

## THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

"Theology and Philosophy" is a vast topic. If it is to be manageable at all, its scope must be narrowed. Since this paper is being read at the convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, it is not unreasonable to restrict its range to Roman Catholic theology. Again, since I am a philosopher whose recent research has been devoted to the history of the neo-Thomist movement, the limits of my competence suggest a further narrowing of the paper's focus.

From its birth in the years before *Aeterni Patris* until its transfiguration into what I think is a different system in Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology*,<sup>1</sup> the neo-Thomist movement in philosophy and theology has undergone a remarkable internal evolution. Although Leo XIII recommended scholasticism to the Catholic bishops as a unitary system, common to all the scholastic doctors in 1879, neo-Thomism had evolved into at least three irreducibly distinct systems of epistemology and metaphysics by 1950. One of these systems, Maréchal's transcendental Thomism, remained a vital force in Catholic theology after Vatican II. By 1977, however, the theologies of two of its leading representatives, Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, had become irreducibly distinct in their epistemology, metaphysics and their conception of philosophical and theological method. Rahner had effected a reconciliation between his own transcendental Thomism and the post-Kantian epistemology and metaphysics which *Aeterni Patris* had claimed was irreducibly opposed to St. Thomas' own thought. Lonergan had moved beyond both the Aristotelian metaphysics of classical Thomism and the post-Kantian metaphysics which structured much of Catholic theology in the first half of the nineteenth century. His transcendental method had led him to a new metaphysics of potency, form and act quite distinct from Aristotelian metaphysics and to a new conception of philosophical and theological method to supersede the Aristotelian scientific method of the Thomist theologians. This, I submit, is an interesting intellectual evolution.

Catholic theologians are not over-friendly to Thomism at the moment. They are far from convinced that Thomism has much to say to them. Nevertheless, whatever may be their attitude toward Thomism, Catholic philosophers and theologians can still profit

<sup>1</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J. *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

from a reflection on the history of the neo-Thomism movement, its early program, the internal and external strains which led to its progressive evolution until it reached the stage when evolution became transformation and neo-Thomism ceased to be itself. In the course of that intellectual evolution, the neo-Thomists raised a number of philosophical questions which remain vital questions for any serious philosophical theologian. At the close of the paper I intend to mention at least four of them.

#### *AETERNI PATRIS, HUMANI GENERIS AND VATICAN II*

A few dates may help to focus our attention on the main lines of our consideration. On August 4, 1879 Leo XIII published *Aeterni Patris*. On August 12, 1950, Pius XII published *Humani generis*. On October 28, 1965, *Optatam totius*, Vatican II's Decree on Priestly Formation, was promulgated. These dates are significant. None of us is unaware of their importance in the history of Catholic theology.

Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* had recommended scholasticism as a unitary method for philosophy and theology.<sup>2</sup> Scholasticism did not suffer from the defects which vitiated post-Cartesian philosophy. Scholasticism's Aristotelian epistemology and metaphysics provided a firm foundation for a sound Catholic apologetics. For, unlike post-Cartesian philosophy, scholastic metaphysics could safeguard the proper distinction between faith and reason, nature and grace. Aristotelian metaphysics and Aristotelian scientific method enabled the scholastic theologian to defend and explain the Christian mysteries without falling into the extremes of fideism or rationalism. Its happy combination of sound method and philosophical openness made scholastic philosophy an ideal instrument for the priest to use in his effort to learn from the modern world. Scholastic philosophy would also enable him to furnish sound solutions to the speculative and practical problems which modern philosophy was unable to solve.

Seven decades later, Pius XII published *Humani generis*.<sup>3</sup> In that controversial encyclical the Roman pontiff voiced his opposition to the philosophical and theological movement associated with the "New Theologians," practically all of whom were Maréchal Thomists. Whereas *Aeterni Patris* had recom-

<sup>2</sup>For an English translation of *Aeterni Patris*, see Etienne Gilson, *The Church Speaks to the Modern World* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Image, 1961), pp. 29-54. See also J. Maritain, *The Angelic Doctor* (New York: Dial Press, 1931), pp. 224-62.

<sup>3</sup>*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 (1950), 561-78.

mended the re-introduction of the common philosophy and theology of the scholastic doctors into the Catholic schools, the new theologians had become partisans of philosophical and theological pluralism. *Aeterni Patris* had claimed that the scholastic theology of the post-Tridentine period was the authentic modern development of St. Thomas' own thought. The new theologians, on the contrary, made a sharp distinction between St. Thomas' own thought and the post-Tridentine scholasticism which they were anxious to remove from its dominant position in the Catholic schools. *Aeterni Patris* was overtly hostile to post-Cartesian philosophy. The new theologians, on the contrary, were open and receptive to it.<sup>4</sup>

Not all Thomists, of course, subscribed to the program of the new theologians. Garrigou-Lagrange, for example, and a number of writers in the *Revue Thomiste* attacked it sharply.<sup>5</sup> Neither Maritain nor Gilson were willing to accept the epistemology and metaphysics on which the program of the new theology was built. Its subjective starting point and its Kantian transcendental method were sufficient in themselves to condemn Maréchal Thomism as un-Thomistic and unsound. It was simply another form of the modern, post-Cartesian philosophy against which *Aeterni Patris* had warned the Catholic philosopher and theologian. Repressive measures were employed against the new theologians. Nevertheless, the Church's removal of post-Tridentine scholasticism from its dominant position in *Optatam totius* and her opening to philosophical and theological pluralism after Vatican II vindicated the new theologians' program of philosophical and theological reform.

#### TENSIONS PRODUCED BY POST-TRIDENTINE SCHOLASTICISM

The great Catholic theologians of the post-conciliar period who continue to work in the tradition of St. Thomas are—or, at least, were—Maréchal Thomists. We can see in their work a number of the New Theology's defining characteristics: the dis-

<sup>4</sup>See G. Weigel, S.J., "The Historical Background of the Encyclical, *Humani Generis*," *Theological Studies* 12 (1951), 208-30. *Humani generis* named no names. However, it was popularly believed that Henri de Lubac, Henri Bouilliar and Jean Marie LeBlond were among the Jesuit authors "aimed at" in the encyclical. The name of the future cardinal, Jean Daniélou, was also associated with the movement. The Jesuit theologate at Fourvière in Lyons was one of the movement's strongholds

<sup>5</sup>See the superb account of this controversy in R. F. Harvanek, S.J., "The Unity of Metaphysics," *Thought* 28 (1953), 375-411.

inction between St. Thomas' own thought and post-Tridentine scholasticism, a receptivity to modern philosophy, the use of transcendental reflection on consciousness as the starting point of metaphysics, and a commitment to philosophical and theological pluralism. Whereas the Thomism of Gilson, Maritain, Billot and Garrigou-Lagrange identified itself with the Thomism of *Aeterni Patris*, the Thomism of contemporary transcendental Thomist theologians does not.<sup>6</sup>

One interpretation of this remarkable internal evolution within Thomism was that Thomist theologians were simply bending with the wind. Already in 1950, the year in which *Humani generis* was published, post-Tridentine scholasticism could no longer structure the theology which the Church required to present Christ's revelation to the modern world. The tensions between exegetes and theologians had become almost unbearable. The difficulty of translating scholastic formulae into effective preaching had provoked the abortive effort to create a kerygmatic theology to parallel the scholastic treatises. More than a hint of scholastic theology's inability to deal with contemporary problems could be found in Pius XII's own encyclicals.

Despite its conservative tone, *Mystici corporis* encouraged the trend away from post-Tridentine ecclesiology. It helped to revive the historical and organic ecclesiology associated with Möhler and the nineteenth-century Catholic Tübingen theology inspired by Schelling. *Divino afflante Spiritu* conferred the papal benediction on critical and historical methods governed by the norms of contemporary empirical science. By doing so, Pius XII implicitly raised the question as to how the results of such empirical biblical research were to be integrated into a non-empirical, non-historical Aristotelian science of theology. *Sempiternus Rex* did more than commemorate the fifteen hundredth anniversary of Chalcedon. It provoked a number of Christological studies which questioned the ability of classical metaphysical categories like person and nature to thematize the biblical data about Christ.

H. Rahner,  
J. Jungmann

#### PHILOSOPHICAL PLURALISM WITHIN THOMISM IN 1950

Nevertheless, the new theologians' opening to philosophical pluralism had not come about entirely through external pressure.

<sup>6</sup>For Gilson's identification of his own philosophy with the Christian philosophy recommended by *Aeterni Patris* see his *The Philosopher and Theology* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 174-99.

It was the result of a genuine intellectual evolution within Thomism itself. By 1950 several decades of historical scholarship and critical reflection had brought about an internal scission within the neo-Thomist movement. At least three irreducibly distinct systems of epistemology and metaphysics had come into being, each of which claimed to be the authentic modern representative of St. Thomas' thought.

Perhaps the best known was the classical Thomism of Jacques Maritain. Maritain took his inspiration from Cajetan and, above all, from the great post-Tridentine Thomist, John of St. Thomas. On the basis of John of St. Thomas' epistemology Maritain constructed his critical realism and his metaphysics of the three degrees of abstraction. The eidetic, or conceptual, intuition of being and John of St. Thomas' epistemology of the cognitional sign enabled Maritain to argue convincingly for his contemporary development of post-Tridentine Thomism as the speculative integrator of human knowledge. Thomistic abstraction of the concept from the phantasm was the key to Maritain's brilliant integration of aesthetic, moral, scientific and religious experience. *The Degrees of Knowledge*,<sup>7</sup> *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*,<sup>8</sup> *Science and Wisdom*<sup>9</sup> and *Integral Humanism*<sup>10</sup> were brilliant expositions of Maritain's Christian philosophy. Garrigou-Lagrange and Charles Journet were Maritain's great theological allies.<sup>11</sup> His influence on Catholic philosophy, theology, education and social thought was enormous.

Maritain's integration of knowledge required an Aristotelian metaphysics of man and being. The Aristotelian collaboration of sense and intellect in the unitary act of knowledge and the Aristotelian distinction between connatural and conceptual knowledge permitted him to integrate the practical knowledge of art and ethics with the speculative knowledge of his Aristotelian philosophy of

<sup>7</sup>J. Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959).

<sup>8</sup>J. Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: Meridian Press, 1955).

<sup>9</sup>J. Maritain, *Science and Wisdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940).

<sup>10</sup>J. Maritain, *Integral Humanism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973). For Maritain's epistemology of the cognitional sign, see *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1939), pp. 63-130.

<sup>11</sup>See J. Maritain, *Le Paysan de la Garonne* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), pp. 201, 259-64. There are numerous references to Garrigou-Lagrange in *The Degrees of Knowledge*. See also C. C. Journet, "Jacques Maritain Theologian," *The New Scholasticism* 46 (1972), 32-50.

nature. An Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and accident, faculty, act and habit enabled Maritain to integrate the Christian's philosophical and mystical experience of reality with the necessary conclusions of Aristotelian scientific theology.

If Maritain's philosophy could be critically vindicated, Thomists could make a persuasive case that, in Maritain's works, post-Tridentine scholasticism had achieved the task of integrating knowledge which *Aeterni Patris* assigned to the Christian philosopher.

In fact, the approach to philosophy in *Aeterni Patris* and in Maritain's programmatic work, *Three Reformers*,<sup>12</sup> is strikingly similar. Modern philosophy could not integrate the Catholic Christian's natural and supernatural experience. Only scholastic philosophy could so that. Scholastic philosophy had reached its most mature expression in the interpretation of the Angelic Doctor proposed by his post-Tridentine interpreters. The philosophy which structured Maritain's brilliant exposition and defense of his integral humanism was, in essence, the post-Tridentine scholasticism of John of St. Thomas. No other philosophical option was acceptable to him. There could only be one true metaphysics. That was the metaphysics critically grounded through the eidetic, or conceptual, intuition of being. In other words, it was the Aristotelico-Thomistic metaphysics of being, act and potency. It included as an essential element an Aristotelian metaphysics of human nature and human knowledge, i.e. the metaphysics of substance, faculty, habit and act. The integration of knowledge could only be achieved through a speculative philosophy which followed the Aristotelian scientific method.

The position which Maritain defended so brilliantly in his *Degrees of Knowledge* was essentially the same position defended by Garrigou-Lagrange and the Dominican writers in the *Revue Thomiste* in their controversy with the new theologians. Philosophy structured theology. If there could be only one true philosophy, then there could be only one true theology.<sup>13</sup> The one true theology was the theology built upon post-Tridentine scholastic epistemology and metaphysics. The new theologians' proposal to dethrone post-Tridentine scholasticism in the name of philosophical pluralism was philosophically unwarranted and theologically unsound. This was the conception of theology which provoked Pius XII's negative reaction to the New Theology in *Humani generis*.

<sup>12</sup>J. Maritain, *Three Reformers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).

<sup>13</sup>See note 5.

no sense  
of differentiations  
of consciousness  
& how did they  
see the Fathers,  
esp. Augustine?

The second major school in the neo-Thomist movement at the time of the New Theology controversy was the historical Thomism of Etienne Gilson. Like Maritain, Gilson claimed to be a Christian philosopher in the tradition of *Aeterni Patris*.<sup>14</sup> As a direct realist, he rejected the Maréchal's subjective starting point in epistemology and denied the speculative legitimacy of philosophical pluralism. For Gilson, as for Maritain, there was only one true metaphysics; but it was not the post-Tridentine scholasticism of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas. It was the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor himself.<sup>15</sup> The only place in which that philosophy could be found was in St. Thomas' own scientific theology. Gilson's historical research had convinced him that Maritain's identification of John of St. Thomas' post-Tridentine scholasticism with St. Thomas' own thought was historically and speculatively unwarranted. Three indispensable elements of Maritain's speculative integration of knowledge were the eidetic intuition of being, the three degrees of abstraction and the mediating function of an Aristotelian philosophy of nature in the mind's ascent from sensible experience and empirical science to metaphysical wisdom. The first two elements could not be found in St. Thomas' own philosophy.<sup>16</sup> The third was not required by it.<sup>17</sup> Far from being an authentic expression of St. Thomas' own thought, Maritain's *Degrees of Knowledge* proposed an irreducibly distinct system of epistemology and metaphysics.

Gilson's historical research deprived the classical Thomism of Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange of its historical credentials. It also undercut two of *Aeterni Patris*'s fundamental presuppositions. There had never been a single system shared by all the scholastic doctors. Post-Tridentine Thomism was not the authentic expression of St. Thomas' own thought.

Maréchal's Thomism, the third major school in the nineteen fifties, not only accepted philosophical pluralism as an historical fact; it defended philosophical pluralism as a legitimate speculative position. Using Kant's transcendental method to ground their

<sup>14</sup>See note 6.

<sup>15</sup>See *The Philosopher and Theology*, pp. 200-14. See also *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 217-19; also *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), pp. 199-207. See also J. Owens, "Aquinas on Knowing Existence," *The Review of Metaphysics* 29 (1976), 670-90.

<sup>16</sup>A. C. Pegis (ed.), *A Gilson Reader* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Image, 1957), pp. 156-7, 247-75.

<sup>17</sup>*Elements of Christian Philosophy*, pp. 60-5.

critical realism, the Maréchal Thomists claimed that the mind's grasp of real being, the starting point of metaphysics, was grounded in the mind's orientation to Infinite Existence as its natural end. If metaphysics was critically grounded in the dynamism of the judging mind, and not in the eidetic, or conceptual, intuition of being, as Maritain claimed, the Maréchal Thomist could admit the legitimacy of several logically unrelated conceptual frameworks, although the Maritainian Thomist could not. The Maréchal Thomist's firm grasp of Abiding, Infinite Existence through the dynamism of the mind, operative in every judgment, prevented him from falling into historicism or relativism, even though the conceptual frameworks of diverse judgments might change. The Maréchal legitimation of a plurality of conceptual frameworks implied the legitimacy of several logically irreducible philosophical systems, each of which was structured by its own diverse set of basic concepts.

There was no reason why a philosopher who admitted the analogy of being should not also admit that each one of these diverse philosophical systems could provide, each in its own way, a true, albeit inadequate, representation of reality. For, although being was grasped through the dynamism of the mind in every judgment, every conceptual representation of being must be deficient and analogous. What was true of the concept was true of conceptual frameworks; and what was true of conceptual frameworks was true of the philosophical systems which they structured.<sup>18</sup>

#### RECONSIDERATION OF *AETERNI PATRIS*

In the nineteen fifties, however, the full implications of the Maréchal Thomist legitimation of a plurality of philosophical systems had not yet been realized. For, although Maréchal Thomists employed the Kantian transcendental method, which Gilson and Maritain rejected as unsound and un-Thomistic, they also emphasized the necessary connection between an adequate theory of knowledge and an Aristotelian metaphysics of man and being. An emphasis on this connection had been a defining characteristic of neo-Thomism since Matteo Liberatore laid down the main lines of the system in the eighteen-fifties. This connection, in fact, had been the *leitmotif* of the master-works of two opposing Thomistic

<sup>18</sup>J. M. LeBlond, S.J., "L'Analogie de la Vérité," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 34 (1947), 129-41. See also Harvanek, "The Unity of Metaphysics," pp. 393-405.



systems, Maritain's *The Degrees of Knowledge* and Maréchal's *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique*.<sup>19</sup> Despite his conversion to the Kantian transcendental method, Maréchal was still very much in the tradition of Liberatore and *Aeterni Patris*. His Kantian transcendental method was used to ground a Thomistic philosophy of knowledge; and, like Maritain, Maréchal also insisted that a scholastic philosophy of knowledge went hand in hand with an Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and accident, faculty and act, form, essence and existence. This was in fact one of the major points which Maréchal hoped to establish in his *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique*. Thomism could preserve the necessary unity of knowledge and being. Post-Cartesian philosophy could not. When it was grounded by the proper use of the transcendental method, Thomism had a consistence and a permanence which modern philosophical systems lacked. Influenced though he might be by post-Kantian epistemology, Maréchal showed little sympathy for post-Kantian metaphysics. Maréchal Thomism differed from other Thomistic schools in its use of the Kantian transcendental method and in its desire for a *rapprochement* with Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy. Maréchal himself, however, never urged the replacement of Aristotelico-Thomistic metaphysics or Aristotelian scientific method in speculative theology.

By 1950, however, theologians who had been influenced directly or indirectly by Maréchal had gone much further than Maréchal himself was willing to go. Henri Bouilliar's *Conversion et Grace*<sup>20</sup> and Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel*<sup>21</sup> had shown that the problems of grace and nature could not be handled satisfactorily by using the post-Tridentine theologoumenon of "pure nature." Bernard Lonergan's famous series of articles on *Gratia operans*<sup>22</sup> had demolished the historical foundations of both the Molinist and the Bannezian interpretations of St. Thomas' theology of grace and freedom. Lonergan's equally celebrated series of *Verbum*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup>See J. Donceel, S.J. (ed.), *A Maréchal Reader* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 12-22.

<sup>20</sup>H. Bouilliar, S.J., *Conversion et Grace chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Aubier, 1941).

<sup>21</sup>H. de Lubac, S.J., *Surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946).

<sup>22</sup>The *Gratia operans* articles originally appeared in *Theological Studies* 2 (1941), 289-324; 3 (1942), 69-88, 375-402, 533-78. More recently they have been republished in book form under the title, *Grace and Freedom* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971).

<sup>23</sup>The *Verbum* articles originally appeared in *Theological Studies* 7 (1946), 349-92; 8 (1947), 35-79; 404-44; 10 (1949), 3-40, 359-93. They have since been

articles had also revealed the essential function of the act of insight as the bridge between the phantasm and the concept in St. Thomas' metaphysics of knowledge. Lonergan's discovery of the functioning of insight not only confirmed the Maréchal's legitimation of a plurality of conceptual frameworks. Although Lonergan himself did not realize it at the time, transcendental reflection on the act of insight could also ground a metaphysics of potency, form and act quite different from Aristotelian metaphysics. More than that, it could ground critically a philosophical and theological method which was more closely allied to the method of the empirical sciences than to the metaphysical scientific method of Aristotle.<sup>24</sup>

Transcendental method did not necessarily establish a connection between a Thomistic theory of knowledge, an Aristotelian metaphysics of man and being and an Aristotelian method in philosophy, as Maréchal thought it did. The necessary connection between St. Thomas' theory of knowledge and Aristotle's metaphysics of man and being, which had been a defining characteristic of every neo-Thomist synthesis since the pioneering works of Liberatore, would soon be broken. The path to a more radical form of philosophical and theological pluralism within Maréchal's Thomism had now been opened.

#### NEW HISTORICAL STUDIES ON *AETERNI PATRIS*

Historical and speculative studies continued to undercut the philosophical and theological presuppositions on which *Aeterni Patris* rested. There was no unitary system common to all the scholastic doctors. Post-Tridentine epistemology and metaphysics was not an authentic interpretation of St. Thomas' own thought. Post-Tridentine scholasticism's understanding of grace and nature and its Trinitarian theology differed essentially from the theological positions of the Angelic Doctor. The connection between St. Thomas' theory of knowledge and Aristotelian metaphysics and method was at least questionable. It would seem that *Aeterni Patris* had been built upon a series of historical and speculative misapprehensions. A good deal of the blame for those misapprehensions could be laid at the door of two neo-Thomist

republished in book form under the title, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1967).

<sup>24</sup>The metaphysics was developed in Lonergan's celebrated *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1963). The theological method was developed in *Method in Theology*.

pioneers, Matteo Liberatore and Joseph Kleutgen. Both were influential Jesuits, stationed at Rome when *Aeterni Patris* was written. Their ideas were reflected in the encyclical.<sup>25</sup>

*Aeterni Patris* represented the great victory of these early neo-Thomists over the representatives of other nineteenth-century speculative systems. The claim of the neo-Thomists was that only their Aristotelian metaphysics could preserve the proper distinction between faith and reason, nature and grace. Their Aristotelian metaphysics and their scientific method alone could preserve the proper distinction between apologetics, speculative and moral theology. No philosophy other than Aristotelian philosophy could defend the objectivity of knowledge, the unity of man and natural analogous knowledge of the Creator derived from his sensible creation. The most extended and profound defense of these neo-Thomistic positions could be found in Joseph Kleutgen's two major works, *Die Theologie der Vorzeit* and *Die Philosophie der Vorzeit*.

Neo-Thomism's major rivals in the latter half of the nineteenth century were ontologism, traditionalism, the metaphysical dualism of Anton Günther and the theology of the Catholic Tübingen school. Every one of these systems was anti-scholastic. Günther and the Tübingen theologians were deeply influenced by Schelling. Every one of these systems, with the exception of Tübingen theology, came under Roman condemnation. The neo-Thomists, particularly Kleutgen, were instrumental in securing their condemnation.<sup>26</sup>

The picture of these nineteenth-century philosophical and theological systems which came down to later generations was largely formed by Kleutgen's two major works. In recent years, however, historians and theologians, who had begun to harbor second thoughts about *Aeterni Patris*, have undertaken a historical re-examination of these post-Kantian theologies. Beck, Pritz and Wenzel have produced impressive books on Günther.<sup>27</sup> Geiselmann<sup>28</sup> has done a masterly series of studies on the Catholic

<sup>25</sup>G. A. McCool, S.J. *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury, 1977), pp. 227-8.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 232-3.

<sup>27</sup>J. Pritz, *Glauben und Wissen bei Anton Günther* (Vienna: Herder, 1963) and *Wegweisung zur Theologie* (Vienna: Wiener Domverlag, 1971); K. Beck, *Offenbarung und Glaube bei Anton Günther* (Vienna: Herder, 1967); P. Wenzel, *Das Wissenschaftliche Anliegen des Güntherianismus* (Essen: Hubert Wintken, 1961).

<sup>28</sup>See especially J. R. Geiselmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964).

Tübingen school. The theological and philosophical difficulties which the neo-Thomists advanced against these systems have been reconsidered in the light of modern scholarship. Geiselmann and, more recently, Walter Kasper have argued that post-Kantian Tübingen theology can still provide a valid model for contemporary theology.<sup>29</sup> It was not discredited by the neo-Thomists; it was simply misunderstood. Beck has pointed out a number of striking similarities between Günther's post-Kantian speculative synthesis and the transcendental Thomist synthesis of Karl Rahner. Both systems begin with a philosophical anthropology. Both are built upon the intrinsic metaphysical relation between the Trinity, the Incarnation, grace and the Church. One of the reasons for this similarity is that both Günther and Rahner borrowed from post-Kantian metaphysics in the construction of their speculative theology.

Thus the radical opposition which Kleutgen had set up between Aristotelian epistemology, metaphysics and scientific method on the one hand and post-Kantian epistemology, metaphysics and scientific method on the other no longer prevails in Catholic speculative theology. Karl Rahner finds no difficulty in introducing a large dose of post-Kantian metaphysics, and even post-Kantian method, into his transcendental Thomist speculative theology. Walter Kasper, who goes further than Geiselmann, seems ready to abandon Thomism completely in favor of a rejuvenated Tübingen theology.

*Aeterni Patris* can no longer be interpreted as a definitive victory of scholasticism over post-Kantian metaphysics and post-Kantian method in Catholic theology. *Aeterni Patris* was simply a high point in the historical evolution of both systems. Today historical scholarship and the international evolution of neo-Thomism have combined to place *Aeterni Patris* in its proper historical perspective.

#### THE DEMISE OF THE NEO-THOMIST MOVEMENT?

This does not mean that Catholic theology has returned to the position in which it was before *Aeterni Patris* was promulgated. The debate between the partisans of Thomism and post-Kantian philosophy has indeed been renewed. But a great deal has happened in modern philosophy since 1879. German Idealism is no

<sup>29</sup>W. Kasper, *Glaube und Geschichte* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1970), pp. 9-32.

longer considered the last word in philosophy. A vast development has taken place in the natural and historical sciences. Dilthey's major contribution to the philosophy of the human sciences has profoundly influenced Catholic and Protestant exegesis. Heidegger has modified our conception of history and hermeneutics. As Thomism evolved in the century which has elapsed since the publication of *Aeterni Patris*, post-Kantian philosophy has also evolved. The philosophical options open to the Catholic theologian today are more numerous than they were in 1879 and the diversities between them are more radical.

Even if a philosopher is willing to begin with a phenomenology of human consciousness, as Maréchal Thomists and other European philosophers are willing to do, the metaphysical outcome of this sort of reflection can vary considerably in different systems.

see my  
dissent.

Karl Rahner's transcendental reflection on human consciousness has been proposed as the critical ground for an Aristotelian metaphysics of the dynamic origin of the faculties from a hylomorphic human nature. Rahner's stroke of genius was the fundamental similarity which he discovered between this dynamic Aristotelian metaphysics of the faculties and the Hegelian dialectic of being's "passage over into its other." This intrinsic similarity between Aristotelian and Hegelian metaphysics is advanced as the justification of Rahner's Thomistic "metaphysics of the real symbol," the linchpin of his whole speculative synthesis.<sup>30</sup> Rahner's exploitation of his Aristotelian metaphysics of man has gone a long way toward reconciling Thomas' Aristotelian metaphysics of man and being with Hegel's metaphysics. The result has been a transcendental Thomist speculative theology whose fundamental structure is strikingly similar to Hegel's dialectical system and to the metaphysics of the post-Kantian theologies against which *Aeterni Patris* was directed.<sup>31</sup> If Rahner's transformation of Aristotle's metaphysics of man is coherent, his transcendental method has enabled him to overcome the opposition between Thomism and post-Kantian philosophy which the authors of *Aeterni Patris* considered to be unbridgeable.

That reconciliation, however, would not strike Bernard Lonergan as the break-through for which Catholic theology has been waiting. As far as Lonergan is concerned, both Aristotelian

<sup>30</sup>See G. A. McCool, S.J. (ed.), *A Rahner Reader* (New York: Seabury, 1975, pp. 108-30. See also Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 248-64.

<sup>31</sup>McCool, *Rahner Reader*, pp. xxiv-xxviii.

and post-Kantian anthropology, like *Aeterni Patris*, belong to a stage of Western thought which is gone forever. The metaphysical consequences of Lonergan's transcendental reflection on human consciousness are very different from the results derived from Rahner's use of the transcendental method. The role of insight as the bridge between the phantasm and the concept is proposed as the critical ground of a new non-Aristotelian metaphysics of potency, form and act. The role of insight as the dynamic link between the concept and the judgment provides the cognitional justification for a philosophical and theological method which is very like the method of the empirical sciences. The dialectical opposition between the mind's pure desire to know and man's other appetites accounts for the levels of intellectual, moral and religious conversion through which the human subject must pass to achieve authenticity. The conscious, self-constituting human subject, manifested in a transcendental reflection on human consciousness, is not an Aristotelian substance. His constitutive levels of conscious conversion cannot be accounted for in an Aristotelian metaphysics of substance, faculty and act. Lonergan, unlike Rahner, is no longer interested in transforming an Aristotelian metaphysics of man; he has moved beyond it.<sup>32</sup>

In *Method in Theology* Lonergan has broken completely with the Aristotelian metaphysics of man and being and with the Aristotelian scientific method, which Maritain considered to be essential for the integration of experience in *The Degrees of Knowledge*, and which Maréchal defended vigorously in *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique*. If an Aristotelian metaphysics of man is claimed to be a defining characteristic of Thomism, then Maritain, Maréchal and Rahner can be called Thomists but Lonergan cannot. Furthermore, Lonergan's epistemology of the objective judgment differs radically from the account of objectivity proposed by Maréchal and Rahner. Objectivity is not necessity as it is for the Maréchal Thomist and the post-Kantian philosopher. Objectivity for Lonergan is what is so in fact.<sup>33</sup> The consequences of this diversity for philosophical and theological method are profound. For Lonergan the objectivity of a philosophical or theological method need not be grounded on certainty and necessity as the objectivity of Aristotelian and post-Kantian scientific methods are. Philosophical and theological methods are characterized by

<sup>32</sup>See Lonergan, "The Subject" in *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 69-86.

<sup>33</sup>See *Insight*, pp. 328-32.

contingent probability as are the methods of the empirical sciences.

Their divergent understanding of objectivity is one of the significant differences between Rahner and Lonergan. It explains why, although Rahner has endeavored to overcome the opposition between Aristotelian and post-Kantian metaphysics, Lonergan has relegated both Aristotelian and post-Kantian theology to the past. Neither horn of the dilemma proposed in *Aeterni Patris* strikes Lonergan as a valid option for the contemporary philosopher or theologian. Neither Aristotelian nor post-Kantian metaphysics are required by transcendental method. The theological method critically grounded by a transcendental reflection on human consciousness is neither Aristotelian nor post-Kantian. It is an empirical method. Its goal is not necessary certitude but simply the best probable explanation of the data presently available.

If Lonergan can make his case, we could well argue that the neo-Thomist movement in philosophy and theology has worked its way through a series of internal evolutions to its own demise. Three distinctive characteristics defined the Thomism of *Aeterni Patris*: the rejection of the post-Kantian anthropological starting point in epistemology, the assertion of a necessary link between a Thomistic theory of knowledge and an Aristotelian metaphysics of man and being, and commitment to Aristotelian method in philosophy and theology. In *Method in Theology* all three have been abandoned. Lonergan would not legitimate the Aristotelian integration of knowledge proposed in Maritain's *Degrees of Knowledge*. He would question Rahner's Aristotelian metaphysics of man on which Rahner's speculative theology is built.

Lonergan's epistemology and Lonergan's metaphysics are no longer Thomistic in the strict neo-Thomistic sense. Nevertheless Lonergan's method is still linked to a metaphysics of existence, potency, form and act. Its objective validity is grounded by the mind's natural movement to Infinite Pure Act as its natural goal. Lonergan has not manifested the openness to process philosophy which Rahner has manifested. He would not be tempted by Walter Kasper's proposal to construct a new theological method inspired by the post-Kantian method of the Catholic Tübingen school but adapted to modern needs by drawing upon contemporary German philosophy, especially the philosophical hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger.<sup>34</sup> Lonergan's human subject may not be an Aris-

<sup>34</sup>See W. Kasper, *The Methods of Dogmatic Theology* (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1969).

totelian substance; but he is not a Heideggerian *Dasein* either. The movement of the Lonerganian subject's mind is not simply a phenomenological structure of consciousness; it is a real metaphysical movement. In that sense, at least, we can say that it is still an Aristotelian movement specified by an Aristotelian final cause. Lonergan's subject may not be a substance but he still manifests some of the defining characteristics of an Aristotelian nature. And the goal of the subject's real movement is Immutable Being, Infinite Existence, the Pure Act of Insight.

Although Rahner, Lonergan and Kasper each begin with a reflection of human consciousness, each of these theologians, if I understand them correctly, has presented a specifically different theological method critically grounded by a different epistemology and metaphysics. Ecclesiastical authority has ceased to impose a unitary method on Catholic theology. Therefore theologians themselves must present the critical grounding for the method which they propose to use in their theology. The critical grounding of a theological method in large part is the work of philosophy. When several philosophies are accepted in the Catholic Church, a plurality of theological methods seems inevitable. This is hardly the state in which Leo XIII expected Catholic theology to be as the centenary of *Aeterni Patris* approaches; but history and philosophy can surprise anyone, even a great pope.

#### QUESTIONS RAISED DURING NEO-THOMISM'S EVOLUTION

The philosopher and the theologian have still a lot of work to do together in the area of Catholic theology. Philosophers and theologians have worked in collaboration during the whole century through which the neo-Thomist movement has passed from the publication of *Aeterni Patris* until the present day. With all its troubled history, that century was a great one for Catholic philosophy and Catholic theology. We may quarrel with the answers which the neo-Thomists have proposed. Nevertheless, the history of their movement shows that they knew many of the right questions to ask if one wishes to verify the critical grounding of a philosophical or theological method. Let me just mention four fundamental questions which we have met, time and again, during the course of this survey.

1. The question of objectivity. This was the fundamental issue between the Aristotelian Thomists and the post-Kantian theologians in the years before *Aeterni Patris*. Liberatore's epistemology and metaphysics was the first great attempt to justify a



neo-Thomist account of objectivity. When pluralism emerged within neo-Thomism, the grounding of the objective judgment became one of the bones of contention among the rival Thomist schools. It remains a bone of contention today. A philosophical answer to the question of objectivity has a lot to do with settling the question of a theological method. The two questions have gone hand in hand throughout the whole neo-Thomist movement. The question of objectivity is a philosophical question. Today it is an open one; perhaps more open than it has ever been.

2. The intrinsic connection between a Thomistic theory of knowledge and an Aristotelian metaphysics of man. Insistence upon this intrinsic connection goes back as far as Liberatore. It is a defining characteristic of neo-Thomism. It is linked to the Thomistic attempt to ground the objectivity of the judgmental assent through the Aristotelico-Thomistic abstraction of the concept from the phantasm. Every philosopher in the Thomistic tradition, including Lonergan, grounds the objectivity of the judgment through the process of abstraction. Every one of these philosophers, again including Lonergan, finds that this commits him to some essential elements of Aristotle's metaphysics of man and being which philosophers in other traditions, phenomenologists and Heideggerians, for example, would not accept. Here we have another open philosophical question whose consequences for theology and its method are extensive and profound.

3. The problem of reconciling a plurality of conceptual frameworks with a non-relativistic theology. This issue was the major one in the controversy between the Maritainian Thomists and the Maréchalian new theologians which *Humani generis* brought to a sudden end. The Maréchalian Thomists were confident that they could admit a plurality of conceptual frameworks without falling into a relativist historicism because they had abandoned neither the Aristotelian metaphysics of abstraction nor the human mind's natural movement to Infinite Pure Act as its final cause. For all his abandonment of an Aristotelian metaphysics of man, these two essential elements of Aristotelian Thomism have been conserved in Lonergan's metaphysics of knowledge. In this sense it can still be said that Lonergan's subject retains some of the defining characteristics of Aristotelian human nature. Lonergan needs both of these elements of Aristotelian metaphysics to stay out of relativism. By retaining them he has remained in the tradition of the Maréchalian new theologians. But there are other

philosophical options which are compatible neither with the metaphysics of the mind as a natural appetite nor with the metaphysics of the Pure Act of Being. If a Catholic chooses one of these other options, can he admit a plurality of conceptual frameworks without falling into historicism and relativism?

4. The role of philosophy in the integration of knowledge. Maritain and Lonergan have given radically different answers to this question. The integrating role of philosophy is the center-piece of both their systems. Their opposing choices of theological method have been determined by it. But an epistemology and metaphysics is at least implicit in every decision about the role of philosophy in the integration of human knowledge. A theologian who wants to know what he is about cannot dispense with the philosopher's collaboration.

The philosophers and theologians of the neo-Thomist movement have still a lot to tell us about the answers to these questions. Their major works are still worth reading. We should not neglect our intellectual heritage as we struggle to meet the theological challenge of the second century after *Aeterni Patris*.

GERALD A. McCOOL, S.J.  
*Fordham University*