

THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

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God and Caesar: Christianity in the marketplace

by Michael J. Welker, SFO

With thanks to his wife for patience and to the editor for helpful commentary.

An impassioned debate has been raging lately among Catholic social scientists between neo-conservatives such as Richard Neuhaus and Michael Novak, and a group headed by David Schindler, editor of the Catholic quarterly journal *Communio*. The discussion centers on American capitalism—with the neo-conservatives endorsing it as essentially compatible with Christianity and the best economic system known to man, and with Schindler and co. rejecting it as inherently anti-Christian and calling for the development of a new economic system rooted in a “culture of love.” (Note that the *Communio* group do not reject capitalism as such, but rather its particular historical “expression” in present-day America). The discussions are particularly timely with respect to the emerging market economies of the former Soviet nation states. The *Communio* group see the spirit of American capitalism as posing a grave danger to the people of eastern Europe and thus engage the neo-conservatives in dialogue, in order to raise

caution about the danger.

Both groups agree that something is seriously amiss in the current system. Plainly capitalism has not succeeded in eliminating the severe problems afflicting human civilization. Unemployment, poverty, unequal distribution of income, Third World debt, ecological damage and many other injustices persist despite the coming of the so-called global marketplace. Furthermore, the present form of capitalism is evidently on the verge of collapse. Government is bloated and gridlocked, and therefore incapable of halting the imminent implosion of our economic system—though certain policies might delay the inevitable. Recognizing this, as concerned citizens of the world, we are obliged to pursue reforms, and to search for more appropriate means of exchange, resource ownership and especially of income distribution. Thus far the *Communio* group and the neo-conservatives agree; they

part company in their respective analyses of the problem and in their proposed solutions.

Economists usually agree on matters related to the facts, observations and basic workings of an economy. Disagreements typically arise in discussions of

“normative” analysis, i.e. questions of what “ought to be” in the economy. Questions of fact are the usual subject of empirical economics; questions of ought are based on judgments that appeal to cultural norms and standards. The discussion between the neo-conservatives and Schindler focuses on the latter. The neo-conservatives argue for incremental reforms within the present system. They suggest that the former Soviet Republics pursue and maintain institutions of economics and law similar to those

found in Western nations. They believe, as evidence seems to reveal, that such actions will promote civil and religious liberties while enhancing standards of living.

Schindler, on the other hand, sees our economic system as being largely responsible for the malaise we experience today in America. According to him, much of our cultural misery—including

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The Communio group see the spirit of American capitalism as posing a grave danger to the people of eastern Europe

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Orthodox not paradox

The March 1 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* ran an article on Franciscan University by Robert J. McGlory, who spent three days here in January. Many familiar with the NCR were pleasantly surprised by the obvious attempt at objectivity. There was no mockery, no muck-raking, no interviewing of bitter and disillusioned alumni, no allegations of cult-like activity or insinuating references to covenant communities. Instead, he quotes Cardinal O'Connor and others praising the University, and faithfully describes the attractiveness of the campus, the oft-packed chapel, the orthodox theology and the religious sincerity of staff and students.

Still, the usual annoying slants are not entirely absent. McGlory calls FUS "an intriguing blend of paradoxes." He is never quite explicit about what he means, beyond describing its unique "mixture of old and new" elements of Catholic culture (e.g. a "pre-Second Vatican Council" "level of reverence" at Mass mixed with "post-Vatican II" guitar music.) But a general impression comes through clearly enough, which goes something like this: How strange and inexplicable that a university featuring theology so "heavy on official teaching," so "light on speculation" and so "empty of dissent" could be so thriving and prosperous! How paradoxical that a place so oppressively orthodox should be so full of bright, contented people!

You can hardly blame the writer for his befuddlement. To those raised on relativism and accustomed to identifying academic freedom with religious skepticism, the prospect of the cheerful, unhesitating submission to Church authority typical of our members must be alarming. The fact that a student who "after prayer and deliberation, still cannot accept a particular church teaching, such as the ex-

clusion of women from ordination" would find herself in the minority here seems ominous—reminiscent of Orwell's *1984* or Percy's *Thanatos Syndrome*.

For those of us, however, who "live and move and have our being" in orthodoxy, there is no mystery. We understand intuitively that doctrinal boundaries no more restrict our minds than the exclusion of poison restricts our diet. We can dismiss McGlory's dark hints as the unfortunate bias of someone who "knows not whereof he speaks."

But, if we do this too facilely, I think we will miss something worth examining in his description of our University. He notes in one place some faculty members saying "many students arrive at the school so trusting that they have to be prodded to ask questions or think critically." Having been just this sort of student myself and having observed many others in the same condition, I would have to say this is a fair charge. Growing up in devout families, hemmed in on every side by the irreligion, immorality and rebellion that have characterized so much of the "Catholic scene" in recent decades, it is easy to develop a too-simplistic "good guys vs. bad guys" view of the Church—Charles Curran, Hans Küng and especially the feminists being among the "bad guys;" the Pope, the Franciscan TORs, and the FUS faculty being among the "good guys." There is certainly *something* to this. Scripture bears out the view of the religious life as a fierce battle between powers and principalities, with everyone lining up (consciously or not) on one side or the other. And there is an often-obvious distinction between people who fight *for* the Church and people who fight against it.

Nevertheless, as soon as we start thinking that whatever the good guys say is true and whatever the bad guys say is false; as soon as we stop examining ideas, and automatically disregard not just the errors, but the *concerns* and developments of the modern world; we are justly accused of a failure of critical thinking and a dogmatical spirit unbecoming any adults, but particularly those engaged in intellectual pursuits. I understand the temptation to be this way. The professors here are generally so admirable and trustworthy. And, surrounded as we are by people who agree in all the fundamentals, it is easy to become lazy intellectually, and leave the serious thinking to others. Let us not give in to it; let us resist the tendency to replace critical thinking with a dogmatical habit unworthy of university students. And let us be humble in accepting legitimate criticism, even when it comes from so unlikely a place as the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Kathleen van Schaijik

THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

An Independent Journal of Opinion

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The University Concourse is a bi-weekly, independent journal of opinion, put together by alumni and students of Franciscan University of Steubenville, and designed to encourage fruitful discourse among members of the University community. The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, nor those of the Franciscan TORs or other University officials.

We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends of the University, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of the University and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words. Articles must be in no later than Tuesday noon, one week prior to publication.

Contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" disk, either to the faculty office of Jules van Schaijik in Egan Hall, or to the van Schaijik home at 915 Belleview Blvd.; Steubenville, OH 43952, or sent to e-mail address: "TheConcourse@eworld.com"

Please include your full name, phone-number and relation to the University.

We will consider printing submissions anonymously or under a pen-name, however, in general we wish to encourage open, "face to face" discussion. In either case, the editors require the full name and phone-number of the author of each opinion.

The freedom of Catholic philosophers

Why we need not necessarily give primacy to St. Thomas

by Richard Gordon

“...EVERY UNDERSTANDING OF REALITY—WHICH DOES IN FACT CORRESPOND TO REALITY—HAS EVERY RIGHT TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE ‘PHILOSOPHY OF BEING’ NO MATTER WHO IS TO BE CREDITED WITH

SUCH PROGRESS IN UNDERSTANDING or to what philosophical school that person belongs. Hence, these other trends in philosophy...can and indeed should be treated as natural allies of the philosophy of St. Thomas, and as *partners worthy of attention and respect* in the dialogue that is carried on in the presence of reality. This is needed if truth is to be more than partial or one-sided.”¹

Pope John Paul II refers specifically to the phenomenological method as just such an “ally” and “partner” to the philosophy of St. Thomas: a partner worthy of respect in man’s dialogue with reality. And so the debate continues.

Certainly the Church has on numerous occasions proposed for her faithful, the study of Thomistic philosophy and theology as a safe and sure method of proceeding with one’s inquiry into reality. The question is whether Thomas’ way is the *only* way for Catholic philosophy to proceed. Does the Church not give a certain freedom to her philosophers as they inquire more deeply into the nature of things? If so, the Philosophy Department at FUS may have every right to give particular attention to the fruitfulness of the phenomenological method for the development of Christian philosophy.

My article is, in part, a response to the piece by Edy Morel de la Prada, which appeared in the last issue of the *Concourse*. I know Mr. de la Prada as a friend and an intelligent student of St. Thomas, yet I must take issue with his “magisterial survey,” for two reasons: 1) because the method is inappropriate in the philosophical domain, and 2) because his particular selection is misleading with respect to what the Church has to say

about philosophy.

As to the first: Catholics should heed the voice of the Magisterium whenever she speaks, but not everything contained in magisterial documents is to be held as a matter of religious obligation. Not every utterance of a pope means “case closed”: “Roma locuta est, causa finata est.” When she speaks outside the area of faith and morals, she demands to be listened to attentively, but she does not cut off further thinking; she does not suffocate inquiry; rather, she encourages the cooperation of our own minds in efforts toward a deeper penetration into truth. The Church exults in the freedom of her children, who with a spirit of fidelity and obedience seek the truth in their respective disciplines, and hold fast to it with firmness and conviction. A Catholic philosopher need not scour the documents in order to learn what he should think; rather, the Church, respecting the integrity of his discipline, urges him to “interrogate” reality as he finds it.

If we want to know what Christian philosophy is, we should look, not only to papal pronouncements, but to Christian thinkers, who embody its principles. And if we do this, we will quickly find that the Church in no way requires her philosophers to be Thomists. Consider

the example of John Henry Newman, who was not trained in Thomism, whose profound thought is in no way Thomistic, who even after becoming a Catholic felt

no real need to study Thomas, and yet who is almost universally acknowledged to be among the greatest minds the Church has ever produced. Or consider Blessed Edith Stein, who was among the first Phenomenological Realists. After her conversion—perhaps with a false sense of religious obligation—she attempted to become more Thomistic, but after much struggle found she simply could not agree with various elements of the Thomistic schema (e.g. the notion that matter is the principle of individuation.) There can be no doubt that these two individuals, despite a lack of Thomistic influence in their thought, are Catholic philosophers of the

highest order.

Further, to illustrate the unhelpfulness of Mr. de la Prada’s “survey” method, we need only apply it to other issues addressed by various pontiffs. I can make a similar “magisterial survey,” for instance, regarding the question of religious liberty. Numerous pre-Vatican II popes addressed the question in encyclicals and elsewhere. In almost every instance they explicitly and forcefully oppose the notion that doctrines contrary

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to Catholic teaching have a right to exist and to be spread on the basis of a so called “liberty of conscience.” Gregory XVI calls this “indifferentism,” “insanity” and “the most contagious of errors.”²² Among the propositions condemned by Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* was the following: “that every man is free to embrace that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true.”²³ Leo XIII, St. Pius X and virtually every pope until the council follow suit in their unambiguous condemnations of such an understanding of religious freedom.

How are we to make sense of the apparent contradiction, then, when Vatican II declares that “Religious communities have the further right not to be prevented from publicly teaching and bearing witness to their beliefs by the spoken or written word...to deny man the free exercise of religion...is to do an injustice to the human person and to the very order established by God for men.”²⁴ If we had to rely on a “magisterial survey” to know the Church’s position on this matter, we would have to confess ourselves perplexed. Are the crafters of this document (one of whom was Bishop Karol Wojtyla of Krakow—now Pope John Paul II) to be considered liberal innovators without respect for the constant teaching of popes and the Magisterium? Plainly the Church gives a certain degree of freedom to her philosophers and theologians, who act with living fidelity to the teaching authority of the Church and who wish to serve her by helping her come to a more profound awareness of truth in all areas—even in areas where she may have already spoken.

As to the content of Mr. de la Prada’s survey. In one place, he identifies the *philosophia perennis* with “the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor.” He is astute in his citations on

this point—referring back to *Humani Generis*, which itself refers back to the *Code of Canon Law* of 1917. There the language is as explicit as Mr. de la Prada says. In the *new Code of Canon Law*, however, it is significant that explicit mention is no longer made exclusively to the philosophy of Aquinas. Canon 251, concerning priestly formation, simply refers to “the heritage of philosophy which is perennially valid,” suggesting a broader understanding of the *philosophia perennis* than a strict equation with Thomism. There can be no question that the philosophy of St. Thomas forms “a notable part”²⁵ of the perennial philosophical heritage, but a part is not the whole, as we might be led to believe by reading Mr. de la Prada’s article. Nor is the *philosophia perennis* a thing limited to our study of the past. I would maintain that there are certain principles which when followed even today constitute, in our own time, a new and fruitful stage of the *philosophia perennis*. Phenomenological Realism, I believe, constitutes a “notable part” of this new and fruitful stage.

What is it about the philosophy of St. Thomas that warrants the praise it has so often received? As Mr. de la Prada points out, John Paul II says its greatness “is to be found in its realism and objectivity: it is a philosophy of what is, not of what appears.”²⁶ As such it is wonderfully apt to be the handmaid of faith. Again following John Paul, Mr. de la Prada points to Thomas’s “openness” and “universalism” as reasons for recommending his thought. All of this is undeniably true of St. Thomas and his philosophy. However, one can object that realism and objectivity, the grounding of an objective moral order, an openness to and a constant pursuit of truth are attributes which are not exclusive to Thomism and which can equally well be applied to the phenomenological method.

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These, I believe, are the basic principles recognized by the *philosophia perennis*; principles which validate any contemporary and any future philosophical pursuit that seeks to live in accordance with so noble and rich a philosophical heritage. In this broader sense, then, we would all rightly be called Thomists, as would the entire faculty of philosophy at Franciscan University.

Note, too, that the Church documents which most aggressively called for a return to Thomistic and Scholastic philosophy were principally concerned with dispelling certain trends in modern thought which notably lacked a realistic and objective approach and as such threatened to undermine certain doctrines of the Faith (e.g. skepticism, empiricism and materialism.) When the documents are attentively studied one must conclude that the Church has never imposed the system of St. Thomas or any of his theories upon the faithful. Leo XIII expressly recognizes the freedom of the Catholic philosopher when in *Aeterni Patris* he writes: “We ordain that any wise doctrine or useful discovery or reflection, no matter who be its author, is to be freely and gratefully accepted... And if anything is treated by Scholastic doctors with excessive subtilty or taught with too little reflection, if anything is inconsistent with discoveries of a later age or is in some way improbable, it is by no means to be proposed for acceptance in our times.”²⁷

Two interesting situations pertaining to religious orders serve to further illustrate the freedom which Catholics are permitted to be other-than-Thomistic in their philosophizing. Mr. de la Prada mentioned the “24 Theses” formulated in 1914 which contain the major propositions and principles of the Angelic Doctor. One of the theses puts forth the real distinction between essence and existence in created things. The then Superior General of the Jesuit order wrote to Pope Benedict XV asking whether this thesis could be discussed freely by the Society and “whether all twenty-four philosophic theses ..must be *imposed* in Catholic schools as *theses to be held*.” The Congregation responded by saying that these theses were not “imposed” but

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CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS



Commendations

I am in receipt of the first two issues of *the University Concourse* and find the publication to be interesting, informative and diverse.

Ms. DeLine's observations on the "Preach Out" in Issue 1 are refreshing and indicative of progress in the important area of ecumenism. From Mr. Fischer's piece on the music issue, which consumed entirely too much time and energy in the 80's at FUS, I gather that this matter has unfortunately survived well into the 90's.

Of particular interest were the article and editorial concerning the need for a core curriculum. While not present for the debate between issues, I can imagine the potential extremes on the issue: from those who are comfortable with the curriculum as it stands to those concerned that there is too much of a "trade school" mentality. It appears from the content of both issues with regard to this particular discussion that the *Concourse* has lived up to its name and mission. The Editor's commentary in Issue 2 is commendably balanced and both the thesis and the conclusion are on point. Ms. Bratten's article on the absence of fine arts and appreciation for the same serves (perhaps deliberately) to strengthen the position that change is needed. My own experience as an accounting major with a significant additional concentration in history (resulting from interest sparked by taking humanities core courses) was in keeping with Dr. Convery's response in Issue 2 that students are free to "pursue areas of interest outside their major concentrations" by taking elective courses. Outside the classroom, however, my

experience was similar both to the Editor's (pre- and, to a lesser extent, post-graduation) and Ms. Bratten's.

Clearly, some evolution of the core is advisable, but this issue needs to be approached with: 1) sensitivity to the strengths and flexibility of the current curriculum and the very positive learning experience already available, 2) a realistic understanding of the requirements of various licensing authorities for minimum in "major credits" in certain fields and, 3) a sense of balance on the other end of the "swinging pendulum" once changes are ultimately made.

You are to be commended for the concept—and congratulated for the success—of the *Concourse*. I look forward to future issues.

Christopher P. Wright
Class of '87

Chris Wright served as President of FUSA (then the Student Government Association) during his senior year at FUS. He currently lives on Long Island, where he is a Certified Public Accountant, serving a fourth term on the New York Democratic State Committee.

Core Curriculum

As a student devoted to improving my own mind as well as the caliber of the education at this institution, I feel compelled to supply a voice in the ongoing debate over the core curriculum. I wish to address in particular those members of the faculty responsible for modifying or ratifying the core curriculum at Franciscan University.

I am disturbed by the lack of consistent direction provided for students in their chosen course of study. Consider the phenomenon of "major change" so prevalent among the members of this student body (myself included.) Most students, it seems, change their major at least once and many perhaps two, three or even (sad to say) four or more times before they graduate. What contribution has this, I ask, to our sense of the unity of truth, and hence to the value of our education?

Far from suggesting that we as students have not the right to determine what we are to study while in college, I suggest rather that we rarely come to Franciscan University equipped with the tools to make such a decision, and all too often leave *never* having made an informed and satisfactory choice.

I believe the function of a core curriculum should indeed be to provide men and women precisely with that fundamental knowledge Dr. Crosby spoke of, and that the first testimony to its effectiveness and its value is the aid it supplies its students in determining what exactly they ought to study. In this regard, I think, our core curriculum has failed us. Too many of us flounder.

Kathleen van Schaijik appropriately lauded the unique quality of *love* of truth that study at this University imparts. But I think all too often we succumb to an aimless pursuit of this truth, for we have been provided no substantial archimedean point at which to aim our academic endeavors. One must first know something of the truth to love it intelligently. It seems we waste a lot of intellectual energy trying to supply ourselves with some sort of direction in our education. How effective then, will our general education finally be in directing us in life?

I ask the faculty to please leave us no longer with the burden of breaking our own educational ground, but rather to provide us with a consistent, ordered, and sufficiently extensive core curriculum, mandated to us at the outset of our education, whereby we might earn the privilege of taking responsibility for our intellectual formation here at Franciscan University.

Katherine Kemmis
Junior, Humanities and
Catholic Culture

Natural Family Planning

I write regarding Kathleen van Schaijik's article on NFP in the February 13 issue of the *Concourse*. I was pleased to see this sensitive issue being discussed. I agree that we must be

careful of judgementalism, since often we cannot judge whether or not one is in a state of sin. However, when the question is not sin, but the level of virtue one exemplifies, I believe we need to admit that some people display a particular virtue to a greater degree. For instance, when one sees the distinctive habit of a Sister of Charity, one thinks of the selfless love with which Mother Teresa ministers to people in need. This is impressive and in no way diminishes the love with which other religious serve people in their care. Just the same, when one sees a large family, as did the doctor referred to in her article, the blessing and generosity is obvious. This fact should not diminish the generosity of families whose blessings are less obvious. This also does not make one “more Catholic” since one is either Catholic. . . or not. The issue then cannot be “Catholicity.” It is in fact generosity. I too have been impressed by large families, but this is not just my opinion. It is also the Church’s.

“Among the married couples who thus fulfill their God-given mission, *special mention should be made* of those who after prudent reflection and common decision courageously undertake the proper upbringing of a large number of children.” (*Gaudium et Spes* 50, emphasis my own)

“Sacred Scripture and the Church’s traditional practice see in large families a sign of God’s blessing and the parents’ generosity.” (CCC 2373)

The Church herself recognizes the sign value of a large family, without dismissing the generosity of parents who, due to circumstances beyond their control are unable to have a large number of children. Children are “the supreme gift of marriage” (GS 50) and thus always and everywhere a blessing, even if their mother is bit “strung out.”

As for the issue of the interpretation of *Humane Vitae*, it seems the issue is the precise meaning of the words used to qualify appropriate reasons for the licit use of NFP. Under the heading “Responsible Parenthood” the document reads: “In relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised, either by the deliberate and generous decision

to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth.”

There are two roads for responsible parents: generously raising a large family or the decision to postpone this for *grave* motives. The issue then is the meaning of “grave.” It is also the word used to qualify the matter necessary for a sin to be considered mortal. It seems to me the scope of meaning appropriate for the word “grave” in reference to mortal sin is the one that should also be used to determine the meaning of “grave” in reference to reasons to use NFP.

Carol Puccio
MA Theology program

Kathleen van Schaijik replies:

I am grateful for the opportunity Carol Puccio gives me to clarify my thoughts on this topic.

Here’s how I see it. The “providentialist” position is that the licit use of NFP is rare and always regrettable, whereas my claim is that it can be a “normal” part of Catholic family life, provided it is done in a right spirit, i.e. within the context of a generous and responsible ordination toward children. I claim further that the documentation (especially John Paul II’s statements) as well as the experience of the faithful bears out my interpretation. (If the Church meant us to be providentialists, why did she not speak more plainly? Why did she not simply say: “Christian parents, have large families if you can. Beware of NFP; it is seldom licit.”)

I do freely admit that many big families emanate the virtue of generosity. I will even happily grant that the Church has a certain “preferential love” for big families (I have it myself), in the same way she has a preferential love for the poor. My objection is to those who take this preference as a warrant for claiming that couples who choose *not* to have large families are thereby compromising in their vocation. Just as her preference for the poor does not justify us in presuming that *unpoor* Catholics (who, after all, could be poor, if they chose) are com-

promising in their commitment to the Faith, the Church’s praise of large families in no way implies that all families *should* be—if they *could* be—large.

Had the doctor limited himself to saying that the large Catholic families he encounters in his practice inspire him by their generosity, I would have had no quarrel with him. They inspire me too. What I objected to was an implication (perhaps unintended) that those who practice NFP are keeping one foot in the world, so to speak, and are less radically committed to their faith than those he termed “providentialist.” (True that people are not more or less Catholic in terms of their profession of faith; either they profess it or they do not. But they can be more or less Catholic to the extent they allow this profession to penetrate their day to day living. Surely there is some sense in speaking of a saint as being “more Catholic” than a person whose faith, though genuine, remains mainly on the periphery of his personal life.)

I cannot agree with Puccio’s having the discussion hinge on the word “grave.” To me the meaning of the term is clear enough: it means serious, weighty, important; it is the opposite of unserious, frivolous, insignificant. Did I ever in my article suggest that it was okay to use NFP for less than serious reasons? I think rather that part of the “providentialist problem” comes in with an unnatural stress on this word, which distorts its plain meaning, almost making it seem synonymous with “life-threatening.” I do not accuse Puccio herself of meaning this; indeed, I imagine we are really very close to each other (if not perfectly unified) in our opinions on the subject.



What is a responsible appraisal of rock?

by Andrew L. Minto

I WAS VERY PLEASED TO HAVE MARK FISCHER REVIVE A DISCUSSION I HAD ENTERED INTO A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO WITH THE PUBLICATION OF A FEW ARTICLES. I ADMIRE HIM FOR BRINGING BACK TO PUBLIC

ATTENTION A QUARRELSOME topic that is not kind to those who debate it. Knowing that he would likely take one on the chin (as he will in my critique) for staking out the position he does, one must applaud him for being honest about his thoughts and for being gutsy enough to share them. Fischer's article represents the kind of work that launched me into the debate about rock music many years ago. I was dissatisfied with discussions on the topic that never penetrated below the level of personal opinion, artistic taste and subjective relativism—the same characteristics I find hampering Fischer's discussion.

I have never espoused a pastoral action with my position on rock music. I have always left this to the conscience of the individual. My intention was to place the discussion on ground that I considered informed and critically oriented, so that an informed conscience could draw a decision and a more illuminated discussion than I had previously encountered could take place.

It surprises me, therefore, to be accused by Fischer of launching "attacks" on artists. In making this accusation, he violates the first rule of entering debates such as the one currently being waged about rock music, that is, he mistakenly interprets my well-reasoned critique of music, an art form and mode of communication, as a personal attack on the artists. We see the same phenomenon when the tags "racist" and "hateful" are thrown out as measures of defense in debates surrounding abortion and affirmative action. A careful reading of my articles will reveal that 1) I do not single out a single artist to criticize, and 2) I restrict my critique to the issues. Fischer would do well to follow suit. Misplaced accusations

such as his do nothing to advance the discussion.

Fischer also claims that I and others are "surely misguided" for holding the positions we do. In examining his article, one is struck by two questions: 1) How does he arrive at such certitude? and 2) On what basis can he claim that I and others are misguided? The last question seems to me to be most critical: What is a guided opinion or conclusion? Unfortunately, Fischer does not provide us with a satisfactory answer to these questions.

Beauty and truth: really?

It is apparent from Fischer's article that his opinion springs from deep personal conviction. Nevertheless, once submitted to close scrutiny, his opinion and others like it are not satisfactory in terms of dealing with the complexities of the problem of inculturation regarding rock music. In fact, I think he brings more confusion than clarity to the discussion. He implies that the opening quotations from me and others are examples of the denunciation of rock music by "social conservatives," a stereotyping tactic that automatically requires the reader to be on guard with respect to the positions proposed by those quoted. Oddly, he omits a statement from Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger quoted at length in one of my articles, which may be abbreviated as follows:

"In many forms of religion, music is associated with frenzy and ecstasy. Such music lowers the barriers of individuality and personality, and in it man liberates himself from the burden of consciousness....this type in rock and pop music, whose festivals are an anti-cult with the same tendency...is the complete antithesis of Christian faith in the Redemption. Accordingly, it is only logical that in this area diabolical cults and demonic musics are on the increase today, and their dangerous power of deliberately destroying personality is not yet taken seriously enough..."

These are sobering and prophetic words, especially when compared to those of Fischer. Ratzinger's opinion harmonizes with my own, but I do not think Fischer would characterize Ratzinger's opinion as that of a "social conservative." Rather, Ratzinger's words express the carefully considered position of a churchman, a theologian and a trusted teacher of the Church. His point of view has little to do with the larger debate about culture wars and social engineering that Fischer intimates. The tag of "social conservatism" only muddies the water.

Regrettably, Fischer rejects conclusions such as mine and Ratzinger's without holding himself responsible to the task of dismantling the hard fought

Fischer rejects conclusions such as mine and Ratzinger's without holding himself responsible to the task of dismantling the hard fought argument that proposed the conclusions.

argument that proposed the conclusions. In short, his opinions, not arguments, are offered without the benefit of assuring the reader that hard-headed critical thinking went into them. It is troubling, for example, to observe Fischer claiming some very well stated criteria only to see that he does not hold himself accountable to them. He warns of making statements “in the abstract,” but proceeds to make his own abstract claims without foundation in the next paragraph. He never explains how or why artistic success in communicating is a competent criterion to lead one to a correct valuation of the artist’s product.

Fischer violates his own criterion again when he claims that traditional Blues music communicates “permanent hope....This is not escapism; it is exactly the opposite.” He gives no supporting evidence for his opinion. There is no hard-nosed analysis of Blues musical scores and lyrics to back up his abstract claim. There is no serious attempt to place these musical expressions within their cultural milieu. Moreover, Fischer holds an opinion not echoed by a single musicologist or music historian I am aware of. It is truly odd to find him accusing me and others of “musical ignorance” when he has not taken it upon himself to do his own homework.

Fischer continues to immerse himself in the criterion of subjective relativism by elevating “experience of the music” above a “general theory.” The “general theory” of which he speaks is the poorly contrived conclusion that merely hearing rock songs means hearing “only ‘sex,’” a presumptuous conclusion that I

do not indulge. For my part, however, I would like to know how one’s subjective experience of music provides a reliable criterion for determining the worth, the good or evil, of an artistic expression? I have heard the “this-is-my-experience” argument for any number of objectionable actions, including abortion, adultery, and thievery. It fails to convince.

Later in the article, Fischer laments the absence of serious attention to “a difficult musical and philosophical question.” This lamentation appears strange in an article bereft of philosophical inquiry either on the level of some proposed system or on the level of the history of philosophy. Both of these philosophical inquiries are found in the articles written by me.

Fischer’s philosophical presuppositions, however, are readily identifiable. He bases his opinion on a theory of aesthetics that owes its heritage to Enlightenment categories. Thus, Fischer indulges subjective relativism and praises art for art’s sake. Art is thought to be evaluated on no other basis than whether or not it is good or bad art, but the criteria for making such distinctions remain obscure and abide only in the judging subject. Fischer also elevates the artist and his work to embody what the Enlightenment philosophers thought to represent the free, rational man, who is unfettered from such socio-political and religious restraints that are mediated by society and culture. Unfortunately, nothing of the kind of honest philosophical work to place the contemporary discussion of the issues within the context of a history of philosophy or within a reliable

philosophical system emerges from Fischer’s article. He seems only capable of using the words “philosophy,” “abstract” and “philosophical roots” without knowing what they mean.

Interestingly, Fischer speaks of rock music as an “idiom.” He assumes, but does not demonstrate (as I do) that music is a form of communication. Yet, he appears unwilling or unable to come to grips with the difficult and complex issues surrounding communication and media. How and why does music communicate? Where is the engagement of the debate that appears in communication/media literature regarding how communication itself is not value-neutral—an insight especially true of music? He makes no attempt to grapple with the argument that music, like other forms of communication, strongly influences the shaping of public opinion and values—a subject treated extensively in journals of communication and musicology. Fischer has chosen to ignore the statistical and clinical correlation that has been demonstrated between rock music and problems in mental and physical health and development in young people. Nowhere does Fischer explore, as I and others have done, the relationship between music and its cultural antecedents. One is left to guess, for example, what “black culture” means to Fischer and why the largess of “black culture” provides a favorable assessment of Blues and Jazz.

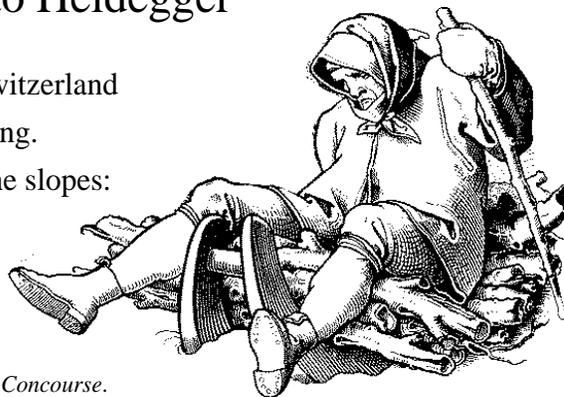
In summary, the most that Fischer can contribute to the discussion of rock music is his shallow, uninformed opinion, albeit one that is held with deep personal conviction. With that observation, one may grant that he has the right to share it in a journal of opinion. However, on examination, I find his opinion devoid of critical thinking, substantive argumentation and demonstrable responsibility to the complexities of the issues. He is entitled to his opinion, but he lacks grounds for his claim that those who disagree with him are ignorant and misguided.

So, how should one enter the discussion in order to make a meaningful contribution and what should the shape of the debate look like?

Bill Marra’s ode to Heidegger

Though Martin lives in Switzerland
You’ll rarely find him skiing.
He sits and mopes upon the slopes:
He only thinks of **Being**.

Dr. Marra was a visiting Professor of Philosophy at FUS earlier in the semester, and the first paid-subscriber to the *Concourse*.



The mode and shape of the debate

I can only speak briefly about this here. A survey of my articles will demonstrate that I have held myself accountable to the discipline and the criteria that I presently discuss. A positive and helpful contribution to the discussion will be responsive both to the needs of the audience, some of whom will desire a more critically reasoned argument than Fischer requires to form an opinion, and to the complex features of the issue under discussion.

1. Since the topic is music, the discussion must contain a competent and thorough understanding of music theory and history. The findings of reliable musicologists must be considered.

2. Related to the first point, musicologists and music critics of reputation agree that music is a socio-culturally situated communication. Hence, one must understand the relation between music and its cultural antecedents and/or context.

3. The meaning of art is a hermeneutical pursuit, thus the discussion must give more than lip-service to philosophical categories, trends and influences. A reliable philosophical system suitable to the complexities of the topic and a knowledge of the history of philosophy that demonstrates how such problems have previously been worked through are needed. This is where communication and social theories intersect.

4. Finally, when the discussion moves toward music and faith, a solid theological inquiry is needed. One's conclusions about faith—what is proper to the gospel, how inculturation takes place correctly so as not to violate the dignity of the gospel and the mystery of the Trinity, what constitutes true praise, and how hymnology and music are to function in the church—will not be sufficiently grounded on aesthetics, but on theology.

With these points in mind, treated as a whole or individually, the discussion may proceed in a way that does not lack clarity and responsibility. In order to facilitate this ongoing discussion, I have placed a copy of my articles on the reserve shelf at the John Paul II library.

Mr. Minto is an Assistant Professor of Theology at FUS

Mark Fischer responds:

When I submitted my recent article to the *Concourse*, I envisioned an opportunity to finally enter into a reasonable discussion about a subject known more for the unreasonable debate it generates. In the spirit of the *Concourse*, I personally invited Mr. Minto to respond, noting in my letter that I believed his response would enrich the debate. Given my viewpoint, I did expect to “take one on the chin.” I most certainly did not anticipate taking one below the belt. Be that as it may, I only ask the reader to consider one man's “shallow, uninformed opinion, albeit one that is held with personal conviction.”

The modest goal of my piece on modern music was to challenge a certain dogma of social conservatives (I consider myself a social conservative and was surprised Minto shrank from a “tag” gladly adopted by the likes of Richard John Neuhaus, Russell Kirk, William Bennett and so on.) The dogma involves a rejection of all modern music on the premise that such music is utterly incompatible with truths and virtues they—and I—hold dear. Their argument inevitably takes the form of reductionism, i.e. the beat is sex, the beat is self-indulgence, or, in the words of Minto, “Rock music is the language of alienation, the means to self-stimulation emotionally and sexually, and an avenue of escape.” To condemn entire genres in this fashion is, in a word, bold. Those who do so clearly have the burden of proof. What I find so disappointing is that most of these commentators, including Minto, display no substantial knowledge of the genre they criticize. Ultimately, they rest on bald assertion.

Minto's article, “Rock music: An ethical evaluation,” is a good example of this phenomenon. He goes to great lengths “demonstrating” the uncontroversial: “First music engages the listener emotionally. Second, music creates a psychological disposition or mood. Third, music functions educationally,

introducing the listener to culture and its virtues through role modeling.” I have no real qualms with these conclusions. I do “assume” the communicative nature of music, and all art for that matter. If I believed music to be an unintelligible, functionless pastime, I would not be wasting my time engaging these matters. And if these conclusions are the “hard fought” ones to which Minto alludes, I would suggest that he has spent far too much time re-inventing the proverbial wheel.

I am more interested in what Minto does with the above conclusions. What does modern music communicate? He approaches this question by examining the “cultural antecedents” of the genre and by attempting to pinpoint the “ideas” communicated by the genre's particular “language” of rhythm, melodic structure, and chordal progressions. I find his analysis wanting. Minto “surveys” and sums up the en-

tire body of 20th century popular music, with all its richness and diversity, in one paragraph, the last sentence of which reads: “The marks of alienation can be found at each stage [of musical development]: egotism, sexual promiscuity, despair, and emotional stimulation to stem the tide of that despair.” With the broad brush of “alienation,” Minto has pigeon-holed artists as diverse as Louis Armstrong, B.B. King, James Taylor, Kansas and Amy Grant.

Why should the reader believe him? He demonstrates no knowledge of the genre. While he may understand the general communicative nature of music, he displays no expertise concerning the patterns and nuances of musical phrases that define an idiom, so as to be able to distinguish between phrases that are stereotypical and those that are truly innovative and authentic. Moreover, he shows no familiarity with a body of criticism that analyzes the modern genres, their roots, their strengths and their weaknesses.

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A year or so ago, I read a book by art critic Martha Bayles, titled *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*. By analyzing in great detail the development of modern genres and by examining the artists, their music, the themes they explore and their musical influences, Bayles concludes that much is wrong with popular music today. Her conclusions are hard fought. She wrestles with the music itself and forces the reader to do the same. She also demonstrates that much can be *right* with popular music; that artists past and present have produced a significant body of work within the various modern genres and that such artists have successfully communicated a wide variety of worthwhile ideas and emotions.

In contrast, Minto seems to trumpet the fact that he does not mention a single artist in his articles—a fact that impinges greatly on his scholarly credibility. If he wishes to attain “hard fought” conclusions, I suggest that he must analyze actual music and actual artists. He cannot simply cite a few musicologists as if that closes the debate. To analogize in his own field of expertise, I ask what he would think of an outspoken critic of Christian ethics who draws his conclu-

sions by citing other like-minded critics and who demonstrates no familiarity with the New Testament texts. I suspect that Minto would not take such a critic seriously.

Minto raises the important question of how one evaluates a song or genre. My article was not geared to answer that question and it would take much space to address it with any seriousness. I note only that I abhor the idea that art can be validated by the kind of pure subjectivism of which Minto accuses me. When I speak of “authentic artistic expression,” I expected, in the context of a Catholic university, that the reader would understand that the terms “authentic” and “artistic” concern matters of technical excellence, creative effort, faithfulness in lyric to the Christian understanding of the person as revealed in Christ and through his Church, and a specific attention by the artist to harmony between music and lyric. If this was not adequately communicated, I apologize. This framework has led me to reject much modern music, both of the secular and religious variety. But this framework has also helped me discover much that is true and beautiful in modern music, and I will continue to take it on the chin to express

this belief.

Finally, I invite Mr. Minto to continue this conversation. I only remind him that a philosophical system, to have any usefulness, must be applied to the object under examination. He appears to have a carefully formulated system and a forcefully stated conclusion, but has neglected the most important step in the process—a thorough application of the system to the object of study. And when that object is music, a certain measure of subjectivity is unavoidable. In the meantime, I hope he will allow me a generous portion of time to brush up on my philosophy, theology, musicology, hymnology, sociology and hermeneutics.

I also invite the opinion of other interested parties, including even those who do not know what a musicologist is and who do not have degrees in philosophy or theology. Popular music is, by its nature, of the people. So when common folk (myself included) listen to Gene Kelly’s “Singin’ in the Rain” and for some reason feel like—well—singing in the rain, we shouldn’t have to wonder whether this strange phenomenon is evidence of deep-seeded alienation. We should put on our slickers. ■

God and Caesar

Continued from page 1

poverty, racism, and homelessness—is nothing other than the inescapable consequence of the flawed deistic epistemology and metaphysics of America’s founders. He concedes that the founders did not intend the moral crisis, but thinks that their “understanding of the person, society, and God, and the way of life embodying this understanding, has ‘logical’ implications which they did not foresee.”¹ The logic of capitalism, in his view, tends toward the evils of greed and materialism. “Western liberalism appeals to appetite. Liberalism creates a society that can satisfy all your wants.”² Thus, he calls for a radically new economic beginning based on a highly developed theological anthropology and the social teachings of the Church.

The answer to the crisis, he tells us,

is Christ. The implication of the answer is society-wide transformation, change of heart and a revamping of the social milieu—meaning nothing less than total conversion of society at every level and in every institution. Government, business, banking, financial markets, insurance industries, the family, education systems and every market exchange would be altogether different in a truly Christ-centered culture. Schindler wants efforts toward the renewal of culture to be based on a right understanding of man’s relation to God. For instance, he insists that our ills arise partly from a disordered emphasis on man’s *creativity* as opposed to his *receptivity*, which should be primary.

As a Catholic, I have a lot of sympathy with Schindler’s view, but as a Catholic economist, I think there are serious problems with it, both in theory and in practice. I object especially to the

condemnation of an economic system as a whole, because of its particular cultural deficiencies. But before I get to my criticisms, I want to clarify the meaning of the term capitalism. (It seems to me that ambiguity in the term has caused a lot of unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding on both sides.) Let me offer a basic definition for a starting point, and then proceed to draw some implications which, to me, seem to undermine Schindler’s position.

Capitalism is one of many possible economic systems. An economic system serves a society in several ways: it establishes the means of production, it guides society in choosing what to produce, and it distributes the fruits of human labor to society. Capitalism can be defined as one kind of economic system with the following characteristics: ownership of resources and the means of production based on the institution of private

property, an authority that protects this institution or provides a mechanism of reparation when the right of private property is violated, and freedom of exchange. Capitalism uses a market system for organizing resources and distributing wealth, goods and services produced.

Our present experience of capitalism in most western industrialized nations, however, is not that of a pure capitalism. Rather, nations like the United States, Japan and Germany are usually thought of as mixed capitalist economies. This is due to public policies that regulate resource and product markets (e.g. antitrust policy and labor laws like the minimum wage), redistribute income (AFDC), and attain control of resources (e.g. federally operated transit systems.) Such public intervention is justified when the market system fails to achieve certain goals. This definition of the economic system is rather simplistic. Even so, it may serve as a reminder that when we discuss culture, economic systems play the part of serving society's material needs.

Now, let us consider Schindler's call to reform. He correctly anticipates some criticism of his argument by indicating that reform must be *proposed* rather than *imposed*. The truth, he reminds us, is liberating. Nevertheless, let me offer two reasons why I think his theory remains flawed.

1) The economic system we live in should not be conceived as simply the necessary outgrowth of a particular idea, but rather as the result of innumerable concrete choices made by individuals day by day.

2) His proposal for reform, while offering the ideal toward which a society may strive, is unrealistic, especially considering the pluralism of American society.

The role of freedom

Let me try to explain what I mean. Working within a given state of economic circumstances, people freely experiment with different options; they take advantage of varying opportunities; and they take risks. Sometimes these experiments lead to success, other times to waste and ruin. But people learn from experience. When particular decisions bring forth

good fruit, knowledge about such "right" decisions spreads through the social framework. I suggest, then, that the economic system has progressed to its current state by the accumulation of millions of experiments (free personal choices and acts) yielding results over time.

I do not mean to suggest that the present state of the economy has nothing to do with ideas—only that it has less to do with ideas than Schindler seems to say. And, to the extent that it *is* a by-product of particular ideas, I would say current American capitalism is much more a product of the last fifty years than of our founders' principles. Further, I think this empirical analysis can be extended to the broader societal construct of culture, implying, I believe, that part of the fault lies with the Church, which has failed to evangelize the culture. The failure to account for human freedom misdirects the attack on American capitalism. The Founders may have predisposed us in a certain direction, but we were free all along to rise above their limits and receive the truth.

Problems of unrealism

There are four reasons why I think Schindler's theory (and his call for reform) is unrealistic. First, from the point of view of practical alternatives: Schindler doesn't ask whether we might not be worse off had capitalism not been in place. Might it not be the case that without a capitalist economy, our social ills could have been still more intense, affecting many more persons to much greater degree? Isn't it at least feasible that the duration, severity, and extent of our economic difficulties would have been much greater had we had different system in place?

Second, from the point of view of actual possibilities, Schindler proposes radical transformation without enough emphasis on the fact of sin. As long as there is sin, the nature of the economic system will be to allow for opportunities of failure. Can emerging fruits of the Spirit become part of the social fabric? Of course they can, but sin remains; we cannot avoid its effects. Neither can people be forced to conform to the culture of love. It seems therefore imprac-

tical to expect the system to embody the culture of love within the framework of political, ethnic and religious pluralism of our society, which results from liberties guaranteed by the Constitution.

Third, the theory is unrealistic because it places unreasonable demands on a system which can only do so much toward remedying human problems. The economic system is designed to perform only certain functions. And, as the Pope has said, many human needs are not present in markets. This is a reminder not to confuse markets with moral systems. To transform a social institution, society itself must be transformed. But transformation of society comes only with the metanoia of the inheritors of the Kingdom. Only then can markets become (only one of many) expressions of a receptive culture of love.

This leads me to the last reason why I think Schindler's theory is unrealistic. Reform must arise from individuals. I think Schindler makes this point, but only weakly. Redirecting the attack against the American expression of democratic capitalism ought to place priority on personal transformation, whereas he seems to make it almost an afterthought.

In conclusion, as we debate these questions, let us be sure we use terms in the same sense and meaning; second, the critique of the American expression must become more pointed (in the direction, I think, of government;) lastly, a proper alternative to capitalism must account for the realities of sin. For God, everything is possible, and a true conversion of



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persons on a widespread scale would surely mean economic reforms. But the crux of the matter is thus: renewal must begin with individuals, not economic systems. If we attempt the reverse, we will see the decline of liberty and the return of serfdom.

I would welcome further discussion on this and related topics.

Freedom

Continued from page 4

“proposed,” not as “theses to be held” but rather as “safe directive norms.” The wording signifies that the Congregation is not judging on the plane of philosophical truth. It maintains that in adhering to the 24 theses, one takes a safe road which will not conflict with the dogmatic teachings of the Church, but it does not impose upon the faithful assent to the truth of the theses.

Something still more pertinent to our work at Franciscan University is found in the General Constitutions of the Friars Minor, which were approved by the Congregation of Religious on August 22, 1921. Rule 277 states: “In philosophical and theological doctrines let them strive to follow the Franciscan School wholeheartedly; let them respect other Scholastics, especially the Angelic Doctor.” Mr. de la Prada concludes his paper by calling upon FUS not to fear in giving St. Thomas the primacy the Church gives him. Rule 277 of these statutes, however, clearly gives primacy to the *Franciscan tradition* in philosophy and only secondarily to the teachings of the Angelic Doctor. Mr. de la Prada’s recommendation would seem to put some Franciscans in the awkward position of having to obey either the voice of the Magisterium or the statutes of their order, but certainly not both.

The Church clearly allows certain schools and faculties of philosophy to proceed without having to give pride of place to St. Thomas. Rather, the place of primacy was reserved for other notable parts, in this case the Franciscan part, of the *philosophia perennis*.

This brings me to another point, im-

“It would appear that on the level of individual nations and of international relations, the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs.... But there are many human needs which find no place on the market.” (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* 34) ■

portant to mention. Mr. de la Prada makes reference to the fact that the crisis we are experiencing within the Church today is due to failure to keep pre-eminent what the Church has declared pre-eminent. I agree with him if he means that much of the crisis is caused by a failure on the part of many Catholics to trust and obey the teaching authority of the Magisterium. But I am shocked and dismayed that he would count the failure of a philosopher or a school of philosophy to give primacy to St. Thomas as just such an act of infidelity which contributes to the aforementioned crisis! This seems to me a failure on the part of Mr. de la Prada to make the crucial distinction between areas which are morally binding on the consciences of believers and areas within which the Church allows a certain freedom. Catholic philosophers are free not to be Thomists without having to endure censure for being a contributing cause to the moral crisis in the Church.

More contemporary documents continue to place in high esteem the teachings and method of Thomas, but go further than the old in safeguarding the legitimate freedom of her philosophers and theologians. In *Gravissimum Educationis*, regarding universities, we read: “the Church endeavors systematically to ensure that the treatment of the individual disciplines is consonant with their own principles, their own methods, and with a true liberty of scientific enquiry.”⁸

Let me conclude with a plea for a permanent end to the unfounded charges that Catholic phenomenologists are, as such, disloyal to their Faith or to the intellectual traditions of the Church. The authentic Catholicity of the Philosophy

Michael Welker is an Assistant Professor of Economics at FUS, an alumnus of the class of 1989 and a professed member of the Secular Franciscan Order.

¹ Taken from an interview published in the October, 1994 issue of *The Catholic World Report*

² Ibid.

Department at FUS ought never to be measured by a “counting of heads.” (I have heard on more than one occasion such statements as: “Only 40% of the undergraduate faculty and 33% of the graduate faculty are Thomists, therefore, St. Thomas clearly does not have the primacy the Church intends for him.”)

Catholic philosophers live out their vocation most truly when they philosophize in the same spirit and according to the same principles by which St. Thomas philosophized, that is, by investigating “things in themselves” with an openness to all truth, no matter what or who its source. If the Church had restricted Thomas by the weight of a magisterial survey—unduly limiting his freedom to analyze and speculate, he would never have become the “heavenly patron of Catholic schools.” The same is true today. Let us seek the truth wherever it can be found, without prejudice toward the person who speaks it, holding fast with an ultimate and unfailing allegiance to that which is true. It is this, and nothing else, that ultimately characterizes Catholic and Christian philosophy. ■

Richard Gordon is a student in the MA Philosophy program and Contributing Editor of the Concourse.

¹ Pope John Paul II - “The perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of our Times” Nov. 17, 1979

² Pope Gregory XVI - encyclical *Mirari vos* (1832)

³ Pope Pius IX - *Syllabus of Errors* #15

⁴ Vatican II - *Dignitatis Humanae* #’s 3 and 4

⁵ Pope John Paul II - “The perennial philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of our Times”

⁶ Pope John Paul II - “The perennial philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of our Times”

⁷ Leo XIII - *Aeterni Patris*

⁸ Vatican II - *Gravissimum Educationis* #1