incisiveness, equates philosophy *as such* with the question of being, which is simultaneously the question of freedom(!).[73] In his insistence on the question of being, Balthasar agrees with Heidegger. Heidegger's refusal to acknowledge God as the giver of all being sets the two apart.[74] If philosophy no longer asks the question of being, and does not allow itself to enter into the question about God, it sinks into boredom, and ultimately degenerates into rationalism and positivism.[75] But when it dares seriously to keep inquiring anew about being, it will find out that "the invisible God, contemplated in his creation, is ontologically no farther from our age than from any other" (*SC*, 278).—*Translated by Thomas Caldwell, S.J., and Albert K. Wimmer* □

[73]"Borrowing Heidegger's phraseology, if the philosophical act happens where existence entirely reveals itself in its totality, how can a human being or an epoch that exists oblivious of existence (Seinsvergessenheit) philosophize?"("Freiheit," in *Freiheit* [Polis 7]: *Radio Lectures by H. Barth, B. Dukor, A. Portmann, H.U. von Balthasar, K. Barth and W. von den Steinen*, ed. by M. Geiger, H. Ott, and L. Vischer [Zurich, 1960], p. 47). Cf. also *H* I, 137-38; *H* III, 1, 943; *Die Wahrheit ist symphonische. Aspekte des christlichen Pluralismus* (Einsiedeln, 1971), 45; *Epilog*, 14ff. Balthasar was fully aware of the fact that the question of existence may be formulated in different ways (*Die Wahrheit ist symphonische*, 41-43). Consequently, M. Theunissen's verdict, "only undistinguished imitators (*Epigonen*) know what constitutes philosophy" (*Negative Theologie der Zeit* [Frankfurt a.M., 1991], 14), will not apply to Balthasar.

[74]*H* III, 1, 786-87. Regarding the conversations with Heidegger, cf. J.B. Lotz, *Vom Sein zum Heiligen. Metaphysiches Denken nach Heidegger* (Frankfurt a.M., 1990). The intimate connection between the topics discussed during the conversations with Heidegger and the conversations with Taoists and Zen-Buddhists mentioned in footnote 87 is documented by R. May, *Ex oriente lux: Heideggers Werk unter ostasiatischem Einfluß* (Stuttgart, 1989). It is entirely possible that the necessary inter-cultural dialogue will once again determine that asking questions about existence has nothing to do with a craze long since abandoned. For instance, G. Scherer correctly refers to Taoism in his discussion of the question of existence (*Welt—Natur oder Schöpfung?* [Darmstadt, 1990], 140).

[75]*Christen sind einfältig*, 107.

Retrieving the Tradition

On the tasks of Catholic philosophy in our time

Hans Urs von Balthasar

> The finally valid answer to pagan wisdom, the answer equal to it in rank, can lie only in the total Christian wisdom.

Catholic philosophy stands today in the same twilight as every other area of the Church's theoretical and practical activity, indeed in the same twilight as the Church as a whole vis-à-vis the modern world. Increasing secularization has forced the Church out of her undisputed position as the crowning of all worldly domains and has brought her ever more strongly into another situation which is juxtaposed, or even subordinated, to worldly structures; seen from the outside and from the perspective of the world, she is permitted to remain in this situation as something perhaps still tolerated, but in any case thoroughly obsolete and questionable. This frequently brutal dismissal of the Church's authority also in worldly matters of politics, of the planning of the world, and above all in matters of the spirit and science, does indeed correspond in part to an increasing falling away of the educated and of the masses from the Christian faith, but in part also to a process (acknowledged and justified by the Church herself) in which the natural orders and areas of knowledge assume autonomy, as was demanded by the Vatican Council itself in its clear distinction between the natural and the supernatural orders: *duplex ordo cognitionis, proprio objecto, propria methodo* (Denzinger 1795, 1799). This makes a kind of subordination between Christianity and the

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worldly domains unavoidable, no matter how much the rank of the two spheres remains different for the believer. On the other side, however, such a subordination can never be understood and acknowledged by the Church in the sense that the human person, who must live, work, and think in both spheres, would thereby become capable of being established as arbiter of their mutual relationship and judge of the boundaries and proportions—capable of taking in at a single glance, as if from an elevated watch-tower, Church and world, Christianity and culture, philosophy and theology, in their mutual relationships, and of bringing these into an ordered system. If this were the case—if the Christian were capable of deciding as an individual human being how far the competencies of reason go and how far the competencies of faith and of the Church's authority go, and what percentage of his strength and his time he ought to dedicate to the one sphere, what percentage to the other—then both spheres would be relativized in favor of the private conscience and the private evidential character, and the human person himself would stand as the synthetic element, not only between both, but secretly above both. *He* would then know how to attain the mixture between the Christian dimension and the "orders of creation" which was appropriate to himself or to his time or to the world in general, and the divine revelation would be devalued to a partial element within an ultimately anthropological totality.

Such a position seems to be favored by the fact that the Bible, above all the New Testament, is scarcely at all concerned with the development of the world order. The state enters Scripture's picture of the world only at the margin, and still less do we hear of the Christian culture, of philosophy, literature, art, science, and technology. If one looks back from this fact over the Church's authority to give form to the worldly orders in the Middle Ages, this can perhaps seem a presumption and usurpation; and if one considers things in this way, the increasing emancipation of these orders during the modern period involves not only the maturing of the world and its liberation from a guardianship that may perhaps have been understandable in its own age, but also the justified shaking-off of a yoke that was never legitimate. But Christianity will never acknowledge the subordination of nature and supernature, reason and faith, in this sense. To do this would be to surrender itself totally and to capitulate in the face of liberalism and historicism. Even if nature has its own regular laws and reason its own evidential character, still these laws and evidential characters can never appear as a final authority over against grace and faith. Their autonomies remain relative and stand as such always at the disposal of the final authority which belongs to the divine revelation, and to its plans and directives. As Christ remains Lord even over the laws of nature, which he is able to break when his work and the glorification of God require this, and as he gives his Church the power "to do still greater works than he himself did" (Jn 14:12), so too his Church takes captive all the thoughts of men in order to place them at the service of Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). It is not only a part of the world that is redeemed by the Lord on the Cross and laid at the feet of the Father: rather, the whole of creation is to be recapitulated in him (1 Cor 15:24-28). And thus it is not only a part of the human spirit that is laid claim to for faith: rather, the entire reason, with all its evidential characters, is placed at the disposal of faith.

The Christian stands consciously (and the non-Christian, too, although unconsciously) in this dilemma, and nothing can soften either of the two sides of this dilemma. It cannot be denied that, as a creature, he is a part of this world; as such, he is subordinate to the laws of the creation. But it is equally impossible to doubt that Christianity does not belong to this world and that it permits those who adhere to it and who come to stand under its law to die and thus to cross over into the kingdom of Christ, which distinguishes itself from this world with all clarity and sharpness. "In this world," "not of this world": the tension in these words cannot be dissolved by a reference to the harmless ambiguity of the concept "world." The entire greatness of the Christian situation will be grasped only when both sides are taken seriously, while rejecting every synthesis of world and Christianity that is not carried out on the far side of the Cross and the descent into hell in the "new earth," the redeemed creation.

An essential part of this situation must be discussed when we are to speak of Catholic philosophy. The question of the possibility and reality of Catholic philosophy has once again become particularly urgent in the present age, but only as one particular aspect of the entire question that is posed about the relationship between nature and supernature as a whole. Thus it is possible to discuss the present situation of Catholic philosophy fruitfully only if we begin by setting out what is fundamental in the problem, and we shall begin in what follows with this question of principles. In the difficult situation in which Catholic thinking finds itself today, it will discover the correct only in the light of a solution from the highest watch-tower. If

it does not take its stance on this watch-tower, it will vacillate nervously and restlessly between on the one hand a modernity that has fallen captive to the philosophy of the modern world, enticed and fascinated by its magic—a modernity that adheres to every tendency and current that blossoms at the present moment, under the pretext of keeping up with the march of time, and thus loses itself—and on the other hand an arrogant self-sufficiency that thinks it can avoid every interior confrontation with modern philosophy merely on the basis of the once valid, medieval synthesis between Christianity and the world. If one looks at it in a merciless light, then, this is the situation of Catholic philosophy today, and only a courageous reflection on the most universal structure of what is Christian can show the way out of this situation.

1. *On the general attitude of Catholic philosophy*

The formal solution of the position of Christian thinking vis-à-vis worldly thinking has been sufficiently sketched in the words which we have quoted from the Vatican Council. Philosophy as such is a conclusive worldly science which on the one hand establishes a priori the ultimate laws about Being and about the world, its meaning, its provenance, and its goal, which can be deduced from what exists and from spirit; on the other hand it a posteriori brings together the results of the investigation from the individual spheres of Being—matter, life, soul, consciousness—and confronts these with the aprioristic laws of metaphysics. To the extent that reason is autonomous at all, such an activity is no less autonomous in relationship to faith and to revelation than other branches of human investigation: but precisely "to this extent." This autonomy remains at the service of the revelation, opened to revelation and therefore also available to faith and to the genuine needs of faith. One such need is faith's self-understanding, the *fides quaerens intellectum*, which can make use in its own way of the results, the methods, and the concepts of philosophy in this activity which is not philosophical but theoretical, in order to attain its own ends. And since the light of faith is a supernatural light, it is superior to the light of reason and does not owe to reason any ultimate reckoning for the use it makes of philosophical thought. But it is impossible for these two ways of forming concepts about the ultimate essence of the world and of Being to remain unconnected to each other. It is not indeed possible for the formal object of philosophy and that

of theology to be identical. But if philosophy primarily contemplates the Being of this world, in order to press forward from this to the boundary of absolute Being as *principium et finis* (Denzinger 1785), while theology primarily begins with God's self-utterance in the Logos, in order ultimately to include the meaning of the world also in God's revelation in Christ and in the Church, then these two objects overlap materially to such an extent that the confrontation becomes unavoidable. And it is only in this confrontation that something like Catholic philosophy comes into being. It has its origin in the consideration that the light of faith in God's self-utterance about his own essence and the meaning of the world is the ultimate authority to such an extent that this light must necessarily also send its rays over onto the light of reason: in negative terms, this means that nothing which opposes the light of faith can be true on the level of reason, i.e., that theology must count as the negative norm of reason. But going beyond this, in positive terms, too, this means that a reason which is illuminated by faith is able to know things of the natural world which a reason lacking this light—indeed, a reason deprived of this light by sin and weakened and obscured in itself—will necessarily overlook, or will recognize only in a disfigured form.

The negative demarcation over against theology would not suffice by itself to justify the expression "Catholic philosophy." Within its own sphere, philosophical activity would be a purely worldly activity that was regulated only from the outside by the laws of a higher sphere, in the way in which a subordinate science does not lose its autonomy simply by virtue of the fact that its first axioms have their place in a higher science. Only the positive perspective in which it becomes clear that philosophy's instrument, reason, and philosophy's object, worldly Being, if these are contemplated in their ultimate concreteness, cannot in the least be separated from the reality of revelation—viz. of the grace which has gone out into nature and of the faith which has been given to reason and has been demanded by reason—only this perspective demonstrates the total interweaving of both spheres and justifies speaking of Catholic philosophy. In the light of faith, both a pure nature and a pure reason appear as abstractions which indeed need not be false as such, but which lack any corresponding detached and separate reality in the concrete world-order. The human person, as he exists *de facto*, is always *a priori* one who has taken a position and a decision for or against the God of grace, because

the entire order of nature has been set *a priori* by the revelation of Christ at the service of his supernatural kingdom. Thus, too, the concrete eye of reason is always already either an eye that is purified and made keener by the light of faith and love, or else an eye that is obscured by original sin or by personal guilt. This supernatural modality does not in any way destroy the relative autonomy of nature and of its epistemological capacity. A repeated error in the course of the history of Christian thought has been to consider the potency of reason as annihilated and removed in its essence by sin, and therefore to set faith in the position of natural knowledge. But the material separation of the two spheres of reason and faith, as this is demanded by the Vatican Council, does not in any way prevent the recognition of their *de facto* interconnection in the concrete world-order as this in fact exists from Adam onwards and as indeed it was determined from primeval times in the plan of God's providence.

This becomes particularly clear when one recalls that all the great thinkers have presented philosophy, as an ultimate knowledge of the ultimate foundations of the world, as a function that goes beyond mere theoretical thinking and makes demands of the entire human person. Philosophy means literally love of wisdom: Thus it contains an ethical element and thereby an element of decision, because it is not possible for the human person to turn with ultimacy to the total object, to the Absolute, without a decision. From Plato and Plotinus to Hegel, Nietzsche and Bergson, we find a keen awareness of the insight that the pure intellect in its turn is only an abstraction, when it is a matter of philosophy, of the love of wisdom. The one who loves burns with passion for this object in which the one who does not love sees only a dry concept. For the one who loves, knowledge can be achieved only by committing the total personality. This commitment is not an irrational element, something that would call into question the objectivity of the knowledge achieved, but a methodological precondition for attaining objectivity itself. For the Christian thinker, however, this decision cannot be cleanly separable from the other total decision which is demanded in a leitmotif that goes through the whole of the gospel: the decision for God which means in concrete terms the decision for Christ and for his Church. There is not space in one soul for two ultimate orientations and gifts of self. That love which draws Plotinus to the infinite beauty of the "One" and which makes the knowledge of this "One" possible for him has no other name in the Christian thinker Augustine than love for God the triune. Philosophy and theology in him are nourished from the same *erôs*.

But it is precisely at this point that Catholic philosophy, which has just been justified, becomes a problem once again. It is surely not necessary to prove that the non-Catholic thinker strives explicitly to attain the *ultimate* dimension of the truth in his philosophizing, that for him it is only this ultimate striving that deserves the name of wisdom, just as it is only wisdom that deserves the commitment of the whole intellectual passion of his search for the truth. An intellectual *erôs* that would stop short at a penultimate truth would not at all deserve the name of philosophy, in the eyes of Plato or Hegel. The venture of the total gift of self, the adventure of the spirit, is so enticing and so promising only because it is the ultimate dimension attainable to the human person. Even when they see the sphere of the knowledge which can be formulated in concepts as something that transcends itself into a sphere of the mystic, orphic, mythical, symbolic in some sense or other, nevertheless it is this transcendence—and precisely this—which remains the genuinely philosophical act for the sake of which the entire conceptual preparatory work was worthwhile: as it were, the basis and material of the absolute knowing. Thus there is no doubt that the non-Christian philosopher lives in his thinking from the same passion for what is ultimate which is the only source from which the Christian thinker can live as a believer and as a theologian. All truly living philosophy outside Christianity lives from a theological *erôs*, and it is only through this *erôs* that it has the power to move and to draw others into the same disposition of seeking orientated towards what is ultimate.

But how do things stand with Christian philosophy, seen from this perspective? When the concrete Logos proceeds forth from the Father as the ultimate dimension of wisdom and utters unheard-of and unimagined things about the abysses of the Godhead and about the designs of God and the meaning of creation and redemption, when the believer begins to drink at these eternal springs and thereby streams of the eternal wisdom begin to spring up in the believer himself, does not Christian philosophy then come into the position of something penultimate which thereby loses the genuine power of conviction that catches others up, too? If the Christian philosopher once looks back, from the height of God's self-utterances about himself and the world, and from the total act of the loving faith with which he adheres to these statements, upon what human reason was able to stammer in its own power

about these same objects, must he not become sobered and cooled down by the sheer emptiness and abstraction of these concepts and these groping words? In the face of faith and of theology as the possibility of setting forth the contents of faith and of tasting this from within, there arises the not unimportant question: from what *erôs* does Christian philosophy still live in fact? Can it acquire for itself the position which it possessed and which it continues to possess outside Christianity, or must it not take off its halo of the ultimate wisdom that is attainable, and give this halo to theology?

There is scarcely any exaggeration, if we dare to say: that which was and is living in Christian philosophy in the course of the history of Christianity owes its life to faith and to theology. The great Christian thinkers are also on occasion great philosophers, only because they are theologians. The Christian decision occupies in them the position at which the non-Christian thinkers make their decision in favor of the absolute, of their god. If Christian philosophers are thinkers on the basis of an ultimate passion, they become automatically theologians. This happens to the Alexandrines, Clement and Origen, to the great Cappadocians, to Augustine, but no less to Anselm, Bonaventure, Albert and Thomas, to Pascal and Malebranche, to Möhler and Newman. Wherever Catholic philosophy is alive, the *erôs* of thought propels it outward, over the penultimate sphere of the objects of philosophical thought, into the sphere of the personal divine Logos. This is not a proof of the impossibility of Christian philosophy, nor does it show that the results of reason would become deprived of their object, or even false, through theology. Not only do Christian cosmology, anthropology, and ethics remain possible, but natural theodicy too retains its relative significance. But in the history of Western thought, these are alive only where they have been set by the intellectual passion of great theologians at the service of the concrete Logos. Outside this theology, they remain not only abstract—as they would have the right to do—but also impotent and sketchy.

Post-Christian philosophical thought outside the Church furnishes us with evidence of this from the other side of the picture, in that it develops truly intellectual passion only where the Christian-theological element appears in a secularized form in the propositions of allegedly pure philosophy: in gnosis, for example, in the heretical mysticism of the Middle Ages from Erigena to Böhme, but finally also in Idealism from Kant to Hegel and in the philosophy of life and of existentialism which is completely permeated by Christian motifs. And the true Christian philosophy is animated very frequently by the passion to retrieve this secularized theological material which has lost its way and to bring it back to its true form. Thus, Clement's only reason for carrying out Greek and gnostic philosophical study with such passion is to discover the secret theological, supernatural impulses which lie therein; Augustine is interested in Plotinus only in order to demonstrate the "truth" of this allegedly pure philosophy as theology; Thomas's only reason for studying Aristotelian and Arabic philosophy with such zeal is to give faith instruments with which it can defend itself and develop itself; Möhler's only reason for studying Hegel's teaching about community is in order to demonstrate that it is a secularized theology of the true ecclesial community; Newman studies Locke and Hume only in order to transform their philosophy of natural believing and supposing into a theology of supernatural believing. It is not only subsequently that all of these have come to the point where natural philosophical thinking impels one to make the decision for or against Christ: rather, they think, in most cases already from the outset, from the far side of this decision, and philosophize already as theologians. And the more total and indivisible is their love for the truth, the more unconditionally does the theological *erôs* animate the sphere of philosophy in them. But if a Christian philosopher seeks to separate the two spheres in such a way that, *ad instar* pagan philosophy, he develops a natural passion for philosophy which is different from the Christian passion, then he will either secularize what is clearly theological matter into philosophy (as we see in the examples of a Gioberti or Hermes or Scheler), or else he will fall victim to the curse of that deadly dullness which is typical of most of the handbooks of neo-Scholastic philosophy.

It would be folly if the Christian were to wish to enter a philosophical duel with non-Christian philosophy. Both the Fathers of the Church and the great Scholastics knew precisely that the finally valid answer to pagan wisdom, the answer equal to it in rank, can lie only in the total Christian wisdom. With delight, and with the best conscience in the world, the Fathers develop the metaphor of the *spolia Aegyptorum*: the theft of worldly thinking so that it can be made to serve Christian, theological aims. But where this theft is carried out by genuine thinkers, it is no mechanical adoption of alien

chains of thought with which one can adorn and garland the Christian dimension externally. Rather, it is itself a genuine, philosophical achievement and as such it is surely to be acclaimed as *the* genuine achievement of Christian philosophy in the course of intellectual history. Here there lies the creative element of Catholic philosophy, which cannot be disregarded for a moment or passed over as something of secondary significance. This is not altered by the fact that it remains an achievement in the service of theology, carried out with a view to theology. This achievement remains so significant in itself that it can be set beside the greatest achievements of non-Christian philosophy without any need for it to blush; naturally, precisely this comparison discloses that these non-Christian achievements are themselves veiled theology.

It is possible to distinguish and to describe separately two sides of this Christian achievement, although they belong together inherently: the art of *breaking open* all finite, philosophical truth in the direction of Christ, and the art of the clarifying *transposition*.

In "taking captive all human systems of thought" (2 Cor. 10:5) for the truth of Christ, the Catholic philosopher demonstrates that he does not carry out his worldly activity in an independent special sphere, but stands here in the very heart of his Christian task. If he is truly a Christian thinker, there is no other conclusive meaning which he can give to his thinking. But this produces in him a quite specific awareness of the truth. As a believer, he knows the word of the Lord, in which he himself calls himself the truth. He is the infinite truth as God, in his unity with the Father in the Holy Spirit; but in him, this infinite truth has appeared in the form of finite, worldly truth. After the Son has lived on earth, this truth can no longer be considered an unattainable *transcendentale*, but must count as something attainable, even if it is also eternally surpassing and overwhelming. Through this approach on the part of the eternal truth, the Christian thinker has received a concrete vision of the provisional character of all purely human thinking in its relationship to the divine, revealed truth which is quite different from what is apprehended by the non-Christian. In faith, he has attained an experience that allows him to sense what eternal life may be: the infinite and ever new experience of being flooded by the ever incomprehensible greatness of the glory and by the inexhaustible marvels of the love of God. Without this experience in faith in Christ, the infinity

of absolute Being may have validity as a proposition that has been reduced to order, and the *triplex via positionis, negationis, eminentiae* may have its validity as a genuine (though dialectic) methodology that permits one to be sure of the contents of this proposition and to make some kind of sense of it. But if one's boundaries are broken open ever afresh and ever more widely in the knowledge of Christ, so that one enters into the truth which lies in him and above him, the truth of the infinite love between the Father and the Son, into this ever illimitable testimony which is one (Jn 8:14) and yet double (Jn 5:31f.) because it has the trinitarian form; if one has learned to locate the essence of truth in general in this unique mystery of the love between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, and one is able now to see all other truth as only a reflection of this innermost kernel of truth—then one will also have grasped that, just as the archetype of the revealed truth, the Son, is true because he eternally opens himself to the infinite Father, then *a fortiori* all the finite truth of this world can establish itself as truth only by opening out onto the mystery of God. Thus it is not for nothing that the Fathers adopt the term *"philosophia"* for the Christian act of thinking of the revealed truth, precisely also in its function of breaking through the boundaries of all pagan truth outside Christianity in the direction of Christ; and in this, they do not overlook the point that one can speak of philosophy here only when the whole existence, the *bios philosophikos*, accompanies this thinking and is in accordance with it.

The nonchalance with which they relativize even the greatest of humanity's attempts at thought when compared to this Absolute is derived from the absoluteness of the truth of Christ, which appears as a person, and from their faith in this truth as the immovable rock on which all other knowledge rests. This is not at all a relativization in the sense of a skeptical calling into question of all inner-worldly truth, but in the sense of a loosening up of all the systems which, thanks to original sin, had congealed into *absoluta* and which only for this reason were mutually exclusive, in order to put them at the universal service of the one Christian truth. In this activity, the Fathers do no more than take seriously the principle of *analogia entis*, according to which all worldly Being and therefore, also, the transcendental properties of this worldly Being (which includes the property of truth) can be spoken of as Being only in a secondary, analogous sense which is determined by the first

sense of this term. And as the one infinite Being of God reveals itself through the fullness and manifold character of the form of worldly Being, which is in itself held in tension, contradictory and mutually determinative in a polar relationship, so too the infinite truth of the Trinity is portrayed only through innumerable forms of expression of worldly truth, which can of course come more or less close to the ideal of the divine truth.

This makes it clear that what is customarily called the philosophical syncretism of the Fathers, and still in part of the scholastics, corresponds to an intention and an attitude which are quite different from what can be called syncretism in the realm of the natural intellectual sciences. Their aim was not in the least to pluck out individual propositions in each case from different systems, in order to juxtapose them cleverly and select them and thus to arrive at a new form of philosophical knowledge which would perhaps be more up-to-date, perhaps looser. When the Fathers adopt elements of Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Neo-Platonic, Gnostic, and Hermetic thought, and make use of these simultaneously alongside one another with an apparent nonchalance, this is not due to an impotent, decadent and syncretistic form of thought, but on the contrary to a wholly original, precise, and irreducible insight of faith into the essence of the divine truth. They are so deeply convinced of the all-embracing authority of Christ not only over all creatures in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, but also over all the forms of creaturely truth, that they cannot rest until they have brought all these forms into the service of the one truth. "Everything is yours; but you belong to Christ, and Christ to God" (1 Cor. 3:23): this is the ethos out of which they think. Thus what presents itself externally as a Hellenistic syncretism, e.g. in Alexandria (just as one may find much in Origen that externally sounds like an echo of Philo), is seen on closer examination to be the attempt to let the entire worldly truth become transparent to the divine truth.

High scholasticism does not behave in any different manner with the intellectual material of humanity which is available to it. The entire breadth of human thought—from the Pre-Socratics *via* Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics, *via* Augustine and Dionysius to Boethius and to the Arabs, to Anselm, Albert and their contemporaries—is scarcely broad enough to serve the theological wisdom of a Thomas Aquinas as material for his presentation. If he had known Buddha and Lao-Tse, there is no doubt that he would have drawn them too into the

summa of what can be thought, and would have given them the place appropriate to them. The genius for ordering which this greatest of Christian thinkers possessed is a genius of lay-out: few thoughts of human beings are so foolish that they cannot attain their own relative significance at the distance from the center which is appropriate to them. In themselves, and in isolation, they appear to have little value, but even the most contemptible stone, if it is hewn correctly and given its place in the totality of the cathedral building, takes on its significance as bearer or as ornament. Everything can be used, unless it wishes to exclude itself from the great order, refusing to serve the total truth. This is how Thomas thought and worked, as did Leibnitz later on, and Newman later on again. They are affirmative spirits to an eminent degree, capable of discovering the faded copy of the original provenance even in inconspicuous forms of the truth. The fragment or stone that they pick up may come from the bed of a Christian stream, or of a pagan or heretical stream, but they know how to cleanse it and to polish it until that radiance shines forth which shows that it is a fragment of the total glorification of God. Such a methodology may appear dangerous, because the clear and sharp outlines of the evangelical decision threaten to become blurred in it. This is the form of thought which necessarily *had* to be confused by unbelieving criticism with the syncretism of late Antiquity, the form of thought which permitted Christianity to amalgamate itself with the elements of Hellenism which were alien to its own being. But everything depends here on the disposition in which the synthesis is made: if the knowledge of the absoluteness of the truth of Christ stands at the abiding origin of such thought, and if the decision for him has been made with the entire purity of a loving soul, then it is legitimate and safe to adopt the intellectual mission to go out into all the world and to take captive all truth for Christ. "Test *everything* and retain what is good!" (1 Thess 5:21). But "do not conform yourselves to the spirit of the world" (Rom 12:2). Thus the one who submits himself to this task ought to be a saint; and all the great figures who succeeded in this task were saints. The mission given by Christ has the effect in the sphere of thought, too, of a shirt that makes one invulnerable and permits one to walk unharmed through the flames. As long as one who thinks is vigilant in his mission, he cannot at all be effected by the temptation to fall captive to some philosophical idea of the world or other, to follow some trail or other that leads away from Christ who is the center (no matter how much this

trail may blind him through the evidential character of its logic). The one inexorable consistency with which he thinks has its life from the spirit of that highest consistency which says: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but only what he sees the Father doing" (Jn 5:19); "for I have not spoken of myself: rather, the Father who has sent me has given me a commandment about what I am to do and say" (Jn 12:50).

It is within this universalism of the reduction to Christ as the center that the second fundamental characteristic of Christian philosophy is also realized: the art of the clarifying transposition. While the reduction of the worldly forms of thoughts and images to the primordial form and the archetype of every worldly truth creates vertical relationships up to revelation, the transposition establishes more horizontal relationships between the individual worldly systems and images of the world. This art too lives from a secret supernatural spirit which is ultimately the spirit of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Pentecost, who attests his unity precisely in the miracle of the multiplication of the languages. In the reduction, it was shown that (as Origen says on one occasion) all words are basically only one single Word. In the transposition, the balancing evidence to this is furnished, in that the one Word has the capacity to portray itself in all human words. For the only task of the disciple of Christ is not to return to the unity with the booty of the whole plurality: he must equally (if not more so) bear the unity out into the whole plurality. The Spirit of Pentecost gives him the fundamental ability to do this, without however dispensing him from his own endeavor to become a master of the most various concepts and forms of thought of humanity, so that he can express in these the message of the eternal truth. The commandment to make this proclamation includes the commandment to make oneself comprehensible to every age and to every people. Thus Paul became a Greek to the Greeks, not only by quoting Greek poets on the Areopagus, but also by introducing his thoughts into Greek forms of thought; while he understands how to be a Jew to the Jews in the Letter to the Hebrews, and indeed is not ashamed to present faith in Christ as the true form of Pharisaism, in the speeches of his defense (Acts 22:3; 23:6). From an innermost point which is unshakable, he draws the power for a mobility such that the forms of expression are on occasion contrary, but never stand in mutual contradiction. But not even the most contrary statements—for example, about the Law—are the result of a syncretistic synthesizing of separated

aspects, but are the portrayal of the superabundant richness of a total vision that is ultimately divine, and which therefore transcends even the speaker himself. In the course of Christian history, the spirit from Paul's spirit is seen in every achievement of thought that has succeeded in integrating wholly new images of the world into the *philosophia perennis*, not merely externally, but from within, something that however involves translating the *philosophia perennis* itself into ever new languages which are living at that precise moment and can be understood. For it is impossible for the perennial quality of living human thought to dispense with the ever new historical transformations and developments in a kind of imaginary, ahistorical supratemporality that would only rob it of its genuine worldly reality. If the eternal truth of revelation and its guardian, the Church, are not ashamed to speak to human persons through the mouth of the most various languages and of their forms which change with the course of time, how much more must the philosophical body of this truth, which is after all a worldly body, show itself ready for this kind of flexibility, which is the only witness to its life.

The methodology carried out by Joseph Maréchal can be adduced as the most perfect example of such a clarifying transposition in the present age. He has made the bold attempt to translate Kantian transcendentalism into the modality of scholastic ontology. Kant has never been understood more deeply and thoroughly by a Catholic philosopher—understood, and at the same time applied and overcome. In the presence of a view from such a height, every external enmity becomes superfluous, and yet Kant and Thomas do not meet one another half-way here in a compromise, but on a level at which each recognizes and acknowledges the complementary truth of the other, without negating anything of what is his own. This methodology of Maréchal lives from the best spirit of Christian tradition: in much the same way, Dionysius once spoke in Christian terms in the language of Proclus, or Thomas once set the Platonic mode and the Aristotelian-Arabic mode in motion against one another in order to express the same thing in several intellectual languages. And yet when Maréchal makes us aware of this methodology, he opens up new paths and, above all, new challenges for Christian thought: for example, the challenge to transpose modern existentialism with all seriousness and all sobriety into the mode of the *philosophia perennis*—naturally, no cheaper price can be paid for this than that of a radical reflection on the first foundations and basic

concepts of the scholastic doctrine of Being itself. Sertillanges has attempted something similar for Bergson's philosophy of life. The greatest progress in this methodology has been made by Erich Przywara, who brought all the great forms of thought of the Western spirit (perhaps with the exception of those which have an orientation to the natural sciences) into relation to one another until the point at which their harmony became the concrete historical proof of the *analogia entis* and *veritatis*.

The Christian thinker who attempts to let the unity of the truth be embodied in the many languages and dialects of the spirit will have to endeavor above all to attain the gift of the genuine discernment of spirits. He will have to listen and penetrate the systems in order to hear their secret heart-beat and thereby to recognize to which spirit they belong. Thus he will sense that the root is dead in many systems which are perhaps splendidly puffed up, and thus he will save himself the loss of energy through a serious confrontation with these. For example, the artificially polished system of Sartre's nihilism is only a concoction that is unfruitful, promising no living impact on the present age and the future. In other systems, which perhaps present themselves externally as utterly traditional, or as a fruitful germ of new thinking in their revolutionary vitality, he will possibly hear a secret negation within and he will attack this directly in his confrontation with the system in order to unmask it. Other forms, which behave externally in a wholly anti-Christian manner, can either themselves contain living fruit in a hidden way, or else be helpful at least in provoking a very fruitful confrontation. The true Christian thinker will discern and probe everywhere in order to test everything and to be able to retain what is good. This requirement made of him is so urgent that he cannot be excused if he evades the laborious attempt to come to know the totality of the philosophical forms of thought in such a way that he attempts to encounter them not only in the dry form in which they can be found in the herbal gardens of the books of the history of philosophy, but in their freshness and original vigor, as they disclose themselves only in the fontal writings of the philosophers of the past and the present. One cannot form a judgment about Chartres on the basis of a postcard, and, in the same way, one cannot form a judgment about Thomas, Kant, or Hegel if one has not submitted to the laborious task of encountering their spirit personally. It is not possible to recognize and get a taste for their essence in any other way, and all discussions about them remain

leathery and dead. In this encounter, philosophy takes on the countenance of a genuine science of experience; but the unavoidable experience is the true encounter with the vitality of the foreign thinking. Not only does such an encounter educate one in the will to understand the alien forms and concepts: it already presupposes this will. The spirit of the know-all—something of which Catholic thinkers are often accused, and perhaps not unjustly—would make the necessary experience impossible, thus preventing philosophy from existing. The will to understand is love, and this is why no true and fruitful thinking is possible outside love. But true love never makes blind: rather, it gives the power to see. It is far from dissolving everything in the blur of a general emotion: rather, it is love that is able to give the other the correct place, in the genuine endeavor to see where he is standing.

The art of assigning a place presupposes the sense for the dimensions of truth, and this sense in turn can exist only where the broad spaces of the truth are not crammed a priori into some systematic scheme or other. Schematism may be a technique that permits one to give a complete structure to the sphere of the truth, so that one may become aware of its extent in the most various ways and may give it depth and perspective for the eye of the human spirit. But if this technique becomes an end instead of a means, it kills the living awareness of space, instead of awakening this awareness to life. The breadth of the space of truth is not formless and indeterminate, and determination does not mean, per se, a reduction to finitude. In the midpoint of this space, dominating it, stands *the* truth: Christ, the Lord; and the forms of human truth lie in living circles around him, at a greater or lesser distance. Thus it is never possible to grasp hold of the midpoint itself: the only relationship to it is one of adoration and of faith. And yet all truth receives a relationship that moves towards this midpoint, and a recognizable profile. It becomes a kind of organism that is animated and given life in its various limbs by the fullness of Christ which fills all in all. Out of the consciousness of this fullness, it will not be difficult for the Christian thinker to recognize that one or another position in the organism of the truth still stands empty: that, for example, an insight which has newly arisen takes its place between two truths which have already been recognized, and this recognition demands that one also attributes and grants to the new insight the place which it is entitled to claim. It is only when this insight arises that one becomes aware that there was hitherto a blank

spot on the map of the spirit at this precise place. It is not necessary for the thinker, when he is confronted by this new insight, to endeavor above all to prove that this place had always been filled from the outset in the *philosophia perennis*. It is enough that he shows that there was always a space reserved for it, that there is sufficient space available to allow this insight too to live and to develop within the total organism. Plato and Aristotle were certainly the first to think very important things; Thomas, too, brought creative new contributions over against Augustine; why should it be forbidden to the present and the future to enrich the kingdom of thought in a genuine and completely original manner? And the place which is legitimately given to what is new must also be left to it afterwards. For these free spaces have often the remarkable tendency to grow together once again; the new thing with which people had been concerned apologetically, as if with a phenomenon of that particular epoch, is forgotten again, as if it had never existed. The great movement of the *philosophia perennis* ought to develop in its progress in such a way that it absorbs into itself, and elaborates in itself, the quintessence of all that is truly living, whether one finds this in Leibnitz or Kant or Hegel, in Kierkegaard or Scheler or Heidegger.

The Christian thinker's consciousness of his mission must go hand in hand with a profound humility. Like every Christian mission, his is a mission of love of neighbor. Precisely because he knows that Christ reigns supreme over the realm of truth, he will guard against a false attitude of infallibility, and to the extent that he entrusts to Christ the criterion of truth, he will refrain from judging as a final authority. He can indeed not avoid judging when he thinks, and judging means making a judgment about what is true and false. But he will remain conscious that he can judge only when he knows that he himself is assessed and judged at a deeper level by the truth of God, and it is only in this consciousness of being embraced within the ever greater divine truth which reserves the judgment to itself that he will receive from on high the power to cooperate in this divine judgment in the mission of love. This is why such an act of assessing and judging can and may never be anything other than a directing and orienting towards the superior truth of God. It would be untruth and hypocrisy for the Catholic thinker if he were to set himself absolutely on the same level as the non-believing philosophers in order "to seek for the truth" together with them, so that he would deny himself in such an attitude and would split his personality in a pathological manner into a religious-Christian personality that knows about the truth of revelation, and a philosophical personality that behaves as if it did not know this, and disguises itself in the attitude of the seeker. On the other hand, it would be presumption if one wished to exclude the ultimately questioning character of what is called "Catholic philosophy," the questioning character which emerges so clearly from the modern controversial philosophers, Blondel, Gilson, and Maritain, and which is generated objectively again and again from the position between natural thinking and theology which cannot be pinned down precisely. Precisely because the Catholic thinker is to lead those who do not yet believe to the total truth, through arguments of the truth, he must be the first to portray in his own life the movement that he demands of others, the movement that lies in the abdication of his own absolute standpoint and judgment.

These are the general preconditions for a fruitful encounter between Catholic philosophy and modern philosophy. It was necessary to begin by demonstrating these, so that the general laws might not be unnecessarily confused with the special laws which are generated by the circumstances of the present day. In what follows, we shall speak of this encounter today.

2. *The encounter today as a formal problem*

After all that has been said, it can no longer be doubted that a true encounter between Catholic thought and modern thought is a strict requirement for the former, and that it must exercise its art of reduction and of the clarifying transposition on modern thought no less than on every other kind of thought. But it cannot be denied that special difficulties are opposed on both sides to this encounter, and that these repeatedly depress the sincere will to engage in the encounter and to perform the task satisfactorily.

The first difficulty comes from the particular spirit and character of modern philosophy. It can be affirmed correctly that, without the secularization of Christian thought, modern philosophy would not have come into existence at all. Modern philosophy is a kind of refuse product of formerly Christian (more precisely, theological) intellectual contents—and this, not merely in a subordinate sense, at the margin, but

essentially and in its kernel. The curve of this secularization has been described so often that it has left its mark on each one of us as something taken for granted; thus only a few references suffice here. Already in the Renaissance and the Baroque periods, one is justified in asking to what extent the new cosmological natural philosophy and mysticism, which already begins with Nicholas of Cusa and develops in Bruno and in the Florentine Neo-Platonism, is anything other than the mere secularization of the theological-mystical view of the world as this reaches from Origen and Dionysius *via* Erigena to Eckhart and Lull. One is likewise justified in asking (from the other side) to what extent the teaching about the natural human being with his natural final goal, which is demanded by the struggle against Baianism in the Catholic sphere, too, and which is favored from the outside also by the development of the period, pressing on towards the development of a natural ethics, a natural doctrine of the state and a sociology, would be conceivable without the secularization of theological intellectual matter, as these are invested within Scholasticism—which however, even as late as Thomas, knows only the one single *finis supernaturalis* of the human being. Further, one can raise the problem of the extent to which everything that behaves in modern times as a philosophy of religion that is apparently independent of Christianity in fact lives in its innermost being either from the adoption or from the negation of ideas that are supernatural in a Christian sense. The unfinished discussion about the relationship between Christianity and German Idealism is especially well suited to bring these matters clearly to light. None of the great Idealist philosophers and thinkers can be thought of even to the least extent without Christianity. Indeed, they themselves do not at all wish to be thought of in this way, for they all endeavor openly to salvage the so-called "truth" of what is Christian into a post- or supra-Christian sphere: Lessing, no less than Herder and Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, Goethe no less than Hölderlin or Schiller. And even those who publicly cut themselves free from faith in Christ, like a Hebbel or Wagner or Nietzsche, do not escape from the figure of the Son of Man, and attempt to salvage the abiding element in this into new knowledge and new forms of life. The whole air of the century is impregnated with Christianity, although a genuine faith in Christ and in his Church does not dominate the images of the world anywhere. Sometimes, as in Hegel, the attempt is made to build this faith completely into a system, so that the faith lies like something ultimate around what is only penultimate. The secularization takes on almost the form of a vampire, sucking at the living veins of what is Christian in order to transfuse the blood into other organisms, but this is done in the attitude of deep acknowledgement, indeed of veneration for the "immortal values" of Christianity. And since a naive ignorance of the true form of what is Catholic must be presupposed in the consciousness of this century, since what is Protestant has become the dominant form of what is Christian, it will indeed be psychologically impossible in most cases to decide whether in the particular thinker the decision for or against Christ has been taken. The process of secularization goes on before our eyes with such anatomical precision that we can follow it into its ultimate fibers. What is Kant without Luther, and how is one to understand his ethics without the presuppositions created by Protestantism? What is Herder without the Bible and the Church Fathers, Novalis without Böhme and Zinzendorf, what are Hölderlin and Hegel without the deepest impregnation by the Johannine writings? And yet all of this, when we contemplate it from our standpoint today, is a process of decay that cannot be halted: for there is only one step from Hölderlin to Nietzsche, and only half a step from Hegel to Feuerbach and Marx. One may indeed prefer the full (even if primitive and barbarous) negation of Christianity to the whole ambiguous profound meaning of the idealistic hybrid world in which the Christian-anti-Christian amalgam has been melted together in such an indissoluble fashion that dialectical thought can devote itself to all the games of endless speculation without ever needing to come to a decision. And even those like Kierkegaard who attempt to cut through this demonic knot, in order to re-establish the Christian decision, will not wholly free themselves from its entanglement. To such an extent has everything become ambiguous.

The end of the century lets this twilight brighten in a clearer Yes or No. On the one hand, philosophy takes on clearly anti-Christian traits in Nietzsche, Klages and other emphatic philosophers of life, while it shows in figures like Bergson, Scheler, and Driesch sides that, if not authentically Christian, are nevertheless in inherent sympathy with Christianity. But what we are primarily concerned with here is not the personal profession of faith of the thinkers, but their conscious or unconscious adoption of theological data. It is quite

impossible to conceive of either group, the anti-Christian or the Christian, without these presuppositions. In order to paint his prophet Zarathustra, Nietzsche, the pastor's son, borrows above all the palette of the Bible, as Hölderlin earlier had adorned his redeemer Empedocles with all the insignia of the Christian Messiah. Klages's denial of the spirit cannot even be thought of without the background in the God of revelation. Bergson's plea for intuition against the technologized *ratio* does indeed mean a direct and dangerous calling into question of the entire Western tradition of the spirit, but (as his late writings show) he draws the courage for this from the Christian mystical tradition, whose immediate experience of God is secularized into a philosophical contact with the mystery of life. This gives Bergson the advantage of being able to set a kind of halo of Christian religiosity around his attack on the Aristotelian-Thomist-Kantian understanding of the essence of discursive knowledge, although the intuition which he intends cannot in the slightest be equated or even only compared with the true phenomena of Catholic mysticism. An even more dangerous game is played in Scheler's portrayal of religion and of the holy, as well as in his phenomenology of love, since it is obvious that here the most intimate mysteries of the Christian world of grace, which belong exclusively in the sphere of theology, are enticed over into the field of philosophy. The description of the religious act begins as a pure philosophical description, but oscillates unnoticed more and more strongly over into the Christian revelation and draws its nourishment from Scripture, from Augustine and Pascal, although the pure supernaturality of what is borrowed in this way is nowhere acknowledged. In the same way, the description of personal love detaches itself without any break in continuity from a purely philosophical exposition of the vital feelings of sympathy and then adorns itself towards the end with all the data of intra-ecclesial spirituality. This seamless transition from the natural plane to the supernatural seemed appropriate to open up a broad access to the understanding of Christian truths without the necessity of a confessional decision, initiating outsiders in the innermost chambers of Catholic thought without weighing them down with the ballast of dogmatic formulae. Indeed, according to the fundamental law of the philosophy of life, these formulae could be shown to be subsequent rigid formalizations in the *ratio* of originally alive intuitions of love, just as Thomas Aquinas is judged by Scheler to be a decline from Augustine's doctrine of love. The same seamless transition from nature to supernature, the reflection of Christian truths into the sphere of natural truth, could finally find an authentication for itself, apparently with all justification, from the patristic period of theology. Indeed, it could present itself as the re-establishment of the primitive Christian unity of nature and grace which had become more and more lost in modern times. But only one thing was forgotten here, namely that patristic theology is and wishes to be nothing other than the ecclesial exposition of the Church's life, while Scheler's religious thought carefully guards against being confronted with the problem of the confessional decision.

The entire modern philosophy of value is closely connected to Scheler's ambiguous (because secularized) thought. What is described here as the realm of validities and values, precisely in connection with Scheler's turning from the theory of values which had been formalized in a neo-Kantian sense and with his turning to a material ethics of value, lives inherently almost entirely from the fundamental positions of the theological doctrine of grace as these are translated into the purely philosophical sphere. This is true not only in the description of the individual areas of value of the ethical, the religious, the holy, but just as much in the way in which the break in continuity between value and Being, the impossibility of understanding the realm of value as a part and function of the realm of Being, is secretly experienced and described on the basis of the theological duality of grace and nature. Once again we ought not to emphasize here the fact that this dualism between value and Being—as the continuation of the fracture in the philosophy of life between life and abstraction, intuition and intelligence—is a symptom of the decadence of the great Western intellectual tradition. Rather we ought to emphasize that this new *philosophoumenon* introduces itself in the mantle of traditional theological truths which bestow on it (as on the wolf in sheep's clothing) a familiar appearance that awakens confidence precisely in the unexperienced Christian spirits.

Finally, one need only recall the explicitly realized philosophy of existence, in Japsers and Heidegger, in order to see the newest forms of secularization. Both are unthinkable without the great Christian tradition from Augustine via the nominalism of late Scholasticism to Pascal, Kierkegaard and Dostoyevski. It may be true that Jaspers has preserved more clearly religious, indeed Christian-Protestant, traits for his

metaphysics of the cipher, of the opening out into the inexplicable puzzles of transcendence, than the nihilistic openness of Heidegger (something which cannot be altered at all by his later mystical camouflage in his interpretations of Hölderlin). And it may be true that the humanistic breadth of the interpretation of existence in Jaspers has space for the most subtle analyses of the human encounter with the "Thou" and with the unknown God. Yet all of these descriptions of the most tender and most inestimable particularities and situations of existence in the world do nothing more than reflect the secularized soul of the modern human person. Much in them would have been just as unfathomable to earlier ages as a Picasso to Raphael or a Hindemith to Palestrina. This permits us to gauge what the human being of today has lost, and to see that the best in him is the distant echo of what was once the glorious possession of the people of earlier times. Perhaps the path of the secularization of Christian values in thought which we have indicated here has not yet been taken to the full. Perhaps, after the phases which we have described, we must still await one final phase, in which the Christian element no longer remains alive even as historical material and as reminiscence, but as something that has become totally alien to humanity, something to which no relationship exists any more. Considered from the standpoint of Christianity, there is little inherent probability in this phase, for Christianity has received from on high so much power to endure and to be renewed constantly that it cannot cease to remain a continuous thorn in the flesh even of a humanity that has sunk totally into what is earthly.

The encounter which is required between Catholic thought and modern thought takes on, naturally, a double difficulty today in the presence of this development of thought. Not only does the Christian thinker in each case encounter his own material in his partner, material which the other has made his own without needing to draw the Christian consequences of it; besides this, he encounters it in such a changed and corrupt form that he scarcely dares any longer to think of a reversal of the development which would bring it back into its former Christian form. Once, the Christian Alexandrines promulgated the slogan of the intellectual *spoliatio Aegyptiorum*: the plundering of the pagan and Jewish authors in order to lead the contents of what they had written back to their original true possessor, Christ. Now the Christian thinkers must experience the opposite, a *spoliatio Christianorum* which they are powerless

to resist, because those who plunder refuse the act of supernatural faith and lay claim for themselves, as unbelievers, to everything that has been given form by this faith. This situation is decidedly more desperate than the first; for while Christianity in its first period of blossoming met a philosophy which was unbelieving in the Christian sense and understood how to break it open and widen it out from within in order to make it a vessel for the truth of revelation, Christianity is confronted today with a post-Christian philosophy which has already put the Christian experience behind itself and holds that it can turn from this experience as apparently informed and mature.

Nevertheless, the task continues to exist, and it is impossible for the Christian thinker to withdraw from it. Here he will bear in mind that late antiquity too was a decadent period, that Philo, the source of the Alexandrines, was to a large extent a secularized theology of revelation; that the Gnosis which was the great stimulant of Catholic theology was the supratemporal classical example of secularized Christianity, which the Church's theology ultimately overcame; and that the paganism of Julian and of Porphyry was nourished no less than modern paganism by resentment against Christianity. Thus the situation is broadly the same: as soon as Christianity appears on the scene, the opponent is no longer naive; he negates; and the more heated the struggle becomes, all the more knowingly does he negate.

Thus it is essential above all to free modern philosophy, too, from its negations and to direct it to its proper place within Christian knowledge. For the Christian thinker as such, the task today ought not to be more difficult or easier than it was for the Church Fathers or for Thomas. If he knows his own tradition thoroughly enough, he will not succumb to the danger of speaking of modern achievements where fundamentally only the adoption (perhaps disguised) of traditional material exists. He will demonstrate soberly that what the masses who read the newspapers admire as the newest discovery is something exceedingly ancient with which he has long been familiar in its original form. Basically, he does not need in the least to bring home what has been at home for a very long time already. But his feeling of certainty in possession will go along with the keenest vigilance, so that he may not miss anything essential that is new and original in modern thought, despite all the secularization. Like every age, today's age too has an "immediacy to God." Just as every artistic style has a character

that cannot be replaced by any other style, so too the style of today's thought cannot in the least be reproduced completely by the style of another century or another form of thought. Not even the most highly polished conceptual art of scholasticism can suffice to portray completely the expressly modern problems. Too much has changed since that time, not only in the customs of life, but more deeply in the customs of thinking and experiencing themselves, for it to be possible simply to measure today's spirit against the criteria of an earlier spirit. And if it is true that no period has been useless in relation to eternity, but has its own voice in the choir of what does not pass away, then one will not wish to miss the voice of today's period there. Indeed, it would be evidence of the worst kind of backwoods mentality if Catholic philosophers were to wish to pass by the most evident progress and enrichments of the modern period to hold rigidly fast to a medieval *status quo*. At most, this would mean handing on the letter of the great scholastic theologians while abandoning their inner spirit, which was a spirit of astonishing openness to their own age and of the most audacious progressiveness. The increased difficulty which is the result of the fact of the secularization of the Christian element is balanced by the increased wealth of stimuli, both from the realm of the exact sciences, which in part create wholly new points of departure, and from the realm of the intellectual sciences, which have also extended the field of speculation on all sides.

The last remarks have already indicated where the difficulties on the side of the Catholic thinker lie. Catholic philosophy is largely—if not in principle, yet in practice—bound to the institution of learning, and more specifically to the education, of future students of theology. As carried out in concrete terms, it is mostly a theological propaedeutic. In itself, this is an ancient situation: this is how things were in the Alexandria of Clement and Origen, the leaders of the *didaskalia* there. And a great part of the Christian transposition of Greek thought was accomplished in the form of compendia and teaching manuals for the use of schools, and not least for the use of theology: one may mention Leontius of Byzantium as an example here. In his history of the scholastic method, Grabmann has described the transition of this philosophy of the schools from the classical period to the Middle Ages, and has demonstrated thereby that there is an ancient history behind the form of thought of high scholasticism. This may indeed be a work of genius in its highest representatives, but it remains bound to the needs of the

schools, not only externally, but also internally, in its methodology and in its contents. Thomas's aim in his *Summa* is to create a practical school manual for beginners, and the methodological and substantial difference between it and his *Quaestiones disputatae* or even his commentaries on Aristotle has been noted and recognized from the outset. But it is undeniable that precisely the *Quaestiones* are adapted to a phase of school instruction (even if a more advanced stage), that it is impossible not to recognize particular ecclesiastical-social concerns in the structural form of the *quaestio* as well as in the way in which the questions posed are resolved, and that Thomas remains always aware of a responsibility for all his hearers here: none of them is to leave the disputation, if he has good will and brings with him the gift of understanding, otherwise than with the feeling and the consciousness that all the questions have been resolved, as far as this is possible. In the genuinely supernatural serenity which remains the mystery of this great saint, there opens up before the eye, as a source of ever fresh wonder, a kind of heavenly world of wisdom in which everything that seems confused and hopeless on the murky earth clears away like clouds to give way to a radiant azure sky. But where one can no longer presuppose the unity of such unique holiness with such unique prudence, where the supernatural gift of grace is imitated only in an external fashion, as if it were a technique that could be learned, this particular charism of the Angel of the Schools, this gift of clarification, of smoothing out and calming down, which lives in some way from the grace of the risen Lord, his power to give hearts a peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7), can become a disaster for thought. Since the school is a situation directed at a particular aim, everything that is touched upon is brought to its solution as simply, quickly, and unambiguously as possible. The logic which must be developed in the service of this goal is not only a logic of calming things down, but not seldom the special art of evasion and of explaining things away. Its aim is above all to take everything in at a glance, and its constructive tendency means that it is opposed to the other fundamental orientation of philosophical investigation: aporetics, as this was developed by Socrates and Plato and is represented today by Nikolai Hartmann and the existentialist philosophers. The school can tolerate only carefully-measured doses of this process of leading the untrained thought, which is all too sure of what it possesses, to the confrontation with the deeper questions, the in-

dication of the true "tracklessness" which is the background against which it is possible to think of perhaps finding a path beyond the *aporia*, this art of the interiorization of thought through the destruction of premature syntheses and ready-made solutions. The permissible measure is embodied by the form of scholasticism's *quaestiones*, which certainly allows there to be a dialogue of question and answer, but still only a question put by the pupil which awaits the superior answer of the master in which the outward semblance of the question—which is sensed to be only a semblance, but is not yet understood completely (*primum videtur*)—must be dissolved. It is not possible in the school for the dialogical form of thought to win any decisive position, the common questioning on the part of several equals who endeavor in common to arrive at a solution which they do not know in advance, with the risk of many of Plato's dialogues that the saving solution may perhaps not be found at all, that it is postponed and must perhaps remain reserved to the investigation of a larger context.

The Alexandrines, who were still familiar with this form of genuine seeking, but who imprudently attempted to give it a place in the activity of the school, had to endure the bitter experience of the inadmissibility of such aporetics, when they were accused (not without justice) of an esotericism based on a double foundation. The young Augustine could afford to engage in philosophical activity as an end in itself with some friends on a country estate, far from the public activity of instruction. And much of this is still alive in Anselm, who created for himself an imaginary opponent in his solitary projects of thought, in order to spare himself and his opponent no cut or thrust in ultimate honesty. But then it is only Erasmus who will take up the dialogue again, naturally on the level of more harmless intellectual games, and Berkeley, Schelling and Fechner will continue the form of the dialogue as a form of the common seeking of the truth. But here we do not have the dialogue as a form of art, but only the inherent form of aporetic thinking, which can never be dispensed with, and also is never in fact dispensed with, in any universal intellectual project as an essential corrective to the human tendency to systematize. John Henry Newman, surely the most vital Catholic thinker of the modern period, is the evidence of this: the results at which he arrives are utterly ill-suited to furnish material for textbooks, not only because everything in Newman depends formally on the English art of nuance, but also because there is an

inner resistance in his thought to systematization, and he frequently sees a greater success in leaving the questions open than in closing them prematurely. On a lower stage, something similar would have to be said of Hermann Bahr, but also of Chesterton and Guardini.

From this point there would emerge, as the presupposition of every fruitful encounter of modern philosophy and Catholic philosophy, the demand that philosophical propaedeutics be largely separated from genuine philosophical investigation. The former will always remain necessary, especially in the service of the Catholic secondary and tertiary, secular and religious centers of education. But every teacher in such institutions who has at least some experience knows that a gifted pupil becomes mature enough to take the first steps in genuinely philosophical questions only at best at the end of the course of study. If this separation is once carried out, so that autonomous investigation is neither practically nor theoretically measured against the demands of pedagogics, then there exists the prospect that Catholic philosophy can also become concerned about the encounter with more modern thought in a way that takes itself seriously and that must be taken seriously by others.

This encounter will be possible to the extent that Catholic philosophers are so familiar with the intellectual materials of the tradition, and especially of Scholasticism, that they are able to open it out of the systematized form into a living (if perhaps also only preliminary) aporetics. Here they will discover with astonishment how much both the philosophy of the Patristic Age and Scholasticism are suited to such a posing of the problem, and indeed themselves already possess this question in a hidden and an open manner. If Heidegger today, in the course of such aporetics, unrolls the program of a "destruction of Western ontology" in which he wishes to dissolve the closed systemic forms as far back as Aristotle and Plato, in order to open anew at all points the access to a genuine phenomenological encounter with Being, such a claim contains more than a mere will to destroy: it contains the justified demand that no philosophical solution be allowed to rest in itself, but rather that one must persist at the original point of posing the question, in order also to learn the answer there ever closer to the origin. Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Anselm, and Nicholas of Cusa are such thinkers, and in Thomas himself—who was for the most part poured into the mold of sys-

tematic forms only later on—there exists an astonishing breadth, flexibility, and mutability of perspectives which allow quite automatically the aporetic element in his thinking to emerge when the individual statements are set up and mobilized over against one another. In Thomas, considered as a whole, it is seldom that the pressure to form a conclusive system outweighs the care he takes to allow even the most awkward opponent to have his say. Despite his will to clarify, he is a master in the art of leaving questions open. This is what inspires confidence in his thinking. He understood that ordering and systematizing need not be the same thing, and that while he had to follow up the creative work of God, who dissolves chaos, in the *materia intellectualis* of the world of thought, his "creation" must retain all the fullness, colorfulness, rich wealth of contents and freshness of a genuine cosmos, in order to be able to count as a credible image of the divine act of ordering. The one who moves by thought in this world will attempt to interpret further in the same spirit what Thomas has created, while not forgetting that alongside him a multitude of other worlds which are not identical with his likewise await their interpretation; he will recognize in Thomas himself the lively point of intersection of the most various spheres of influence, which generate questions posed in a living manner precisely when they are pursued back to their sources (as for example Michael Wittmann has shown in a methodologically excellent study of the ethics of St. Thomas); and he will also take seriously, not only historically but in a genuinely philosophical manner also, what finds no place (or only a diminished place) in Thomas, thus arriving at a wealth even within the Catholic tradition which will make it possible for him to meet the wealth of modern thought without at all being confused or made anxious.

This aporetic education by means of the tradition itself will above all defend him against an addiction that has been so frequent hitherto: the tendency to fall victim to the first form of modernity that comes along, out of an ignorance of the fullness of the tradition, and thus to become a Catholic Bergsonian, Schelerian, philosopher of value or Kierkegaardian. This more-than-lamentable sight—which is always the counterpart to a rigid traditionalism—would then be replaced by the intellectual grappling with modernity as something taken for granted, without strong emotions either for or against the modern age, for or against the tradition. It is only on the basis of such an attitude that it would one day be possible to write the history of modern philosophy from the Catholic side; we do indeed have partial contributions to this—from Przywara, Maréchal, Steinbüchel, Gilson, and others—but the project as a whole has still to be carried out. This basis would also make it possible to present Scholasticism for today's thinkers, not through the hazardous venture of transposing Thomas into the modality of the modern philosophy of identity (as we have experienced this to a great variety of degrees in recent years), but by presenting the genuine fullness of the tradition in a form and conceptuality that permits the modern thinker to find a point of access and entry to Scholasticism with his own starting-point in the questions that concern him.

3. *Today's encounter as a problem of substance*

Naturally, we shall not set out here the substance of the encounter that may be expected on the basis of what has been said up to this point, for that would presuppose the full presentation of the entire breadth of modern and of medieval philosophy. Even a schematic sketch of this encounter would mean anticipating the living creation of Christian thinkers and attempting to canalize this into paths marked out in advance. Both the tradition and modern philosophy are so rich that living water can be summoned forth from the rock at innumerable points, provided only that an original thinker is at hand to strike the rock. This is so true that, when we now conclude by indicating some especially fruitful possibilities of encounter, the selection of the questions must remain even more subjective than in what has been said hitherto.

We leave to one side here the field of the exact sciences, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, and mathematics. Specialists are required today, if an overview of these fields is to be had, and it is of necessity seldom that we find thinkers who possess the freedom of the spirit that permits them to go beyond their special branch of knowledge to investigate the tradition also and to accomplish a genuinely fruitful transposition of what belongs to today and what belongs to the past, without succumbing to a dilettantism. It is true that tremendous progress has been achieved in all these fields, not only in empirical observation, but these achievements often stand alongside metaphysics, without being integrated into it. Both have developed so far from one another in the course of

the centuries that it is scarcely possible any longer to find the points of contact. One ought perhaps to begin by seeking the intermediary links: to mention only two names, Leibnitz and Bolzano would have a mediating role to play, and this detour would permit transpositions that otherwise seem impossible. It will be easier in biology, where philosophical investigation today returns openly without embarrassment to the Aristotelian tradition and simultaneously to the Christian tradition, in Driesch, Uexküll, Dacqué, and Conrad-Martius—returns bearing such a wealth of new knowledge! How tempting it is to begin here and to attempt a philosophy of life and of the development of life! Nor shall we speak here of the achievements of modern psychology. A special gift of discernment will be needed here in order to separate what is of abiding value from what is time-conditioned in the bad sense of this word, and to make the comparison with what earlier authors have discussed under quite different headings (for example, in the teaching about the *habitus*, the virtues, asceticism, or sacramental confession).

Rather, we shall speak of the fundamental tendencies of modern philosophical speculation itself, and of the possible points of contact for a successful encounter with this. We have already discussed Idealism; it is not from this that we can hope for the greatest stimulus precisely today. The favorable moment for this confrontation is past, and was not in fact taken advantage of when it came in the last century. The task of working in a generous spirit through philosophy from Kant to Hegel has not been carried out, and is still something lacking today. At that time, it was not possible, because Scholasticism was much too little known (although one must draw attention to the unique achievement of Franz von Baader, who discovered Thomas Aquinas in his struggle for Christian Idealism, and made use of him in his own way). This unfortunate burial of the Christian tradition made it impossible to keep pace with the intellectual development, because in many cases Christian thinkers lacked the equipment necessary to meet the almost crushing weight of thought of a Fichte or a Hegel. Even today it would be desirable to take up this neglected task—unfortunately, Maréchal's history of philosophy omitted precisely the Idealist period!—in order thereby to establish certain presuppositions for a dialogue that ought to be something taken for granted, and yet are lacking. How necessary it would be on an essential level, for example, to compare the pure logic of Hegel

with Aristotle and with Thomas's commentary on this! The ancient concepts of essence and existence, essentiality and person, possibility, reality and necessity would take on life, if they were considered in such a synoptic fashion! What an enrichment of the teaching about the analogy of being it would be, if this teaching had struggled in close combat with dialecticism! Naturally, it would not be possible to engage in this struggle in the form appropriate to a school; even if this would mean that the struggle would be visible for all specialists, and open to their investigation, it would have to renounce the idea of being the training-ground of philosophical beginners.

But the period of Idealism is past; it was followed by the period of the philosophy of life. At first glance, one can see in this period a striking impoverishment of speculative power—something of which the philosophy of life is indeed proud—and one can feel tempted to judge it a product of the decline of the Western spirit. We have ourselves given prominence to this aspect above. But one cannot overlook the fact that even the philosophy of life defends genuine Christian concerns over against the formalism which it overcomes in epistemology and ontology. It has given them false names, and even worse, false concepts and forms of thought as their expression; it has presented its concerns in the form of irrationalism and intuitionism and thereby provoked the protest of the Christian thinkers who were obliged to hold fast to the fundamental form of the discursive structure of knowledge. And even if some of these Christian thinkers held that they ought to enter a pact with this irrationalism, attempting to replace Thomas by Bergson, the healthy sober insight of the majority was correct to protest against this also. And yet: has not the philosophy of life too its true concern? Not only in a general and vague sense of a regulative tendency that demands that the thinker "remain alive," warning against the reduction to the bare bones of unfruitful speculation and aiming at a listening to the "life-rhythm" of Being itself in the sense of Nietzsche and Bergson—but also in a much more precise, technically philosophical sense? The concern of the philosophy of life is that thinking always contains an element that in every case lies beyond the concept, cannot be captured in the concept and yet gives the concept its foundation and its justification. But this concern is also the concern of the entire Christian tradition: in the Platonic form in Augustine, who attempts to subsume conceptual knowledge under the schema of partici-

pation in an eternally transcendent, infinite light of truth, and in Thomas who traces conceptual knowledge back to the first principles of knowledge and of Being which are supra-conceptual because they are possessed directly and intuitively (here Thomas is less helpful for the problem with which we are concerned). But these first principles cannot be abstract propositions, since it is precisely not on the basis of abstraction that we arrive at them: they must necessarily be concrete and immediate encounters, not only with the laws of Being, but with Being itself. This is why Descartes is correct to locate the fontal point of all evidential character in the intuition of thinking Being (however this intuition is to be described more precisely), i.e., in the identity of Being and consciousness in the act of thinking, where this identity is not itself disclosed through a discourse but is recognized directly to be the presupposition of all subsequent discourses. Even if the discourse reaches those sources, so that the original intuition can be described and investigated in logical discourse—which means that it is not at all possible to speak of irrationalism—nevertheless, it remains no less true that that immediate encounter with Being remains the basis that supports all discursive activity of the understanding. We may leave aside here the question whether this intuition must be narrowed down to the mere existence of one's own consciousness, or whether—without detriment to the discourse which is necessary for knowledge of the other things—the existence of God and the existence of the world as the destruction of the solitariness of the "I" is just as fundamental a given element in this first intuition as the existence of the "I" itself. Thus, the path of judging and of concluding that God and the external world exist would not be taken without a prior indication in the immediate evidential character of their necessity. For otherwise, the concern of the critique of knowledge that one should arrive with a minimum of admissible presuppositions at that point which is immovable under all circumstances is one thing, while the concern of a phenomenology of the foundations of knowledge, far removed from every readiness to engage in resistance, is something else; the latter, as it peacefully contemplates what is present before its gaze, may perhaps discover many more individual data that the purely critical science is willing to admit.

It is possible that one would arrive, through such a concretization of the first evidential character which is prior to all discourses and remains superior to them, at an understanding of Being and of knowledge that contains—once again, we leave open the question, how—both in Being and in thinking an element of fullness and of richness that can never be wholly captured by any ontological and logical form. A mysterious surplus, which prevents Being and thinking from becoming exhaustible, keeps awake both the interest in the existing object and the movement of the thought that recognizes and investigates. And one would need only to link this supposition (initially very difficult to grasp) with the ancient Thomistic teaching on the real distinction between essence and existence, in order to understand that it is neither absurd nor without a foundation in the tradition: for the authentic Thomistic conception, the *actus essendi* is unlimited in itself and signifies, over against the form of the *essentia* which limits it, an element of fullness which no limits of essentiality can tie down in such a way that it would not always overflow this essentiality in a mysterious and yet very real manner. No matter how one describes this *actus essendi* in the creature—more as a principle distinct from the infinite act of God, or more as the participation of the creaturely finite being in the infinity of divine act—it will always remain the case that this act overflows the determinate essence in the manner in which the principle of "life" overflows the principle of "form" in the philosophy of life. If creatures were only "essences," they would be radical finitude, they would be circumscribable, open to being known totally by one another, exhaustible, and they could not be the object for one another of an infinite interest. But something in them is more than can be comprehended, something entices thought ever further on, although it is not possible to see any end ahead, something holds the movement of insight and of love in suspense and tension. This "something" is not irrational, since thought moves within it, in a kind of infinite progression; it is the necessary condition for the possibility of this movement itself. It belongs to the *ratio* as its basis and its empowering. But at the same time, it breaks open the compass of the *ratio*, by broadening out the merely theoretical understanding to a total reason.

It is in this direction that Joseph Maréchal has sketched his dynamic theory of knowledge, in explicit dependence on the old Scholastic ontology. What he has expressed in a particular form of Thomism which keeps to the determined presuppositions of the schools could be widened and modified in many ways, and could offer in this extension the precise response to all the positive concerns and questions of the phi-

losophy of life. The widening would be possible *inter alia* as a greater proximity to the experience of thinking and of the encounter with Being itself, and the transcendence of Being would thereby become phenomenologically fathomable without the necessity of abandoning the strict framework of a philosophical investigation in favor of a psychological analysis. In this activity, not only would the Thomistic real distinction supply the corrective for the philosophy of life, but (from the other perspective) the philosophy of life, too, would lead to a revitalization of that doctrine of essence and existence which had become rigid and abstract. Suddenly there would be phenomenological points of access to the doctrine of real distinction, something that has yet been very seldom the case in the history of philosophy. (One finds significant first steps in this direction and indications in Nicolai Hartmann's *Zur Grundlegung der Ontologie*, 1935.) This could be articulated in a multiplicity of aspects which would all be the fruit of a genuine and living encounter with the fundamental phenomenon of finite Being and which could be interpreted on the basis of this. And what is looked on today as a dusty instrument of medieval hair-splitting, something to which scarcely any modern thinker pays any attention now, would at a single stroke enter the center of the most relevant knot of problems today. But the doors would also open backwards into the Patristic Age. Not only along those paths drawn by Roland-Gosselin in his history of the real distinction, but apart from this, where the thing itself already exists although the concepts are not yet visible: thus, for example, in the whole anti-Arian epistemology of the great Cappadocians, who fought passionately for the transcendence both of knowledge and of Being, in the sense that neither what exists nor the act of thinking can ever be captured definitively and laid to rest in the finitude of a form or a concept. There emerges from the great treatises against Eunomius a spirit with which Bergson would at once have felt himself at home, and the Thomistic ontology would have the possibility and thereby the task of mediation between these two fires: it could only grow by doing this service.

A final form of the philosophy of life, though already reflecting strongly over into the philosophy of existentialism, is Karl Jaspers's metaphysics of the cipher. Basically, this philosophy is nothing other than a weary descendent of Platonism and of the Alexandrines' symbolic view of the world. Jaspers understands that everything in Being is full of signifi-

cance, indeed he sees this fullness written so large that nothing conceptual is ever able to meet it even at its margin. The *erôs* of thought, which burns in passion for the unfathomable riches of what exists, lives in him too, and lets him find glorious words for the fullness of meaning of the world. So significant is everything that it will be ever more significant, beyond all interpretation and all possibility of interpretation. But this surplus of significance beyond what the concept grasps, this intensification which led in the philosophy of life to a passionate affirmation of the eternal fullness of life, settles down like an all too heavy weight on the thinker that Jaspers is. He feels himself unable to cope with the onrushing surge of this sea of significance. He is too weary to hold out under the effort of the eternal openness and intensification in the finite thinking and Being. He understands the comparative that dwells in what is creaturely, but he does not allow himself to be borne along by its movement. Thus he experiences the comparative only in the negative mode of failure. A discussion with Jaspers would most likely be fruitless. Not that all his books, which bear almost too heavy a cargo of insights, would fail to give us the richest gifts; but there is no way of getting past the weariness in his *Weltanschauung* which permeates everything. Jaspers can provide only the occasion for Christian thinking to reflect once more on its own philosophy of the cipher: on the universal symbolism of the Alexandrines, with effects that lasted far into the medieval image of the world, the symbolism that understands how to penetrate through all things and through their limitations to reach the archetypes and primal sounds latent in them. The Christian yearning cannot rest satisfied at the "enigmas seen in a mirror": as far as is permitted already now, it wishes to feel in presentiment and groping something of the original totality of all partial words in the divine Word. The Alexandrine symbolic thought explicitly calls on the aid of the mobile unity of the transcendentals as organs of this premonitory knowledge, a knowledge that does not separate itself from the possibilities of the good and the beautiful for reasons of methodological neatness, but specifically includes them to strengthen and intensify itself. It understands the mutual presupposition and inclusion of these properties of Being. Where the *agathon* and the *kalon* are understood as immanent in the truth itself, and where the *circumincessio* of the transcendentals is taken seriously, wholly new possibilities emerge for the encounter between Christian thought and modern thought, possibilities

that are already established (though little developed) behind Scholasticism in the thought-forms of the Fathers. Here too, in a discussion with the metaphysics of "significance and interpretation," Christian thinking does not fall out of the sphere which is properly its home; it can bring the necessary clarification to this metaphysics, but through the new aspects it can also develop for the very first time what is established as its own foundation.

Jaspers throws the bridge across to the genuine philosophy of existentialism. Its endeavor to describe existence in its non-essential kernel is a direct challenge to the Thomists, indeed to every Christian philosophy, to provide the answer. For the existentialist philosophy takes up its abode *de facto* in the innermost kernel of the being of creatureliness, in its "thrownness," its non-absoluteness, its temporality and transience, in distress and guilt, sorrow and death. These realities, which had been pushed out to the extreme margin of philosophical consciousness for centuries and could find no place, or only a very small place, in an Idealist *Weltanschauung* or even in that of the philosophy of life, suddenly stand in the focal point of philosophical investigation. But this means that the problem of the real distinction also stands in that focal point, to the extent that the intention is to use these categories to speak of what belongs to existence in finite Being: and this problem stands in an unheard-of new illumination. Nor does Heidegger omit to draw attention at the end of his book on Kant to the close relationship of the problems posed. A fruitful discussion between Christian philosophy and existentialism cannot be conducted on the basis of general cultural-philosophical and moral considerations, but only on the basis of a clear and exact ontological investigation. Thus, in the confrontation with Heidegger and his pupils, it would be necessary to set out anew the whole breadth of the question of the relationship between essence and existence, and explicitly in such a way that this would include the problematic of temporality. We would see in this that Heidegger has executed a masterly stroke in his transposition of the question of time from the specialized realm of "cosmology" into the innermost center of universal ontology, no matter how perverse his subsequent evaluation of this new knowledge may be. When he exaggerates and ultimately equates being and time, because the relationships of the dimensions of time generate the existential of existence, one could justifiably ask the question whether time and the real distinction are concepts so closely related that they

are describing the same reality from two different sides. Scholasticism has without any doubt paid too little attention to this connection. But if the various aspects of the real distinction established in the scholastic tradition are developed in such a way that the ontological movement between essence and existence emerges clearly, the genuine origin of temporality will be able to be made visible at this point of the break of continuity in finite Being. One will need to pay heed here not only to the relationship in the philosophy of life indicated above between the *actus essendi* as fullness of Being and the *essentia* as the boundary that gives form, but equally to the complementary view of the *essentia* as the stable and supportive essentiality and the *existentia* as the Being which always in each case appears—Avicenna's *esse accidens*. This broadening of the scholastic foundations too will not lack its backing in the patristic age: for we find in Augustine a teaching on time which in its kernel contains all the elements of what will be needed as the reply to the philosophy of existentialism. It is these elements that Scholasticism would need to recall in its reflections, if it wished to take up the confrontation with the moderns supported by this tradition and deepen its own presuppositions.

In this dialogue, Scholasticism's decisive advantage is that it possesses in the point of the real distinction a key position from which it is possible to see through the one-sidedness of the philosophy of existentialism too, and to do this very quickly. All that Scholasticism needs to do is to draw the consequences from the real distinction as the fundamental constitutional structure that permeates finite Being for its transcendental properties, in order to arrive at the insight that thereby these too, in the properties of truth, goodness, and beauty, cannot in the least remain untouched by the distinction between essence and existence. On the contrary: the tension, the fracture goes right through these transcendental properties. Thus, just as one can grasp finite Being only in the tension between essence and existence, and the two poles always explain, illuminate, support and point to one another, so the truth too—let us mention only this here—will always be held in a tension in which the essential and the existential truth are the poles that demand one another and explain one another. The greatest philosophical dispute of the nineteenth century, that between Hegel and Kierkegaard, would take on a wholly new illumination from this simple fact and would appear in a light that would necessarily make it interesting for the scholastic, not only from

a historical point of view, but certainly from a systematic point of view also. The consequences for this further development of the real distinction for the totality of Christian thought cannot be seen totally for the present. They do not call into question anything essential in what the tradition has elaborated, but they enrich the tradition in the sense that Christian thought contains new possibilities for understanding and assimilating other forms of thought. It would be necessary to take up afresh, not only the question of the relationship between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* which has been much discussed by Kant and also by Christian thought through the dialogue with him, and to examine this under this aspect once more, but also the world of Husserl's phenomenology with its distinction between the sight of the essence and factual-historical knowledge, and (from this starting-point) the whole question of the knowledge of what is historical and of its laws. Further, the problematic of the mutual immanence of the transcendentals would occur anew under this heading, too, since the *agathon* and the *kalon* would have to lead the "essential" knowledge beyond itself into an "existential" knowledge. All of this would have to be discussed, not in an uncertainly floating sphere cut off from the tradition, but quite certainly in the primal tradition of Western-Christian thinking from the time of Plato and Aristotle and of the tension established there between the ideal and the real essence (*eidos* and *morphê*). These concepts, which have perhaps lost their freshness of color, would take on new color and enrichment through the modern points of view, both for us and in themselves.

Finally, after the clarifying transposition of the philosophy of life and the philosophy of existentialism in the mode of the tradition, it would be necessary to carry through the confrontation with the modern spirit of history. Here, of course, much work has already been done; yet not so much that it would already be obvious what the position of history in a Christian theory of Being would be. If modern philosophy from the Renaissance onwards takes an ever stronger interest in individuality as such (instead of being interested, like Thomas, only in the species), in the unmistakably distinct personality, then this clear shift of emphasis does not at all have to be interpreted merely as a sign of decadence, in the sense of turning from the universal and the essential to the special and contingent, in the sense of a lack of the power of abstraction and of synthesis. This has its reverse side in an indisputably greater concreteness, a widening of the philosophical field too through the illumination

of what is individual as such by a ray of metaphysics. For this, one need not join Hegel by going as far as to absorb history in the realm of necessity. It is already much if one recognizes both the historicity of Being as a fundamentally ontological category, as well as the significance of history in terms of Being. The indications given above about the origin of temporality show that path on which this encounter can, and indeed must, take place. But if the insight into the necessity of a philosophy of history has arisen universally, nevertheless there is still a long way to go before it is constructed and realized.

We shall not speak further here about the special fields of philosophy—cosmology and psychology, aesthetics and ethics—although it would be possible to bring about the most fruitful encounters with modern thought in these concrete fields. Let us draw attention only to one final point, which concludes our study by referring back to our beginning: viz., to the question of the place given in theology to a Catholic philosophy that would be broadened and made relevant in this way.

The advantages this would have would be almost impossible to overlook. For although theology thinks and develops on the basis of its own presuppositions, it makes use of the human-philosophical forms of consideration and results of investigation at every step on this path. But the broader that this basis is, the broader this available material, the more means does theology possess to develop itself. It will be stimulated, encouraged, enriched almost against its own will by every progress of philosophy. The more nature develops in fullness, the more material does supernature possess in nature to transform, elevate, and permeate like a yeast. Faced with this richness, theologians ought to delight in making everything that the natural spirit can offer into the footstool for the Word of God, instead of being content with a few dried-up concepts and theses which they are otherwise accustomed to borrow from philosophy. The entire fullness—the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of human thought—is not too much to be presented to the Word of God which has become nature. In this sacrifice, modern thought too must not be lacking; Christian philosophy will seek to bring it home, in order to let it share in the transforming power of the fire that must catch hold of everything that is to become eternal, including human thought.—*Translated by Brian McNeil, CRV* □