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KRIKŠČIONIŠKOJI EPISTEMOLOGIJA: RECEPCINĖ AR PROJEKcinĖ?

Christian Epistemology: Receptive or Projective?

SUMMARY

In a previous issue of LOGOS, I defended Aquinas from Heidegger's ontotheology critique of metaphysics. I argued that the presencing of things in human consciousness outstrips *Dasein's* productive comportment. From this residual realism Aquinas employs his analogical notion of being to think the First Cause in a genuinely transcendent manner. In the present article I defend Aquinas's sense realism from the turn to the subject that is characteristic of modern philosophy. I also offer this defense as an example of what some Popes have called Christian Philosophy.

In a past issue of LOGOS I spoke of Aquinas's immediate sense realism as an antidote to Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein* as projective of Being in the light of which things stand forth as beings. The ontotheologian is naively unaware of this role of *Dasein* as the ontotheologian traces beings back to an all too human First Cause. In this article I want to discuss in a critical way Aquinas's epistemology of immediate sense realism that is basic to his different understanding of the Being of beings.

SANTRAUKA

Ankstesniame LOGOS numeryje gyniau Akvinietį nuo Heideggerio ontoteologinės metafizikos kritikos. Teigiau, kad daiktų pateikimas žmogaus sąmonėje pranoksta produktyvų *Dasein* elgesį. Iš šio likutinio realizmo Akvinitis paima savo analogišką būties sampratą tikrai transcendentiskam Pirmosios priežasties apmąstymui. Šiame straipsnyje ginu Akvinietį nuo jo požiūrio į moderniajai filosofijai būdingą objektą. Taip pat šią gynybą siūlau kaip pavyzdį to, ką kai kurie popiežiai vadino krikščioniškąja filosofija.

Ankstesniame LOGOS numeryje kalbėjau apie Akvinietį tiesioginių pojūčių realizmą, kaip priešnuodį heidegeriškajai *Dasein* kaip būties projekcinio vaizdo, kurio atžvilgiu daiktai išryškėja kaip esiniai, traktuoti. Ontoteologas naiviai nesuvokia šio *Dasein* vaidmens, nes esinius redukuoja į pernelyg sužmogintą Pirmąją priežastį. Šiame straipsnyje noriu kritiškai aptarti Akvinietį tiesioginių pojūčių realizmo epistemologiją, kuri yra kitokio esinių Būties supratimo pagrindas.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: Tomas Akvinitis, Martinus Heideggeris, krikščioniškoji filosofija, epistemologija, būtis, *Dasein*.

KEY WORDS: Thomas Aquinas, Martin Heidegger, Christian philosophy, epistemology, Being, *Dasein*.

I. COGNITION AS COGNITION

The expressions “epistemology” and “philosophy of knowledge” are of recent coinage in philosophy’s history. Nevertheless, what they mean is age-old. The expressions stand for the study of human cognition precisely as cognition. Cognition is taken generally here, and so it stands for any kind of human awareness.

Right from the beginning human awareness is an interesting phenomenon. We are “immediately but indirectly aware of our awareness.”¹ This description may sound oxymoronic, or contradictory. For does not “immediately” mean “directly”? But what the phrase “immediately but indirectly” means here is that we become aware of our awareness in the very course of being aware of something else. For example, we are aware of our seeing during our awareness of color. We are aware of our mathematicizing when we are aware of the

numbers. In other words, we become aware of our awareness in and through the object of the awareness. Hence, you might say that our cognition is a “peripheral” object of awareness. We are aware of our cognition but as “on the side” of the object of our attention. Cognition is not displayed like the books before you. It is not out there on the table like them. Cognition is something caught out of the “corner of one’s eye” while one is looking at the books.

But this peripheral approach is true of the first or original acquaintance with our cognition. For subsequently and by reflection we can make what is an indirect object of awareness a direct object. That is, I can concentrate on the seeing or on the mathematicizing. As so considered, the initial cognition appears at least (1) as my activity or operation and (2) as a context in which something is appearing.

II. TWO BASIC VIEWS OF COGNITION

Granted that one can attain facility in reflexively focusing on one’s cognition, what does epistemology say about cognition? Epistemology is primarily interested in *what* cognition is. How should cognition be basically described? In the history of philosophy, there have been two most basic descriptions of cognition: cognition as receptive and cognition as projective.

Reception characterized both the Platonic and Aristotelian understandings of cognition that marked philosophy before

the 16th century modern period. Cognition draws its basic content from a contact with reality. In the *Phaedo*, 74E–76E, Plato describes that contact as in a previous life. There we were confronted with the forms. Plato understood the forms as subsisting universals or commonalities that were not only real, or cognition independent, but more real than sensible things. For Aristotle our cognition’s basic contact with reality was sensation, viz., what you are doing right now as you look this way and listen. In *Posterior*

Analytics II, 19, 100a10–14. Aristotle understood Plato's forms as ideas that the mind abstracted from real sensible particulars. So, for example, we know the form triangle in and through seeing triangles drawn on a board.

The switch to the projective understanding of cognition happened because of a perceived problem in the receptive approach. The receptive approach involves the claim that we know reality. But in the modern period philosophers became convinced that weighty reasons existed to doubt that claim. Hence, the receptive approach rested on an assumption, and assumptions are to be avoided in philosophy. One of these weighty reasons was the following: what is received is received according to the mode of the receiver.² Hence, cognition cannot receive reality and leave reality unchanged. Cognition reduces reality to itself and so the object of cognition is more the effect of cognition than of reality. Just as the heat of the fire is modified by the cold rock that is receiving the heat, so too cognition modifies what is entering it.

The modern philosopher who most developed this new view of cognition was Immanuel Kant. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant proclaimed a "Copernican revolution" in philosophy.³ Instead of the knower circling reality, reality now circles the knower. He understood this change to mean that the knower, not reality, now determines the object of consciousness. By a process called "transcendental method," Kant presented the knower as equipped with the "synthetic a priori" which was an innate and immutable mental structure that determines how things appear in cognition.

Space and time were examples of the synthetic a priori. Various facts indicated that space and time were a priori, or that they were *before* our experience. For instance, objects can come and go but space and time remain the same.⁴ Hence, space and time seem to have more to do with us than with things. Likewise, whatever we think of happening we think of being caused; hence causality has more to do with us than with what is happening.

Philosophers who followed Kant's Copernican revolution did not necessarily follow his understanding of the synthetic a priori as immutable and universal to all human minds. Thought is still actively mediating the appearance of things, but now thought is not pure and immutable. Rather, thought is culturally determined. Such is Martin Heidegger. The way people see things is determined by their cultural world-view. For example, the way a Greek or a Roman sees things is not the way a Catholic medieval sees them nor is it the way an Enlightenment figure sees them. But behind the seeing of things is a projection of a sense of being, a world view, that allows things to profile themselves in the way that they do. There is no rational basis either in things or in human nature for this projection of being. Rather, both things and human nature light up or appear only subsequent to the projection of being. The source of the projection seems to be raw exercise of will. This exercise of will that founds the projection of a sense of being is not the prerogative of everyone. Only certain unique strong and bold individuals, e.g., the real poets and philosophers, are able to rise above

the cultures in which they live and project new senses of being, new world-views. They live in authenticity while most of us live in an inauthenticity prompted by things. Heidegger says:

. . . philosophy is always the concern of the few. Which few? The creators, those who initiate profound transformations. It spreads only indirectly, by devious paths that can never be laid out in advance, until at last, at some future date, it sinks to the level of a commonplace; but by then it has long been forgotten as original philosophy. What philosophy essentially can and must be is this: a thinking that breaks the paths and opens the perspectives of the knowledge that sets the norms and hierarchies, of knowledge in which and by which a people fulfills itself historically and culturally, the knowledge that kindles and necessitates all inquiries and thereby threatens all.⁵

Jean-Paul Sartre was more equalitarian. Each of us uses his freedom to project a project in and through which things come across to us. The projecting is so fundamentally within our control that we can never complain about how we are determined by things, circumstances, place, birth, etc. As Sartre explains in *Being and Nothingness*, Pt. 4, ch. 1, any of these obtain their coefficient of adversity only in and through our free choice to come at them in a certain way. Sartre's famous illustration is the rock on the road. What is the rock? Sartre says that it all depends upon what the traveler wants to make of it. If the traveler's freely chosen project is to reach the village on the other side, then what the rock is is a hindrance. On the other hand, if the traveler's freely chosen project is to pause and to survey the countryside, then, as

something upon which to stand, the rock is an aid. In sum, Sartre remarks, "Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders." (Sartre 1948: 29)

To finish this presentation of basic descriptions of cognition as cognition, I want to emphasize one decisive result of the projective view of cognition. The result is that we have to surrender all talk about reality as such. Kant himself acknowledged this result when he mentioned that a trade-off to his Copernican revolution was the end of metaphysics. (Kant, 1965: 24; B xx). Traditionally metaphysicians thought that they were grasping at least the basic structure of reality. To underscore Kant's skeptical result, let me point out an analogy. Consider the play of biases. If my bias is a prejudice against blacks, then I will be structured to see a black relaxing on his front porch in the middle of the week as a lazy no-good. Moreover, this bias is going to distort the object of my cognition because in fact the said black is hard working and enjoying a day off. But suppose that the bias is ineluctable, or inescapable. Then we would never know if our view of things is distortive or not. In Kant's Copernican revolution cognition is like an ineluctable bias. All that we are left knowing is that we may be seeing things as they really are but then again maybe we are seeing things as they are distorted by what we bring to them. That "on-the-fence" result is the skepticism indigenous to the projective view of cognition and continues with Heidegger and Sartre. We will return to this result when I mention *Fides et Ratio*.

III. CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

I want to do epistemology as a branch of Christian philosophy. What do I mean by the latter? What I mean is doing philosophy with specifically Christian concerns in mind. Here Christianity provides the focus but leaves the philosopher to do the philosophizing. For example, Christianity teaches about a creative God. Creation is a way of causing something without needing to presuppose something else. We do not seem to find creation in our experience. Experience shows agents causing by presupposing; for example, Michelangelo causes the Pieta presupposing the block of marble, the carpenter causes the house presupposing the lumber. Can philosophy prove creative causality? That question lead Christian philosophers to probe more deeply philosophical understandings of what it means to be an existent. One of them, Aquinas, succeeded in deepening the Greek understanding of being as possessing form. For Aquinas, to be an existent was to have existence understood as an attribute *sui generis* because of its fundamentality to the thing. The cause of this attribute had to be a creator. Aquinas' attribute understanding of the existence of a thing was a genuine metaphysical innovation on the level of philosophy but it was occasioned by his faith. His faith lead him to peer philosophically more intently into existents and to catch something that had evaded the gaze of pagan philosophers. In future articles, I will go through Aquinas's philosophical case for the attribute of existence.

The same dynamic can be observed as a result of Christian teaching on human freedom and human dignity. Again, these teachings provided a powerful impetus for Aquinas to develop a philosophical psychology of the human as an intellector of being. That psychology was in the core ideas of the philosophical tradition but left unobserved and undeveloped by the tradition. It took a Christian working under the truths of his faith to catch the philosophical insights.

The phrase "Christian philosophy" first appeared as part of the title to a famous encyclical by Pope Leo XIII. The encyclical was *Aeterni patris* (1878). The relation of faith to reason is described in this famous passage that uses the analogy of the "friendly star."

Those, therefore, who to the study of philosophy unite obedience to the Christian faith are philosophers indeed; for the splendor of the divine truths, received into the mind, helps the understanding, and not only detracts in nowise from its dignity, but adds greatly to its nobility, keenness, and stability. . . . Faith frees and saves reason from error, and endows it with manifold knowledge. A wise man, therefore, would not accuse faith and look upon it as opposed to reason and natural truths, but would rather offer heartfelt thanks to God, and sincerely rejoice that in the density of ignorance and in the flood-tide of error, holy faith, like a friendly star, shines down upon his path and points out to him the fair gate of truth beyond all danger of wandering. (Brezik 1981: 182)

This philosophical use of faith-as-a-friendly-star still demands that the phi-

philosopher make the philosophical case for what he already knows to be true by faith. I believe that another analogy is the way mathematics is taught using books with the answers at the back. It is considered good pedagogy by secular teachers that students already have the answers. The prior knowledge does not prevent students from genuinely learning math but helps them to do so. The answers at the back are a check on the student's computation and an encouragement for him to go back over the numbers if his answer does not match.⁶ Leo is saying that the faith can function in a similar way in the philosopher's thinking. As a verification of his claim, Leo goes on to describe the thinking of Aquinas. But Leo could have mentioned many other Christian thinkers in the Middle

Ages. I would direct you to the writings of the famous 20th century French Thomist, Etienne Gilson. Besides being a great philosopher, Gilson was a pioneering historian of medieval philosophy. In book after book on figure after figure, Gilson displayed remarkable philosophical ingenuity in the Middle Ages that advanced the heritage of Greek philosophy. In fact, Gilson shows that modern philosophy would not have appeared if the Middle Ages were absent. For example, modern philosophical ideas about God and man cannot be traced to Greek times. Their pedigree is medieval. So one must admit that in the Middle Ages the faith was productive of authentic and influential philosophical theses under pain of denying the philosophical character of modern philosophy.

IV. *FIDES ET RATIO* AND THE TASK OF THE CHRISTIAN EPISTEMOLOGIST

Christianity includes not only claims about causality, human freedom and dignity, but claims about cognition. These claims can be seen in a section of John Paul II's 1998 encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*. For these claims I want to read a paragraph from Chapter VII: Current Requirements and Tasks, the opening section: "The indispensable requirements of the word of God". Speaking of current developments in hermeneutics and the analysis of language, John Paul mentions that some scholars working in these fields tend to stop short at the question of how reality is expressed without going further to see whether reason can discover reality itself. He then says,

Faith clearly presupposes that human language is capable of expressing divine and transcendent reality in a universal way – analogically, it is true, but no less meaningfully for that. Were this not so, the word of God, which is always a divine word in human language, would not be capable of saying anything about God. The interpretation of this word cannot merely keep referring us to one interpretation after another, without ever leading us to a statement which is simply true; otherwise there would be no Revelation of God, but only the expression of human notions about God and about what God presumably thinks of us.

The point of these lines is remarkably simple and incisive. If God and the scrip-

tural authors use human language to get across truths about reality, even transcendent reality, then the human mind, the author of that language, must be capable of grasping reality and so be able to know absolute truths, truths that hold in all times and places. In other words, the human mind cannot be as Kant claimed it was, namely, unable to know if it knows reality. Hence, the job of the Christian epistemologist is to elaborate in a cogent philosophical manner, the human capacity to know truth.

For the accomplishment of this task, *Fides et Ratio* goes on (in para. 85) to recommend a reconnection with the earlier receptive tradition in the philosophical study of cognition. The mentioned ancient tradition was receptive and a posteriori in its understanding of cognition. So that is the direction in which the Pope is pointing out to philosophers. And that

is the direction in which I go as a Christian epistemologist. In particular, I use Aristotle. And since for Aristotle all knowledge begins from the senses, I would like to conclude with some words in defense of sense realism. According to this epistemological position, the direct and immediate object of our sense cognition, e.g., what you are doing right now as you look this way, is something real. By “real” I mean something with its own existence such that if I knocked you unconscious, what you were looking at would not cease to exist as dream objects do when you wake you up. By “something” I do not mean full-blooded things like animals, plants, and humans. I mean what Aristotle calls their accidents, e.g., color, shape, motion, sound, temperature. The full-blooded world will be worked out from these more superficial realities.

V. IMMEDIATE SENSE REALISM

a. Arguments against

Since the modern period no philosopher has espoused sense realism. A list of the many objections to it include the following. Relativities in perception – seeing the straight stick bent in the water. If the real stick is straight and I am seeing something as bent, then I am not seeing the reality. The color-blind person seeing the poppy field as gray. If the field is red and the person is seeing gray, then the person is not seeing the reality. People to the sides seeing the rectangular paper as trapezoidal. They are not, then, seeing what is real. Also consider seeing the moon as the same size as the quarter

held at arm’s length. It follows that the visual moon is not the reality. Likewise, seeing the square tower through the mist or from a distance as round. From Husserl, I always see the six-sided die as only three-sided. Again, I am not seeing the reality, and so my judgments of real existence are to be bracketed. Finally, consider seeing a star long ago extinguished, or feeling pain in a leg that has been amputated. Are not all of these cases of sensation presenting us with an unreal object? That was the conclusion the moderns came to and so the basis of philosophy shifted from sensation and away from a basically receptive account of cognition to a projective one.⁷

There is also the famous dream and hallucination possibilities mentioned by Descartes in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* and still being employing in the twentieth century as grounds for bracketing our judgments of real existence in the phenomenology of Husserl.⁸ In sum, have you not dreamed that you have been reading an article? So how do you know that you are not dreaming right now?

Finally, there are Immanuel Kant's arguments that space and time are not real characteristics of real things but a priori forms of our sensibility. In other words, since space stays the same whether it is populated with these things or with those things, then space is less a characteristic of the experienced and more a characteristic of the experienter.

b. Replies

None of these three types of arguments, as well as some others that I will mention, are knockout blows to immediate and direct sense realism. First, there is always enough realism in the relativity examples to do philosophy. In other words, when I look into the water, I see something real, but I do not know if it is straight or bent. Maybe I will never know its precise shape, but I cannot gainsay that I know some shaped reality. Likewise, I may see the poppy field as red while the color-blind viewer sees it as gray. My point would be that both of us see real color, we just disagree on the precise shade of the real color that we both see. Likewise, I see the shape as rectangular, you see it as trapezoidal. So what? What is important philosophically is that we both see real shape. The

reader can go on to figure out my replies to the moon, tower, and die examples.

I know what my objector will say to these replies. He will insist that if something is directly and immediately present, then it must be present exactly as it is. For example, if I am present in this room, then I have to be here moustache and all. For example, if the real me is two-armed, then I am absent if a one-armed person is present. Hence, for my objector, you cannot have me directly present to you right now as I turn sideways and a one-armed man is in your cognition.

But the thinking of my objector seems to conflate direct physical presence with direct cognitional presence. Direct presence as physical is what brooks no inexactitude. As my replies to the relativities in perception indicated, realities can be directly present in cognition inexactly. My objector gives no arguments that cognitional direct presence should be thought of as just like physical direct presence. Until my objector does so, my objector has not given an integral objection.

The distinction between physical presence and cognitional presence enables one to answer the following questions. If sense realism is true, am I not in two places at once when someone senses me? Again, the objector assumes cognition equals physical presence. Also, when my hand is in the oven I feel the heat; if the real me is in your sense awareness, why do I not feel your sensation? Again, as the reference to the oven indicates, the objector is assuming cognitional presence is just like physical presence.

How sense cognition can directly, but inexactly, present a reality is a question

worthy of pursuit. And at the end of the second book of his *De Anima*, Aristotle gives some enlightening remarks to explain the how this happens – namely, sense receives the form of the thing known without the matter.⁹ But how-questions need not be answered to keep assertions *that* something is so. A savage from the jungles of New Guinea on the streets of some great city would know for certain that vehicles were going down the street but be perfectly ignorant of how they were doing it. Likewise, the realist has good reason to say that sense directly presents reality, albeit inexactly, even though the realist might be unable to explain how this can happen for cognitional presence but not than for physical presence.

Finally, direct but inexact presence of reality in sense awareness is also useful to deal with other phenomena used by the skeptic. First, what about seeing the long extinguished star and the amputee still feeling pain in an absent limb? These cases seem to indicate that sensation does not necessarily provide an existent. But just as the precise shade or shape of the real body may elude sensation, so too the precise time of the reality may not be given by sensation. Nevertheless, sensation still gives a reality even though sensation may be imprecise about whether it is giving the reality in the present moment or in a past moment. The important point is that I am seeing something real even though it may not be real right now. Likewise, like time, number may not be an original factor in vision. By pressing my pupil, I can double whatever I am seeing. Does this

mean that I must doubt whether I am seeing one thing or many? Yes it does. But it does not follow that I have to doubt that it is real. Whether my object of sensation is one thing or a multiplicity, the object still comes across as real.

What of the dream and hallucination possibilities? Are they sufficient to destroy immediate sense realism? No. Dreaming involves a model of cognition that I can verify right now is not true for my sense awareness. In dreams we are aware of non-existents because our dreaming takes advantage of ideas. Ideas are reflexively observable mental entities that possess an intentional charge. Because of this intentional charge, they can convey our awareness to something other than themselves, even to something that does not really exist. What I am calling ideas are also found in memory and imagination. So the dreamer never immediately relates to the dreamer's object. Between both is the idea that the dreamer is using to get the dreamer's attention to the object. So how do I know that I am not dreaming right now? Because right now I can sweep my current sense awareness with an act of reflection and see that it is an idea-free zone. In my awareness right now as I look this way there is only me and some reality. I can see that my awareness is not employing an idea that might make me wonder if I am doing something like dreaming or hallucinating.

That my current awareness can be reflexively confirmed to be an idea-free zone also make it impossible for an evil spirit – a *spiritus malignus* – or even for God, to bring my current awareness into an awareness of something that does not

really exist. If sensation is a direct presence of the real, then a superior being cannot cause me to sense and not also cause the reality. Only if sensation employed ideas could some superior being cause me to have a false sensation. Finally, I want to note that if you study the reprise of methodic doubt in *Meditation VI*, you will see that Descartes' dream and hallucination possibilities all assume that sensation operates in and through ideas.

But what about the scenario presented in the movie, *The Matrix*? In this case someone has his brain hooked up to a computer and by feeding his brain with electrical stimulation, the person is brought to experience an entire world that does not exist. Does not the possibility of the Matrix destroy confidence in sense realism? Again no. What is called a possibility here has really not been established as a possibility. It is pure Hollywood. In experiments of electrical stimulation of the cortex, the noted neurophysiologist, Wilfred Penfield, could only give patients an experience of what they recognized to be a past event. (Penfield, 1978: 21–27) So, obviously, the electricity caused a restimulation of the patient's ideas of memory. What the experiments have failed to do is provide a person blind from birth an experience of color or a person deaf from birth the experience of sound. Those experiments would be a problem for the immediate sense realist. It is true that video technology has given us a case of going from pure electricity to color and sound. But that transition is to real color and sound, real color on the TV screen and real sound from the

speakers. As Penfield showed, we are still lacking a transition from real electricity to color and sound in cognition. So the Matrix is pure fantasy.

Finally, what about Kant? Again, he noted that if space was an attribute of real things, then space should change with things, but space does not. Hence by process of elimination, Kant concludes that space is a characteristic of the sensor, not the sensed. But the sense realist could respond that the space about which Kant is speaking is an imaginative enlargement of the real extension of larger bodies against which smaller bodies profile themselves. For instance, I see the picture frame only against the wall, I see the tower only against the sky. Here the backgrounds that stay the same are real extensions. What the knower can do is to take real extension and imagine that it is infinite so that there is one imaginary space against which anything can be profiled. Even though this space is imaginary, it is not a priori. The imagination builds it up using real extension given immediately in sensation. This reply, or a type of it, can be used with Kant's other arguments for the apriority of space and for the apriority of time.

It is true that immediate sense realism establishes itself by conceding a form of minimalism. I do not immediately perceive full-blooded bodily substances. Rather, my sensation only goes as far as what Aristotle called the real accidents of those substances. That is why impersonation of one substance by another is possible. Also, the direct presence of those real accidents can be fraught with inexactitude. I see the real straight shape as bent, the

red poppies as gray, the rectangle as trapezoidal, etc. Yet, in my opinion which I have explained elsewhere, despite the minimalism, our sensations have enough purchase on reality to argue much further. For example, our sensations suffice to argue to particular substances, to their matter/form composition, to their entitative composition with their act of existence, and to efficient causality behind these compositions. (Knasas 2003: 9–17) Also, the immediate data, meager as they are, are also sufficiently varied to abstract an analogous notion of being that is recognized as the good. Against this notion of being, the data of sensation

appear as goods but not as the good. This situation leaves us with a real freedom before any particular thing. Finally, our awareness of ourselves as intellectors of being reveals ourselves to be particularly intense instances of the good and so grounds a respect and solicitude owing to ourselves and others. (Knasas 2011: 14–23) In sum, if one is clever enough, one can produce what John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*, para. 4, called “the implicit philosophy.” Our minds can come to truths about reality which we can express in our language. It is, then, not incongruous to find revelation using human language to do the same.

VI. CONCLUSION

I hope that I have provided some indication of the fruitfulness of practicing epistemology as a branch of what is called Christian philosophy. In his philosophizing, the believing philosopher can work under the impetus of belief. The philosopher’s faith may indicate the truth, but it leaves the philosopher to make the philosophical argument for that truth. One of those truths involved in revelation is realism. As Jacques Maritain acerbically wrote in *The Peasant of the Garrone*:

The Almighty God who created the world, and whose voice Moses heard, was he owing his existence and his glory to the mind that knew him? And the people this God chose for himself, and the land to which he led them, with its vines, its olive trees and its corn – were all these men and all these things which the hand can touch and the eye see, objects which have shape or consistency only in dependence of the mind that knows them? . . .

And Christ preaching along the roads, and the enemies through whose midst he passed, and the mountain from which they sought to hurl him, and the children he blessed, and the lilies of the field he admired, and the sins which he took upon himself, and the love with which he loves us, is all this grasped by our intellect as being, to say, like Schopenhauer, “my representation”? . . . The Judeo-Christian revelation is the strongest, the most insolently self-assured testimony rendered to the reality in itself of being – the being of things, and Being subsisting by itself – I say being dwelling in the glory of existence in total independence of the mind that knows it. Christianity professes with tranquil impudence what in the philosophical vocabulary is known as realism. (Maritain, 1968: 99–100)

Again, in this paper I have attempted to illustrate the thinking of an epistemologist who is working under the umbrella of Christian philosophy. In that

respect, I have outlined how the realism of revelation does not engender philosophical bias but provides a prompt by which the philosopher, using genuine

philosophical resources, can discover the truth of sense realism, despite the modern turn to subjectivity in many of his colleagues.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Aristotle mentions the point about human cognition as an objection to separate substance being thought thinking thought, "But evidently knowledge and perception and opinion and understanding have always something else as their object, and themselves only by the way," *Metaphysics*, XII, 9, 1074b 35–36. For a phenomenological description that illustrates the truth of Aristotle's claim, see Owens, 1992: 5.
- ² Of course, Aquinas was familiar with this maxim. See *Summa Theologiae* I, 75, 5c But it is used by Aquinas to describe the intellect's subtraction of matter from the object sensed, not for the addition of something subjective and constitutive. In their own manner, the senses receive form without the matter, see *Summa Theologiae* I, 14, 1. With the moderns the physical interpretation of the maxim becomes the paradigm.
- ³ Kant, 1963: 22; B xv. On the next page, B xvi, Kant critiques the correspondence understanding of truth on the basis that thought can compare itself only to thought again. So a conformity of thought to reality is arbitrarily assumed.
- ⁴ Kant 1965: 68; A24/B29. For a discussion of the Transcendental Thomist attempt to "beat Kant at his own game," i.e., to commit to the Copernican Revolution in philosophy but still have a metaphysics of things in themselves, see Knasas 2003: ch. IV.
- ⁵ Martin Heidegger, 1977: 10 and also 37. For poets, Heidegger singles out Hölderlin because Hölderlin wrote expressly of the essence of poetry. What Hölderlin reveals, Heidegger de-

scribes this way: "The poet names the gods and names all things in that which they are. This naming does not consist merely in something already known being supplied with a name; it is rather that when the poet speaks the essential word, the existent is by this naming nominated as what it is. So it becomes known *as* existent. Poetry is the establishing of being by means of the word. . . . But because being and essence of things can never be calculated and derived from what is present, they must be freely created, laid down and given. Such a free act of giving is establishment." (Martin Heidegger 1968: 281).

⁶ I take Joseph Owens to be saying as much when he, like postmodernism, acknowledges a formative role of culture for thought: "The all-pervasive formative role of immediate cultural and linguistic circumstances may be readily granted, even with regard to speculative philosophy. But what is the manner in which these highly particularized circumstances and linguistic combinations exercise a formative influence? Could it not be that the new way of thinking gets its direction rather from differences already present in thought and things but now for the first time brought to the explicit attention of reader or listener through words? May not the peculiarities in novel combinations of words, or idiosyncrasies in the new historical circumstances, merely be drawing attention to previously unnoticed aspects in the thought or in the things?" (Owens 1992: 361) For a more formative role for culture in the vein of a con-

stitutive a priori, so that in principle one would not be a Thomist if one were not a Catholic, see Rowland 2003. I should note that *contra* Rowland, I interpret *Gaudium et spes*, para. 22: "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear" in the light of the faith-as-a-friend-ly-star concept of *Aeterni patris*.

⁷ For Descartes' listing of relativity cases, see *Meditations on First Philosophy*, VI. For John Locke's, see *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. II, ch. VIII, paras. 14–21. Joseph Berkeley extends Locke's arguments for subjectivizing the secondary qualities to the primary ones, see his *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* I, 9–15. Finally, David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section XII, repeats Berkeley's arguments. In the twentieth century, Edmund Husserl employed the perspectival character of sensation to argue that the physical object is not a real "constituent part of consciousness" but necessarily "transcendent to perception." See Husserl 1972: 120.

⁸ "Not only can a particular experienced thing suffer devaluation as an illusion of the senses; the whole unitarily surveyable nexus, experienced throughout a period of time, can prove to be an illusion, a coherent dream." (Husserl 1964: 17).

⁹ For an enlightening commentary, see Joseph Owens, 1981: "Aristotle: Cognition a Way of Being," Also see Owens 1992: ch. 2.