

ophy may indeed prescind from the latter's dogmatic opposition even to holding open the question as to the harmony of faith and reason.

We thus return to *Fides et ratio*. Whatever else we may learn from this document, we should be grateful for its ability to awaken a question slumbering within the Western tradition. By inviting us to consider that modern science has not inevitably replaced God and that history has not replaced rational reflection, *Fides et ratio* performs as great a service for theology as it does for philosophy. If we take up this invitation to think once again about this most important question, we may discover, as did our Medieval forebears, that we live in a world transfused with divine and human meaning.

## FAITH AND REASON: FROM VATICAN I TO JOHN PAUL II

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John Paul II's encyclical of September 14, 1998, on "Faith and Reason" takes up a theme that has been a staple of Western theology since at least the time of Augustine in the fourth century. St. Anselm in the twelfth century and St. Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth, argued brilliantly for the harmony between faith and reason. The medieval synthesis, already wounded by the inroads of fourteenth-century Nominalism, was sharply contested from two sides in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At one extreme were self-assured rationalists, who belittled the role of faith, and at the other, skeptical fideists, who distrusted the powers of reason. Since some Catholic thinkers of the early nineteenth century were tainted by these two errors, the Roman Magisterium issued condemnations of both rationalism and fideism. The official Catholic position was most authoritatively summarized in 1870 by the First Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on Catholic Faith, which contained a chapter dedicated to the theme of faith and reason.

Without actually mentioning Thomas Aquinas, Vatican I endorsed

his position. A decade later, in 1879, Pope Leo XIII published his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, proposing St. Thomas as the thinker whose synthesis of faith and reason should be accepted as a solid foundation from which to grapple with more recent questions in philosophy and science.

In the first half of the twentieth century the popes issued a number of further condemnations and admonitions relevant to our question. Early in the century Pius X repudiated the agnostic and historicist theses of Modernism. After World War I, Pius XI censured Marxist Communism for its materialist determinism. Pius XII in 1950 cautioned against the *nouvelle théologie* of the day, in which he detected a tendency toward historicism and dogmatic relativism.

At the Second Vatican Council, in 1962–1965, the problem no longer seemed acute. The Council, displaying a measure of historical consciousness, acknowledged the need to understand the Gospel with all the tools of contemporary scholarship and to proclaim it in ways adapted to existing cultural situations (GS 44, 62). But at the same time it declared that there were unchanging realities and permanent truths (GS 10; DH 3). In the course of its treatment of the autonomy of science and culture, it reaffirmed the teaching of Vatican I on the distinction between the “two orders” of faith and reason (GS 59). Elsewhere Vatican II praised Thomas Aquinas for having given glorious witness to the harmony of faith and reason (GE 10). But these were only passing and disconnected remarks. Vatican II gave no sustained attention to our theme; it was remarkably silent about the role of reason in preparing for the assent of faith—a point that had been of acute concern to the Fathers at Vatican I and to Pius XII.

Since the acrimonious debates of earlier centuries had evidently subsided, Pope John Paul II could easily have left the problem in a state of benign neglect. If he did wish to speak on the subject, he

might have been expected simply to enlarge upon the positions of Vatican I, very much as Leo XIII had done in his encyclical on Thomistic philosophy in 1879. But instead, he addressed the problem in a strikingly new way.

The present pope does not, of course, contradict Vatican I. In fact, he quotes or refers to its Constitution on Catholic Faith in favorable terms at least ten times at various points spanning the entire encyclical.<sup>1</sup> He takes over from Vatican I the familiar ideas that reason has the power to establish the existence of God and the preambles of Christian faith (§§53, 67), that faith confirms truths that reason can cannot grasp except with great difficulty (§43), that faith also embraces mysteries that lie entirely beyond the range of unaided reason (§§8, 9), and that reason can render even these revealed mysteries to some degree intelligible (§83). In line with Vatican I, the pope teaches that the Magisterium has the right and duty to condemn philosophical tenets that are opposed to truths of faith (§55, fn. 72), and that there can be no conflict between faith and reason, since both are gifts of the same God, who could never contradict himself (§§8, 53). Also in the footsteps of Vatican I, John Paul II opposes both a rationalism that dismisses the input of faith and a fideism that distrusts the guidance of reason (§§52, 53). He repeats the teaching of Vatican I that faith and reason “mutually support each other” (§100).

Notwithstanding these important continuities, there are striking differences between the approaches of Vatican I and John Paul II. They are speaking to radically diverse situations. At the time of Vatican I, the issues within the Church were rather clearly drawn. At one end of the spectrum were rationalists and semi-rationalists who professed exorbitant confidence in the powers of unaided reason to fath-

1. Ten references are listed by Kenneth L. Schmitz in his “Faith and Reason: Then and Now,” *Communio* 26 (1999): 595–608, at 598, note 9. He seems to have overlooked the quotation from *Dei Filius* in *Fides et ratio* 9.

om the depths of reality and who regarded faith as unreliable and unnecessary for educated persons. At the other end were fideists and traditionalists who denied the capacity of the intellect to attain truths of a moral or metaphysical nature and who entrusted themselves to faith as a blind movement of emotion or volition or a passive conformity to tradition. Rationalism was more at home in Germany; fideism, in France.

Vatican I, recognizing elements of truth and falsehood in both rationalism and fideism, adopted a mediating position. Against the fideists it affirmed that reason, by its natural powers, could establish the foundations of faith and the credibility of the Christian revelation (DS 3019, 3033). And against the rationalists Vatican I attributed the full assurance of the act of faith to the power of divine grace enlightening the intellect and inspiring the will (DS 3010). The act was therefore reasonable without being a deliverance of pure reason.

By the end of the twentieth century, the proud boasts of autonomous reason, setting itself up against the claims of faith, had been severely muted. The prevailing mood was one of metaphysical agnosticism. Some intellectuals, clinging to a remnant of rationalism, professed a scientism that restricted genuine knowledge to the sphere of measurable physical realities. Logical positivists dismissed all statements not verifiable by experience as "noncognitive" deliverances of emotion, convention, or simple caprice.

In summary, therefore, the rationalist mentality hardly survives today except in the spheres of mathematics, logic, and empirical science. Philosophy, for its part, has practically abandoned the pursuit of transcendent or metaphysical truth. It has narrowed its horizons to the spheres of shifting phenomena, linguistic study, the interpretation of texts, and pragmatic strategies for coping with radical pluralism.

In this situation John Paul II sees no need to restrain the excessive

claims of pure reason. Unlike Vatican I he refrains from lamentations and angry condemnations. In the spirit of Vatican II, he prefers to use what Pope John XXIII called "the medicine of mercy."<sup>2</sup> He sees himself as a friend and ally, called to help philosophy to extricate itself from its present state of impoverishment. He exhorts it to recover its original vocation of being a quest for wisdom, as is implied in the very name *philo-sophia*, which means love of wisdom (§§3, 6). This positive stance harmonizes with the tendency of the Second Vatican Council to depict the Church as a partner in the struggles of humanity at large, including its search for truth (§2; cf. GS 16).

Whereas Vatican I spoke in authoritative and judgmental tones, John Paul II, seeking to establish a common ground with all sincere seekers, situates himself by the side of sincere inquirers. The philosophical quest, as he sees it, begins from below, where experience gives rise to questions. All philosophy, he remarks, begins in wonder (§4). The mind ineluctably asks about the meaning of life in the face of suffering and inevitable death (§26). In language reminiscent of Augustine the pope detects in the human heart "a desire to know the truth," (Preface), which he later calls "a seed of desire and nostalgia for God" (§24). Giving scope to this impulse, he interprets the search for wisdom as a pilgrimage or journey of discovery, much along the lines of Bonaventure in his *Itinerary of the Mind to God* (§§33, 105).

The pope's rhetoric is strikingly different from that of the Magisterium in the nineteenth century. Vatican I had called for a submission to the authority of God who reveals; it stressed the obligation of the individual to believe whatever is contained in the word of God and certified by the Magisterium. John Paul II, by contrast, adopts the posture of a physician helping a patient on the road to recovery.

2. John XXIII, "Gaudet Mater Ecclesia," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher (New York: America Press, 1966), 716.

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He portrays the truth of revelation as a fulfillment of the universal human quest for meaning and truth. At the point where reason begins to falter, faith comes to its aid and lights its way.

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The pastoral and dialogic tone of John Paul's encyclical has its roots in his own personalist philosophy. In agreement with twentieth-century Jewish philosophers, such as Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas,<sup>3</sup> he is convinced that friendship and dialogue can best sustain reason in its search for truth (§33). Among the merits of contemporary philosophy the pope points out its welcome emphasis on personhood and subjectivity (§48). But subjectivity should not be confused with subjectivism; it is in no way opposed to metaphysics. On the contrary, he says, "the person constitutes a privileged locus for the encounter with being, and hence with metaphysical inquiry" (§83). Metaphysics makes it possible to ground the concept of personal dignity in the spiritual nature of the person.

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John Paul II professes a personalist doctrine of faith. Whereas Vatican I had described faith in terms of a faculty psychology as a submission of intellect and will, John Paul II prefers to describe it as a decision engaging the whole person (§13). Knowledge through belief, he asserts, develops in a context of personal trust. The witness of the martyrs inspires confidence and requires no lengthy arguments in order to convince. "The martyrs," he writes, "stir in us a profound trust because they give voice to what we already feel and they declare what we would like to have the strength to express" (§32).

The present pope's emphasis on testimony and dialogue differs markedly from the "scientific" apologetics found in the Scholastic manuals inspired by the First Vatican Council. Whereas they relied heavily on objective evidence, and on miracles as exceptions to the laws of nature, the present pope makes no explicit mention of mira-

3. John Paul II discusses the personalism of Buber and Lévinas in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 35-36.

cles and prophecies. He refers instead to "signposts of the Spirit," which invite the mind to explore hidden truths.<sup>4</sup> Where Vatican I spoke of the "evident credibility" of the Christian religion (DS 3013), John Paul II speaks of the need to discern the signs of revelation in the context of interpersonal communication (§13). Here as elsewhere, the pope does not contradict the earlier teaching; he simply adopts a different angle of approach and a new emphasis.

Whereas Vatican I and the popes who followed it relied principally on the medieval Scholastics as sources, John Paul II gives at least equal emphasis to Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers. His second chapter, dealing with revelation, deals at some length with the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and its echoes in the Pauline letters. He opens his chapter on the relationship between faith and reason (chapter 4) with a discussion of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles, and follows this with a survey of patristic thinking from Justin and Clement to the Cappadocians and Augustine. The Fathers, he concludes, were highly original in welcoming the unlimited dynamism of reason and infusing it with a richness drawn from revelation (§41).

The biblical and patristic predilections of John Paul II affect his categories of thought and language. The vocabulary of Vatican I was Scholastic and abstract. Concerned with universal essences, that Council spoke in an undifferentiated way of "natural reason" (DS 3015), without reference to any historical or cultural context. John Paul II, by contrast, gives close attention to the concrete factors of history and culture. The wisdom tradition of Israel, in his estimation, did not arise through revelation alone; it preserved insights from the ancient cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia (§16). In referring to

4. For the expression "signposts of the Spirit," see John Paul II, Audience before the Angelus at Castel Gondolfo, September 26, 1999, *L'Osservatore Romano* (English weekly edition), 29 September 1999, p. 1.

philosophical wisdom, the pope does not focus exclusively on the Greco-Roman heritage. Philosophy, he notes, is found in less abstract and technical forms in every great culture, from the ancient Near East to present-day India and Japan (§72).

In view of their different orientations, Vatican I and John Paul II treat tradition in characteristically different ways. Vatican I speaks only briefly of tradition, affirming that it is received from Christ and the apostles and that it belongs to the deposit of faith, of which the Church is the infallible custodian (DS 3006, 3011, 3020). This way of speaking suggests that tradition is something passively received and impervious to change or development.

Vatican II, however, made it clear that apostolic tradition continually develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit (DV 8) and takes different forms in different cultures (UR 14-17). Consistently with this teaching, John Paul II asserts that the content of revelation has been progressively unfolded in the course of the centuries (§65) and that the faith has been differently handed on in different cultural contexts (§71). Tradition, therefore, has always employed the help of concepts and thought-forms drawn from particular philosophical currents (§65). While extolling the merits of the great philosophical tradition that comes down to us from the Greeks, the pope does not see it as a closed chapter. The philosophical tradition, he contends, can be further developed by dialogue with the religious and philosophical traditions of other civilizations, such as those of India, China, and Japan, as well as the traditional cultures of Africa, which are for the most part orally transmitted (§72).

Vatican I adopted a two-stage schematism in which reason, with its natural powers, provided a firm platform upon which faith, as a supernatural gift, could be erected. According to this schema, philosophy, as a work of pure reason, comes first, and theology, as a rational reflection on faith, follows (DS 3015-16). Philosophy, for Vatican I,

was a perfectible construct of human ingenuity, but the doctrine of faith was a divine trust that God had committed to the Church to be faithfully preserved and expounded (DS 3020).

John Paul II softens this dualism of reason and faith. In the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, he points out, we find a harmonious fusion of philosophy and theology. In the biblical Wisdom literature and in the Greek and Latin Fathers, he shows, no sharp distinction was made. The profound unity between the two disciplines, preserved until after the time of St. Thomas, has regrettably been eroded in recent centuries (§48).

John Paul II does not reject the hard-won distinctions between reason and faith, philosophy and theology. He even quotes Vatican I to the effect that "faith is superior to reason" (§53; cf. DS 3017). But when he speaks in his own name he shows a marked preference for circular images. "The relationship between theology and philosophy," he writes, "is best construed as a circle" (§73). God's word comes to meet the human quest for truth, and is itself best understood with the help of philosophy. The revealed word keeps philosophy from going astray and at the same time stirs philosophy to explore new paths that it would not have discovered without revelation. Reason and faith, therefore, are not competitors. Each, according to the pope, contains the other (§17). The simultaneity of faith and reason in the pope's thinking makes him reluctant to speak of either in isolation. As he puts it in the preamble to the encyclical, "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." The implication would seem to be that truth is unattainable without both together.

Revelation and reason, for John Paul II, are two different paths, neither sufficient unto itself. Revelation perfects the work of reason in its quest for ultimate truth. Faith and reason converge as they turn toward Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God, who is both Creator

and Redeemer. As the Word or Logos, he is the light of reason, and as incarnate Son he reveals the depth of the divinity, making it accessible to faith. The unity of all truth, natural and revealed, is found in a living and personal way in Christ himself (§34). The Christocentricity of *Fides et ratio* stands in marked contrast to what we might call the theocentricity of Vatican I.

Philosophical wisdom and theological wisdom, according to John Paul II, have a deep affinity because both of them aim to explore reality in terms of its ultimate principles. They are two forms of acquired wisdom. But both of them, he notes, can be perfected by the infused gift of wisdom, which enables the human mind to penetrate divine things through a kind of connaturality bestowed by the Holy Spirit (§44). Here again, the pope takes a step beyond Vatican I, which made no reference to this higher synthesis through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Another interesting development beyond previous doctrinal teaching, including that of Vatican I, is Pope John Paul II's attitude toward what we may call philosophical pluralism—if I may here use a term that does not appear in the encyclical. Neither Vatican I nor Leo XIII nor Pius XII had words of praise for modern philosophies outside of the Thomistic, or at least the Scholastic, tradition. Leo XIII, in his encyclical on the study of philosophy, said that the “golden wisdom” of St. Thomas should be used for the defense of the faith, the advance of the sciences, and the refutation of prevalent errors. Pius XII, after calling for the instruction of future priests according to the method, doctrine, and principles of Thomas Aquinas, deplored the current tendency to denigrate the philosophy so long received in the Church as if the erroneous principles of immanentism, idealism, materialism, and existentialism could offset the limitations of classical metaphysics (DS 3878, 3894).

Vatican II gave a slight opening to pluralism. In its Decree on

Priestly Formation it declared that while students should be trained to exercise their speculative intelligence under the tutelage of St. Thomas, they should learn to apply eternal truths to the changing conditions of modern affairs, so as better to communicate the faith to men and women of our own time (OT 16). The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, going a stage further, observed that the findings of science, history, and philosophy raise new questions that demand new theological investigations. The faithful should live in close union with men and women of their time, and be familiar with modern ways of thinking and feeling (GS 62).

John Paul II in *Fides et ratio* shows no lack of esteem for St. Thomas. “The Church has been justified,” he declares, “in consistently proposing St. Thomas as a master of thought and a model of the right way to do theology” (§43). He praises Leo XIII for having insisted on the incomparable value of the philosophy of St. Thomas (§57). He is also on guard against eclecticism, which takes over ideas from different philosophical systems without concern for their inner coherence (§86).

Notwithstanding his evident preference for St. Thomas, the present pope is careful to avoid canonizing any one philosophical system (§49). He writes that while the Church has been excellently served by the powerful array of thinkers formed in the school of the Angelic Doctor (§58), philosophers who adopt more recent currents of thought, such as the method of immanence and phenomenology, have helped to keep the tradition of Christian thought alive (§59). In addition to St. Thomas, therefore, philosophers and theologians of other schools receive words of praise in the encyclical. He mentions St. Anselm and St. Bonaventure together with St. Thomas as making up the “great triad” of medieval doctors (§74). Among the baroque philosophers, he pays tribute to Francisco Suárez (§62), and among the moderns he commends John Henry Newman, Antonio Rosmini,

Vladimir Soloviev, and Vladimir Lossky (§74), none of whom could be called a Thomist.

These references to non-Thomistic currents in philosophy call for some explanation. In the first place, it may be noted that the method of immanence, apparently favored by the pope, should not be confused with the philosophy of immanentism that had been previously rejected by the Magisterium. Maurice Blondel proposed the method precisely as a way of demonstrating the aspiration to the transcendent that is inscribed in the human spirit, and therefore as a way of refuting immanentism, which excluded the transcendent. It is surprising that the pope does not mention Blondel by name anywhere in the encyclical.<sup>5</sup>

The reference to phenomenology is by no means surprising. John Paul II encountered it in depth when writing his *Habilitationschrift* on the ethics of Max Scheler. While he welcomed the personalism and intersubjectivism of Scheler, and some aspects of Scheler's philosophy of values, he was dissatisfied with Scheler's unwillingness to pass from pure phenomenology to ontology. The pope stands closer to Roman Ingarden, who combined Husserlian phenomenology with philosophical realism. Edith Stein, having been a disciple of Edmund Husserl, likewise integrated his phenomenology with the ontology of Thomas Aquinas, thus more closely approaching the positions of the present pope.

Although John Paul II insists that the Magisterium has no mandate

5. On this subject see the speculations of Peter Henrici, "The One Who Went Unnamed: Maurice Blondel in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*," *Communio* 26 (1999): 609-21. Henrici is of the opinion that precisely because the pope was following Blondel so closely, he may have feared that an approving reference to Blondel might have suggested that he was imposing Blondel's analysis of immanence. The same explanation might hold for the omission of the name of Henri de Lubac, who set forth positions on faith and reason very similar to those of John Paul II. See my essay "Can Philosophy Be Christian? The New State of the Question" in the present volume.

to teach philosophy, he agrees with earlier popes that it has the right and duty to warn against philosophical errors that can undermine the right understanding of revelation and present obstacles to faith (§§49-50). He recalls with approval the Church's condemnation in the nineteenth century of systems such as fideism, traditionalism, rationalism, and ontologism (§52).

In the list of past condemnations the pope significantly omits any mention of Rosmini, although the Holy Office in 1887 condemned no fewer than forty erroneous propositions drawn from his work (DS 3201-41). Should this omission, taken in combination with the favorable reference I have already mentioned, be understood as a tacit retraction of the earlier magisterial reprobation? Several commentators suggest that the pope is here rehabilitating Rosmini and exercising the kind of ecclesial repentance for past errors that has been an integral part of his program.<sup>6</sup> This interpretation is not indisputable, since John Paul II declares that he is not endorsing all aspects of the thought of the thinkers he praises. Nevertheless, his remarks on Rosmini tend to support a solid scholarly opinion to the effect that Rosmini was misinterpreted and wrongly accused.<sup>7</sup>

Like Vatican I and the popes of the past century, John Paul II enu-

6. Henrici, "Maurice Blondel," 620. Walter Kasper, "Magisterium's Interventions in Philosophical Matters," *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly English edition), 28 April 1999, 5-6, at 5.

7. Since this paragraph was written, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has published a "Note Regarding Father Rosmini," confirmed by Pope John Paul II, in which explicit reference is made to *Fides et ratio*, no. 74. The CDF here explains that John Paul II, without endorsing every aspect of Rosmini's thought, pointed to him as "one of the recent thinkers who achieved a fruitful exchange between philosophy and the word of God. According to the Note, the condemnation of 1887 rejected only certain conclusions that could possibly be drawn from the reading of Rosmini's works; it did not state that his work was contrary to Catholic faith and doctrine. The recent Note concedes that Rosmini's system was considered "inadequate to safeguard and explain certain truths of Catholic doctrine" and that his speculations "at times bordered on a risky rashness." For the text of the Note, see *Origins* 31 (August 16, 2001): 201-2.

merates a variety of philosophical systems that he sees as injurious to faith and to authentic wisdom. Instead of impulsive fideism and idealistic rationalism, the prime targets of Vatican I, he names eclecticism, historicism, scientism, pragmatism, and nihilism (§§86–90). All of these tendencies call into question the capacity of the human mind to transcend the factual and the empirical; they implicitly deny the possibility of metaphysics (§83). Some forms of postmodernity, he adds, allege that “the time of certainties is irrevocably past” and contend that we must “learn to live in a horizon of total absence of meaning, where everything is provisional and ephemeral” (§91). In settling for such an absence of meaning, says the pope, philosophy subverts its own project. Abandoning its pursuit of sure and abiding wisdom, it offers a prescription for intellectual despair (§91).

Even when he severely criticizes, John Paul II avoids the harsh language of condemnation. He calls attention to the ingredients of truth in systems that he finds faulty. When discussing historicism, for example, he concedes that to understand a doctrine from the past correctly, it is necessary to set it in its proper historical and cultural context (§87). Later he says that “the currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention” (§91). He appreciates the difficulty of seeking full and ultimate truth in a world divided into so many specialized fields (§56). Concessions of this kind are not easy to find in Vatican I or in the encyclicals of popes prior to John XXIII.

For John Paul II the negative role of the Magisterium in condemning philosophical errors is secondary and subordinate. The primary purpose of magisterial interventions, he states, is to “prompt, promote, and encourage philosophical inquiry” (§51). No such positive encouragement of philosophy can be found in the decrees of Vatican I. In fact, that Council quoted the words of Paul in the Letter to the Colossians, warning the faithful against philosophy and vain deceit (DS 3018; Col 2:8).

So great is John Paul II’s confidence in reason that he is willing to use it critically in the field of theology. Without this rational component, he declares, faith could easily deteriorate into myth and superstition (§48). In an admonition to theologians he voices his dissatisfaction with biblical positivism and with merely narrative styles of theology, which content themselves with retelling the biblical story. For the same reason he is also critical of hermeneutical theology that seriously studies the meaning of ancient texts but tends to dodge the hard questions of truth and falsehood (§94). The very acceptance of God’s word, he points out, presupposes the capacity of the human mind for transcendent truth (§103).

A note of positive encouragement resounds through the entire text of *Fides et ratio* like a refrain. In his introduction the pope states his intention “that those who love truth may take the sure path leading to it and so find rest from their labors and joy for their spirit” (§6). Faith, he contends, can stir reason to overcome any false modesty and to run risks with the goal of attaining whatever is beautiful, good, and true, arduous though this may be (§56). A restoration of confidence, he believes, is essential for the renewal of philosophy and for setting all the arts and sciences in their proper context. In his concluding exhortation to philosophers he asks them “to have the courage to recover, in the flow of an enduringly valid philosophical tradition, the range of authentic wisdom and truth—metaphysical truth included—which is proper to philosophical inquiry” (§106).

Throughout this paper I have tried to call attention to the points at which the recent encyclical of John Paul II differs from the statements of Vatican I and some earlier papal teaching. But I would not wish to be understood as dismissing the value of these earlier statements. Vatican I, in particular, is to be esteemed for having established the solid platform on the basis of which further advances could be made. Leo XIII took a positive step forward when he encouraged a revival of Thomistic philosophy. Vatican II made fur-

ther progress by pointing out the need for Catholics to be men and women of their time, familiar with modern currents of thought.

John Paul II presupposes these earlier documents and in no respect disavows them. But he uses a different method and speaks with new accents. With his keen sense of the variety of human cultures and historical eras, he is able to enter into dialogue with many schools of thought. As a personalist, he brings out hidden resources in the great tradition with which he identifies himself. Standing firmly in that tradition, he issues a ringing challenge to contemporary philosophers and theologians.

For Catholic universities, *Fides et ratio* may provide a beacon light of progress. Taken together with the apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, it can enable Catholics to overcome the haunting suspicion that their confessional allegiance is an encumbrance for the intellectual life that is the proper business of the university. If John Paul II is right, the light of revelation is no substitute for thought but is the strongest possible ally of reason and science. It can permeate the various disciplines, reenergizing them, and bringing them into an organic unity with one another.