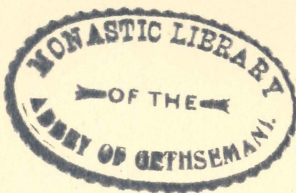


JACQUES MARITAIN

SCIENCE AND WISDOM



NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
1940

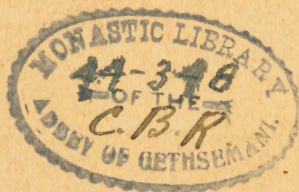
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teaching on the solution  
of the one problem  
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Yet the one may go  
into Gen. Wks. & Philo.  
& the other into Pure  
Threat. ethics.



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ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.  
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✠ FRANCIS J. SPELLMAN, D.D.  
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK

NEW YORK, APRIL 10, 1940



respectively, in the ancient world, the christian world and the world of our time. And when I use the word knowledge I shall no longer use it in the extreme or extremist sense which I gave it a moment ago—that of the biblical expression concerning ‘the tree of knowledge of good and evil’, in which I distinguished the knowledge of the sinner. I will use it in the more usual and purer sense, in the classical sense which makes it mean a certain type of knowing and a certain perfection of the intelligence; where we have to do with the knowledge of the causes of things; with a knowledge which is as such a certain nobility of mind; and which has a certain dignity. x

Thus, the word knowledge has three meanings. In a superior sense it means *knowing in a firm and stable way*. It is not exhaustive, of course (except in God), but it is armed for certitude and capable of advancing endlessly in the way of truth. In this sense wisdom is comprehended in knowledge, and is its highest region. We speak of the ‘knowledge of the saints’ as we speak of ‘the wisdom of the saints’. In this first sense, which is the most comprehensive, we may speak of ‘knowledge or understanding’.

In an intermediate sense the word knowledge is taken in opposition to the highest regions of our understanding. In this sense it means science in contradistinction to wisdom, and has to do with the less exalted regions of our understanding. We do not describe botanical or linguistic knowledge as wisdom, but as science. Wisdom is knowledge through the highest sources and in the deepest and simplest

[ 4 ]

- (1) Knowledge = Wisdom - of saints
- (2) Knowledge - dist. from wisdom - of sciences
- (3) Knowledge - low sense - of sciences

that science is inferior to wisdom, it is inferior in the sense in which one perfection is inferior to another perfection, one virtue to another virtue; inferior in the sense in which one world of mystery and beauty is inferior to another world of intelligence and mystery.

## II

It is to the credit of pagan antiquity always to have understood that wisdom is a science, a form of knowledge, a perfection of the intellect, that it brings into play the highest speculative energies of the intelligence; for were it not so the very order of human nature would be overturned. And it is also to the credit of the ancient world that it never for a moment dreamt that science, in the sense of the special sciences, could claim to prevail over wisdom and enter into conflict with it. For the ancient world always realised that wisdom was sovereignly to be desired, that it is a science of freedom, and that it relates man to the divine. But what is this wisdom, and in what does it consist? In a general way we find in the ancient world what we may call a *competition of wisdoms*.

It is impossible to speak, however briefly, of the pre-christian forms of wisdom without attempting first of all to sketch the attitude of oriental thought, and above all of Hindu thought. But how can the christian approach this question without asking also why a world so marvellously gifted, so far as its natural disposition is concerned, for con-



reach it by a desperate urge which came from the depths of the soul, a sort of tidal wave of the divine energies that are spread in the universe and concentrated in man. How should India have been able to distinguish as we do between the supernatural order—that is to say the order of participation in the intimate life of God—and the natural order? In her eyes nature itself, freed from the constraints of illusion and the power of causality, must transcend itself in a perfection which we may call supernatural in quite another sense. Wisdom, the wisdom of salvation, the wisdom of the saints, is to be achieved by the ascetical and mystical effort of human nature.

I am fully aware that India bases all her philosophy on a sacred revelation, and that the idea of divine grace is not absent from her thought. I am fully aware that in the sort of prefiguration of an unknown truth, the fervour of *bhakti* brought to India, mercy and love were conceived as descending to us from on high. But theism and the doctrine of piety of *bhakti* are only one aspect of Hindu thought, and one, moreover, which did not always retain its purity. And even if grace was indeed received from above, the significance of such a gift remains implicit and unexplained. As for the sacred revelation upon which all Hindu thought depends, it is not the living voice of a God telling of himself through His Son and bringing to the heart of humanity His truth which can tolerate no immixture. It is a holy literature inherited from the wise men and deposited in the shelter of a ritual tradition: from which each *dharsana*, each human



work and the work is nowhere complete. It is incomplete on the metaphysical side. We know how Aristotle, faced with the questions that concern the supreme spiritual realities, hesitated and shut his eyes: we know his errors and how small a following his great speculative discoveries won in the ancient world. It is incomplete on the scientific side, for though the physico-mathematical method was applied with success in certain particular domains it never came to be used as a means of acquiring a general knowledge of natural phenomena: and though physics were well based so far as their philosophical principles were concerned, they led to great errors in detailed explanation of phenomena. It is incomplete on the moral side, where neither the philosophy of pleasure nor that of virtue led to any conclusion, except to despair of the possibility of true wisdom. ✕

And when this human wisdom tried to complete itself by its own unaided efforts, it took a bad turn. It was not content to fulfil its mission and affirm the ontological consistency and value of creatures. Instead of paying honour to the principle of created being, as shown in created things themselves, it divinised them. For this it earned the condemnation of St. Paul. In the end it called in vain for the help of the East, of a syncretism without existential roots, and sought a remedy for the great melancholy of paganism in mystagogy and magic. It renounced the realism<sup>x</sup> in orienting thought to which its original strength had lain: and contented itself with a substitute, a dialectical world in which the search is only for an ideal procession of essences, and for an ecstasy which

lies beyond being. The neglect of the singular, and more profoundly of existing things, the primacy of the generic and the logical which it is the fashion (quite wrongly) to blame on Aristotle—really represents what was a temptation for Greek philosophy and finally brought about its defeat when it showed itself no longer capable of sustaining Aristotle. The Renaissance of platonic idealism during the Alexandrine period was a punishment on human wisdom which had grown degenerate. And I am not sure that the same cannot be said of every platonist revival during the course of history.

But in the ancient world there is a third wisdom, the wisdom of Moses and the prophets, the wisdom of the Old Testament. It is not human wisdom like the Greek. The Jewish world until Philo seems to have even ignored or despised all strictly philosophical and metaphysical inquiry, every search for human wisdom. It is a wisdom of salvation and holiness, of deliverance and freedom, of eternal life. But it is differentiated from Hinduism by the fact that man does not achieve it by his own effort. *Quis ascendet in caelum*, who will ascend to heaven and look for it?<sup>1</sup> The heart of Israel knew that no effort of asceticism and of mysticism could *force* that wisdom. Wisdom must give itself, must itself open the gates and descend from heaven.

Here we have the peculiar mark of the true wisdom of eternal life. As it is a matter of entering into the depths of God, how would it be even conceivable if God Himself did not take the initiative with a free gift?

<sup>1</sup> Deuter. xxx. 12; Rom. x. 6; Baruch, cap. III.



The long unwearying impatience of the Jews beseeches God to give Himself—God whose only wish is to give Himself, and yet who hides Himself. And He will come even in person and in the flesh, and descend lower than all so as to save all. Wisdom itself will bear our sorrows.

Nowhere is wisdom spoken of more gloriously and more mysteriously than in the Bible. It appears as increate and yet created, it is identified with God and is yet the first creature, the maternal form, so to speak, in which all things are planned and formed. So much so that in our time certain orthodox Russian theologians have tried to turn *Sophia* into some sort of hypostasis mediating between the uncreated and the created. They do not see that this expression moves analogically from God to His consubstantial Word made Flesh and to Her who, inseparable from Him, and reflecting God as perfectly as a pure creature can, was Herself, too, and for this reason foreseen from the beginning.

The wisdom of the Old Testament is bound up with the most inflexible idea of divine transcendence, and of the abyss of glory of an uncreated life whose thoughts are not like our thoughts, and whose initiatives and sanctions intervene perpetually in our history. And it is bound up with the idea of creation *ex nihilo*. It seems to me very remarkable that while we have here a conception as opposed as possible to any immanentist monism more or less compromising the divine personality, we have at the same time a conception of the creature as far removed as possible from an effacement of created being, of its human reality, of its personality and



domain (of which it knows the gods are envious), of definitive data and absolutely certain landmarks, points of crystallisation in the intellectual order which are more incontestable and more suggestive than those furnished by the senses in physical science. Theology will supply them. The more theology knows God from a distance the more it wants to know Him through experience. The more mystical wisdom knows God by way of experience, the more it aspires to the vision of Him. And each time the higher discipline gives to the soul that which it has been encouraged by the lower discipline to desire.

But how are these desires fulfilled, save by the quickening gift which pours from Pure Act? And not only does He fulfil them, but He enlarges their scope and unceasingly vivifies them. Nor is it possible to discern to what extent His loving-kindness entered into those aspirations on the lower plane of which we have already spoken.

It is clear that the more the soul welcomes this quickening gift, the more the deep energies are awakened in its depths by which it mounts towards Him. Thus is theology activated by contemplation and metaphysics by theology. And this is not a violent or despotic rule, but a natural and spontaneous movement like that of the tides and the seasons.

At this price only, which is a condition *sine qua non*, order and harmony, unity of life, force and suppleness are maintained in the spiritual universe between the three concurrent and synergic wisdoms. The spiritual unity that mediaeval Christendom knew was made possible only because and in so

Averroism  
century onwards it was shaken by a violent crisis—the averroist crisis which still continues to-day. Averroism really meant an effort to separate philosophical wisdom from theological wisdom. It tore it away from the Synergic movement from above of which I have spoken and set it up in perfect isolation. It thus cut man into two parts, one being man according to pure nature, with his philosophic wisdom: the other being man according to grace and faith, with his theological or even mystical wisdom. The myth of the two truths, and it is really a myth, is an adequate symbol of this duplication.

The effort at separation was centred on metaphysics. It failed, for a time, as is well known, thanks to St. Thomas. But the drama was more violent and the action of Siger de Brabant was of deeper significance than is usually imagined. M. Gilson recently pointed out the theological-political Averroism of Dante's *De Monarchia*. The revival of Averroism in the sixteenth century was a cause which prepared for quite another revolution.

By this I mean the cartesian revolution. I have spoken of it so often that I will mention it only very briefly here. The cartesian revolution also derives from an effort to separate philosophical wisdom from theological wisdom. But this effort was centred on physics rather than on metaphysics, and it succeeded.

As I have tried to show elsewhere<sup>1</sup> Descartes' achievement, whatever may have been his personal intention, was to deny

<sup>1</sup>*Le Songe de Descartes*, Paris, Correa, 1932.



the positive science of a period, and its passing states. Science is the real winner. The wisdom which believes it is supreme has already been beaten.

Also, the success of the cartesian revolution was the expression of a great movement not only of human intelligence, but also, and primarily, of desire. Science was able to preponderate over wisdom because generally speaking the classical humanist world was subordinated to created wealth as its final end. And such an event was entirely new in the history of civilised mankind. One and the same desire, one and the same mystical covetousness turned the human heart towards the possession of things by way of material control, and by way of intellectual control. The way of humility, the sense of poverty as a mark of the highest knowledge and of the wisest economic system, gave way to the use of riches and a sort of universal gluttony. It is very significant that the reign of science (which was turned into a god), and the reign of money, were rung in at the same moment, at the dawn of the modern world.

So the story continued. Kant had only to deduce the consequences of the cartesian revolution. Just as Descartes separated philosophy from theology, so Kant separated science from metaphysics. As Descartes denied the possibility of theology *as a science*, so Kant denied the possibility of metaphysics *as a science*. And now that metaphysics in its turn was no longer a form of knowledge, how could it be a form of wisdom? It tried to defend itself, without success. After the great effort of German romanticism and idealism



questions. Should there be a philosophy of nature distinct from the sciences of natural phenomena? (This is the question *an sit.*) And in what exactly does it consist? (This is the question *quid sit.*) A whole volume would be needed to treat them fully. I shall only indicate in the shortest possible way the conclusions I believe we ought to reach.

To reply to the first question we must distinguish—at the first degree of intellectual abstraction, in the order of knowledge of sensible reality—two ways of constructing concepts and of analysing the real: the analysis we have already called ontological, and the analysis which we have called empiriological, of sensible reality. In the first case we are dealing with an ascending analysis towards intelligible being, in which the sensible plays an indispensable part, but in attendance on intelligible being. In the second case we are dealing with a descending synthesis towards the sensible, towards the observable as such. Not of course that the mind then ceases to have to do with being, which is impossible, but being passes into the service of the sensible, the observable and above all of the measurable, becomes an unknown element assuring the constancy of certain sensible determinations and of certain standards, or assuring the value of certain *entia rationis* with a foundation *in re*.

In one case one seeks a definition by ontological characteristics, by the constituent elements of an intelligible nature or essence—so obscurely that only at times does one grasp this essence. In the other case, one tries to define by possibilities of observation and measurement, by the performance of

cannot be brought into relation with the real causes which are the object of philosophical consideration.

But this being granted, one may point out the very significant affinities which make modern science, in spite of the huge areas of shadow that still surround it, more synergic than either ancient or mediaeval science with the aristotelian-thomist philosophy of nature. We do not refer to the sciences of life where the demonstration of this thesis is almost too easy. The cartesian conception of the world-machine and of matter which is identified with geometrical extension, the newtonian conception of an eternal framework of space and time independent of the world, the infinity of the world, the pseudo-philosophical determinism of the physicians of 'the Victorian age'—all these dogmas have had their day. The idea which contemporary scientists have of mass and of energy, of the atom, of mutations due to radio-activity, of the periodic classification of the elements and the fundamental distinction between the elements and solutions and composites: these ideas dispose the mind to restore their value to the aristotelian notion of *nature* as root principle of activity, to the notion of *substantial mutations* which is the basis of hylemorphism, and to the notion of an *ascending order* of material substances, an order far richer and more significant than was realised by ancient physics.

Our world in which everything is in movement, even more in the invisible atom than in the visible stars, and in which movement is the universal medium of interaction, is seen by the philosopher as animated in its entirety by that



Modern science confirms in its own way and in admirable detail the great thesis of the thomist philosophy of nature which sees in the universe of non-living bodies and living bodies an aspiration and ascent from one ontological plane to another, towards more and more developed forms of complex unity and individuality, and at the same time of interior life and communion, in fine, towards what in the vast universe no longer signifies a part but a whole in itself, a consistent unity opening out towards other such unities by way of intelligence and love. Such is the *person*, which, as St. Thomas says, is the most perfect thing in the whole of nature.

While deciphering the image of the mysterious universe that is furnished by the phenomenal sciences, natural philosophy perceives in the heart of what might be called the tragic of prime matter an immense movement of *response*, at first indistinct, then stammered, which becomes, with the human being, a word, in response to another Word which of its own power the philosophy of nature does not know. Metaphysics will know it. Bringing with it the light of philosophical illumination, the philosophy of nature liberates in the scientific universe an intelligibility which the sciences themselves cannot provide. It discloses in sensible reality, known in so far as mutable, analogical traces of deeper realities and truths which are the proper object of metaphysics. A form of wisdom uncertain and *secundum quid*, the philosophy of nature undertakes in the first degree of abstractive vision and in the generic sphere of intellection which is least removed from sense the ordering and unifying func-



the universal success of the new scientific methods and the preference given to science over wisdom. We may add here that however much science may breed covetousness in man, it itself has remained unsullied by the contaminations of desire. In the modern world science has been the last refuge of sanctity and truth and spirituality. This spirituality is not efficacious because it is not a spirituality of wisdom: and may be turned in practice to evil as well as to good; which is perhaps why rationalism is in such sore straits in our time. But it is spirituality, a beginning of spirituality, and as such we must honour it. Although the notion of truth may be largely diminished in it, although with it the temptation to yield to practice is carried to its extreme limit, there exists in phenomenal and physico-mathematical science a dignity and virtue which are in their nature holy and which, in spite of everything, follow their inner inclinations to a speculative truth, which is in itself independent of human interests and cares.

Nevertheless, the purity and chastity of knowledge has a much higher sanction in wisdom than in the sciences. Metaphysics is more perfectly speculative than the philosophy of nature and the sciences of phenomena. And if the superior forms of wisdom (theology and the wisdom of grace) by virtue of their very superiority are at the same time speculative and practical, they are first of all and principally speculative. It is through contemplation of the subsistent Life and Love that they penetrate to the innermost depths of human life and human interests. They are practical because in the self-revealing light of Uncreated Reality human action also is

seen to be directed beyond time to the vision of God, and to be subject to divine rules.<sup>1</sup> The thinkers of antiquity took great care to insist that mystical contemplation is strictly speaking a form of knowledge, a science and the highest science, though in its mode obscure.

It remained for us in our wretchedness to reproach Greek and mediaeval thought for their pure idea of science and intellectuality, which is one of the titles that justify the existence of the West: and to conceive of a wisdom which is a negation and annihilation of speculative values. From this point of view, pragmatism was a particularly morbid phenomenon in Western civilisation. As philosophical doctrine it only enjoyed a passing existence. But we already see the birth of certain conceptions which degrade the spirit even more, and which are in truth materialism integrated into the very exercise of thought. The last refuge of spirituality (of which I have already spoken) which the sciences of phenomena provide in the modern world is itself in danger of being carried.† Wherever the Social Class, or the mysticisms of Party or of State are erected into an absolute, science as well as philosophy are in danger of falling under the control of a sort of dynamism of the human collectivity, whether of class or race or nation.

<sup>1</sup> *Magis est (sacra doctrina) speculativa quam practica: quia principalius agit de rebus divinis quam de actibus humanis: de quibus agit secundum quod per eos ordinatur homo ad perfectam Dei cognitionem: in qua aeterna beatitudo consistit.* (*Sum. theol.*, I, I, 5). And of the gift of wisdom which is both speculative and practical St. Thomas says: *Per divina judicat de humanis, per divinas regulas dirigens actus humanos* (*Ibid.*, II-II, 45, 3).



It should be scarcely necessary to add that pragmatism as a subconscious disposition or tendency has not exhausted its effect even on the higher regions of our culture.

For instance how can we explain, in the neo-protestantism of Karl Barth, the contempt we find for the speculative order (which is confused with the 'spectacular') save through the fact that speculative knowledge itself is defined by relation to action: as though it were a refusal to act, a refusal to commit oneself, a defection before the drama of existence and of destiny, a sort of withdrawal to a place of academic judgment. Speculative knowledge may well show this character amongst those who misuse it, among those who like to be spectators, or are the dupes of a want of humanity which they mistake for grandeur. They make use of speculative knowledge in a wrong sense and with the wrong object, by applying it to matters of action and of conflict, so as to halt their action in the contemplation of possibilities and to shake a learned head at those who are engaged in the conflict. But speculative knowledge is something wholly different, and has to do with the answer made to the generosity of being by a generous spirit which lives in the supra-temporal life of truth. And it has therefore the most intimate relation with the existence of a being who does not live by bread alone and who by his very essence has need of that which is not useful. It aids, directs, enlightens the obligations and the elections with which he sows the field of life during his years of freedom.

And again, how are we to explain the inveterate distrust—

cf  
Kierkegaard  
"Present  
age"

*on the part of so many Catholics,*

\*especially among the Catholic clergy and those whose profession it is to teach—of the wisdom that is offered by the Angelic Doctor. This distrust does not come from a contrary philosophical or theological conviction, which is the result of serious and ripe reflexion and meditation. Were it so, it would merit our respect. It comes from a preliminary refusal, from an infra-intellectual prejudice against wisdom and speculative knowledge. The universe of such materialised minds can only assimilate what is visibly and immediately of use for action. Hence the supra-temporal wisdom whose principles were formulated for them by a Doctor of a past age is inevitably as useless in their eyes as the arm of a corpse.

If we make an effort to analyse the slow historical process which has led us to the disorder (as well as to the promise) of our time, I believe we shall recognise the ambivalence of such a process, and distinguish in its causes two moments of very different character.

The first is this: Man forgot that God has the first initiative always in the order of the good, and forgot that the descending movement of divine plenitude in us is primary in relation to our movement of ascent. He sought to treat this second movement as primary, and himself to take the first initiative in the line of goodness. Thus the movement of ascent was necessarily separated from the movement of grace. That is why the age in question was an age of dualism, of schism, of division, an age of anthropocentric humanism cut off from the Incarnation; an age in which science finally carried the



day against wisdom, and the effort of progress turned to the destruction of human values.

But on the other hand, obscured by these consequences of error, a certain divine exigence was at work in the same age of history. These things are not easy to express, and it will be easier presently to sense my meaning. But let me say here that during this period a sort of rehabilitation of the creature was going on, a growing awareness and a practical discovery of the peculiar dignity of that which is hidden in the mystery of human nature. 'Man's heart is hollow' said Pascal, 'and full of filth.' But this very hollow is so deep that God himself or death await one at the end. In short, the radical vice of anthropocentric humanism was that of being anthropocentric, not of being humanism.

Hence it is not enough to say (as we did in the first paper) that the christian world of the Middle Ages was traversed by a twofold continuous movement of the descent of God to man and the ascent of man to God. Such a twofold movement which is the consequence and manifestation of the law of the Incarnation, is essential to every christian age, and we know that several christian epochs are possible under the sky of the Church. We must endeavour also to determine what was the peculiar style or note of mediaeval Christianity. In my view this style is marked by the naïve and unreflective simplicity of man's response to the movement of divine effusion.

In the midst of many relapses into passion and crime, it was a simple movement of ascent, of the intelligence towards its object, of the soul towards perfection, of the world to-

worthy of being loved? I do not mean worthy of being preferred. . . . In that pure and formal aspect, such a claim was in conformity with the laws of the development of history. Science undertakes the conquest of created nature, the human soul creates for itself a universe of subjectivity, the profane world differentiates itself according to its own proper law, the creature knows himself . . . yet at the price that we have stated, and to end in the catastrophe that is common to all true tragedy. For humanity took up and continued the movement of ascent which it had known before the fourteenth century only while pretending now that henceforward all the initiative comes from man. The hero of humanism and the puritan sure of salvation have thus led us to a completely logical conclusion.

These considerations help us to understand how much it was in conformity with the proper style of mediaeval Christianity that that age of culture should be the age of the differentiation and the apogee of theology: while on the contrary the modern age was to see the birth and progress of a philosophy in schism, both speculative and moral.

But we have noticed that the modern world has already ceased to be modern. If a new christian civilisation is in preparation—whether it be free or persecuted—it must needs know in its own way the mysterious rhythm of systole and diastole without which it may not manage to exist. The second movement must become secondary once again, the first initiative must again be granted to divine goodness. Though, in spite of this, the knowledge and gains of the pre-



In fact, it receives from faith and from revelation an aid without which theologians have said it is incapable of realising fully the claims of its true nature; I mean, without too many mistakes. From faith and revelation it receives *objective data* which deal primarily with revealed truths of the natural order. The highest of these have been regularly missed or misstated by the great pagan philosophers. Moreover, these *objective data* are also concerned with the repercussions of truths of the supernatural order on philosophical reflexion: and here the connexions and echoes really extend indefinitely. And from the *subjective reinforcements* which also extend indefinitely philosophy receives the superior wisdoms, theological wisdom and infused wisdom, which rectify and purify in the soul the philosophical *habitus* with which they maintain a continuity not of essence but of movement and illumination, fortifying them in their proper order, and lifting them to higher levels.

And to this we need to add that in the field of practical knowledge, philosophy would not only fail to reach its maturity, but it would even fail to exist as a science, in the precise Aristotelian sense of this word,<sup>1</sup> would fail to exist as

<sup>1</sup>The word science takes on a diminished meaning when it passes over into the practical order. And yet the practical sciences are authentic sciences—involving a group of certitudes organically bound together, assigning principles and causes in a certain objective field. These sciences are essentially practical because of their object which is a work or action *to be performed*. Though they belong to a genus opposed to the speculative genus, they retain a speculative element up to the point at which practical knowledge ceases to be a science and becomes prudence. (Need I note here that recognition of the legitimacy of practical knowledge has

(practical) knowledge stabilised in truth in an organic and sufficient manner, unless it recognised the truths of faith. Moral philosophy adequately considered would then only be a philosophy 'subalternated' to theology.

These positions, which I believe to be correct, show that the expression 'Christian philosophy' indicates not an essence in itself but a complex: an essence taken in a certain state, under conditions of performance, of existence and of life, for or against which one is in fact obliged to make a choice.

These positions have been the object of various criticisms. It would take too long to examine them all in detail, but I should like to say a few words about certain of them. First of all it is quite clear that the views I advance involve the conception of a certain synergic and vital union of philosophy with faith and theology, and a declaration that this union is practically indispensable (as a condition, though not fully sufficing) for a development of philosophy in the strict and formal line of truth.<sup>1</sup> We must accordingly admit that they are likely to offend cartesian ears.

nothing in common with the pragmatism already spoken of, which involves the rejection of speculative knowledge, or a claim to bring it under the law of the practical intellect. So that, in destroying science pragmatism goes on to destroy practical science. Because in practical science in so far as it is science—whether speculatively practical or practically practical—there still remains in a greater or less degree something of the speculative order which pragmatism destroys.)

<sup>1</sup>Concerning the way in which I think we ought to conceive the effective progress of philosophy, see *The Degrees of Knowledge* and *Sept Leçons sur L'Etre* (first lesson).



sophy by theology and revelation. It is simply *as* philosophy, and by virtue of the requirements of its specific development, that it would seem to be catholic: because it finds in itself both an inability to reach reality (a defect which can only be remedied by the knowledge that comes from connaturality) and a void which calls for faith. Thus philosophy has no need to receive anything from outside, either objective data deriving from revelation or subjective reinforcement coming from superior wisdoms specifically distinct from it. To be Christian, it does not need to lend an ear and receive *ex auditu*. But reason aspires so much to the supernatural that that which it can achieve of itself is only, strictly speaking, an aspiration to wisdom and does not constitute in its own sphere a natural wisdom. Were we to admit the possibility of such a wisdom we would be adoring an idol. There is only one wisdom and that is supernatural.

To all this I would reply that philosophical knowledge which, being at once intuitive and notional, has in its proper dynamism a capacity for decisive certitude and at the same time for endless advance, the latter accelerated by the former, the former fortified by the latter—cannot in itself be impotent in face of its own proper specifying object. As we said in the first of these papers, it aspires to a better knowledge not in so far as it knows its proper object *badly*, but in so far as it knows it *well*.

Moreover, it is not Christian only in its emptiness and imperfection, but also by its fulness and in the truths it holds. That is why it constitutes a work of reason which is not only

an aspiration but also wisdom. It only knows its own emptiness when it has reached a certain degree of perfection. And this degree of perfection which brings it to the knowledge of what it lacks is also the stage at which it knows the highest truths that it can attain. It only reaches this degree when aided by the light of faith.

M. Blondel has a great aversion towards Cartesianism, and is right in his aversion. But it would be an illusion to react against the cartesian separation of philosophy and faith while still keeping a cartesian conception of the autonomy of philosophy: to conceive of philosophy in the cartesian way as receiving nothing from outside, as a philosophy that is deaf, while trying to put into this deaf philosophy a christian hymn. Moreover is not the belief that autonomy and liberty, to be real, must be absolute, one of the central errors of the rationalist world? Amongst autonomous natures or virtues there can exist order and degrees—degrees of perfection and degrees of autonomy—and those that occupy lower ranks remain autonomous while receiving from others, just as the intelligent creature remains free while receiving from God. The autonomy and liberty of speculative philosophy, far from being destroyed or diminished, are fortified by their union in the living subject with the light of faith.

Such a problem ought not to be envisaged from the point of view of the social constraints of authority, the penalty of our human condition, or the irritation philosophers have to put up with from theologians. It should be seen from the standpoint of the internal synergy of the soul in its vital



real motion or impression deriving from the *habitus* of faith passes also into it.<sup>1</sup>

From which can be concluded not only that there exists at each degree of specific knowledge a distinct centre of objective irradiation which illuminates the intelligence and reinforces its subjective dynamism, but also that these are in a state of communication by light with one another; and that the *first* centre or *first* focus whose objective irradiation, illuminating the mind at a certain specific degree, is reflected in the other centres, can occur at different levels. For the pure philosopher it is identified with the centre of the determination of Being or Essence, which gives its character to philosophy. For the believer, above all for the believer who has reached the state of union with God, for the soul that Pat-

<sup>1</sup>Cajetan (in i, 106, 1) and John of Saint Thomas (*Curs. theol.*, vol. iv, disp. 25, a. 2) teach that the superior Angel illuminates and fortifies the intellect of the inferior Angel by the mere proposal of the object. *A fortiori*, the putting of the object in a superior light will have an effect of inferior and vital reinforcement on the operative dynamism itself, when it is a *habitus* of the soul which is thus aided by a higher *habitus*. For then a 'physical' motion or impression of one on the other will take place. Evidently this sort of motion could not take place from one angel to another, but it would be ridiculous to conclude from this that it is equally impossible between the *habitus*' of the same soul. On the contrary, thomist psychology maintains that the powers of the soul move one another (the *potentiae vegetativae* make use of *vires naturales* in a quasi instrumental way: the will moves the intelligence and the sensitive appetite, etc.). *Posse unam potentiam, vel habitum unius potentiae aliquam impressionem realem ponere per suam motionem in alia potentia vel habitu, valde commune est inter thomistas*. (John of St. Thomas, *Curs. phil. De Anima*, q. 12, a. 6.) Strictly speaking, it is not the *habitus*' or powers of the soul which operate: it is the living subject, the subject in its substantial unity, which operates and knows by means of its powers and its *habitus*'.

explains the subjective reinforcement of philosophy by living faith, occur in the way of intellectual illumination and of the inclination of appetite. Unity, which is quite the opposite of equilibrium or balance, but is a discovery and a transfiguration, is accomplished in the soul when the two centres I have been speaking about begin to meet and join at the summit of being. The One whose attraction pulls on the whole soul is also He of whom the experience throws light on the universe of all things known.

In fact, as M. Gilson has rightly affirmed, from the historical point of view it is thanks to christian revelation, and because it had ears to hear, that philosophy was set up in a christian *state* and manifested a character that is plainly Christian. Do we need to emphasise the objective help which it thus received? Already we have given numerous examples of notions and certitudes which of their nature are accessible to reason alone, and yet which have only been formally conceived or fully affirmed by reason in that christian state. The notion of creation is one of the most obvious of such examples. Let us here consider two others.

A study of the idea of the soul would show that this idea has followed a remarkable course from the soul considered as form of the body and biological principle, to the soul as mentioned in the Gospels, the soul as object of salvation. Now this last conception of the soul—such that it profits me nothing to gain the whole world if I suffer its loss—has made its way into the consciousness and into the notional texture of philosophy, and modern philosophy will never eliminate it.



The other example is even more important. Aristotle said that God is subsisting Intelligence. He could then speak one of the Divine Names. Aristotle suggested that God is subsisting Being, though to enable Aristotle's principles to bear the fruit they contained, philosophy had in fact to have recourse to Moses. But Aristotle neither said nor suggested that God is subsisting Love. This is a truth of the natural order which we have been taught by the Gospels. Indeed, philosophy up till now has only appreciated its meaning in a very imperfect way.

I am fully aware that it is always possible to try to emasculate the meaning of historical observation for the benefit of particular *a priori* views. But it is precisely such theoretical views that are here being contested. In a word, if philosophy is so different in nature from theology that it can receive nothing from it, then the union of philosophy with faith—which like theology makes use of notions and formulae—seems by an unsuspected effect of *a priori* reasoning to lead to a separation difficult to remedy. But if reason of itself and in its proper sphere is only capable of an aspiration towards wisdom, whose own urge in turn is to debouch into mysticism, the distinction between philosophy and faith seems impaired in its turn by an opposite effect. In short, if metaphysics is not a natural wisdom, speculative reason has been given us in vain and remains impotent in face of reality.

But what is this natural wisdom? The fact that a wisdom may be purely natural in virtue of its objective specification does not bring the subject using it into a state of pure

nature. How many false problems would vanish were this elementary principle understood. Or are we to let iconoclastic zeal annihilate the whole order of specification, for fear lest the exercise of our powers be idolatrous, and lest the aspiration of our soul towards God be halted at an inferior level. We do not reach God by destroying essences, and to recognise essences is not to adore them. To affirm that metaphysical wisdom is natural is also to affirm that the soul should not rest in it. If philosophy is a knowledge of the natural order we already have a reason not to be *satisfied* with it, not to seek there the ultimate rest of our spirit. The soul will never be satisfied by any wisdom, even the most supernatural, and however filled with it. It will always be as in a strange land, *tanquam in aliena, in casulis habitando*.<sup>1</sup> The more wisdom grows, the more desire grows also.

In the state of fallen and redeemed nature there is for human life no perfection save a supernatural perfection: and this perfection itself is a paradox—a more perfect soul is suspended above a more fearful abyss. But there exists a speculative wisdom which is purely natural in itself, that is to say, through its object, because speculative wisdom has for its object Being in the mystery of its own proper intelligibility, not human life and human acts. But this natural wisdom comes to us in the fulness of years and is realised as a *perfectum opus rationis*, only under certain conditions and with the help of supernatural grace which raises our wounded nature to a participation in divine life.

<sup>1</sup>St. Paul, Hebr. xi.



or yet again Christian, in the sense of being intrinsically dependent on Christianity, through aversion or resentment.

To Rev. Fr. Sertillanges<sup>1</sup> who is surprised that I have not said of speculative philosophy what I have said of practical philosophy, I reply that the interests of symmetry should not prevail over the law of specification of *habitus*' by their objects. And it is precisely the specifying object—in one case purely natural, in the other not—which makes it obligatory to introduce a dissymmetry between the case of speculative philosophy, which is Christian only by reason of its *state*, and the case of practical philosophy which is Christian both by reason of its *state* and by reason of its *object*. In reality the concrete *situation* of the philosopher is similar in each case. I mean that subjectively he lives within the chime of the same harmonies and receives the same intellectual reinforcement, in the same atmosphere of grace. His reason, while proceeding in the fashion which is proper to philosophy, is aided and enlightened by faith. But in the speculative order the *opus philisophicum* remains entirely autonomous; and its objective texture refuses all positive regulation save that of reason. In the practical order it ceases to be fully autonomous, its objective structure calls for positive regulations from a superior source.

But here we approach a problem of special importance which requires fuller treatment. It is a tiresome habit of our

<sup>1</sup>*La Philosophie Chrétienne*, study day of the Thomist Society, 11th September, 1933.

time—due no doubt to a sort of nominalism in our way of living—to neglect, in favour of the unity of the word philosophy, the fundamental distinction between speculative philosophy and practical philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

I should like therefore at this point to make some more exact observations concerning first the speculative part, and next and more especially the practical part of christian philosophy. In both cases we shall have occasion to show that the notion of christian philosophy carries a double consequence: it demands that we should recognise the subordination of philosophy to the superior orders of wisdom; and it demands that, in face of these orders of wisdom, we shall maintain and affirm the specific character, and the autonomous existence of philosophy in its own right and method.

The word 'subordination' which I have just used, does not satisfy me. It is very exact in itself, I have used it often and will do so again. But, as I have already remarked, it has gained from its use in popular speech a halo of associative images which tend to make it mean more than it says. Philosophy should have the courage to use technical jargon when precision requires it. And so I would prefer to say *infravalence* or *infraposition*, which simply affirm a certain situation in the scale of values, without any imagery which may conceivably

<sup>1</sup>According to St. Thomas there is not *one* philosophy but there are a number of philosophical sciences which are specifically distinct (*Sum. theol.*, i, 1, 3, ad. 2). In the speculative order the philosophy of nature, for instance, is specifically distinct from metaphysics. And the *speculative* philosophical sciences and the *practical* philosophical sciences belong to two different orders, to two different genera (*Ibid.*, a. 4) which have to do with the first and most fundamental division of knowledge.