

Preface

AMONG MANY OTHER accomplishments, the long and fruitful papacy of John Paul II provided new evidence of the richness and vitality of philosophy in its engagement with faith. There is ample reason to believe Pope Benedict XVI will through the depth of his accomplishments in theology continue to provide a vivid demonstration of “an authority rooted in the intelligence of faith,” to borrow an expression from James V. Schall, SJ. Writing in 1997, Father Schall observed, “In the persons of both the Holy Father and Josef Cardinal Ratzinger, we have with us a coherent body of teaching whereby we can keep contact with the living intelligence of Christianity as it reacts to the dominant intellectual positions that persist in modern culture.”¹

Attestations to the philosophical importance of the work of John Paul II have come from many sources. Speaking from a perspective outside of the Roman Catholic Church, Eva Brann, an eminent tutor at St. John’s College in Annapolis, expresses deep admiration for the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. After exploring ways in which the concepts of reason and philosophy are developed as separable notions in the document, Brann concludes that the encyclical is “not only an exhortation to professional philosophers to return to foundational rationality, but an invitation to all and sundry to realize their natural philosophical capability. I find this call absolutely remarkable, not only as a Magisterial pronouncement for the faithful, but especially as an incitement to us all to reflect on the relation of faith to thought.”² And writing an obituary of John Paul II for a Web-based

publication dedicated to providing information related to Israel, Raphaël Lellouche proposes a daring observation that had occurred to me as well: “In certain respects—and *mutatis mutandis*—it would not be completely absurd to compare John Paul II to the ideal of Plato’s Philosopher-King.”³

The European context out of which John Paul II and Benedict XVI have both emerged offers powerful examples of deep philosophical accomplishment and courage in the face of intellectual, moral, and political crises, and it would appear that both men have been, at the least, emboldened and inspired by these examples. I am thinking in particular of some of the men and women who gathered around the great German philosopher Edmund Husserl during the early decades of the twentieth century and whose work and lives provided examples of great philosophical accomplishment and in some cases deep religious faith in the face of the worst travesties of Europe in the years following their intellectual formation. Husserl himself, strictly in terms of a purely philosophical endeavor, faced up in the 1930s to what was already frequently called “the European crisis” and proposed heroic philosophic effort as a needed response: “The ‘crisis of European existence,’ talked about so much today and documented in innumerable symptoms of the breakdown of life, is not an obscure fate, an impenetrable destiny; rather, it becomes understandable and transparent against the background of the *teleology of European history* that can be discovered philosophically.” Husserl goes on to propose as the only solution “the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of reason that overcomes naturalism once and for all.”⁴

One of Husserl’s students was the great Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, who returned to Poland after studying with Husserl and undertook a monumental work in ontology written in Poland during the Second World War, *The Controversy Over the Existence of the World*. The philosophical issues at the heart of Ingarden’s many works were the ontological basis of human culture and the nature of

the human person, and he was deeply aware of cultivating opposition to Nazism and Marxism on the deepest philosophical levels even as his homeland faced the threat of destruction from first the one and then the other. Karol Wojtyla and Ingarden later “established an important intellectual alliance,”⁵ in the words of Rocco Buttiglione.

Edith Stein was another very close student of Husserl and was later Husserl’s assistant. She was a friend to Ingarden and edited the German text of the Polish writer’s masterwork in ontology and literary theory, *The Literary Work of Art*. John Paul II has written of his study of some of the writings of Stein, especially her great work *Finite and Eternal Being* (a selection from which was reprinted in *Logos* 8:2 in our Reconsiderations feature), and in one of his last publications mentions his interest in her: “I was particularly interested in Edith Stein, an extraordinary figure, for her life story as well as her philosophy.”⁶ As is now well known, in the years following her work with Husserl she became a Catholic convert and Carmelite sister and was eventually canonized by John Paul II as Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. In an Apostolic Letter in 1999, he named her as a “Co-Patroness of Europe,” and here we can note that the philosophic heroism called for by Husserl and embodied by some of his students was perhaps a necessary component for the resurgence of Europe but not sufficient on its own:

The hope of building a more just world, a world more worthy of the human person, stirred by the expectation of the impending Third Millennium, must be coupled with an awareness that human efforts are of no avail if not accompanied by divine grace: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain” (Ps 127:1). This must also be a consideration for those who in these years are seeking to give Europe a new configuration which would help the Continent to learn from the richness of her history and to eliminate the baneful inheritances of the past, so as to respond to the challenges of

a changing world with an originality rooted in her best traditions.⁷

Dietrich von Hildebrand was another important student of Husserl and a part of this circle of thinkers. We can now read selections from von Hildebrand's *Memoir* in a translation by John Henry Crosby available on the Web site of the Dietrich von Hildebrand Legacy Project,⁸ a project for which Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger is listed as an honorary member of the advisory council. These selections show how deeply troubled von Hildebrand was by political developments in Germany in 1933 and depict his early opposition to anti-Semitism, giving us another example of a philosopher courageously confronting the European crisis. In the foreword to Alice von Hildebrand's biography of her husband, *The Soul of a Lion*, then-Cardinal Ratzinger describes his meetings in the early 1950s with von Hildebrand, who offered conferences every summer in the parish where the young Ratzinger was a priest. He provides a powerful assessment of the inspirational character of von Hildebrand's work:

His extensive writings on Christian philosophy, spiritual theology, and in defense of the Church's teaching, place him among the great thinkers of the twentieth century. His steadfast and determined opposition to totalitarianism, whether in the form of National Socialism or Marxist Leninism, a conviction that would cost him dearly during his life, illustrates the profound clarity of his moral vision and his willingness to suffer for what he knew was true.⁹

We need not claim that these thinkers provided necessary innovations in philosophical method or approach to recognize the inspiration of the example of philosophical courage they provided in the midst of terrifying cultural upheavals. Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI surely recognized in their example various elements that made vivid again the long-standing interpenetration of philosophy and faith that stands at the heart of the Catholic tradition. In a

lecture given in 1985 at the College (now University) of St. Thomas in Minnesota, Cardinal Ratzinger articulated the necessary relationship between faith and philosophy brilliantly:

The universality of the faith, which is presupposed by its mission, only makes sense when it goes beyond the mere symbolism of religion to the common reason of humanity. Where this common ground is ignored, all possibility of meaningful communication with men ceases. It follows that the faith must be open to philosophical debate, starting with the question of God. When it abandons its claim to reasonableness in its fundamental expressions, it does not become a purer form of belief, but betrays one of its fundamental characteristics.

The same is true for philosophy if it wishes to be true to its own task: it must respond to the demands of faith about the ultimate questions of the nature of death and the meaning of life.¹⁰

As a final hint of the fullness of intellectual and spiritual integration displayed by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, we might note the abiding love of beauty expressed by each. John Paul II addressed his “Letter to Artists” in 1999 to “all who are passionately dedicated to the search for new ‘epiphanies’ of beauty so that through their creative work as artists they may offer these as gifts to the world.”¹¹ And Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in a recent address spoke of the importance of theological aesthetics and emphasized the importance of beauty in the life of faith:

Being struck and overcome by the beauty of Christ is a more real, more profound knowledge than mere rational deduction. Of course we must not underrate the importance of theological reflection, of exact and precise theological thought; it remains absolutely necessary. But to move from here to disdain or to reject the impact produced by the response of the heart in the encounter with beauty as a true

form of knowledge would impoverish us and dry up our faith and our theology. We must rediscover this form of knowledge; it is a pressing need of our time.¹²

The integration of philosophical scrutiny, theological inquiry, and the love of beauty exhibited by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI demonstrates the profundity and vitality of the Catholic vision in the contemporary world.

This issue of *Logos* offers our usual exploration of the breadth of the Catholic vision, ranging from Aristotle to Tocqueville; from Vézelay, France, to Rwanda; from poetry to Catholic social thought to moral theology.

Paul Murray, OP, himself the author of a recent collection of poetry titled *These Black Stars*, asks why and how it is that poetry offers deep consolation in times of trouble in **“The Fourth Friend: Poetry in a Time of Affliction.”** The title refers to the fourth friend depicted in Job, a figure who, in Murray’s account “sounds very much like a poet” in his manner of offering comfort to Job through his words, and the article reflects upon the role of poetry in times of deep distress, including events as public as the September 11 attack in New York and as private as recovering from childhood sexual abuse. The article examines the capacity of poetry to crystallize around a vision of beauty even in the life material of suffering: “Somehow the great artist can contemplate the lineaments of sorrow in a world of chaos and suffering and yet still create out of this material a thing of matchless beauty. Even in the poetry of the most profound sorrow and lament, if the work is of the highest order, there is always somewhere—if you look for it—a lift in the words, an element of praise, a singing line.” Great works of art bring to expression, however indirectly, the word of God, and the healing touch of beauty carries with it a sign of divine grace: “But by naming, through poems and stories, the black stone of affliction—the stone that had no name, perhaps, but that weighed heavily on our

hearts—the weight of the stone is somehow lifted. We are touched by God’s grace, and healing begins.”

The relationship between Christianity and modern civilization, and more broadly between democracy and religion, remains as an issue of urgent importance in contemporary political and cultural life, and the reflections of Alexis de Tocqueville on this topic in the nineteenth century as the modern condition of political and cultural life began to emerge provide much needed insight into such issues, according to **Marinus Ossewaarde** in **“Tocqueville’s Christian Citizen.”** Ossewaarde shows that although Tocqueville upheld the separation of church and state, he believed that religion provided a necessary guide and standard for public conduct: “As a Catholic...he believes that religious norms, discourses, and symbols are important for the regulation of public life, for the protection of liberty and dignity in the face of materialist temptations. Religion, like politics and ethics, is never a private affair, a matter of private choices.” Liberty itself has a spiritual foundation in Tocqueville’s view, and from this perspective comes the famous insight that “statecraft” is really “soulcraft.” The article considers Tocqueville’s view of the role of religion in transforming the passions in relation to social and political life and reflects upon his “political theology,” concluding with particularly interesting observations on the complex concept of pride in Tocqueville’s work: “In his understanding, pride means something like ‘right ambition,’ which strongly resembles Aristotle’s definition of pride: pride as a necessary condition for personal grandeur and strong individuality. Understood as ‘right ambition,’ pride is still a sin because it stands in contrast with Christ’s humility, but it is a sin that produces several civic virtues.”

Logos has been privileged to publish two previous articles by **Emmanuel M. Katangole**, and in this issue we present **“Christianity, Tribalism, and the Rwandan Genocide: A Catholic Reassessment of Christian “Social Responsibility.”** Katangole confronts the horrors of genocide in Rwanda and poses the profound challenge to Christian ethical reflection and practice presented by

these horrors. Rwanda, which is one of the most Christianized nations in Africa according to Katangole's account, was nevertheless the site of mass slaughter: "Within a period of less than one hundred days, more than 800,000 Rwandans were killed by fellow Rwandans, as the rest of the world stood by and watched." Katangole acknowledges that references to the role of "tribalism" in Rwanda are relevant to our understanding of the events, but goes on to argue that "tribalism is not merely an African problem but is a distinctively modern problem pertaining to the role of stories in political imagination. This is to say that a tribal identity and the violence associated with tribalism are wired into the imaginative landscape of modern nation-state politics. In this case, the Rwanda genocide revealed the depth of the tribalism operating not only within nation-state politics in Africa but also within the imagination of Western so-called democratic nations. Even more important, I suggest that since tribalism is connected with the issue of political imagination, the urgent Christian challenge in response to tribalism is one of political reimagination." The article stresses the ways in which Christianity can overcome the limitations of political imagination that underlie the phenomenon of tribalism anywhere in the world. For Christians, participation in the Eucharist becomes the basis of a new kind of community in which the distinctions that divide us and that sometimes become the pretext for violence against one another can be dissolved. "Only a community so re-membered or so constituted by the Eucharist can stand as a witness and an alternative to the politics that would have us live as tribes, each set against the other."

Johan Verstraeten has also appeared in this journal before, bringing Catholic social thought into dialogue with contemporary issues of management and culture, and in this issue we present his reflections on "**Catholic Social Thought as Discernment.**" How can the principles of Catholic social teaching be brought into play in the concrete economic, social, and political circumstances of individual and community life? We must understand Catholic social teaching as social discernment, in Verstraeten's account. The Second Vatican

Council in *Gaudium et Spes* has called upon us to engage in “scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in light of the Gospel,” and such acts require social analysis and interpretation of social life through the Gospel, calling upon us to think differently and act differently as a result of the discernment we practice at the heart of Catholic social teaching. Verstraeten calls our attention to the importance of Christian witness, the role of narrative and vision, and the importance of what he calls “semantic vigilance” through which we resist the tendency of dominant worldviews to distort our ways of thinking and speaking and seek instead to allow a Christian vision of life to transform our ways of being and acting in the world. “So Catholic social thought can inspire people at all levels of society to think differently and to act differently, knowing that a renewal of the earth ultimately depends on the conscious choices and commitments of individuals and institutions who practice their faith in the world.”

Alice von Hildebrand in “**Aristotle: The Philosopher**” casts a respectfully critical eye upon the concept of causality in Aristotle’s thought, pointing out the inevitable danger “that a great discovery can easily degenerate into a false interpretation of the riches of the cosmos if it is either very narrowly interpreted or indiscriminately applied,” and suggesting some of the ways in which this has been the case with the thought of Aristotle. Aristotle’s concepts of final, material, formal, and efficient causality provide indispensable metaphysical insights, “but there are other metaphysical laws that are also crucial, and that he largely overlooked or paid scant attention to, such as hierarchy (higher and lower, more perfect and less perfect), the exemplarism just referred to, and one my husband, Dietrich von Hildebrand, dubbed ‘superabundance.’” After exploring some of the ways these later concepts supplement the thought of Aristotle and redress the intellectual imbalance of an overemphasis on finality, von Hildebrand confronts a difficulty into which St. Thomas Aquinas may have fallen through an overstated reliance on the

thought of Aristotle. “But no thinker is always at his best, and possibly one of the most baffling sentences in St. Thomas (quoted by one of his disciples, Josef Pieper) is ‘if God were not man’s beatitude, the latter would have no reason whatever to love Him.’ At its face value, this formulation is extremely unfortunate. It is regrettable indeed because it seems to imply that ‘happiness’ is the highest good, and that everything else is a means to achieve this absolute end—Aristotle’s thesis.” If this proposition is understood as meaning that God is used as an end to man’s final happiness, it verges on blasphemy, since in such a way of thought God is used as a means, which is never permissible. The relationship between our love of God and our hope for beatitude is much better viewed through the concept of superabundance, according to which we are directed to God as our primary end, and God’s love and goodness overflow superabundantly so that we experience beatitude in our love of God but not in a manner that makes God a means to something else.

We live in an age that has tried to evade questions about the foundations of morality by substituting rational techniques to deal with moral issues, according to **Livio Melina** in “**The Fullness of Christian Action: Beyond Moralism and Antimoralism.**” This has had dire results: “The more action lacks a reference to an ultimate meaning, the more a moralism of rules becomes oppressive. A substantial number of moral disputes—which have so proliferated in the media—have contributed to this confused situation. The artificiality of their arguments and the disconcerting pluralism of the positions taken foster a deep-seated conviction that the domain of morality is constituted by a series of opinions from among which each individual may choose according to taste and point of view. The result calls to mind the image of the tower of Babel, on which everyone works busily, but without anyone understanding anyone else.” Melina brings forward the analysis from the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, according to which the modern difficulty has arisen as a result of the separation of freedom from truth and the separation of

faith from morality, and then adds to these problems the problem of “antimoralism,” according to which “one need not...attempt to determine objective norms regulating action: it suffices to remain sacramentally united to that community in which the transformation of our existence occurs.” The two approaches of moralism, with its emphasis on rational techniques and norms external to action, and antimoralism, with its emphasis on our reliance on the gratuity of salvation, “share the very same incomprehension of the significance of action for the person and of its reference to man’s vocation to salvation in Christ.” It is necessary to recognize properly “the drama of human action,” leading to an understanding of the fullness of human action. “An integral openness to the mystery of Christian action, in which human liberty joins synergistically with divine freedom, enables us to overcome moralism—which reduces human acts to merely external events in order to weigh their advantages and disadvantages, without, on the other hand, falling into antimoralism—which eliminates the drama and the seriousness of human decisions in history.”

Christopher O. Blum has appeared in this journal once before with an article on the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris, and in this issue he calls our attention to the beauty of an important destination in Burgundy for medieval pilgrims in “**Vézelay: The Mountain of the Lord.**” Blum’s words in his introductory paragraph evoke the atmosphere of this holy site: “To our generation, wearied by a world the automobile has conquered, a mountaintop shrine seems a fitting place to seek communion with God in solitude and amid natural beauty. Yet when the men and women of the twelfth century climbed the hill of Vézelay, they found a bustling center of pilgrimage and a meeting place on the road to Santiago de Compostela. To our medieval ancestors there was no contradiction between a holy place and a center of human community. On the holy mountain of Vézelay, we find crowds of pilgrims, a religious community devoted to welcoming them, and a church of the highest artistic merit.” The arti-

cle traces the origins of this shrine to the earliest centuries of the Christian era, explores some of the legends attached to the shrine, and provides historical insight into the communities that have for centuries occupied the village. His account of the architectural and artistic beauty of the abbey church illuminates “art at the service of worship and worship at the heart of Christian community,” evoking vividly the transformative power of the beauty encountered there and contemplating what it means to speak of this place as “the Lord’s holy mountain.” Readers might well be tempted to undertake a pilgrimage of their own.

Editor’s Note: I have referred several times to articles appearing in earlier issues of *Logos* written by some of the contributors to this issue. I invite you to consult the useful Author Index and Article Index available on our Web site at <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/logos/>.

Michael C. Jordan

Editor

Notes

1. James V. Schall, “On Understanding Contemporary Intellectual Movements: Cardinal Ratzinger and the Modern Mind,” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* XCVIII (October, 1997): 6.
2. Eva Brann, “A Call To Thought,” *St. John’s Review* XLV, no. 1 (1999): 118.
3. Raphaël Lellouche, “Karol Wojtyła : Derrière les apparences, un géant méconnu,” *DesInfos.com*, April 9, 2005, http://www.desinfos.com/article.php?id_article=3212 (accessed May 2, 2005).
4. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 299. John F. Kobler has proposed that we might consider the Second Vatican Council “as carrying out—and possibly surpassing—the humanistic goals of Husserl’s *Crisis* and portending that a chapter has yet to be written in the intellectual and cultural history of the West” in *Vatican II and Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), xiii.
5. Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyła: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*,

- trans. Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 37.
6. John Paul II, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way* (New York: Warner Books, 2004), 90.
 7. John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter Issued Motu Proprio Proclaiming Saint Bridget of Sweden, Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Co-Patronesses of Europe," October 1, 1999.
 8. <http://www.hildebrandlegacy.com>
 9. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, foreword to Alice von Hildebrand's *The Soul of a Lion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 9.
 10. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Faith, Philosophy and Theology," in *Pope John Paul II Lecture Series* (St. Paul, MN: College of St. Thomas, 1985), 12–13.
 11. John Paul II, "Letter of His Holiness John Paul II to Artists," April 4, 1999.
 12. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "The Beauty and the Truth of Christ," *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, November 6, 2002, 6.