• CTSA PROCEEDINGS 47 (1992): 1-20 •

ST. THOMAS AND THE APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE

It is not too much to say that for many today experience has become the all-encompassing category into which all that is meaningful is to be translated. It forms for many the ultimate court of appeal; thus, for example, one hears of various worlds of experience. Or to switch from legal to monetary metaphor, the appeal to experience is taken by many to be what gives to meaning its modern currency. Experience so taken becomes the central bank for meaning and for its communication and exchange. To speak colloquially: we "swap" experiences—recently, to be sure, in the form of narratives.[1]

I have been asked to speak to the significance of St. Thomas for a theologian today. Not a few among you might well speak better than I as to his possible contribution to a theology of grace, or revelation, or some other properly theological topic. To be sure, that would not be bringing coals to Newcastle since such theological topics belong here; but were a philosopher to bring them, they might prove of poorer quality than those already in your own theological coal-bin—so porous as to prove too little combustible for the fire of discussion. I shall speak, then, from my own philosophical understanding of Thomas, and more directly to the topic of experience.

Like Gaul, my remarks fall into three parts. In the first I will briefly review the way in which Thomas, largely following upon Aristotle, uses the terms *experientia, experimentum,* and *experior.*[2] In the second part, I will offer my own

---

[1]The title of this essay was already chosen before the thoughtful article by George Schner reached me: "The Appeal to Experience," in *Theological Studies* 53 (1992) 40-59. Schner remarks that "Another use of the phrase could be as part of a prescriptive theory of the transcendental conditions of all human experience, a notion which may indeed be needed by some theologians to make their arguments work, but one which is more ideal and prescriptive than empirical and descriptive." (50) The author draws helpful distinctions between various modes of experience: rhetorical and philosophical; and in sketching the modes of appeal in theology, outlines the transcendental, hermeneutical, constructive, confessional and mystical. In his conclusion which is generally positive, especially in respect to the appeal of the constructive mode, he hints nevertheless at the tendency of the appeal to experience to be self-grounding and to invite a disproportionate and even autocratic preoccupation.

[2]It might be objected against the procedure I have adopted that, in restricting myself to the *term,* I miss the fuller sense of experience in St. Thomas. But I believe that such a charge would be anachronistic. At the close of the present essay I have acknowledged a special adjectival sense of the term, in which Thomas speaks of a sort of *experimental* knowledge of God. I am convinced, however, that the *primary* sense of the term for him

construal of the shift that has occurred in the meaning of the term *experience* in modern times. That meaning is embodied in what post-modernists call "modernity." The on-going attacks of the deconstructionists upon the epistemological structure of modernity calls certain aspects of the term *experience* into question, raising issues that have long lain dormant, and questioning presuppositions that have functioned more or less without question for the last three centuries or so. We are, it seems to me, at a promising juncture of our intellectual culture, since basic questions are being asked. The criticism of modernity offers us a pause for reflection; and in that pause a pre-modern understanding of these issues may yet warrant a further hearing, inasmuch as it remains free of certain relatively unexamined convictions that have been entrenched in modern opinion. This is especially appropriate regarding those aspects of modernity that seem to have led us into blind alleys. It is into that listening, I will argue in the third part, that Thomas may yet speak a word or two worth hearing. Indeed, the focus of my remarks will be upon the difference between Thomas' sense of the term *experience* and the widely accepted general sense of the term among modern thinkers, and the implications of that difference. Some of what I mean by the pre-modern character of Thomas' thought applies *mutatis mutandis* to other mediaeval and ancient authors, also deserving of study; but there are distinctive features of his thought, too.

*****

When treating philosophical terms in Thomas it is well to begin by checking in with his philosophical mentor. In Aristotle, the term *empeiría* does not make a perfect match with our modern senses of the term *experience.* Of course, the term *empeiría* was by no means a simple one for the Greek thinker. He locates its formation in the imagination (*phantasía*) between sensations and perceptions, on the one hand, and intellectual thought, on the other. It is a product of time,

---

is to be found precisely in the restrictive use he makes of the above mentioned terms in somewhat more general contexts, and that the special adjectival sense is an extension of the primary sense. In tracing the traditional sense of the Christian experience of faith as it is expressed in the works of the Fathers and the mediaeval theologians, Hans Urs von Balthasar observes that St. Thomas does not shy away from speaking of a certain "experimental knowledge" of the divine persons, understanding by that term the *integral* sense of the Christian experience of faith. (*The Glory of the Lord* [San Francisco/New York: Ignatius/Crossroad, 1982] I, *Seeing the Form,* 219-425, specifically 295.) I maintain, however, that this special adjectival use is an extended sense based upon the primary and more ordinary use, and that Thomas' principal use of the term remains, on the whole, reserved. (See also below, fnn. 47 and 48.) What is more, the question remains: if there are other conscious activities deserving of the name "experience," why did he not call them "experience?" and why do we today, on the other hand, feel the need of referring to them in the language of experience? It is precisely Thomas' restrictive sense in contrast with the more general modern sense that provides the focus of this essay.

being formed slowly through repeated perceptions. Yet it is more than mere repetition, and is the formation of a new mental habit through the accumulation of many similar perceptions in the sensory, reproductive memory (*aisthêtikê phantasía*). Even more, experience comes about through the development of a frequent and privileged association with some special order of facts. Moreover, there is a degree of immediacy of acquaintance that attaches to the sense of the term. Indeed, one might speak of a conscious penetration into typical situations that produces a certain intimacy with them. We might say that "experience teaches" just because it is itself first taught by familiarity learned from the encounter with factual situations of a similar type. Fulton Sheen observed that experience seeks encounters and relationships rather than arguments.[3]

Yet a kind of thinking is distilled in this process, which is first of all practical; for experience is not the mere reduplication or reiteration of given facts, but includes a kind of directive for action that reaches beyond the facts towards the practice of some skill or the enactment of some conduct: it is a sort of *savoir faire.* For that reason Aristotle does not hesitate to call experience wisdom (*sophía*) and to join it with prudence (*phronêsis*). Persons of experience are thought to possess a sureness of judging and acting in the practical order by virtue of some skill or practical wisdom. I will give the name "sapiential" experience to this first sense of *empeiría*, since it embraces technical expertise, political acumen, ethical discernment, and the general wisdom learned from the lessons of life.

A modern scholar has termed the Aristotelian *empeiría* "reflective empiricism."[4] It is empirical in the Aristotelian sense that it lacks a reasoned grasp of the principles and causes why a thing is so and not otherwise. Those who are experienced (*émpeiroi*) know the simple fact but not the reason for it.[5] Yet for Aristotle the very imperfection of *empeiría* is also the source of its own integrity; it remains what it is: *experience.* And Aristotle leaves no doubt that in practical affairs experience without reasoned grounds is superior to the bare thought of

---

[3]Speaking of the contemporary emphasis upon religious experience, in "Contemporary Conceptions of Religion," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 2 (1926)76.

[4]Louis Bourgey, *Observation et Expérience chez Aristote* (Paris: Vrin, 1955) 44-45. Many of the key texts from Aristotle's corpus are cited and commented upon in this work.

[5]*Metaphysics* I (981a29-30). We find here a contrast between the *émpeiroi,* persons of "mere experience" who know only the fact (*tò 'óti*), and those (here referred to as artists in the sense of technical experts, artisans, master craftsmen and the like) who know both why the thing is so and the reason for or cause of its being so (*tò dióti kaì tên aitíav*). Such practical wisdom, however, is not in possession of that apodeictic theoretical comprehension that for Aristotle constitutes a truly demonstrative knowledge.

rational principles empty of the experience required to apply them appropriately.[6]

When one turns to the more strictly scientific sense of the term, however, *empeiría* finds its place in the productive imagination (*logistikê phantasía*) as a stage oriented towards conceptualization and properly intellectual activity. *Empeiría* is the starting point of more general understandings, providing, as it does, the evidence from which intelligence draws its concepts and frames its judgments. If the first, the sapiential meaning, gives us the practical sense of experience, this second more theoretical meaning may be termed the *evidential* sense of experience.

There is in Aristotle yet a third sense of the term *empeiría,* a sense associated with the medical tradition and close to the root from which the word *empeiría* and its cognates are formed. The Greek root (*peíra*) means a trial or try, and a cognate (*peirá*) means a point; both are derivative from the verb (*peírô*), meaning "to pierce through." A cognate verb (*peiradzô*) gives us our word for *pirate,* and means "to put someone to the test." To experience in this sense, then, is to make proof or trial of someone or something by a probe that penetrates. And this sense of immediate contact-meeting-resistance carries over into the ancient sense of *experiment.* In this sense, too, the *expert* is one who has been tried and who has passed through the test.[7] The aspect of passage (*póros* from *péraô*) is found in such terms as the Latin *porta,* portal or gate, the German *fahren* in *Erfahrung,* and the very travel *fares* that brought us here. When this passage is undergone as a test, trial or probe, we have the *probative* sense of experience.

And so there is a range of meanings in the Aristotelian usage. For, besides "mere experience" which is present in animals which possess memory as well as in humans, human experience takes form as technical mastery and practical wisdom distilled from life, often gained through trial and probe, and which contributes evidence to understanding. The matter is even more subtle in Aristotle, but in identifying these three meanings of experience—sapiential, evidential and probative—I have secured what is sufficient for the present purpose.

As we turn to Thomas we find these three senses present and operative, though in a set of contexts that might have bewildered the Greek philosopher. A tour through the saint's principal theological work, the *Summa Theologiae,* shows us that the epistemic structure of such allied terms as *experientia, experimentum,*

---

[6]According to ancient usage there was the sect of *Empeirikoí* or *Empirici* who, in contrast to the *Dogmatici* and the *Methodici* (Methodologists), applied medical remedies without recourse to and even in defiance of philosophical theory, eschewing all form of reasoning and relying exclusively upon observation. Given the state of ancient medical theory, one is tempted to say that so bold a policy may not have been such a bad practice, though it did earn from their detractors a reputation for quackery.

[7]Every *peritus* is put to the test each time an expert opinion is called for, and if successful the expert has survived a *danger* with reputation intact, for the term will bear that meaning too, as in the Latin *periculum.*

and *experior* retains its essentially Aristotelian character.[8] Two characteristics strike one regarding his usage, however. In the first place, the terms occur for the most part in the arguments or "objections" that cite other thinkers' views; they do not occur copiously in his own responses or even in his replies to the objections. A second point to notice is that most of the contexts in which the terms appear are more strictly religious and practical, especially in such contexts as the virtues, grace, prophecy and the like. When he does use the term in the context of knowledge, he often uses it by way of contrast with other modes of knowing. Thus, for example, he uses the term in order to contrast man's natural mode of knowing with the purely intellectual and intuitive angelic mode of intellection or the infused knowledge given to Adam. There are perhaps no more than a half dozen articles in the *Summa* which center on experience itself, and the most extended use is made in his discussion of experiential knowledge in Christ. It is fair to conclude that the term in its several senses plays a restricted, though indispensable, role in his thought.

Moreover, the basic structure remains Aristotelian. Experience is, first of all, a sensory mode of knowing.[9] It apprehends singulars and particular situations.[10] It is learned in and through time, hence discursively.[11] It is cumulative, being formed by a gradual process that builds up from perceptions and memories.[12] It brings the knower close to concrete factual situations, even immersing him or her in them. It makes these accessible in a seemingly immediate and direct way. It gives to the knower a sense of familiarity and even of intimacy with the facts, because it, so to speak, brings him or her within the facts; it possesses a two-way interiority, for it penetrates not only into the facts but within the knower as well.[13] Yet it comes to us from outside, so to speak, so that Thomas accepts from Bonaventure the designation "acquired knowledge."[14] It is the manner of acquisition, however, that is distinctive. Its acquired character points towards one of its normally most attractive, aspects, for it is the avenue along which the human knower develops his or her initial discoveries.[15]

---

[8]A fuller study of the terms is possible from the *Index Thomisticus,* ed. R. Busa, S.J., (Frommann-Holzboog, 1976). A cursory overview indicates that the usage differs principally in context in the Aristotelian and scriptural commentaries.

[9]*Summa theologiae* I-II, 15, 1c; II-II, 95, 5.

[10]*ST* I, 54, 5c and obj.2; I, 117, 1c.

[11]*ST* I, 58, 3, obj. 3 & ad 3; II-II, 47, 16, obj. 2.

[12]*ST* I, 64, 1, obj. 5 & ad 5; I, 89, 3 sed contra; II-II, 47, 14, ad 3; II-II, 47, 15, sed contra; II-II, 49, 1c.

[13]*ST* I-II, 112, 5c; II-II, 47, 3 ad 3; I, 79, 4c; *Suppl.* 84, 2 ad 2; I, 76, 1c; I, 81, 3c; I, 84, 7.

[14]*ST* III, 9, 4c and ad 1; also I, 94, 3, obj. 1 and ad 3; II-II, 172, 1c; I, 102, 1 ad 4; *Suppl.* 54, 3 sed contra 1. See also II-II, 145, 1 ad 2; I, 94, 3, obj. 1 and ad 3.

[15]*ST* I, 85, 7 sed contra; I-II, 98, 6c; I, 65, 1 obj. 2. See also II-II, 10, 7c.

The distinctive force of its accumulative "immediacy" commands our attention and lays a certain claim upon us.[16] When this dynamic structure is exercised in the context of practical life, a special weight is introduced—that *pondus* to which Augustine refers in his consideration of the good. The repetition which accumulates perceptions through memory thereby reinforces and strengthens a specific skill or line of conduct, so that it empowers the approach to practical issues and gives to experience a certain authority.[17] This dynamic orientation merits for it the name of practical wisdom.[18] At the same time, Thomas recognizes that certain experiences can have an adverse impact upon the knower, since they may contribute to a loss of hope, courage or other positive virtues.[19] Moreover, experience is not without risk, since it may transgress appropriate limits in misguided curiosity or in ungoverned concupiscence.[20]

We can speak of proof in the practical order as proof by trial, test and experiment,[21] though not quite in the modern sense of that term.[22] One suffers or lives through experiences by *undergoing* them.[23] There can be no doubt, too, that this practical probative sense of experience and experiment lays a certain ground for the more theoretical probative meaning, along with what I have called the evidential,[24] which begins with proof in the mode of recurring manifestation.[25]

In sum, then, experience for Thomas consists in the accumulative immediacy of past particular situations, gathered up over time into the familiarity of memory, brought into the immediate present, and further ordered to practical wisdom and/or theoretical conceptualization. I have mentioned already that there is a certain disparity between Thomas' meaning of experience, especially in the

---

[16]*ST* III, 15, 3; I, 1, 8, obj. 2; I, 13, 9, ad 3; I, 81, 3c; I, 84, 7c; II-II, 45, 2, obj. 2; II-II, 97, 2 ad 2; II-II, 152, 1, ad 4; *Suppl.* 74, 7 (*Sent.* V, d. 47, q.2, a. 3, qa. 1); *Suppl.* 98, 9, ad 2.

[17]*ST* II-II, 123, 1 obj. 2 and ad 2; I-II, 97, 2 obj. 3; II-II, 60, 3. See also I, 102, 3c; II-II, 145, 1 ad 2; II-II, 172, 1c.

[18]*ST* II-II, 49, 3; II-II, 60, 3c; II-II, 181, 2 ad 2.

[19]*ST* I-II, 40, 5; see also a.6.

[20]*ST* I-II, 89, 3 obj. 2 and ad 2. See also *Suppl.* 98, 9 ad 2.

[21]*ST* II-II, 97, 2c; I, 114, 2c and ad 2; II-II, 97, 1; III, 41, 1 obj. 1; *Suppl.* 58, 1c; *Suppl.* 58, 2. See also II-II, 117, 4 ad 1.

[22]The technical modern sense of experiment is more deliberative, even calculated, and aims at precision in a way that the ancient meaning did not. The modern sense is all but inseparable from the formation of an hypothesis, methodical reflection and mathematical control and formulation, whereas the pre-modern sense is less directive, and more receptive to meeting the challenge of whatever life has to offer.

[23]*ST* I-II, 45, 4c; II-II, 13, 4 obj. 1; II-II, 77, 1 ad 2; *Suppl.* 70, 3. See also II-II, 150, 2 ad 1. See also also the sense of "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*).

[24]*ST* III, 12, aa. 1-3 (on Christ's knowledge).

[25]*ST* I-II, 34, 1c; I, 68, 2 obj. 2; I, 69, 1 ad 2; I, 89, 1c; I-II, 66, 2 obj. 3; I-II, 77, 2; I-II, 105, 1 obj. 3; II-II, 35, 1 obj. 4; I, 88, 1c; II-II, 95, 6 obj. 3; II-II, 96, 3 obj. 2.

evidential sense, and what I understand to be the most commonly accepted modern sense or senses of the term. The disparity is by no means absolute, of course, since experience, however we construe it, is deeply and intrinsically part of the human constitution.

The evidential role of experience in Thomas points towards experience as prelude to conceptualization. Now it is important to understand that by conceptualization I do not mean merely the formation of abstract concepts, but rather *the entire range of the intellectual life* of the human person in community and in the world; I mean the process and activity of rendering experience into intelligible values by means of concepts, judgments and argument (in ways that attempt to be relatively free of myth and imagery).[26] And this is the nub of my proposal: The study of St. Thomas permits us to reflect upon the difference between the pre-modern and the modern understanding of experience, because it raises *the question of the status of conceptualization and its relation to experience.* And here it seems to me one finds a difference in the relation between the quite general modern role of conceptualization *within* experience, on the one hand, and the more restricted role of experience *in relation to conceptualization* in Thomas, on the other. It is in Thomas's understanding of the human constitution and the role of conceptualization within that constitution that I find what at first may seem a modest but, it seems to me, is a significant emphasis that runs counter to many prevailing currents of thought. Related to this difference is also a difference in the sense of rationality and in the sense of the concrete.

*****

Now, although the aspects of sapiential, probative and evidential experience are present in modern thought, the status and role of experience has changed since Thomas' time. Indeed, it is not easy to find a proportion between the two general approaches to experience. Permit me, then, to set forth some reflections on what I understand this modern shift to be.[27] One way of noting the shift is to draw the contrast between the modern and pre-modern meaning of the term "subject."[28] I take the term "subject," understood in the modern sense of "subjectivi-

---

[26]Some praise, some blame the Greeks for this mental revolution. Their cultivation of conceptualization in a radically new way took the form of four modes of conceptual discourse which have retained their Greek names to this day: *philosophy* (discourse about being and fundamentals), *mathematics* (discourse about number and numerical relations), *history* (discourse about deeds and events), and the *organon* (discourse about logic, rhetoric and language). See "Das Erbe Griechenlands: Rationalität," in *Das Europäische Erbe und seine Christliche Zukunft,* ed. N. Lobkowicz (Köln, 1985) 95-104 (English 348-56).

[27]What follows in the next few pages is an adaptation of a passage from my McGivney Lectures (1991), forthcoming from the Catholic University of America Press (1993): *At The Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II.*

[28]I first noticed this shift in "Toward a Metaphysical Restoration of Natural Things,"

ty," to be a form of modern inwardness. That is, I take the modern sense of the term "subject" to be "subject of thought, feeling, willing, etc.;" in short: a subject of human experience in the broad sense.[29] This modern sense of "subject" stands in contrast to the term "subject" understood by Thomas; for his metaphysics understands the term "subject" to mean "subject of being" (*suppositum entis*).[30]

Now, "subject" in the modern sense of "subjectivity" was born of the process of modernization itself. By the seventeenth century, nature had come to be viewed more and more externally as an object set over against the mind, and scientific enquiry had posited the ideal of an external objectivity. There can be no doubt that the nominalism of the late mediaeval period, with its tendency to make separations where there had been only distinctions, helped to shape the background to this shift. But the shift itself occurred largely under the hegemony of the science of mechanics, or rather of the philosophy of mechanism extrapolated from mechanics. No doubt, deeper and broader factors were at work as well, including social factors.[31]

It is well known that leading thinkers in the sixteenth and subsequent century launched a sustained attack upon scholastic metaphysics, including that of St. Thomas, and particularly upon final causality and the web of ancient metaphysical principles.[32] The whole building of medieval scholasticism was dismantled, leaving only its ruins. What is not so easily recognized is that the principal victim of that attack was not just the lumber of the scholastic framework (the causes), but the resident *being* that was domiciled within the house. For traditional metaphysics claimed for *each and every* being (and not just for mental or spiritual being) an *ontological interiority and depth.* That interior depth was the

---

in *An Etienne Gilson Tribute* (Milwaukee: Marquette, 1959) 245-262, but I have since come to recognize it as a quite general reversal of horizons.

[29]This breadth is already acknowledged in Descartes' exceedingly diffuse use of the term "thought," which is for him co-extensive with any and every humanly conscious activity insofar as it is inseparable from immediate and intuitive mental experience; as such it includes reasoning, sensing, perceiving, imagining and willing.

[30]Thomas' use of *suppositum* is, to be sure, even more broad than Descartes', since it is as broad as the community of beings, and can even be said of the divine nature; it is not merely coextensive with what will come to be identified as the subject of human experience.

[31]I have offered some reflections on the social aspect of this process in "Is Liberalism Good Enough?" in *Liberalism and the Good,* ed. R. Bruce Douglass et al. (New York: Routledge, 1990) 86-104. See the detailed examination of this period from the point of view of natural theology by Michael Buckley, S.J., *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (Yale, 1987).

[32]For a further development of the contrast between metaphysical principles and atomic elements, see my "Analysis by Principles and Analysis by Elements," in *Graceful Reason: Essays in Ancient and Mediaeval Philosophy Presented to Joseph Owens, CSSR,* ed. L. Gerson, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983) 315-330.

source of its positive mystery (as distinct from a merely negative indeterminacy). This ontological interiority and depth was understood to be brought about by the principles and causes that constituted each being. For each being was thought to contain within it its intrinsic formal and/or material principles, its essential and existential constitutive principles, and its finality; but along with these was also the primordial Presence that remained in communicative continuity with each and every being. Indeed, each and every being was thought to be constituted in its being by the intrinsic principles that flow from the originating Source and through the creative communication of the manifest-yet-hidden God.

With the rejection of the scholastic principles, however, the interiority hitherto thought to be present in all being did not disappear without residue; instead, interiority took refuge in the human subject in the form of human subjectivity. The interiority of being, already recognized and present in traditional metaphysics, came to be excluded from the external world which was then handed over to the ideal of a neutered objectivity. The immediate gain was in theoretical precision and technical progress. But the human interiority—the human subject now understood as subjectivity—was turned back upon itself. Descartes' inward journey to the *ego cogito* has served as the most famous and influential emblem of this introspective turn, just because he so clearly wrote the conceptual signature of modernity. It is not surprising, therefore, that so many post-modern critics of modernity begin with a critique of Descartes.

By turning inward, then, the human subject turned towards itself, in order to establish itself as the basic resting and testing point from which all reality and worth is to be measured. Human consciousness pronounced itself to be *subjectum fundamentum inconcussum* and the guarantor of certitude. As the fundamental and unshakeable basis and center of all meaning, value and reality, the self assumed the role of issuing credit to reality, and it issued that credit in the currency of its own *experience.* In this modern context, experience rose to the status of the privileged medium of exchange within the reign of consciousness. It became the "dollar" into which everything could be converted in the sphere of meaning and value. Or, to reverse the metaphors already mentioned, subjectivity with its experience appointed itself to a sort of judicial bench with the power to determine what is to be admitted for further serious consideration. And so, knowledge was converted into meaning, the good into value, and reality into objectivity.[33]

---

[33]The classical statement of this "Copernican" turn is to be found in Immanuel Kant's second preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*: Human reason must not be kept in the leading-strings of nature, accepting everything that nature puts before it; rather, nature must be constrained to answer questions of *reason's own determining,* much as an accused is required to answer a judge. In the practical order, the subjective bias of modern liberalism is also to be found in this same priority of subjectivity over the non-subjective; but in the case of liberalism what is stressed is not specifically subjectivity as theoretical judge, but rather subjectivity as *conatus* or freedom of choice. (See "Is

To be sure, even as mechanism gave way to more sophisticated extrapolations of science, so too the pure mentalism of Cartesian ideas and the mere subjectivism of Humean impressions eventually gave way through Kant and phenomenology to an emphasis upon the relation of intentional objectivity.[34] Since Kant, considerable stress has been laid upon objective reference, but the ground itself has not shifted, and that ground is still held by human subjectivity dressed, since Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, in its critical-reflective modern armour. The concept of experience has been enlarged and enriched by these extensions, but experience grounded in subjectivity continues to provide the decisive horizon of objectivity. In such a view, experience is no longer the evidentiary prelude to conceptual judgments within the community of beings; it is the ultimate touchstone and definitive horizon of interpretive meaning, whose referential point is the impact of objectivity upon human subjectivity. Experience no longer provides simply the evidentiary base, but claims for itself the definitive horizon of what is to be considered meaningful and valid.

We are here at the critical nexus of the still dominant modern shift, for we are at the birth and source (if not the earlier initial conception) of the modern sense of experience and of its all-embracing and absolute primacy. It is here that experience in the traditional *evidential* sense of "acquaintance with" (conveyed by the terms *empeiria* and *experientia)* gives way to the more super-charged modern sense of *experience* as the ultimate and decisive *horizon* of what can be taken as worthy of consideration. Fortified with the medium of experience, human consciousness now takes to the field of nature and to the world of history in order to appropriate what is external to consciousness and to translate it into its coin.[35]

The term "impose" does not seem too strong when we consider the practical force of technology in its exploitation of our natural environment, nor the impositions of ideology in the social, political and cultural realms. The exploitation and impositions are reinforced by a largely unanalyzed and

---

Liberalism Good Enough?" n. 31.)

[34]Unlike some of his immediate predecessors (e.g., Descartes, Locke, Hume), knowledge for Kant was not an affair of "having ideas." It was for Kant not a possession but a transcendental relation, and precisely the relation of subject and object, even though the object of experience was phenomenal. Brentano is associated with the retrieval of the term "intentionality" but it bore little similarity with the scholastic understanding. For Brentano it named a relation between the mind and its internal objects. With Husserl it emerged as the relation whose noematic correlate received its fundamental determinations through the noetic acts of consciousness.

[35]An early indication of this imposition is expressed by Descartes in *Discourse on Method,* Part II, Rule 3; but see also the very structure of the a priori in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* and Husserl's reference of the noematic structures of the object to the noetic acts of consciousness.

unnuanced sense of power, taken in the main from the material levels of reality. In the theoretical or noetic realm, however, the bias towards subjectivity and its experience works more subtly; and there the term "imposition" is not quite adequate, since the modern empowerment of subjectivity is not directly a physical force, nor is it even a metaphysical (causal) empowerment. The strength of the modern claim of subjectivity and its experience is epistemic. It is not surprising, therefore, that the new queen of the philosophical disciplines was epistemology. For the putative primacy of consciousness is an *authoritative* power, the exclusive power to set up the criteria and to revise the rules of what will "count" in experience, of what will be taken seriously and further used in the development of knowledge. And even the strictures or resistances of objectivity are referred to the authority of subjective experience.[36] The effect of the authoritative primacy of human subjectivity is to resolve all exteriority into what counts for human subjectivity, positively or negatively.

At this point it might well be objected: But what or who else can perform such a task? To which it may be replied: The issue is not whether the human subject, individual and/or communal, must in the end *acknowledge* what will count for humanity, but rather *how* it does so; whether human subjectivity acknowledges itself as *setting* what counts (in the form of human progress, or the forces of production, or the demands of consumption, or the advancement of liberty, or the will to power, or some other criterion), or whether human subjectivity is open to decisive determination by something else (such as God, being, cosmic fate, evolution, etc.).

If the foregoing analysis is true, the shift to modern objectivity consists in the displacement of consciousness by one of its own strategies. But, curiously, this strategy of self-displacement places consciousness itself at the center; and the self-displacement takes place in the very process by which consciousness drains the external world of its interiority in order the better to face it for explicitly stated objectives.[37]

---

[36]The rules may be endlessly revisable, but the paramount position of human subjectivity and its experience has remained untouched—at least until the deconstructionists. But even they, while they denounce subjectivity and rob it of its constructions, seem caught in the same web and put nothing in its place except the seemingly endless generation of differences. For my own understanding of Derrida, see "Post-modern or Modern-plus?" in *Communio* (North American English edition) 17/2 (Summer 1990) 1-15. Heidegger, the perhaps unwitting "father" of deconstruction (through Beaufret), accomplished a radical displacement of subjectivity, but he left the horizon of otherness indeterminate.

[37]A thorough analysis of my contention would require a discussion of the internal conflict within consciousness itself that is implied by my argument. I take the conflict to be contingent and not inevitable. It is due in part to certain strategies expressed and promoted in the influential writings of a large group of authors over the past three centuries (and backed by the achievements of modern techno-science). These strate-

This, then, it seems to me, is the genesis of the modern sense of subject *as subjectivity*. We might say that subjectivity is the self-defence by which a beleaguered consciousness fends off a world either hostile to its inhabitation or at least without companionate room for it, even while consciousness subverts the integrity of that world by its demands. The modern shift gives to the human subject an absolute status precisely in its character qua consciousness as experience; for modern consciousness not only sets terms for itself, but for whatever else will be accepted as valid.[38] As Werner Schneiders has remarked regarding the initiative of the Enlightenment in shaping modernity: "Experience as direct encounter with present reality, or as an experimentally planned and controlled discovery of reality, would be the basis of thought and action."[39]

Now, the changes affecting the shift to subjectivity did not affect the meaning and role of experience alone. Correlative with it came a shift in the meaning and role of human reason. At first, confidently taking the whole weight upon itself, Enlightenment reason subsequently underwent its own self-criticism and gradually emptied itself of its previous fullness, taking up in various ways and at various times critical and constructive roles. This self-criticism is, nonetheless, witness to the normative power of truth in relation to human reason, even in such a negative form. Nor do I mean that the period of modernity has been without its precious insights, especially into the human psyche and into social structures. But at a deeper level, reason has become more and more the instrumental means to some other drive: to power, control, the utility principle, negative criticism; or it has become the scribe and servant of praxis. In the recent

---

gies—in pursuit of certain goals—have shaped modern (mostly "Western") consciousness, by raising selected partial and more immediate values (precision, certitude, control, productivity, technical power) to the status of primary, comprehensive and ultimate values. It is not the values themselves that are in question but the all but successful attempt to make them absolutely fundamental. Philosophers such as Bacon, Hobbes and Descartes in the seventeenth century stated their practical objectives in terms of the betterment of human life and raised such values to primary status. These values, good in themselves, may however need to be placed within a broader and deeper context: to begin with, that of nature (the recent concern with ecology), and ultimately that of Providence (the question whether secularism can sustain a healthy society).

[38]See Karol Wojtyla, "Person: Subject and Community" (1976) in *Review of Metaphysics* 33 (1979) 278f, in which he speaks of the "absolutization" of consciousness as a mark of modernity. See also his very original and reserved treatment of intentionality in *The Acting Person* (Reidel, 1979).

[39]"Experience in the Age of Reason," in *Revelation and Experience,* ed. E. Schillebeeckx and Bas van Iersel, *Concilium* 113 (1979) 22. Schneiders also comments upon the correlation between experience and reason in the European Enlightenment. Dietmar Mieth remarks on the immediacy and spontaneity characteristic of experience, notices a present crisis in the "experience of experience," and alludes to "the current excessive concentration on experience." See "What Is Experience?" *Concilium* 113 (1979) 49.

history of thought, rationality has been constitutive for experience (with Kant), constructive for revolution (with Marx), critical of existing claims (with Nietzsche, and with positivists and Neo-marxists), instrumental (with utilitarians and technologues)—always carrying another's freight, hence a subservient rationality that invites ideology-critique.

*****

When Leo XIII presented St. Thomas to the world, he did more than present a set of doctrines; he presented the Doctor as the model of Christian intelligence. And so, too, when I mention "conceptualization" in Thomas, I do not mean to recall a kind of theoretical cognitive mechanism that goes its own impersonal and merely abstracted way; I mean, rather, the full play of the life of intelligence.[40] In setting forth St. Thomas as an example, the pope did not call for a theoretical style of thought uncommitted to life, after the manner of the purported opposition of theory and praxis. For that alleged opposition is another of those medieval distinctions that in modern times have been converted into separations and dichotomies, and whose resolution is then sought by some form of dialectic, hermeneutic or ideology-critique. Rather, the example of Thomas is meant to call us to invest the freedom offered to us in conceptualization—initially the freedom to transcend the particular—to invest that freedom with the serious energy of our lives in pursuit of the truth, whether theoretical, practical or ultimate. Now this too is a kind of praxis. And when Leo singled out St. Thomas, it was not simply for this or that doctrine, but as a guide in this very praxis. Since Leo's time scholarship has shown us that a number of other contemporaries come along with Thomas as an invitation to the life of Christian intelligence: among them, Anselm, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus.

The challenge that Thomas presents to the modern emphasis on the primacy of experience is that, according to him, the life of active-receptive conceptualization discloses a trans-historical dimension in relation to experience understood as sensory-particular and temporal-historical. What is essential here, then, are not the various dynamisms operative in the Thomistic theory of abstraction, but the character and status of the results of the process of conceptualization: concept-formation, judgment, argument and, above all, on-going living interrelating insight.

And so we cannot avoid asking once again an elusive and primitive question: What is it to form a universal understanding of a particular temporal-historical situation? And on the basis of discursive experience as understood by Thomas, what is it to recognize the facets of meaning contained within that situation? Does that understanding introduce us to a larger horizon of meaning and reality than the particular situation taken in itself? Or is conceptualization merely derivative from and wholly contained within the particularity of the time-space bound-

---

[40]Somewhat in the sense, for example, of Père Sertillanges', *La vie intellectuelle.*

aries of the situation? It seems to me that, for Thomas, conceptualization is in a genuine sense a liberation from the particularities and temporalities of the situation, since conceptualization issuing in judgment and insight permits us to re-situate the concrete particularities and the historical situation within a larger horizon of understanding and of discourse. And Thomas' understanding of the radical and comprehensive character of being with its emphasis on *esse* requires that conceptualization return what we know concretely by way of judgment to the actual situation within the community of beings. There is here, then, a distinctive sense of the concrete that is not identical with the modern sense. It is the concrete reality of creaturedom rather than the concrete program of human interpretation and action conceived as modern praxis.[41]

But now, to be sure, even if that were agreed upon, some of our contemporaries will still see in such so-called "liberation" merely an escape from the contingent pressures and challenges of the particular situation. A hermeneutic of suspicion may lead them to see, in what they take to be a pseudo-liberation, little more than a temporary respite, which can too easily become a refuge and retreat in which the prison of abstract thought blinds its prisoners to their responsibilities, or worse still, forges weapons of ideology in which to confirm their advantage and increase their oppressive power. Some purport to find these distortions operative even in the acceptance of conceptually formulated Christian dogmas which have been cast in the experience of a former time.

There is no use denying that conceptual distortion can and indeed has happened; but, if the foregoing sketch has some merit, then we need not swallow all of the presuppositions of ideology-critique in order to admit this; nor need we let the suspicion of concept-formation condemn outright what I have called a "liberation" from the particular situation, as though there is in such "liberation" nothing more than a "bad-faith" freedom from the particular burdens of our existential condition. There is no doubt that this withdrawal (this non-consideration of particulars) does constitute the negative phase of conceptualization. But

---

[41]Thomas' insight into the primacy of existential act (*esse*) and into the termination of the process of conceptualization in a judgment of actuality has been recovered by modern Thomistic scholarship. The more general move towards the concrete in Thomistic studies is manifold, e.g., in the work of Josef Pieper, Thomas Gilby and others. The more radically concrete side of metaphysics and the appreciation of metaphysical depth has been deepened even further by the notion of participation along the lines indicated by the classical studies of Geiger, Fabro, De Finance and others, and continued by Norris Clarke, and by Gilson's emphasis upon the judgment. This continuing recovery of the concrete might begin with those texts in Thomas that describe *esse* not only as most comprehensive, but also as most intimate (*intimius*). There is no doubt, however, that a new sense of singularity (brought about in part by the modern experience of subjectivity) has played a role in helping us to recognize the concrete already embedded in and called for by Thomas' thought.

if the human spirit, fortified by prayer, memory, insight and hope, is a source of power, then there can also be something *positive* in that liberation which saves it—not from the risk inherent in all freedom, but from an irresponsible and deadly escapism. For conceptualization invested with the energy of the human spirit offers us the possibility of an approach to particular situations and to our own particular era from a point of reference that is at once both larger than the particular situation and era, and yet resident at its very center.[42]

Conceptualization for Thomas is not simply a liberation *within* the confines of the situation, but the liberation *of* that situation by placing it in the larger context of the community of beings. That larger horizon does not stand by itself alone, but always in relation to the situations out of which it has grown and to which it is to return. And so this liberation attains a relative transcendence; it returns to the situation with a new vision, and thereby to a renewed situation that is pregnant with further possibilities and relationships. For conceptualization is the convergence and condensation of just those characteristics in a multitude of experienced situations that link them together into a community of meaning and being. Experience for Thomas is the beginning, the anticipation and the basis of that process of assembly, but experience in itself remains an assemblage, whereas conceptualization goes on to identify the ground of their common unity and thereby to open the situation to further development. As with all things human, conceptualization is open to abuse, and especially to over-looking important differences, but that abuse is not ingredient in the process itself. Indeed, in Thomas analogy with its primary emphasis upon diversity is a built-in partial corrective of the tendency towards the neglect of difference.

In sum, conceptualization is a freeing-from for the sake of a freeing-for. In liberating us from the particularities of situations, conceptualization permits us to disclose a deeper significance within them. It permits us to receive into our own consciousness the very core that identifies the significance, the meaning and values at play in such situations. And it permits us to re-cognize that which constitutes their reality, supports their value, and grounds the unity implicit in our experience of such situations. For they are now brought together no longer simply on the basis of remembered familiarity but are cast into the analogous unitary

---

[42]We stand in need of a strong contemporary understanding of the human spirit. Hegel attempted such a retrieval in the context of Absolute Spirit, but in a manner still too close to the presuppositions of modernity. His dialectic sought to overcome modern dichotomies while accepting them as a necessary *constitutive* starting-point, and not simply a rhetorical one. Moreover, the emptying of human reason referred to above was at the same time accompanied by a certain emptying, not so much of the human spirit itself as a narrowing of its own self-understanding, leaving it prey to the material conception of power that has so dominated modern thought and action. In this sense, the modern conception of rights, while inherently noble, is (however aggressively pursued) a defensive notion rising out of the vulnerability of modern consciousness (referred to above as "beleaguered.")

light of understanding with its openness to further situations. Conceptualization permits us—although always partially, never exhaustively—to grasp the actual significance of the historical situation, providing that we return to it through judgment and with a renewed sense of the analogous diversity of each situation, and provided that we remember that fully human knowledge is not purely intellectual but takes its rise from and makes its return to just such situations.

Conceptualization so understood can accommodate the "turn to history," but not in the sense in which it is usually meant today. For among contemporary authors the term usually carries with it the presupposition that the situatedness of human historical experience is simply ultimate and decisive, the present vantage-point from which and within which all knowledge is to be resolved. But that, of course, is precisely what is at issue in my claim that, by virtue of its relative transcendence, conceptualization calls for a *reversal* of horizons and the re-situating of any historical situation within the larger horizon of the community of beings.[43] Another way of putting the issue is to challenge a certain understanding of *presence.* Is *presence* confined to the temporal present, or does it include that present within a broader, deeper and higher sense of *presence*?[44]

This liberation from the purely temporal present does not rob us of our freedom, for the use to which we put this liberating return to reality is itself a mark of our freedom. For human freedom is not an absolute freedom from the situation in which it is. Nevertheless, it is more than a freedom *within* that situation; it is more even than a fusion of horizons, it is a *reversal* of them. And so I was tempted to entitle this present essay, "St. Thomas and the Reversal of Horizons." Once conceptualization has reversed the order of horizons, then experience is once again called into play, and the modern historical-critical strategies unfold on a new foundation. But, in receiving a new grounding, these strategies—the

---

[43]It is not possible here adequately to discuss what in various conceptual formulations is vulnerable to time and relative to a specific culture. Nor is there need to do so here. It is enough to indicate that there is a sort of "vertical" transcendence within our grasp of situations and not only a horizontal passage from one to another. The issues of what is culture-conditioned and time-bound are part of the ongoing discussion, and while such issues may never be definitively settled, what is at issue here is the *means* that are available to us for even a partial resolution of such a question; whether, for example, we must turn to a "fusion of horizons" or to "ideology-critique" *as the fundamental and exclusive hermeneutical strategy.* It is my contention that a fresh reading of Thomas on this point casts a pre-modern light that contributes to such a resolution without a reliance upon these methods as *the only fundamental ones available.* They retain their tactical value. Conceptualization does not put an end to hermeneutics; properly understood it rescues it from historical relativism.

[44]By "temporal present" I do not only mean an atomic, isolated present, but also the Husserlian complex which includes the immediate past (retention) and immediate future (protention) within the constitution of the *Now,* as well as Heidegger's *Anwesenheit.*

phenomenology of experience, the hermeneutic of situation, the dialectic of opposition, and ideology-critique—will also have been relativized. They will no longer have the last decisive word. And reason is freed to remember once again its created status in the midst of the community of beings. It is through this conceptual liberation that a thorough yet relative human transcendence of time and place takes its origin and takes it as part of our human constitution. For in this immanently human trans-particularity and trans-temporality, a new order of meaning, appreciation and evaluation comes into play, and a new orientation becomes possible towards the mystery that outstrips us on all sides.

On the other hand, if our human reach is understood to be so overwhelmingly confined within a horizon defined by a particular historical time and cultural place that we have no exit from it, then—to borrow a saying from Heidegger—it is doubtful if even a God can save us, at least not without some violent act perpetrated against our human structure.[45] At most we might reach a limit-situation that throws us back upon our confined time-space context. It is just this strategy to which most versions of contemporary dialectic appeal, in order to build up meaning from within a purportedly temporal-spatial horizon, by means of "conflict oppositions," "contrast experiences" and similar strategies. If the strategy discovers anything beyond the confines of human experience, it is at best a putative presence that is at most wholly Other, entirely negative and conceptually indeterminate. In so doing we do not yet quite escape our modern Cartesian origins. We see things from within a circle, and we build up a world to support the exceedingly opaque membrane that encloses it.[46]

---

[45]I have in mind among current theologians the philosophical difficulties which, it seems to me, are encountered in the later work of Edward Schillebeeckx, despite his attempt to "save" a certain normativity for past dogmatic formulas. Leo Scheffczyk, "Christology in the Context of Experience: On the Interpretation of Christ by E. Schillebeeckx," *The Thomist* 48 (1984) 399, renders a severe judgment on the latter's particular use of hermeneutics: "According to Schillebeeckx, one could very well dismiss Jesus' Father-experience as an illusion; but what is decisive is to put one's trust in Jesus. And yet, in that case, one should draw the consequence that this trust is incapable of demonstration, that it is preceded by no plausibility or judgment of its believability whatever. It is not objectively based in Jesus himself, but rather *in his reflection in human experience.* It is a voluntaristic, at worst even an arbitrary, decision. This whole complicated hermeneutical manner of thought leads in the end to something very much like a merely arbitrary option." (Italics added.) For a more sympathetic but not uncritical view of the same, see Louis Dupré, "Experience and Interpretation: A Philosophical Reflection on Schillebeeckx's *Jesus* and *Christ*," in *Theological Studies* 43 (1989) 30-51. See also the comprehensive and nuanced exposition of Schillebeeckx's development by Mary Catherine Hilkert, O.P., "Hermeneutics of History in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx," in *The Thomist* 51 (1987) 97-145.

[46]In this sense, Edward Schillebeeckx's concept of reality as that which breaks down our constructions states the negative aspect of such a norm, but his insistence upon the

It is a question for philosophical and theological anthropology. If, on the one hand, there is a trans-historical movement and a trans-historical depth *within* the human person, then that transcendence will form the creaturely basis from which a passage is possible to a more *determinate* quasi-knowledge (and not simply an indeterminate negative apprehension) of what is both higher and deeper than us. If, on the other hand, we humans possess no such opening, if our historical situations are closed off from some positive appreciation of transcendent depth and breadth, or if all such transcendence must capitulate to human terms and be absorbed and refracted into the horizon of human immanence before it is acceptable, then however much stress is put upon phenomenological intentionality, or noematic objectivity, or existential limit-situations, or indeterminate otherness, or contrast experiences, they will yield only a muted sense of trans-human reality and a muffled transcendence.

Now, the interiority of modern subjectivity is vastly different in character and motive from the ontological interiority that, as the metaphysics of Thomas insists, is resident in all being as the heritage of every created being. For the causes and principles that constitute created being provide that being with an ultimately inexhaustible depth and mysterious interiority that is partly its own but that also proceeds from and leads back to its creative Source. Conceptualization properly carried out does not banish that mystery, but it locates it differently than

---

indeterminateness and negativity of that which resists us fails to ground any determinate and positive revelation and/or dogma, though he evidently would prefer to do so. He begins with a true proposition: that the mystery of God is beyond our expression, and finds some confirmation in allusions to Kant and Levinas. (One must be careful with such allusions, however, since they may become more a "confusion of horizons" than a fusion of them, hiding as they do strikingly incompatible presuppositions. This looseness of allusion contrasts with the careful treatment of *Horizontverschmelzung* given by Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode,* 2nd edition [Tübingen: Mohr, 1965] 289-290, which rejects the closedness of historical situations, without however conceding the reversal of horizons I think is needed.) Now, it seems to me that the inexpressibility of the mystery does not *necessarily* imply the negative indeterminacy of the mysterious Source in every respect, or even that we cannot say something determinate and true about it, even though it remains inexhaustibly beyond us. Inadequacy of expression does not convert into total inexpressibility. If I have understood his *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Seabury/Crossroad, 1990), Schillebeeckx struggles to retain some determinacy (continually revisable under hermeneutical suspicion and ideology-critique), but on grounds that all but undermine the possibility of any trans-historical truth in the historically conditioned formulations of Scripture and dogma. The critical-historical method as tactical hermeneutics has brought us many treasures, but if it is taken as fundamentally decisive and if human consciousness is taken as exclusively historical, a crisis arises that attempts desperate solutions. Conceptualization, on the other hand, it seems to me, offers a bridge between situations, insofar as it has the capacity to accommodate and even integrate all times within it.

does experience. For even if the initial Cartesian dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is overcome, the various post-Cartesian strategies have absorbed reality into the horizon of subjectivity, giving us at best a shadowy and indeterminate transcendence. While experience translates the mystery into feelings of reverence and awe, conceptualization releases that same mystery to new depths; and its intelligible determinacy, properly understood, discloses more than experience can.

As I have said, it is my own understanding of Thomas that his metaphysics of existential act calls for an ontological depth in all beings, a depth that might well be called "interiority." As *metaphysical* interiority, it is the quite general causative condition of every created being, and it is this depth that sets the comprehensive horizon of all created being. And so, in contrasting Thomas' metaphysical subject of being with the modern subjectivity of consciousness, we must be careful not to overlook the metaphysical interiority intrinsic to each and every being, or to objectivize Thomas' pre-modern metaphysics by rendering it after the manner of an object that lacks interiority. For Thomas' conceptualization in no way excludes the interior dimension of reality; on the contrary, it broadens the scope of that interiority and situates human interiority with its historicity within that broader horizon.

A last remark: I have up until now confined myself to Thomas' restricted sense of experience, since this is the primary and ordinary sense he attaches to the term. He does, however, sometimes speak of experience in wider terms, though in a special context in which he joins the ancient tradition of "integral Christian experience." For in speaking of the immediate knowledge of hidden graces, he speaks of "tasting" the divine goodness as a sort of experimental knowledge (*quasi experimentalis*).[47] This special adjectival sense is neither simply the ordinary restricted sense I have treated as the primary sense in Thomas; nor is it the super-charged modern sense rooted in human subjectivity. Such an experience is the fruit of that prayerful interiority long known to Christians, an interiority that is neither simply metaphysical nor is it modern; it is the path that leads towards union with God.[48] And here we meet in Thomas

---

[47]See *ST* II-II, 97, 2 ad 2; *ST* I, 43, 5 ad 2; I *Sent.* d. 14, q.2, a.2 sol., ad 2, ad 3. Also Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord,* I, *Seeing the Form,* 219-245. (See above, n. 2.) For a more general consideration, see the classical study by Jean Mouroux (1952), *The Christian Experience: An Introduction to a Theology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954); also see Angelo Scola, "Esperienza Cristiana e Teologia," in *Teologi in Rivolta: Ecclesia* (Edizioni Logos) 7:5-20.

[48]The impressive article by William J. Hoye, "Zur Problematik des Begriffs 'Gotteserfahrung' bei Thomas von Aquin," in *Theologie und Glaube* 77 (1987) 407-42, repays study on the question of *cognitio Dei experimentalis.* The conclusions arrived at are strongly negative with respect to the *immediate* and adequate knowledge of God by experience (though not of all lesser yet determinate understanding based upon God's

that pathway of interiority that is neither simply metaphysical understanding rooted in the interiority of created being; nor is it the modern path that finds a restless starting and transient stopping point in human subjectivity. It is the path of Christian prayer that opens out upon the uplands of the God who created man with the gift of that inner transcendence I have called conceptualization.

KENNETH L. SCHMITZ
John Paul II Institute
Washington, D.C.

---

existence (*an est*) as distinct from His essence (*quid est*). Hoye closes with a telling text that sets knowledge in the ultimate context of love: *Dilectio est cognitionis terminus; et ideo ubi desinit cognitio, scilicet in ipsa re, quae per aliam cognoscitur, ibi statim dilectio incipere potest.* (*ST* II-II, 27, 4, ad 1. See also *De veritate* 10, 11, ad 6.)