

## THOMISM FOR THE TIMES

THE witness of *The New Scholasticism*, a quarterly review and the organ of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, to a vigorous Thomist movement in the United States, is confirmed by a book recently published, *Contemporary Philosophy and Thomistic Principles*,<sup>1</sup> in which Thomism is presented as a complete and authentic philosophy, not a sort of philosophical parasite on a religion of authority; and as a philosophy able to meet present problems and complete the solutions advanced by modern thinkers. It lays the ghost, evoked by Mr. Wyndham Lewis in *Time and the Western Man*, of a Thomism incurably conservative, forever the old against the new, anti-modern in a stupid historical manner. The page-references to Aquinas, Thomas, steadily grow in the index to names in books of science and philosophy. His name comes readily to the journalist's pen and the mouth of that public which reads the review pages of the more serious dailies, and a lady over the tea-pot can quite easily remark, 'Of course, Mr. So-and-so, you know, is a *tomist*.'

### I

Dr. Bandas begins with a particularly firm and downright piece of writing on Fundamental Principles (Chapter I). The foundation of Thomism on Being is clearly indicated, as well as the transcendental value and immunity from empirical criticism of the principles immediately deriving from Being—identity and contradiction, substance, sufficient reason, causality.

<sup>1</sup> By the Rev. R. G. Bandas, Ph.D. Agg. (Angelico, Rome), S.T.D. et M. (Louvain). With an Introduction by the Rev. J. S. Zybura, Ph.D., (New York: The Bruce Publishing Co.; pp. viii, 468; \$4.50.)

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The ground has been covered before, but here we have the logic of Father Garrigou-Lagrange with an address acceptable to English readers.

### II

It has been said that a boa-constrictor cannot cope with its prey unless it first gets a firm hold on something with its tail. You picture the unpleasantness of being locked in an empty cell with one, but apparently you would not be crushed. Take this as a parable, neglecting its zoological truth or otherwise. Modern science, for all its power, is increasingly aware of the need for a firm philosophy to support its method as well as to crown its conclusions.

St. Albert, the master of St. Thomas, was a sheer scientist as well as philosopher and theologian. In those days Science and Philosophy (Chapter II) were in alliance, but a rupture has grown since Descartes until the present time, when attempts are being made to re-establish an agreement which is dictated by the best interests of both. To this end, on the side of Thomist philosophy, the School of Louvain has effectively collaborated. Dr. Bandas appreciates the distinct domains of science and philosophy; there is conjunction but not confusion. He rightly criticizes those 'paleo-scholastics' who snort at the relevance of modern science to their philosophy, but it is well to understand that it is not their philosophy which is so much at fault as their manners. A pure metaphysic is intrinsically independent of the prevailing hypotheses of science, but the metaphysician must guard against an unhealthy exaggeration of this principle in practice. It is bad for an ostrich to bury its head in the sand, but it remains an ostrich. The model Thomist syllabus scraps the *a priori* method of Wolff, which treats of ontology first as something wholly apart from scientific experience and then proceeds

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deductively to apply its principles to the material universe, the soul, and God. This is the method adopted in most scholastic manuals. But the ideal procedure is to work up to metaphysics by logic through the natural sciences. Metaphysics is present, of course, from the beginning in a confused and implicit form, and hence a preliminary treatment of it will be a convenience. This is the method according to the mind of Aristotle and St. Thomas and now generally favoured by the leading philosophical professors of the Angelico, the Gregorian, Sant' Anselmo, Louvain, and the Institut Catholique of Paris.

### III

Until recently the chief question of philosophy was the problem of knowledge (Chapter III: Idealism and the New Realism). With the beginning of the century a reaction set in against Hegelian idealism. William James poked fun at the Absolute. Presently a group of American professors were showing the world the spectacle of a realism that did not fall away with the wind and refuse engagement on the approach of subjectivism, but crowded on sail to rake it with broadsides, leaving it holed with the fallacy of argument from the egocentric predicament, the fallacy of pseudo-simplicity, the fallacy of exclusive particularity, the fallacy of definition by initial predication, the speculative dogma, the error of verbal suggestion, the fallacy of illicit importance. It was a brisk cannonade, and contemporary subjectivism was badly damaged.

With less of a 'platform program' a similar movement was under way from England with the publication in 1903 of Dr. G. T. Moore's famous article, *The Refutation of Idealism*. The new realism represents a powerful force in modern philosophy.

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Professor G. H. Muirhead has stated in the preface to *Contemporary British Philosophy* (Second Series, 1925); 'that knowledge is in some sense an immediate revelation of a reality other than that of the knowing activity itself, and that this activity is not the creator of its own world, may be said to be the starting-point of all recent British philosophy.'

Although still boggy from recent subjectivism, the ground is favourable for the Thomist philosophy. With pragmatism it holds a plurality of beings, but it is a metaphysical pluralism; with idealism it stresses the supremacy of Mind, but a Mind not cut off from Nature; with neo-realism it affirms an extra-mental existence and uses a strictly scientific method, but it pushes beyond a co-ordination of physiological and psychological data. The new realism has not yet generally achieved a metaphysic, but it is feeling for one, and particularly since the breakaway of the critical realists after the war. There are signs that it will not be very different from the philosophy of St. Thomas; that it will be better than a discovery, a recovery.

### IV

The temper of modern philosophy is not only realist, it is intellectualist as well. Intellectualism is recovering from the shock of the Bergsonian attack, and is all the better for it. While it seems true to say that the Philosophy of Becoming (Chapter IV) does not now exert the same influence as before the war, it would be a great mistake to consider it a spent force. A Thomist is in cordial agreement with much of its destructive and successful criticism of a self-opinionated scientism taking naive satisfaction in the geometrical and symbolical activities of the reason. M. Bergson's positive contribution to philosophy is not so alien to Thomist thought as has been pre-

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capitately imagined; his insistence on intuition,<sup>2</sup> as M. Chevalier has pointed out, is not wholly anti-intellectualist, and, allowing for literary differences, sufficiently corresponds with St. Thomas's idea of pure and perfect knowledge which totally embraces the real without isolation of formal aspects. It can be worked out sympathetically along the lines of the Thomist *mens* and the movement of mind and appetite in which the real is felt without the mediation of a concept. Thomists in general have still to explore this part of their country. The late Fr. Gardeil, O.P., magnificently led the way in *La Structure de l'Ame et l'Expérience Mystique*. And Max Scheler in his work on the nature and forms of sympathy repeated St. Thomas more than he realized.

A fault of the Bergsonian philosophy is its lumping together of metaphysics and mechanics. The former is denounced for the excesses of the latter, the whole reasoning reason is dismissed and then utilized to express, communicate, and defend the Bergsonian system, and criticize others. It is like sacking the maid because cook has burnt the dinner, and then expecting her to lay the table.

It is easy to exaggerate the anti-intellectualist bias of M. Bergson's philosophy. It must be judged in its historical context as a revolt against a mechanistic rationalism. His books show an aspiration for a metaphysic which St. Thomas can provide, in which principles are firm but not frozen, the immobility of perfect activity is not confused with inertia, nor the rhythm of life with the imperfect movement of quantity, nor simplicity with poverty, nor eternity with monotony, nor satisfaction with stagnation.

<sup>2</sup> 'An intuitive effort in which the savant by a flash of genius transports himself into the heart of reality, round which he had hitherto been hovering, penetrates to its depth, and quaffs the live current' (p. 188). The thought is the thought of Bergson, but the voice . . . .

v

Another result of the retreat of old materialism is the development of the Philosophy of Organism (Chapter V). The universe is interpreted no longer as a machine but in biological terms as an organism, a living unity in which the parts are present in complication, integration and interaction. According to Professor Lloyd Morgan's *Emergent Evolution*, the lowest forms of being combine to form new syntheses, and these in their turn combine to form fresh and higher syntheses, all under the direction of causality. Although there is an intrinsic continuity of development from the lowest form of the physical to the highest form of the psychical, each 'emergent whole' is more than the mere aggregation of the combining elements. The Holism of General Smuts represents a similar position. It may be noticed that it is corroborated by the recent movement of *Gestalt* psychology, of which Professor Köhler, of Berlin, is the leader. It is difficult to squeeze Professor A. N. Whitehead into a philosophical category, but he may be considered as holding a philosophy of organism; the solidarity of many actual entities form a universe by entering into one another's constitution, not by simple addition, but by synthetic 'concrecence.' The same may be said of Professor Alexander with his view of Space-Time as the matrix of all reality and the universe ascending through the levels of matter, life, and mind, and being borne ever still higher.

There is a noble truth in this emphasis on the organic unity of the universe. But although the emergence of fresh syntheses is described very much after the manner of St. Thomas's teaching on the eduction of forms from matter, there is an unacceptable tendency to produce everything out of the primordial deposit. St. Thomas develops a holism free from this,<sup>3</sup> a sweep

<sup>3</sup> Cf. IV *Contra Gentes*, 11.

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upward from perfection to perfection, with each successive perfection recapitulating the preceding ones, and Pure Mind at the peak not detached and 'different' but containing the whole perfection of Nature in itself—the sublime conclusion St. Thomas drew to the Life-Mind of the Greeks.

Contemporary philosophies of organism agree with Thomism rather as descriptions than as explanations. The universe is an organic unity, but it is also a metaphysical plurality. Here, as is his custom, St. Thomas combines one truth with its seeming opposite. Pure empiricism affirms a shallow pluralism, philosophism runs to monism. Yet with an instinct deeper than sense, we desire to be united with the One but not to lose the Many. 'Two distincts, division none'—St. Thomas can explain the philosophy of the Phoenix and the Turtle by the oneness of things in an act of mind and their 'own-ness' in their proper metaphysical individuality. He develops Aristotle's theory of the identity of knower and known, lover and beloved, and indicates the nature of our future union with the All in One: he develops Aristotle's theory of potency and act, introduces composition into the very order of Being, and confers on distinct personalities a metaphysical status above the lyrical they already possess. This is a universe of beauty, real unity and real variety; the creature united with, but not extinguished in, the All.

## VI

Modern scientific research had familiarized us with the notion of a hypothesis, a principle imposed on a subject to make its scientific data coherent and its laws logical. It makes no pretence of reaching the heart of the matter; it is useful rather than true. This diffidence is a virtue in the scientist, but in the philosopher a vice. From Kant to Bergson, philosophers

have combined to deny that we can touch the nature of things. The contemporary Philosophy of Value (Chapter VI) has arisen under this double influence from the scientists and philosophers. The object of mind is the value which things have for it. Where that value lies is variously assigned. Philosophies of Value range from a realism which grants an objective basis for value and which is similar to the Thomist idea of the Good, down to an extreme subjectivism which holds that value is conferred by the subject entirely. This view is crystallized in the *als ob* principle. We find it useful and satisfactory to act *as if* certain things were true. For instance, with regard to the existence of God, to quote Leuba's remark, He is not known, he is not understood, he is used. Philosophers have canonized and universalized the children's game of 'let's pretend.'

It is arguable that the Philosophy of Value in its extreme subjective form is killed by its own principles. For it is difficult to appreciate how a thing can be felt as valuable unless it is also held to be to some extent independent of us and immune from our mutability.

The truths of religion are naturally the first to which the principle of value is applied. Some apologists under the stress of a hostile scientism have relapsed almost gratefully into the apparent comfort it offers. Religion, they say, is a deeply felt value which the positive reason cannot touch, a quality which the quantitative sciences cannot dispel. And to escape the scientists they have thrown reason from the sleigh of religion and have wrapped themselves warmly in the furs of experience, to discover too late that only reason can manage the horses.

In point of fact, an experience of value is not so necessarily bound up with religion as is commonly imagined. Religion is too facilely assumed to be either a comfort or a stimulus, just as the courteous



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visitor to a cloister thinks that this offers above all a refuge from 'the world.' A Catholic has his moods when it is felt as something uncomfortable, but simply—almost reluctantly—true.

In the order of thought, analysis confirms St. Thomas's principle that the first object of human activity is Being and Truth, then Goodness. Things are good because they are true, not the other way round. Truth first; then goodness in its various manifestations, value, beauty, utility—if you like, the Aristotelean three, the worthy, delightful, useful. Value, says Mr. C. E. M. Joad, is discovered, not created. This accords with St. Thomas's theory of the primacy of the mind over the will. Over and above the movement of particular desire is Being, enduring and firm, but profoundly congenial too. For it is not to be thought that a concept of the mind remains uninfluenced by the appetite. Truths are perceived through the mind, true things are grown into by the whole person. The notional becomes real. This is as felt by the Thomist thinker as by the Catholic believer. What was at first perhaps merely an intellectual system becomes more and more rounded and co-extensive with the whole of his experience.

## VII

Modern philosophies of religion have taken over the distinction of Ritschl between 'judgements of existence' and 'judgements of value.' The intellectual element in religion is disparaged, the affective exaggerated. Religion lies in an immediate and incommunicable experience, dogmas are just so many more or less opportune conceptual gestures. William James has traced the growth from the Reformation of this idea of purely private religion. The individual stands forlornly deprived of that objective body of reality which is Catholicism.

The Church has set herself against this denial of a common and profound intellectual value. It is a curious fact that it was in the nineteenth century, when she was not even regarded as an also-ran in the race of rationalism, that her main doctrinal emphasis was on the rights of the reason—from Gregory XVI ('bigoted reactionary'), Pius IX ('well-meaning old gentleman'), to Pius X ('peasant parish priest').

It is not difficult to expose the sentimentalism of much of the philosophical journalese that is written about religious experience. It is more valuable to show that behind the movement lies a great and sometimes neglected truth. Dr. Bandas is perhaps over-inclined to criticize it in its most emotional form, to conduct it too swiftly to a vague pantheism, to divide it too trenchantly from an intellectualist philosophy. Fr. D'Arcy, S.J., in his *Nature of Belief*, has more justly and sympathetically drawn out an agreement. Much of it represents an instinctive compression of St. Thomas's natural theology. Neither does St. Thomas reject religious experience. It derives from intellectual truth, it is accommodated in an intellectual system. Conscious appetite essentially presupposes cognition. He goes further, and uses the natural appetite for God, which precedes cognition and is present in every stirring of desire. Later theologians have not always been so clear on the distinction between the supernatural and the preternatural, between the *voluntarium* and the *violentum*. For St. Thomas, the supernatural is not an arbitrary imposition on to nature from outside, not an 'extrinsicism,' but a gracious elevation entirely consonant with its desires.

#### VIII

With the philosophy of religious experience, the recent American philosophy of Humanism (Chapter VIII) finds its centre of gravity in man. Its temper,

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however, is a pronounced rationalism. Humanism is rather a way of life than a speculative science. It is 'the effort to enrich human experience to the utmost capacity of man and the utmost limit of the enviring conditions.' It is a reaction against the exaggerations of Christian 'otherworldliness,' more characteristic of Lutheran, Calvinist and Jansenist than of Catholic theory. Eternity is not seen through the forms of the present, but in violent contrast to them. 'What of vile dust? the preacher said.' A heaven is attempted in the next life by making a hell of this. Humanism, then, insists first on individual integrity and completeness, and opposes the lop-sided growth of one power at the expense of another—one of the lessons of *Point Counter Point*. And in the social order, it is a reaction against humanitarianism. It would agree with the sarcasm of *Brave New World*. Irving Babbitt, the philosopher of Humanism, is the opposite of the Babbitt of Mr. Sinclair Lewis's novel. Humanism has no admiration for the booster and the Rotarian, for the civilization of Fordism. It advocates a control of machinery by reason and will; logically it should consider the passing of self-denying ordinances.

Poise, balance, discipline, the law of measure. If this world could be considered as a completely closed system, Humanism, in its blend of Stoicism and Epicureanism, would be in accord with St. Thomas. But it tends to be a religion without God. Its practice lacks sanction, its theory fails by its own canon of the Complete. A complete view of nature must include God, *natura naturans*. By reason alone, God is at least necessary as the integrator of the universe. Philosophy may go further, revelation certainly does.

Although it is refreshing to have Galileo again condemned and man back again in his place at the centre of things, the Humanist universe is almost parochial,

the paradise of a cultured American gentleman. It is all very charming, civilized, learned, gracious, mellow, clean, salty and all that, but—ever so slightly—smug. There is a wider universe, the hierarchy of Denis and Augustine and Aquinas, of which God, not man, is the centre, and all things go out from Him and return, so many reflections of His inmost life. A Thomist will not readily disagree with the statement that all achievements of science, art, and social life are religious, but he will not think of them as earth-bound, but as springing from and seeking the life of God.

The inherent goodness and 'worthwhileness' of natural perfection is strongly emphasized by St. Thomas. All activity is directed to Happiness, the perfect harmony of every function. Violence is a practical necessity only because a harmony has been broken by sin. And just as an indifferent pianist not sure of his left hand will bring out a melody strongly with his right, so must man now stress his reason and will at the expense of his other faculties. The search for the rule of measure so easily relapses into a rather stodgy mediocrity; the kingdom suffereth violence, but in it there will be nothing strained and warped. It is the theory of Bremond's de Rancé that offends the Thomist, much more than the practice.

The future harmony of every function is held by St. Thomas, not as an evasion from and consolation for present misery, but simply as a matter of demonstration. Every desire within us supplies a base for the strictly metaphysical proof of the Perfect Good. And finally, in working for this, man is central inasmuch as the desire for self-perfection is implicit in every action. St. Thomas does not divorce duty from nature or teach the impossible selflessness of the Categorical Imperative.

IX

Dr. Bandas goes over the five demonstrations for the existence of God (Chapter IX: The Theistic Arguments), exposing the inadequacy of much modern criticism of them on his way. His exposition of the *quinta via*, the proof from teleology, would have been improved by a clearer distinction of internal and external finality. The argument from design, from the perfect co-ordination of the parts of the universe, from external finality is valid and will remain so for us as long as the universe appears to be reasonably well-ordered from our point of view; but the argument from the transcendental relation of means to ends, from internal finality, is founded on a necessary principle of Being, and would still hold good even if the universe were permitted to fall into disorder, if anomalies were the rule and not the exception, if nature always brought forth monsters, and all liquid were poisonous, and elephants bred as prolifically as house-flies.

Dr. Bandas also treats of the nature of God (Chapter X) and of the notion of Revelation and Dogma (Chapter XI). By the Thomist principle of the Analogy of Being, our knowledge of God is seen to be more than metaphorical and the dogmas of the Church more than arbitrary codifications of religious experience.

Dr. Zyburas contributes a lengthy introduction written with verve. And if he steals Dr. Bandas's thunder, and if its tone is a trifle too loud, and if the pulpit manner is not a success in philosophy, still it is an effective piece of publicity, presenting Thomism as an original, authentic, vital, valid, and modern philosophy.

The publishers have done their work extremely well. Binding and type are excellent, and especially the printing in a bright nonpareil of the extensive footnote references, which constitute almost a bibliography

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of modern Thomism, and which are not the least value of the book. Mistakes are few.<sup>4</sup> It is to be hoped that they will arrange for *Contemporary Philosophy and Thomistic Principles* to reach a wide public in this country, for it is altogether an extremely competent piece of work and very much to the point at present.

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

<sup>4</sup> As regards inaccuracies in the text. We are tired of reading that St. Thomas was a monk (p. 3)—the verbal suggestion of a 'monkish philosopher' so easily follows. The condemnation of the inanity and servility of the scholasticism of the period preceding the Council of Trent is summarily extended to include the Thomism of the time (p. 20). But a movement which produced Cajetan and Ferrariensis, both of them profound and vigorous thinkers, and not at all the type to run in blinkers, and which saw the beginnings of the brilliant Spanish group was scarcely in decline. Francis of Victoria, contrary to what is suggested (p. 22), was a pre-Tridentine, for he died only a year after the Council was convoked. These are Dr. Zyburas. Dr. Bandas repeats Olgiati-Zyburas' inadequate definition of *cause* as that by which being begins to be (p. 61). The metaphysical principle of identity seems rather too quickly particularized (p. 67). A quotation from the *de Ente et Essentia* should be re-punctuated to read, 'Being is predicated of substance primarily and absolutely, of accidents only in a restricted sense' (p. 68). Is it true to say that science is inseparably fused with philosophy in the works of Aristotle (p. 86), and that whatever is moved is moved by another is an example of a self-evident truth of natural philosophy, underived from metaphysics (p. 114)? In the *prima via* it is treated as a metaphysical conclusion. And how can scientific conclusions be 'only probable,' 'though not devoid of certitude' (p. 101)? There is looseness, too, in the statement (p. 116) that ethics is a practical philosophy or an art, and that its theoretical principles are furnished by psychology. There is a speculative science of ethics. Dr. Bandas shows a tendency to identify intellectual life with the 'conceptual' (p. 192) and 'intentional' (p. 256). Supernatural contemplation seems to be taken as an extraordinary grace *de jure* (p. 298). And though understandable in its context, this is an unfortunate phrase; 'Eternity, as such, is only a chronological attribute' (p. 350).

## UNDER THE SKY

TRAVEL in the younger sort is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience,' announced the disconcerting Bacon, but I think there is more to be said for travel than that. 'The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases,' declares Hazlitt in the most charming of his essays. For him travel was a journeying into solitude—none of your collective hiking for him. 'For once let me have a truce with impertinence,' he says. 'Give me the dear blue sky over my head and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before.' And in the same essay: 'I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing by fits and starts. "Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said; but, in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment . . . I am for the synthetical method on a journey in preference to the analytical.' There is no need to deny the sympathy that Sterne's beautiful sentence invokes, even though in principle Hazlitt may command our assent. At the heart of the essayist's rather forcibly expressed preference is a pleasure in the continuous addition of impressions in tranquillity; his notion of a journey is a solitary pilgrimage to the very bosom of a peaceful countryside; he is the dreaming watcher of sunset skies who resents unnecessary talk. Quoting a fine passage from Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* he says: 'Had I words and images like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds: but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves