

So many contemporary philosophers, particularly political philosophers, engage in disjunctive thinking, that is, make some fundamental opposition central to their thought,¹ that it is refreshing to find attempts at conjunctive or reconciliatory modes of thought. At a certain point in the development of Jacques Maritain's thought, patterns of reconciliation become apparent; whether it be the attempt to reconcile science and wisdom, value and end, rights and duties, or personalism and the community. The pattern of reconciliation is apparent when Maritain comes to deal with the philosophy of history and the modern conception of self-consciousness.

The focus of this paper is primarily on the connection between nature and history; it is initially concerned with the opposition between these two terms, and then with the attempt made to combine the two, not in a mere juxtaposition, but in a reconciliation. Reconciliation here means that natural inquiry and historical inquiry will be integrated. First, Emil Fackenheim's articulation of the antinomy between metaphysics and historicism will be examined,² then Charles Taylor's recent work³ is used to illustrate the power of the historical alternative. In the second part, I will deal with Maritain's combination of the two concepts stated in one context as the relation between nature and adventure, in others as the relation of nature and state, but more prominently as the relation between nature and history in moral philosophy. In a period in which most philosophers have opted for one of the alternatives, the metaphysical mode or the historical mode, Maritain's struggle with the antithesis is an instructive narrative. There are

indeed Maritainian passages in which history appears as completely extrinsic to philosophy. For instance, he says

Philosophy, being rational knowledge, is not concerned with historical data and events in time as constituting an intrinsic part of its subject-matter.⁴

And yet, the philosophy of history is later seen as a component of an adequate moral philosophy. Perhaps, then, the statement only applies to theoretical philosophy.

Now Emil Fackenheim has articulated the situation, in nineteenth century German philosophy, once nature and history are seen as antithetical conception. The opposition is between metaphysics and historicity. What he calls metaphysics is "a grasp of timeless truth",⁵ the assertion that human nature is permanent. «Human nature," is seen, "as the ontological ground of the human situation."⁶ Historicity, on the other hand, asserts that "man's very being is historical"⁷, that there is "an historically situated self-making."⁸ So, "there are no permanent natures, distinct from the processes in which they are involved; or, at any rate, there is no permanent human nature."⁹

The most significant feature of Fackenheim's analysis for our purposes is the idea of self-making. History is "a self-making or self-constituting process."¹⁰ Humanity is the cause of itself (*causa sui*). If man's being "is a self-making", "his acts constitute also what he *is*."¹¹ The focus, then is on "the-self-as-struggle", on "self-definition."¹² It is, in fact, the opposition between philosophy as *sub specie aeternitatis* and philosophy as philosophy as *sub specie temporis*, or *sub specie modernitatis*.

Well, Fackenheim goes on to indicate how historicity hardens into historicism. For historical consciousness may not necessarily conflict with metaphysics unless historicism is

adopted, since "in the classical sense", historicism, "is the position which asserts that all philosophical are superseded by historical questions."¹³ This is "the most dangerous metaphysical assault ever made on the idea of timeless truths...."¹⁴ He believes that it has failed. In a later work, Fackenheim characterizes historicism as follows:

the doctrine that human existence has historical limitations so radical that philosophy itself can only reflect and not transcend them.¹⁵

The kind of antithesis that Fackenheim has in mind has been stated in somewhat similar fashion by Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self*. Taylor, however, takes the opposite side of the argument from Frankenheim. He observes that in the seventeenth century "the identity was emerging which would break our dependence on orders of ontic logos, ...establishing a self-defining subject."¹⁶ It is precisely this self-defining subject which constitutes the protagonist of historicism according to Fackenheim. Now nowhere in his long treatise does Taylor refer to himself as a historicist or as a Hegelian, for that matter. Yet if we accept Fackenheim's formulations, his work is an instance of historicism, and if we follow the argument of the book, it seems reasonable to compare Taylor's study to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. It differs from that great monument in its emphasis on moral consciousness - Taylor speaks of "moral phenomenology"¹⁷ - and no culmination or synthesis is presented at the end. While I think it would be erroneous to state that Taylor adopts the Hegelian dialectic, the course he does follow resembles it in its search to uncover the different and competing conceptions of the self in modern thought, and to investigate grounds on which a reconciliation is possible. That Taylor does not propose the form in which reconciliation will be effected is evident in his summation

of the argument. His aim clearly is to delineate the confliction currents of the modern search for self.

It should also be noted that reconciliation in a Hegelian way involves a comprehensive view, overcoming one-sidedness, preserving the goods affirmed by the conflicting positions. The end result would be "the best available account of our moral life."¹⁸ And even if he does not propose the pattern of reconciliation, he believes that reconciliation is possible.¹⁹

Well, what is it that has to be reconciled? Basically, the opposition is between the conception of the "disengaged subject", traced back to Descartes and Locke, and the Romantic "concept of self-expression."²⁰ He refers to "the great intra-mural debate of the last two centuries, pitting the philosophy the Enlightenment against the various forms of Romantic opposition."²¹ He stresses the endurance of this dichotomy in our time, perhaps illustrated by the current polemic between liberals and communitarians in political philosophy.

Now that opposition, between the Enlightenment view and the Romantic view of the self, is the main concern of Taylor's moral phenomenology. But it operates against the background of a more primitive opposition: that between the exponents of what he calls ontic logos in understanding the human and those who conceive of the human being as the "self-interpreting animal."²² From an ethical point of view, the exponents of ontic logos, like Plato and Thomas Aquinas, "identify the good with the bent of our nature."²³ They are the proponents of an objective or meaningful order. The modern project, according to Taylor, began with Descartes and has consisted in an abandonment of any theory of ontic logos."²⁴ Taylor, then, calls ontic logos what Frankenheim calls metaphysics.

Not only was dependence on such an order broken at an early stage of modern thought, but it apparently cannot be re-established. Taylor states at the end of his study:

We are now in an age in which a publicly accessible cosmic order of meanings is an impossibility.²⁵

If he had said improbable or implausible, who could disagree? But he seems convinced that no new ontic logos will replace the historical course of the self-defining self, even though that course may eventually led to a kind of reconciliation.

One puzzling feature of Taylor's "portrait of the modern identity"²⁶ is the hope he holds for some kind of theism in this process. Nothing has prepared us for this development, and the denial of a new ontic logos closes one path to its realization. Perhaps what Taylor has in mind reiterates the kind of prospect set out in F. H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies*.²⁷ On the basis of what he tells us, we can only conjecture about this outcome.

It has not been my intention to rehearse the richness and historical depth of Taylor's phenomenological approach to the task of portraying the modern identity. Rather I have concentrated on the relevant antinomies of modern historicism the opposition of the self-defining subject to a theory of ontic logos, on one hand, the dichotomy between the Enlightenment and Romantic conceptions of the self, on the other. Suffice it to say at this point that Taylor would seem to reject out of hand the very possibility of Maritain's project, combining a theory of ontic logos and an account of historical consciousness. For that would be to join what the course of modern self-definition has separated: nature as an orientation to the good and the self as the source of the good.

If Taylor's philosophy is in some sense a philosophy of becoming, with affinities to Hegel's phenomenology, let us say a kind of phenomenology of the moral mind, it would be

representative of one of the targets of Maritain's early criticism. Whether they be about Bergsonian philosophy or German philosophy, Maritain's initial writings, shortly before and during the First World War, were a defence of the philosophy of being against the prevalence of the philosophy of becoming.

And it would seem that the attack on the philosophy of becoming would be all the more an attack on the philosophy of history as well, be it that of Condorcet, of Comte, or of Hegel and Marx. This, however, is only partially the case, since even at a very early stage, Maritain provides certain indications, alongside the criticism of the Enlightenment philosophy of progress, of a positive attitude towards historical becoming and progress. Now, no doubt, a number of the early works became notorious for their harsh polemical tone. The best illustration of this tone can be found in the portraits of Luther, Descartes, and Rousseau in *Three Reformers*. After the reader has gone through this rather fascinating characterization - at least from a literary point of view - of three of the greatest figures in modern thought, he would conclude that there would appear to be little truth to be found in them. To confine oneself to Descartes, I don't believe that Maritain originally found much of a positive nature in Descartes, unless perhaps the fact that he initiated the "reflective age" (the advent of the self and self-consciousness). But even that he had done, if not badly, at least in such a way as to prepare the way for modern idealism.

In contrast to the polemical attitude, so pervasive in the early writings, and again at the end of his life in *The Peasant of the Garonne*, in which an exclusionary distinction is made between philosophy and ideosophy,²⁸ (and according to which the idealists are consigned to the second category, while Bergson is saved for philosophy), there is another attitude apparent in

Maritain's writings, and that is assimilative. And, to the extent to which the assimilative attitude is predominant, it is in conjunction with the notion of the perennial philosophy.

Perennial philosophy is one of those terms often invoked, though seldom elaborated. After being advised to read a rather obscure author who had first used the expression, Leibniz adopted the term "as a sort of motto of his eclecticism."²⁹ Here is Leibniz's formulation.

Truth is more widespread than we think, but it is very often embellished, and very often also encased, and even weakened, mutilated, corrupted by additions which spoil it and render it less useful. By pointing out these traces of truth in the ancients (or, to speak more generally, in our predecessors), we would draw out gold from muck, the diamond from its matrix, and light from darkness; and this, in fact, would be a certain perennial philosophy, *perennis quaedam philosophia*.³⁰

When Maritain develops the notion of perennial philosophy in a number of his works, the watchword is assimilation without eclecticism.

It is noticeable that Maritain moves from the polemical to the assimilative attitude in one of his earliest examinations of the philosophy of history, *Théonas*.³¹ Operating clearly within the French tradition, Maritain, like Comte and other representatives of the sociological school, likes to speak in terms of law. He begins by challenging the idea, illustrated by Condorcet's *Esquisse* that there is a law of necessary historical progress. This primitive version of the philosophy of history, and the philosophy of progress, is basically manichean. What is history but the move from darkness to light, from superstition to science and enlightenment, from despotism and servitude to freedom, from the evil past to the beneficent future? It is a curious vision, and no doubt contradictory, because it is a philosophy of history without continuity and a teleology without a *telos*. Comte closes the circuit by identifying the third stage of this

philosophy of history as definitive. All that remains thereafter is to invent the appropriate moral, religious, social, and political institutions for the positive age.

An initial objection to this philosophy of progress consists in pointing to the laws of change related; let us say the law of the corruptible in contrast to the law of the perfectible. That should give us pause, Maritain argues, in regard to any idea of necessary progress. The law of progress may refer to the order of knowledge or to the moral life. Thus, at the outset, Maritain remarks on the ambivalence of historical becoming: the law of progress, on one hand, the law of change (generation and corruption), on the other.

Now no doubt there has been technological progress. Has there been an advance in moral perfection? It would seem not. "On the contrary, in the domain of moral life, there is no regular progress for humanity, but perpetual vicissitudes."³²

Yet progress in regard to science is undeniable." It is the law of growth which, in science as such, will always tend to predominate."³³ Scientific progress occurs through the replacement of one theory by another. What is surprising is that Maritain, in spite of the aberrations of modern thought, speaks of "the law of continuous progress in metaphysics." "The law of progress dominates the eternal metaphysics of the human mind."³⁴ But does this not conflict with the observation that there are periods in which metaphysics is in decline or is eclipsed? I think the meaning is that there is a metaphysics that endures even in periods of metaphysical decline, like our own period.

If there is to be philosophical progress, if there is a law of continuous progress, two conditions are required: settled principles and a stable tradition.³⁵ At this juncture, Maritain turns to an account of Thomism.

As noted earlier, it is to Leibniz that we are indebted for the term perennial philosophy. For Maritain it is a perspective that recognizes the certitudes of common sense and has taken on a scientific form with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. The conception, in the Thomistic context, includes the idea of identity (or continuity) and that of progress. Development in Thomistic doctrine took place as it endured as a spiritual tradition in which Cajetan, John of Saint Thomas, the Salamanticenses, Capreolus and Bañez, carried on the work of Thomas Aquinas. Clearly we are dealing with an intellectual heritage. But the mere continuation of Thomism through later Thomists does not exhaust the meaning of the term perennial philosophy. It is permanence and it is movement. There is a temporal aspect, yet as philosophy, it transcends time. There is continuity, but there is also renewal. How does that happen?

First, take the problem of renewal. Maritain has continuously and vehemently asserted that "modern philosophy since Descartes follows the way of error."³⁶ Does this mean, then, that progress can only come from within, so to speak, out of the Thomistic substance itself, as the previous remarks on the tradition might suggest? There are several reasons why that does not seem to suffice. Firstly, the Thomist cannot ignore the way in which philosophical questions are reformulated in one's own time. Secondly, new discoveries have been made outside of Thomism. So even if one may believe that modern philosophy, particularly in its long idealist stage, has gone astray, it cannot be ignored. The alternatives are twofold in considering the situation. One may be concerned with the refutation of modern philosophers from a Thomist point of view, and then we have the kind of study that Maritain did of Bergsonism in *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*. On the other hand, one may forego warfare (polemics) and attempt

in a sympathetic way to understand modern philosophers, and to discern what truth is to be found in them. The latter course is referred to as organic assimilation."³⁷

Bergson has made some valuable suggestions on how to accomplish this second approach, and Maritain came to adopt his viewpoint.

In his essay on philosophical intuition,³⁸ Henri Bergson wants to get inside of another philosophy rather than just turning around it. So, to begin with, he seeks to isolate the fundamental intuition of the philosopher. This fundamental, and original, intuition is to be distinguished from the means the philosopher has available to express it. There is a suggestion that language provides an imperfect means of expression. In fact, there is an "incommensurability between the simple intuition and the means available to express it."³⁹ Furthermore, a philosophy is more like an organism than an assemblage (or construction); an important point of convergence between Bergson's account and Maritain's. A more questionable assertion is Bergson's belief "that a philosophy worthy of the name never says but one thing only."⁴⁰ It is as if there is an initial seed of truth from which all else proceeds.

Maritain's endorses Bergson's idea that one must first seek the original intuition or insight in a philosophy. For instance, regarding Bergson's philosophy he refers to "this intuition of psychic duration, faultless to the extent that it involved an authentic intellectual intuition."⁴¹ However, Maritain goes on to say, there is no intuition "without concepts and conceptualization"⁴², and so even if the intuition is true, the conceptualization may go awry. Great philosophies offer different facets of reality, but all too often what was a grasp of truth at the start is badly conceptualized and "will ill express that intuition."⁴³ And so he generalizes.

with every great philosopher and every great thinker there is a central intuition which in itself does not mislead.⁴⁴

And then the subsequent step is illustrated by a critical examination of the way in which Bergson conceptualized the notion of duration (*la durée*). This two-step method is adopted by Maritain once he had left aside what I have referred to as the polemial attitude for the assimilative attitude appropriate for the perennial philosophy. There is probably no more accessible example of how Maritain uses the procedure, than his account of the Vienne Circle, in the essay "Science and Philosophy."⁴⁵ In fact, it constitutes a kind of methodology for the operation of the perennial philosophy, in that Maritain's account is conciliatory, though critical, intent in Leibniz's terms in sifting out the gold from the muck.

In one of his most elaborate considerations of the meaning of Thomist philosophy, the book devoted to Thomas Aquinas, the problem of defining that philosophy is not merely that of establishing an integral Thomism, that is, an attempt to present exactly what Thomas said and thought, nothing more, nothing less. And it is certainly not an attempt to modernize Thomism by welding it to the most recent manifestations of metaphysical thought. Rather Maritain wants to establish the profile of a philosophy which is dynamic and yet avoids eclecticism (such as Cartesian Thomism, Kantian-Thomism, or transcendental Thomism). The task is "*to integrate everything true that has been discovered since the time of Saint Thomas*".⁴⁶ The aim is to show that Thomism "is an essentially assimilative and unifying philosophy."⁴⁷ This means that Thomism transcends time, "that the intellect is above time."⁴⁸ The fullest statement of his aim is

to save all the intentions of truth contained in the diversity of systems, and to rectify the rest in synthesis based on the real...not indeed a feeble eclecticism...that it reconciles in its eminence, the while it transcends them, the most opposed doctrines.⁴⁹

So, "Thomist philosophy is of its very nature a progressive and assimilative philosophy, a philosophy, a missionary philosophy, a constantly open to the demands of First Truth."⁵⁰

Now if the assimilative approach becomes the appropriate way to confront modern philosophers, and if Descartes and Rousseau were great philosophers, one in the theoretical domain, the other in the practical, what basic insights can be attributed to them? Although earlier he gave us a portrait of Descartes with no redeeming features, in the later *The Dream of Descartes*, there are positive notes. He contributed to the founding of mathematical physics, and through him "reflexivity carved out its own domain in philosophy."⁵¹

While Rousseau is as close to being Maritain's *bête noire* as any modern philosopher, and seems accordingly bereft of insight, in his critic's eyes, there may be an unavowed insight. Perhaps he can be credited with grasping the idea of autonomy and giving it a prominence in political philosophy, it did not previously enjoy. Although the conceptualization of this intuition became faulty, since Rousseauian autonomy consists in eliminating the difference between law and freedom by dint of making autonomy and obedience to self-imposed law, while Maritain makes autonomy consist in the interiorization of the law, inspired in this by Pauline passages. This is a way, I suggest, by which some truth may be found in Rousseau, even though the philosophic critic may find that Rousseau took a wrong term in conceptualizing this intuition, unless, of course, one accepts his identification of law and personal will. I think Maritain has incorporated to a considerable extent the Leibnizean recourse to principles in dealing with philosophic issues and has incorporated the principle of sufficient reason in the catalogue of metaphysical principles: "*being must either possess its intelligible sufficiency of itself, a se, or derive it from some other being, ab alio*. This is a preliminary and approximate statement of

the principle of sufficient reason."⁵² Of course, Leibniz like Descartes is accused of transposing the attributes of angelic to human knowledge. Still Leibniz is usually viewed much more positively than Descartes.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Maritain's treatment of modern philosophy is his almost complete disregard of Anglo-American philosophy. There is no in-depth analysis of any of the great figures of that tradition, through allusions to and side remarks about them about. It is true that he refers to Hobbes in his *Moral Philosophy*, and devotes a chapter in the same work to John Dewey, but he doesn't have that much to say about the former, and Dewey, after all, received an early Hegelian formation, and Dewey's philosophy bears a definite resemblance to Comte's in some respects. The influences of British empiricism on it are underplayed. I suppose the most attention given to British philosophy as such is in an examination of empiricism, in which J. S. Mill is taken as its main representative. In short, Maritain always adopts a continental Europe outlook on the philosophy of history. He might argue that Locke just took Descartes' lead, and that if one is acquainted with Malebranche, Humes does not seem that original.

As to Kant, it is the emphasis on the active powers of mind that is noticeable, even though Kant, indeed, confused knowledge and construction. We are indebted to Kant for the discovery of a new philosophical discipline, the theory of knowledge. Kant is basically a remedy for a conception of knowledge as a kind of passive reception, the idea that knowledge can be explained by input alone, at least initially, since impressions are followed by reflection. But the impressions are just received. Clearly, on the ethical level, Maritain gives credit to Kant for his stress on duty, and his effort to explain the force of duty, the "pressure" obligation.

Maritain's own moral philosophy is marked by this stress, regardless of his rejection of the ethics of practical reason.

The modern development of the knowledge of phenomena stimulated Thomist philosophy to explain whether or not the new science had succeeded, as many thought, in replacing Aristotle's philosophy of nature, or whether it was not important to show that in the study of nature, there is an ontological as well as an empiriological form of inquiry, and that Thomist philosophy had the resources to explicate the bifurcation of natural knowledge. Here Thomism has to face the emergence of a new form of inquiry and to integrate it in its epistemological field. What had once been viewed somewhat generally as a possible approach to nature (i.e. as an explanation to save appearances) has now become an actual acquisition of the modern mind.

I now turn to another acquisition of modern philosophy that Thomism, understood as a progressive and assimilative philosophy, had to confront, and that is the philosophy of history. In fact, I have been discussing one of the laws of Maritain's philosophy of history, the law of *prise de conscience* (of becoming aware). This law is inseparable from the idea of a perennial philosophy. I have been trying to show that it is related to a philosophy that articulates principles and constitutes a tradition, that this philosophy has both a nature and, since it grows in time, a history.

The emergence of the philosophy of history is marked by the names of Condorcet, Comte, Hegel and Marx. Since I have already discussed the first, and since I want to stress the extent to which Maritain was influenced by the French school of sociology, I shall begin with the treatment of Comte. Just as epistemology or the theory of knowledge has become an addition to the philosophic canon, so also has the philosophy of history. It is to Hegel that we are

beholden for this addition. In addition to his comments on Condorcet, Maritain has written extensively on Comte, Hegel, and Marx, most notable in *Moral Philosophy*. His assessment of these three nineteenth century exponents of philosophical history is based on the twofold procedure, enunciated earlier: the preliminary task is to discover the basic or primordial intuitions which are true, and subsequently to undertake a critical examination of the way in which these basic or primordial intuitions and insights have been conceptualized, and this usually means misconstrued.

Following an order which is analytic rather than chronological, let us begin with Comte. It is from the Comtean or, more properly, the French tradition of social thought that Maritain comes to speak in terms of laws. One of the main differences between French sociology and German sociology, exemplified by Max Weber, is the approach in terms of the search for laws in the former, and the use of ideal types in the latter. This is only one respect in which Maritain was influenced by French sociology. I will have more to say later about his reformulation of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's thesis about cultural differences involving primitive and civilized mentalities.

Comte's philosophy of history, particularly as expressed in the famous law of three stages, is an instance of that historicism mentioned earlier in the paper. Maritain adopts the following formulation: "historicism holds that all human thought is conditioned by history, not only as to its accidental modalities, but also as to its very relation to the object."⁵³ In the ethical context, this means the denial that there are universally valid norms,⁵⁴ as on the theoretical level it denies supratemporal truths. Along with historicism, Comte's philosophy is an instance of sociologism, that is, the contention that the only science of human conduct is

sociology. At the foundation of this philosophy, however, here is "a genuine observation"⁵⁵ - Maritain rather inconsistently denies that it is an intuition, yet refers to it as an insight - "a *prise de conscience* concerning the proper course of the science of phenomena."⁵⁶ He correctly distinguished between two modes of thinking, one of which is scientific, the other philosophical. And, furthermore, Comte was also right in his efforts at establishing human, moral, or social science.

But an objection arises from the assertion that the sphere of one of these modes (science) must increase, and the sphere of the other mode (philosophy) disappear. There seems to be two alternatives: the coexistence of diverse modes of knowledge (theology, philosophy, and science) or the replacement of the first two by science. In the latter case philosophy retains at best only a residual kind of existence or become a meta-scientific inquiry. Comte chose the replacement alternative in formulating the law of three stages. By assuming that the three forms of thought (theology, metaphysics, and science) were all aiming at explanations of the same events, he could then assert that the mind had progressed from theological accounts to positive ones, passing through the intermediate and transitory stage, metaphysics. The law of the three stages purports to articulate "*the fundamental law of the intellectual evolution of humanity*."⁵⁷

Now it has often been observed that philosophies of history in the nineteenth century, Comtean, Hegelian, and Marxist, offer us not only the narrative of a process, but the culmination of that process, whether it be the positive state of society, the achievement of absolute knowledge and realized freedom, the advent of a classless society and the end of pre-history. It is as if history has a *telos*, or as if history could only be explained by an extra-historical factor, similar to eschatological theology. The proponents of these visions have

the happy privilege of living in an age that reveals the culmination of the human adventure. What, we may well ask, happens to Comte's social dynamics when positivism has gained the day, and institutions and practices congruent with it have become universal? It is unthinkable that mental regression might occur. The final state seems to be a stationary state.

Maritain was a student of the philosopher-sociologist Lévy-Bruhl and he became interested in his once famous notion of the primitive mentality or soul. Maritain believed that the description of the law tracing the change from the primitive to the civilized mentality was flawed, not because no such transition took place, but because Lévy-Bruhl had stated the law as if there was a difference in nature between the primitive and the civilized person, rather than just a difference in state.⁵⁸ He then proceeded to re-formulate the law of the passage from the magical state to the rational state, from a state in which mind is dominated by the imagination to one in which reason is dominant. It is significant that Lévy-Bruhl accepted Maritain's distinction between nature and state as a corrective to his own thesis.⁵⁹ The distinction is employed by Maritain in his exposition of the notion of Christian philosophy. He wants to argue that while the nature of philosophy, particularly moral philosophy, is rational inquiry, philosophy finds itself in a certain state, and this cannot be ignored in the way it proceeds. For we do not live in the state of pure nature. And, in fact, the understanding of our actual state requires theological date. Thus natures remain constant, but states differ.

While Comte's positivism would view theological and metaphysical thought as superseded by positive knowledge, Hegel affirmed the superiority of philosophical knowledge, absolute knowledge, over empirical science and religion. Religion and art become absorbed in philosophy. Thus theology as well would be absorbed in philosophy, and that accounts for

certain aspects of Hegel's philosophy of history. It accounts for the self movement of the Absolute.

Hegel is credited by Maritain with establishing the philosophy of history among the philosophic disciplines. "His primordial intuition finds its natural place in the philosophy of history."⁶⁰ In a sense, Hegel's entire philosophy is a philosophy of history. The primordial intuition is "of the mobility of life, or rather the intuition of the mobility and disquietude essential to the being of man who is never what he is, and is always what he is not."⁶¹ Like all genuine intuitions, this one is true. However, the invention of Hegelian dialectics is a major factor in the faulty conceptualization of this insight. It is not that a dialectical approach is ruled out, since Maritain himself examines the dialectics of modern history in *Integral Humanism*.⁶² Rather it is the identification of the realm of reality and the realm of logic in what Maritain calls Hegel's "onto-logic" that is at fault. Then dialectics becomes transformed into absolute knowledge.

I should stress three aspects of Maritain's criticism of Hegel's philosophy of history. Firstly, it is a manifestation of the idealist confusion of thought and reality; it conceives the philosophy of history as part of theoretical philosophy; and it announces the end of history. Confident that the real is rational and the rational real, Hegel's philosophy offers not just factual truth, but the rational truth of history.

Beginning with Hegel, the tendency has been to make the philosophy of history a part of theoretical philosophy, to identify it with metaphysics. Though political philosophy, as it developed in modern thought, was generally seen as practical philosophy, Hegel dissents maintaining that its task too is just to understand, to tell us what the modern state is, not what

it should be. Hence also the epimethean, as supposed to promethean, character of his thought, exemplified by the Owl of Minerva as after-knowledge. In fact, there is no distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy in Hegel; there is only theoretical knowledge. So the philosopher attempts to understand the movement of history as he attempts to understand the meaning of the modern state.

Maritain, on the contrary, conceives of the philosophy of history as part of practical philosophy, "the final application of philosophical knowledge to the singular development of human events."⁶³ Whether consistently or not, he holds that the laws elucidated in the philosophy of history pertain to practice rather than to pure knowledge. The belief is that the moral agent must have some understanding of historical movement in order to appraise the human situation and to act appropriately. The action-oriented character of the philosophy of history is common ground for Marx and Maritain.

Thirdly, Maritain objects to the Hegelian notion about the end of history. On the plans of absolute spirit, it entails questioning the claim to knowledge involved in absolute knowledge. On the plane of objective spirit, it entails questioning the notion that the modern state is the realization of freedom. On the last point, Maritain devotes a good deal of attention to what he sees as Hegel's depreciation of the human person and human freedom. The eschatological direction of Hegel's thought raises the query as to what happens after the achievement of absolute knowledge, when the spirit's journey of discovery has ended. Hegelians might answer by indicating the beginning of a new era illuminated by absolute knowledge or, like Alexandre Kojève, speak of the universal state.

Despite Marx's materialism and atheism, Maritain is more well-disposed to him than he was to Hegel.⁶⁴ That is at least partly because Maritain considered idealism as the base of modern thought, and Marxism marks a return to a kind of realism and a recognition of the importance of material causality. The basic intuition of Marx concerned "the conditions of heteronomy or alienation imposed in the 'capitalist' world on the work-force, and of the dehumanization with which the owners and the proletariat are thereby simultaneously stricken."⁶⁵ However, realism was confused with materialism -- a salient features of Marxist thought -- material causality was disjoined from formal causality. The human essence was defined through work, and the liberation of suffering humanity presupposed an atheistic perspective. The social emancipation of the proletariat called for an implacable class conflict ending in the liberation of humanity itself.

If Maritain rejected the messianic role allotted to the proletariat, he did recognize a historical role for this class. For at least one critic, thesis was too great a concession to the Marxist vision and made Maritain, to some extent at least, a precursor of the Christian Progressives.⁶⁶ The passage at issue is the following:

It remains that, without falling into Marxist messianism, a Christian can recognize profound insight in this idea that the proletariat, by the very fact that it will have been in capitalist civilization as suffering from it, not as profiting from it in order to exploit as merchandise the forces of man, is the bearer of fresh moral reserves which assign to it a mission in regard to the new world; a mission...of liberation if the consciousness it has of it is not...falsified by an erroneous philosophy.⁶⁷

If the proletariat has a historical mission, though not the revolutionary role assigned to it by Marx, in what does that mission consist? In his wartime writings, and in his analysis of the reasons for the French collapse in 1940, Maritain cites the failure of the governing elite as one

of the principal factors. Having criticized the bourgeois elite, and being hardly less critical of the socialists, he looked primarily to the work class as providing the social base for an enlightened elite. In collaboration with intellectuals, the working class will bring fresh resources to the task of social reconstruction. The danger, of course, is that leaders springing from the working class may acquire different interests from those of their followers, and, instead of leadership of and from the proletariat, it will be simply leadership over the proletariat, and indeed against the express wishes of that class. The behaviour of the Polish Communist Party in regard to solidarity illustrates the problem. A party that claims to be the vanguard of the proletariat was in open conflict with organized workers and their leaders. This turned out to be the most significant and fatal contradiction of Eastern European Communism leading to the *annus mirabilis*, 1989.

The treatment of Marx provides a bridge between the examination of the law of *prise de conscience*, which I have argued only makes sense in conjunction with the conception of perennial philosophy, and "the law of the progress of moral conscience."⁶⁸ The working class has gained from "a certain *prise de conscience*, it is the growth in awareness of an offended and humiliated human dignity, and the growth in awareness of a historical mission."⁶⁹ The dignity of the worker is promoted by working class solidarity.

At this stage Maritain is no longer concerned with the discovery and development of philosophical truth, depending on principles, a tradition, and a practice of assimilation, but with the growth and development of moral consciousness. Now, while one can find philosophers who will deny that any such progress has occurred,⁷⁰ Maritain thinks that this progress is unquestionable.

whereas Greek philosophers disdained the life of the laborer and argued that the highest life was the life of the philosopher and, hence, a life available only to the select few not the many, Christianity has taught us that the contemplation of the philosophers is not to be compared with that of the saints. Furthermore, Christianity proclaimed the dignity of labour. At a later stage, the conception of natural rights was developed, as early as the fourteenth century, even though the doctrine only became politically effective in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And then here was the advent of political democracy. Among other ways in which moral conscience has progressed, in addition to these important instances, there are changes in the way prisoners of war are viewed, there is the acknowledged wickedness of child labour, and there is the recognition of basic human equality, and moral concern and respect for the person. And one might add, at the very beginning, the discovery of the concept of conscience itself.

The progress of moral consciousness should not be confused with the idea that there has been a progress in human moral behaviour. That is not a thesis that Maritain is willing to entertain, nor would it be wise to do so. In Condorcet's philosophy of progress, moral enlightenment would necessarily be equated with moral goodness. Since moral awareness or knowledge alone is insufficient for moral goodness, Maritain's position should not be confused with the Condorcet-type philosophy of progress.

Now, assuming that we agree with Maritain that there has indeed been a progress of moral conscience or consciousness, the explanation for that progress needs to be explored. And in order to do that the whole structure of Maritain's philosophy of history requires critical examination.

To begin with, Maritain wants to distinguish two kinds of historical laws. The first kind is called functional. Such laws "express a functional relation between certain intelligible characteristics, certain universal objects of thought..."⁷¹ The second kind is called vectorial. Such laws relate to what may be called *vectors of history* -- I mean given segments determined in extent and direction and in significance."⁷² When Maritain describes the law of twofold contrasting progress in which the cockle grows along with the good seed, its functional character is evident. But when we turn to the law of *prise de conscience*, also considered to be a functional law, its functional character is not evident at all. In fact, it seems more reasonable to classify it as a vectorial law, and if that is done, what then is the difference between the law of *prise de conscience* and the law of the progress of moral consciousness? Is it not the relation between a general trend, the progress in becoming aware, and the more specific instance of the growth in moral awareness? If that is so, significant differences between the two laws would remain. For when we discourse about scientific progress, which takes place by substitution, and philosophic progress, which takes place by deepening, we are not speaking of ordinary consciousness, but that of the learned, of those who know, or claim to know.

The progress in moral consciousness has diverse sources, not just or mainly the consciousness of the learned. And here the complexity of the issue appears. For there appear to be three sources of this progress: rational understanding, knowledge through inclination, and divine revelation. It is characteristic of Maritain's approach to play down the first source, rational understanding through deductive reasoning, as a significant source in this progress, and to argue that our natural knowledge of the natural law is knowledge through inclination.⁷³ The difficulty with this assertion - and Maritain found few Thomist supports for it -- is that

connatural knowledge (knowledge through inclination) may refer to two sequences. In the first, it could be argued that human beings have access to knowledge through their inclinations. Would this knowledge be of any value if their inclinations, their bent as Taylor would say, were distorted? Thus an ambiguity arises. In *Man and the State* Maritain seems to describe a kind of knowledge that is an alternative to conceptual knowledge, accessible generally and requiring no particular qualifications. However, there is good reason for restricting this knowledge to those like Aristotle's *phronimos* who make right judgements, but who may be unable to give an account of the process in conceptual terms. This is the second sequence. If connatural knowledge is of this second type, then progress in moral consciousness would be derived from the influence of the virtuous and the saintly. I take it that critics of Maritain's position might accept connatural knowledge in the second sense and not in the first. That means that they would deny Maritain's account of the natural knowledge of the natural law as in principle connatural knowledge.

The third source of the progress of moral consciousness is divine revelation, and if the various instances of progress in regards to the notion of the person and of basic human dignity, including the dignity of work, the concept of human rights, the democratic ideal, and our ideas about the value of life and warfare are canvassed, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the most important source of the progress of moral consciousness is divine revelation. Eliminate that influence and the progress becomes problematic. And then one might well end up with a Nietzschean rejection of all of those values held dear by Maritain and by most people in our society.

In fact, Maritain says, only when the Gospel has penetrated to the very depth of the human substance will natural law appear in its flower and perfection."⁷⁴ It is notable that most of the instances he gives of the progress of moral consciousness have been brought about through the influence of the Christian message, whether it be the development of political democracy or the concept of natural rights. To sum up, it seems to me that Maritain's argument for the progress of moral consciousness is more firmly grounded in evangelical influence than in the account of connatural knowledge.

And now some concluding remarks. The philosophy of history as it has been surveyed concerns the process of human self-consciousness. Maritain links Luther's name with the advent of the self in Western thought. Hegel traces the journey from natural consciousness to absolute knowledge; Marx as a bourgeois ideologist who had come to understand the whole of social reality sought to enlighten the workers' consciousness. Maritain formulates laws that bear on the process of becoming aware, whether in regard to knowledge in general, or moral knowledge in particular. But what are the consequences of one's philosophy of history? For Comte, once the spread of positivism has rooted out the last vestiges of pre-scientific thought, the task of establishing a morality and religion remained, not to speak of the appropriate social organization. Unlike later positivists who seemed only concerned with knowledge, he had a moral vision. Scientism would be compensated by philanthropy. By undermining the status of morality and religion, logical positivists simply refused to face our need for norms.

The Hegelian of the letter, like Alexandre Kojève, speaks of the end of history and the universal homogenous state. The Hegelian of the spirit, like Charles Taylor, attempts to track the development of the modern moral self, its divisions, and to discern possibilities of

reconciliation. The promise and challenge of Marx's philosophy of history can only survive in an attenuated form. The promise of working class hegemony, in Europe at least, has been dispelled, and the challenge is to perpetuate the idea of class conflict by a kind of populist redefinition of the oppressed. Who are the people in the socialist conception? What constitutes the substitute proletariat?

For Maritain, the task implicit in the philosophy of history is twofold: the perennial philosophy flourishes by an openness to new philosophical and scientific currents in order to pursue aims of assimilation as well as criticism. The progress of moral consciousness, though it does not come about through the activities of moral philosophers, stimulates their afterknowledge or reflection. Moral philosophy, then, is in an ongoing state of reformulation. And because of this it seems to me that the work of Charles Taylor, in spite of deep and probably ineradicable differences in perspective, is invaluable for the Thomist philosopher.

NOTES

1. For instance Hannah Arendt used the distinction between the social and the political in order to argue that certain questions were social and should not be subject to political decision-making. Isaiah Berlin, in a notable essay, held that the negative concept of freedom should be adopted and that the so-called positive concept of freedom cast aside since it conflicted with common usage and had sinister connotations. Michael Oakeshott held that there were two distinct modes of human association, prudential and moral, the one-end-based, the other rule-based, and the latter along is appropriate to politics. Donald Dworkin also employs the end-based/rule-based distinction in order to identify the appropriate spheres of legislative and judicial activities.
2. Emil L. Fackenheim; *Metaphysics and Historicity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961).
3. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).
4. Jacques Maritain *Ransoming the Time* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969) p. 196.
5. Emil Fackenheim, *Op. cit.* p. 9.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 13 n. 9.
9. *Ibid.* p. 24.
10. *Ibid.* p. 27.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
15. Emil L. Fackenheim, *Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy: A Preface to Future Jewish Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) p. 213.

16. Charles Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
18. *Ibid.* p. 99.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
22. *Ibid.* p. 112.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 512.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 495.
27. "Reflection on morality leads us beyond it. It leads us, in short, to see the necessity of a religious point of view. It certainly does not tell us that morality comes first in the world and then religion. What it tells us is that morality is imperfect, and imperfect in such a way as implies a higher, which is religion." F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 314.
28. Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 98-104.
29. Andre Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 755. On the question of Leibniz's eclecticism, Leroy E. Loemaker says: "The eclecticism of his thought is an inevitable result of his effort to achieve a perennial philosophy and of the varied practical projects for which philosophy was to provide the unifying and motivating basis." "Leibniz's conception of Philosophical Method", in Ivor Leclerc (ed.) *The Philosophy of Leibniz and the Modern World* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1973), p. 137.
30. Letter to Rémond, 1714 in Karl I. Gerhardt (ed.) *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz* (Hildesheim: Goerg Olms, 1960), volume II, pp. 624-625.
31. Jacques Maritain, *Théonas: les entreriens d'un sage...* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1925). Discussions of the concept of perennial philosophy are also found in *St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958) and in *Distinguish to Unite: Or, the Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. xii-xiv.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
36. *Ibid.*, p.183.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
38. Henri Bergson, "L'intuition philosophique," *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 117-142.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.
41. Jacques Maritain, "The Metaphysics of Bergson", in *Ransoming the Time*, p. 58.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Jacques Maritain, "Science and Philosophy," in *Scholasticism and Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 35-48.
46. Jacques Maritain, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p. 19.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
50. *Ibid.* p. 80.
51. Jacques Maritain, *The Dream of Descartes* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), p. 185.
52. Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 98.
53. Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 264.

54. *ibid.*, p. 273 n. 1.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-3.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 273 n. 1.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
58. Jacques Maritain, "Sign and Symbol" in *Ransoming the Time*, pp. 236-7.
59. Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons,1957), p. 97 and p. 77 n. 1.
60. Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 134.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
62. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 8, and also p. 17.
63. Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, p. 14.
64. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, pp. 43-45. See also *Scholasticism and Politics*, pp. 48-49; *On the Philosophy of History*, pp. 23-24; and *Moral Philosophy*, p. 209.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
66. Gaston Fessard, in a work entitled *De l'actualité historique*, devoted several pages to a critique of *Integral Humanism*, particularly the passage on the historic role of the proletariat. He says: "In the same chapter, I mentioned various other pages of the same book to try and show to what extent the lack of historical reflection in traditional Thomism favoured the development of Progressivism among Christians and contributed to the failure of the workers priest experiment." Fessard's remark appears in Henri de Lubac (ed.) *Gabriel Marcel-Gaston Fessard, Correspondence*. (1934-1972) (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), p. 424.
67. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, p. 235.
68. Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, pp. 104-111.
69. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, p. 231.
70. "I confess a great reluctance to believe that our conscience has improved on any important subject..." Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1959), pp. 309-310.

71. Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, p. 43.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
73. Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 91-93.
74. *Ibid.* p. 90.