



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Some Reflections on Philosophy as a Core Discipline in Jesuit Education: The 1977 “Symposium de Philosophie” in Rome

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ABSTRACT

From September 8 to 18, 1977, a group of Jesuits convened at Villa Cavalletti, near Castel Gandolfo, outside Rome, for a ten-day symposium on philosophy, the “Symposium de Philosophie.” In preparation, organizers distributed a “Questionnaire on Philosophy” that solicited reflections on the condition of philosophy, its prospects, and its function within the Society of Jesus. This article suggests that the symposium and the related documents are important for understanding the role of philosophy in the Jesuit tradition, both at the time and in general. To develop this claim, this article first situates the symposium within its broader context of philosophy in the Jesuit tradition. It then examines selected responses to the questionnaire to clarify how discussions of philosophy inform and integrate the pursuit of knowledge with the goal of spiritual perfection. Finally, it draws connections to contemporary circumstances, suggesting that the symposium offers a way to continue to support philosophy as a unifying and integrative force in Jesuit institutions.

Keywords:

philosophy; core education; curriculum; integration; formation

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In 1977, from September 8 to 18, at Villa Cavalletti, near Castel Gandolfo, outside Rome, a group of Jesuits held a ten-day symposium on philosophy—the “Symposium de Philosophie.” To prepare for the gathering, organizers sent out a “Questionnaire on Philosophy” that asked questions about the state of philosophy, its future, and its role in the Society of Jesus. I suggest that this gathering and the documents that came from it are mile-markers in the reflection on philosophy in the Jesuit tradition. As such, they help clarify how philosophy is at the core of Jesuit education itself. To elucidate how, I present some aspects of the symposium in three sections of this paper.

In the first section, I give a sketch of the context of the symposium and of some of its contributors. In the second section, I highlight several responses to the “Questionnaire” in order to gain a sense of the discussion of the place of philosophy in Jesuit education, especially as it serves to unify and integrate the search for knowledge in the quest for spiritual perfection. Finally, in the third section, I suggest a few ways that the symposium illuminates our current situation and provides a way for philosophy to continue to serve a unifying and integrating function. Now, to be sure, these three sections do not expound all of the complex issues surrounding the symposium. My present aim, however, is less to give an exhaustive account of these than to show that there is much to learn from this conversation and, perhaps, to offer further motivation to return to it and to continue in its spirit.

Symposium de Philosophie

In order to set the stage for the 1977 symposium, a brief overview of the place of philosophy in the Society of Jesus is in order. For philosophy was present to the Society from its earliest days. Indeed, as the work of Cristiano Casalini has shown, the founding members received some philosophy in their sixteenth-century education, and retained a sense of its import from that formative time in their lives.¹ In this respect, Paul F. Grendler traces the lineage of some expressions about philosophy in the *Ratio studiorum* back to the *cursus atrium* of the University of Paris, where Aristotle formed the foundation of philosophical studies.² In that lineage, an early Jesuit’s education in philosophy went from first-year logic to the second year of the *Organon*, that is, to some psychology and natural philosophy; they would then go to a third year of metaphysics and ethics. Although there was discussion in the Society about where exactly to place moral philosophy in the formation of a Jesuit, this was always present, as was the primacy given to the

1 Cristiano Casalini, ed., *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity* (Brill, 2019).

2 Paul F. Grendler, “Philosophy in Jesuit Schools and Universities,” in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, ed. Cristiano Casalini (Brill, 2019), 14.

thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas. In any case, a similar structure appears in other founding documents, such as the *Constitutions*, and in early institutions that taught both lay people and Jesuits, like the Collegium Romanum.

With the growth of schools, the tradition of writing and disseminating manuals also arose. Prominent in this respect were the Jesuits Francisco de Toledo and Pedro de Fonseca, whose introductions and commentaries provided a basis for study; above all, perhaps, was the Jesuit Francesco Suárez, whose manuals became something of a standard and thus set the model for others. Indeed, with such a model, teachers of philosophy also became researchers, as the preparation of manuals of philosophy meant synthesizing a great amount of knowledge—for recall, that philosophy then included the content of logic, the natural sciences, metaphysics, and ethics, all of which were developing rapidly through the modern age, as I discuss further below. Such a comprehensive viewpoint came with the Aristotelian-Thomist way of thinking about knowledge—*scientia*. Most generally, this way of thinking distinguished “first” philosophy and the “second” philosophies: first philosophy, or what comes to be known as “metaphysics,” is the science of being *as such*; it is “first” or primary, as it gives the unifying principles of the particular sciences or the “second philosophies,” and does so without disrupting the latter’s distinctive studies of each particular sort of being or region of being. As all knowing seeks to know being, so first philosophy provides a science of being as such that integrates all possible knowing. In this respect, metaphysics even serves theology, the science of God, by providing categories, however analogical (as there is a radical difference between created being and the Uncreated Creator), for understanding revealed truths. This synthesis and integration of knowledge became one of the hallmarks of Jesuit philosophy, as I discuss further below.

Moreover, the research that these Jesuits were doing was not in order to be novel or “original,” as it were. Their aim was instead to further clarify that which was true and good, in the service of saving souls. Indeed, the search for knowledge appears, for these Jesuits, within the greater work of spiritual perfection. Essential to that spiritual perfection is fostering unity among human beings in relation to God, even in the search for natural knowledge. In this respect, Christoph Sander and Paul F. Grendler show that, at this point in history, there was a desire for unity among Jesuit Scholars.³ That does not mean, of course, that there was always perfect agreement among scholars; nor does it mean that there were no original

3 See Christoph Sander, “Uniformitas et soliditas doctrinae: History, Topics, and Impact of Jesuit Censorship in Philosophy (1550–99),” in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, ed. Cristiano Casalini (Brill, 2019).

contributions to knowledge.⁴ To be sure, these Jesuits were involved in much learning and discovery; but their method of learning and teaching was meant to keep the greater aim in mind.

Philosophical currents are hardly stagnant, however. Not only do new questions emerge, but there also arise entirely new viewpoints in which old questions must be asked anew. Indeed, as the early Jesuits experienced, the Renaissance challenged the scholastic, Aristotelian-Thomist way of proceeding. For example, according to this way, knowledge of an object comes from knowing its cause—that is to say, one knows, when one knows *Why*, when one has the reason for its being such and so; and, again, a first philosophy or metaphysics unifies knowledge in the first and final causes of being—the *ultimate reasons Why*—which it clarifies. Although this conception did not completely disappear during the Renaissance (it was, of course, still present among the Jesuits and within the Church), it also gave rise to a methodological emphasis on natural causes, as well as a focus on empirical observation and experimentation. This methodological development also led, in turn, to a challenge to knowledge of ultimate causes and, indeed, the way of knowing by causes at all. Such a challenge disrupted the philosophical integration of all the disciplines. In fact, the empirical sciences proved so successful at discovering new frontiers of knowledge that the old understanding of first and second philosophy was rapidly left behind, replaced by the emergent methods of natural, empirical science.

By the time of the Enlightenment in the late seventeenth century—and through the suppression and restoration of the Society—the unitive and integrative philosophy in the classical sense became unmoored, even adrift among many thinkers in Europe. Even René Descartes, who is sometimes identified as the founding father of modern philosophy, was concerned about this disintegration and drift. However, in response, the great French thinker, who was educated at the Jesuit College of La Flèche, “reversed” first and second philosophy: for him, the sciences were to be unified by a critique of consciousness, of subjectivity, rather than of being—the object of the subject’s desire to know. Whatever Descartes’ intention, as he and his followers came to distinguish “thinking things” and “extended things,” there came, ultimately, a rift between rationalist philosophy and empirical natural sciences. The dualism of the interior and exterior did not bring the unity and integration for which they still worked.

4 For more on this notion of novelty, see Andrew Barrette, “Deordinatio Vitae Meae: Philosophical Formation and Community,” in *Philosophy as a Spiritual Exercise*, ed. Andrew Barrette, Jeff Bloechl, and Patrick Byrne (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2024).

What is more, by the time of the Society's restoration in 1814, the drift between philosophy and spiritual life was evident in culture. An important expression of this came from the personality of Félicité de La Mennais, a French Catholic priest, philosopher, and political theorist who advocated for the independence of the Church from governmental control while also emphasizing the importance of faith, social justice, and the Church's role in addressing societal issues.⁵ From these points of emphasis, there came what became known as the philosophy of "Common Sense"—a philosophical approach that emphasized not only reasoned actions but also the study of human behavior in order to understand and guide action.⁶ At first blush, this follows the old way of seeking out reasons for actions, that is, for being able to say *why* one acts in such and such a way. But it also evidenced a disintegration of reasons between faith and reason. Indeed, whatever the intention of La Mennais himself—and his views were complex and changing—the approach exemplifies, in some respect, a dual methodological tendency in the human sciences of the time: to separate faith and revelation in ordinary human living on the one hand, and, on the other, to reduce human behavior to empirically observable actions. Rather than thinking of human life as an individual and communal striving for a supernatural spiritual perfection, in which departments and institutions of knowledge had a role, the spiritual and the scientific life were further separated. And so, there was a continued drift of philosophy from its role as an integrating discipline.

During that same time, several significant changes were made to the teaching of philosophy in the Society of Jesus. In 1832, for example, the superior general of the Society, Jan Roothaan, oversaw a revision or renewal of the *Ratio studiorum*, which aimed, among other things, to adapt the curriculum to contemporary needs while preserving the order's educational heritage. There thus remained an emphasis on classical studies of letters, including Latin and Greek, and an emphasis on the discipline of philosophy, now aimed toward revising the mistakes and avoiding the shortcomings of modernity.⁷ A main concern, as Roothaan expresses, was to reinforce

5 Members of the Society were careful to reject the liberal positions of "Mennaisianism." See Waldemar Gurian, "Lamennais," *The Review of Politics* 9, no. 2 (1947): 205–29, especially footnote 40, which includes further references to the relations between Jesuits.

6 See Joseph Burnichon, *La Compagnie de Jésus en France Histoire d'un Siècle 1814–1914 Tome Deuxième, 1814–1914* (G. Beauchesne, 1914), 1–45.

7 The "Cover Letter" to the revised *Ratio* speaks directly to the issues: "And so, after the philosophical disciplines have been lightly sampled, young people go forth furnished with no weapons against the sophistries of the innovators, which they do not even know how to distinguish from solid arguments. Hence their

philosophy's role in providing a solid foundation for theological studies and pastoral work. That did not mean avoiding recent developments in science; on the contrary, Roothaan encouraged integrating new knowledge into the curriculum. Through this, the formation of students was to remain as a goal of teaching philosophy—new knowledge was to be put toward the perennial goal of developing well-formed individuals, individuals who were not only knowledgeable but also virtuous in their commitment to the mission of saving souls. Such individuals would know *why* they were acting to serve others in relation to the ultimate reason why—God.

An important instance of the effort of renewal, in light of these statements from the superior general, appears in Jesuit philosophers of the nineteenth century. There arises then, in fact, an effort to differentiate and yet to unify various methodological approaches of philosophy. For example, the work of Josef Kleutgen, especially in the five volumes of *Theologie der Vorzeit* (*Theology of the Past*) and *Philosophie der Vorzeit* (*Philosophy of the Past*), sought to show, among other things, how classical theology and philosophy provide a foundation for such differentiation and unification,

minds are ensnared and captivated by all manner of errors (even ones so completely absurd that, if it did not involve the most important issues, they would deserve laughter than refutation)—but they have no way to unmask and demonstrate their falsity”; and, further on, “But if the boys barely taste so many different disciplines without truly digesting them, that variety may indeed lead them to think they that know a great deal and someday to swell the mob of the half-educated that undermines the learned disciplines just as much as society, if anything else—and yet they know nothing truly and solidly. *A bit of everything; nothing fully.* So, covering the humanities in a short time at a very impressionable age, even with their talent still undeveloped, they proceed to the most serious study of philosophy and the higher disciplines, from which they take almost no real profit, and by their enjoyment of greater freedom, they are swept headlong along on the wrong way as captives, soon to be teachers, to be sure, but (to put it quite mildly) not fully mature”; and, finally, “And since the new opinions springing up day after day, especially in the philosophical disciplines, rightly ought to sharpen our vigilance, I judge that we must press for what the first Congregation of the restored Society instructed should be done, namely, that the provincials should prepare for my approval a list of opinions that it would not be useful for Ours to teach.” See G. M. Pachtler, *Ratio studiorum et Institutiones Scholasticae Societatis Jesu per Germaniam olim vigentes collectae concinnatae dilucidatae*, ed. Karl Kehrbach, vol. 2, *Ratio studiorum ann. 1586, 1599, 1832*, Monumenta Germaniae paedagogica 5 (Berlin, 1887), 228–33. The translation by Claude Pavur was accessed at https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1832_roothanontheratio. For more on the *Ratio*, its history, development, and program for its application today, see Claude Pavur, S.J., *In the School of Ignatius: Studious Zeal and Devoted Learning* (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2020).

over against the tendency in some modern thought toward fragmentation.⁸ But it was especially the presence of this thought in the papal encyclical of 1879, *Aeterni Patris*, that moved a generation toward a restoration of “Christian philosophy in Catholic schools, in the Spirit of Saint Thomas Aquinas,” as the subtitle of the encyclical puts it. This, relating as it does to the roots of Jesuit education, meant there came renewed attempts to develop philosophy as a foundational and integrating discipline; and to do so in a way that at once accounts for the increasing differentiation and development of knowledge and is in accordance with Aristotelian-Thomist wisdom. No small task.

Shortly after Kleutgen, another major contribution to the effort of renewal came from the work of Belgian Jesuits, like Joseph Maréchal. His own five-volume work, from the early twentieth century, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique: Leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance*, brought into relation classical and modern methods of philosophy, especially that of Aristotelian-Thomism and Kantianism.⁹ A basic point of this work is the methodological discovery of the “finality of the intellect”—that is, how the very movement of intelligence provides evidence of its final end, which is not in any specific affirmation of this or that finite being, but rather in knowing the Infinite Being, God. In other words, human beings desire to know *why*, as Maréchal finds—in line with Aristotle and Aquinas—and are not perfectly satisfied until coming face to face with the ultimate reason *Why*. Indeed, all knowing, whatever its object, emerges from the operation of intelligence; so, if one reflectively and critically understands the operation of intelligence, one has a critical methodological foundation for all and any knowing and action. In short, one has the *point of departure of metaphysics*. Maréchal’s philosophy means to provide a way—following Saint Thomas while also responding to modern questions—for others to discover this tendency within themselves such that they could apply it to all their actions. As Paul Gilbert shows, this

8 Joseph Kleutgen, *Pre-Modern Philosophy Defended*, trans. William H. Marshner (St. Augustine’s Press, 2019). See also Paul Gilbert, “Restoring the Society and the Thomist Tradition (the Nineteenth Century),” in *Philosophers and Jesuits: From Our Origins to Today*, trans. Andrew Barrette (Institute of Jesuit Sources, forthcoming), chap. 3.

9 Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique: Leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance*, 5 vols. (Desclée de Brouwer, 1922–47). There was a planned sixth volume, the reconstruction of which is in English translation, along with the published five volumes and other works, in the *Collected Works of Joseph Maréchal, S.J.*, from the Institute of Jesuit Sources.

approach had an immense impact on Jesuit thought well into the century.¹⁰ With it, in fact, there came renewed discussion about how to approach the old question of first and second philosophies, now in relation to the new question of methods.

By the mid-twentieth century, however, approaches to philosophy came to be further distinguished as between the consciousness-meaning-minded “continental” and the logical-linguistic-minded “analytic” strands. The distinction cannot be readily captured in a few sentences, to be sure.¹¹ But if the tendency of continental philosophy is toward the examination of consciousness and conscience, the analytic approach tends to ask about questions of meaning and value by way of logical analysis of language, and so focuses upon propositions, their content, and their various relations instead of inquiring into how meaning and value arise in history. Of course, the roots of this distinction were not completely unknown to Kleutgen and Maréchal, though its fruits were not yet directly their concern. In some respect, the Belgian Jesuits’ way of taking seriously the data of consciousness and history while retaining the place of logic and metaphysics does not fit so neatly into the distinction; and, from it, Jesuits—like many at the later symposium, as we will see shortly—forged a rather distinctive philosophical synthesis. In any case, the distinction between the tendencies of “continental” and “analytic” philosophy became yet another instance of a point of possible drift and fragmentation within philosophy. And with it, there arose anew the question of how philosophy would appear in institutions of Jesuit education.

Indeed, the question impacted Jesuit institutions where philosophy was taught and studied. Shortly after the Second World War, Jesuit institutions of higher education in America became remarkably pluralist, though they tended toward what was becoming known as continental thought. In fact, these institutions played an essential, if not predominant, role in preserving and promoting so-called “continental philosophy.” This makes sense, even if only because so many members of the Society were European or often sent abroad to study and learn in that context. There also came, however, a resistance, if not allergy, to scholasticism among “continentals.” This emerges, for example, from the line following the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, who was a one-time scholastic and even nearly a Jesuit candidate. He sometimes called the Scholastic the “System”—a system, of

10 The later chapters of Gilbert’s book, *Jesuits and Philosophers*, evidence the impact of Maréchal, as so many significant Jesuit thinkers are influenced, one way or another, by Maréchal.

11 Importantly, American Pragmatism appears, like German Phenomenology, as operating across these lines.

course, underpinned by metaphysics. Heidegger was also resistant to a turn to subjectivity, however, preferring instead to raise the question of being within the horizon of history. From this critical posture came seemingly endless historical debates within continental spheres about the meaning and place of metaphysics. Analytic trends, for their part, seemed largely to avoid such debates and instead went to work on seemingly endless reconstructive efforts of logic and metaphysics, often on the basis of linguistic analysis or, by this time, the methods and themes of the successful natural sciences of the day. In the academy, the benefits of a multifaceted conversation, unified under the banner of a shared aim of understanding, sometimes gave way instead to a perspectival pluralism that tolerated atomistic research—a fact we will see expressed in the symposium documents. To be sure, such a brief overview of a few centuries is inadequate to a complex history. Nevertheless, it might give some indication of the situation that the Jesuits at the symposium were facing—something like the realization of Roothaan's worry: "A bit of everything; nothing fully."

Before turning to the content and contributors of the symposium, it is also important to keep in mind ongoing conversations within the Society, especially as expressed in General Congregation 31 and 32 of 1965–66 and 1974–75 respectively.¹² For, in fact, the 31st General Congregation, which came near the end of the Second Vatican Council (which ended in December of 1965), included a focus on the academic formation of Jesuits.¹³ Their formation, it reiterated, in the spirit of the Council, should be oriented toward apostolic work, helping both their own souls and those of their neighbors. Again, the *Ratio studiorum* was recommended for revision, now also with the need to address technological developments like audio-visual media. Likewise, the 32nd General Congregation addressed

12 See John W. Padberg, *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009). For more on the histories of these, consider Thomas H. Stahel, "Toward General Congregation 34: A History 'from Below' of GC 31, GC 32, and GC 33," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 25, no. 4 (1993): 1–40; also, Daniel Cosacchi, "Jesuits and Social Justice," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 6, no. 4 (2019): 651–75; John W. Padberg, "Continuity and Change in General Congregation XXXII," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 7, no. 5 (1975): 197–221; also, in the same periodical, "The Society True to Itself: Brief History of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (December 2, 1974–March 7, 1975)," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 15, nos. 3/4 (1983): 1–101.

13 For letters after this General Congregation, see James P. Jurich, S.J., ed., "The 31st General Congregation: Letters from the First Session," *Woodstock Letters* 96, no. 2 (1967): 143–95.

the formation of Jesuits, especially amid global changes.¹⁴ This congregation recognized the emergence of new cultural values, while articulating the mission of the Society in relation to the service of faith and the promotion of justice. With this in mind, it makes sense that these Congregations aimed to ensure that Jesuit education and formation remained relevant and effective in promoting the faith and serving the needs of broader society. For these efforts, however, there remained a need for a formulated philosophical position.

In these conditions, the need for the symposium became evident. The Jesuits who first sensed this need were, let us recall, formed under the call to return to Saint Thomas of *Aeterni Patris*, and lived through the conversations of the Second Council and the Congregations that followed. It seems evident they understood that the intellectual apostolate of the Order needed to be addressed, not just for their generation but also for the *next generations*. So, let me stress the point that these Jesuits were not so much concerned with their own research projects; rather, they were concerned with how to form others in relation to the tradition from which they had so benefited in their teaching and thinking. So, what the symposium represents is evidence of another way of proceeding in that line; another way that is rooted in the original way of proceeding, namely, to learn, discover, and teach in such a way that unifies others in that effort.

So, it is perhaps no surprise that, in the first pages of the invitation to contributors to the symposium,¹⁵ there is a reference to General Congregation 32's call for the strengthening of philosophical studies. Indeed, the invitation even suggests that these studies should be connected to other points of learning. The invitation also directly references so-called "Transcendental Thomism," the philosophical method that Maréchal helped develop. Indeed, many of these Jesuits were formed during a time when Transcendental Thomism was emergent as the main viable option for a unifying and integrating philosophy, and so they were still laboring under its basic principles. What this invitation also recognizes, however, is that

14 An interesting note about the decrees on doctrine and teaching may be found in Jurich, "The 31st General Congregation," 160, which reports that the Jesuit cardinal during General Congregation 32. Paolo Dezza, says, in response to a question about how support was gained for reforms, "All these reforms were in the air long time ago. The only thing that remained to be done was to condense them into a decree which would be flexible and would not block the way of the future. This is what we have done. To my great surprise, however, while I was expecting some very lively opposition in the aula, almost nobody brought up serious objections to the reforms we propose."

15 This may be accessed in the Lonergan Archive, as document number 27950DTE070; the responses to the questionnaire itself is archived as number 27940DTEF70.

such an approach was meeting its limits with problems arising from “pluralism” in general—problems that socio-political and hermeneutical philosophy made clear in a way that earlier Transcendental Thomism had not. Thus, questions arose about how to respond without losing the basic principles. And so, the organizers of the symposium created a “Questionnaire” and drew up a list of people to invite to discuss their responses.

Before turning to those questions and their responses, let me stress that every response to each question is worth a closer look and comparison. Given the limitations of this paper, I have selected only a few that present special problems and solutions in the context that we are presently considering.¹⁶

The first group of Jesuits to whom I refer are among the organizers of the conference. In this group, there is Robert F. Harvanek, who was a long time professor at West Baden College in Indiana and Loyola University Chicago, where he was also rector for a time; there is also Emerich Coreth, who was sometime dean of the faculty of theology and then rector of the University of Innsbruck from 1969–71, and from 1972–77 provincial of the Austrian Province.¹⁷ Outside this group, I present some responses from Jose Caffarena, who had a long tenure at Comillas Pontifical University in Madrid; I also refer to responses from Henrique Cláudio de Lima Vaz, who taught in São Paulo for ten years between 1963–74, then went to Rio de Janeiro between 1975–81, and, finally, transferred to Belo Horizonte until his death in 2002; I will also mention responses from the well-known British Jesuit Frederick Copleston and Eduard Dirven, the latter of whom was educated in Belgium under Maréchal and wrote his dissertation on him, after which he was sent to Zaire; I also refer to responses from François Marty, the French Jesuit who was also the director of the Archives de philosophie; finally, I present some responses from Bernard Lonergan, the Canadian Jesuit, longtime professor of theology at the Gregorian, who ended his career at Boston College. Let me mention that those in the line of Lonergan know his contribution to this symposium well enough—in fact, it was included in volume 17 of the *Collected Works*—but may benefit

16 The following are participants that I do not discuss here: Arthur McGovern, in Detroit; Tadeusz Slipko, in Krakow; Julio Téran Dutari, in Quito; Gerardo Remolina, in Bogotá; John de Marneffe, in Pune; Ignatius Pthiadam, in Sembagunur; Thomas Vincent Daly, in Parkville; Ludwig Armbruster, in Tokyo; Klaus Riesenhuber, also in Tokyo; Franciscus Danuwinata, in Jakarta; Meinrad Hebga, in Yoiundé; and Octave Ugirashebuja, in Kinshasa.

17 Other organizers of the conference, whose responses I do not address here, include Alfonso Bolado, in Madrid, and Simon Decloux and Peter Henrici, who were also in Rome.

from further consideration of its context and the conversation with other contributors.¹⁸

The questions to the group are captured in the five parts of the “Table of Materials” of their collection:

- 1st part. The evaluation of the current state;
- 2nd part. The necessity of philosophical formation;
- 3rd part. Which philosophical formation;
- 4th part. Philosophical pluralism and coherence of teaching;
- 5th part. Preparation of philosophy.

The questions, then, have to do with the current state of things, in general and in the company; the changes since General Congregation 31; the necessity of philosophical formation—for priests, for professors, and for a specifically Christian philosophy; and the method, content, and mode of philosophical study and teaching, especially in the face of the issue of pluralism. The responses were organized into a single document according to the region from which the Jesuit responded. Some of the Jesuits who responded met just outside of Rome at the Villa Cavaletti.¹⁹ Let me now turn to a few of their responses.

18 Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, vol. 17, *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965–1980* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 352–84. It is worth noting that the collection of documents does not include the entirety of Lonergan’s response, as the *Collected Works* do. Also, though Lonergan did not personally attend the gathering in Rome, the editors rank the piece “among the most important pieces Lonergan ever wrote.” See Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers*, xiv.

19 The Villa itself is part of a compound, built upon land belonging to the second half of the sixteenth century to Cardinal Bartolomeo Cesi, sold by him in 1596 to the Marquis Ermete Cavaletti. After the Second World War it became the General Curia of the Society of Jesus, in whose meetings Pope Francis participated as Provincial Father of the Jesuits of Argentina. Subsequently, it became the seat of the Catholic Integration Community and since 2003 it has been called the prestigious Academy for the Theology of the People of God on the initiative of the then cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who would become Pope Benedict XVI, a meeting place between monotheistic religions in conferences of international importance and fertile ground for the writings of Pope Benedict XVI. Following the move of the Catholic Integration Community to Rome in 2014, the complex is now run by a private group that holds various retreats for agri-tourism, as well as events for meditation, and so on. Here, the Jesuits had time to discuss the responses and to readdress the questions again in person.

Some Responses: Jesuit Philosophy as Unifying and Differentiating

One of the benefits of reading all the responses to the symposium “Questionnaire” is the frank appraisal of the situation of philosophy in particular regions and schools. Since I cannot go through each, permit me instead to highlight a few in order to show a sampling of the spirit of unification at the meeting, even amid a clear concern for fragmentation and disintegration. Such a desire for unity pressed the following question: How is it possible, after all, to raise the departments of knowledge to a comprehensive viewpoint that can then be translated into a program for formation?

The responses, at first unavailable to the public in their entirety, were circulated in a document of about 130 pages.²⁰ The responses, once again, are organized according to the region from which the Jesuit responded. Let us also note, from the outset, that many of these remarks are on the loss of philosophical courses after the 31st and 32nd General Congregation and the need to strengthen the remaining courses. Respondents’ reasons for strengthening the courses, though specific to each respondent’s situation, nevertheless rhyme.

For example, Coreth, writing from the perspective of the German-speaking world but also capturing a broader sense of those regions influenced by the European continent, notices the increasing pluralism of philosophy and philosophy departments, amidst which there appears the danger of *relativism*. Indeed, without an underpinning and unifying viewpoint within departments, there comes a sense that any of the different possibilities in departments are equally viable, equally legitimate, equally true. With respect to a lack of an underpinning viewpoint, Coreth stresses the fact—as do no less than two-thirds of the contributors—that the time of the “schools” has passed. Not only is scholasticism no longer present as an underpinning doctrine, but neither are German idealism, phenomenology, existentialism, and pragmatism—all have lost their footing as *the* philosophy. These traditions still exist and can be studied, of course, but less as a foundation for further work and more as part of a “history of ideas” in which all are, again, equally viable, equally legitimate, equally true. In contrast to the approach of the history of ideas, which was tending to appear among “continental” departments, Coreth also mentions the calls for and advance of linguistic philosophy, of “analytic” philosophy, which is methodologically, he says, either relativist or absolutist—a senti-

20 I am using the document from the Lonergan Archives, A2794, in conjunction with the document that contains the questions, A2798. It was pointed out to me that it was printed and circulated among communities, for example, in *Symposium on Philosophy*, ed. Jerome Aixala, S.J. (Gujarat Sahitya Prakash Publisher, 1978).

ment that Lonergan and Copleston reiterate. That ambiguity is intolerable, especially insofar as it remains uncritically accepted, unquestioned, and unaddressed. A demand for a foundation still presses in the human being. Thus, as Coreth concludes:

At the same time, there is an increasing return to the human being. Against the background of today's threat to human being . . . the question of human being's nature, of human values, of the meaning of human existence in history and society, of ethical values, not so much individual but social: from these, we might care again about freedom, justice and human responsibility for the world and society—And from here, a new approach to transcendence can emerge.²¹

So, a hopeful note from Coreth. What shines through here is a lesson he learns from Transcendental Thomism: human intelligence presses on, called toward its final end despite obstacles and hindrances. But he also introduces an important element of social critique and the importance of the interpretation of the human being in this report on the state of things.

In a similar vein, Lima, in Brazil, speaks of the decline of neo-Thomism and the persistence of Marxism. However, this, Lima says, is amidst the rise of thinking particular to the culture, away from Europe and toward properly Brazilian thought. This point about the emergence of non-Eurocentric thought and the need to consider it hermeneutically with respect to studies and teaching is significant. For the emergence of thought is, so to speak, “organic” and “natural”—that is to say, emergent from existential situations of intelligence. Rather than suppressing this natural emergence, say, by way of imposing rules “from above,” Lima suggests the need to understand the situatedness of intelligence as a way back into the very norms according to which it operates. In an important sense, this is a development of so-called “Transcendental Thomism,” in line with that for which the symposium originally called. Dirven says something similar is arising in Africa, suggesting that there is a need to make room for more African thought in education while keeping up conversations with European traditions, to have a real exchange and, therefore, a real communal formation. “Right now,” Dirven says, “we need real philosophers who, while having recognized philosophical competence, also know how to keep a sense of their people, their aspirations and their characteristics.”²² These Jesuits express how a plurality of conversation partners presents problems but also offers an opportunity to answer the question of philosophy in culture—and underscores the need for a philosophy that can handle such a transition. That means, as Dirven saw in Africa, meeting *real people*, that is, people as

21 “Symposium de Philosophie,” 4 (my translation).

22 See “Symposium de Philosophie,” 20–21 (my translation).

they are where they are, to foster and promote questions beyond their mere situatedness, in accord with their transcendent aspirations.

About the concrete state of affairs with respect to philosophy in colleges and universities in the United States—both in general and in Jesuit institutions—Harvanek finds steady decline. There was a time, he recalls, when philosophy was the major study of all Jesuit college students, but, he says, “all of that is changed now, except in a few colleges which are still able to maintain some of the old patterns.”²³ Instead, most colleges, he finds, pay more attention to new thinkers than to traditions, have drastically cut required courses, foundations, and texts, and so lose serious students. This happens especially as Jesuits increasingly study for higher degrees in programs that are not run by and for Jesuits.

With this sentiment, one gets a sense of change in culture that was impacting Jesuit educational institutions. A doubt of the worth of the liberal arts, in general, and philosophy in particular was finding its way into the culture. Such a doubt was not new, of course; but, as Harvanek notices, a new sort of development of an ideal of education—as one that produces, not so much fully-formed persons, but rather well-trained people—was disintegrating the role of philosophy as serving the whole. The loss of philosophy was part of this drifting culture.

So, why care at all about losing philosophy? These Jesuits already presaged an answer for us: Questions emerge, conversations happen, and human beings can prepare to direct and form these such that they may be better asked and more properly oriented. As Marty says, while taking up the issue of the need for philosophical training, philosophy is a living inquiry; and so, in a significant sense, the only philosophy is philosophy that is going on in historical culture.²⁴ In other words, similar to the point made by Lima and Dirven, there will always be something like a “philosophy” in operation, upon which we might reflect and formulate, so to speak, *philosophy*. As such, there is to be an engagement with, a directing of this thinking by those who have adequately prepared themselves in it. How so? Marty suggests, alongside the *Ratio*, that the decisive point is that there should be *discussions* between professors and students.²⁵ In this way, professors can engage any *philosophie du jour* by way of a more *perennial* philosophy. To do so, however, this perennial philosophy must be, Marty recognizes, hermeneutic, as it is now engaged with and understanding of the day and the questions emergent *in situ*. We do not merely lose philoso-

23 See “Symposium de Philosophie,” 6–8.

24 See “Symposium de Philosophie,” 118–19.

25 See “Symposium de Philosophie,” 119.

phy, in short, but rather replace it with pale imitations of the real thing, for which we need much work and formation.

Still, there is the issue, as more than a few of these Jesuits express, that the link between philosophy and theology must be made. As Harvanek, like Coreth, summarizes, the link to Saint Thomas has been weakened or lost, and so, too, the link between philosophy, theology, and religious experience. A concern, in this respect, is that hermeneutic philosophy would reduce the questions of human being to their historical situation—a concern that arose especially in their engagement with Heidegger and those philosophers and thinkers that followed. In order to meet people where they are at, to engage with the *philosophie du jour*, there needs to be a careful cultivation of the tendency of human beings to transcendent Being—something Maréchal saw, though he did not draw out the hermeneutic implications himself. Importantly, drawing out these implications means that such a cultivation, far from severing one from Saint Thomas, brings one closer to the desire to know that motivated his reflection. It means finding oneself seeking along with Saint Thomas, even if, at the same time, one reaches up to his mind at work.

Again, for teachers of philosophy, formulating and communicating such a philosophy to students is not easy. For, as Caffarena and Lima express, there is the reality of increasing specialization. To reach up to Saint Thomas means knowing quite a lot about his specific situation and thought, even while knowing quite a lot about general themes in philosophy and theology. Indeed, for philosophy, there is a need for a wide horizon, a study of the human being in all its dimensions, as well as an appreciation of specializations. But who has the time, not to mention the ability, for such broad and deep understanding, especially when philosophy has shown *itself* to be just another discipline among others? I will return to this point in the next section. Let me simply point out that these Jesuits detected that the old lifeline between teaching and researching was breaking, for it was simply impossible to know everything one needed to know to synthesize it in a manual. In short, the sense of philosophy as a *core discipline* was giving way to philosophy as a *department of knowledge*. Although there may be both a discipline and a department, without the former, there is a loss of that formation that would integrate all knowing and all action.

Again, in an attempt to respond to that reality, Coreth, when discussing a “minimum” of studies, transposes the old *cursus artium* in order to speak to those fundamental questions that human beings have. If questions are enlivened in students, he suggests, then it makes sense to turn them to the tradition rich with answers. It is to be the goal of educators to guide students through these questions and answers. For if students turn to this tra-

dition without preparation, they will then only have an oblique and opaque core, which sends them adrift in a sea of options. So, philosophy serves as a core discipline that brings unity to the pursuit of knowledge and integrates the products of knowledge through the formation of a community tending toward that which really and truly is.

Conclusion: Learning from the Symposium

Above, I introduced and indicated the significance of the “Symposium de Philosophie.” I suggested, in fact, that it is a mile-marker in the investigation and formulation of philosophy in the Jesuit tradition. Now, by way of concluding remarks, I suggest that there is a need for further study of the meeting to learn—and to learn from—its motivations, context, and organization. We are heirs of the historical shift under which they labored, even as we labor under new and novel shifts. To continue to respond to these movements means, indeed, to continue to the *renovatio mundi* at work from the foundation of the Society unto the symposium.

So, first, the symposium teaches us the need to study and teach methods of approach. That means understanding the differences between as well as within natural and humanistic sciences—as, say, between as well as within analytic and continental philosophy—in order to find a way to unify and integrate them into the same task. Coreth, as well as Lonergan, offers a possible point of departure for this work, which other Jesuits in the group share, and which follows, in no small measure, the work of Transcendental Thomism. That point of departure is from *human intelligence*. In this respect, a *philosophia perennis* requires that people have an understanding of themselves in relation to being. It requires that people inquire intelligently and gain insight into thinking and feeling, which requires discovering and understanding how these go beyond themselves to that which is transcendent. For that, it is necessary to reflect on a historical reality and critically distinguish *what* occurs in history and *how* it happens in history. Thus, as Frederick Copleston also notes, an expansive understanding of history can still be paired with the rigor and precision so desired by analytic philosophy. This general approach can unify and integrate even within specialized philosophical traditions.

Second, we have learned from the symposium that conversations are required for going beyond oneself. Questions appear in these conversations, not only with the sort of questions posed to others, but also the sort of questions needed for listening. In a profound way, philosophy serves both aspects. For if one reflects upon intelligent inquiry in order to bring to light its operation and its ends, one can discover not only intelligence in themselves but also in others, and so learn to listen to it, watch for it, appreciate it, and draw it out of others. Far from a solipsistic, subjectivistic

world, there emerges an intersubjective world—a world in which we are inextricably intertwined with each other, even dependent on each other's intelligence, and each other's well-wishing for any progress of our intelligence and well-being. Ultimately, in this reflection, one can discover a radical dependency on that which moves us all beyond ourselves, on what metaphysics calls the Prime Mover and First Act. Of course, a special kind of conversation is necessary in this relation to this Ultimate End—prayer.

Third, the symposium teaches the importance of developing institutional knowledge for students, professors, and administrators. That means understanding the history of institutions, as well as the ideals according to which they operate and toward which they strive. After all, it is abstract for one to consider oneself as operating outside the conditions imposed by institutions and their traditions. Such an abstraction leads to an alienation from the foundational ideals that govern institutions. In this state, one does not identify with the task that makes their work possible, and so one's work breaks—deliberately or not—from the work of the institution. In contrast, philosophy offers both a formulation of these ideals and a reflective check on them, as well as on oneself living and working under them.

Now, with these three points in mind, let me note again how these Jesuits detected a danger in the fact that the time of the student and teacher is increasingly occupied with things other than philosophical conversation, in the sense given above. In this respect, a special danger arises with the increasing demand to focus upon *oneself* and one's own work. Indeed, increased specialization and increased focus on one's own specialty lead to a decrease in understanding others' work. Because no one truly comprehends what anyone else is doing, the way of evaluation becomes *quantitative*; that is, the more one produces, the more they are worth. Thus, as one becomes focused upon one's own production, rather than upon the mission of the whole community, it becomes counterproductive to serve a mission that is not ultimately reducible to one's own mission—a mercenary rather than missionary spirit. The concern is that this has become the *philosophie du jour*. If so, how does one meet such a philosophy?

No thinker at Cavalletti was against a healthy work and publication schedule, as far as I can tell. However, at least some worried about the fragmentation of individual researchers from each other, the increased focus on living for *oneself* rather than in accord with one's self-transcendence in community, and the reduction of knowledge to a measurable product. Rather than giving up on philosophy or relegating it to a sub-specialty, they take the perhaps more difficult path of a philosophy that responds reflectively and critically to these problems.

As Lonergan says, the student and teacher of philosophy face an “arduous task.”²⁶ For they must be generalists and specialists, knowing their own conscious operations and able to show them to others, while knowing and communicating insights in their field. That, again, takes time and effort. Most of all, it takes a community willing to create that time and effort and sustain it across generations. In this respect, the symposium offers another significant insight, in line with the ascetic elements of the Church and Jesuit tradition: Avoid complacency in comfort. Not only must we do work to renew philosophy, but it also cannot be presumed that, when things are going well, they shall continue to do so. History teaches otherwise, even in Jesuit philosophy. The venerable Collège Sainte-Barbe, where the founders of the Society of Jesus met in Paris, the great Collegio Romano, and the Villa Cavaletti—these, like many places of higher learning, are no more. Yet this same history teaches perseverance and adaptation. The new building of the Pontifical Gregorian University in the Piazza della Pilotta alone is a testament to that fact, as are countless new spaces for teaching and studying.

Perhaps now, however, there is a need to consider anew the state of affairs, the preparation of professors of philosophy, and the place of philosophy in a formative education. After all, the situation of philosophy and philosophers in the Society of Jesus and their educational institutions has changed since 1977. In any case, the symposium appears to us now as a meeting for study and, as such, is able to continue to teach us a way of responding to the present and so chart a path into the future.

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26 “Symposium de Philosophie,” 129.