form of realism that cannot be sufficiently grasped either on the basis of everyday experience or cosmological realism.

Phenomenological realism in this sense is an example of the unified model; it follows the path of the realist critique of transcendental idealism and stresses the unique importance of the experience of the real in our world and mind. Our mind too owes its reality to the very source of real-

ity, God; phenomenological realism is a unified way to see reality's roots in God and its way to the reality of God.

7. The Importance of Philosophy for Catholicism

As to Catholicism's importance to philosophy, let me mention the problems of philosophical scholarship in our age. The problems, as I see them, are as follows:

- Growing overspecialization in philosophical scholarship;
- The lack of generally received, normative traditions and schools;
- The overemphasis on the pattern of mathematical sciences in philosophy;
- Estrangement from the classical conceptions of philosophy;
- Forms of unfriendliness to theistic and religious thought (including their ethical dimension);
- The lack of a common philosophical language;
- The lack of appropriate institutional frameworks for the cultivation of philosophy.

These problems hang together. Overspecialization confines professional philosophy to small circles of experts. Since, however, there is no generally received tradition or school in our time, various circles do not communicate with each other properly in matters philosophical. While there are philosophical trends in our days, such as pragmatism or phenomenology, they are not well formed in themselves and have only a weak influence on each other. The strong emphasis on analyticity and mathematical patterns in philosophy suffocates the vital importance of philosophy in the everyday lives of persons; such an emphasis does not only affect the form of philosophy but its content too. As to its form, philosophy becomes rigid; and in its content, it becomes esoteric. Classical conceptions of philosophy, such as Platonism, Aristotelism, Thomism, or Idealism are rarely considered centrally relevant in our philosophical discussions. As an example, see the unpopularity of the notion of natural law in many philosophic circles.

Hand in hand with this estrangement there goes the unfriendliness to theistic and religious thought. Our ethical discussions today have grown out from the tension between theistic and atheistic thinking. While there has been an important change in this respect during the past decades, the unfriendliness to theistic thought still exists and exerts wide influence. By the lack of a common philosophical language I mean the problems given in the plurality of philosophical traditions in German, French, Spanish, Italian, and English. While English is becoming the most widespread language in philosophy too, its merits are often overshadowed by its natural difficulty to enhance synthetic thinking.

Last but not least I want to call attention to the importance of a proper institutional framework for the appropriate cultivation of philosophy. The crisis of the university in our day is at the same time the crisis of philosophy. The ancient idea of the university—representing the universe or cosmos from which it received its name—was fundamentally philosophical. The emergence of the mathematical sciences pushed philosophy into the background, so much so that philosophy became just one department even in the faculty of humanities. The crisis of the human sciences has led to the marginalization of philosophy as a discipline. In some new conceptions of higher education, philosophy does not even figure among the subjects. If we want to assist philosophy to regain its genuine sense, then it is important either to reestablish the proper place of philosophy in the disciplines of university, or to develop a new institutional framework for it.

The importance of philosophy for Catholicism in our day can be grasped in philosophy's prophetic significance. By analyzing the process of secularization, the development of the sciences and of technology, the political changes in our age and the reshaping of culture, philosophy can contribute not only to the better understanding of our problems today, but especially to the deeper understanding of Christianity and Catholicism in the face of the tremendous changes in our time. In all these changes, it is not the task of philosophy to contribute to detailed and specific investigations in fields where specific sciences are obviously more competent. Rather, the task of philosophy with respect to the sciences is to show in as many ways as possible the limits of scientific knowledge and the proper realm of philosophical reflection. Moreover, it is philosophy's task to show its own heteronomy with respect to the proper realm of autonomy. While these tasks may appear insignificant for many, I believe that they are centrally important; with all their implications and possibilities they constitute the very realm of philosophical research.

8. Consequences and Tasks

Let me summarize some of the important consequences of the above points for philosophy's relationship to Catholicism.

While the atmosphere of contemporary culture favors philosophical specialization, scientism, skepticism or even atheism, philosophy should be cautious to embrace such views. It is the task of philosophy to understand the historical shift of its own self-understanding from universal knowledge to specific analysis, from philosophical dialectics to logical positivism, or from a theologically interested discipline to the proponent of atheism. Secondly, it is crucially important to understand the limits of philosophical reflection, its fundamental heteronomy. Thirdly, it is equally important to recognize the importance of philosophy in understanding heteronomy of human knowledge in the general sense. Fourthly, just on the basis of this heteronomy, philosophy is capable of reaching a certain insight into the reality and nature of genuine autonomy.

With respect to Catholicism, the following appears to be important. The fulfillment of the tasks of philosophy in our day makes it possible and even necessary that we rethink from the philosophical point of view the traditional tenets of Catholic Christianity, tenets not only philosophical but also theological. I call this aspect of philosophy philosophical Catholicism. Philosophical Catholicism is to reflect on

- the traditional contents of Catholicism;
- the historical change Catholicism has gone through with respect to society, culture, the sciences, and philosophy itself;
- the most acute moral and doctrinal problems of current scientific research from a Catholic perspective;
- the historical perspective in which Catholicism is to accomplish its mission;
- its proper nature with respect to Catholicism in the form of the unity of models I proposed above.

As I mentioned, the cultivation of philosophy in this sense needs an appropriate institutional framework. This may be a university if the sufficient conditions are guaranteed; the most important condition is that genuine work be done on the rethinking of the nature of the university and on the

role of philosophy in it. It may be better nevertheless if philosophy in the above sense is pursued in an independent institution; thus its purposes may be followed more properly.

The very prerequisite of doing philosophy in this sense is, however, the community of philosophers that take their philosophical tasks most seriously; philosophers, I say, who give their life for the fulfillment of their philosophical vocation with special respect to the tasks I mentioned above. In such a community, a cooperation can be developed that may bring, in its turn, its fruits in the realm of the relationship between philosophy and Catholicism. I am deeply convinced that it is not only philosophy that leads to failure without the appropriate assistance of Catholicism; especially in our age, but in a general sense too, Catholicism needs philosophy for the fulfillment of its historical vocation in the realms of culture, society, and the sciences. The task of the third millennium of Christianity is not simply to survive the age of secularization; it is rather to understand secularization as a challenge, which helps us go beyond the earlier horizon of Catholic thinking and prepare, with all our means, the age of a new and overarching synthesis, the cultural synthesis of the third millennium.

As we read in John Paul II's 1998 encyclical letter *Fides et ratio* (N^o 106),

I appeal also to *philosophers*, and to all *teachers of philosophy*, asking them to have the courage to recover, in the flow of an enduringly valid philosophical tradition, the range of authentic wisdom and truth—metaphysical truth included—which is proper to philosophical enquiry. They should be open to the impelling questions which arise from the word of God and they should be strong enough to shape their thought and discussion in response to that challenge. Let them always strive for truth, alert to the good which truth contains. Then they will be able to formulate the genuine ethics which humanity needs so urgently at this particular time. The Church follows the work of philosophers with interest and appreciation; and they should rest assured of her respect for the rightful autonomy of their discipline. I would want especially to encourage believers working in the philosophical field to illumine the range of human activity by the exercise of a reason which grows more penetrating and assured because of the support it receives from faith.

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