

Chapter One: The Catholic Church, Philosophy and Education

Introduction

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, diversity ...¹

THIS dictum, our starting point, simply expresses a profound thought: that all entities may be reduced to two fundamental classes: the essential and the non-essential (or accidental).

Applied to the topic, Catholic philosophy of education, this leads to two obvious questions:

1. What are those *essentials*, those non-negotiable and unifying elements of Catholic education?
2. Conversely, what are the non-essentials, those areas where change is possible and desirable?

In answer, this chapter begins by examining key concepts relevant to the topic *in terms of how the Catholic Church itself defines them*, particularly with reference to the writings of and beyond the Second Vatican Council (or Vatican II), which marks a new age in the Church. Main sources used for this part of the analysis consist of Papal and Vatican teachings and documents, which represent the official mind of the Church in a climate where dissent from these teachings sometimes prevails, making difficult the task of discernment.

Because this study deals with the areas of philosophy and education as well, these same topics are approached next from a historical perspective. Here, the exclusivist or partial nature of many solutions particular to these fields is contrasted with the possibilities that a more universal outlook could offer.

¹ This saying, attributed to Saint Vincent of Lerins (a Patristic writer), was used as a guiding principle by Cardinal Newman and by Pope John XXIII, who convened the Second Vatican Council (where it is also quoted in the document, *Gaudium et Spes* # 92).

Statement and Context of the Problem

Recent Vatican teachings are unique in having adverted to a widespread lack of unity of purpose and shared values not *without*, but now effectively *within* the Catholic Church itself. In light of this crisis, the Magisterium (or teaching authority of the Church) has laid an insistent stress upon the need to return to a core of *fundamental truths* as the unchanging reference points in an era of uncertainty. This occurs, for instance, in the Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (1997) where, within the context of moral considerations, Pope John Paul II states the basic problem facing the modern Church:

Today ... it seems *necessary to reflect on the whole of the Church's moral teaching*, with the precise goal of recalling certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which, in the present circumstances, risk being distorted or denied. In fact, a new situation has come about *within the Christian community itself*, which has experienced the spread of numerous doubts and objections of a human and psychological, social and cultural, religious and even properly theological nature, with regard to the Church's moral teachings. It is no longer a matter of limited and occasional dissent, but of an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine, on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions. At the root of these presuppositions is the more or less obvious influence of currents of thought which end by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth. (#4)

In his next encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, the Pope returned to the theme of maintaining doctrinal basics in answer to convictions of dissent 'so widespread that they have become to some extent the common mind' (1998b: #55); here, though, he narrowed the focus down to a more philosophical context:

In my Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, I drew attention to 'certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which ... risk being distorted or denied'. In the present Letter, I wish to pursue that reflection by concentrating on the theme of *truth* itself and on its *foundation* in relation to *faith*. (#6)

John Paul then considers the rôle of philosophy relative to the challenges of contemporary education:

For it is undeniable that this time of rapid and complex change can leave especially the younger generation, to whom the future belongs and on whom it depends, with a sense that they have no valid points of reference ... The need for a foundation for personal and communal life becomes all the more pressing at a time when we are faced with the patent inadequacy of perspectives in which the ephemeral is affirmed as a value and the possibility of discovering the real meaning of life is cast into doubt ... With its enduring appeal to the search for truth, philosophy has the great

responsibility of forming thought and culture; and now it must strive resolutely to recover its original vocation. (1998b: #6)

An unremitting insistence on certain *core essentials* is patently present, too, in the specifically educational pronouncements of the Holy See. In 1997, the Congregation for Education released the document, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*—its stated purpose being to ‘focus attention on the nature and distinctive characteristics of a school which would present itself as Catholic’ (#4). Again, in similar words, it argues that, ‘for the Catholic school to be a means of education in the modern world, we are convinced that certain fundamental characteristics need to be strengthened’ (#8). For a third time—as if not to understate the theme—the Congregation elaborates as follows:

Furthermore, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, innumerable interventions of the Holy Father, ordinary and Extraordinary Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops, Episcopal Conferences and the pastoral solicitude of diocesan Ordinaries, as well as international Catholic organizations involved in education and schooling, all support our conviction that it is opportune to devote careful attention to certain fundamental characteristics of the Catholic school, which are of great importance if its educational activity is to be effectual in the Church and in society. (#4)

The particular nature of these fundamental characteristics aside, it suffices for now to draw attention to the constant emphasis on the need for unwavering reference to given foundations.

Some Responses

In the years following the Second Vatican Council, there has been a growing perception within many quarters that Catholic education is failing to preserve its distinctive identity and falling short of its responsibility to pass on the deposit of the faith.² In an Intervention at the Synod of Bishops’ Special Assembly for Oceania, held in Rome in 1998, then Archbishop of Hobart, Dr. D’Arcy, outlined this problem in quite striking terms:

Students come away from thirteen years of full-time Catholic schooling, seriously ignorant of the Church’s doctrines, ignorant of the good reasons which support them, ignorant of the most elementary responses to the common arguments against them ... [Teachers] themselves are victims of that tragic lacuna in the pedagogy of their own professional formation, and of the texts provided. (1998)

² Later, it will be demonstrated that the definition of Catholic education goes well beyond the confines of studies in Religious Education.

Following this Synod, the Australian Bishops and Vatican curial representatives released their *Statement of Conclusions*, directly addressing the issues facing the Australian Church. The section, *Education in Catholic Schools*, mentions the challenges for evangelization today and lists factors not disharmonious with D'Arcy's observations: the increasing secularization of students, who no longer receive basic faith formation at home as in the past; the increasing intake of non-Catholic students; the rapid loss of priests, nuns and brothers teaching in the schools, and the resultant 'impact on the atmosphere and Catholic identity of the school'; the need for the proper formation of lay teachers; and the conclusion that, 'care is needed to ensure that a desire to be welcoming to all does not compromise the Catholic identity of the school' (1998: #60-61).³ The term *Catholic identity*, then, appears as a recurring, central theme.

Consonant with the above is a widely held concern that some schools, colleges and universities have compromised this identity to the point where Catholicism has been diluted to the level of a generic acceptability. The dissatisfaction of many with the outcomes of Catholic education concurs with the rise of the *neo-orthodox movement* which, in essence, aims to reform, restore or rebuild (where necessary) by studying, following and implementing the authoritative teachings of the Church.⁴ It should be noted that neo-orthodoxy is not a stance of rebellion or dissent; rather, it is a mainstream Catholic development, loyal to (and even encouraged by) the Pope and Magisterium, but working alongside and sometimes outside some of the more conventional or established channels of Church institutions.

In Catholic education, the neo-orthodox movement has inspired a worldwide network of non-systemic educational faculties. Established and prominent American examples include the Seton Home School and tertiary colleges such as the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Christendom College and Thomas Aquinas College. These faculties, functioning semi-independently of the U.S. Catholic education system, count high-profile clerical and lay Catholics among their staffs and consultants, and offer programmes to students in many other countries. Significantly, these institutions have either arisen from, or share strong links with the

³ Even those with different religious perspectives are asked to acknowledge the distinct identity of Catholic schools in which they may enrol: *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* stresses that the school, '...although clearly and decidedly configured in the perspective of the Catholic faith, is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all who appreciate and share its *qualified educational project*' (#16) [emphasis added].

⁴ In fact, many Catholics would reject the term *neo-orthodoxy*, claiming that it simply represents mainstream—common and garden—Catholicism, or is simply an expression of the *new evangelization* often called for by Pope John Paul II.

American home education movement. There is also the network of ParEd schools, which are parent-run but derive from the pedagogical ideas of the recently canonised St Josemaria Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei.

Australia, too, has been caught up in this movement.⁵ Several ParEd schools exist in New South Wales, and—unlike most of their Catholic counterparts—function entirely independently of the diocesan Catholic Education Offices. Perth’s Divine Mercy College—a further example of an independent Catholic school—classifies itself as providing students with a ‘traditional Catholic upbringing’ but ‘... not associated with any movement or apostolate within the Catholic Church. It aims to provide solid orthodox teaching of the Catholic Faith, embracing the rich tradition of [the] Church and following faithfully the Church’s Magisterium’ (?1997).

By way of a final example, there is the recent opening of Campion College, Sydney: ‘Australia’s First Catholic Liberal Arts College of Higher Education’. 2006 was the first academic year of the College, which aims eventually to be registered as a fully-fledged university. The mission statement is based largely on John Paul’s *Ex Corde Ecclesia* (a document relating to Church tertiary institutions), and the college website reiterates the themes of Catholic fidelity and independence.

Chapter Five of the present study will test the hypothesis that Catholic home education counts as a further instance of the neo-orthodox trend being described. The Catholic expression of the wider home education movement (which is growing exponentially in America) is steadily gaining a firm foothold in Australia—and whilst certainly standing outside systemic Catholic education, many home educators would claim (and be considered) to be faithful adherents of the Church.

The Nature of the Catholic Church

A given entity is distinguished by being true to its nature and to what it proclaims itself to be. In harmony with this precept, one may take the example of a Beethoven symphony. An audience attending such a performance anticipates that the work will be played according to the demands of the score, the musical actions of the performers corresponding to a pre-established tonal

⁵Mention should be made here of the several Australian “Catholic” schools operating under the banner of the Lefebvrist Society of Pius X as outside the embrace of this study, due to their position of non-communion with Rome.

harmony, unity and structural order. So also, the listeners expect a legitimate freedom of interpretation in the performance, but never to the point of exceeding the limits and discipline of the composition—such that it becomes unrecognisably other than a Beethoven symphonic work.

Likewise, from any enterprise bearing the name *Catholic*, one should expect—indeed, one has a *right* to expect—an observance and deliverance of the Catholic profession.⁶ Yet, side by side with the ostensibly Catholic, much that passes under the same banner is unwittingly—or, sometimes, deliberately—untrue to its spirit. Trying to discern the authentically from the purportedly Catholic is a daunting and demanding task. So, the question arises: Do there exist vital points of reference which designate and define the nature and *raison d' être* of the Church itself, and which can be confidently followed as passing on the core Catholic traditions and teachings (and for our purposes, also flow over into the sphere of Catholic education)?

How the Church Defines Itself

Foundational to most disciplines there exist inescapable tenets—‘the most deeply entrenched beliefs in any conceptual system’ (Laura & Leahy quoted in Hobson & Edwards 1999:28-29)—for example, the uniformity of nature in science, or the principle of non-contradiction in classical philosophy. Of such basic assumptions, axioms or ‘epistemic primitives’ Hobson observes that, ‘To reject them is equivalent to giving up the discipline’ (ibid.:29). This matrix transposes to Catholicism (even though it claims to stem not from human wisdom but from divine revelation), which has its own primitives that must be grasped in order to avoid a faltering understanding of this belief system.

First and foremost, the Church regards itself as a divine institution: ‘The Church is the body of Christ’. This definition derives from the Biblical account of the conversion of St Paul in the *Acts of the Apostles* (Chapter 9). Bound for Damascus in order to round up the Christians of that city, Paul is arrested by a blinding flash while a voice is heard, saying, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ Catholic tradition has interpreted this episode as indicating the complete identity of Christ with his own followers—otherwise, why Christ’s use of the word *me* in describing the persecution of the fledgling Church. (Elsewhere, Jesus had similarly taught his disciples, ‘I am the vine, you are the branches’ *John* 15: 5). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* comments, ‘The Church is both visible and spiritual, a hierarchical society and the Mystical Body of Christ.

⁶ On rights, duties and responsibilities, see Canons 213, 392.1, 217, 794 (The Canon Law Society Trust 1983).

She is one, yet formed of two components, human and divine. That is her mystery, which only faith can accept' (1994: #779).⁷

The Church and the Papacy

Secondly, in the mystical body the spiritual leadership is exercised by Christ—'The Church is the Body of which Christ is the head' (ibid. #807)—whereas the visible leadership is exercised by the *Vicar of Christ*: the pope. The so-called Petrine text (*Gospel of St Matthew* 16:18-19) is the basis of the Catholic teaching that each pope, as the successor of St Peter, exercises his power in the name of the authority vested in Peter by Christ.⁸ The First Vatican Council (1869-1870) built on this teaching by defining the doctrine of papal infallibility:

The Roman Pontiff ... enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful ... he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. (quoted in Holy See 1994: #891)

Moreover, Vatican II requires that Catholics always give a 'loyal submission of the will and intellect' to the pope even when he does not speak *ex cathedra*. The same document also explains the corresponding rôle of bishops within the overall scheme:

The college or body of bishops has for all that no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head, whose primatial authority, let it be added, over all whether pastors or faithful, remains in its integrity. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered. The order of bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in their rôle as teachers and pastors, and in it the apostolic college is perpetuated. Together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and full authority over the universal Church, but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff. The Lord made Peter alone the rock-foundation and the holder of the keys of the Church and constituted him shepherd of his whole flock. It is clear, however, that the office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head. (Vatican II 1964: #22)

⁷ The 1994 *Catechism*, a key reference tool, is underwritten by the authority of the Pope as 'a statement of the Church's faith and of catholic doctrine' (Holy See 1994:5).

⁸ The full text is: 'So I now say to you: you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven'. (*Jerusalem Bible* 1968)

Antonio Rosmini, whom we will meet in the coming pages, seems to ratify the choice of these two ideas as most foundational to the Church. Speaking of the unique institution of the papacy in his *Maxims of Christian Perfection*, Rosmini writes:

Knowing by revelation that their See was so chosen by the divine Founder that it can never fail, we may say that by this election it became the essential part of the Church of Jesus Christ, and that all other parts can only be regarded as accidental; for no infallible promise has been given that these parts, taken singly, may not for a time perish. (quoted in Leetham 1957:33)

Philosophy and Education: A Historical Perspective

These few preliminary theological considerations are intended as an indispensable background to the discussion of ensuing chapters.⁹ Considering the emphasis also given by the Church to the fundamental importance of philosophy in forming thought and culture, the focus now moves to a different realm: there follows a historical overview of selected major philosophical positions contributory to this educational study.

The Key Positions

Bowen and Hobson contend that the history of Western educational thought and practice has been dominated by two distinct models: the conservative educational *thesis* developed by Plato and Aristotle; and the liberal educational *antithesis* developed by Rousseau and Dewey (1983:13-15). So seminal are the expositions of these contrary philosophies that educationalists have since been more or less forced to align themselves with one or the other camp.¹⁰

The model of the conservative / liberal dichotomy is a reasonable and widely held interpretation both of philosophical thought and educational practice. Of course, contributions to the original

⁹ Some would question the identification of *Catholicism* with the *Catholic Church*, arguing that Catholicism has a broader meaning, which overtakes the Church's institutional and doctrinal dimensions and embraces wider social and cultural phenomena. To define what is Catholic in the fields of philosophy, education and other disciplines (such as literature, music, sociology and politics) is complex, because these disciplines have their own freedoms which cannot be derived directly and merely from the Magisterium but also require the autonomous efforts of human rationality, although inspired by the Christian faith and in the light of the teaching of the Church. An exploration of these matters lies ahead: see also Maritain's useful discussion of similar themes in *Art and Scholasticism*: Ch. VIII: *Christian Art* (1974a).

¹⁰ Dupuis proposes that Dewey's *Democracy and Education*—in calling for the educational equality of all people—becomes 'the first treatise in the history of education which sets out to dethrone the *Republic* and *Laws* of Plato from their position of supremacy in educational thought' (1966:121).

ideas have been made, but the essential foundations have remained unchanged. For example, the conservative domain is popularly characterized by the teacher / authority-centred liberal arts curriculum, rigorous assessment, inculcating an educational heritage, and student passivity in the learning process. Progressive educational practice is usually identified with open-plan classrooms and the ideals of self-directed student activity, independent learning, and the rôle of the teacher amounting to that of a facilitator in the learning process.

Greek Thought

However, as there is scarcely anything new under the sun, we might anticipate the conservative/liberal antimony to have sprung from far more ancient sources than those named above. In fact, we *can* trace the roots of these movements back to perhaps the earliest, most fundamental and defining philosophical conflict. This conflict—which has since been perennially (and almost inevitably) re-enacted—arose from the attempts of two Greek philosophers (sixth century B.C.) to explain the reality that lay before them.

The first significant response came from Heraclitus (influenced by the Ionian school) who asserted that multiplicity, change, non-being (or *becoming*) underpin the state of all things in the universe. By admitting no reality beyond the sense knowledge which is confronted with this flux, Heraclitus became ‘the philosopher of evolution and becoming’ and ‘the slave of *change*’ (Maritain 1979:38, 45).

Parmenides (of the Eleatic school) responded with the opposite argument, proclaiming the unity and immutability of reality, and denying the possibility of motion and change. In refusing to admit the validity of sense experience Parmenides thereby exalted the value of the intellect alone to such an extent that he was ‘the slave of *being*’. Contrariwise to Heraclitus, ‘he fixed for all succeeding ages one of the possible extremes of speculation and error’ (ibid.:37, 46). The antagonism set up between the two philosophers is summarised in the following syllogism (Kinsela?1978:8), wherein Heraclitus and Parmenides agree about the major premise only:

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| Major: | That which is becomes not (because it already is). |
| | That which becomes, is not. |
| Minor: | Everything becomes (Heraclitus). |
| | Nothing becomes (Parmenides). |
| Conclusion: | Nothing is (Heraclitus). Nothing becomes (Parmenides). |

This triple antimony of ideas—namely, the apparent conflict between Unity and Multiplicity (or the One and the Many), Being and Becoming (or non-being), Sense and Intellect—may be represented as two arches of a bridge being constructed from opposite shores, yet awaiting the central joining span (ibid.:10). The challenge for philosophy now became that of bridging the gap between two seemingly irreconcilable opposites.

The initial reaction to this dilemma was that of the Sophists, who remained sceptical about the attainment of certainty and so considered truth as unknowable. Ancient Greek society had been based on a tribal, superstitious way of life, unquestioningly adopting mythological beliefs and taboos. The Australian philosopher, Gavin Ardley, recounts how the Sophists reacted against the errors of the closed society from which Greece was emerging, distinguishing these errors from their own more rationally “enlightened” ways. They enunciated and contrasted two orders of being that corresponded to these two outlooks:

- *Physis*: the order of nature (or the real), which also extends to the domain of the divine or supernatural.
- *Nomos*: the order of human constructs, with its laws, artifices, conventions and categories.

The *physis* / *nomos* distinction is a recurring motif that sounds throughout Greek thought hereafter. This valid distinction became lop-sided, however, with the Sophists’ tendency to interpret *all* reality in terms of *nomos*—as against the other extreme of those who had exaggeratedly viewed all as *physis*. Protagoras, the foremost of the Sophists, expressed his school’s quintessentially humanist doctrine when he claimed the human person as “the measure of all things”.

Ardley draws some vital conclusions. If the realm of *physis* is ignored or displaced, then all that remains as the ultimate criterion of appeal is the socio-centric consensus. For example, laws operate as merely human conventions that are useful, but ultimately changeable in meaning: there are no natural rights stemming from a natural moral law, merely positive rights deriving from the positive human law. The consequence of denying the reality of the two orders is a kind of paralysis, according to Ardley, who argues that:

- the Sophist doctrine paradoxically leads to extreme conservatism: ‘If you abandon objective reality you fly into the arms of a rigid conventionality, because there is then nothing more to appeal to beyond convention.’
- only with an appeal to *physis* can we grow, because ‘only the permanent can change’ (1950:7-8).¹¹

Socrates’ discovery of the *concept* answered the relativistic stance of the Sophists. For Socrates, human nature is constant and is illumined by concepts which are universal, immutable definitions. Therefore, our lives may be founded on absolute truths and constant ethical values.

Plato built his *idea* on the Socratic concept. ‘The Platonic Idea not only hails conceptual knowledge as absolute and perfect knowledge; it not only extends the reign of the concept—hitherto confined within the limits of human conduct, to all reality—but it inaugurates metaphysics, the metaphysics of Ideas’ (Mackey 1994 unpub.:16). Plato strove by this means to find the unity that stands behind the many, explaining this unity in terms of the ideal order that exists beyond the illusory world of the senses. Thereby, Plato may be interpreted as denying that things possess any substantial reality and, therefore, our innate ideas contribute nothing to our knowledge of material things.

Rosmini notes, though, that a certain core of truth in Plato continues to assert itself: a tide of opposition from numerous detractors has never been able to permanently suppress his system despite the obvious need for purifying it of obscure and false elements. Rosmini explains both circumstances in terms of two types of influence and teaching that occur in Plato:

1. the theological, traditional and symbolic method of analysis—characterized by the Italic school and Pythagoras
2. the rational and philosophical method of synthesis—characterized by the Ionian school and Socrates

An appreciation of these scholarly divisions (which echo the earlier *physis / nomos* differentiation), Rosmini regards as the key to unlocking and understanding ancient philosophy. He portrays Plato as vainly trying to please both the sages and unlettered society, deliberately embellishing his philosophical argument with fictitious and fabulous elements in order to

¹¹ This squares with Gilson’s observation that: ‘Only distinct things can be united; if you attempt to blend them, you inevitably lose them in what is not union, but confusion’ (1965:62).

stimulate the popular mind to accept his system. It was these ‘peripheral attractions’ that were retold and corrupted over time, as well as seized upon by his opponents in order to discredit the real truth in Plato’s statement of the difficulty of the origin of ideas: namely, that ‘in order to discover some truth which we seek, we need some preconceived notion of it—otherwise we could not recognize what we are seeking if we bumped into it’ (Rosmini 2001: #277).

It was left to Aristotle to harmonize and synthesize the strands of the previous philosophical progressions, which, although contributing to philosophical progress, had failed to reconcile the remaining antimony. It was Aristotle who ‘put ideas back into things’ (Kinsela?1978:11), material things themselves being for him the source from which our very ideas derive. Aristotle’s doctrine of Hylemorphism (Gk. *hyle*: matter; *morphe*: form) explained the fundamental duality present in all things: a duality which simultaneously comprises the principles of matter and of mind. ‘Thus the Socratic CONCEPT evolves into the Platonic IDEA and then becomes—in contraposition to matter—the Aristotelian FORM, the soul of all Aristotle’s philosophy’ (Olgiati 1923:4).

Controversially, Rosmini takes issue with Aristotle’s outright rejection of Plato’s theory of innate ideas. He questions Aristotle’s success in accounting for how the particular knowledge of our senses becomes abstracted to form the common or universal knowledge that is the object of our intellect (2001: #249). Aristotle uses the analogy of a poured liquid conforming to two differently shaped receptacles to explain how sense and intellect give entirely different form to what they receive. Rosmini comments as follows:

It is easy to see traces of kantian thought in such teaching. This would require us to accept, without knowing why, the presence in the human spirit of a certain *form* to which perceived entia would conform.

Now either this form is the type of truth and, in this case, the type, that is, the essence of truth, must be innate in us (this is my position), or nothing of this kind is admitted in the spirit. In this case, the spirit, limited and determined as it is, will endow what it perceives with a purely subjective form ...

I see perfectly well how a liquid can be placed into a vase without its initially having the form which it receives as it is gradually poured in. But I do not understand how *singulars* can enter the intellect if we accept the principle that the intellect apprehends only *universals*. And if they do enter, why do they inevitably have to be transformed there into universals? (2001: #254-255)

Aristotle hesitated before the theory of innate ideas as contradicting his own constant teaching: that is, ‘in order to think, our intellect needs to acquire phantasms of external things from the

senses' (ibid. #262). However, Rosmini shows a principle at work in Aquinas that can be interpreted to encompass Aristotle's thought without denying Plato. Analogous to the way in which the action of the acting intellect separates what is proper from what is common in things, St Thomas refers to an Aristotelian metaphor: 'as light makes colours active, not because it already contains within itself all separate colours' (quoted in Rosmini 2001: #263). Rejecting the interpretation of this passage that compares the *intellect* to a prism, Rosmini instead likens to pure, unrefracted light 'the act in which the acting intellect terminates'; it is *sensible things* he compares to the prism that 'divides this light into its elementary rays and determines the various colours' (ibid.), concluding:

In this supposition ... the intellect, although it would not see any separate colour without the external prism of sensible bodies which break up and determine its light, would nevertheless still possess an innate light. It would have no knowledge of anything particular and determined, but would be granted the *most common* of all ideas, a form quite undetermined prior to sensations. In a word, although it would not possess any derived ideas, as Plato, Aristotle's rival claimed, it would have the primal, most universal idea as innate. Only the principle would be innate, not the consequences. (ibid.)

Medieval Thought

Passing over the many other philosophical and educational developments of the Greek and Roman classical systems, we now consider the influence of Christianity via medieval scholasticism. Although representing a fundamentally unified worldview, the scholastic tradition flourished in an era of immense discovery and change. This era was notable for the fact that the newer synthesis of Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas now gained the ascendancy over the established tradition of Plato and St Augustine. Aristotelian / Thomism has been named moderate realism, because it denies none of the key contributions of preceding thinkers but draws them together into a unified whole.¹² Albers sees the 'corner-stone' and 'quintessence' of Thomistic scholasticism to be the existence of universals in the human mind.

I think it is safe to say that Thomism is unique in maintaining that Universals actually exist in the human mind. Other philosophers would admit to universals, but would not attribute to them existence.

For, if existence must be given to universals inside the human mind, then existence must be given to Absolutes outside the human mind. For absolutes are human concepts, alive in the mind first as Universals. If they live there, and point by necessity to a transcending existence, then transcending existence must be given to them. Concepts such as First Cause, Motor Immobilis, Total Perfection, Absolute

¹² Chapter Three looks at the specifics of Aquinas' thought.

Truth, Eternal Being, God, are concepts in the human mind. If they are real, and alive and existing in the human mind, existence beyond the senses is assured, and absolute existence becomes perfectly logical. But if these concepts are denied existence as Universals in the human mind, existence beyond the senses becomes problematic ... We can then at most postulate the existence of God, or absolute truth as a function of the human mind. And man remains the measure of all things. (1981:63-64)

Soon, though, came a progressive reaction to a conservative outlook. However innovative it may have been at first, the so-called 'ancient way or *via antiqua* (the realist tradition of which Thomism was the latest manifestation) was opposed by the 'the modern way' (*via moderna*) in the form of nominalism: a predominantly analytical and critical logic (Copleston 1961:235-236) championed by the English Franciscan, Ockham (d. 1349). Nominalism (*nomen* Latin: name) denied the reality of universal concepts in the mind, and considered universals simply 'names' or terms which we ascribe without any consequences for transcendental truth or values.

Generally overlooked, this medieval debate is emphasized by Maritain, who considers the question of the existence of universals as 'the first and most important of philosophic problems' (1979:119), with Weaver concurring that:

The defeat of logical realism in the great medieval debate was the crucial event in the history of Western culture ... It was William of Ockham who propounded the fateful doctrine of Nominalism, which denies that universals have a real existence. His triumph tended to leave universals merely 'terms' or names serving our convenience. Ultimately the issue involved is, whether there is a source of truth higher than, and independent of, man; and the answer to the question is decisive for the nature and destiny of humankind. The practical result of nominalist philosophy is to banish the reality which is perceived by the intellect and to posit as reality only that which is perceived by the senses. With this change in the affirmation of what is real, the whole orientation of culture takes a turn. (quoted in Albers 1981:103)

This same medieval debate also prepared the soil in which succeeding movements might flourish.

Post-Renaissance Thought

This section is basically limited to a consideration of Descartes and Kant, because in these are 'characteristically found all the features of modern thought' (de Torre 1989:296). Both thinkers framed their ideas in highly mathematically or scientifically based terms and so tended to discount and reject anything that is uncertain; both have also made a lasting contribution to *contemporary* thought.

De Torre names as Descartes' starting point 'the rejection of all received knowledge' (ibid.), leaving us with immanent, subjective thought as our only certainty. In Duggan's analysis, the 'exaggerated dualism' of Descartes ...

... postulates that the direct object of our knowledge is not a reality distinct from the mind, but the representation of this object in the mind, which Descartes called the *idea* ... [his] subjectivist assumption flies in the face of our direct experience ... it leads inevitably to total scepticism. (1999:13)

Descartes also contributed much to the undoing of the largely unified scholastic worldview, such that, 'from [his] day to our own, philosophers have tried, without success, to bridge the gap which he created between the mind and reality outside the mind' (ibid.). Stemming largely from his separation of matter and ideas, philosophy dichotomised into the idea-based paths of rationalism, or tended to naturalism with its consequent offshoots: materialism, positivism, experimentalism, modernism, critical theory and nihilistic post-modernism.

To introduce Kant, we turn to Rosmini, whose critique emphasizes aspects other than those of the standard commentaries. Kant is presented as a significant contributor to the theory of the origin of ideas—being accredited (along with Leibniz, a German near-contemporary) with whittling away many superfluities in Platonic thought while developing its essence. Leibniz held that we retain 'tiny vestiges of ideas' showing very clearly 'the need he felt to remove the excessive feature of Plato's theory by accepting less of what was innate than Plato and Descartes acknowledged' (2001:#366).¹³ For Rosmini, the strength of Kant's position lies in his resurrecting and re-applying the ancient division of ideas into their *material* (sense-based) and *formal* (innate) parts:

Kant, by restricting what is innate in us to the pure *forms* of cognitions, introduced into the human spirit less of what was innate than all his predecessors. Nevertheless, he realised the necessity of admitting just enough for a full explanation of the fact of ideas and human cognitions. (ibid.)

As will be seen, Rosmini reduces Kant's 'excessive list' of categories to one, single form, arguing that the Kantian pure forms are in fact *modes of thought* containing in themselves an admixture of the determinations of matter (#367). Over elaborate, too, is Kant's explanation of how our mind conforms sensation to pre-established patterns:

¹³ Rosmini considers the Leibnizian interpretation still to contain superfluous elements.

In Kant's view, our spirit has nothing innate prior to sense. When the spirit is provided with the *matter* of its cognitions by the senses, it is obliged to accept it in accordance with certain laws, to endow it with *certain forms*. Together, the *matter* of the senses and the *forms* which the spirit adds to them form external objects. (Rosmini 2001:#364)

As such, Kant's theory 'endows the spirit with an energy which creates the external world, but is nevertheless subject to inexorable laws'. Rosmini praises Kant for pursuing scepticism and 'sensism' (e.g., Reid's innate 'instinct for judging the existence of bodies') to their logical consequences: 'Kant's was the only possible conclusion, and he had the courage to reach it. It takes courage for a man to condemn as deceitful the very nature of things' (#364-365).

Rosmini's summation is that Kant brings modern thought to its ultimate destination: moving from a rejection of truth, then through doubt, thought finally reaches a state of 'profound inextricable, necessary illusion' given the Kantian belief that 'the nature of the human mind is so constituted that it is the wellspring of a universal, irreparable deception' (#364:App. 32).

Ardley's account in *Aquinas and Kant* offers another perspective—seeing the strength of Kant's contribution not in his broadly acknowledged philosophical scheme, but in his profound—and much overlooked—scientific project. For Ardley, Kant's great and fundamental discovery (set forth in his *Prolegomena* and most fully in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) is this: that due to the *a priori*, subjective basis of scientific considerations, the methodology of post-Renaissance physics corresponds with the physicist assuming an active rather than passive rôle in his / her endeavours. One explanation of Kant's conclusion is his elaboration of the *phenomenal* and *noumena* realms: the former represents things as they appear to us in terms of the rigid mental categories; the latter is the thing in itself (*Ding an sich*) which remains free of determinations and is ultimately unknowable (cf. Ardley 1950:178; de Torre 1989:300-301). The methodology of physics equates to phenomenal knowledge: both *impose* their own order on reality. This confronts the theory of the classical English empiricists (such as J. S. Mill) that the physicist impartially observes uniformities in nature and then generalizes these into laws by applying the scientific method—that is, by forming hypotheses and testing them experimentally to determine their validity.

This Kantian proposition effectively evokes two scientific paradigms. First, are the so-called Aristotelian sciences (e.g. biology, zoology, botany, and geology). These are classificatory and descriptive, and aim to enquire into the real nature (*physis*) of things. Here the scientist stands as a pupil, perceiving nature and receiving from it. Second, in the more exact physical sciences

(such as chemistry, astronomy and, today, molecular biology), nature appears before the scientist like a witness compelled to answer the specific, pre-formulated questions of a stern judge: the exact image used by Rosmini in characterizing the *critical* aspect in Kant.

Sitting as a judge, and citing human reason to appear before him, he passed sentence on its worth and results ... To carry out a critique of reason at the same time as a critique of human cognitions would be absurd ... This is precisely Kant's error. Reason can criticise particular human cognitions, but not itself, because it can never oppose itself. (2001: App. 35)

Leaving aside its minutiae, we can approach Kant's obscure thought via the astronomer, Eddington, who borrowed from a Greek fable to articulate his own development of Kant's theory. The story runs that the brigand, Procrustes, required that all travellers wishing to use his road conform to the length of his bed before being allowed to proceed on their journey: those who were too tall had the offending body parts chopped off; those who were too short were stretched to fit the bed! Eddington holds to the Procrustean nature of modern science—which, like a butcher, *makes* the structures to be dissected, unlike the anatomist, who *finds* and follows these structures. Highly artificial and categorical (which is in no way to denigrate its indisputably stunning results), empirical science provides a systematic, measured environment enabling outcomes to be reliably predicted and nature to be manipulated (cf Ardley 1950 Ch. 1).

Kant's grasp of the *nomical* nature of physics was a key contribution to the progress of scientific understanding. But then followed his great experiment: 'metaphysics on the paradigm of physics' (Ardley 1950:78). Kant took the activity of the physicist as representative of that of the human mind in general and tried to conform metaphysics to the pattern of modern science: a discipline that claims autonomy from metaphysical foundations and implications. By tenaciously clinging to the belief that categories are innate in our minds and, therefore, inescapable rather than voluntary, Kant erred by applying a particular discovery beyond its proper domain (ibid.:78-96). To him could be applied Frankl's lament: that it is not so much of concern that scientists are specializing but that specialists are generalizing (cited in Schumacher 1978).

Kant's experiment has reverberated in the 'extreme empiricism' motivating those other sciences and disciplines that have since followed the trail of modern physics (cf. Ardley 1950: Ch. 3). Wolfgang Smith designates this general phenomenon 'scientistic belief'—whereby 'philosophical opinions ... masquerade as scientific truths'. Smith considers this blurring of

boundaries ‘to be at odds with the great philosophical traditions, including especially the Thomistic, where the opposition becomes as it were diametrical’:

It hardly needs pointing out, moreover, that if physics, the most exact of the natural sciences, is ... associated with scientific—and indeed, from a traditional point of view, illusory!—notions, what can one expect in the case of less rigorous disciplines, such as evolutionary biology, physical anthropology, and psychology, not to speak of the so-called social sciences. The unappreciated fact is that science in its actuality bestows both truth and error: not only enlightenment, but benightedness as well. (2000 online)

Aquinas and Kant offers a more reconciliatory outlook, being an effort to assign a rôle for Kant within the *philosophia perennis*. Ardley contends that those influenced by Thomistic as well as by Kantian strains tend to avoid discussion of each other’s insights, whereas both sides would benefit from recognizing the existence of the two legitimate, autonomous orders: the categorical and the real. ‘In this way we hold to the strict Scholastic doctrines, but yet we admit the modern movements as devices’ (1950:8).

Synthesis and Conclusion

As stated initially, *education* is an emotive term. The word itself is of an uninteresting derivation, coming from the Latin verb, *educare*: to educate—and not, as is commonly held, from *educere*: to lead out. More suggestive are the derived meanings of two other key educational terms: *school* comes from the Greek *skhole*, meaning *leisure*, whereas the learning framework of this leisurely activity, *curriculum*, is actually the Latin word for *racecourse*. No wonder that educators find themselves mutually at sixes and sevens as they grapple with their various interpretations!

It therefore happens that, in addition to a desirable and legitimate diversity of approach, contemporary expressions of education are also characterized by a vast disunity of agreement and fragmentation of thought among practitioners in regard to the underlying means and ends of the art and science of pedagogy. New movements and ideas clamour for attention and constantly vie to outmode each other. Moreover, education is hurled along in the wake of an ethic that increasingly values utilitarian ends. Much of this is doubtless linked to the changes sweeping the world at present: the information and technological explosion, economic rationalism, and the effect of globalisation. Such factors notwithstanding, an overriding sense of confusion is often a hallmark of educational thought and debate:

Fundamentally, the cause of this confusion lies in the fact that philosophers and educators fail to agree concerning: (1) ultimate reality; (2) the validity of knowledge; (3) our origin, nature and final end. (Redden & Ryan 1956:4)

Naturally, this lack of agreement as to the formulation of foundational principles impacts most immediately on the young, who do—or should—constitute the focus of any educational enterprise on their behalf. How are their needs best to be served? Should education acquiesce to calls for ongoing change to the extent that its content and positions are subject to being undermined at any time by relativistic standards? Should it adhere to more foundational modes, offering educands learning skills and values which are claimed to possess a timelessness that surpasses what is simply current? Or does the answer lie in a compromise between fidelity to the past and openness to the future? One commentator describes the seemingly insurmountable challenge of harmonising diverse contemporary views:

It is difficult enough to undertake an analysis of the situation which is in constant flux and defies all preconceived models. There is also the difficulty of combining principles and values which, however reconcilable in the abstract, can prove on the practical level to be resistant to any easy synthesis. (John Paul II 2000)

The quest for synthesizing the best of both the ancient and the modern in thought and practice occupies the energies of many educational thinkers. Few would completely reject the accumulated wisdom of the past, but none can deny that present times demand answers that are new in their methods and in their expressions. One wonders where to turn and how to begin to solve the dilemma of achieving a suitable balance. Maritain (1974b) observes that in pondering such challenges as these, education cannot escape the problems and entanglements of philosophy.

In fact, the evolution of western education has been largely governed by that of philosophical movements. Education and philosophy have followed a similar pattern of growth through an interplay of antitheses—noted by Ardley (1950)—whereby every theoretical exaggeration is countered by a contrary exaggeration. Ardley contends that this process becomes the means by which thought advances to dialectically greater heights, but remarks that it is in the final synthesis, when thought has had the time that it needs to mature, that a realistic balance is often found.

In other words, many of these movements are marked by the common trait of *exclusivity* (cf. Redden & Ryan 1956) typical of the antithetical, formative stage. That is, they take hold of one particular truth and (over-) develop that truth alone. While exclusivist positions are valid and

useful in some respects, they lack the *universality* (ibid.) that is able to synthesize the earlier, variant ideas and that should characterize the ideal philosophical stance.

Maritain goes even further, with the forthright proposition that:

The truth, indeed, is not to be found in a philosophy which keeps the mean between contrary errors by its mediocrity and by falling below them, being built up by borrowing from both, balancing one against another and mingling them by arbitrary choices made without the light of a guiding principle (*eclecticism*); it must be sought in a philosophy which keeps the mean between contrary errors by its superiority, dominating both, so that they appear as fragments fallen and severed from its unity. (1979:205)

Maritain imagines the philosophical golden mean as a mountain towering between two valleys, and from this notion of an eminence between two extremes, he elaborates a model of the different theories of truth. The peak represents the ‘moderate intellectualism’ of Aristotle and St Thomas which teaches that truth (the correspondence of the mind with reality: *aedequatio rei et intellectus*) is neither *impossible* nor *easy*, but *difficult* to attain. Reason can attain with complete certainty the most sublime objective truths, but only with discipline and effort.¹⁴

This capability for infinite intellectual extension contrasts with its error by defect: the anti-intellectual or sceptical view (e.g., of modernism and pragmatism) that truth is intellectually *impossible*. Rosmini’s contention that ‘scepticism results only when we are not satisfied with the truth but seek some *further* justification, so placing certainty beyond truth’ (Hunt?2002) portrays the sceptical mind as subject to a kind of intellectual scrupulosity. On the opposite side in Maritain’s scheme, is the error by excess: the rationalist belief (e.g., of the subjectivists, Descartes, Hegel) that truth is *easy* to attain.

The final segment in Maritain’s exposition amounts to the synthesis of (or, mean between) these two extreme positions: that of Kant, who postulated that our minds make the truth of that which we know (phenomena), and that which really is, is unknowable by reason (criticism) (1979:137-138).

We end with this analysis because it unites (and, on various levels, applies to) many disparate elements looked at throughout this chapter. The further implications of these recurring themes

¹⁴ Rosmini defines certainty as ‘a firm and reasonable persuasion that conforms to the truth ... *Certainty*, therefore, results from three elements: 1. *truth* in the object, 2. firm *persuasion* in the subject, 3. a motive, or *reason*, producing the persuasion (2001:#1044, 1047).

will be taken up in the following discussion of essentials and non-essentials pertaining to the field of education.

Chapter Two: The Antonio Rosmini Case

THIS chapter approaches the leading question of essentials and non-essentials by means of an unexpected way: unexpected for the writer because knowledge of this element—the recent and implication-laden case of Antonio Rosmini—was initiated by an oblique reference in a second-hand book. (The significance once comprehended, the discovery then demanded incorporation—even though this study was well under way.) Unexpected, too, was the way this same element then suggested itself as device that plays a twofold function: the case illustrates the formation and application of certain essential principles relevant to our themes; simultaneously, it introduces the person of Rosmini as well as his thought, which is drawn upon as a crucial and original element of this thesis.

Rosmini: An Introduction:

July 2007 marks the 152nd anniversary of the death of Antonio Rosmini (1797–1855): a towering and controversial but—paradoxically—obscure figure in the recent theological and philosophical history of the Catholic Church. Greatly revered in Italy as ‘a significant cultural and philosophical force’ but generally little known outside his own country (Guarino 2003: note 4), Rosmini, a Catholic priest, was the founder of two religious orders (the Institute of Charity and Sisters of Providence), a prominent but much maligned political collaborator during the Italian *Risorgimento*, and a close associate of several Popes. His prodigious literary output amounted to almost one hundred volumes of writing and correspondence on topics including philosophy, theology, psychology and education.¹⁵

Yet circumstances during his lifetime, and in the intervening years have kept Rosmini’s highly original contribution on the outskirts of mainstream Catholic thought. In 1849 two of his writings were placed on the Vatican’s *Index of Forbidden Books*. Then in 1854, the year before he died, the decree *Dimittantur* (*They are to be dismissed*) removed these works from examination and declared Rosmini’s thought and intentions to be above suspicion. Although this gave Rosmini a certain victory over his many opponents, the Decree did not amount to a direct approval of his theological or philosophical system.

¹⁵ In Italy Rosmini occupies a place in Catholic history analogous to that of John Henry Newman in Britain (Tablet 2001 online).

More controversy was to follow. In 1887, twenty-two years after Rosmini's death, the Vatican Congregation of the Holy Office issued the decree *Post Obitum*, condemning forty Rosminian propositions taken primarily from posthumous works as well as from other works edited during his lifetime. Consequent to these events we read therefore of his 'final eclipse' (Hunt?2002:16) and—particularly in the English-speaking world—'the almost total obliteration of Rosmini's contribution to philosophy and theology' (Cleary 1992:65).

Vindication:

Lately, however, a series of pivotal events has restored Rosmini's standing and put his thought squarely back into the spotlight. The first major step in his rehabilitation occurred in 1998 with Pope John Paul II's endorsement of Rosmini in the Encyclical, *Faith and Reason* (*Fides et Ratio*). Here, after considering the philosophical contributions of the great Christian patristic and scholastic theologians, the Pope continues:

We see the same fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God in the courageous research pursued by more recent thinkers, among whom I gladly mention, in a Western context, figures such as John Henry Newman, Antonio Rosmini, Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson and Edith Stein ... (1998b: # 74)

The act of referring to an individual by name in a papal encyclical is no minor matter. Long before he too was accorded that distinction, the selfsame Gilson reflected on the intense process of deliberation that goes into drafting an encyclical:

When a Pope writes such a document, he does so in the full awareness of his spiritual responsibility. He knows very well that each and every sentence, word, noun epithet, verb, and adverb found in his written text is going to be weighed, searched, and submitted to the most careful scrutiny by a crowd of countless readers scattered over the surface of the earth. And not only this, but the same anxious study of his pronouncements will be carried on by still many more readers, including his own successors, for generation after generation. (1955:21)

Just a few days after the release of *Fides et Ratio*, the Pope sent an address to the General Chapter of the Institute of Charity, applying the Encyclical themes specifically to the Rosminian context:

Your Founder [Rosmini] stands firmly in that great intellectual tradition of Christianity which knows that there is no opposition between faith and reason, but that one demands the other. His was a time when the long process of the separation of faith and reason had reached full term, and the two came to seem mortal enemies. Rosmini, however, insisted with Saint Augustine that 'believers are also thinkers; in believing they think and in thinking, they believe. If faith does not think, it is

nothing'. He knew that faith without reason withers into myth and superstition; and therefore he set about applying his immense gifts of mind not only to theology and spirituality, but to fields as diverse as philosophy, politics, law, education, science, psychology and art, seeing in them no threat to faith but necessary allies. Rosmini seems at times a man of contradiction. Yet we find in him a deep and mysterious convergence; and it was this convergence which ensured that, although very much a man of the nineteenth century, Rosmini transcended his own time and place to become a universal witness, whose teaching is still today both relevant and timely. (1998a online)¹⁶

In March 2000 the name of Rosmini featured once again, this time in connection with one of his previously proscribed works. Cardinal Ratzinger, speaking of Pope John Paul II's initiatives of reconciliation towards those who have been unjustly treated by the Church, referred to the warnings in the *Book of the Apocalypse*, adding:

This type of prophetic admonition...which is an awareness of our being sinners, this too occurs in the history of the Church. We could think ... in times nearer our own, of Rosmini's *Five Wounds of the Church*.¹⁷ (in Hunt?2002:38)

Finally, and most conclusively, on 1 July 2001, after a ten year re-examination of the condemned propositions, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) laid to rest any suspicions of heterodoxy in Rosmini when it issued a *Note on the Force of the Doctrinal Decrees Concerning the Thought and Work of Fr Antonio Rosmini Serbati*.¹⁸ The *Note* (or *Nota*) is significant in that it marks the culmination of the entire Rosmini case and overturns the

¹⁶ Significantly, the very *themes* - as well as the key words - used in John Paul's portrayal of Rosmini bear an undeniable similarity to those used in describing the aims of higher education by the Vatican Council in its document on *Christian Education*:

'Indeed, in the institutions under its control the Church endeavours systematically to ensure that the treatment of the individual disciplines is consonant with their own principles, their own methods, and with a true liberty of scientific enquiry. Its object is that a progressively deeper understanding of them may be achieved, and by a careful attention to the current problems of these changing times and to the research being undertaken, the **convergence** of **faith and reason** in the one truth may be seen more clearly. This method follows the **tradition** of the doctors of the Church and especially St Thomas Aquinas. Thus the Christian outlook should acquire, as it were, a public, stable and **universal** influence in the whole process of the promotion of higher culture. The graduates of these institutes should be outstanding in learning, ready to undertake the more responsible duties of society, and to be **witnesses** in the world to the true faith' [emphasis added] (Flannery 1980:735)

¹⁷ This work (1846) considers five wounds afflicting the Church: the need for renewal of liturgical life in order to overcome division of the people from the clergy in worship, for better education of priests, for unity among the bishops, for freedom from governmental pressure in the choice of bishops, for freedom from state control of the Church's temporalities and enslavement of the Church by riches (cf. Cleary 1992:67; Hunt:6; Malone 2001:10).

¹⁸ *Serbati*: an aristocratic addition to the family surname sometimes assumed by Rosmini to divert the attention of the authorities away from his writings in his native, Austrian-controlled Piedmont.

earlier ruling of a Vatican Congregation. Moreover, its philosophical implications have led to vigorous debate—even to the point of its being upheld as evidence that the Church now embraces a double truth. (This claim is investigated later.) But above all, this controversial document (although *promulgated* by the previous Pontiff) is of especial interest for the fact of its having been *composed* by then Prefect of the CDF, Cardinal Ratzinger—who now presides as Pope Benedict XVI and who counts Rosmini among his most formative influences.

Overview and Summary of the CDF *Notice*:

The *Note* opens by considering the impact of Rosmini's philosophy:

The Magisterium of the Church, which has the responsibility to promote and safeguard the doctrine of the faith and preserve it from the repeated dangers arising from certain currents of thought and certain kinds of practice, was concerned during the 19th century with the results of the thought of Fr Antonio Rosmini Serbati. (2001:#1)¹⁹

Some of Rosmini's works were initially prohibited then later removed from investigation, although other writings were subsequently condemned. In so acting, did the Church of the day interpret and evaluate Rosmini's thought in an objectively and intrinsically contradictory manner? Ratzinger contends that this would be a 'hasty and superficial' conclusion. He claims that the answer to the question is to be discovered only in 'an attentive reading' of the Church interventions *together with* a consideration of 'their context and the situation in which they were promulgated, which also allows for historical development' (#2). As will be seen, this key term, *historical development*, has been misapprehended by some commentators.²⁰

Ratzinger specifies the *context* and *situation* to which he has referred. He explains that the 1887 Decree, *Post Obitum*, condemning the '40 Propositions' expressed a certain distancing of the Church from Antonio Rosmini's thought and propositions due to *two* main historical-cultural factors of the time.

The first was Pope Leo XIII's fostering of Thomism (the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas) as a unifying synthesis especially valuable in seminaries and theological colleges:

The adoption of Thomism created the premises for a negative judgement of a philosophical and speculative position, like that of Rosmini, because it differed in

¹⁹ The quotes from this *Notice* are given by section number.

²⁰ See page 29 ff.

its language and conceptual framework from the philosophical and theological elaboration of St Thomas Aquinas. (#4)

That Rosmini sought to dialogue with the modern age in terms new to Catholic tradition is true. In his work, *Theodicy* (a. 148), he wrote: ‘If philosophy is to be restored to love and respect, I think it will be necessary, in part, to return to the teachings of the ancients, and in part to give those teachings the benefit of modern methods’ (in 1911 Online Encyclopaedia 2004).

Elsewhere, Gilson styles Rosmini’s thought as an attempt to counter the influence of rationalism by offering

... not a theology of scholastic inspiration, but a philosophy standing on its own ground, yet attuned to the teaching of the Catholic theology ... he devoted his talents to the elaboration of a philosophy, both modern and Christian, capable of counterbalancing the antimetaphysical and antitheological influence of Kant. (1966b: 237-238)

A congress held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina to celebrate Rosmini’s 150th anniversary introduced his Christian philosophy from quite another perspective. It presented his thinking as upholding rather than undermining Thomistic principles in as much as it is well rooted in the Patristic and Scholastic principles but

... formed in the discussion with modern philosophers, from Descartes to Hegel ... [It] represents one of the few philosophical systems that harmonically integrate the genuine elements present in modern thought on the great philosophical tradition, thus casting not a little light on the latter. He is therefore, to be seen in the line of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas ... (Facultad de Filosofia y Letras - Pontificia Universidad Catolica Argentina 2005 online)

This is not to say that Rosmini should be artificially forced to fit a Thomistic mould; but—at the least—the foregoing suggests that his system *and* Thomism derive from a common tradition and, therefore, are not irreconcilables.

We come now to the second historical-cultural factor. The *Note* relates how the propositions were condemned posthumously and then published without ‘a critical apparatus capable of defining the precise meaning of the expressions and concepts used’. This favoured heterodox interpretations of Rosminian thought and categories ‘especially when they were read in a neo-Thomistic perspective’ (#4). Such vagaries of interpretation are attested to in the short biography by Cleary (himself a Rosminian), where he illustrates how some propositions were ‘stitched together ... and made to run as a single assertion’ while in fact being composed from

sentences scattered across many pages and even different volumes of Rosmini's writing (1992:69–70).

Likewise Gilson, a Thomist philosopher with no particular allegiance to Rosmini, points out how the Rosminian notion of 'the divine in nature' which largely contributed to the censure of his doctrine, 'was a bit complicated for the censors' who 'intentionally or not, missed the distinction' which, otherwise may make Rosmini read as a pantheist. For example, according to Gilson, the sixth condemned proposition is *harmless* but 'must be read in its philosophical context, which is the Rosminian notion of essence...' (1966b:742 -744).

Similarly, Cardinal Ratzinger advises that Rosmini's manner of expression often requires a careful interpretation, and can only be clarified in the overall context of the author's work (#5). In fact, superadded to the historical-cultural factors discussed above, is an advertence to the sometimes equivocal and complex nature of Rosmini's own terminology and concepts. This initiated the concern of the Magisterium as to the possibility of 'erroneous and deviant interpretations of Rosminian thought that were in contrast to the Catholic faith' (ibid.). The *Note* explicitly states that *Post Obitum* was written purposely to warn against the ambiguities of the '40 Propositions' in an objective way. The apprehensions of the Magisterium were later realised when non-Catholic intellectuals actually misinterpreted Rosmini's thought in an idealist, pantheist and subjectivist manner (ibid.).

A central issue in the Rosmini case is that of the 'inner consistency' of the Church's various interventions. Ratzinger discovers the key to this consistency in the Church's fundamental distinction between:

- (i) Rosmini's stated beliefs;
- (ii) the lack of a mechanism within the Rosminian system which would enable it to defend itself from possible erroneous interpretations.

The corresponding section in the *Note* states that:

...the doctrinal Decree *Post Obitum* does not make any judgement that the author formally denied any truth of faith, but rather presents the fact that the philosophical-theological system of Rosmini was considered insufficient and inadequate to safeguard and explain certain truths of Catholic doctrine, which were recognized and confessed by the author himself. (#5)

Conversely, interpretations contrary to Catholic beliefs derived from this system have now conclusively been shown by Roman Catholic theologians and philosophers not to correspond to the ‘authentic position’ of Rosmini (#6).

The crux of the document has fuelled much debate. It states that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, after examination of the two 19th Century doctrinal decrees by ‘taking into account the results emerging from historiography’ and recent research concludes:

The motives for doctrinal and prudential concern and difficulty that determined the promulgation of the Decree *Post Obitum* with the condemnation of the ‘40 Propositions’ taken from the works of Antonio Rosmini can now be considered superseded. This is so because the meaning of the propositions, as understood and condemned by the Decree, does not belong to the authentic position of Rosmini, but to conclusions that may possibly have been drawn from the reading of his works. The questions of the plausibility of the Rosminian system, of its speculative consistency and of the philosophical and theological theories and hypotheses expressed in it remain entrusted to the theoretical debate.

At the same time the objective validity of the Decree *Post Obitum* referring to the previously condemned propositions, remains for whoever reads them, outside of the Rosminian system, in an idealist, ontologist point of view and with a meaning contrary to Catholic faith and doctrine. (#7)

The *Note*’s penultimate paragraph remarks, though, that Rosmini’s apostolic and spiritual ‘courage and daring’ in offering ‘new possibilities to Catholic doctrine in the face of the challenges of modern thought’ sometimes ‘bordered on a risky rashness’.²¹ Nonetheless, the CDF re-establishes Rosmini’s reputation, and while pointing out the need for reading his works

²¹ For example, Gilson comments that while Christian theologians ‘admit at least the intimate presence of the divinity in nature’ and guided by ‘what perhaps is a sound instinct’ avoid defining it, Rosmini ‘bravely, but perhaps recklessly, undertook to turn the divine into a definite philosophical category. He specialized the name to signify that in nature which immediately attests the presence of God’. (1966b)

But in *Fides et ratio*, John Paul II had encouraged philosophers ‘to trust in the power of human reason and not to set themselves goals that are too modest in their philosophising ... not to abandon the passion for ultimate truth, the eagerness to search for it or the audacity to forge new paths in the search...and [to be] willing to run risks’. (#56)

Rosmini, too, was aware of the audacity of his own propositions. Regarding the problem of the origin of thought, he wrote:

‘You might say, why treat of such a dangerous question? Well, let us leave it out, and all the other parts of philosophy will be headless, and a decapitated philosophy will be dead. You cannot justify or demonstrate any philosophic truth without establishing the criterion of certainty, and the criterion of certainty cannot be established without resolving the question of the *origin of ideas*.’ (in Leatham 1957:117)

in their whole context, proposes them to scholars for further study and research so that their merits or demerits may be plainly assessed.

Signed by Cardinal Ratzinger, the *Note* concludes: ‘The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II ...confirmed this Note...and ordered it published.’

Reaction to the *Nota*:

The inscription on Rosmini’s tomb in Stresa (Italy) was composed by his close friend, Pope Gregory XVI, declaring him to be:

...a man endowed with lofty and surpassing genius, adorned with extraordinary gifts of soul, renowned in the highest degree for his knowledge of things human and divine, distinguished for his remarkable piety...conspicuous for his wonderful love and loyalty to the Catholic religion and to this Apostolic see. (Cleary 1992:13; Leetham 1957:231)

Rosmini’s submission to the Vatican condemnation of 1849 led to this remark from his friend and renowned educator, St John Bosco: ‘[Rosmini] showed that the respect due to the See of Peter is to be tested by deeds, not words ...’ On another occasion Don Bosco said, ‘I do not remember ever seeing a priest say Mass with such devotion and piety as Rosmini’ (in Leetham, 1957:462).

During his lifetime, Rosmini was also characterized as ‘a hypocrite, disloyal, a Jansenist wolf, a teacher of hellish doctrine, a traitor to the Church, and of such human and diabolical evil that it would be difficult to go further’ (in Cleary 1992:14). Unsurprisingly, the same varied understandings accompany Rosmini to the present day: advances in scholarship stand alongside commentaries that do no more than underscore the ‘oblivion’ that surrounds him (Rosmini House n.d.:5).

Even the Catholic media have been multiplied the inaccuracies. For instance, *The Tablet*, a respected English religious journal, promptly reported the publication of the *Note* but misquoted its title, cited the wrong number of years since Rosmini’s death, and—loosely translating the original throughout—also replaced the word *superseded* with *surmounted* in the crucial part of the document (7 July 2001).

A few months later, an article in America's *National Catholic Reporter* went much further, claiming that the *Note* opens up new avenues of theological research because it points to inherent contradictions in the doctrines of the Church.

In a recent document, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has decided to apply the historical-critical method, commonly used in the interpretation of scripture, to the understanding of the church's magisterium. This nota ... is the first ecclesiastical document to adopt this approach. The nota first lifts the condemnation ... and then explains how the magisterium can do this without involving itself in an internal contradiction. (Baum 2002 online)

The problematic term, *historical-critical method* is arbitrarily assumed here by Professor Baum; the phrase itself appears nowhere in the *Note*, nor does the structure of the Vatican document justify such a descriptor.²² The CDF may speak of '**historical** development' (#2), '**the historical**-cultural and ecclesial factors of the time', 'respect for **historical** truth' (#5), 'taking into account the results emerging from **historiography**' (#7), and the need of a '**critical** apparatus' (#4)—but it clarifies the usage of these terms as they arise.

Baum's second point (if taken to mean that this is the first ecclesiastical document to reverse, improve or develop a previous magisterial ruling) represents an incorrect and cursory view of history. An initial ban on Rosmini's works in 1849, removed soon after by another decree, is one of countless examples to the contrary. The last few years have seen the canonization of two saints who, at one time, too, were placed under Church sanctions. Padre Pio (1887–1968) was ordered by the Vatican to desist from all correspondence, spiritual direction, and hearing

²² This term has many meanings and applications; however, a *critical thinker* has been characterized as one who: tolerates ambiguity and uncertainty; identifies and resists the biases, assumptions and manipulations embedded in texts; maintains an air of scepticism; separates facts from opinions; does not oversimplify; uses logical thought processes, and examines available **evidence** before drawing conclusions (cf. Department of Education Tasmania 2002:21; Smith, Randolph. A. 1995).

Baum's assertion that the *historical-critical method* is used *commonly* in the interpretation of scripture may be true, but those Catholics who adopt a secular mechanism of analysis such as critical theory likewise overlook the method of Biblical exegesis approved by the Church. The Vatican Council's document on *Divine Revelation* maintains that the Church's interpretations always refer to the triple foundations of Tradition, Scripture and the Magisterium: one cannot stand without the other. The document also states that 'the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgement of the Church' (Flannery 1980:756-758). In fact, as Pope, Ratzinger recently—and before the Roman Curia—distanced himself from that school 'in which the historical-critical method claimed to have the last word on the interpretation of the Bible and, demanding total exclusivity for its interpretation of Sacred Scripture, was opposed to important points in the interpretation elaborated by the faith of the Church'. (Benedict XVI 2006a:7)

confessions after the Holy Office (now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith!) received accusations from the detractors of this Italian priest. Hereafter, his activity was restricted to the private celebration of the Mass, while statements from the Holy See denied the supernaturality of his mystical experiences. A reversal finally came when Pope Pius XI ordered the Holy See to lift its bans, saying, ‘I have not been badly disposed toward Padre Pio, but I have been badly informed’ (Eternal Word Television Network?2002 online).

Universally less known is the Polish mystic, Sister Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938), whose promotion of the Divine Mercy devotion was suppressed (after her death) by the Church due to faulty translations of her diary. The Archbishop of Cracow, who was later to become Pope John Paul II, investigated the matter. The translations were corrected, the sanctions lifted, the devotion became firmly established, and Faustina’s eventual canonisation was the first to take place in the new millennium (Arnold 2006 online).

Returning to Baum and the Vatican ‘switch’ whereby the propositions are no longer erroneous, he asks: ‘Where does this leave the truth? Can the magisterium be right when it made the condemnations and right when it lifted them?’ (2002 online) These objections have already been addressed; suffice here to mention that Baum makes his own switch. Three times he repeats that the *Nota* of July 2001 is an important ecclesiastical document because ‘never before...has the magisterium applied the historical-critical method to its own teaching’. But this entire analysis rests on one main “quote” which is actually a fabrication (his own demonstration of critico-historicism?): that an attentive reading ‘interprets the decree *Post Obitum* “in the light of its historical context and thus reveals its true meaning”’ (ibid.). Taken at face value, these words seem to reinforce Baum’s argument; compared to the original, they clearly depart from the truth of what was stated:

However, an attentive reading not just of the Congregation’s texts, but of their context and of the situation in which they were promulgated, which also allows for historical development, helps one to appreciate the watchful and coherent work of reflection that always kept in mind the safeguarding of the Catholic faith and the determination not to allow deviant or reductive interpretations of the faith. The present *Notice* on the doctrinal value of the earlier decrees fits into this train of thought. (#2)

Accordingly, Baum’s preliminary assertion that ‘Ratzinger has *decided* to apply’ this method seems to amount to little more than an unfounded, personal opinion. Baum’s conclusions cannot be accepted without doing a certain violence to the CDF text—as do the conclusions of commentators such as Guarino who, in concert with Baum, concludes that the *Note*’s

‘admission with regard to Rosmini is also a continued affirmation of the importance of theological pluralism and conceptual mutability’. Starting from the premise that the favourable *Fides et Ratio* citation demanded a re-evaluation of Rosmini from the CDF, Guarino examines admissions in the *Note* ‘regarding paradigm-based rationality’ from the perspective of theological epistemology. He finds the *Note* validating many of the issues elaborated in Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: ‘theory-laden interpretation, the incommensurability of theological systems, the possibility of "masking" in theology, and the relationship between referential stability and socially reinforced paradigms’ (2003 online).

Strikingly similar to critiques from the liberal sector, are those from the opposite side of the religious / political spectrum. Members of the Society of St Pius X (SSPX) are followers of the excommunicated Bishop, the late Marcel Lefebvre. The conservative Lefebvrist movement is devoted to the Tridentine (traditional Latin) Mass to the extent that its members refuse to acknowledge at least the lawfulness if not the validity of the *Novus Ordo* Mass which was promulgated after Vatican II. Additionally, they reject—as mistaken—most of the Church teachings stemming from the same Council. Yet the Society’s considerable influence also extends to many mainstream Catholics who can empathize with SSPX attacks on abuses (liturgical and otherwise) that have often flourished in the post-conciliar climate.

The Society’s website contains a commentary on the election of Pope Benedict XVI. Written by the Superior General, Bishop Fellay, the article singles out Cardinal Ratzinger’s act of ‘trying to justify Rosmini’ as evidence that the Church now embraces ‘an evolving truth’ (2005 online). Paul VI and John Paul II were so eager to accelerate Rosmini’s process of beatification (a significant step towards sainthood), according to Fellay, that both Popes set up commissions to investigate this cause. In each case a negative verdict was returned because, ‘The problem with Rosmini was that he had been condemned by the Church’. Fellay’s account continues:

So they [sic] went about it in a roundabout way. They got a decree from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which attempted to explain something rather difficult to accept. Thus they tell us that the condemnation of Rosmini, considered from the Thomistic viewpoint in force at that time, was absolutely valid. But today, things stand otherwise, that if we look at Rosmini’s thesis with the eyes of Rosmini, his doctrine is acceptable. This is a totally subjective approach to the truth. Rosmini spoke, his work was understood. The Church understood it and said that what was understandable was worthy of condemnation. But a little later, they

come and tell us that it should not have been understood that way, that you had to enter into Rosmini's mind to understand his vision of things. (ibid.)²³

The SSPX argues that the *Note* marks the demise of objective truth in the Church, and that Ratzinger's actions show him applying a Hegelian dialectic: producing new doctrines from a conflictual meeting of old ones. The Society concludes that this can only result in the marginalization of Thomism, and its replacement by an alternate philosophy of evolving truth: these it considers the hallmarks of the post-Vatican II Church, and sees the same traits to be exemplified *in the actions of the reigning pope*.

The various criticisms that have been listed cover the range of typical, even excusable reactions. At the same time, these criticisms converge in a fundamental way, because of their underlying implication that Rosmini is really a nineteenth century heretic who now stands uncondemned. (One can only surmise as to reasons for the passionate interest of these disparate parties—the one rejoicing, the other lamenting—in the Rosmini case. Is it because, feeling the Church to be at odds with them—or themselves to be at odds with the Church—they are eager to follow the progress of one whose orthodoxy is widely regarded as dubious?) In fact, it is well documented that Rosmini—far from remaining obdurate in his opinions—frequently protested his allegiance to the Holy See's decisions apropos his writings, and fully submitted to the Vatican's decision to place certain of his works on the *Index* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2001; Malone 2001; Leatham 1957). An overview of the Rosmini case in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, traces these allegations of heresy to their likely source. It explains that the teachings of Rosmini were *reported* to the Vatican Congregation as erroneous and heretical, accusing him of fostering a philosophy of ontologism (that our human knowledge directly perceives God). Resultantly, in 1887 ...

Under suspicion as teachings which *catholicae veritati haud consonae videbantur* (seemed scarcely to be in accord with catholic truth), these propositions were condemned as *reprobandae, damnandae, and proscribendae* (to be reproved, condemned and proscribed). (Malone 2001:10)

They were then automatically included in Denzinger's catalogue of heretical works (Hunt?2002:17)—a standard reference for Catholic theological institutions at that time.

²³Similar opinion is to be found elsewhere. One conservative commentator labelled the Vatican Congregation's decision 'Orwellian Newspeak at its worst': 'What Rosmini said, he did not really say. But what Rosmini said that he did not really say is condemned outside of what he really said if interpreted in the obvious sense which he obviously meant but which is not really a part of what he said'. (Larson 2004:5)

Notwithstanding, a vital distinction remains: in no Vatican communication has the term ‘heretical’ ever been directly applied to the person or works of Rosmini; nor were his works condemned as damnable in any specific way or placed under any particular theological censure (Malone 2001:10; Leetham 1957:435). The *Osservatore* article makes three other worthwhile observations about the uncertainty of the conclusions that were handed down:

First, the reporting of the propositions as *catholicae veritati haud consonae* indicates that the difficulties raised by the teaching underlying the propositions were felt to be theological. No other meaning can be given to the phrase “catholic truth”. Second, the first 24 propositions are nevertheless concerned with philosophical matters, and in particular with the question of the intellectual relationship between the creature and the Creator. It was obviously felt as essential that Rosmini’s view of such a relationship should be criticized from the beginning. Third, the immense difficulties under which the compilers laboured to produce the propositions is clear from the way in which several of the propositions are stitched together. (Malone: *ibid.*)

To sum up, it is obvious that many difficulties surrounding the Rosmini case arise from the inaccurate but commonly held beliefs regarding the *nature* of the original condemnation. The *Note on the Force of the Doctrinal Decrees* definitively counters these difficulties by showing that:

the main impediment to the original acceptance of Rosmini’s works was the possibility of their being *misinterpreted*;
the earlier ruling was based on a prudential but incomplete assessment of Rosmini’s writings which recent scholarly scrutiny has shown—to the Church’s satisfaction—not to correspond to the author’s authentic position.

Despite the many objections that have been raised against Rosmini, the weight of evidence confirms that he now stands firmly established within the Catholic tradition. The point at issue is not whether his writings have been scrutinized, but whether they have ultimately been approved. Father Vito Nardin, former provincial superior of the Italian Rosminians, encapsulates the situation: ‘In words that are comprehensible to all it can be expressed thus: “The accused has not committed the deed”’ (Zenit 2005:¶ 2).

Change or Genuine Development?

If the reversal of the condemnation is claimed not to constitute a fundamental shift, can it be proven to conform to any wider, pre-established mode of implementing change in the Church? Or more precisely, what is the yardstick by which the Church distinguishes legitimate change

from fleeting fashion or fad? Shortly after his reception into the Catholic Church in 1845, Cardinal Newman addressed similar issues in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, where he concluded that the test of every genuine development is that the doctrine in question should ‘anticipate its future’ (in Boyce 2001:283). Because Divine Revelation is *the* original idea and the source of all doctrine, Newman saw that subsequent ecclesiastical developments cannot express or contain more than Revelation implies (cf. Waters 1988:15).

Newman’s criterion of development demonstrably aligns with the Church’s own mechanisms for adopting and implementing change. This can be seen by following the course of another controversial judgement, relevant here because its principles of growth articulate an explicit response to this section’s two opening questions, and because its progress both parallels and consolidates the Rosmini ruling (of which it is useful to be conscious while reading the following). Not unlike the latter, this other case involves the re-evaluation of an already authorized, established and documented teaching. Here, though, the difference is that the reforms were aimed at changes that had been newly introduced only since the Second Vatican Council; moreover, these reforms related to the Church’s central act of worship: the Mass.

The Vatican II *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*—written to establish certain fundamental rules governing the liturgical reforms that were eventually implemented—forms the background of this examination. The *Introduction* considers the phenomena of *tradition* and *change*, first explaining that: ‘...in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that [the Church] holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way’ (1963: #4). The *Constitution* then explains how the liturgy comprises ‘unchangeable elements divinely established’, as well as ‘elements subject to change’. These latter, it continues, ‘not only may be changed but ought to be changed with the passage of time’—to exclude any elements that lack harmony or suitability. The document stipulates that the regulation of any such liturgical reform depends solely on the authority of the Church (i.e. on the apostolic See, and, as laws may determine, on the bishop or bishops’ conferences), and must be undertaken with openness *and* with fidelity:

In order that sound tradition be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, a careful investigation—theological, historical, and pastoral—should always be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised. Furthermore the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy must be studied in conjunction with the experience derived from recent liturgical reforms and from the indults granted to various places. (ibid.: #23)

Next, and most importantly to our purpose (and holding in mind Newman's idea), it likens desirable change to *organic growth* in nature—that is, growth within its own kind. (*Progress* or *development* describe this state of growth more suitably than *change*: here, it is a question of something being brought to an advancement rather than a replacement of one thing by another (cf. Waters 1988).)

Finally, there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them, and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some grow organically from forms already existing. (Flannery 1980:9-10)
[Emphasis added.]

So far, the theoretical background; now, to the case itself. In 1970, Pope Paul's promulgation of the Roman Missal effectively amounted to the 1500 year old Traditional Latin Rite being superseded by the New Mass.²⁴ (Also named the *Novus Ordo*, the latter is usually, although not necessarily, celebrated in the vernacular.) However, in 1984, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship acquiesced to the ongoing demand for the previous liturgical and disciplinary Latin tradition, issuing *Quattuor Abhinc Annos* in which the Holy Father granted to diocesan bishops 'the possibility of using an *indult* [a licence given by the Pope for something not sanctioned by the common law of the Church (The Concise Oxford Dictionary 1985)] whereby priests and faithful ... may be able to celebrate Mass by using the Roman Missal according to the 1962 edition' [i.e. the Tridentine Latin Mass] (Congregation for Divine Worship 1984 online).

The restrictive conditions of this indult were relaxed following the illicit ordination of bishops by Archbishop Lefebvre (from the Society of St Pius X). On 2 July 1988, Pope John Paul II responded to Lefebvre's action with the Apostolic Letter, *Ecclesia Dei*, whereby a Commission was instituted to regularize and recognize the canonical status of communities (whether formerly Lefebvrist or not) wanting to preserve their Tridentine spiritual and liturgical traditions while still maintaining their union with Rome. Importantly, the Letter also acknowledged the 'rightful aspirations' (1988: 5, c) of *all* other Catholics who felt drawn to the Tridentine Rite, and called for 'a wide and generous application' of the 1984 directives relating to this matter (ibid: 6, c). The Pope bestowed upon the newly convoked Pontifical Commission, *Ecclesia Dei* the faculty of directly granting permission for the celebration of the Latin Rite.

²⁴ It should be noted that the former Rite was never abolished or forbidden.

In turn, Augustine Cardinal Mayer, Prefect of the Commission, instructed bishops to ensure that the Tridentine Mass now be regularly available to all who legitimately request it. However, the Cardinal explained that the respect due to those attached to the centuries-old Latin liturgical tradition should be construed simply as a *pastoral provision* rather than as a promotion of that Rite in prejudice to the *Novus Ordo* (Mayer?1991 online). In fact, those requesting permission for the old Rite are still bound to adhere to the central and often ignored proviso of *Quattuor Abhinc Annos* (1984): not to ‘call in question the legitimacy and doctrinal exactitude of the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970’ (Congregation for Divine Worship 1984 online).

Clearly, the adoption of this new stance corresponds to a radical progression, leading to a major revision of the Vatican II reform of the Mass. Of interest is the extent to which these “reforms of the reform” did indeed accord with the principles of genuine development and the other norms outlined above in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*.

But of greater interest is that Archbishop Lefebvre—who, in a sense, catalysed the reforms introduced by *Ecclesia Dei*—was condemned precisely for acting counter to the unity of the Church by disregarding its principles of organic growth and continuity. This is manifest in John Paul’s statements in *Ecclesia Dei* regarding Lefebvre’s unlawful ordinations; these are named acts of ‘*disobedience* to the Roman Pontiff in a very grave matter’, amounting to ‘the rejection of the Roman primacy’. The Pope points to ‘an **incomplete** and **contradictory** notion of Tradition’ as being at the *root* of this schismatic act (1988: #3-4):

- **incomplete**, because it does not take sufficiently into account what the Second Vatican Council named the ‘*living* character of Tradition’, which results in ‘a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on’;
- and especially **contradictory** because Lefebvre’s notion of Tradition ‘opposes the universal Magisterium of the Church possessed by the Bishop of Rome and the Body of Bishops. It is impossible to remain faithful to the Tradition while breaking the ecclesial bond with him to whom, in the person of the Apostle Peter, Christ himself entrusted the ministry of unity in his Church’. (ibid. #4)

The Pope then broadens his focus beyond the case at hand to the wider programme of the Church, calling for increased fidelity ‘to the Church’s Tradition, authentically interpreted by the Magisterium, especially in the Ecumenical Councils from Nicaea to Vatican II ... by rejecting

erroneous interpretations and arbitrary and unauthorized applications in matters of doctrine, liturgy and discipline' (ibid. #5.a). At the same time, he firmly maintains that all members of the Church must show 'a new awareness, not only of the lawfulness but also of the richness for the Church of a diversity of charisms, traditions of spirituality and apostolate', which constitute the harmony and beauty of 'unity in variety' (ibid).

Finally, an especial appeal is made to theologians and other experts in the ecclesiastical sciences to rise to the challenge of integrating present developments with the tradition of the Church:

Indeed, the extent and depth of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council call for a renewed commitment to deeper study in order to reveal clearly the Council's continuity with Tradition, especially in points of doctrine which, perhaps because they are new, have not yet been well understood by some sections of the Church. (ibid. #5b)

(Postscript to this section: The publication in mid 2007 (after the preceding was written) of Pope Benedict's *Summorum Pontificum* ratifies the sequence of our argument. The letter (issued 'motu proprio': on his own initiative) allows for more availability of the Tridentine Latin Mass, a rite the document dubs the 'extraordinary form'. The document also attends to the situation of schismatic groups such as the Society of St. Pius X, that refuse to celebrate the "Novus Ordo" Mass established by Vatican II (Benedict XVI 2007, cf. Zenit, 2007).

The Synthesis of Fidelity and Dynamic:

While the *Ecclesia Dei* case applies to the liturgy and to a very specific and conclusive condemnation, the relevance of its principles is accentuated if we transfer them to the many points of convergence between this case and the Rosmini ruling: legitimate progress and diversity from organic growth; the living character of Tradition as interpreted by the Magisterium; the need for a prudent discernment in order to distinguish valid applications from erroneous, arbitrary and unauthorized ones. However, both these relatively recent Vatican rulings possess more than just a contingent worth: they also typify how the Church seeks to harmonise *faith and reason, the old and the new*.

From another perspective, these perennial problems can be reduced to the question: What is fundamental and what is not? There are certain essentials which the Church—even today—regards as beyond its power to change because it considers them to have been mandated by

Christ: such are the contents of Revelation—or the so-called *deposit of faith*—along with the entailed moral obligations. Expressing these truths in terms accessible to contemporary thought is the task of the modern Church; altering the meaning of these terms or relativizing their truth is not within the Church's domain. In non-essentials, both approaches are completely valid.

Pope Benedict XVI has remarked the confusion of these distinctions within the present-day Church. In 2005, forty years after the conclusion of the Vatican Council, the Pope asked: 'Why has the implementation of the Council, in large parts of the Church, thus far been so difficult?' In answer he traces within the Church the development of two contrary interpretations (2006a).

In the first place, the Pope identifies a *hermeneutic of reform*, 'of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church ... a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same ...'. Wherever this hermeneutic has been implemented, observes the Pope, the new life and growth foreseen and hoped for by the Council has appeared. He refers to the inaugural Conciliar address by John XXIII on 11 October 1962 as introducing this theme of reform in terms of a synthesis of *fidelity* and *dynamic*:

[The Council wishes] to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion: Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us [It is necessary that] adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness ... [be presented in] faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. (ibid. #6)

On the counter side, Benedict identifies a *hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture* which has frequently 'availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology'. It has caused confusion and 'risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church' by not following 'the texts of the Council but its spirit':

[The hermeneutic of *discontinuity*] asserts that the texts of the Council as such do not yet express the true spirit of the Council. It claims that they are the result of compromises in which, to reach unanimity, it was found necessary to keep and reconfirm many old things that are now pointless. However, the true spirit of the Council is not to be found in these compromises but instead in the impulses toward the new that are contained in the texts.

These innovations alone were supposed to represent the true spirit of the Council, and starting from and in conformity with them, it would be possible to move ahead.

Precisely because the texts would only imperfectly reflect the true spirit of the Council and its newness, it would be necessary to go courageously beyond the texts and make room for the newness in which the Council's deepest intention would be expressed, even if it were still vague.

In a word: It would be necessary not to follow the texts of the Council but its spirit. In this way, obviously, a vast margin was left open for the question on how this spirit should subsequently be defined and room was consequently made for every whim. (Benedict XVI 2006a:5)25

The Pope points out a further specific reason why a hermeneutic of discontinuity can *seem* convincing. The Council Fathers recognized that the Church possesses its own unchangeable constitution, but, simultaneously, they saw that it was necessary to break new ground by entering into a dialogue of 'openness to the world': they realized the need for keeping intact the *deposit of faith*, while giving that discerning "yes" to the modern age. This idea emerges in the Council's closing discourse delivered by Paul VI:

In the great dispute about man which marks the modern epoch, the Council had to focus in particular on the theme of anthropology [i.e the study of humanity, especially of its societies and customs]. It had to question the relationship between the Church and her faith on the one hand, and man and the contemporary world on the other. (ibid.)

In the context of this relationship, Pope Benedict favours the term, *modern epoch* (as more precise than the generic term, *contemporary world*), dating the commencement of this epoch from the time of Galileo. It was the several centuries of the modern era, continues Benedict, which formed the great anthropological questions that were ultimately addressed by the Council. Contrasting to the popular and partial conception of the Council merely as an instrument to modernize the Church in line with the 1960s and beyond, the Pope's interpretation places Vatican II within a more extensive past, present and future panorama:

The Second Vatican Council, with its new definition of the relationship between the faith of the Church and certain essential elements of modern thought, has reviewed or even corrected certain historical decisions, but in this apparent discontinuity it has actually preserved and deepened her inmost nature and true identity. (2006a online)

The effort to fathom the welter of twists, turns and facts to this point may have blurred the focus on Rosmini: the central object of this chapter. However, rather than introducing his system (as undertaken in the next section), the foregoing has aimed to consolidate Rosmini's standing, and

²⁵ Benedict XVI's address is of interest in its function more as an interpretative rather than authoritative papal document.

to consider the repercussions both of his case and of related issues in the broader scheme of the Catholic Church.

Rosmini's Philosophy

Born in 1797 at Rovereto in Northern Italy, Antonio Rosmini was raised in a wealthy family, his early life being notable for his intense application to the spiritual life and to his studies, such that, as Cleary relates, by the age of sixteen, the foundations of immense erudition had been laid (1992). Rosmini was ordained to the priesthood in 1821. Pope Pius VII's explicit assurance that a dedication to philosophical writing was 'the activity that Providence wanted especially from him' (Leetham 1957:283) confirmed Rosmini's resolve to persevere in his studies.

Rosmini's unfamiliar thought needs some introduction. Given his encyclopaedic written output, one baulks at attempting to condense Rosmini's thoughts to a matter of pages. Even his translators comment that brevity and conciseness are not his first priority! However, a definite thread unifies his work, and the approach to his demanding—at times, flamboyant and controversialist—style is eased by Rosmini's own summaries and reiterations of his central themes. Rosmini's *sistema filosofico* is expounded in his major philosophical work, the three volume *New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas* (*Nuovo Saggio sull' origine delle Idee*), first published in 1830 and revised towards the end of his life. His contribution to education is contained in its most condensed form in his *Ruling Principle of Method in Education* (begun in 1839 but never completed). Taken as a whole, his works attest to his aim of elucidating a 'conception of a complete encyclopaedia of the human knowable, synthetically conjoined, according to the order of ideas, in a perfectly harmonious whole' (1911 Online Encyclopaedia 2004).

As a scholar, Rosmini was conversant with Greek and scholastic philosophy, but also acquainted with thinkers of the modern age from Descartes to Hegel. Aquinas is given precedence in his writings, and during his lifetime, Rosmini began an Italian translation of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* as well as leading the study of this same work with young clerics in Rovereto. (Supporters of Rosmini claim that his writings shed light on Aquinas; elsewhere, those same supporters have been accused of sometimes making Rosmini say what *they* intend!)

The New Essay:

Rosmini presents his *New Essay* as an attempt to clarify and develop self-evident (but seldom contemplated) truths, rather than a search for new philosophical truths. He initiates his study by considering the perennial problem of the origin of ideas, asking: ‘What is the light of truth: that *mediating* light [quoting Dante] between intellect and sense that constitutes the very origins of our knowledge?’²⁶

Before answering the question, there follows a statement of the two principles governing his enquiry, which are a corollary of “Occam’s razor” (“Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity”):

First, in explaining facts connected with the human spirit, we must not make fewer assumptions than are required to explain them.’ Second: ‘We must not make more assumptions than are needed to explain facts’ (#26).²⁷

Rosmini aligns the above elaboration with three philosophical periods. First, *popular* or *infant* philosophy suffers from a deficiency of thoroughgoing observation. Just as many arguments may be undemanding in nature so *popular* philosophy ‘either does not grasp problems at all or has only a vague grasp of them; consequently, it explains them by concocting crude, confused hypotheses’ (#34). The first period Rosmini describes as being ‘new to problems’ (#34) and associates it with the pre-Plato / Aristotle period. However, he argues that sectors of modern philosophy have reverted to a popular mode, and he numbers Locke, Condillac, Reid and Dugald Stewart among those whose explanation of our understanding is defective because based on a ‘sensist’ philosophy: one which fails to explain how our senses miraculously become a ‘mini intellect’ capable of generating ideas in the realm of thought.

Conversely, the second period is that of *scholarly* philosophy. Having made some progress the philosophers of this period ‘have already seen some problems, but are as yet unable to explain them simply ... First reasons, which are always conjectural, extremely complex and involved, are welcomed and accepted by the impatient human mind which on the one hand has nothing

²⁶ Rosmini considered the answer to this problem not an exercise in abstract thought, but as being of practical application to society. In impassioned terms, he describes the impact of the ‘abasement of philosophy’ due to scepticism, and then proposes the necessity of a restoration of “true” philosophy.

²⁷ References to the *New Essay* are by paragraph number.

better to offer but on the other cannot endure a total lack of explanation' (#33). This period Rosmini describes as being 'new to solving problems' (#34), and he numbers Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, Kant and Hegel amongst those whose idealist explanation of thought is excessively elaborate. While Rosmini acknowledges the contribution of the 18th Century philosophers up to Kant in highlighting the problems inherent in the theory of knowledge, he considers their conclusions to lead to basic fragmentation, lack of certainty and scepticism. As such, he sees the progress of philosophy as impossible until the 'source of unity' of the different divisions of philosophy has been investigated' (Cleary 1992:15).

The third period—which corrects the defects and excesses in the previous two—is reached only when the former inadequacies are completed or simplified. This marks the most harmonious stage of philosophical speculation: the golden mean between opposing errors.²⁸ A philosophical system approaches perfection the more it is characterized—to use Rosmini's phrase—by 'simplicity and elegance': that apt and purposeful type of philosophical reflection, devoid of defect or excess, avoiding the extraneous or artificial. Rosmini's contribution to philosophical analysis satisfies the criterion of simplicity by admitting the least possible: it consists in positing one single truth as the source of all thought.

Judgement and Abstraction:

In considering where ideas come from and why they are found in the human spirit, Rosmini first examines two obvious—but demonstrably deficient—processes for explaining the origin of thought: *judgement* and *abstraction*.

When we form a judgement, we already need universal notions in our mind ... a judgement is merely the operation whereby we unite a given predicate to a given subject ... a predicate distinct from a subject always contains a universal notion. However, if the human mind cannot carry out the operation called judgement without possession of some prior universal notion or idea, how does the human mind manage to form universal ideas? (#42).

Therefore, if judgement can only begin through universal ideas, it is obviously impossible to explain the *formation* of universal ideas through *judgements*. We must suppose that some universal idea pre-exists all judgements in human beings, enabling them to judge and, through their judgements, gradually to form all other ideas. (#44)

²⁸ This corresponds with Ardley's account of the progress of knowledge: see Chapter One.

Abstraction enables us to form a common idea from a proper idea by stripping away the characteristics proper to that thought until only the common ones remain. For example, we think of a friend; if we systematically remove the individual, human, animal, vegetative, and finally mineral properties from our concept of this person, we are left with just the universal notion of his / her existence. Rosmini concludes that abstraction only enables us to trace back our thought to a particular idea—the possibility of *some thing*—that is already present to us, and which the process of abstraction has not generated, but has merely made more vivid to us (#43).

We now reach a point of departure from the Aristotelian account (upon which Aquinas' system is largely grounded). The Rosminian system aligns more with that of Plato, who considered intuited ideas to be the basis of thought. From the outset, though, it is highly essential to recognize that Rosmini stringently qualifies his agreement with Plato, insofar as he replaces the Platonic *world* of innate ideas with the existence of just *one* innate idea.²⁹ Rosmini now leads into his own explanation of the origin of thought with a second basic question:

‘How is the first judgement possible?’ (# 539)

We have just considered how every judgement—whereby we unite a subject to a predicate—presupposes that there must be a prior idea. In other words, if the mind starts as a *tabula rasa* (blank slate), what part of our self equates to the *tabula* that permits the first act of thought to be written on it? If all knowledge comes from our sense faculty which is subjective, particular and material, how do we account—asks Rosmini—for the mediation of this knowledge to the faculty of intellect, the nature of which is entirely different from sense?

He then traces the origin of our thought back to a single, simple source: the innate idea of indetermined being which is present to our minds as the light of our intellect. This idea of being then becomes the basis for our further (determined) thoughts. Rosmini interprets St. Thomas' light of the *intellectus agens* (activity of the mind) in the sense of distinguishing the *activity of the mind* from its *light*, explains Leetham. This is the foundation of the theory and while it is a

²⁹ Plato contends that our knowledge is simply a rediscovery of forgotten but fully formed ideas which we already possess in our minds.

controversial interpretation, not admitted by most Thomists, the number and force of the passages of St Thomas that can be quoted in its favour are considerable (Leetham 1957:291).³⁰

Four Key Distinctions:

In trying to determine the angle from which one should begin to assail Rosmini's system, the author himself comes to our aid. In the second volume of his *New Essay*, Rosmini elaborates his central tenet of the idea of being (to which we have just been introduced), and then, himself, proposes four key distinctions which form a synthetic summary of his teaching on the origin of ideas. He claims that we can examine and understand these distinctions only by carefully observing the fact of their presence in our own human nature; merely reading about the theory is not enough to establish its veracity.

These distinctions reveal the presence of two elements conjoined and united in the human constitution: that related to sense, constituting our individual, singular and particular selves; and that related to being, constituting the human personality whereby we are united in commonality of nature with other persons.

i. Sensation Versus Sense Perception

These, Rosmini defines as the two discrete elements from which our individuality derives. Individuality consists in the permanent feeling I have of myself, distinct from every other being: constituting the so-called *fundamental feeling*. The first act of this feeling is to give life to my body, and to feel it as identical with myself. Rosmini points out two modes of feeling.

³⁰ Here is one example of objection to Rosmini on Thomistic grounds: 'It is sometimes said that we have an intuition of being (Maritain) or an innate intuition of the idea of being (Rosmini). I do not subscribe to these views. The agent intellect (*intellectus agens*) possesses an innate formality for *apprehension* prior to judgement, and this is the *formality of being*. It must be presupposed for the very possibility of a judgment reaching out to the act-of-existence (*esse*). The attributes that Rosmini attaches to the "idea of being" really apply to this *formality of being*. Apprehension, or laying hold of a thing, is different than intuition. Intuition often follows upon and perfects apprehension, as in the case of corporeal vision, but this does not apply to being according to our natural mode of knowing. As Saint Thomas says, knowledge begins in apprehension and concludes in judgement'. (Kalb n. d.)

1. The *extrasubjective* (outside the subject) mode: Either I, or someone else, may touch my hand in a purely detached way, my hand becoming in both cases a material object of sensation. Here, my glove is considered mine in the same sense as is my hand.
2. The *subjective* mode: However, when I feel or look at my hand as *mine*, infused with my own life, I experience the individual identity of my body as belonging uniquely and solely to me: a feeling that is unreproducible in the experience of anyone else. Modifications in the fundamental feeling of my body constitute the basis of all sensation.

Rosmini argues that in every sensation we feel a modification of our organ of sense. Indivisibly linked to, but also distinct from this physical modification, ‘a perception of something outside the organ takes place in our spirit. We call this *corporeal sense-perception*’ (#740). For example, feeling our own eye when seeing (sensation) usually remains unnoticed by us, as our attention is captivated by the image before us (perception). But when an intensely strong light strikes our eyes, we then advert to the feeling of pain in the organ of sight itself. Rosmini concludes that we experience two things co-existently:

1. We feel the modified sense organ.
2. We perceive the exterior *agent* in a way compatible with our feeling. This *perception* has nothing to do with the *sensation* of the organ; but the perception is so indivisibly joined to the sensation that it forms one thing with it so that one cannot exist without the other’ (#741).

The distinction is most easily observed in the sense of touch which, ‘phenomenally weaker [than the other senses], concentrates our attention more on the organ itself’ (#747).

Listing the main aspects in point form, we have:

1. Sensation:
 - in which particular feelable qualities, separated from the predicate of quality and every other abstract notion, are terms of our sensory capacities; these feelable qualities establish the sign to which our thought turns its attention ;
 - follows the innate idea of being but precedes judgement wherein the idea is joined to sensation, generating the perception of the existence of bodies (#454);

2. Sense Perception:

- is *extrasubjective*, (i.e., comprising all that is perceived outside the intelligent subject) in so far as I feel simultaneously an *agent* outside or extraneous to my organ` (Index:320;#740);
- in *bodily sense* perception, it is not the body which is perceived but a *passive experience* terminating in an outside agent (App. 3)

Rosmini reaches two crucial conclusions from this first of four distinctions:

- Sense perceives a being not in so far as it *exists* but in so far as it *acts* (425).
- Sense perception provides only the *matter* of our intellectual perception.

ii. Idea Versus Judgement

The second distinction is that between *ideal* and *real* being: that between possessing the *idea* of something and *judgement* of the thing's subsistence. Judging consists in uniting a given predicate to a given subject.

When our spirit forms the *idea* or *concept* of anything, we can possess a perfect concept of that being, with all its essential and accidental qualities, without *judging* that it really exists. This is sufficient to assure us that our spirit, when intuiting the *idea*, performs a different operation from that involved in making a judgement about the subsistence of a being (#402).

Rosmini illustrates with the example of our thinking the concept of a horse complete with all the particulars proper to its being. Imagining that we could en flesh a fully living horse—layer by layer—from our concept. Rosmini asks: Has my perfect concept `received anything from the real subsistence of the horse?` (#403). He concludes that it has not, because the independent nature of ideas means that they derive nothing from the real existence of individuals. *Judgement* functions only to persuade us that the thing actually exists. It is our second operation of thought and already supposes the *idea* of the thing. Because already complete and perfect, this idea does nothing to help us know about the real, actual existence of things, but presents them only as *possible* (cf. #407).

iii. Sense-Perception Versus Intellective Perception

Sense-perception has been described above. Intellective perception follows on from it, and comprises ‘a judgement whereby we affirm the subsistence of something—ourselves, or an external body—sensitively perceived. It is, therefore, the idea of a thing accompanied by the *judgement affirmative of its subsistence*’ or, ‘the union of the intuition of a being with sense-perception’ (Index:327). Often confused, these phenomena differ in so far as *sense* perceives *singulars* and the *intellect* perceives *universals*. Rosmini notes that ‘the term of feeling is always something particular’ with the consequence that, ‘Whatever is universal in the perception of bodies, must be attributed to the intellect, not to feeling’ (#962). The ‘general formula of intellectual perception’ is stated as: ‘Judging, affirming, being persuaded that a being subsists with its determinations’ (#536).

iv. An Act of the Spirit Versus Advertence to that Act

The fourth distinction is between ‘*an act of the spirit*, and *advertence to that act*, for example, between feeling and adverting to feeling’ (#1038), or, ‘the contradiction inherent in claiming as simultaneous the act by which we know something, and know that we know it’ (#551). Applying this is to the idea of being, Rosmini observes that *the act of intuiting being* is completely different from the act whereby I judge that: ‘*I intuit being*’ (#548). He recounts the experience of becoming so captivated by, enthralled or engrossed in something that we pay no attention to ourselves. Such self-reflection is only possible once we have “returned to ourselves” again and realise that we have been in a state of absorption in the contemplation of an *object* other than the *subject* which is *myself* (#550-551).

Outcomes of Rosmini’s Theory

These four distinctions are Rosmini’s explanation of what takes place within our ‘spirit’: the locus of feeling and knowing, and of our necessary subjectivity and objectivity. Summing up, Rosmini points out that sensation is *subjective* because it modifies a feeling subject: sense perception is *extra-subjective* because it is a sensation or feeling united to a real term: an idea is an *object*, or possible being intuited by the mind; intellective perception is *objective* because it is ‘the act by which the mind apprehends a real thing (something feelable) as an object, that is, in the idea’ (#417).

A celebrated Scholastic / Thomistic concept maintains that, “There is nothing in the understanding that did not first exist in the sense”. In Rosminian terms, however, ideas and sensations differ from each other ‘to the point of mutual exclusion’ (#437). This requires a revision of the commonly accepted interpretation of the scholastic position. Rosmini—never one to shy away from controversy—denies that the great scholastics meant to show sense as the source of all knowledge, but rather intended the meaning as: ‘Everything *material* in human knowledge has its source in sense’ (#478). He reminds us that sense only provides the *matter* of knowledge, while it is the intellect that provides the *form*.³¹ This area being one of the sticking points with Thomists, it is worthwhile conveying Rosmini’s concluding thoughts:

I have already explained what is to be understood by ‘everything material’ when I said that in all our ideas we think: 1. being, as the *formal* element of ideas; and 2. a *determined mode* of being as their *material* element. The meaning of the Scholastic dictum, therefore, must be: ‘The understanding cannot think a determined *mode* of being unless it is administered to it by the sense.’ (ibid.)

Granted Rosmini’s initial premises, a whole philosophic structure then unfolds from the smallest origin of innate, necessary, objective truth to embrace countless social, political, ethical, religious and other consequences. Being, as the light of our reason, applies to action as the ‘supreme moral directive’, summed up in Rosmini’s words: ‘Recognize being in its order practically, according as you know it speculatively’ (quoted in Leetham 1957:291).

This cursory overview—paring Rosmini down to a few of his self-stated essentials—does not begin to do justice to the corpus of his work. Space precludes a review of Gilson’s acute Thomistic critique which describes Rosmini as penetrating to the very ‘beingness of being’ (1966a); nor is it possible to explore avenues of reconciliation with the prominent Thomist, Maritain, who also speaks of our ‘intuition of being’ in terms redolent of Rosmini:

... the prime intuition of Being is the intuition of the solidity and inexorability of existence; and, secondly, of the death and nothingness to which my existence is liable. And thirdly, in the same flash of intuition, which is but my becoming aware of the intelligible value of Being, I realize that the solid and inexorable existence perceived in anything whatsoever implies—I don’t know yet in what way, perhaps in things themselves, perhaps separately from them—some absolute, irrefragable existence, completely free from nothingness and death. These three intellectual leaps—to actual existence as asserting itself independently from me; from this sheer objective existence to my own threatened existence; and from my existence spoiled with nothingness to absolute existence—are achieved within that same and unique intuition, which philosophers would explain as the intuitive perception of the

³¹ The last chapter showed this to be one of Kant’s conclusions.

essentially analogical content of the first concept, the concept of Being. (1952 ch. 7, para. 6 online)

With many indications of a contemporary revival, it is beyond doubt that Rosmini will become more widely recognized and better understood as his thought now disseminates both outside Italy and his own religious congregation. Rosmini offers insights that come from the vantage point of his living in a crucial period of intellectual and ecclesiastical history. Even his sometime obscurity may have allowed him to emerge opportunely to make a key contribution to the better understanding of ourselves, and the era in which we live.

Postscript:

On the 26th of June 2006, in his first official action as pontiff in favour of Rosmini, Pope Benedict authorized the publication of the Decree of Rosmini's 'heroic virtue' (Zenit 2006 online). This significant announcement was made just days before Rosmini's anniversary, and marks an advancement towards the possible beatification and canonization of this 'universal witness, whose teaching is still today both relevant and timely'.

We add that since this last paragraph was written, Rosmini's beatification has come to pass. During the Mass of Beatification on 18 November 2007, the celebrant, Cardinal Saraiva Martins, said of the new Blessed 'In Antonio Rosmini one finds a philosopher, a teacher, a political theorist, an apostle of the faith, a prophet and a cultural giant' (2007). Given the Papal recognition that Rosmini has now received, his work is more than ever a fertile field for development.

Chapter Three: Aquinas

Introduction:

THERE is a dilemma inherent in the choice of the three main protagonists studied here. Their massive written contribution—not to mention that of their commentators—leads to the misgiving that by adding a single word to such an immense body of learning one will merely repeat something that has already been reproduced a hundredfold. What is more, to condense any one of these productive minds to a few pages presents a formidable challenge; reducing them collectively is akin to attempting a sip from a fire hydrant. However, the originality of this paper derives from the unique synthesis of these three thinkers that (to the researcher's best knowledge) has hitherto never been undertaken.

This chapter and the next constitute an examination of the nature and scope of Catholic education by focusing most fully, but not exclusively, on the implications of possibly the two most defining yet antithetical models of pedagogical / philosophical thought:

- (i.) Thomism, or the philosophy developed from the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274);
- (ii.) Experimentalism, Instrumentalism, or Pragmatism developed by John Dewey (1859-1952).

Until the early 1960's an abundance of Catholic educational commentaries that were pro-Aquinas and contra-Dewey issued forth. This thesis too follows the choice of the two main protagonists in these earlier commentaries, but with a radical departure from the previous theme: here, the rationale is that *both* philosophers—although each representing an opposite aspect of a fundamental dichotomy in educational thinking—are now found to be present in sectors of Catholic theory and practice. Also constituting a new note in this debate is the incorporation of a third participant:

- (iii.) Antonio Rosmini (with whose principles we are now somewhat acquainted).

As such, the focus solely on the sphere of Catholic education forms a major delimitation of this study—although it is anticipated that the research findings arrived at here would have also a

wider application to many facets of education. Given this starting point, Chapters Three and Four will attempt to justify the choice of two such divergent philosophers.

That the medieval philosopher and the twentieth century educationalist represent two key protagonists in the history of pedagogical thought is borne out manifestly in the literature. Donohue (1968:18) observes that in the United States from ‘...1940 to 1960 the philosophy of education of the up-to-date Catholic teacher was likely to be thought of by himself and his colleagues as Thomistic, as much as secular humanists were presumed to follow Dewey’. Gulley (1964) notes two opposite and apparently irreconcilable analyses of the teaching/learning situation precisely in Aquinas and Dewey, while Spangler (1983) devotes her volume, *Principles of Education: A Study of Aristotelian Thomism Contrasted with Other Philosophies*, to illuminating the differences between the two. In *Education at the Crossroads* the Thomist, Maritain, specifies the pragmatism of Dewey as an ‘ideological system’ whose historical impact upon culture ‘... will naturally lead to a stony positivist or technocratic denial of the objective value of any spiritual need’ (Maritain 1974b:115).

In turn, Dewey singled out the scholastic method of dialectic and logic—with its learned literary language—as beyond the grasp of the ordinary person. He acknowledged scholasticism as efficient in transmitting an authoritative body of ready-made or received truths—comparing this to modern methods that rely on textbooks and the principle of authority. But Dewey fundamentally opposed any such schemes, contrasting them with his system of discovery and inquiry that aims to comprehend nature and contemporary society (cf. Dewey 1961:280).

Having outlined the general direction of these chapters, we now turn to St Thomas.

The Popes, Aquinas and Education:

Since the 1300’s, Aquinas—although considerably fallen from grace within certain contemporary Catholic circles—has been titled the *Common Doctor* (i.e., universal teacher) *of the Church*. Over the centuries, the perennial value and importance of St Thomas’ teaching has been consistently reaffirmed and ratified by both the Magisterium of the Church and numerous popes. However, this long history has also witnessed periods of waning and waxing opinion in favour of Thomistic thought. Such occurred in the nineteenth century, when, after a time of neglect and disuse, a surge of renewed interest ushered in the so-called *Neo-Thomistic* revival.

Here, we will confine attention to this most recent age of Thomism (which arguably extends to the present day) and consider certain highlights of this revival as they pertain to education.

The pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903) was notable for giving ‘fresh impetus’ to the Thomistic movement that had been newly initiated in Italy (Coppleson 1961:238). This was largely attributable to the Encyclical, *Aeterni Patris* (1879), which Leo later and more descriptively subtitled: *On the Restoration in Catholic Schools of Christian Philosophy According to the Mind of the Angelic Doctor Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Cessario 1999 online). In this (the first Encyclical ever to be devoted entirely to philosophy), Aquinas is characterized as collecting, ordering and embellishing the doctrines (hitherto ‘like the scattered members of a body’) of the early Fathers and Doctors of the Church:

Philosophy has no part which he did not touch finely at once and thoroughly; on the laws of reasoning, on God and incorporeal substances, on man and other sensible things, on human actions and their principles, he reasoned in such a manner that in him there is wanting neither a full array of questions, nor an apt disposal of the various parts, nor the best method of proceeding, nor soundness of principles nor strength of argument, nor clearness and elegance of style, nor a facility for explaining what is abstruse. (: #17)

The Pope also named Thomas Aquinas the model for teachers and students by declaring him the patron of *all* Catholic schools of every type.

The following pontificates solidly maintained this so-called *Neo-Thomistic* progression, a noteworthy educational contribution being made in 1914 when Pope St Pius X declared A *Decree of Approval of Some Theses Contained in the Doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas and Proposed to the Teachers of Philosophy* to ‘clearly contain the principles and major propositions’ of Aquinas (Sacred Congregation of Studies:1).³² Compiled by Catholic philosophers and intended to serve as a pedagogical and evaluative tool, the twenty-four theses summarise in a few pages the central tenets of Thomism—responding to the Pope’s call (in *Doctoris Angelici*) that these teachings be held in all schools of philosophy.

Also significant for Catholic teachers is a letter commemorating the seventh centenary (in 1974) of the saint’s death, where—from among his own various Aquinian pronouncements—Paul VI singled out a passage identifying the saint’s contribution precisely to the mission of education:

³² The movement was taken up and augmented by lay scholars such as Gilson, Maritain and the non-Catholic, Mortimer Adler—all of whom made an impact in America—and, in Australia, Rev. Dr. Woodberry, who founded the Aquinas Academy (now named *The Centre for Thomistic Studies*.)

As far as We Ourselves are concerned, it will be enough to quote ... the following words which We spoke on one occasion: 'Those whose function it is to teach ... should listen reverently to the Doctors of the Church, St. Thomas chief among them. So great is the genius of the Angelic Doctor, so unalloyed his love of truth, and so profound his wisdom in penetrating, shedding light on and unifying among themselves even the loftiest truths, that his teaching is a most effective means not only of safeguarding the foundations of the faith but also of promoting its development along secure, healthy and profitable lines. (1974 #24)

Vatican II and the Status of St Thomas:

This quick survey has sketched out a continued tradition of papal approval for St Thomas. But what of his overall post-Vatican II standing? We should begin by noting that the Second Vatican Council *twice* referred to St. Thomas in the context of education: a matter of high significance, according to de Torre:

...the Church has consistently regarded [Aquinas] as her universal doctor, down to the recent II Vatican Council (1962-65), which took the unprecedented step, for an ecumenical council of the Church, of mentioning him by name in this respect in two of its official documents: the Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatam totius*, no. 16) and the Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum educationis*, no. 10). (1989:xxv-xxvi)³³

By so interlinking St Thomas with priestly, tertiary and school education, the Council made a statement that has far-reaching ramifications. This is instanced by Pope John Paul II's assertion that the recommendations of the Council regarding 'the study of philosophy required of candidates for the priesthood ... have implications for Christian education as a whole' (1998b #60). Why such implications? The answer can only be that the nature of formation received by priests (as Church leaders) exercises a direct bearing upon the make-up of the Church at large—from theologians, to religious brothers and nuns, to Catholic teachers and to the laity in general.

Similarly, the revised *Code of Canon Law* (1983) stipulates that the theological formation of students for the priesthood is to be based on Scripture and Tradition, 'with St. Thomas in particular as their teacher' (The Canon Law Society Trust Can. 252 §3). Updated in line with Vatican II, the new *Code* replaces the previous 1917 version, and by functioning as 'the

³³ This summation is also reinforced in the words of Paul VI: 'This was the first time an Ecumenical Council had recommended an individual theologian, and St. Thomas was the one deemed worthy of the honor' (quoted in Casin 1977:144).

Church's fundamental legislative document', it has 'the force of law for the whole Latin Church' (ibid.:xiii; xv).

However, there is a counter side to the Thomistic debate, because the Church's recommendations have been greeted with a certain hesitation. John Paul's 1998 encyclical, *Faith and Reason*, adverted to this situation and specifically related it to 'the years after the Second Vatican Council'. The Pope reflected that, 'If it has been necessary from time to time to intervene on this question, to reiterate the value of the Angelic Doctor's [Aquinas'] insights and insist on the study of his thought, this has been because the Magisterium's directives have not always been followed with the readiness one would wish' (1998b #61).

The element of tension between the attitude of the Magisterium and that of some scholars raises what de Torre calls the 'academic question, compounded by factional rivalries, as to the meaning of the Church advocacy of the doctrine of Aquinas' (1989:312) We can begin to weigh up this question by looking at a section of the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on Priestly Formation*, the text of which runs:

Philosophical subjects should be taught in such a way as to lead the students gradually to a solid and consistent knowledge of man, the world and God. The students should rely on that philosophical patrimony which is forever valid, but should also take account of modern philosophical studies, especially those which have greater influence in their own country, as well as recent progress in the sciences. Thus, by correctly understanding the modern mind, students will be prepared to enter into dialogue with their contemporaries. (1965b #15)

In *St. Thomas Aquinas and Education* the Jesuit writer, Donohue, observes that the decree here mentions only *a philosophical patrimony* rather than St. Thomas himself (1968:18). In this he sees an opportunity to split Catholic educationalists into two camps: *Maximalists*, who recognize Thomas as the official Catholic philosopher; and *Minimalists*, who merely recognize him as a reliable Christian thinker. (Donohue claims that the minimalist view prevails.) This seemingly measured, far from radical interpretation fails to take account of some important considerations that are typically overlooked by those who query the status of Thomism in the post-Conciliar period.

In the first place, Donohue errs by broadening his definition of the *perennially valid philosophy* beyond that expressly stated in the *Decree*, which gives a definition that is demonstrably in continuity with Tradition. When directing that the training of priests be based on 'the philosophical patrimony, which is forever valid', the *Decree* defines this phrase via a footnote

reference to *Humani Generis*. In this Encyclical Pius XII substantially identified the same phrase with ‘the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor’: a philosophy the same Pope acknowledges as ‘singularly pre-eminent’ in making students aware of ‘the genuine validity of human knowledge, the unshakeable metaphysical principles of sufficient reason, causality and finality, and finally the mind’s ability to attain certain and unchangeable truth’ (#48-50 quoted in Morel de la Prada 1996:3)

In the second place, attempting—as Donohue does—to style post-Conciliar Thomism in terms of its extreme manifestations can, at best, only make for an incomplete representation of the whole picture. But the value of his conclusions is that they portray either of the two stances to which the modern Catholic educator may be tempted to default. At the same time, both positions miss the point of what the Church is actually saying.

The *Maximalist* claim is invalid because there are no ‘official’ philosophers. Pope Paul VI has this to say: ‘The Church has moreover shown a preference for the teaching of St. Thomas by declaring it to be her own’; but note that he adds, ‘this is not at all to say that one may not follow another school recognized by the Church’ (1974:143-144). And in *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II has this to say about *Christian philosophy*: ‘In itself, the term is valid, but it should not be misunderstood: it in no way intends to suggest that there is an official philosophy of the Church, since the faith as such is not a philosophy’ (1998b:n. 76).³⁴ The rôle accorded to the philosophy of St. Thomas by the Church is well summarized as that of ‘preference which is not exclusivism, for were it so, it would be the very negation of Thomism’ (Morel de la Prada, op. cit.).

The *Minimalist* claim is met in an address on the hundredth anniversary of Leo XIII’s *Aeterni Patris*, where John Paul II considers significant that before the *Decree on Priestly Formation* mentions the need for teaching to take into account contemporary philosophical investigations, it first requires that studies should be based on the perennially valid philosophical heritage (1979: #5)—as defined above. The Pope then reinforces his theme by linking this *Decree* with the second of the Council’s educational documents, which expressly points back to Aquinas:

In the *Declaration on Christian Education* we read: ‘By a careful attention to the current problems of these changing times and to the research being undertaken, the

³⁴ Nonetheless, Cessario notes that although *Fides et Ratio* ‘enforces no allegiance’ to any specific philosophical theses, it does in effect ‘condemn those intellectual positions that faithful adherence to Aquinas inhibits’ (Cessario 1999:8).

convergence of faith and reason in the one truth may be seen more clearly. This method follows the tradition of the doctors of the Church and especially St. Thomas Aquinas' (n. 10; Flannery, p. 735). The words of the council are clear: the Fathers saw that it is fundamental for the adequate formation of the clergy and of Christian youth that it preserve a close link with the cultural heritage of the past, and in particular with the thought of St. Thomas; and that this, in the long run, is a necessary condition for the longed-for renewal of the Church. (ibid.)

These Magisterial pronouncements (which form just a representative sample of a whole body of such texts) firmly advocate Aquinas as more than a philosophical *first among equals*, or a *reliable Christian thinker*. An article entitled *A perennially valid and Christian philosophy: Why the Church gives St. Thomas primacy of place in Catholic education* argues that Thomism be retained in today's overall educational scheme because '...when popes, generation after generation, put something on the category of primacy or first thing, we should leave it there. The general crisis we currently experience in the Church can largely be traced to an unwillingness to do this' (Morel de la Prada 1996:2-3).

Vatican II, Thomism and the Continuity of Tradition:

But the pervasiveness of Thomism goes deeper than recommendations in its favour; there is considerable evidence that an extant Thomistic background is widely pre-supposed in ecclesiastical (and particularly Conciliar) formulations.³⁵ In this regard, Cessario notes:

It would be impossible to understand the debates and documents of the Second Vatican Council without acquaintance with the principal theses that discussions influenced by Aquinas had developed over the course of nearly seven centuries (1999:27-32).

This notion of an underlying Thomistic basis parallels the quite striking earlier thought of Pope St Pius X, who, in his Encyclical, *Doctoris Angelici*, advised that:

If such [Thomistic] principles are once removed or in any way impaired, it must necessarily follow that students of the Sacred Sciences will ultimately fail to perceive so much as the meaning of the words in which the Dogmas of Divine Revelation are proposed by the Magisterium of the Church. (quoted in Albers 1981:107)

With these comments in view, we can better understand John Paul's concerns regarding 'the problem of the enduring validity of the conceptual language used in Conciliar definitions', because of the 'scant consideration' accorded to speculative theology, the 'disdain' for classical

³⁵ An instance has been quoted on the previous page.

philosophy, and the ‘abandonment’ of the traditional terminology which derives from these disciplines and in which the understanding of faith and formulations of dogma have been drawn (1998b: #55&96).

At this stage comes a slight deviation from our topic, in order to clarify some points about the nature, authority and validity of the Church’s teaching which, when misunderstood, can lead to manifold confusions.³⁶ Simply stated, the Church maintains that, as the Body of Christ, it is *one* and remains at the service of the *one truth*. Therefore, the Church cannot be divided into pre- and post-Vatican II incarnations: whatever has been taught and upheld by the Magisterium—be it centuries ago—still applies unless it is modified or revoked. Importantly, most historical revisions are *additive*: they normally do not cancel previous decisions.

This leads into a topical area, because of the incidence of historically verifiable but contradictory Church rulings—especially papal injunctions (whether stipulating a liturgical form, restricting the reading of the Bible to saintly scholars, or specifying who may incur damnation and for what) couched in threatening phraseology:

- “It shall be unlawful henceforth and forever throughout the Christian world ...
- We order and enjoin under pain of Our displeasure that nothing be added ... nothing omitted therefrom, and nothing whatsoever altered therein;
- ... it shall be excommunication ‘*latae sententiae*’ and all other penalties at Our discretion;
- ...should any person venture to do so, let him understand that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God
- ...let him be anathema.”

As Forrest rightly asserts:

... much that was taught is no longer taught ... We need not quarrel with the claim that ... there has been continuity and that what has changed is the emphasis or the interpretation. But we must grant that there has at least been a change of emphasis and interpretation. (2001:13)

This is a challenging domain. Expressly, the need to accept the Church’s changing teachings may be thought problematic from an intellectual point of view. Gilson, commenting on formal

³⁶ These points relate to the essential marks of the Church named in Chapter One.

papal documents, however, suggests a way forward: ‘Only a Pope has authority to complete the teaching of one of his own encyclicals as well as that of the encyclicals of other Popes, since only a Pope has authority to write and to publish such a document’ (1955:21). Professor of Liturgy, Fr McNamara, takes up the same thread and lists some criteria for determining the legitimacy of changing papal emphases and interpretations:

- ‘Such norms are evidently tied to the circumstances of time and place and may be adjusted, attenuated or abrogated by future popes as situations change’: they ‘cannot be literally interpreted as binding on possible later actions’ of successors.
- ‘The strictures fall only upon those who act without due authority’, otherwise, many popes would have automatically excommunicated themselves.
- ‘It is for this reason that, except in matters of faith and morals, a pope’s disciplinary decrees in matters such as the non-essential elements of liturgical rites are never “set in stone” and can be changed by a subsequent Supreme Pontiff’. (2006 online)

How much more forcefully do these various conditions apply to the teaching of a Vatican Council. This argument was elaborated by Cardinal Ratzinger, when Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose mandate is to guard the orthodoxy of the Church and the purity of its faith:

... it must be stated that Vatican II is held up by the same authority as Vatican I and the Council of Trent, namely, the Pope and the College of Bishops in communion with him, and that also with regard to its contents, Vatican II is in the strictest continuity with both previous councils and incorporates their texts word for word in decisive points.

It is impossible to take a position *for* or *against* Trent or Vatican I. Whoever accepts Vatican II, as it has clearly expressed and understood itself, at the same time accepts the whole binding tradition of the Catholic Church, particularly also the two previous councils...It is likewise impossible to decide *in favor* of Trent and Vatican I, but *against* Vatican II. Whoever denies Vatican II denies the authority that upholds the other two councils and thereby detaches them from their foundation (1985:28).

Granted, then, the connectedness of Vatican II with the previous tradition of the Church, and given the position of St Thomas within that tradition, it follows that Thomistic teaching forms one of its indispensable and non-negotiable elements, as well as being unequivocally acclaimed, recognized and recommended as compatible with contemporary Catholic formation. Plainly, the teaching texts of the Church do not have to be unnecessarily forced in order to yield a verdict largely in favour of the pre-eminent standing of Aquinas.

The Nature and Principles of Thomism:

I. Universality

Having ascertained a preferential option (but one that is neither *exclusive* nor excluding) for Thomism today, what are the elements of this philosophy that are most deserving of attention for educators and how do they apply to teaching and learning?

A starting point presents itself in the form of one particular trait that is consistently associated with Thomism: namely, its *universality*. Leo XIII wrote of this in his Thomistic Encyclical ...

The Angelic Doctor considered philosophical conclusions in the reasons and principles of things, which, as they are infinite in extent, so also contain the seeds of almost infinite truths for succeeding masters to cultivate in the appropriate season and bring forth an abundant harvest of truth. (quoted in de Torre 1989:330)

... while John Paul II applied the same theme to the education of youth:

The philosophy of St. Thomas deserves to be attentively studied and accepted with conviction by the youth of our day by reason of its spirit of openness and of universalism, characteristics which are hard to find in many trends of contemporary thought. What is meant is an openness to the whole of reality in all its parts and dimensions, without either reducing reality or confining thought to particular forms or aspects (1979).

The Church refers to Thomas not primarily as an authority but by way of the *methodology* he followed in his *teachings* and *principles*. The openness of Aquinas' approach has led commentators to regard his synthesis as amounting to more than just another philosophical *system* ...

Despite their whole-hearted insistence on the need for Catholic scholars to become imbued with the teachings of St. Thomas, the Popes ... are far from thinking that Thomism is a closed system that is unable to incorporate within itself any healthy new developments. Rather they tell us that St. Thomas' synthesis is abiding and perennial. The reason for this is that his teachings are based on reality, on the key notion of "being," so that everything that is real finds its place in Thomism, which can be continually enriched and augmented. For, as Pope Paul VI explained, "Having once made the universality and transcendence of certain supreme notions the basis of his philosophy (the notion of "being")...he logically refused to construct a doctrinal synthesis that is self-contained and limited. (1994 unpub.)

Forrest maintains that Aquinas avoids the misplaced confidence in the truth of one's own conjectures that besets other great philosophers—the reader getting the sense that St Thomas 'discusses difficult questions in order to find the truth, with all the resources he can muster.

rather than that he is developing a philosophical system attributable as his work and evoking canonical status for “*his*” system’ (2001:15). Properly applied, and when not reduced to the *formalism* that has shadowed the history of Scholasticism (de Torre 1989:295), the philosophy of St Thomas should not lead to a narrowing of thought but to ever-widening possibilities of future growth and development.³⁷ All this, for the fact that it is not a ‘compendium of knowledge encompassing the answers to all questions’ but a philosophy that is ‘as unfinished as the reality which it reflects’ (Allard 1982:3).

Authentic Thomism is always anxious to discover, acknowledge and integrate new truths. It strives to manufacture a key that opens, not closes doors ... it is a doctrine in movement and vital development ... above all it is an insatiable hunger and quenchless thirst for truth to be grasped and assimilated. (Maritain quoted in Allard *ibid.*)

(A.) A Catholic Worldview:

If the keynote of Thomism is *universalism* (in the sense of an openness to all reality and truth), then the educational manifestation of this quality corresponds to a ‘catholic’ (i.e., universal) worldview.

In 2005 the Secretary for the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE), the Canadian Archbishop J. Michael Miller, delivered an address entitled *The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools*—an informed and instructive commentary which is also a virtual compendium of the main directions mapped out for education in post-Conciliar teachings.³⁸ Miller relates how documents of the Holy See ‘repeatedly emphasize that certain characteristics must be present if a school is to be considered Catholic’, and he reduces these characteristics to ‘five non-negotiables of Catholic identity ... *Five Essential “Marks” of Catholic Schools* that identify the principle features of a school *qua Catholic*’. Among these, he emphasizes the necessity for schools to be *Imbued with a Catholic Worldview* if they are to furnish an integral education that systematically develops the growth of the whole person in their natural and supernatural perfection (2005c:3). A theme stressed by the Holy See is that the Catholicism of a school derives not just from the quality of its religious instruction and pastoral activities, but from its entire programme of studies: “‘Catholic’ is not just a label but a fundamental principle

³⁷ ‘Saving Thomism from the Thomists’ is a common catch-cry!

³⁸ Miller has also written two articles of a similar function on university education: we will return to these commentaries throughout this study.

informing its organizational, administrative and academic structure, its programs, curriculum, ambience, outreach and the formation of students' (Miller 2005b:22).

While the Vatican documents are in no way concerned with prescribing specific didactic measures, explains Miller, they do provide certain principles and guidelines which give the particular 'take' on reality that should animate the content and methodology of a Catholic education, and contribute to the 'Search for Wisdom and Truth' (2005:6). In this worldview, the person of Christ and the Gospel are primary and vital to the curriculum. But also indispensable to a fully human education are the moral and intellectual virtues.

(B.) The Theory of the Virtues

Miller briefly touches on the virtues and highlights wisdom as indispensable among them. An awareness of the nature and rôle of the virtues contributes to a better appreciation of their position in a universal philosophy of education. Redden and Ryan observe that, '[Aristotle's] classification of the intellectual and the moral virtues was accepted by St. Thomas Aquinas, and remains unchanged to this day (1956:233). (This classification, too, has been woven into the Church's own tradition.)

A virtue (from Latin *vis*: strength) is defined as a good habit or quality and a mean between its contrary excess and defect. Isaacs notes that 'Every virtue, except justice, has two opposite vices, one which is obviously its opposite and the other which looks quite like the virtue itself. For example: order—disorder, excess of order; diligence – laziness, working non-stop ... prudence—imprudence, negligence' (1993:17).

1. The Moral Virtues:

There are many *moral virtues* but all essentially derive from the four Cardinal (Latin, *cardo*: hinge) Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude. These have been redefined in modern terms as sound judgement, a sense of responsibility and fairness, self-control, and personal toughness (Stenson cited in Moore 1996:76).³⁹ The volitional powers of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude are the ends towards which prudent action is aimed. Thus, in

³⁹ It is the moral virtues that predominate in the 'Character Education' movement emanating from the United States (cf. Lickona)

the classical scheme, good action is firmly rooted in the rational, as opposed to the emotional or sentimental.

Whereas prudence, temperance and fortitude govern our doing in relation to the rights, duties and obligations we have towards ourselves in seeking to lead the ‘good’ life, justice is the one moral virtue that is directed towards the rights of others. The first three of these virtues merit little attention today, whereas justice is emphasized to the extent that it might be called ‘fashionable’ (Isaacs 1993:166)—the effect of this, according to Taylor, has been a narrow focus on *morality* in much contemporary thought:

This moral philosophy has tended to focus on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life; and it has no conceptual place left for a notion of the good as the object of our love or allegiance or ... as the privileged focus of attention or will. (1989:3).

Likewise, Adler contends that by overemphasizing justice to the partial or full exclusion of the other virtues, modern moral philosophy has replaced moral virtue with regulations:

The moral laws or rules of conduct that modern ethical doctrines substitute for the concept of moral virtue are exclusively concerned with right and wrong conduct toward others rather than the good that the individual ought to seek for himself (1988:259).

Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas both teach that happiness is achieved by living the good life through making the right choices in accord with our nature, guided by the virtues. For Aristotle natural happiness is the ultimate end or goal of life; for Aquinas, the goal is supernatural happiness *as well*.

In the Aristotelian/Thomistic sense, this way of living is the same (or similar) for everyone, given that we share a common humanity. Necessarily, the accidents, or external circumstances of individual lives will vary hugely, but the essence of our shared human “be-ing” prescribes only one recipe for happiness:

The one right plan for achieving happiness or a good life is, according to Aristotle, a plan that involves us in seeking and acquiring all the things that are really good for us to have. They are the things we need not only in order to live but also in order to live well. If we seek all the real goods that we ought to possess in the course of our lives, we will be pursuing happiness according to the one right plan of life that we ought to adopt. (Adler 1978:89)

Both philosophers make a clear distinction between *needs* and *wants*. Needs include such things as are necessary to life, for example, adequate health and wealth to sustain us. These are called *limited goods*, because, although necessary, we can benefit only so much from them, or have a limited capacity for them (e.g., food or sleep). They are means to other ends, not ends in themselves. But our natural needs also encompass such things as enable us to live well, or lead a fully human life, for example, learning, skills and friendship. These are called *unlimited goods*, because we can draw ever more deeply from them and less easily (or never) exhaust their benefits to us. Many of these goods are higher means or even ends in themselves, to which we should subordinate lesser means by cultivating prudence, temperance and fortitude. Needs here, are always seen as positively good; wants, however, may range from the good to the harmful.

One plan for living well is better than another to the extent that it guides the individual to a more complete realization of his capacities and to a more complete satisfaction of his needs. And the best plan for all, the one we ought to adopt, is one that aims at every real good in the right order and measure and, in addition, allows us to seek things we want but do not need, so long as getting them does not interfere with our being able to satisfy our needs or fulfil our capacities. (ibid.:90)

2. The Intellectual Virtues:

Less known, but seminal to the Thomistic theory of knowing, are the *intellectual* virtues. They fall into two groups:

- a. the Virtues of the Speculative Intellect, geared to *understanding* the things around us, or applying reason to human knowledge (speculative or theoretical thought);
- b. and the Virtues of the Practical Intellect, geared to *changing* the things around us, or applying reason to human activity (practical thought).

The three virtues of the speculative intellect are Understanding (*intellectus*), Science (*scientia*) and Wisdom (*sapientia*). They do not pertain to moral virtue as such nor do they make any

assertion about what is to be avoided or pursued, but are ordained to considering truth for its own sake.

Art and Prudence, the two virtues of the practical intellect, also have truth as their end, but here with a view to production, action or doing.

The educational system most closely allied to Aristotelian/Thomistic thought is a classical or liberal arts education, where the theory of the virtues plays a crucial role. Outside this system, we see a predominant attention given to certain virtues along with a correspondent downplaying of others.⁴⁰ Let us consider how the imbalance of such an exclusivist approach could be addressed by examining the intellectual virtues in relation to the liberal arts, and in line with the theme of universalist educational aims.

i. Understanding: Intellectus

The first intellectual virtue is Understanding; it relates to information and facts. Also called 'intellection, intuition or intuitive reason' (Brennan 1941:17), it is the most basic and necessary power or habit of the speculative intellect, in that 'it signifies the virtue of the intellect known as first principles' (ibid.). It relates to the mind's faculty of perceiving those ultimate, self-evident principles that constitute the very foundations of rational knowledge and action, e.g.: the principles of being and non-being, causality, finality, the whole being greater than its parts, etc. Understanding is the ordinary common sense knowledge possessed by everyone. It amounts to the use of reason "...spontaneously in an *unreflective* or *pre-scientific* way" (de Torre 1989:21). Newman describes the everyday operations of understanding:

First of all, starting from intuition, of course, we all believe without any doubt, that we exist; that we have an individuality and identity all our own; that we think, feel and act, in the home of our own minds; that we have a present sense of good and evil, of a right and a wrong, of a true and a false, of a beautiful and a hideous, however we analyze our ideas of them. ...None of us can think or act without the acceptance of truths, not intuitive, not demonstrated, yet sovereign. If our nature has any constitution, any laws, one of them is this absolute reception of propositions as true. (1870:167-169)

Pedagogically, the groundwork for this habit of understanding is best laid during the primary years, when '... learning by heart is easy and, on the whole, pleasurable; whereas reasoning is

⁴⁰ Although Dewey discusses *habit*, he fails to mention the intellectual virtues (Shannon 1996:68).

difficult and, on the whole, little relished' (Sayers 1947:9). The beginning development of the habit of understanding corresponds to the *grammatical* stage in the classical *trivium*.

The grammatical stage of learning is the first that follows the acquisition of the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Once your child can do those his attention should be turned to the "grammar" of each subject he studies. This entails using his faculties for observation and memory in each subject...This is what children do naturally at this stage; channel it into something constructive...Train the imagination to retain information: fill the memory with a store of rich and varied images. (Berquist 1994:6)

Constituting the first step in reasoning processes at all levels, understanding remains the constant starting point for intellectual activity at any age.

ii. Science: Scientia

The second speculative intellectual virtue is *science*—other terms for which are 'knowledge', 'truth known through demonstration' (Farrell, W. 1938:185), and 'the habit of conclusions' (Brennan 1941:32). It both builds and depends on the virtue of understanding: 'According to the Aristotelian and Thomistic concept of science as virtue directing the intellect to *certain* conclusions arrived at by means of logical demonstration, some fixed starting points must be known with certainty to be true. These indemonstrable principles are discovered by the natural virtue of intellectus' (ibid.:81). Science adds a *why* to the necessary *what* of the virtue of understanding.

Science goes beyond common sense, not by contradicting it ... but by reflecting on our knowledge and discovering why it is so, i.e., by looking for the true causes or explanations of what we know. (de Torre 1989:21)

In the classical theory of the child's intellectual development, the habit of science coincides with the emergence of a disposition to or appreciation for the construction of an intellectual argument (Berquist 1994:6). Sayers cites the student's aptness to '...pertness and interminable argument' [!] as the sign of readiness to pass to the second part of the Trivium, 'For as, in the first part, the master-facilities are observation and memory, so in the second, the master faculty is the discursive reason' (1947:12).

It is the virtue of science that is given an inordinate prominence in twenty-first century life and education. Redden and Ryan remark that '... modern times have stressed out of all proportion the second intellectual virtue, namely, knowledge (science) and have excluded the other two' (Redden & Ryan 1956:234).

Similarly, Farrell states that ‘... the modern world has stopped at knowledge. And mere knowledge can be a disorderly, chaotic thing ...’ (1938:186). An excessive focus on science alone even tends to a disunifying effect on knowledge itself:

Perspectives on life and the world, often of a scientific temper, have so proliferated that we face an increasing fragmentation of knowledge. This makes the search for meaning difficult and often fruitless. Indeed, still more dramatically, in this maelstrom of data and facts in which we live and which seem to comprise the very fabric of life, many people wonder whether it still makes sense to ask about meaning. The array of theories which vie to give an answer, and the different ways of viewing and interpreting the world and human life, serve only to aggravate this radical doubt, which can easily lead to scepticism, indifference or to various forms of nihilism. (John Paul II 1998b:114-115)

In terms of schooling, an over-emphasis on knowledge manifests itself as a disparate array of seemingly unrelated information. Sayers comments that ‘... although we often succeed in teaching our pupils “subjects,” we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them to think: they learn everything except the art of learning’ (1947:4). This outcome, she likens to a ‘jig’, or template, that is effective only when fulfilling its specialized function—beyond which it has no use.

The problem (and one that gains new immediacy in the information society) now remains as to how to effect in the educational process a restoration of ‘... the unity which saves it from dispersion amid the meandering of knowledge and acquired facts’ (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997: # 10).

iii. Wisdom: Sapientia

Miller (a member of the Congregation just quoted) responds that the other virtues need to be complemented by wisdom, the third speculative intellectual virtue:⁴¹

In an age of information overload, Catholic schools must be especially attentive to the delicate balance between human experience and understanding ... knowledge and understanding are far more than the accumulation of information ... [Catholic schools] aspire to teach wisdom, habituating their students to desire learning so much that he or she will delight in becoming a self-learner. (2005:6)

A synonym for wisdom is philosophy; the keynote of this virtue is order. This faculty—Thomistically, considered the highest science—orders and judges the conclusions and

⁴¹ While he is clearly invoking the intellectual virtues, Miller uses the lay terminology: *information* for intellectus; *knowledge* for scientia; *wisdom* for sapientia.

principles of the other sciences. Philosophy may be defined as ‘the science gained by the natural light of reason, of all things through their highest or ultimate causes’ (Kinsela?1978). Whereas the virtue of science relates to the ‘knowledge of things through necessary causes, the virtue of wisdom relates to the knowledge of things through ultimate causes’ (de Torre 1989:236).

Philosophy is a science, but of a unique type, since other sciences are always concerned with only *one aspect* of reality (they are particularized in their object), while philosophy looks at *reality as such*: it tries to understand the *ultimate* meaning of reality, of being, of existence, of life, seeking the ultimate explanations, the *ultimate causes* or first principles of reality. (ibid.:21-22).

Just as the truth of the conclusions of the virtue of science depends on the prior truth of the principles of the virtue of understanding, so the virtue of wisdom grows out of and develops the conclusions of science.

This wisdom is the frequently missing factor in the educational undertakings of our time. Its presence rounds out and gives a meaningful balance to thought; its absence leads to that fragmentation and confusion which are the hallmarks of an outlook that lacks a ‘sapiential horizon’ (John Paul II 1998b:143).

[Wisdom] is not satisfied with the immediate truth, as is knowledge; it wants the last truth, the last explanation. It is not satisfied to take a principle from some other science, it must go back to the very last and very first principle ... It should be the prime object of education. (Farrell, W. 1938:186)

At this level, we reach the high point of the liberal arts Trivium: the rhetorical stage. Here the learner is now ready to master an elegant and persuasive means of expression, but, above all, to focus on the inherent unity of knowledge:

The doors of the storehouse of knowledge should now be thrown open for them to browse as they will. The things once learned by rote will be seen in new contexts; the things once coldly analyzed can now be brought together to form a new synthesis; here and there a sudden insight will bring about that most exciting of all discoveries: the realization that a truism is true. (Sayers 1947:15)

The intellectual virtues are commonly listed only as those that have been described above. But there also exist the two Virtues of the Practical Intellect: Art and Prudence.

iv. Art: Ars

Art, or technique, is directed to *facere* (to make) and is described as ‘reason applied to making’ (de Torre 1989:237). It follows on from the speculative virtues because ‘... there can be no action without knowledge, no “practice” without “theory”’ (ibid.). Beauty or, at least, producing and appreciating well-made, useful or fitting things, constitutes the sphere of art. The practice of art is not just the preserve of the artist; the aptness to work well and the satisfaction of a job well done are innate in us all.

Although the less essential of the two practical intellectual virtues, art receives the greater stress in our society—as was seen to be the case with *scientia*. Its influence is evinced in professional excellence, sophisticated means of manufacture and technical perfection. The disadvantage of this pre-occupation with production is that modern labour often sacrifices true art to the commercially and educationally expedient.

v. Prudence: Prudentia

Unlike the virtue of art, prudence dictates that reason choose the best means to arrive at a given end. Called by Bernard of Clairvaux ‘the guide of every good habit’, *prudence* is unique in being the sole virtue that is numbered among both the moral and intellectual virtues. ‘It is located in the intellect, but the material with which it deals is distinctly moral material, namely human acts; prudence works on the acts of seeing, hearing, thinking, willing, loving, and so on’ (Farrell, W. 1938:188). As such, it is directed toward the concrete and practical, being concerned not only with right ends, but equally with the proper and best means to those ends. Isaacs comments that, ‘There is really only one motive for being prudent—the desire to make a decision consistent with the action we take to achieve our purpose...Prudence implies deciding to take steps to do the good. It is not enough to judge situations: one has to make decisions in line with those judgements’ (Isaacs 1993:188, 195). As an intellectual quality which is also directed towards action, prudence, or ‘practical reasonableness’ (Finnis 1998:118), embraces and directs both intellect and will; reason and character.

Prudentia, directing every virtue, embodies (so to speak) as an active disposition of mind the very meaning, force, and content of the moral ought. (ibid.:119)

While wisdom is the highest virtue, prudence is the essential moderator and commander of all the other virtues. Being directed to *agere* (Lat.: to do, from which “activity” derives), the end or aim of prudence is goodness or right action.

The Virtues Summarised:

The various virtues govern the basic divisions of all human actions: knowing, making and doing—and their correspondence to truth, beauty and goodness. The moral and intellectual virtues work together to form the whole person and, as good habits, they are capable of development and enhancement. We often tend to equate virtue, with moral virtue, but not all virtues need be moral *per se*; for example *science* and *wisdom* are ‘virtuous’ yet are not necessary to morality.

Understanding, science, art, even wisdom can be had by a man who is thoroughly bad...Not every theologian is a saint, not even every great theologian. (Farrell, 1938, p. 191)

While the intellectual virtues develop certain important capacities, skills and knowledge, it does not follow that they produce that ethical behaviour which is also necessary to life. Departing here from the Socratic teaching that knowledge alone guarantees uprightness, (and again rejecting a partial approach) Aristotelian / Thomism would add the necessity of those powers of the will—the moral virtues:

If man were a pure spirit, or if the body to which his soul is united were completely docile, he would only have to see what he should do in order to do it. Thus Socrates’ thesis would be valid, and there would only be intellectual virtues. (Gilson 1957:261)

Farrell (1938:189-190) takes up this theme:

The notion behind this idea is that since all human actions are acts controlled by reason, reason is the supreme power in the government of our lives, a power which has only to crack the whip to have its subjects jump to obey. There is something in this, but not enough. True enough, reason is supreme, the first principle of human actions precisely as human; but the command of reason is by no means absolute in its power. Over the spiritual, yes; but it has no command at all over the vegetative side of our nature and its power over the animal part of our nature is by no means the despotic power of an absolute tyrant. It is rather a political power that may at any time be upset by a rebellion, is frequently resisted and only rarely gets whole-hearted obedience. The appetite of man needs good habits, habits by which its activity flows along lines demanded by reason. The moral virtues are quite necessary, and as distinct from the intellectual virtues as intellect is from appetite.

II. Faith and Reason:

We now move from the general characteristic of universalism to a study of St Thomas' *principles* and *methods*. Chief among these is 'the golden principle' (Paul VI 1975 # 8) at the basis of Aquinas' whole doctrinal synthesis: namely, that *grace perfects nature* (or, that *the supernatural builds on the natural*). In the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas writes: ... faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected' (1998 I Q2 a 2).

While St Thomas identified the distinctions between these two different orders—grace and nature, the supernatural and the natural—he also highlighted their unity and complementarity. By extension of the same 'golden' principle Aquinas achieved what is (in the eyes of the Church) one of his most notable contributions: the synthesis of faith and reason:

By clearly distinguishing reason from faith, as is only proper, yet at the same time harmoniously linking the two, he preserved the rights and dignity of each. Reason, carried to its human heights by the soaring mind of Thomas, can hardly rise higher, while faith can hardly expect reason to supply it with greater helps than it derived from Thomas. (Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* quoted in Casin 1977:139)

The import of the Aquinian synthesis emerges only if the fullest meanings of these two terms are appreciated. The definition of *faith* is plain enough: it is the realm that centres on those truths revealed by God, and is unattainable to the human intellect, save that it is aided by this supernatural light. Theology is the vehicle that studies and clarifies the objects of revelation. (Such truths include, for example, the trinity of God and the divinity of Christ.)

The term, *reason*, encompasses a more extensive range of meanings. Most generally, it stands for any activity of the mind precluding a reliance on faith—depending, rather, only on the evidence and criteria of our natural powers of thought. *Reason* may mean philosophy: that natural wisdom (and adjunct to faith, or, supernatural wisdom) acquired by the labour of the intellect, and one time defined as, 'The science by which the natural light of reason studies the first causes or highest principles of all ... in other words, the science of things in their first causes, in so far as these belong to the natural order' (Maritain 1979:81).

However, there is a further usage of the term that lends a deeper meaning to the notion that faith builds on and perfects reason. Benedict XVI hints at it when discussing the dramatic encounter in the 13th century between Aristotelian thought and medieval Christianity formed in the Platonic tradition. In this confrontation, when

... faith and reason risked entering an irreconcilable contradiction ... it was above all St. Thomas Aquinas who mediated the new encounter between faith and Aristotelian philosophy, thereby setting faith in a positive relationship with the form of reason prevalent in his time' (2006a online).

From this it is apparent that while the term *faith* remains more or less constant in meaning, *reason* varies its sense in conformity with different epochs. Referring to the same encounter of the Greek and Christian traditions in the Middle Ages, Paul VI draws from this episode a broad definition of the reason / faith relationship. 'In its most general form', he explains, this may be reformulated as that 'between the whole created order and the order of religious truth and especially of the Christian message'. Paul VI succinctly expresses Aquinas' synthesis of these two orders as 'a harmonization of the world's secularity with the radical demands of the Gospel' (1974 38).

Additionally—but continuous with the above—Church interpretations invariably use the terms *reason* and *culture* synonymously.⁴² Miller's words, 'It is precisely the conversation between faith and reason, between the Gospel and culture, that the Catholic university must keep alive' (2006:3) are one such example. The same interchange of terms appears in the latest school document from the Congregation for Catholic Education:

From the nature of the Catholic school also stems one of the most significant elements of its educational project: the synthesis of **culture and faith**. The endeavour to interweave **reason and faith**, which has become the heart of individual subjects, makes for unity, articulation and coordination, bringing forth within what is learnt in a school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history (1997:n. 14) [emphasis added].

Miller summarizes this task as 'transforming culture in light of the Gospel', and he includes among the 'five essential marks' of Catholic education 'the integration of faith, culture and life' (2005c:7).⁴³ This educational theme is also the kernel of Thomas' *teaching, methods and principles* and constitutes a great part of his contribution. But how was this encounter mediated?

St Thomas was undoubtedly very bold in pursuit of the truth. He showed great liberty in dealing with new questions and the intellectual honesty characteristic of those who, while not permitting any contamination of Christian truth by a secularist

⁴² Vatican Council II defines *culture* as 'the cultivation of the goods and values of nature ... The word "culture" in the general sense refers to all those things which go to the refining and developing of man's diverse mental and physical endowments' (1965c:n. 53).

⁴³ (cf. Congregation for Catholic Education 1990:n. 34)

philosophy, refuse to reject such philosophies a priori and without examination ... He thus avoided the unnatural tendency to despise the world and its values, while at the same time not betraying in any way the basic, inflexible principles governing the supernatural order' (Paul VI 1974 #8).

Aquinas' way of doing philosophy and theology could therefore be termed a *reasonable faith*. The strength of his universal synthesis (which remains the model and ideal for Catholic education) becomes more apparent if we consider the effect of segregating or isolating its elements—leading to that exclusivism discussed previously. By depriving faith of reason (or vice versa) or by giving undue emphasis to either, both become enfeebled and impoverished.

Rationalism is reason without faith. In its etymology, *to reason* (from the Latin, *ratio*) implies a rationing, apportioning, or segregating of thought or observation into distinct sections or fragments; to rationalize is, in this sense, to disregard the whole in favour of a part. Extreme forms of rationalism include positivism and the various types of naturalism which exclude God from the world, with the consequence that reason 'is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being' (John Paul II 1998b: # 48).

The Church, in following St Thomas' dialogue with the world, sets itself the task of engaging faith with *the prevailing form of reason*; in our day, the latter is unquestionably science and technology. We have already examined how the virtue of *scientia* has risen to prominence in the modern era and how this *knowledge*—which may burden the memory without enlightening the intellect (Rosmini Serbati 1902:112)—must be complemented by *sapientia* (that *wisdom* that grasps the entire universe in a small number of principles, and enriches the intellect without burdening it) (cf. Maritain 1979:80). 'Otherwise, the immense triumphs of science and technology contribute to what John Paul II titles a *scientistic outlook*: a philosophical notion which considers meaningless all considerations other than those of the positive sciences; which replaces the concept of being with a pure and simple facticity; and where 'the morally admissible' is often equated with 'the technically possible' (1998b: #81&88).

Fideism (faith without reason) is an exaggerated and false *supernaturalism* which disdains the contribution of rational thought, and by stressing 'feeling and experience' runs the risk of faith 'withering into myth or superstition' (ibid.: n. 48). Fideism has also been characterized as 'using the principle of authority to suppress the legitimate demands of reason and the

development of the natural order' (Paul VI, 1974:n. 8).⁴⁴ By absolutizing faith, by over-extending the rôle of revelation and by mistrusting reason, fideism leads to an otherworldly outlook that is not consonant with a universal philosophy.

Although St Thomas believed that every analogy limps, there is one comparison that well illustrates what we have been considering. Taking the crucifix as symbolic of the whole mission of Christ, we then make a separation. On the one hand, we are left with the *crossless Christ*: an undemanding, sentimental figure who represents an emotional religion without reason; on the other hand, we have the *Christless cross*, an image of harsh, merciless discipline that lacks all humanity.⁴⁵

The twin reefs of fideism and rationalism correspond to this picture which Catholic education is called to restore to its fullness through a balanced understanding and application of Thomas' golden principle: 'Grace perfecting nature and not destroying it', explains Maritain, 'transcends reason in order to strengthen not to blind or annihilate it' (online). By distinguishing in order to unite, by analyzing in order to synthesize (cf. de Torre 1989:290), Catholic education—far from consigning the Catholicity of its enterprise to a course of religious studies tacked on to an otherwise secular curriculum—will aspire to the challenge of producing graduates who know how to harmonise faith and reason.

III. The Unity of Truth:

We have examined the matter of Aquinas' synthesis, but not the manner by which he achieved it. The keynote of his achievement stems from his perception of the unity of truth, summed up in a saying frequently quoted by St Thomas: *Whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit (omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est)* (1998:I-II, 109, 1). This principle led St Thomas to adopt an impartial view of truth; he neither disdained nor disregarded any helps that the natural realm offers to faith—a fact that accounts for his use of philosophical arguments (including those of pre- or non-Christian thinkers) to support his theological enquiry. John Paul II explains that, 'Thomas had the great merit of giving pride of place to the harmony which

⁴⁴ Fundamentalist movements that suppress religious freedom and human rights represent extreme forms of this kind of religious exclusivism: on a lesser scale is that Christian fundamentalism deriving from the tradition of *sola scriptura*: a term that is to be found nowhere in the Bible itself. Elsewhere, fideist notions have inspired heresy, misunderstanding and division.

⁴⁵ This image was invoked by Archbishop Fulton Sheen to contrast the predominantly materialistic western world with those nations that suffer under tyrannical dictatorships.

exists between faith and reason. Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, he argued; hence there can be no contradiction between them' (1998b #67).

From this there follow two implications especially pertinent to Catholic educational philosophy. First, there exists an intimate harmony between truths established on the physical or natural plane, and their corresponding fulfilment on the supernatural plane. This gives great confidence to the Catholic educational approach to secular studies. The validity of these studies without an artificial religious admixture is witnessed by the method of St Thomas himself. He has been described as first a theologian doing philosophy in order better to understand his theology—but he is no less a philosopher for that fact. Thomas could be said to be exemplifying St. Anselm's famous dictum: "*Fides quaerens intellectum*: Faith in search of understanding". Albers elaborates Anselm's meaning:

Faith telling the human intellect to do its homework. To get on with the job of initiating a proper investigation first on the level at which it is competent, and to come to grips with a reality, whatever it is, at its own human level, before willy-nilly dragging faith into it. (1981:166)

Second, if all truth is considered to be in unity, reason then becomes a legitimate means of dialogue in a pluralistic climate, and the basis on which to appeal to supernatural faith. To uphold the oneness of truth is to uphold the *principle of non-contradiction*, which states that an entity cannot simultaneously be and not be. This is a theme that greatly informs the perennial science-versus-faith debate: Thomistically speaking, the nature of truth is such that there can be no contradiction between or threat to either science or faith from truths established in either domain. However, the scientific perspective may tend to replace this belief with its opposite: the *principle of identity*—redefined by the Romanian quantum physicist, Niculescu, as the 'logic of the included middle' (2002). This is a position inadmissible to Catholic teaching when it is a question of essential matters.

IV. Being:

Most foundational to Thomism is its insistence on '... being as the ultimate kind of reality in the universe' (Spangler 1983: 32).⁴⁶ It is also the Thomistic basis of our knowledge. In the *Summa Theologiae* we read: 'The proper object of the intellect is common being or truth' (Aquinas 1998 I. 55. i) (a teaching that Rosmini strenuously applied). The centrality of being is a concept borrowed from Aristotle, but utilised by St Thomas as the bedrock of his philosophy after

⁴⁶ *Being* is named by Olgiati 'The Soul of Thomism' (1923).

contemplating an episode in the Old Testament. In *The Book of Exodus*, God appears to Moses in a burning bush and reveals His Name as *I Am Who Am*. Describing this encounter as the day that Moses entered God's university to do a course in philosophy, Albers continues:

When God revealed His Name to Moses, He did not give it in the theological definition of the Blessed Trinity, but in the philosophical definition ... In stating His Name as 'I am', God revealed to Moses that He is 'Being'. He is all there is. He is perpetual 'to be'. He is Absolute Existence. (1981:98-99)

For St Thomas, the Sinai revelation underwrote by faith the conclusions that were already in his mind. Note that it is the basis of a *philosophical* system that is being formed here. This is not to deny the presence of theological implications as well, but these are not now our concern. Rather, the significance of God's revelation for Thomistic philosophy is that it functions on the natural rather than supernatural plane, and is therefore reachable by the power of the human intellect alone—unaided whatsoever by faith. Concrete proof of this is evidenced by the fact that Aristotle's philosophy is founded on the very same basis—Aristotle having concluded as to the centrality of being through his own human reasoning without adverting to any supernatural revelation.

Translating this to our topic, we may ask: What is the *being* or essence of Catholic education? What marks the difference between a "Catholic" learning institution and its secular counterpart? Expressly, the one answer is: its *Catholic identity*. Deriving from the Latin *idem* (the same), *identity* is defined as 'The extreme case of resemblance; absolute likeness of two or more things in the respect in which they are considered ... (*Webster's New International Dictionary* 1913:1067).

Ensuring the genuinely Catholic identity of its educational institutions is named by Miller as 'the Church's greatest challenge' (2005c:8). This not unreasonable assertion is simply an educational response to the crisis facing the Church as a whole.⁴⁷ It, too, reflects the priorities of the Magisterium, as exemplified in John Paul II's 2004 message to the American bishops:

It is of utmost importance, therefore, that the Church's institutions be genuinely catholic: Catholic in their self-understanding and Catholic in their identity ... The Church's educational institutions will be able to contribute effectively to the new evangelization only if they clearly preserve and foster their Catholic identity. (quoted in Miller 2006 online)

⁴⁷ The Congregation for Catholic Education speaks of a contemporary 'crisis of values' assuming the form of 'subjectivism, moral relativism and nihilism' (1997 #1).

Miller traces the development of the relatively new, post-conciliar emphasis on Catholic identity to a precise historical event. The year 1968 marked a watershed in Church history, corresponding with the release of *Humanae Vitae*—the encyclical of Paul VI that effectively divided the Catholic world over the birth-control debate.⁴⁸ The flourishing Catholic dissent since then has necessitated the current preoccupation of the Church with re-establishing certain fundamentals as the unchanging reference points in an era of uncertainty.

Not surprisingly, of primary concern to the Vatican in all its interventions and initiatives in the sphere of education is the preservation and fostering of an institution's specifically *Catholic* identity ... In *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Council Fathers said nothing about the need to foster the Catholic identity of the Church's educational institutions. Only in the wake of the upheavals of 1968 did the Holy See begin to identify this challenge and seek ways to meet it. (Miller 2005a:7-8)

In modern usage, the concept being considered has suffered a literal “*identity* crisis”: the trend being to replace *identity* with a noun having an altogether different nuance: *ethos*—that is, ‘the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations’ (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* online). Typically, Catholic institutions (educational and otherwise—although, with many notable exceptions) favour *ethos* in their publicity and mission statements, while shying away from the unequivocal term, *identity*, that is preferred in Vatican communications.⁴⁹ Whereas the latter term inescapably declares two things identical, *ethos*—with its strong overtones of consensus within a community—can be construed to hold much broader interpretations. With this distinction in mind, Bishop Jarrett of Lismore, New South Wales, recently cautioned a commissioning of new school principals against letting the Church's faith and teaching being reduced ‘to a mere ethos’, or think of her living voice and tradition as if these were merely the sum-total of ‘what Catholics believe’ (2006:7).

A similar substitution of non-interchangeable terms has occurred elsewhere. Voices in favour of a democratised Church vaguely appeal to the *Church as community* when, in fact, the norm in Magisterial parlance is *communion* (Latin, *communio*): a term that invokes the sense of unity

⁴⁸ Australia's Cardinal Pell cites the invention of the contraceptive pill as ‘the catalyst for a social revolution everywhere in the Western world’ and as ‘significant in contributing to important changes in the Catholic community’ (2006 online). *Humanae Vitae* was the Vatican's unequivocal rejection of artificial contraception, an action regarded by the American sociologist, Fr Andrew Greeley, as the ‘major cause of disaffection in the American church’ (quoted in Hamilton 1981:17).

⁴⁹ When used without qualification, the common appeal to “Gospel values” is equally vague.

and solidarity which derive from a shared profession among members of a group. Whereas *community* may recall the same attributes, this word could also loosely apply to any assembly of disparate individuals as diverse as society itself. Key texts such as the documents of Vatican II, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* only ever use the more general heading in conjunction with a modifier—such as *Christian community*, *Catholic community*, *Ecclesial community*, or *community of believers*.

This very issue is taken up by Archbishop Miller in detailing another of the essential marks of Catholic schools—that they be *Animated by Communion and Community*. He does observe a new emphasis by the Holy See on the *community* (as opposed to *institutional*) dimension of its educational establishments. But he adds that in the Council texts the *community* dimension is primarily a theological concept rather than a sociological category, and that, increasingly, Vatican statements emphasize that the school is a community of persons and, even more to the point, ‘a genuine community of faith’ (2005c online). By placing *community* within the context of *communion*, Miller shows that the ecclesial notion of a *community* embraces more than the secular understanding of the term: a vital distinction amid clamours for a church governed on a purely consensual basis—a situation that would be inherently incompatible with Catholic identity.

V. Revelation and Causality

... it was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God besides philosophical science built up by human reason ... Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation. Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation: because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. Whereas man's whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that besides philosophical science built up by reason, there should be a sacred science learned through revelation.

These opening words of the *Summa Theologiae* (I, q.i. a.1) concern the indispensability of the concept of *revelation* as the means of coming to know God.⁵⁰ Supernatural revelation puts otherwise unattainable mysteries within the compass of understanding. For instance, in scripture God reveals such truths as human reason is unable to investigate, while even angels require enlightenment regarding those truths that surpass the angelic nature (1998: I, q. 57, a. 5, q. 94, a. 3, o. 3). But, according to Aquinas, revelation of natural truths is also necessary on the basis that most individuals lack the time, ability and constancy to plumb the depths of philosophy.

⁵⁰ See also *Summa Contra Gentiles* (I, chs 4&5).

natural theology and metaphysics requisite for a rational knowledge of God and the truths of salvation.

Following this logic, teaching similarly functions as a kind of revelation—albeit on a human plane. When the teacher simply tells the students a fact or directs attention in a certain way, students are saved the labour of having to investigate the whole matter themselves, and are enabled to arrive more expediently at an understanding that they may not have reached by their own unaided powers. *Disciplina* (learning by being taught and by instruction) is the name St Thomas gives to this type of education (Donohue 1968:59). *Instruction*, or *training*, differ, however, from *teaching*. As Hardon explains, ‘I distinguish teaching from training, for I say that teaching addresses itself mainly to the mind, and training to the will; indeed, the training of the mind is in order to motivate the will’ (1991 online). Teaching implies the virtue of *scientia* (knowledge, or the ability ‘to demonstrate conclusions from principles’ (Aquinas 1998:q.57, a.2)), teachers drawing upon their own learning experience so as ‘to help others arrive at the necessary insight into principles and then trace the logical procession of various conclusions from them’ (Donohue 1968:60). Teaching also implies the virtue of *docilitas* (teachableness, or readiness to learn) on the part of the student.

But Thomas deems this form of learning inferior to *inventio* (discovery, or learning by oneself) (ibid.)—a process that reaches its peak when, by an interior instinct, the intellect reaches conclusions via an almost suprahuman process. This illumination, we call *genius*—described by Aristotle as the manner wherein the mind is ‘moved by a better principle’ than is human reason, arriving—as it were—at ‘readymade’ judgements (cf. Woodbury 1965:11-13), and bypassing the usually necessary cogitations and deliberations (the ninety-nine percent perspiration) constitutive of human reasoning. In effect, acts of discursive reasoning are as distinct from acts of genius as the motion of a boat being rowed by laborious human effort differs from that of a sailing ship being propelled by the winds.

In contradistinction, the Deweyan model—disdainful of formal learning and authoritative teaching—restricts practice to just one aspect of those just mentioned: independent learning. Here we would seem to have the student almost singlehandedly choose, explore and solve the problem: a situation which presupposes an uncommon depth of student maturity and teacher expertise, and where the success of the outcome is only seen in retrospect. Cardinal Laghi, former Prefect of the Congregation for Education, remarks in the modern pedagogical outlook ‘a hesitation in the face of any kind of directivity or of setting forth proposals for what should

be done or how it should be done' (1995:4). Laghi sees this attitude as a formal barrier to true pedagogical communication. In turn, Shannon proposes directivity as intrinsic to our very nature:

The role of authority in a Thomistic theory of education, insofar as the authority is a source of knowledge, is linked to Thomistic epistemology, the starting point of which is that the vital and active principle of knowledge exists in each of us. This principle is the chief agent in education and actually accords well with the current constructivist approach to learning. (1996:50)

If the different modes of teaching and learning equate to a kind of human "revelation", then this paradigm of education is inseparable from the processes of cause and effect.

To truly know education—as is true of knowing any phenomenon—one should first strive to understand its causes. Basing himself on the classical definition, Aquinas enunciates four substantial causes: material, efficient, formal and final (cf. Clark, M. T. 1974:169). These four causes or factors follow a certain temporal order when they relate to practical or artistic pursuits:

Thus the architect...first draws up his plan [final cause], then the materials are purchased [material cause], the labourers begin to build [efficient cause], and finally the house itself takes on its definitive form [formal cause]. (Spangler 1983:12)

However, a specific temporal causal order is followed when the activity is outside the sphere of making and is instead concerned with knowing, speculating or philosophizing about an entity that already exists. De Torre enumerates this causality:

The first one is called the *formal cause*: it points to the essence of the thing, *what* the thing is. The second is the *final cause*: the end for which it is made, the end or purpose. The third is the *material cause*. And the fourth is the *efficient cause*: agent, maker, producer. So, these are the four: (i) essence or nature, (ii) purpose, (iii) stuff, and (iv) maker. And these four questions also indicate that this is the field of metaphysics, that is, the study of *being*, because the four of them point at being: what is the *being* of this? what *is* it? what *is* it for? what *is* it made of? what brought it into *being*? (1989:44)

As to the material cause, Gulley observes that, 'In discussing the material cause in education we can speak of the *remote material cause*, that is, the person who is being educated; and the *proximate material cause*, that is, the learner's faculties, his intellect and will (1964:12). Spangler specifically applies this to a philosophical treatment of education from the point of view of both teacher and student:

As one seeking to know or understand education, the student must proceed in the following order: from form to end to materials to agent ... the knower sees first the form of things, which, being the fulfillment of a plan, indicates to the keen observer that initial plan for the form being observed. Thus the one studying education must first examine carefully the human situation before him; that is, people with all their yearnings and strivings. From the voices that he hears, from the form of things, the perceptive thinker can then detect the end or plan for human education. Aware of this plan from the very nature or form of the people that he is helping, the student can then move to understand the type of materials needed and the appropriate agents to shape this material. (1983:13)

Aquinas likens the causal influence of the teacher in education to a farmer or doctor, who aids nature by striving for a desirable end, but cannot determine or dictate the path nature may take. For Aquinas, causality, truth, reason, faith and all other realities point to the hierarchy of being that flows from God on to creation—a universal concept in Aquinas being the principle of redundancy in the order of being: redundancy used here in the sense of a superabundant or diffusive redounding of influence by an entity of a higher order onto that of a lower order. This principle is evidenced in the order of the macrocosmic and microcosmic phenomena which surround us, as well as in that cosmos in itself which is the human person.

While, therefore, by a downward movement, there is a refluent upon and penetration of lower powers by higher, those of the lower orders are brought, by assimilation, to some participation in perfections above those of their own rank. (Brennan 1941:107)

In common with Aristotle, Thomism esteems the intellect or reason as the highest, and therefore, the governing power of the person—the rational animal (*Summa Theologiae*, I.12.1.c.). As such, the development of the mind or intellect is intimately associated with our highest happiness, which, for Thomas, reaches its culmination in the intellectual vision of eternal beatitude.

Conclusion:

These topics form the essential core of Thomism. Other central Thomistic themes have or will be approached throughout this discussion (for example, the way in which we gain and possess knowledge derives from Aristotle; the individual / person differentiation is dealt with in the Rosmini, Dewey sections and elsewhere).

Aquinas' theoretical ideas and their practical consequences have been superseded by more "fashionable" authors since Vatican II. However, Kenny surmises that, "This wind of

ecclesiastical change may blow no harm to Aquinas in secular circles' (1980:28). (Such change may even extend to the relatively new papacy of Benedict XVI, who has stated a preference for Plato and Augustine over Aquinas—at least as the latter is commonly taught).⁵¹ That Kenny's prediction may be realized in unexpected ways is suggested by this concluding report.

Shortly before being elected as pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger 'enlisted in his defence of Christianity against secular Europe ... the philosopher considered in the world of the German language as the purest secularist', Jürgen Habermas, who said in his essay *A Time of Transition* (2004) that 'Christianity, and nothing else, is the ultimate foundation of liberty, conscience, human rights, and democracy, the benchmarks of Western civilization. Habermas, who defines himself as "a methodical atheist", is a member of the Frankfurt School of philosophy'. The report quotes Habermas' confession that 'he is "enchanted by the seriousness and consistency" of the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, "the opposite of the feeble thinking that pervades current theology"'. Habermas writes:

Thomas represents a spiritual figure who was able to prove his authenticity with his own resources. That contemporary religious leadership lacks an equally solid terrain seems to me an incontrovertible truth. In the general leveling of society by the media everything seems to lose seriousness, even institutionalised Christianity. But theology would lose its identity if it sought to uncouple itself from the dogmatic nucleus of religion, and thus from the religious language in which the community's practices of prayer, confession, and faith are made concrete. (Catholic News 2004 online)

Indeed, if there are benefits inherent in Thomistic teaching, they deserve to be evaluated anew in our times: Aquinian philosophy should not be summarily discarded as the preserve of the specialist or historian.

⁵¹In the same vein, Rosmini observed that, 'Since St Thomas' day, all that has been done is to abbreviate or comment', producing students who are 'men of memory instead of men of thought' (quoted in Leetham 1957: 365-366).

Chapter Four: John Dewey

Introduction:

DEWHEY, whose system establishes the ‘extreme empiricism’ of the science model within education, lies squarely in the spheres of pragmatism and experimentalism. Why, then, include him in this study? The answer is that there is a traceable Deweyan influence in Catholic education, and so in the present context his inclusion is both reasonable and justified. One aspect of this Deweyan impact is detailed by Archbishop D’Arcy, in the Intervention referred to previously:

Three decades ago the “Experientialist Model” of catechesis was widely adopted throughout the English-speaking First World by Catholic education facilities and diocesan education offices, and in the texts they produced... In John Dewey’s immensely influential version, early education did not need to be tied to any specific *content*: a few direct experiences will suffice to develop the skills that children require ... Of course, Dewey was only half wrong: he was half right too, and brilliantly so ... But that other half is equally essential. It comprises all those things which you cannot discover for yourself, but which have to be taught to you by those who have learnt them already. (1998:1)

D’Arcy limits the focus to catechetics; equally important, though, is Dewey’s influence on the overall Catholic curriculum. However, before tracing these inroads and examining their degree of compatibility with the distinguishing characteristics of authentic Catholic education, the first imperative is that of gauging the extent of Dewey’s general standing today.

Although Dewey’s thought is no longer widely considered to be cutting-edge material, many research endeavours vouch for the immense and continuing effect of his philosophy on modern education. In 1990 the thirty-seven volume *Collected Works* of Dewey was published by the University of Southern Illinois (marking the completion of a work begun in 1967 by Boydston): a compendium of great value to modern scholars. Shannon attributes Dewey with positively influencing the widening access to tertiary education in particular (1996:201). Campbell states that today, many are led to Dewey’s thought via contemporary writers—including deconstructionists, post-modernists, followers of Rorty, Habermas, and so forth—who see value in Dewey’s careful discussion of themes such as ‘contingency and fallibilism, process and adaption, and the building of a democratic society in a world that is simultaneously building its own intellectual foundations’ (1995:x-xi).

Menand remarks that the end of the Cold War coincided with the sudden re-emergence of Dewey's ideas (such as his 'insistence on understanding antagonism as a temporary stage in the movement towards a common goal').⁵² The renewed study of these ideas appeals in 'an era when skepticism about the finality of any particular set of beliefs has begun to seem to some people an important value again' (Menand 2001:441). 'The current revival of pragmatism is complemented by a renewed interest in John Dewey and his philosophical and educational ideas', writes Maxcy (2002 online:1), and in one of the latest commentaries. Edmondson attributes the progress of American public education—particularly during the *last* five decades—to the 'incalculable' effects of the Deweyan legacy 'that only seems to grow more intense with each passing year' (2006:xiv).⁵³

Dewey: Where to Begin?

The bedrock of any philosophical system is its *beginning*. 'The beginning is thought to be more than half the whole,' stated Aristotle in his *Ethics* (I, 1098b), meaning that if the first principles are sound, so too is the ensuing thought, whereas faulty principles will inevitably lead to *logically sound but philosophically erroneous conclusions* (cf. Gilson, E. 1965). '...The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousand fold ...' continues Aristotle. 'The reason is that a principle is great rather in power than in extent; hence that which was small at the start turns out a giant in the end' (On the Heavens, I, 271b, 10 quoted in Spangler 1983)

So this examination should set out by asking: What are the initial principles or themes of this thinker? Edmondson discounts the secondary literature on Dewey as a fruitful source of this quest, considering the sheer bulk of these writings to have reached a point of diminishing return

⁵² The second summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe convened in Paris on November 19 1990 to proclaim the end of the Cold War (Britannica Standard Edition 2002a).

⁵³ Dewey is considered the founder of the progressive education movement, which translated his experimentalist ideas into educational practice. By 1905 he counted as a dominant voice in teacher education and training. Maxcy relates that historian, Henry Steele Commager, wrote of Dewey: "... it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that for a generation [of Americans] no major issue was clarified until Dewey had spoken" (1950, 100). Robert Westbrook tells us, "John Dewey would become the most important philosopher in modern American history, honored and attacked by men and women all over the world" (1991, ix). (quoted in Maxcy 2002 online)

Dewey's writings and ideals reveal the influence of his association with organizations such as the USA Humanist Society. He was among the founders of the first two professional unions of teachers in America: the American Association of University Professors and the New York Teachers' Union (Curtis & Boulwood 1977:467).

‘decades ago’, repeating Montaigne’s contention that, ‘It is more of a business to interpret the interpretations than to interpret the texts’ (in Edmondson 2006:17)

We turn, then, to Dewey in his own words. His vast literary output contains little of an autobiographical nature (Campbell 1995:38) but, fortunately, there are a few instances when Dewey makes a self-revelation that gives key personal insights into his main ideas.⁵⁴ At the age of ninety, reflecting back on his long career, Dewey gave a critical interpretation of his own writings, invaluable for elucidating his chief concerns:

Were I anonymously to turn critic of my own philosophy, this is the place from which I should set out. I should indicate that after insisting on the genuineness of affectional and other “tertiary” qualities as “doings of nature,” Dewey then proceeds to emphasize in his theory of knowing, as that is manifested in both science and common sense, the operations of transformation, reconstruction, control and union of theory and practice in experimental activity which are analogous to those involved in moral activity.

Dewey concludes by reiterating his message:

Without continuing this line of criticism ... I express my indebtedness ... for the opportunity to remove any doubts that may exist as to the direction in which I read the community of pattern which I find in physical and moral judgement. (quoted in Schilpp 1951:580)

54 As an aside, we include here some facts that show other dimensions of Dewey’s life, certain of them possibly give an inkling of the motivations behind this complex, unfathomable man. Commentators conclude that Dewey’s opposition to all things traditional veils his own rebellion against his mother’s unflinching Christian Congregationalism (Edmondson 2006:118-119; Menand 2001:237; Moran 2006:15). Menand relates that Dewey was named after his baby brother, John, who died after being burned in two consecutive accidents just over nine months before his elder brother was born. John (senior) had five children, two of the sons dying in childhood while on separate family trips to Europe. After the death of the gifted and beloved two year old Morris, it seems that as early as 1895 a light had gone out for the father. Dewey attributed the beginnings of his interest in education to his own children; he also adopted two Belgian war orphans in his late eighties when he remarried nineteen years after Alice, his long-time wife, died (Menand 2001:235, 316, 318, 437).

Unfortunately, two Deweyan documents of possibly immeasurable historic and academic worth have been lost: the first, from the start of his career, was Dewey’s PhD thesis⁵⁴ entitled *The Philosophy of Kant* (Campbell 1995: Ch. 1); the second, tentatively entitled *Naturalism*, was a ‘comprehensive text on philosophy ... the summation of his life’s work’, the only manuscript of which was misplaced by Dewey when in his nineties (Martin cited in Edmondson 2006:16). We could surmise that the autobiographical passages cited here furnish some clues as to what those missing works might have contained.

A theme to which he returns time and again is this very identification of the scientific (or the physical) and the moral. These themes hark back to a short autobiographical chapter (entitled *From Absolutism to Experimentalism*) contributed by a younger Dewey to the volume, *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements* in 1930.⁵⁵ Here, he traces the formation and progression of his own intellectual development and lists ‘four special points that seem to stand out’ (1962:2).

1. Philosophy and Education:

In first place, Dewey states that his philosophy orbits around educational considerations. He describes ‘the importance that the practice and theory of education’ had for him, naming *Democracy and Education* as the work that most fully expounded his thought (but observes that it was teachers rather than philosophers who read it).⁵⁶

I have wondered whether such facts signified that philosophers in general, although they are themselves usually teachers, have not taken education with sufficient seriousness for it to occur to them that any rational person could actually think it possible that philosophizing should focus about education as the supreme human interest in which, moreover, other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head. At all events, this handle is offered to any subsequent critic who may wish to lay hold of it. (1962:23)

Some critics have indeed laid hold of this handle. At a time when Deweyan influence was at a peak, Hardon wrote:

It is unfortunate that so many studies on Dewey have concentrated on his pedagogy, ignoring the fact that he was primarily a philosopher whose interest in education, on his own confession, was a matter of practical efficiency. He was simply using education as the most effective instrument for putting his principles of philosophy into living practice. (1952:3)

Edmondson, too, notes that education became for Dewey the means by which to make philosophy useful: ‘... it is in his educational thought that all the dimensions of his philosophy intersect ... for Dewey, all philosophy is, in a sense, educational philosophy, because it is only in education that all branches of philosophy find their consummation’. (2006:5-6)

⁵⁵ George Adams, the editor of this volume, subsequently referred to this autobiographical ‘fragment’ by Dewey as ‘perhaps the most succinct and revealing statement of his intellectual development yet to appear’, and as ‘the best key to understanding some of Dewey’s otherwise notorious obscurity of thought’ (quoted in Hardon 1952:6).

⁵⁶In *Democracy and Education* (1916) he wrote: ‘The most penetrating definition of philosophy which can be given ... is that it is the theory of education in its most general phases’ (1961:331).

2. Instrumentalism and Dualities:

The second point concerns *instrumentalism* (the name Dewey gave to his own philosophy) as the means to effecting his self-proclaimed aim: of dispensing entirely with all dualities in thought and education, in theory and practice—and especially the dichotomy between science and morals. Dupuis goes so far as to claim that ‘Dewey’s denial of the validity of all kinds of dualism is the touchstone of his educational philosophy’ (1966:118). Dewey describes the legacy of his intellectual upbringing as a ‘painful oppression’ due to the prevalence of ‘divisions by way of isolation of self from the world, of soul from body, of nature from God’ (1962: 19). Then, in impassioned terms, he identifies the prime duality that concerned him:

... as my study and thinking progressed, I became more and more troubled by the intellectual scandal that seem to me involved in the current (and traditional) dualism in logical standpoint and method between something called “science” on the one hand and something called “morals” on the other. I have long felt that the construction of a logic, that is, a method of effective inquiry, which would apply without abrupt breach of continuity to the fields designated by both of these words, is at once our needed theoretical solvent and the supply of our greatest practical want. This belief has had much more to do with the development of what I termed, for lack of a better word, “instrumentalism”, than have most of the reasons that have been assigned. (ibid.:23)

He tells of the ‘immense release’ and ‘liberation’ unleashed upon him by his discovery of ‘Hegel’s synthesis of subject and object, matter and spirit, the divine and the human’ (ibid). However, the influence of the sociologist, Jane Addams, would later lead Dewey to redevelop the Hegelian synthesis to the point where he reflected that,

I can see that I have always been interpreting the [he wrote “Hegelian,” but crossed it out] dialectic wrong end up—the unity as the reconciliation of opposites, instead of the opposites as the unity in its growth, and thus translated the physical tension into a moral thing. (from a letter to Alice Dewey, October 1894, quoted in Menand 2001:313)

But Dewey breaks his own rule and violates his own standard: despite his stated aim of abandoning all dualities, he tenaciously (and unwittingly?) clings to *one* duality that permeates his entire thought: *the duality of truth*. For Dewey, truth is also subject to the pragmatic test of whether it works in a given situation. Therefore, today’s “truth” may be discarded if it is not seen to be of value tomorrow. Fundamentally, and in regard to the nature of truth, Dewey replaces the first tenet of classical philosophy—*the principle of non-contradiction* (it is impossible for the same thing simultaneously to be and not to be)—by a new principle that identifies an entity with its opposite. For him, there are no objective norms of truth or morality

because ‘human experience consciously guided by ideas, evolves its own standards and measures, and each new experience constructed by their means is an opportunity for new ideas and ideals’ (quoted in Hardon 1952). This thought closely parallels one of the tenets of the *Humanist Manifesto*, a document endorsed by Dewey: ‘Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values’ (Bragg R. (ed.) 1933).⁵⁷

3. James’ Biological Psychology:

Dewey’s third point admits his indebtedness to the influence of William James as ‘one specifiable philosophic factor’ that gave his thinking ‘a new direction and quality’. It was James who in 1898 made famous the term *pragmatism*—first used by C.S. Pierce in 1878, although James reportedly preferred *humanism*, the term used by his Oxford ally, Schiller.⁵⁸ Menand quotes Dewey himself as once saying, ‘I object root and branch to the term “pragmatism”’ (2001:350). Nonetheless titled *Pragmatism*, James’ major work describes this outlook as ‘the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, categories, supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts’ (1908:55 in Catholic Encyclopedia 2006). He also outlined the aims of this movement as impacting on philosophy: ‘The centre of gravity of philosophy must alter its place ... It will be an alteration in the ‘seat of authority’ that reminds one almost of the Protestant Reformation’ (ibid.: 123, cf. Menand 2001:87). Maurer likewise styles *pragmatism* ‘a new name in philosophy, a new way of philosophizing originating in America and expressing the practical—even, it was said, the commercial—spirit of its people’ (1966:623).

Dewey cites James’ theory of the *stream of consciousness* as an enormous advance, enabling ‘the traditional concept of substantial personality’ to be replaced by James’ notion of ‘functionalism’ (Hardon 1952:7). In other words, we have the *mind in activity* responding to stimuli, simply as a function of the organism.

James’ ‘return to the earlier biological conception of the *psyche* ... possessed of a new force due to the immense progress made by biology’ is named by Dewey as an element that worked

⁵⁷ The *Manifesto* is scrutinized further on.

⁵⁸ Pierce, one of Dewey’s lecturers at Johns Hopkins University, wrote a paper for *Popular Science Monthly* titled ‘How to make our ideas clear’, describing the Pragmatic principle in terms of mental conceptions deriving their meaning from the practical effects they will have in action (Catholic Encyclopedia 2006:2). James first heard the terms *practicalism* or *pragmatism* used by Pierce at Cambridge in the early 1870s (Menand 2001:350).

its way into ‘all my ideas and acted as a ferment to transform old beliefs’ (1962:24). Dewey observes that the fundamental assumption underlying the various separations—such as spirit and matter, body and mind—inherent in classic philosophical systems, is ‘an isolation of mind from activity’ (1961:323)

4. The New Philosophy:

The fourth and last point is a consequence of the previous three. The ‘objective biological approach of the Jamesian psychology’ leads Dewey to the conviction that a great deal of philosophizing needs to be ‘done over again’ in line with the connectivity between science and social subjects. The ultimate effect of this renewal will be ‘an integrated synthesis in philosophy congruous with modern science and related to actual needs in education, morals and religion’ (Dewey 1962:26). Dewey’s predictions as to how this will come about, Hardon describes as ‘iconoclasm’ directed towards ‘the accumulate wisdom of the past’ (1952:7):

I think it shows a deplorable deadness of imagination to suppose that philosophy will indefinitely revolve within the scope of the problems and systems that two thousand years of European history have bequeathed to us. Seen in the long perspective of the future, the whole of western European history is a provincial episode. I do not expect to see in my day a genuine, as distinct from a forced and artificial, integration of thought. But a mind that is not too egotistically impatient can have faith that this unification will issue in its season. Meantime, a chief task of those who call themselves philosophers is to help get rid of the useless lumber that blocks our highways of thought, and strive to make straight and open the paths that lead to the future. (Dewey 1962:26)

Here we have on record as clear a personal statement of Dewey’s main influences as can anywhere be found. But then he adds this frank self-judgement:

I envy, up to a certain point those who can write their intellectual biography in a unified pattern, woven out of a few distinctly discernable strands of interest and influence. By contrast, I seem to be unstable, chameleon-like, yielding one after another to many diverse and even incompatible influences; struggling to assimilate something from each and yet striving to carry it forward in a way that is logically consistent with what has been learned from its predecessors...I cannot write an account of intellectual development without giving it the semblance of a continuity that it does not in fact own...’ (ibid.:22).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ The Deweyan penchant for reconstructing and redefining his ideas is remarked by Maxcy (2002). Edmondson describes Dewey’s ‘ideologically charged and philosophically vague’ style as contributory to his resilience and mystique (2006:11).

An curious tone resonates in Dewey's autobiographical conclusion: 'Forty years spent in wandering in a wilderness like that of the present is not a sad fate—unless one attempts to make himself believe that the wilderness is after all itself the promised land'. (ibid.:26)

Statement of Dewey's Pedagogy:

Staying with Dewey in his own words, we have him laying down the bases of his pedagogy in the preface to his *Democracy and Education*:

The philosophy stated in this book connects the growth of democracy with the development of the experimental method in the sciences, evolutionary ideas in the biological sciences, and the industrial re-organization, and is concerned to point out the changes in subject matter and method of education indicated by these developments. (1961:iii)

Redden and Ryan extract from this quote a so-called Deweyan 'trinity' of terms, which they specify as:

- i. *science*
- ii. *industry*
- iii. *and democracy*

The scientific first principles of experimentalism center about the word "science"...Sociological principles form the actual basis of the integration of science with the other two aspects of this "trinity," namely, industry and democracy. It is knowledge tested by experience that becomes the very foundation and source of all effort, work, and industry; and such effort is carried on in the interests of the group, in conformity with group desires. Thus are industry and democracy allied (1956:486)

With a slightly different emphasis, Spangler also reduces Dewey's thought to three dominant ideas:

- His total reality is limited to nature or experience, which is constantly changing.
- His method of controlling nature is the scientific method, which is one of observation, hypothesis and experimental test.
- His greatest practical reason for developing this method is its application to the field of morals, to the problems of the social organism. (1983:31)

Drawing these elements together and mindful of the Deweyan statements examined so far, we can piece together a framework that encapsulates Dewey's position—despite the difficulty posed by the many points of mutual intersection within his thought. There follows an

exploration of some main aspects based on this scheme and organised around familiar Deweyisms and tenets.

Experience and Experimentalism

Experimentalism—characterized as ‘an indigenous American philosophy’ that represented a breaking free from the inherited European philosophies (Redden & Ryan 1956:471; Campbell 1995:2)—discounts anything but the immediately quantifiable. Dewey claimed the fundamental assumption underlying the classical philosophies to be an isolation of mind from activity, and vehemently opposed education that is based on these philosophies (1961:323). As Shannon observes, ‘Dewey is almost paranoid about any aims of education which transcend observable phenomena’ (1996:73).

Dewey proposes the method of experimentalism as the means of reacting to the sum total of reality, which he considers to be *change*. Here, he borrows from the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, in whose partially extreme but partially correct view, ‘...everything, absolutely everything, was constantly changing. Nothing, absolutely nothing, ever remained the same’ (Adler 1978:30). This is patent in Dewey’s self-proclaimed ‘technical definition of education: It is that reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience’ (1961:76).

A *Weltanschauung* wherein all things are in constant flux and rooted in materiality has its own particular outcomes. Principally, there are no absolutes—whether they be God, truth, transcendent or metaphysical constructs. Consequently, no body / mind / soul duality exists in the human person (‘Man is continuous with nature’). Our ideas, knowledge and thinking therefore arise solely from the need to apply problem solving to experience.

Because all is open to reassessment (including morals, the nature of democracy and education), truth and the good are completely utilitarian: they correspond to that which *works in practice*, ‘warranted assertion’ being Dewey’s means for solving the truth issue (Campbell 1995: Ch. 1). Finally, with his thesis that, ‘Nothing is relative to growth save more growth’, change becomes for Dewey an end in itself.

By his own admission that, ‘There is no possibility of disguising the fact that an experimental philosophy of life means a hit-and-miss philosophy in the end’ (quoted in Campbell 1995:52),

Dewey provides a substantial basis for the hesitation that many feel towards this aspect of his thought.

Industry and Education

Experimentalism concentrates on the activity (or industry) which inducts learners into the mechanisms of a technically advanced and industrialized civilization. The home no longer being able adequately to equip the child for the modern world, Dewey would have integration into this complexity delegated to education through the schools. He assigned to schools the mission of reforming and revolutionizing society, seeing them as agents and vehicles of change—much as Habermas regards schools as ‘ivory towers’ or sites of hope for realizing the ‘ideal pedagogical speech situation’ at the heart of his critical pedagogy (Young:43). What John Dewey most often favoured and what is most consistent with his whole philosophy, notes Skilbeck, is the view

... that the school should try to act as a self-conscious agency for the guidance of social change—not directly, but through the cumulative effect on future citizens of a science-based social issues curriculum’. Dewey aimed to tailor the method and content of school education to his ends largely via Social Studies courses and the child-centred curriculum. (1970:31)

The philosophical opposite of the Thomistic educational ideal of a *truth-centred curriculum*, the Deweyan *child-centred curriculum* focuses on catering to the ‘felt needs’ of the child who experientially creates a personal reality by choosing the relevant curricular activities. Today, this process is still in vogue but known by another name—*Constructivism*:

Constructivism does not assume the presence of an outside objective reality...but rather that learners actively construct their own reality ... Where do such ideas come from? The roots go back to John Dewey, often considered the “father” of American education. (Pearcey 2000:4)

Additionally, Dewey’s model is firmly rooted in *present* felt needs. He strongly criticized those modes of education that inculcate the heritage of the past, or that look to the future in the child’s formation. For Dewey, a model education corresponds to ...

... the idea of continuous reconstruction of experience, an idea which is marked off from education as preparation for a remote future, as unfolding, as external formation, and as recapitulation of the past. (1961:80)

From this reasoning springs the overriding purpose of education:

Our net conclusion is that life is development, and that developing, growing, is life. Translated into its educational equivalents, that means (i) that the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end; and that (ii) the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming. (ibid.:49-50)

We pause to consider the implications of this ‘net conclusion’. Dewey calls ever-changing process its own end. But, as seen, his avowed purpose was to eliminate all dualities. Therefore, Dewey does not admit the validity of dualities such as cause and effect, ends and means. Could it not be argued that what is here characterised as an *end* could equally apply to a *means*?

This point rates mention because Maritain considers the besetting problem and complication of many contemporary educational systems such as Dewey’s to be a disregard of *ends*. He reflects that modern education’s preoccupation with assessment, observation and detailed needs have led to a near-infinite multiplication of *means* which have distracted from education’s true *ends*. He argues that the laudable improvements in modern means and methods require the balance of a stronger practical wisdom and a dynamic trend to the goal (cf. 1974b).

In any case, it is activity, or *doing* that is emphasized (even overestimated) in Dewey’s definitions—on which grounds he has been accused of creating an imbalance: ‘As I see it, we educate through the intrinsic relationship of being and doing’, comments Isaacs (1993:15).

The success or failure of Dewey’s enterprise (of experientially tested knowledge being applied to the benefit of democratic society through labour and industry) lies squarely with teachers. Teacher training colleges, it is claimed, are producing graduates steeped in the Deweyan principle that *doing* has primacy over *being*. They owe to Dewey’s inspiration, contends Edmondson, the separation of pedagogy into its own self-contained “discipline”, wherein teaching *substance* became completely subordinate to teaching *method*. This ‘educationism’ has occasioned an insular attitude within university education faculties and encouraged among teachers a belief that they are the only legitimate interpreters of their science (cf. Edmondson 2006:53-54, 109-110).

Science and Evolution:

Intellectual progress by way of the scientific or experimental method is paramount in Dewey’s educational interpretation. In *How We Think* (1910) Dewey elaborated the well-known five-step process by which the thinker is trained to solve a problem: meeting a difficulty; defining it; making a hypothesis; gathering facts; and verifying—or disproving—the hypothesis. Barzun

takes issue with this experimental method, considering its downfall to consist precisely in the belief that all thinking is problem-solving. He observes, 'But this pattern does not even apply to the way scientific solutions are found, only to the way they are written up' (1991:47).

Moreover, Barzun argues that most thought does not deal with convergent problems—which he describes as definable difficulties, falling within certain limits, and being solvable given the right answer. Rather, thought is more usually concerned with divergent difficulties or purposes which, having no solution, call for a creative or improvised approach:

So we come to the conclusion that the mind at its best thinks not like Dewey's imaginary scientist, but like an artist. Art is achieved not by problem-solving but by invention, trial and error, and compromise among desired ends—just like good government. We may thereby gauge how far from practical is the opinion that if we teach problem-solving, or critical thinking, we shall equip young minds for dealing with all of life's predicaments. (op. cit.)

The view of physicist and philosopher, Wolfgang Smith, tends to much the same conclusions:

We must remember ... that facts and their interpretation are not the same thing. And since, subjectively, facts are invariably associated with an interpretation of some kind, it comes about that science as a rule presents us with two disparate factors: with positive findings, on the one hand, plus an underlying philosophy in terms of which the formulation and disclosure of these discoveries are framed. In its actuality science is never the kind of purely empirical enterprise it is generally reputed to be, which is to say that ontological as well as epistemological presuppositions do inevitably play an essential role. (2000 online)

Earlier, Dewey's identification of the scientific and moral was examined. For Dewey, the value of this scientific outlook lies precisely in its capacity to contribute to the development of democracy, or society at large. Again, Dewey closely associates the experimental sciences with the theory of evolution (this is in fact the general view of most scientists and educators today—the irony being that evolution is fundamentally a theoretical, non-experimental science), such that he has been described as an educator 'whose explicit goal was to work out what Darwinism means for the learning process' (Pearcey 2000:4).

These points are highly significant because they lead to a link that merits further investigation: the connection being that Teilhard de Chardin—a Jesuit priest and contemporary of Dewey—also combined the concepts of evolution and democracy and, furthermore, brought to bear an incalculably great influence and impact within Catholic circles in endeavouring to synthesize these concepts with the beliefs of Catholicism.

One of de Chardin's essays is titled: *The Essence of the Democratic Idea—A Biological Approach*, in which his thought closely approximates Dewey's. For instance, Roberts comments that 'Teilhard sees biological evolution and the growth of human society as a continuum (cf. Dewey: Man is continuous with nature). He views association or social organization as a general evolutionary principle, present at the molecular level and at other critical stages in the emergence of humanity and culminating in the social organization of humankind' (2000:169-170). In the essay cited above, de Chardin claims, 'that the growth of modern Democracy, and the impulses underlying it, will become more intelligible if, disregarding the political and juridical aspects, we approach the problem in biological terms' (238 quoted in Roberts, *ibid.*)

Reportedly, among Teilhard's admirers 'the scientists regard him as a great theologian and the theologians see him as a great scientist' (Roberts 2000:13).⁶⁰ Unquestionably, though, de Chardin is the channel by which unwaveringly evolutionary / scientific ideas were so readily taken up by countless Catholics (cf. Livingstone 2002:57). As Smith explains:

... I perceive the contemporary penchant for accommodating the teachings of Christianity to the so-called truths of science as ... a case, almost invariably, of scientific errors begetting flawed theological ideas ... The paramount instance of scientific theology is doubtless given by the far-flung speculations of Teilhard de Chardin' (2000 online)

Regarded by many as a saint, de Chardin prepared a fertile soil for the cultivation of Dewey's similar educational proposals. Despite different backgrounds and outlooks—e.g. de Chardin's non-Darwinian model which insists on 'the fact of evolution as opposed to any particular theory' (Roberts 2000:50-51)—the two men share a common indebtedness to Hegel (see Vardy 2003:75; Menand 2001:266-267, 329) as well as undeniable similarities of thought and expression. Between them, too, stands a fact of further interest: Dewey and Julian Huxley were contemporaries and prominently involved with the American Humanist Association. Huxley also wrote the introduction to de Chardin's *Phenomenon of Man*. Surely, it is reasonable to suppose a degree of scholarly interchange (be it personal or indirect) within these circles.

⁶⁰ Roberts recounts that the standard French *Editions du Seuil* (on which all English translations are based) severely edits from de Chardin's writing references to the Piltdown Man forgery, while the German K Schmitz-Moormann edition consists of facsimiles fully containing all the scientific details that some devotees might rather forget (2000:28).

Dewey and Catholic Education:

Ask many a teacher, and they will have no further association for the name, Dewey, beyond the decimal classification commonly used in libraries (developed by *Melville Dewey*). When *John Dewey* was more in vogue (and when authors still dealt with such topics), the majority of Catholic educators knew similarly little of him, save that his name was listed in book indices after that of the Devil—the suspicion being that the two shared more than just a close alphabetical relation! Incognizance of the Deweyan influence on the educational profession prevails among practitioners to this day.

In secular spheres of teaching and learning, at least, Dewey is very much alive, according to Edmondson: ‘Dewey’s legacy is evident in our educational system by the very fact that experimentation has become the unquestioned norm’ (2006:98.). The same author remarks the imprint of Deweyan principles (and the often unconscious acceptance of same) throughout the education establishment: outcomes-based education; textbook politics; the revolt against various expressions of authority (hand in hand with the attitude of “progressives” who unceasingly recycle Dewey’s ideals).⁶¹

Unexpectedly, a similar situation increasingly obtains in religious teaching and learning. Vital strands of Dewey’s moral relativism have surfaced in values-clarification programmes (Edmondson 2006:27) and particularly in the dominant moral education system of Kohlberg (Shannon 1996:71; cf. Livingstone 2002:104). Both methodologies are used extensively within Catholic schools and colleges.

D’Arcy directly links the influence of Dewey’s philosophy of learning to the adoption (forty years ago) of the ‘Experientialist Model’ of catechesis (1998 online). Exemplifying this “new catechetics” are the contested *Guidelines for Religious Education for Students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne* (1973-1995)—in which dialogue, consensus and situation-centred experience are stressed, in place of doctrinal, scriptural and liturgical formation. The experiential basis of the *Guidelines* is firmly grounded on the ‘particular theology of revelation’ developed by Fr D.S. Amalorpavadass (Engelbreton 1997:26). This Jesuit theologian rejected the traditional, ‘over essentialist and objective’ notion of revelation with its associated catechetical pedagogy that hands on ‘the revealed doctrines, the articles of the creed, the

⁶¹ Admittedly, Edmondson speaks from an American perspective; his main conclusions, though, could fairly be said to apply throughout the world of education.

emphasis being on what we have to communicate or on teaching the truths' (quoted in Engebretson: *ibid.*). In place of this 'inadequate' understanding, Amalorpavadass proposed a 'concrete, relevant, historical and existential, actual and dynamic, personalist and social' view of Revelation (*ibid.*). The *Guidelines* have become the inspiration for religious education syllabuses used throughout many Australian states to this day.⁶²

Amalorpavadass' reconstruction echoes Gabriel Moran's "ongoing revelation": a concept adopted by numerous religious education professionals that has wreaked 'great havoc' on the maturing faith of many young Catholics, according to Walker (2004:11). Moran, a New York University professor and former de la Salle Brother, places *experience* instead of supernatural revelation at the basis of his theology:

Revelation consists only in present conscious experience of people. (p. 13) ... There is no revelation except in God revealing Himself in personal experience ... One must choose to structure it (the curriculum) according to the people precisely because that is where revelation is. (p. 144) ... People who demand that there be a higher norm of truth than human experience are asking for an idol. (p. 45)(from Moran's *Catechesis of Revelation* 1966, quoted in Duffner 1990 online)

Advocates of the principle of ongoing revelation claim its derivation from the Vatican II *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (cf. Engebretson 1997; Hobson & Welbourne 2002). Yet, this theological innovation demonstrably contradicts the express teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—which makes reference to the same *Constitution* before declaring:

God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant forever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him. (Holy See 1994 #73)⁶³

⁶² Saker's study (2004) confirms an overemphasis on the experiential in R.E., with first and second year undergraduates (and intending future teachers) who attended Western Australian Catholic schools in ignorance of the very Church doctrines which they widely reject. Saker argues for the reintroduction of the 'knowledge component' in religious education guidelines in order to redress the inadequacies of an experiential methodology that is 'not working', leaving students 'with no experience and no particular background of their Catholic tradition' (O'Brien 2005:3)

⁶³ The *Catechism* does add that although revelation is complete, 'it has not been made completely explicit: it remains for Christian faith to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries' (*ibid.* #66). This admits nothing that favours the superficial interpretation just given, however.

The plausibility of radical, new reinterpretations once admitted, however, the way is opened for the other unorthodox positions that abound amongst catechetical educators. For example, it is commonly held that Vatican II ‘appears to reverse the *extra Ecclesia nulla salus* doctrine’ (Engebretson 2003:63; Hobson & Edwards 1999:50), which overlooks that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (with stated qualifications) still upholds the principle that, ‘Outside the Church there is no salvation’ (Holy See 1994 #846-848).

There is the example of Thomas Groome, professor of theology (who, along with Moran, is one of the gurus of the ‘newchurch’ vision), encouraging a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ against Papal authority and Church doctrine, while rallying for a gender-inclusive ‘reconstructed’ Catholic priesthood (Moore 2003 online). Groome’s firmly entrenched method of emancipatory, shared Christian praxis borrows from Freire and Habermas (whom we mention elsewhere).

We see also the rise of “interfaith programmes” that are hailed by progressives as marking the ‘coming of age’ of religious education in a pluralist society (Lovat 2003:8). Hobson and Edwards’ promotion of one such project proposes that: ‘A major aim of a religious studies programme based on extended pluralism would be to get people to hold whatever beliefs they reach in a non-dogmatic and flexible way’ (1999:59). This equates to a so-called ‘correspondence theory of truth’ and approximates Forrest’s argument for resolving the predicament of religious pluralism by accepting a degree of inconsistency between (and, therefore, within) belief systems (cited in Hobson & Edwards 1999:67-68).⁶⁴

Innovations of the kinds just listed disregard the reality of non-negotiable elements within the Catholic faith, and veto St Paul’s educational principle: ‘Faith comes from what is heard’ (Romans 10:17)—students being denied the opportunity to *hear* the first truths that they need to know when teachers lead them by these ways.

It would be futile to essay a quantitative assessment of Dewey’s involvement in this state of play. What *is* being asserted here aligns with Edmondson’s conclusion: if ideas have

⁶⁴ The notion of holding essential (as opposed to non-essential beliefs) in an open way may be suited to secular analysis, but is untenable to Catholicism. To question one’s faith by abandoning all or part of it is to over-extend the virtue of tolerance—Cardinal Newman remarking that to make an act of faith with the intention of altering one’s beliefs is a contradiction in terms. Here Aquinas may be the model inquirer: probably no other scholar has listed more objections to the faith than he (see 1998), but his questioning was always undertaken within the parameters of his belief.

consequences, ‘then John Dewey’s ideas have been profoundly consequential’ (2006:110). All the named catechetical innovations as well as Catholic educational proposals inspired by humanism, Groome, Moran and company evince a recognizable Deweyan heritage—above all for seeking to standardize and unify different belief systems into one reconstructed, philosophic creed. The following excerpt from an article entitled *Modal shifts and challenges for religious education in Catholic schools since Vatican II* epitomizes the point:

The new concept of revelation of Vatican II points to the need for a praxis epistemology and a religious education that is concerned with relevant interpretation of personal and relational experiences that connect the present with the past and the future. The kind of religious education that is needed to take into account such teaching on revelation is very different from previous religious education that was concerned with transmitting, from the past, a body of knowledge that was to be learnt ... this signalled the end of a process of religious education that aimed at the authoritarian reproduction of doctrine and practices: it meant the demise of the catechism and a move towards revisionism in religious education ... The challenge for the practice of the discipline of religious education, that reflects Vatican II, is to engage learners in a way of knowing that is committed to unmasking ideologies and false views of reality through creative suspicion—the challenge to religious education is to facilitate learning that is emancipatory. (Hobson & Welbourne 2002 online)

With Catholicism traditionally so resistant to such ideas, how could these formulations have gained near wholesale acceptance—except that more progressive factions have opened themselves to alien traditions and successfully educated others in them? Our focus being on Dewey, we need to ask if there are particular traits in his thought that could successfully metamorphose into a tolerable religious guise. In fact, if we turn to the religious dimension of Dewey’s educational thought, it makes an appeal to liberally-oriented minds while it pays lip-service to religious sympathies. Dewey’s views in this regard have a dual aspect. In the first place, he inveighs against religious authority: ‘Dewey’s unrelenting attack on religion and traditional education is a conspicuous feature of his educational philosophy ... [He] forthrightly maintains that a key obstacle to proper education is traditional religion’ (Edmondson 2006:19). But let us allow Dewey his own explanation:

If I have said anything about religions and religion that seems harsh, I have said those things because of a firm belief that the claim on the part of religions to possess a monopoly of ideals and of the supernatural means by which alone, it is alleged, they can be furthered, stands in the way of the realization of distinctly religious values inherent in natural experience. For that reason, if for no other, I should be sorry if any were misled by the frequency with which I employed the adjective “religious” to conceive of what I have said as a disguised apology for what have passed as religions. The opposition between religious values as I conceive them and religions is not to be abridged. Just because the release of these

values is so important, their identification with the creeds and cults of religions must be dissolved. (1934:27-28)

This ‘militant’ attack on established religions (Hardon 1952 online) shows Dewey tenaciously holding to his own absolutes and irreconcilable dualities despite his aim to achieve the unity of all ends. This passage also introduces the counter aspect of Dewey’s response: he denounces religion while maintaining the need for a reconstructed vision of religiosity—the latter being defined in *A Common Faith* as, ‘Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality’ (1934:27).

A parallel version of the religion / religious distinction occurs in the first *Humanist Manifesto*. Humanist websites are quick to deny the claim that Dewey helped to assemble the *Manifesto*, stating that he simply signed and returned the draft sent to him (Wilson 1995 Ch. 18 online). Nonetheless, by the fact of his being a signatory, the document became listed among authentic writings in the official *Bibliography of John Dewey* (Thomas, Milton Halsey & Schneider 1939:130). Published in *The New Humanist, Manifesto I* (1933) evokes the pre-war faith in humanism as *the* efficacious means for confronting the challenges of the twentieth century. From the very introductory paragraph, the *Manifesto* asserts its major preoccupation:

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of candid and explicit humanism. (Bragg R. (ed.) 1933 online)

Then, are listed the fifteen theses of ‘religious humanism’ (ibid.) which prescribe nothing repugnant to Deweyan orthodoxy. In the same volume of *The New Humanist*, there follows an interpretation by Roy Wood Sellars, ‘integral to the initial presentation of the manifesto’ (Wilson 1995 online). Explicating the main themes, Sellars writes:

- ‘We adopted the term humanism because it was, quite obviously, the one suitable term. Reject theism as the logical center of religion and the only alternative is to take man as the center. The new religion is homocentric and not theo-centric.’

- ‘We conclude that the humanist movement is a religious movement in that it is deeply concerned with the furtherance of human life along the lines indicated by reason and sympathetic intelligence. It is true that it represents a break with the traditional religious interpretation of life and the universe, but this is a sign of its vitality and novelty. If, as the humanist contends, the traditional religious interpretation of the world was illusory, the only manly thing to do is to acknowledge the mistake and make a fresh start’.
- ‘Upon this I think all naturalists are agreed that between naturalism and theism it is a case of either-or. Either a reality corresponding to the God-idea is at the center of reality in a directing, planning way or there is no such reality.’ (1933 online)

(The last point merely restates the conclusion reached in the *Pensées*, where Pascal considered the solution to this problem the inescapable and ultimate challenge facing every living person.)

The humanist / religious tradition was carried forward by such figures as Julian Huxley (1887-1975)—author of *Religion without Revelation* (1958), prompting de Chardin to comment on, ‘The sort of religion that has been foretold with such warmth and brilliance by my friend, Julian Huxley: to which he has given the name of evolutionary humanism’ (quoted in Roberts 2000:185).⁶⁵ Eventually, as we have examined, the baton was assumed by ostensibly religious groups, only too eager to experience and then educate students in new “spiritualities.”⁶⁶

Rosmini and Dewey

This analysis suggests few points of intersection between Dewey and Aquinas. But what of Rosmini: could his ideas be termed Deweyan (or vice versa) in any respects?

⁶⁵ John Dewey, also compared the scientific attitude to a “religious” cause in his book *A Common Faith*—humanists nowadays tending to avoid these ‘shopworn sacerdotal words’ (Madigan 2006 online) lest they embroil themselves in awkward debates about humanist teachings in schools contravening the “Establishment Clause” in the U.S. First Amendment: a matter that theistic religious opponents are keen to play up.

⁶⁶ Saker’s research (see Footnote 62) found Catholic students asserting, ““Yes we have faith,” but they didn’t know how to express it. There was no search for meaning. I can only guess they were confusing faith with spirituality ... In fact approximately 95 per cent of them regarded themselves as spiritual people. But spiritual people could be people who have no particular belief in religion at all”. (O’Brien 2005)

The answer is “No”, in regard to Rosmini’s educational foundation, which was a direct result of his philosophy of innate being (or possible being) as constitutive of our intellect.⁶⁷

Rosmini regarded educational method as a branch of logic. Truth is the supreme object of the human mind and it is in relation to truth that it exercises its noblest functions. One of these is concerned with the communication of truth to others and it is this aspect which is the main object of education. (Curtis & Boulton 1977:383)

Rosmini’s unfinished pedagogical treatise, *The Ruling Principle of Method Applied to Education*, elaborates the progression of learning that unfolds from the idea of being:

The mind first conceives the general and then the particular—first the thought blocked out, as it were in the rough, then in definite outline, then finished and perfected; first the necessity for a division, then the form to be given to it. (1902 #58)

The *ruling principle* itself is formulated in these specific terms:

Present to the mind of the child, first, the objects which belong to the first order of cognitions: then those which belong to the second order ... and so on successively, taking care never to lead the child to a cognition of the second order without having ascertained that his mind has grasped those of the first order relative to it, and the same with regard to cognitions of the third, fourth, and other higher orders. (ibid. #80)

Rosmini reduces the central objective of education to this methodological statement:

The object of instruction is to bring the young to know, and it may therefore be called the art of properly directing the attention of the youthful mind. (ibid. #90)

In focussing next upon student activity, there is remarkable correspondence with Dewey’s ‘learning by doing’ and the child’s ‘felt needs’. Rosmini speaks of exposing the child to the primary notes, colours and shapes (first in order, and then, where applicable, in intervals and combinations), ‘but always by degrees, and never passing on to a new play till he shows weariness of the old’ (ibid. #153):⁶⁸

The child should be provided in abundance with objects to look at, touch, examine, and experiment upon ... in a word, to perceive, and perceive ever more and more

⁶⁷ A conclusion that Thomists disavow: ‘All the difficulties of interpretation and appreciation of Rosminianism arise at the confluence of the two notions of intellectual knowledge and of being. Taken separately, they create no difficulties; when they join, difficulties abound’ (Gilson, Etienne 1966a:243).

⁶⁸ A part of Rosmini’s recommended ‘abundance’ in style’ (Toomey 1988: section 3.7.6).

accurately. The objects chosen should be those which most attract his attention, which will also be those which satisfy his wants, his desires, and give him pleasures: for it is only by these that his attention is aroused. (ibid. #152)

Rosmini observes that the child has his / her own rule which is not that of an adult, and that the educator must follow the mutations of form of the child's understanding in each order of cognitions. Curtis concludes that Rosmini, whose system pre-dates Dewey by decades, 'was a pioneer in perceiving that imaginative play is nature's way of teaching the child about human nature and its modes of action' (1977:389). Rosmini was adamant that the teacher enjoy much freedom (cf. Toomey 1988: section 4.15) but, like Aquinas (who advised teachers never to dig a ditch in front of students lest they stumble into it), Rosmini warns of the pitfalls of inadequate pedagogy. His treatise proposes a method wherein even the least detail of teaching conforms to his philosophical system, and is designed to illuminate the way on the difficult road of learning, leading 'the tender minds of pupils by easy and gentle gradations to the heights of knowledge' (1902: # 13).

A missing factor in Dewey is a well-developed theory of the human person. Skilbeck notes criticism of Dewey precisely on the grounds of his difficulty in defining individuality and consciousness; for emptying the concept of selfhood of anything personal and unique; and for denying a spiritual essence (1970:33-34). In Rosmini's eyes this would add up to producing a philosophy intrinsically 'disdainful of humanity' (2001:22).

Democracy becomes for Dewey the means by which the individual is incorporated into society—the individual, in fact, only deriving his / her personhood in so far as he / she contributes to and is integrated into society. Maritain questions such systems as derive their supreme rule and standard of education from social conditioning. He advances the Thomist position which sees the essence of education in first making a person, 'and by this very fact preparing a citizen' (1974b:15): a position with which Rosmini would be in complete agreement.

Conclusion

The last chapter stated the intention of justifying the inclusion of two philosophers as divergent as Aquinas and Dewey. Having examined each in detail, and before coming to a final conclusion on their mutual status, we first seek guidance from scholars who have tackled the issue of integrating differing systems of thought.

We must, insists Edmondson, earnestly take account before attempting to reconcile contrary views or undertaking substantial change: ‘... it is imperative to identify the areas underlying education problems and proposed reforms. Many disputes in education today ... are fundamental philosophical disagreements’ (2006:95). Rosmini, who examined the same question, expounds the form of such disagreements as well as describing the manner in which philosophies may intersect:

Philosophical systems are not brought together as a result of arbitrary choice between what they offer. Each system, if it is truly such, will have a principle from which deductions are made, and will be able to be reconciled, despite accidental differences, with every other system sharing the same principle. On the other hand, systems will not be reconcilable, despite their accidental agreement, if their basic principles differ. In the former case, agreement will be possible by working back to the principle, and setting out once more from there; in the second case, apparent agreement will only be skin-deep. (cited in Cleary 2001 online)

Childs, who promoted and implemented Dewey, articulates a fundamental ideological incompatibility precisely between the variant pedagogical institutions that we have highlighted:

Much of the confusion now apparent in the effort to work out the ideas of experimentalism in education arises from the effort to combine these *newer methods* in education with *older outlooks* which are correlatives of a world view which experimentalism has repudiated. (quoted in Redden & Ryan 1956:473)

With Dewey in mind, Campbell augments Childs’ theme: ‘The new philosophy was clearly more than a new way of doing the same sorts of things that had been done before. It was a way of doing new things’ (1995:35). Sellars makes an even more specific concession: ‘Now these humanist fundamentals are in many ways diametrically opposed to the fundamentals accepted by Christianity’ (1933 online).

Drawing these strands together, and on the basis of much other evidence, we arrive at an almost inevitable conclusion: that the synthesis of Aquinian and Deweyan thought would amount to a philosophical impossibility, there being a less than superficial agreement between them. But what of Rosmini? Applying the same standards, it is quite evident that, despite certain dissimilarities, Rosmini merits inclusion within the very Thomistic enterprise on the grounds of belonging to the same tradition, if not the same school.

Chapter Five: Home Education

REMISS would it be for a modern study on educational philosophy to neglect one remarkable instance of changing pedagogical practice: home education. The matter of this chapter bridges between the paradigms outlined previously on the basis of Rosmini, Aquinas, and Dewey on the one side, and the home education movement (as the chosen application case of these theoretical findings) on the other. While a quantitative survey based on personal interviews or research in the field is beyond the scope of this work, Chapter Five—based on a comprehensive review of the literature—delineates some main features that explain the rationale behind home education in general. Finally, the specifically Catholic declination of home education is investigated and then weighed against the priorities so far established as essential to modern day Catholic education.

Historically, learning outside of school and teaching children at home are nothing new.⁶⁹ The modern expression of this phenomenon is unique, nonetheless, in positing itself parallel to a now established and almost universal educational system. Home education is a reclaiming of familial and parental rights in reaction to the compulsory education legislation of the last two centuries, with the family taking back the role that is more commonly associated with schools (Barratt-Peacock 1997:114). A worldwide grass roots movement, home education (otherwise termed home schooling, alternative education, and even unschooling or deschooling) extends to an ever-increasing number of families, whose methodologies range from the completely informal through to the rigorously academic, and whose attitudes range from compromise with the school system into which they eventually integrate, through to those who choose to be ‘in but not of modern consumer society’ (Talbot 2001 online).

The movement derived its initial momentum and inspiration during the 1960s and ‘70s from figures of a somewhat radical bent such as Ivan Illich (1926-2002), who, in *Deschooling Society* (1971), candidly attacked all compulsory, institutionalized schooling, with its ‘hidden curriculum’, contending that ‘schooling and learning are mutually antipathetic’ (Curtis &

⁶⁹ Home education often incorporates some degree of private tutoring as well as autodidactics. The *Education Otherwise* website lists—among numerous famous figures who were unschooled, but certainly not uneducated: politicians (George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill); inventors (Thomas Edison, the Wright brothers); scholars and philosophers (Margaret Mead and Blaise Pascal); writers and artists (Agatha Christie, Claude Monet, Yehudi Menuhin and Charlie Chaplin!) (n. d. online).

Boulton 1977:667). Unusually, also associated with the roots of the movement is the Brazilian Marxist educator and author, Paulo Freire (1921-1997), who ‘sought to empower the world’s oppressed through literacy programs that encouraged social and political awareness’ (Britannica Standard Edition 2002b). His seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) argued that ‘the passive nature of traditional education promoted repression’. Consequently, Freire favoured a ‘‘pedagogy of liberation’’ that encouraged dialogue between teacher and student, enabling the pupil to ask questions and to challenge the status quo’ (ibid.).

Freire’s methodology certainly contributed to critical pedagogy and its call for emancipation from the perceived power structures that make schools ‘capitalist agencies of social, economic, cultural and bureaucratic reproduction’ (Kincheloe 1999:71). His legacy, though, has not been so much to effect this emancipatory change via home education as a call to reconstruct the model of teaching that schools adopt. Critical theorists do not want to go as far as unschooling because they see schools as potential ‘venues of hope’ for the promulgation of their ideas, as ‘sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts among teachers and students to work within a liberatory pedagogical framework’, and as ‘institutions where forms of knowledge, values and social relations [are] taught for the purpose of educating young people for critical empowerment rather than subjugation’ (ibid.).

John Holt (1923-1985) was an American educator who, eventually abandoning hopes that schools would ever reform according to his child-centred vision, became the ‘first home-schooling activist’ (Talbot 2001 online) and coined the term, *unschooling* (Wikipedia 2006 online). His works *How Children Learn* (1964), *How Children Fail* (1967), *Teach Your Own* (1981), and the *Growing without Schooling* magazine questioned the tenets of systemic education and upheld the principles that innate interest and curiosity—as opposed to the intervention of adults—are the prime motivators for children, who ‘ought to be in control of their own learning; deciding for themselves what they want to learn and how they want to learn it’. It was Holt who inspired families to take the then often illegal and almost unheard of step of withdrawing their students from the formal system.

A. S. Neill, founder of the British alternative school at Summerhill, could also be numbered among these innovators who ‘became critics of formal education itself—tests, grades, curricula, the very idea that a specific body of knowledge ought to be transmitted from adults to children’. They inspired the first home educators who were ‘studiously nonauthoritarian ... suspicious of institutions, Rousseauvian in their pedagogy, and big on learning by doing’ (Talbot 2001

online).

The home education movement absorbed a whole set of new influences when the ideas of these pioneers underwent a conservative reinterpretation. In works such as *Better Late than Early* (1975) and *Home Grown Kids* (1981) the Seventh Day Adventists, Raymond Moore (a former U.S. Department of Education official) and his wife, Dorothy, researched the merits of a much later school starting age so that children might longer remain under what they considered the beneficial parental influence, removed from the impersonal, institutionalized, peer pressure school climate. When they became regular guests on Dr James Dobson's American radio broadcast, *Focus on the Family*, the Moores' ideas were widely disseminated and met with an enthusiastic response from Christian (primarily fundamentalist and right-wing) parents, who now constitute the majority of home educators (cf. Talbot 2001 online). Born during the cultural ferment of the 1960s, home education as it is known today has derived from two main sources, explains Hitchcock:

The cultural crisis has given birth to the home school movement from two opposite directions: moral traditionalists who see the corrosive effects of established schools, and political left-wingers who regard the schools as the instruments of capitalist oppression. Both sides are radical in the real sense, in their willingness to question established institutions in a way most people are not prepared to do. (1997:45)

A constant theme of the research is that home educators, whatever their political affiliation, do share certain main ideas, namely,

- a 'skepticism towards mainstream education' with little store set by certification and other signifiers of professional expertise (Talbot 2001 online);
- a view of their project as 'a profound shift in paradigm' (Wikipedia 2006 online), whereby the entire home atmosphere—far from being an attempt to replicate the school construct—functions as an educative and cultural community which, as a general rule, does not use school as a baseline or guide.

In the 1980s, media reports began to pick up on this new phenomenon. Initially treated with hesitation (at the least), home education in its precipitate growth has now gained an overall social acceptance.⁷⁰ Since 1993 it is legal in all American states and in most parts of the

⁷⁰ During the 2000 presidential campaign, George Bush said: 'In Texas we view home-schooling as something to be respected and something to be protected' (quoted in Economist 2004 online). This is not to advocate any

countries mentioned below, although government regulation, testing, and parental qualification requirements vary enormously. Entry into higher education is made possible by many colleges having policies for the integration of home-educated students—for example, standardized tests, recognition of prior learning, acceptance of ‘equivalency diplomas’, parent statements and portfolios of student work as admission criteria (cf. Wikipedia 2006 online).⁷¹

Exact statistics are unobtainable (because in some countries and states there is no requirement to register with education authorities and national census figures do not differentiate between schooled and home educated students); nonetheless, there are some reliable indicators.

Currently, America leads the home education count and features the most reliable data figures: in 2003 there were 1.1 million home schooled students in the United States. This figure is based on estimates gathered from National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), authorized by the United States Department of Education and published by the National Center for Education Statistics. It relates to students aged 5-17 in years K-12 whose numbers increased from an estimated 850,000 students, or 1.7 percent of the school-age population in 1999 (when the first such survey was conducted), to 2.2 percent in 2003. This represents a 29 percent relative increase over the 4-year period (2004:1-3).⁷²

This same survey also presents parents’ primary reasons for home schooling their children:

- Concern about the environment of other schools: 31%
- To provide religious or moral instruction: 30%
- Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools: 16%
- Other reasons (those reported by parents included family unity and individualized teaching, among others): 9%
- Child has a physical or mental health problem: 7%
- Child has other special needs: 7%

Stated otherwise, nearly two-thirds of students had parents who saw the first two reasons as

political view: it is to highlight that public recognition of home education exists in America, while elsewhere the topic is usually swept under the carpet.

⁷¹ After being home educated, my own older children were accepted into matriculation colleges without question. All have continued on to university graduation and / or studies.

⁷² Enrolments at U.S. charter schools—another recent innovation in education—only approximate by half the numbers who are home educated: The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (Sixth Edition) quotes some 3,000 such schools serving more than 600,000 students in North and South America by 2004 (2003 online).

primary in their decision to home school (ibid.:2-3).

Other countries leading in home education are Canada and the United Kingdom, each having 10, 000 families (and unofficially double that number) according to estimates made ten years ago (Meighan cited in Thomas, Alan 1998:2; Wikipedia 2006 online). In *How many home educators in Australia* Philip Strange of the *Australian Home Education Association Inc.* bases his estimates on figures from New Zealand, where (unlike Australia) ‘there is an incentive to be registered as the government provides a tax free payment for each child’ (2000 online)—a factor likely to reduce the number of non-registered practitioners. In July 1998 the New Zealand total (which also included students of post-compulsory school age—16-19 years old, accounting for 9.2% of the whole) was: 5274 registered home educated students in 3001 families (Data Management Unit, NZ Ministry of Education, Education Statistics News Sheet, Vol 8 No8 Sept 1998 cited in Strange: ibid.). Applying the New Zealand proportions to Australia’s 1998 population, Strange arrives at an estimate of 26,500 home educated students in 15,000 families nationally.

One of the most reliable sources for Australian statistics is Tasmania, where (since 1994) there exists ‘a reasonably stable home education administration’ that ‘lacks most of the excessive controls of some other Australian states’ (ibid.).⁷³ Strange argues that after factoring in the unregistered home educators, ‘this State’s data supports the premise that the NZ data is applicable’ to Australia’.⁷⁴

According to the sociologist, Stevens, the movement is ‘statistically associated with white, religious, two-parent households’, of average wealth, but with more years of education (a sizeable minority having teaching degrees) and larger families than the average (quoted in Talbot 2001). Often politically conservative, home educators in many countries have yet been willing to lobby a seemingly conventional bureaucracy in order to obtain the legal status they now widely enjoy (cf. Barratt-Peacock 1997:23). Latest trends also point to a wide cross-section

⁷³ The December 2006 Newsletter of the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council (THEAC) reported 289 registered families in the State home educating 521 children. Established by the Minister for Education, THEAC has ‘the responsibility to monitor and support parents wishing to home educate and to advise the Minister accordingly’ (2006:3).

⁷⁴ On the ‘vexed question’ of Australian home educator numbers, Barratt-Peacock cites Hunter (1994) who drew on information from home education and government reports to suggest an approximate figure of 10,000 families in 1991 with a per annum growth rate of 20% (1997:44)

of other practitioners: in 2001, the Fraser Institute named Muslim Americans as the fastest growing subgroup in the home school movement (Wikipedia 2006 online); as well, there emerges a new wave of home schoolers who base their choice on a perceived dissatisfaction with the performance of the public education sector rather than on religious grounds.

There is a quite extensive North American and Canadian academic literature on the topic, ‘much of which is concerned with comparing the educational outcomes of home educated children with those of schooled children ... and the legal battles that have played a significant role in the development of American home education’, while there is a ‘dearth’ of Australian literature (Barratt-Peacock 1997:18-19). However, there are two rigorous Australian studies that partially redress this situation. By providing an extra-American perspective and by filling a perceived gap in existing knowledge, these studies (which are driven both by theoretical and practical research) are of particular academic interest.

Two Australian Studies:

Contrasting and correlating Australian with U.S. approaches, and written by an experienced teacher and home educator, Barratt-Peacock’s doctoral thesis, explores the question: ‘Why do some parents choose to home educate their children and how do they do it?’⁷⁵ The data he gathered through personal interviews and direct observation undertaken in most parts of Australia indicated that ‘home education was chosen when the role of the family as keeper / creator of explanatory systems appeared to be challenged by the school’ (1997:12). His research develops the model of the Australian home educating family as a Community of Learning Practice, wherein learning constitutes a major orientation of family membership and children become joint venturers with parents in this process. (A flow-on effect being the often readiness of parents to extend or continue their own education.) Barratt-Peacock concludes that this leads to a renewed sense of responsibility, status and purpose as families develop together—something that holds true particularly for the women involved, who are normally the principal teachers.⁷⁶ The writer finds that learning (whether formal or informal) in this environment is more true-to-life, being emphasized ‘within the field of authentic adult practice rather than the

⁷⁵ Barratt – Peacock’s thesis was judged by one examiner ‘the authoritative text on home education in Australia’.

⁷⁶ In his home education sociological survey, *Kingdom of Children*, Mitchell Stevens notes that women, absorbing something of the surrounding feminist climate, find in home education an intellectual outlet, as well as social, political and even entrepreneurial opportunities that meet the legitimate aspirations of those who elect to be more than ‘just moms’ (cited in Talbot 2001 online).

unproblematic individual absorption of decontextualized knowledge in a dedicated institution as a result of teaching' (ibid.:278).

Noteworthy among the findings of this study are:

- a significant and growing number of Australian home educators;
- a questioning of the assumption that home educated children achieve superior outcomes in standardised tests—due to the wide unavailability of scores in this category, and to the possibility of the results of lower achieving students being withheld by parents (the research here showing that the collective results were higher than average, but 'not uniformly excellent');
- a likely factor in student high achievement simply being parental support and involvement: a correlation common to children educated whether conventionally or at home;
- the identification of two broadly defined processes of home education as: (i.) the formal, whereby the curriculum is central and the student is obliged to engage in 'a core of preplanned, sequenced work in basic subjects': (ii.) the informal, whereby the child is central and the student chooses the learning to be undertaken;
- the motivations decisive for home educators summarized as: parents holding different values (educational, cultural, personal, moral, religious) from those promoted by the schools; the lasting influence of overwhelmingly positive or negative experiences during the parent's childhood (such as disillusionment with their own schooling or family life or, conversely, an idyllic upbringing), strongly colouring their attitude to education and its means of implementation; a 'contemporary crisis'—the child unhappy at school, bullying, reduced quality of relationships within the family and other disadvantages coinciding with school attendance; education regarded as the primary responsibility not of the state but of the parents, who believe that they can do better themselves; and finally, the identification of a significant 'informant-mentor' who drew attention to the home education option and/or guided the parent's first steps in this direction.

Chapters seven and eight offer some cogent insights (highly relevant to the themes of the present study) into the extent to which American home educating families of the pioneer era became for John Dewey the pedagogical ideal behind his educational philosophy. Barratt-Peacock argues that much scholarship focuses on the development of Dewey's instrumentalism yet largely ignores the self-proclaimed model on which all was built' (ibid.:122). Dewey,

observes Barratt – Peacock, admired the pioneer model of education for its industriousness, enterprise, the passing down of manual, craft and practical survival skills, and above all for its emphasis *away* from distinct studies. Dewey sought to adapt the principles of those early communities to industrialized society—these ideals finding concrete expression in his famous Experimental School. In *The School and Society* Dewey described these prized values as so many

... instrumentalities through which the school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons. (1915, quoted in Barratt-Peacock 1997:123)

Barratt-Peacock convincingly invokes Dewey as a quasi-apologist for the type of home education practice that could be termed *natural* or *child-centred learning*. He reproduces from *The School and Society* a lengthy quote that strikingly illustrates how Dewey's model approximates certain ideals with which most home educators would be in complete agreement:

If we take an example from the ideal home where the parent is intelligent enough to recognise what is best for the child, and is able to supply what is needed, we find the child learning through the social converse and constitution of the family. There are certain points of interest and value to him in the conversation carried on: statements are made, inquiries arise, topics are discussed, and the child continually learns. He states his experiences, his misconceptions are corrected. Again the child participates in the household occupations, and thereby gets habits of industry, order, and regard for the rights and ideas of others, and the fundamental habit of subordinating his activities to the general interests of the household. Participation in these household tasks becomes an opportunity for gaining knowledge. The ideal home would naturally have a workshop where the child could work out his constructive instincts. It would have a miniature laboratory in which his inquiries could be directed. The life of the child would extend out of doors to the garden, surrounding fields, and forests. He would have his excursions, his walks and talks, in which the larger world out of doors would open up to him ... Now if we organise and generalise all of this, we have the ideal school. (1997:124-125)

Dewey's depiction of the education environment as a microcosm of society typically, though, lacks reference to the dimension of formal learning. Furthermore, he adds the important proviso that the 'ideal home' requires the 'best and wisest parent' (ibid.) to guide the child's activities beyond the family to the wider society—parental qualities that Dewey considered rare, thereby justifying his relegating education away from the family and towards the school.⁷⁷ J. T. Gatto, New York State and New York City Teacher of the Year (1991) and now critic of 'compulsion schooling', would share many values in common with Barratt – Peacock but would deny the

⁷⁷ This is reinforced in *Democracy and Education*, where Dewey accords priority to the school with no recognition of the educational role of the family (Edmondson 2006:43).

latter's portrayal of Dewey as an ally of home education. Gatto adamantly emphasizes the strongly pro-school, pro-institution Deweyan stand:

Exactly what John Dewey heralded at the onset of the twentieth century has indeed happened. Our once highly individualized nation has evolved into a centrally managed village, an agora made up of huge special interests which regard individual voices as irrelevant. The masquerade is managed by having collective agencies speak through particular human beings. Dewey said this would mark a great advance in human affairs, but the net effect is to reduce men and women to the status of functions in whatever subsystem they are placed. Public opinion is turned on and off in laboratory fashion. All this in the name of social efficiency, one of the two main goals of forced schooling ... Dewey called this transformation "the new individualism." ... Americans failed to notice the deliberate conversion of formal education that was taking place, a transformation that would turn school into an instrument of the leviathan state. (Gatto 2003 online)

Again, Gatto in large part traces back to Dewey the view of the school system as a 'religion' with its own 'holy mission' and the teachers its dedicated evangelizers, instanced by a statement from *My Pedagogical Creed* (1897) where Dewey wrote:

Every teacher should realize he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of the proper social order and the securing of the right social growth. In this way the teacher is always the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of heaven. (ibid.)

Popular home education advocate and author, Mary Pride, admits that 'No discussion of education would be complete without a nod to John Dewey, generally regarded as the father of Progressive Education' but, in line with Gatto, contends that, 'It is fair to say that the majority of home learners are seeking rather to escape Progressive Education than to implement it' (1989:37).⁷⁸

Barratt – Peacock's thesis was completed one year before the publication of Alan Thomas' *Educating Children at Home*: a scholarly contribution to the literature, based on research divided between Australia (primarily Tasmania) and England—with no notable differentiation in research data and conclusions emerging from either country. Significantly, it is a non-sectarian work written by a non-home educator—the author being a former schoolteacher and university psychology lecturer, whose interest in this area was kindled by two factors:

- the unique research opportunity provided by this individualized teaching environment to glimpse into the "holy grail" of education: the meeting of two minds that is fundamental

⁷⁸ Edmondson, too, mentions the choice of home education as an alternative to progressive values (2006:xii)

to the pedagogical process:

- the potentially enriching effect of informal, social conversation with an adult (a ‘cultural apprenticeship’ that is an extension of the way that much pre-school learning takes place): the kind of meaningful interaction with individual children (according to findings in developmental psychology) that is virtually impossible in the conventional classroom.⁷⁹ (1998:3, 1-2).

Thomas describes his aim as being ‘a systematic attempt to find out how parents actually go about teaching their children at home’ and shows how parents, as ‘pioneers of a different pedagogy’ are challenging ‘many professional assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning’ while yet attracting little mainstream research interest. While schools flag their commitment to catering for individual student needs, this Thomas considers little more than the rhetoric and ‘fruitless preoccupation’ of a system that is most successful (wherever one teacher has responsibility for a large number of students) when devoting itself to tried and true practices:

Time-honoured methods, based on good discipline combined with keeping noses to the grindstone or, in current parlance, good classroom management coupled with maximizing ‘on task’ behaviour or Active Learning Time, have not been superseded. A number of researchers, albeit reluctantly, conclude that such methods may represent optimal classroom pedagogy and that no substantial improvement is likely. (ibid.:3)

Thomas observes that with time, parents tend to become less formal in their approach as they move away from imitating the school model that is the only one they know. (This pattern is now disrupted as home-educated children pass on their own experience to a new generation: an interesting study!)

Even a more formal, structured approach to teaching and learning at home ... turns out to be rather different from school. The principal difference is that, because it is one-to-one, with the parent more or less constantly at hand, any question arising or problem encountered is dealt with there and then, at length if necessary. In consequence, learning becomes a continuous process with very few errors and attendant feelings of failure. (ibid.:5)⁸⁰

Thomas tackles the likely most common objection to home education (curiously, not academic

⁷⁹ The benefits of conversation with an adult concord with the Dewey quote given previously.

⁸⁰ Barratt – Peacock similarly concludes that the formal component ‘was immediately contextualized because it occurred “on the job”’ (1997:278).

progress or the ability of untrained parents to educate their children at home): the issue of socialization. Although these children have less opportunity to mix with others of the same age, most parents believed that their children had a more normal social upbringing than children in school. The latter were said to have comparatively little adult social contact, and criticism was made of the ‘narrowing effects’ of the ‘same-age subculture in school, with its restricted view of the world and pressure, sometimes physical, to conform to its mores’ (ibid.:124). Parents pointed out that institution of schooling itself directly fosters the development of such a peer subculture, leading Thomas to conclude: ‘It is reasonable to ask whether school is the best place to learn social skills other than those obviously necessary for survival in school’ (ibid.).⁸¹

Thomas, too, broaches the challenges and trials of home education: the professional and monetary sacrifice that may be involved; the cases of those who—overwhelmed by the enormity and difficulty of it all—abandoned the exercise; the opposition from relatives, friends and bureaucrats; and the uncertainty of going it alone—in effect, by ‘challenging nearly two centuries of accumulated professional wisdom, underpinned by a massive amount of research’ (ibid.:125).

Christopher Dawson named universal compulsory education among the most revolutionary developments of modern times, because it extends the power of the state over people’s lives (cited in Hitchcock 1997:44); but Thomas points to the contribution of home educators as today’s counter-revolution:

What they have learned from their pioneering experiences has the potential to bring about the most fundamental change in education since the advent of universal schooling in the nineteenth century. (1998:131).

In all, Thomas depicts an all-consuming undertaking that is not for the faint-hearted—yet with tangible personal benefits for those involved.

Future Directions

The literature predicts two outcomes for the future of home education. First, it is undeniable that the exponential growth of the movement represents a challenge to the monopolies of the

⁸¹ Taylor approaches the same theme in ‘*Self-Concept in home-schooling children*’: ‘Critics who speak out against home schooling on the basis of social deprivation are actually addressing an area which favors home schoolers. Apparently, the research data indicates that it is the conventionally schooled child who is actually deprived’. (quoted in Wikipedia 2006 online)

education industry (including curriculum design, teacher unions and school supply and publishing companies).⁸² The most dramatic interpretation would have home education as ‘the first inroad into the school system prior to its demise’ (Perelman, quoted in Barratt-Peacock 1997:21). Politically, the increasingly well-organized movement may become ‘the bluntest and most direct challenge yet to the moral claims of the omnipotent state’, writes Hitchcock (1997:45), while U.S. Department of Education researcher, Patricia Lines, remarks that ‘the rise of homeschooling is one of the most significant social trends of the past half century’ (quoted in Talbot 2001). Jeans’ research suggests that some form of home education is likely to become the dominant paradigm in Australia within the next twenty five years (cited in Barratt-Peacock 1997:18).

The second likelihood, a consequence of its very popularity, is that home education will be monitored to the extent that it falls under the control of the state bureaucracies, or that it will be suppressed as too great an affront to the political and educational control that governments wish to maintain. Influential teacher unions and other critics have voiced outright opposition to the movement on the grounds of its elitist and separatist nature, and the possibility of children being exposed to forms of abuse, neglect or extremist views. Such claims must be fronted—although they apply with equal validity to institutional education. Perhaps, though, the following back-handed compliment from one opponent comes closest to pinpointing the real issue in this debate: ‘It is no longer about whether home-schooled children are losing out, but whether they are doing unfairly well’, with the consequence that ‘... home-schoolers represent an assault on public education that teachers everywhere should pay attention to’ (Economist 2004 online).

While the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* acknowledges the duty of equipping children with an education adequate to all their needs and best interests—it finds the responsibility for education and guidance to lie in the ‘first place with his [sic] parents’ (Principle 7); the U.N. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 26 (3), states also that ‘parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children’ (quoted in Hunter 1994).

Sidney Hook once described John Dewey’s Chicago laboratory school as ‘the most important experimental venture in the whole history of American education’ (quoted in Skilbeck

⁸² *The Economist* estimates the U.S. market for teaching materials and supplies for home-schoolers to be worth at least \$850m a year (2004).

1970:10). This survey has outlined a *worldwide*, multi-cultural phenomenon that looks set to challenge the supremacy of many a previous educational venture. Indeed, today's leaders at every level of society must pay serious attention to the claims of the home education movement: a phenomenon that is at once anti-modern and ultra-modern, and one that is here to stay.⁸³

Catholic Home Education:

If the home education phenomenon barely registers on the radar of mainline educational inquiry, then the subset, *Catholic* home education, is even more difficult to detect.⁸⁴

Furthermore, from an ecclesiastical point of view, it is potentially problematic—given the Church's prescriptions regarding the nature of purportedly Catholic education. Yet it too is a vibrant movement, for which most of the characteristics reported above—including the unreliability of statistics—hold true.⁸⁵ The rationale behind the inclusion of Catholic home education here is:

1. to define the nature of Catholic home education;
2. to examine the justifications for its operation within the Catholic tradition;
3. to investigate the degree to which it aligns with the neo-orthodox Catholic identity that has been described.

Particularly before the Second Vatican Council, many Catholic parents and pastors considered it an obligation or duty to send their children to a Catholic school, because State schools were considered inimical to the faith.⁸⁶ The thrust of this study has now shown that there is

⁸³ Talbot points to this 'new counterculture' as a movement 'distinctly modern, even forward-looking': 'It is modern in some superficial ways, such as in its use of the Internet to pass along curricula and teaching tips and to create instant support networks. And it is modern in some deeper ways—for example, in its capacity to fulfill needs that could have arisen only in our present social circumstances. Those include the need many parents feel to shield their families from a commercial culture they regard as soulless, acquisitive, overly sexualized, and corrosive of family ties'. (2001 online)

⁸⁴ Catholic home education is conceived here as pertaining to *practicing* (as distinct from *nominal*) Catholic families.

⁸⁵ Rudner's extensive American survey claimed Catholics to constitute five percent of those who are home educated (1998 online). This datum is offered for what it may contribute to these virtually unresearched numbers.

⁸⁶ The three articles (cited previously) written by the renowned Jesuit scholar, John Hardon, contrasting Catholic beliefs with Dewey's teachings, linked the latter solely with the American *state* system of the 1950s.

sometimes little differentiation between the two systems in very many ways: a development even admitted by the Church hierarchy. For instance, Edouard Cardinal Gagnon, when President of the Pontifical Council for the Family (the highest office in Rome on the family), remarked,

In times past, parents were only too happy to be assisted by the Catholic school system in the formation of their children. Now, however, it is no longer the case in many a diocese where Catholic schools are permitted to use certain catechetical texts, which though bearing an imprimatur, are gravely deficient in following the Magisterium. (quoted in Seton Home Study School 2006b online)

Another take on the efficacy of Catholic schools is provided in the keynote address to the 2006 National Catholic Education Conference, Sydney, where Cardinal Pell painted a not over-optimistic picture of the beliefs and practices of young Catholics—based on the recent research project, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, dealing with 13-29 year olds (2006 online). He mentions a ‘religious confusion’ that is ‘worse than that of all other young Australian Christians’ instanced by higher than average rates for abandonment of the practice of the faith among Catholic females (a new development) as well as males (29% by the age of 29). Pell characterizes the widespread opinion among Catholic youth that morals and beliefs are relative (held by 56% and 75% respectively) as indicative of ‘a malaise ... in the general approach to life’. Conversely, around one fifth of religiously committed students complained of forms of harassment from others.

Pell does not solely blame Catholic schools for this state of affairs, but he does link certain of the above to the pressures of contemporary propaganda, the inadequacies of family life and Catholic education and, in particular, to the sometimes ‘ill effects of courses in comparative religion’.⁸⁷

Pell sees the hypothesis of an accelerated Catholic slippage to be little contradicted by some aspects of Catholic school enrolments: Catholic schools educate 20% of Australia’s children (most being from the middle class); between 23-44% of students in Catholic schools are non-

⁸⁷ These Australian figures, as well as the devastating rates of practice of the faith among Catholic-educated students, are bolstered by the findings of Saker (see O’Brien 2005:3; Gilchrist 2006:6), Flynn and Mok (see Gilchrist 2002:6), and echo in the important conclusions of the nationwide American surveys conducted by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (see Reilly 2003:38-46; 2003).

Catholics; 5% of Catholic school students attend non Catholic private schools; an average 43% of Catholic school students attend state schools (with far higher percentages for poorer Catholics). Further, most schools have no dedicated religious (priests, brothers and nuns) on staff, while 20% of teachers are non-Catholic or non-practicing Catholics. Against the backdrop of these parameters, Pell reflects on the impact of Catholic schools with a series of questions, among which he asks:

- Do Catholic schools retain today a capacity to strengthen the faith and improve the morals of their students, as they did in the past?
- Are Catholic truths presented to students sequentially and comprehensively over the 13 years of schooling? Do students know what are the 4 or 5 fundamental truths of our faith?
- What strategies would overturn the assumption that all morality is relative? How can the truths about life, marriage, family and social justice be defended?
- Is it a concern that few Catholic schools are listed among the best academic schools?
- Is there sufficient diversity among Catholic schools?
- How can we attract committed Catholic school graduates into the teaching profession?
- (Also mentioned are means of outreach to non-Catholic students, to poor families and to Catholics in state schools.)

While these matters are apparently of minor interest to certain of the 27% Australian Catholic population, many educators, clerics and families are evidently satisfied that Catholic schools do succeed in addressing such demands. Speaking before a Catholic *schools* conference, Pell understandably (but perhaps not helpfully) avoids factoring in the reality of home education, which is exercised as an option by those whose faith in the Catholic system to meet their expectations may be less than robust.

In our school-oriented society, it is not surprising that home education is viewed with suspicion (if not completely ignored) by most bishops, clergy, and education leaders who are engaged enough in promoting or defending their own Catholic schools.⁸⁸ So, it must be asked: Do there exist valid justifications for this growing movement about which an official comment from the magisterium or the Pope is yet to be made?

⁸⁸ Support varies, with some clergy and religious even involved in chaplaincy, teaching and liaison with home educators.

Parents as Primary Educators:

Certainly, while one would scan official Vatican documents in vain for a single instance of the term *home education*, the search yields abundant results if the correct descriptors are identified and utilized. The Seton Home Study School's article, 'Home schooling based on Catholic Church teaching', points to the key element in this search:

Does the Catholic Church allow home schooling? Absolutely, yes! In fact, the Catholic Church strongly supports home schooling. Several documents of the Church use language specifically stating that parents must be acknowledged as first and foremost educators of their children:

- Canon Law
- Vatican II *Declaration on Christian Education*, #3
- Pope John Paul II *The Role of the Christian family in the Modern World*, #36-40
- *On Catechesis in Our Time*, #68
- *The Charter of the Rights of the Family*
- *Guidelines for Education Within the Family*, Chapter IV (by the Pontifical Council for the Family, 1995)
- and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994.

While not using the words home schooling directly, all the documents of the Catholic Church mentioned above leave absolutely no doubt that the primary right of education and the duty of education lie with the parents. The parents are the primary educators. (2006b online)

Evidently, the concept of 'parents as primary educators' a topic fraught with meaning. Indeed, we find this to be exactly the case when we study the emphasis on the role and duties of parents in the named documents, and realize the ensuing implications for home schooling.

- ***The Code of Canon Law***: 'Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate them' #226 §2.
- ***The Second Vatican Council***: marriage is 'ordained toward the begetting and education of children'; parents 'should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those [to] whom it has been transmitted' (*Gaudium et Spes*, #50). 'Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can

compensate for their failure in it.’ (*Gravissimum Educationis*, #3).

- **Pope John Paul II:** ‘The right and duty of parents to give education is essential since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; it is irreplaceable and inalienable and therefore, incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others’. (*Familiaris Consortio*, #36)
- **The Charter of the Rights of the Family:** ‘Since they have conferred life on their children, parents have the original primary and inalienable right to educate them; hence they must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children ... Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions ... Parents have the right to freely choose schools or other means necessary to educate their children in keeping with their convictions’ (Article 5, a and b).
- **Catechism of the Catholic Church:** ‘The right and duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable’ (Holy See 1994: #2221).

These excerpts witness to two facts:

1. A consistent similarity of wording that underscores the importance of the role of parents in the most definite terms.
2. All sources being either Conciliar or post-Vatican II, these documents belie the tendency to portray home educators—who interpret these teachings at face value—as anchored to the past.

The following will look at the legitimacy of home education by Catholic parents. Of the sources named above, therefore, the most pertinent here is the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*—officially promulgated as ‘the Church’s fundamental legislative document’ and ‘a great effort to translate the conciliar ecclesiological teaching into canonical terms’ (The Canon Law Society Trust :xiii-xiv). References to Canon Law in this section will be interspersed with explanatory commentary from canon lawyer and home educator, Benedict Nguyen.

The rôle of parents as primary educators is often invoked by clerics and in educational mission statements, but with the almost automatic anticipation or assumption that school will naturally

be handed the educational role *in loco parentis*. To reduce the meaning of *primary* to nothing more than *first* (in temporal order) is an erroneous interpretation. Nguyen points out that to recognize ‘parents as primary educators’ does not prove parents to be the ‘only educators’, but ‘primary’ in the sense that it is they who must decide, prayerfully and reasonably, the proper means of education for their child and, ‘just as importantly, it is they who must make the determination of whether or not to delegate part of this child’s formation to others—and, if so, to whom and how much’ (2004 online).

Again it is often assumed that parents’ role is limited to providing an elementary formation of their children in the human, the moral and the spiritual (e.g. Baptism, elementary faith practices, enrolment in the parish school!) before handing over to the “professionals”—at which point some parents consider themselves greatly absolved of educational responsibility (as many a school teacher could attest). But the Church’s interpretation of parental duty is patent from the very first word in the directives on ‘Catholic Education’ in Canon Law, ‘*Parents*’:

‘Parents, and those who take their place, have both the obligation and the right to educate their children’. (793 §1)

Nguyen points out that before examining the role of schools or pastors or even bishops in Catholic education, this section begins with this clear and forceful reminder about parents (2004 online). When actually addressing those who normally take the place of parents, canon law does so in terms of calling for the ‘closest cooperation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children’ (796 §2).

The next point is equally important: ‘Catholic parents have also the duty and right to choose those means and institutes which, in their local circumstances, can best promote the Catholic education of their children’ (793 §1). This canon is given added weight for the fact that *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* names the ‘covenant’ of marriage as an ‘institution’ (Holy See 1994:#1639).

The canon declares that Catholic parents have the duty and the right to determine not only which institutions can help to provide for their children’s Catholic education, but first and foremost, which *means* are the best means by which to accomplish this task. Catholic parents are well within their canonical rights to choose the institution of the family instead of the institution of the school to achieve this goal. (Nguyen 2004)

In fact, in more recent Church education policy there has been a quite notable shift in emphasis and terminology. Whereas before, it was the Catholic *school*, now it is Catholic *education* (with its much broader connotations) that is frequently invoked:

While the now abrogated 1917 *Code of Canon Law* emphasized “schools” in its section on education, the current 1983 *Code of Canon Law* employs a more general “Catholic Education” as its focus, with “schools” being among the elements considered under Catholic education. Many canonists have pointed out that this was no accident’. (ibid.)

This new emphasis is reinforced in the Code’s discussion of the *means* of education: ‘Among the means of advancing education, Christ’s faithful are to consider schools as of great importance, since they are the principal means of helping parents to fulfil their role in education’ (796 §1). The language used outlines the highly valuable but clearly not exclusive educational function of the Catholic school as the common means of providing Catholic education without obliging parents to any one choice, so leaving room for other alternatives. Nguyen takes up the theme:

The point is that among the various ways, home schooling is a legitimate and proper expression of the vocational duty of parents in the education of their children *even when* other means are available, including the existence of Catholic schools. Home schooling is not and should not be a decision that Catholic parents make when they have no choice, but rather should be the fruit of a reasoned, prayerful consideration of what is the most advantageous way in which each individual child of theirs can acquire a truly Catholic education. (2004 online)

Canon 797 stipulates that ‘Parents must have a real freedom of choice in their schools’ and urges the Church to be watchful that ‘civil society acknowledges this freedom of parents’ and even provides them with assistance. The inclusion of home education in the interpretation of this Canon is logically demanded in order that the Church not be put ...

... in the hypocritical position of demanding from the state a true freedom for parents in the choice of means and schools, on the basis of natural-law argumentation, while absolutely denying this natural-law right when it comes to home schooling. (Nguyen: ibid.)

Furthermore, Catholics worldwide have set up many private schools, academies, colleges and universities that function outside the usual diocesan Catholic education system, and usually first designate themselves *independent* rather than *Catholic*.⁸⁹ Consistency demands that if home education should be disallowed as unlawful, then so should these other educational establishments—which are not Catholic so-called.

Canon 803 §3 requires that ‘No school, even if it is in fact catholic, may bear the title “catholic school” except by the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority’. Thereby, ‘canon law acknowledges the existence of schools that are in fact Catholic but not formally designated as such’ (Nguyen: *ibid.*) and also highlights the serious responsibility for the recognised “Catholic” institution to exhibit a truly “Catholic” identity.

Canon 798 turns to parental duties: ‘Parents are to send their children to those schools which will provide for their catholic education. If they cannot do this, they are bound to ensure the proper catholic education of their children outside the school’. Here we notice an emphasis upon the *means* which best provide a Catholic education rather than on the institution of the *school*. Similarly, the Vatican II document on education teaches that, ‘Parents are reminded of their duty to send their children to Catholic schools wherever this is possible...’ (*Gravissimum Educationis* #8). Nguyen comments that the phrase ‘wherever possible’ is not absolute: parents may find it impossible to follow this directive in two ways: *physically*, due to distance or geography; or *morally*, because of objections to or dissatisfaction with available means (which may include financial considerations).

So far we have concentrated on the *primary* aspect in the definition of parents as primary educators. But what of the *educational* nature of the parental primary role? Clearly, the definition of an education that is Catholic extends to far more than just religious or catechetical considerations: a point that previous chapters have elaborated and which Canon 795 reinforces:

Education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person, so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society. Children and young persons are therefore to be cared for in such a way that their physical, moral and intellectual talents may develop in a harmonious manner, so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and a right use of freedom, and be formed to take an active part in social life.

⁸⁹ Examples are the network of ParEd schools (such as Redfield and Tangara College in New South Wales).

Canon 1136 adds to this the particular responsibilities entailed by parenthood: ‘Parents have the most grave obligation and the primary right to do all in their power to ensure their children’s physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing’. There are obvious expectations here, too, in regard to children’s educational rights and principal needs.

On the Rights of the Church

The Church allows a surprising leeway within parental jurisdiction, but also claims certain rights for itself in education. Firstly, it is the task of the competent ecclesiastical authority—*not* of Catholic parents—to decide whether a school is “Catholic” or not. Nguyen discerns two strands of argument here:

Whether or not a Catholic parent can formally determine the Catholicity of a school is not the issue ... I would submit, however, that this is not what is going on canonically. Home-schooling parents are not determining whether a school is Catholic (they do not have the canonical right to do so), but rather they are determining what is the best means by which they believe *their children* can attain a Catholic education. (Nguyen 2004 online)

Additionally, it is incumbent upon parents who choose to home educate to ensure the continuity with Catholic principles of their educational programme. This is a crucial but unproblematic area if parents refer to themselves the exacting standards demanded of schools:

Formation and education in a catholic school must be based on the principles of catholic doctrine, and the teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life. (Canon 803 §2)⁹⁰

Finally, while the Church disdains an ingrained bureaucratic attitude among its various members towards home schoolers (who remain well within ecclesial discipline), it also demands that the latter respect and acknowledge the undeniable contributions and achievements of its many Catholic schools.

Subsidiarity:

At base, the reasoning and arguments presented so far revolve around what has been called ‘a most important principle of “social philosophy”’, ‘a permanent element ... among the most constant and characteristic directives of the Church’s social doctrine’ (Pontifical Council for

⁹⁰ Canons 804-806 contain other stipulations about Catholic educational formation and the central involvement of the diocesan Bishop in this regard.

Justice and Peace 2004: #186): namely, *the principle of subsidiarity*. In most rudimentary form, this philosophical principle can be reduced to ‘the idea that we should never do for an individual what [s]he can do for [herself/] himself (Seton Home Study School 2006b online). The idea was fully enunciated by Pius XI in the Encyclical Letter, *Quadragesimo Anno*:

Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so it is also an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them. (quoted in Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004:#186)

On the basis of this principle, all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help (“subsidium”)—therefore of support, promotion, development—with respect to lower-order societies ... This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer the community. (ibid.:187)

Stemming from this, we can conclude that the right to decide if one is capable or not of undertaking the education of children lies within the bounds of the parents’ conscience. Nowhere does Canon Law enforce a requirement that parents enrol their children in Catholic schools, nor does it give to bishops, priests, schools or any other agent the canonical authority to define what may constitute the best means of providing a catholic education for an individual child in any given circumstances: ‘The parent is the one to decide: “I am capable to teach,” or “I cannot do this alone. I need help”’ (Seton Home Study School 2006b online)

The Church gives certain guidelines, but ultimately places before parents the momentous responsibility of deciding how to educate their own children. For their own good reasons, the majority will choose the school. For them, too, home education will remain an untenable option or, perhaps, an unknown avenue. Others may take upon themselves the education role, deeming it within their suitabilities to do so. Even an eclectic mix of some school years and some home tutoring may be the answer for this particular child at this particular time.⁹¹ It belongs to no one

⁹¹ One may ask, why home educate when the reasons cited for doing so also support the idea of small, informal schools? Dr Mary Kay Clark, home educator and director of Seton Home Study, a leading Catholic home education correspondence programme, gives her perspective:

‘The time, money, and energy involved in running a parent-operated school is great. I helped to establish one in Columbus, Ohio, and was the principal during the 1970’s.

to judge the rightful choice of others—just as it is imperative that all involved in Catholic education (whatever its manifestation) stay informed and aligned with present Church teaching.

Towards a Manifesto of Catholic Home Education:

The first four chapters of this thesis outlined certain essentials of a neo-orthodox Catholic philosophy of education with which Deweyan educational derivatives were shown to be in basic conflict. Tackling issues of a very different kind, the present chapter established the characteristics of home schooling in its generic form, and then ascertained a *canonical* basis for its Catholic counterpart. It now remains to draw together these seemingly variant findings by plumbing the extent of the relationship between the theoretical paradigm enlarged in the preceding chapters and the application case now being studied. This we do by returning to a question that stands at the heart of this thesis—namely, the hypothesis: *Whether, educationally and philosophically speaking, Catholic home education may be considered a tenable option and, by inference, whether it therefore operates as an authentic instance of neo-orthodox Catholic practice?*

We probe this final question in the scholastic manner; that is, by first scrutinizing the claims that run counter to the disputed point. (The *Summa Theologiae*, for instance, uses this device.)

Objection One: *It seems that the Catholic family—being itself an imperfect society—is unequal to the task of furnishing a balanced educational environment: hence, the necessity of recourse to Catholic schools in raising children.*

St Thomas teaches that because the family ‘unlike the Church, is not a perfect, or complete, society, its task of nurturing and developing man is eventually continued by that perfect society

A parent-operated school needs to be run by someone whose children are grown, or by someone whose career is taking care of the school. Mothers who are having children are the ones who want such a school, but they cannot give the proper amount of time to their own children and families if they run a school.

The constant problem of raising enough money to pay the rent and the salaries can be emotionally and physically draining ... Some parent-operated schools are successful, but most are not. Most ... have a short life span. Many do not make it through the first year due to financial pressures, leadership problems, personality differences of the board members, children with learning problems, and parents whose ideas about various aspects of the school differ ... I continue to believe that the best choice for Catholic families is home schooling. There is simply no better place for children than at home with their parents’. (Clark, Mary 1993:12-13)

in the natural order which is the state or civil society' (in Conway 1960:156). Logically, this appears to be an unassailable argument in favour of school education—Catholic or otherwise. Conway, though (himself, a Thomistic educationalist), augments this principle with the proviso that, 'Needless to say, should the state become perverse, then education must perforce be undertaken by that more elementary group, the family' (1960:18).

In effect, the Catholic school system was set up to address both circumstances. The act of practicing Catholic parents entrusting their children to reliably Catholic schools was nothing but an extension of the first principle. These schools, after all (in the days when they were mainly staffed by priests, professed brothers or nuns), were commonly perceived as a very branch of the family itself. At the same time—in application of the second principle—Catholics gravitated away from state or secular schools, these being considered (by parents *and* the Magisterium) generally inimical to the upbringing of their children. Few would go so far as to label public schooling *perverse* (i.e., systematically and ideologically promoting a set of values which totally clashed against those of the Catholic tradition); nonetheless, secular schools were still very much at odds with Catholic belief. But they posed a limited threat, as Catholic parents had at their disposal schools of their own denomination and saw no need to personally undertake the onerous educational task.

Today, perceptions are changing. Now more circumspect, Catholics are no longer in near-unanimous agreement that their schools are efficient in transmitting the expected values to the younger generation or capable of accommodating the best interests of their families. As extensively formulated in the preceding pages, there exist the very real dilemmas posed by inauthentic, institutionalized "Catholic" practice, while a forthcoming short or long-term solution to the problem is yet to eventuate: a situation that does little to alleviate the *immediate* need of parents to best educate their children in the few short years at their disposal. Basic assumptions—for example, 'that Catholic schools existed primarily to teach Catholicism and to turn out graduates who would continue to practise the Catholic religion'—are downplayed, generating 'widespread anxiety' amongst Catholics (Denahy 1988:18). Elsewhere, veteran analysts such as Hardon have detailed the 'widespread secularization of what was once strong Catholic education', opining that, '...there is nothing more important for the survival of the Catholic Church...than sound Catholic Home Schooling' (in Clark, Mary 1993:413, 415).⁹²

⁹² John Hardon, the Jesuit scholar whose critique of Dewey was referenced earlier on, became a staunch promoter of Catholic home education in the last decades of his life.

Indeed, disquieted parents *are* turning to Catholic home education in preference to its systemic counterpart—as testified by this Australian father who took ‘what seemed the radical step’ of taking his children out of school to be taught at home:

...I can only say that, in practice, the system has proved easy, effective and economical. Free from peer pressures children mature rapidly. They readily gain self-assurance and learn to socialise well, which is the opposite of what some fear...

Gone are the worries about children being taught religious ideas, moral values or political leanings at variance with those of their parents. One can ensure, almost effortlessly, that one's children are taught the Catholic faith in its integrity and entirety, that they become competent in basic mathematics and excellent in the use of English...

Any parent with a reasonable education can easily achieve this much. Where extra coaching is necessary, it can be readily obtained. (Denahy 1988:18)

Reply to Objection One: We maintain that, in many cases, the present attitude of Catholic home education in regard to Catholic schools compares to the past attitude of Catholic schools in regard to state schools. Put in starkest form: just as in the past Catholic practice conscientiously avoided state schools, so now, a number of Catholics reject their own systemic schools for the very reason that they are very little different from public / state ones. These same parents assume responsibility for passing on the deposit of the faith and rise to the challenge of teaching their children all the academic subjects at home, finding this the most effective means at their disposal for striving to deliver the essential ingredients of a Catholic upbringing. This obviates the argument that, always and everywhere, Catholics must rely on Catholic schools. It also marks home education as a solid alternative quest for authentic Catholicity, encapsulated in Hardon’s formulation of Catholic home schooling as a process of teaching ‘that which has been believed by professed and practicing Catholics over the centuries’ (in Clark, Mary 1993:413).

Objection Two: *Granted, that if Catholic schools do not supply an educational panacea, it is nevertheless a self-delusion for untrained parents to hope to bridge the gulf between such lofty pedagogical ideals as have been advocated throughout this study and their own educational venture.*

Articulated hereinbefore, we have the magnificence of the “pedagogical cathedrals” erected by the likes of Aquinas and Rosmini, as well as the principles and rich traditions of Catholic education. We also have Catholic mothers and fathers—often without the assistance of

professional teachers—seeing fit to embark on a personal educational enterprise. Could the one type of construct possibly have any relation to the other?

An answer is suggested in the particular phrase taken up by one leading writer in the field:

What is Catholic Home Schooling? ... Simply put, Catholic Home Schooling means that the directives from the Church and the Bible given for education are put into effect in the family. At the same time, the family is living the Catholic family life as the “domestic church,” the church of the home’. (Clark, Mary 1993:21)

The choice of the Vatican II epithet, ‘domestic church’ (1964: #11), is apposite: if the institution of the family equates to the Church in microcosm, the inference is that the same institution is also entrusted with assuming its due part in the Catholic educative function. Even though fashioning the more humble edifice of a church rather than a cathedral, parents are still effectively fulfilling their mandate whenever their foundations are laid in correspondence to the ecclesial model.

In fact, St Thomas founds his own pedagogical cathedral (namely, in the preliminary wording of the very *Prologue* to his *Summa Theologiae*) purposing ‘to treat of whatever belongs to the Christian religion in such a way as may tend to the instruction of beginners’. Aquinas makes this cornerstone his departure point, ‘...because a teacher of Catholic truth ought not only to teach the learned ...’ (quoted in Farrell, W & Healy 1952:v-vi).

And by its very nature, home education revolves around beginners, beginnings and instructing the untutored. In a radical new start, families are initiating a clean sweep of education. They make the judgement to build anew—seeking neither to inhabit nor to renovate the existing structures, but bypassing them completely. This they do without wishing to set themselves up in competition with mainstream education, nor by hoping to emulate all the facilities that schools so well provide. Aware, too, that no human enterprise can claim to be perfect, these parents aspire to equip their children with something they perceive to be lacking in the schools, believing themselves able to communicate something over and above that offered by a standardised education. Parents are convinced that ‘the most effective evangelization is from parents to children’; moreover they find in this learning apprenticeship ‘the best way to live the authentic Catholic family life’ (Clark, Mary 1993:19-20). In exercising their prerogative, Catholic parents may so be said to unselfconsciously aspire to the Aristotelian / Thomistic precept that ‘... the slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the highest things is more

desirable than the most certain knowledge of lesser things' (1998: I, q.i, a.5).

There is concrete evidence, too, that these unlikely educational practitioners have chanced upon an especial formula. Composed of diverse and isolated strains and operating in daily obscurity, Catholic home education defies easy analysis. At the same time, this world-wide, invisible college inscribes its signature in one readily accessible, up-to-date research source: the Internet. Even a cursory survey of websites dedicated to promoting, informing, resourcing or otherwise supporting Catholic home schooling (e.g. Kolbe Academy 2008; Seton Home Study School 2006a; St. Thomas Aquinas Academy 2008; Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc 2008—the last, an Australian group) leaves no doubt as to the global tenor of this movement. Mirroring the aspirations of Catholic home educating communities, these various sites appeal to certain common denominators: academically, they yield categorical proof of the re-establishment of orthodox (not necessarily traditionalist) practice and content in catechetics, while the learning and teaching methods and the curricula espoused frequently draw from the liberal arts tradition (philosophy, Latin, history, classical literature).⁹³ As to their Catholic orientation, these associations unvaryingly demonstrate loyalty to the tradition of the Church and to the Magisterium.

In short, these “virtual” institutions witness to an overall repudiation of experimentalist methodologies and— what is more—manifest a thorough, ostensible and explicit Thomistic inspiration.⁹⁴ From this conglomeration of home education websites there emanates, as it were, a collective “Mission Statement” expressive of those *essentials* argued herein as constitutive of Catholic education.⁹⁵ Could the same quality be said to typify the mission statement issued by many a Catholic school or educational bureaucracy?

⁹³The prime outcome of Catholic home schooling, contends Berquist, should be nothing less than the delivery of ‘a truly Catholic intellectual formation’ (1994:3).

⁹⁴ It would be a pretence to nominate all catholic home educators Thomists. Could it be surmised, though, that they overwhelmingly count as anonymous Thomists? If asked, “Are you conversant with the teachings of St Thomas?” the majority would answer in the negative; if asked, “Do you agree in principle with this or that Thomistic proposition?” most would clearly answer in the affirmative.

Here we are adapting (while not necessarily endorsing) the controversial theological concept of the equally controversial, Karl Rahner who postulated the existence of the ‘anonymous Christian’. Rahner claimed that ‘those who do not know Christ explicitly can nevertheless encounter him “anonymously” and live in the grace of Christ in a mysterious way, thus being in communion with the Church’ (Engelbreton 2003:62).

⁹⁵ Many contributions from these web pages have already been cited throughout this debate.

Such unity of purpose spanning an international spectrum of home education exponents betokens the influence of a guiding principle—like a compass orienting practitioners in the direction of the same true North. Again (despite their limitations and against many real obstacles and odds), the majority of families both persevere and succeed in their educative project. Acting with a confidence at once spiritual and human, the option to home educate is a natural outcome of their own conscientious belief and commonsensical motives.

The shared vision and resolve objectified in the group being studied bespeak the operation of a certain *Catholic instinct*. Hereby is intended not some privileged illumination bestowed on Catholics; rather, although abetted by faith, the *sensus catholicus* is activated by an interplay of intellectual and moral factors that produce true conviction. It is a process akin to that which preoccupied John Henry Newman and found expression in his theorem of the *illative sense*: a manner of reasoning often ‘beyond articulation but more certain than logical argument’. The basis for such assent Newman likened to...

... a *cable*, which is made up of a number of separate threads, each feeble, yet together as sufficient as an iron rod. An iron rod represents mathematical or strict demonstration; a cable represents moral demonstration, which is an assemblage of probabilities, separately insufficient for certainty, but when put together, irrefragable. (quoted in Dessain 1980:158)

This ‘power or faculty of judging and concluding, when perfected by experience’ (ibid.:157), or, ‘right judgement in ratiocination’ (quoted in Shannon 1996:231) approximates the series of reasonings, subconscious and deliberate, that make the determination to home educate one befitting both *Catholic instinct* and good sense.

Reply to Objection Two: We maintain that, far from there being a vast chasm between traditional Catholic praxis and education by Catholic families in the home, there are establishable links between the two, and that in the latter is found one hopeful sign of the maintenance (or recovery, as the case may be) of the very ideals and principles of the former. While this lay initiative amounts to a new educational foundation, it is continuous with positions argued in these pages as Catholic essentials: unity with the Pope and Magisterium, conformity to the vision of Vatican II, philosophical openness to Thomistic ontological claims, a strong Catholic identity in line with the Holy See’s teaching on Catholic education, and basic adherence to a liberal arts upbringing. Home education, therefore, offers young Catholics an alternative to the diet of the experimental and the experiential that schools have incorporated into many religious and academic programmes.

Accordingly, Catholic home education becomes not a parental self-delusion but a practical and rational response to the impasse that confronts families when faced with the unsatisfactory standards of some schools, for which reason it may be characterised not an *extreme* but an *extraordinary* pedagogical choice.

In delving into the whys and wherefores of Catholic home education, we have summoned factual evidence and pursued a methodology of some rigour. But in a departure from data of purely quantifiable kind, we have also permitted ourselves a margin of speculation in order to fathom the intangibles of Catholic home education—a line of investigation we follow on good authority. ‘Remember that education is a matter of the heart...’ (1883 online): so stated Saint John Bosco (among the most successful and practical-minded Catholic educators of all time) in one of his final letters to his Salesian Order. Bosco’s directive is a reminder that the workings of a true pedagogical philosophy concern not just the head but also the heart.

Conclusion

If certain defects of schools have been catalogued, this is not to undervalue the fine achievements of the school system. Similarly, listing the merits of home education is in no way an attempt to over-idealise the subject. Home education is a calling, if you will, and by no means a universal one. As against the relative ease of sending children to schools, home educators tread a path that does not favour a life of comfort, suggested in the phrases that spring to mind when describing this demanding task: breaking new ground; putting out into the deep; taking a step in the dark. These families also face the prospect of being labelled educational radicals and social pariahs.

Yet, alongside the negative aspects, Catholic home education has its own valid returns to make to the world of education and to the Church. One interpretation compares home schooling families to bastions of orthodoxy, to a ‘faithful remnant’ (Clark, Mary 1993:xxx) that is helping to preserve Catholic culture much as did the monasteries in the Dark Ages. Whether we accept this wholesale, there is something of use in the analogy. In harking back to a more “primitive rule”, the small voice of Catholic home education powerfully critiques the dominant structures. In its ‘simplicity and elegance’ (a Rosminian ideal) it holds up a mirror reflecting back—from a new angle--on the complexities, on the sometime complacent and (dare one say) bragging institutional monopolies that flourish in an atmosphere where formal schooling is taken as normative. The dedication of home education families in general may contribute to reinforcing

a sense of vocation in the teaching profession at large, while its Catholic relation exemplifies the perseverance found wanting in the professed religious educators who have deserted schools in droves.⁹⁶ Finally, the home education initiative ties in with the Rosminian educational belief in regard to very great freedom for teachers and flexibility of method (cf. Toomey 1988:4.15-4.16): the expertise amassed by home educating communities being contributory towards less standardised and more diversified teaching and learning outcomes.

Hence, is confirmed the hypothesis that Catholic home education is a philosophically and educationally valid pathway and that it complies with the neo-orthodox tradition *sine glossa*.

⁹⁶ To which situation was addressed the Vatican's *Consecrated Persons and Their Missions in Schools* (2002).

Concluding Section:

AT the conclusion of this ambitious study, it is opportune to reflect back on the beginnings and to make a final survey of the journey that has been undertaken. In the sense of recalling and reinvestigating core principles, this work could be described (borrowing Taylor's phrase) as an 'essay in retrieval' (1989:10). It has sought to pursue its purposes along seldom-traversed byways: via Aquinas, who should be familiar to the Catholic world, but who provokes minimal attention nowadays; Rosmini, who has barely emerged from the philosophical suspicion and 'theological cloud' (Hunt?2002:17) obscuring him for the last hundred and fifty years; Dewey, who has made profound inroads into Catholic academic thought, while being the last person one would instinctively associate with religiosity; and the almost hidden Catholic home education initiative—seemingly destined to remain in status a very poor relative of the schools.

The nature of the chosen topics has, therefore, necessitated a degree of (not unjustified) reading between the lines. Throughout, the main themes interrelate extensively, such that the overall scheme reveals itself only by grasping the interdependence of chapter upon chapter. By way of synthesis and summary, this proposal is now re-presented with some final comments.

Faith without Reason

*Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience...*⁹⁷

The Catholic Church has entered new and testing times. The “bringing-up-to-date” envisaged by John XXIII in convening Vatican Council II has often—and without foundation—been construed as an opportunity to revolutionize the existing order. Whereas Pope John would have thrown open the windows of the Church to allow in the breeze of fresh ideas, others would have demolished the very walls in attempting to install their own concepts. This study has variously witnessed that the “spirit of Vatican II”, when invoked without advertence to its dual character of fidelity (*ressourcement*) and dynamic (*aggiornamento*), remains little more than a phantom.

Adding an extra dimension to the discussion in these pages is the fact of their having been composed within the defining historical moment of the election of a new pope. Long before the

⁹⁷ (John Paul II 1998b: #48)

death of John Paul II—who was both heralded and scorned, and presided over the Church during quarter of a century of unprecedented change and technical progress in the wider world—many disgruntled Catholics anticipated a different future: surely the *next* pope would finally usher in the democratization of the Church (and perhaps even convoke Vatican Council III).⁹⁸ But this has not occurred—although the successor to the four popes of the conciliar era has, from the very choice of his name, suggested an intent to embark on a fresh course. Here, perceived a progressive thinker, and there, a conservative, Benedict XVI—like his recent predecessors—was an active participant in the Second Vatican Council; however, he differs in his educational background from the long line of Thomistic popes since Leo XIII.

A recurring motif of the former Cardinal Ratzinger was that the Church should not consider itself obligated to maintain and preserve links with institutions that have seriously and wilfully compromised their Catholic identity—the *quality* of ‘uncompromising Catholicity’ (rather than the numerical *quantity* of ‘Catholic-lite’ establishments) being the criterion by which the modern Church may well re-evaluate its sponsorship of organizations (Miller 2005b:11-14; Miller 2006:5; cf. Pell in Livingstone 2002:314). Commentators have speculated that this motif may re-surface in the current papacy.

Whatever may eventuate, Ratzinger’s concession admits the possible loss of an institution’s commitment to maintaining its ecclesial union. Speaking in terms of schools (but equally applicable elsewhere), the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) asserts that the complexity of the modern world necessitates a strong emphasis ‘that this ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its ... activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission’ (1997: #11).

Rosmini critiqued this very phenomenon in terms of a disordered *esprit de corps* that readily permeates religious orders in particular. When members love their institute more than they love the Church, notes Rosmini, these institutes are changed into ‘so many sects ... which instead of aiming at the general good of the Church ... finish by putting first their own advantage’ (quoted in Leetham 1957:83). As this work has pointed out, other foundations (be they educational, intellectual or other) are no less susceptible to the same shortcoming—the ultimate outcome of which is the rise of eclecticist or syncretist factions that share no meaningful reference to Christ

⁹⁸ Others were hoping for a champion of the traditionalist cause.

and the Church other than the appellation “Catholic”. No matter their influence and appeal, the alien constructs and traditions of this firmly entrenched parallel “magisterium” may be judged to be categorically uncatholic.

By contrast, the authentic Magisterium pits itself against the modern penchant for “doing it my way”—challenging Catholics to resolve the uncertainties that remain after reason has done its work with that ‘obedience of faith’ invoked by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Holy See 1994:#143–144) and elaborated by Neuhaus:

I may not understand an authoritative teaching of the Magisterium, I may have difficulties with a teaching, but, as Newman understood, a thousand difficulties do not add up to a doubt, never mind a rejection. I may think a teaching is inadequately expressed ... But, given a decision between what I think the Church should teach and what the Church in fact does teach, I decide for the Church. I decide freely and rationally—because God has promised the apostolic leadership of the Church guidance and charisms that He has not promised me; because I think the Magisterium just may understand some things that I don’t; because I know for sure that, in the larger picture of history, the witness of the Catholic Church is immeasurably more important than anything I might think or say. In short, I obey. (2003:3)

The Synthesis of Freedom and Truth, Knowledge and Wisdom

The Catholic faith is frequently portrayed as a collection of prohibitions (cf. Benedict XVI 2006b: #3) and the Church as narrow-minded and exclusivist. This study has shifted the problem by examining the ways in which the Church itself strives towards a universal outlook, and sees as inadequate and repressive relativist philosophies which do not admit of the totality of being and which confer an absolute character upon partial visions of the human person. When at the CCE helm, Cardinal Laghi described ‘a sort of “fusion” which has progressively led philosophical reflection to identify truth and freedom, making of this latter the only absolute—truth “dissolved” in freedom’. Laghi considers any such absolute affirmation of freedom ‘destined to lead to its own negation’ (1995:7). A corollary of this point is Ardley’s proposition that the principles of the perennial philosophy (Thomism) do not annihilate themselves in this ‘self-refuting’ way but, ‘on the contrary, assert themselves in the very act of being denied, so that far from being self-contradictory, they are inherently self-assertive’ (1950: ch. 15).

Opponents of relativism also agree as to the inevitable end product of relativistic thought: innumerable magisterial references vouch that, if detached from its constituent relation to truth, freedom in fact transforms into a species of tyranny:

- ‘Sundered from [transcending] truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially on experimental data...’ (John Paul II 1998b: #5).
- [To the Rosminian Order]: ‘Today’s dominant culture worships freedom and autonomy, while often following false paths which lead to new forms of slavery’. (John Paul II 1998a online)
- ‘Outside of the perception of a concrete Truth, unique and unchangeable, there remains only the banality of utilitarian thought, which makes the human being a slave of a finite purpose and finally of an abstract system, intolerant and tyrannical, which humiliates the person and does not recognize his vocation to the infinite and the eternal’. (Laghi 1995:14)

The present pope, too, speaks of a ‘dictatorship of relativism’—a phrase explicated in his last homily as a Cardinal (and delivered to the Conclave that was soon to elect him):

To have a clear faith, according to the creed of the Church, is often labeled as fundamentalism. While relativism, that is, allowing oneself to be carried about with every wind of "doctrine," seems to be the only attitude that is fashionable. A dictatorship of relativism is being constituted that recognizes nothing as absolute and which only leaves the "I" and its whims as the ultimate measure. (2005 online)

Benedict has pointed to ‘the massive presence in our society and culture of a relativism’ that does not acknowledge anything as definitive. This, he considers ‘a particularly insidious obstacle in the educational endeavor’, with the conclusion that, ‘In such a relativist horizon an authentic education is not possible’ (quoted in Miller 2005b:15-16). On similar grounds, the Congregation for Catholic Education specifies that in the present pluralistic culture, the Catholic school must refuse ‘to accept unquestioningly educational projects which are merely partial’ (1997: #16).

a. Discernment

By their fruits you shall know them. (Matthew 7:16)

Urgent is the need for some instrumentality that will help us to evaluate the welter of positions that co-exist in a pluralist society; in his *Spiritual Exercises*, St Ignatius names *discernment* that virtue by which the mind sifts the spirit of truth from falsity, and good from evil. The principal purpose of the encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor* (which proposes a response to the contemporary ‘crisis’ of values), Laghi sums up in the very word, “discernment”: ‘... it is not a “call to order,” but a penetrating look, an attention to the roots of the problems, an effort of clarity so as to prevent people from falling victim to their own illusions’ (1995:5). In *Fides et Ratio* the Holy See mandates bishops with the task of promoting philosophical rigour and guiding the faithful by the exercise of *discerning* leadership: ‘It is the Church’s duty to indicate the elements in a philosophical system which are incompatible with her own faith’, especially when these opinions directly ‘touch on the revealed truth of which she is the guardian’ (John Paul II 1998b: #50).

Edmondson discusses discernment in terms of Aquinas’ ‘practical wisdom’, which furnishes the knowledge of what to seek and what to avoid. Pedagogically, this equates to ‘educational prudence’ or ‘deliberation’ that guides educators in the ‘commonsensical application’ of sound principles and away from ‘careless guesswork’ and the ‘precipitous introduction ... of unproven pedagogy’ into the classroom (Edmondson 2006:91-94). *Vis à vis* contemporary demands and challenges in education, the CCE similarly calls for a discerning balance between ‘courageous renewal’ and ‘prudent innovation’ (1997: #3).

According to Rosmini’s analysis of the process of discernment, human nature is so constituted that the mind moves freely in a world of possibility until it is thrown into confusion by encountering contradiction (Rosmini 2001 #785, 790). Rephrasing the argument, Hunt writes: ‘When we try to put contradictory elements together in a single idea we see and feel the necessary force of the contradiction’ (?2002:30). Elements of modern society, however, tempt us to become “comfortable” with the irrational, to abandon the ‘logically possible ... containing nothing contradictory’ (ibid.): with its ceaseless (often chaotic) flux of information; with its ‘genuflections before the menacing heap of knowledge’ (Barzun); in the uncritical adoption of meaningless, politically correct language; in arguments that confound *equality* and *identity*; in futile comparisons of non-homogeneous realities. It is therefore unsurprising that we encounter

manifold reactions of confusion, lethargy, desensitisation and so on: undesirable attitudes that culminate in the indiscriminating decision to accord first priority to everything:

A legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based on the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today's most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in truth. (John Paul II 1998b: #5)

Here, there is no longer *Truth*, only *truths*—the intelligence renouncing its spirit of discernment and consciously habituating itself to a compromise with the absurd and illogical: a process which Ardley traces to an inner personal conflict:

... we must enquire why men allow themselves to be so deceived, or rather why they rejoice in being deceived. This is not a case of mere ignorance or error or failure to employ our faculties to the full: that is a failing to which we are all prone, and is not especially culpable. Addiction to the absurd has deeper roots: it is a symptom of an underlying alienation. It proceeds from moral corruption ...

The aberrant metaphysical systems feed moral turpitude; conversely they are erected by subconscious processes in an attempt to disguise that turpitude. They conceal a man's moral faults, not only from the gaze of the outside world, but from himself. (Ardley 1962:83)

This position has definite philosophical and societal manifestations; Rosmini mentions one: 'Whenever humans are deprived of some good essential to their mind, they inevitably fall into a sort of intellectual frenzy' (2001: #7). Might this interpretation partly explain the restlessness evident in many present educational settings; might it also account in part for the resultant 'weariness in pursuit of truth' (ibid. #22) and 'pedagogical tiredness' (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997: #6) on the part of "disengaged" students *and* teachers?

b. Teachers and the Core Purpose of Catholic Education

Vatican II affirms that it depends chiefly on teachers as to whether Catholic education achieves its purpose (1965a: #8). There emerge four main qualities that should distinguish Catholic teachers (educating either at home or in schools). Firstly, 'Teaching consists in communicating to others a truth meditated beforehand', writes St Thomas (quoted in Gilson, E 1957). In this way, teachers combine the fundamental contemplative and active states, having the specific vocation of effecting learning by transmitting their own reflections and discoveries. Secondly, teaching is also compared to martyrdom in the interpretation given by Miller, who uses *martyr* in its original meaning of *witness* (2005c online)—teachers witnessing by the integrity of their lives, and in the overall formation they pass on to students. Thirdly, teachers are likened to

missionaries. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* document reminding schools of their basic duty to evangelize, and the consequent collective and individual responsibility placed on teachers as participants in this enterprise (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997: #2, 18, 19).

Fourthly, teachers are called upon to demonstrate love in action. The current pontiff has newly emphasized the apostolate of ‘intellectual charity’ (Miller 2006:10): not insignificantly, the precise term and one of the distinguishing practices (together with temporal and spiritual charity) that Rosmini specified for his religious Institute by means of scholarship, schools and media (Rosminians 2006 online). The CCE likewise decrees a characteristic preferential option for the weak and the poor—whether victims of old or new forms of poverty: marginalisation, unemployment and the masses seeking for truth (1997: #2).

On such grounds, Archbishop Miller names it a ‘mistake’ for Catholic schools to be other than ‘rigorist’ in ensuring that teaching personnel are primarily practicing Catholics. The ‘blunt’ reason for this is given by the Congregation for Education: ‘... the Catholic school tries to create within its walls a climate in which the pupil’s faith will gradually mature and enable him to assume the responsibility placed on him by Baptism’ (2005c online).

No less vital to the Church’s educational project is the promotion and development of the whole person of each individual human being in his or her material and spiritual needs, explains the CCE. Modern education tends to focus on the technical, practical, phenomenological and didactic, and aims at a supposed generic neutrality. This has obscured the sphere of transcendent, ultimate objectives, which constitute the essence of education. (1997: #9-10). Thus, the Church rejects an outlook that subordinates the person to society, but also the reductionist premise that detaches freedom and autonomy from individual responsibility. Catholic schools have the task of cultivating values that enable a fully human life in this world but that also inspire students with the supernatural vision of their eternal destiny.

This corresponds to the vision of an integral *Christian humanism* (a regular concept in Maritain, John Paul II and Benedict XVI) founded upon a Christian anthropology of which Christ is the inspiration, standard and measure (Miller 2005c online). Unlike other notions of humanism, this model acknowledges that the person is made in the image of God and wants to help him / her to live in a way consonant with that dignity (cf. Benedict XVI 2006b: #30 (b)). The ultimate end

of a fully humanistic Catholic education consists in bringing students to know Christ, who has been named the human face of God and the divine face of the human person.

Recommendations for Future Study and Final Conclusion

Casting attention beyond the point now reached, we pause here to select certain main topics that would lend themselves to further development, distilling our overall deliberations into three recommendations for future research in these areas:

1. Rosmini's educational programme proceeds from his supreme principle of intuited being. Utilizing the ever-multiplying scholarly sources in this field, analyse the pedagogical aspects of this organic system and examine how these might inform modern teaching practice and redress imbalances where they occur (cf. Chapter Two).
2. Notwithstanding the prescriptions of Catholic tradition, Teilhard de Chardin has successfully established evolutionary scientific thinking within Catholic academia. In respect of similarities between de Chardin's and John Dewey's thought, and in respect of influences common to both these thinkers, explore the philosophical and educational ramifications of de Chardin's teachings (cf. Chapters One, Three and Four).
3. The unstudied Australian Catholic home education movement is now in its second generation. Gathering data via personal interviews and field research, undertake a quantitative survey to ascertain the nature of this movement (cf. Chapter Five).

This thesis has suggested some resolutions of disputed matters and defences of contested opinions, but has likely also raised just as many questions as it may have answered. The grand hope in these pages has been to contribute in some way towards delineating the boundaries of a universal—as opposed to partial—theory of education, applicable to the Catholic discipline but of interest to those with other beliefs.

Above all else, throughout these chapters the effort has been to increase awareness of the challenges to a Catholic philosophy of education in a changing world. Paradoxically, the very effort exposed another and primary challenge: namely, to assemble the components and articulate the essence of this same philosophy in a contemporary context. In so doing, we

likewise categorised elements of modern thought as either hostile to Catholic educational belief and practice, or merely extraneous—and therefore able to be assimilated embraced or, at least, tolerated.

The kernel and whole thrust of this thesis, then, is the unwavering belief that the *discipline of philosophy* is an indispensable part of any educational fabrication. Relative to this conviction — and in the specifically Catholic vein— stand two immovable pillars: the teaching authority of the Church (the Pope and Magisterium)—which guides new interpretations of traditional thought; and the metaphysics of *being* (Thomism and compatible systems such as that of Rosmini)—which corrects the modern tendency to confuse the order of *concepts* and *things*, to analyse the *faculties* of the spirit instead of their *product*, and to put *thought* (or individual mental constructs) and *human knowing* before *being* (cf. Rosmini 2001: #410; de Torre 1989:75, 94, 159; John Paul II 1998b: #8).

Recognition of these two principles will result in unity of purpose without uniformity of method, and ensure foundations without fundamentalism; ignorance of the two principles will lead to impoverishing or imperilling the progress of Catholic education. The last circumstance has been accentuated in a recent assessment by Pope Benedict, who revealed his ‘anxiety’ about what he called ‘a great educational emergency’, whereby many parents and teachers, overcome and discouraged by the difficulties of educating today, are ‘tempted to give up their task and do not even succeed in understanding what the mission entrusted to them truly is’. As to the effect on the young, the Pope concludes, ‘It thus becomes difficult to propose to the new generations something valid and reliable, rules of conduct and worthwhile objectives to which to devote one’s life’ (2008 online).

Thus, it is incumbent upon all Catholic teachers, parents and educational professionals to base their hopes for the future on the firm footing of the perennial philosophy. A dual benefit flows from this source: it enables understanding and rational dialogue with those who do not share the Catholic creed, and it becomes the adjunct to a reasonable faith—which faith will always be the first essential of Catholic education. For it is written: *Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laborant qui aedificant eam: If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labour.* (Psalm 126 1948, 1974)

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