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Faith and the Object, Method and Goal of Philosophy*

JOSEPH L. ROCHE, S.J.

THE ultimate nature of philosophy can be described as the reflection on the primordial relation between being and man's spirit. The question naturally arises whether or not this being, the object of philosophy, is endowed with any sort of religious character. To forestall any equivocation, religion is defined by Forest as the *absolute relation to the Absolute*.¹ Consequently, to ask if being has a religious quality is simply to inquire if it incorporates an intrinsic relation to the absolute.

PHILOSOPHY'S OBJECT AND FAITH

This question is broached by the different philosophic conceptions of existence. Among many contemporary existentialists, for example, existence represents a "limit concept" which defies objectivization or even proper representation, and constitutes a radical contingency incapable of leading to any transcendent. The distinctive trait of existence so conceived is its finitude, revealed in time to man in his personal anguish and experience of "abandon." An absolute value is thus conferred on the very failure, or the impossibility, to find an absolute. This attitude contradicts the typical religious approach which looks not toward finite, determined existence,

* This is the second of two articles.

¹ The proximate source for this definition is the series of interviews granted the author by Prof. Forest in Sept. 1962, at his home in Montpellier, France.

but toward morality, the choice of the universal in some way immanent to man. In its highest form religion results in mysticism, whose essence could be described in part as a turning away from all created existence, a movement directly opposed to that of the existentialists.

This existentialist doctrine, apparently absolutely contrary to the notion of a religious quality inherent in philosophy's object, can nevertheless be interpreted in a manner which would find its deepest signification in relation to the transcendent, the absolute, and thus as something religious according to Forest's definition. In other words, this total reference to finite, determined, contingent existence, this very refusal to attempt any passage to a superior order, in final analysis actually presents a religious character.

In approaching this rather paradoxical interpretation, one basic truth should be kept in mind: attitudes of religious consciousness differ greatly, as befits the liberty of the human spirit. Thus it is very possible that two widely different conceptions of existence—as exemplified by the atheistic and "Christian" existentialists—can both derive in their own proper way from a basic religious inspiration. This does not deny, of course, that the doctrine of finite, limited existence *does* lead in many instances to outright atheism, or at least to a professed agnosticism. Yet a deeper analysis reveals that this concentration on finite existence is often made in the light of a transcendence previously accepted as irreducibly "other". Finite existence would naturally be considered, then, as enclosed in itself, as contrasted to—rather than linked with—transcendence.

A concrete example is found in Kierkegaard, whose work represents a metaphysical transposition of Lutheran experience. All the existentialist characteristics of existence are present, but *following* existence's relation with the transcendent. There is also the consciousness of inquietude, anguish: *peccator semper, semper justus, semper poenitens*.² Thus many of the contempo-

² See Forest's "L'Existence et la conscience religieuse," in *L'Esistenzialismo*, Vol. II of *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Filosofia*, Rome, 1946 (2 vols.; Milano: Castellani e C., 1948), pp. 211-14.

rary existentialist doctrines show certain similarities to some principles of the Reformation, notably those concerning justification. The experience of salvation was depicted by Reformation theologians not in terms of participation, nor of any internal principle of justification. Rather man is saved by a power which remains transcendent and extrinsic; his experience of salvation becomes in a sense the exaltation of his very finitude. It is precisely because of his intrinsic, inescapable weakness, that man is saved by the power of the transcendent, the absolute.

An analogous approach is found in certain Catholic circles, for example in Pascal's themes of solitude, anguish, suffering, as the "natural" state for a Christian, and in much of the work of the Port Royal theologians.³ The relation of nature to grace in this doctrine is basically one of pure passivity. What is common to these doctrines is a certain underlying philosophic basis, founded in nominalism and voluntarism, which stands in opposition to the themes of participation and mediation. The point here, however, is that Forest has made out an interesting analogy between these "atheistic" existentialists and the religious extrinsecism of the Reformation theology.

Clearer still is the religious character of being in the context of the philosophic theory of participation. The problem here is whether the doctrine of participation can actually be applied to existence. When medieval theologians extended the Platonic participation to the order of existence, participation lost its static nature, its quality of composition, a "belonging" in a partial way to a pre-existent end. Instead a total dynamic reference of the inferior to its term was posed, so that the doctrine of participated existence manifested a higher actuality than finite existence itself by revealing the presence of the universal in the concrete existent, the Absolute in the relative. The result of this doctrine is that the very orientation toward existence takes on a religious value.

³ In this regard see Forest's enlightening article "Les Fondements de la certitude chez Pascal et chez Jansenius," in *Mélanges Louis Arnould* (Poitiers, 1934), pp. 55-67.

Existence, then, is not enclosed on itself, but actually points beyond. For the very actuality which is its perfection is that which creates in it a reference to the absolute and realizes the presence of the absolute in it.

Existence, therefore, can be called a religious category. The reference to existence is not, undoubtedly, religion in its entirety, but it does take its signification in its relation to the religious order as such. Reference to the absolute or reference to existence, such seemed to be the dilemma of the religious conscience. But in the end it is eliminated... We express in the orientation toward participated existence the rectitude of our religious attitude, in one and the same consent.⁴

Thus the metaphysical affirmation, in its penetration of existence, attains in a certain fashion that which surpasses the concrete limited existent, yet is somehow inscribed in it. In transcending the two fundamental metaphysical positions—essentialism, which tends towards intemporal essences, and existentialism, orientated toward finite existence—Forest's metaphysical realism takes on a properly religious aspect, understood here as relative to its object, being.⁵ For while existence is not seized in any representation outside itself—it is not "objectivized"—yet the implication of the transcendent, the absolute, adds nothing to its original understanding, for it is given in the very intuition which attains existence in its metaphysical dimensions. This intuition of being constitutes a "metaphysical revelation," an insight into the relation between the existence of the concrete singular being and transcendent being.⁶ It is an intuition of a universal presence revealed in the concrete, singular presence of the existing reality. In brief, then, metaphysics enables man to grasp how being is already a grace, a gift, *gratia creationis*.⁷

⁴ "L'Existence et la conscience religieuse," p. 218.

⁵ See "L'Essence et l'existence," *Témoignages*, No. 13 (Mai, 1947), pp. 224-25.

⁶ See *La Vocation de l'Esprit* (Paris: Aubier, 1953), pp. 179-83. The connection between the intuition of existence and God has been developed by J. Maritain into a "primordial way." See *Approaches to God* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), pp. 1-15; also R. Jolivet's *The God of Reason* (London: Burns & Oates, 1958), pp. 114-18.

⁷ See *Consentement et création* (Paris: Aubier, 1943), pp. 91.

Forest likewise draws out the *subjective* aspect of this analysis of participated existence. For if the absolute is in a way present in the relative, the universal in the singular, then the *act* by which man seizes this value must itself be motivated by a will for the universal. Man's act should be in accord with the significance it seizes. Consequently, he cannot acquire a "*sens d'existence*"—a full comprehension of existence—without recognizing in himself a will for the universal. For such a will is alone capable of inspiring an orientation for seizing existence in its metaphysical proportions, that is, as implying the absolute and the universal. If existence is participation, the orientation man has toward it necessarily becomes a form of detachment in which man is so detached from his personal, individual, singular interests, that he can recognize immanent in his spiritual nature, the will for the universal. Such a will Forest qualifies as "the pure form of the religious act."⁸

Consequently, the intellectual grasp of participated being also involves an exercise of the will. In the Augustinian tradition, a dialectic exists between the love of *participated* good and that of the good *par excellence*. Hence the same religious quality observed in being can also be revealed in the realism of the will of love. Instead of concentrating on the object of the will's attachment, being as good, Forest rather stresses the philosophical reflection upon the act of the will itself. Now the very attraction of being enables man to reproduce in his own act of will, as far as is possible for a creature, the divine creative act of will. God creates the goodness of being, and this goodness attracts man's will. Through the intermediary of being, then, God attracts man to elicit an act analogous to His own. The disposition thus inculcated to consider ultimately the being of beings, independent of all desires and utility, is at once a metaphysical and religious attitude. By serious reflection on man's act of will incorporated into his total metaphysical experience, the immanent presence of the absolute will is revealed.

⁸ "L'Existence et la conscience religieuse," p. 218.

SPIRIT AND THE ORDER OF SALVATION

In linking the philosophical consideration of spirit with religious faith, what was stated above concerning philosophy as a preparation for faith is particularly pertinent. It is question of the rectitude of man's spirit before being, of a purification and revelation of the spirit's proper value and spiritual élan.

Philosophy always possesses a value all its own. It forms in us the good values of the spirit. We owe to philosophy what can be called a spiritual art, a possession of ourselves in a certain disposition toward things. What is precious in philosophy is its power to safeguard the rectitude of the spirit in face of being, at the same time as the sense of being for the spirit.⁹

This analysis of the subjective state of man is evidently at great variance with many contemporary doctrines which insist rather on man's spiritual state of exile, on spirituality defined in terms of negativity, on the liberty of pure autonomy as man's highest power. Forest's position is at once simpler and, perhaps for that very reason, more profound, founded on the basic principle that the spirit is "ordered to things as they are." This "things as they are" is not the immediacy registered by the senses, but the fullest knowledge of reality that man is capable of when he employs all his powers of cognition. For it is not just being, but the *interiority* of being that is the object of the spirit's profoundest movement—a "recognition in reality itself of a meaning or signification, a spirit, to which we must correspond."¹⁰

Philosophy thus entails a "conversion," a change of perspective toward the universal, the totality, and thus toward unity. This orientation is now revealed to be at bottom a religious experience. "The fundamental meaning of religion is to render possible and to achieve a unitive experience."¹¹ Unity is had through the universal; thus the

⁹ From an autobiographical article of Forest's published in translation in the Spring number of *Continuum*, 1964, under the title of "The Growth of a Vision."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ From *La Vocation de l'Esprit*, p. 129.

philosophic drive for the universal is indicative of philosophy's link with religious faith. Universal in this context refers explicitly not to the object of the spirit's élan, but to the élan itself. "A radical force of will which is orientated toward the universal cannot be understood without the action of the principle towards which it is ordered. The infinite is not only before us, at the end of our effort. We recognize it present and acting in the very movement which it excited."¹²

Ultimately, Forest's doctrine on the philosophical consideration of the spirit and its relation to salvation takes its stand on the Christian truth that the soul is made to the image of God. If such is the reality, it is reasonable to suppose that even on a natural, philosophic plane, the soul could not be fully itself except in some recognition of that essential likeness and dependence, however vague that recognition may be.¹³ Union with self—a clear philosophic ideal—simply cannot be faithful to itself outside of some union with the absolute.

The life of the soul inspired by philosophical research thus displays a distinct religious characteristic. It is not simply that philosophy renders religious life possible by preparing the spirit to accept the religious revelation; what is more important is that philosophy "already exercises this life in its own imperfect way by the reference, mysterious though it be from its own viewpoint, which it establishes between the soul and the universal."¹⁴ Philosophy, by reason of the life of soul it supposes and actually inculcates, thus justifies its membership in the "order of salvation," for the spirituality intrinsic to its research is an eminent form of the "nature"

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹³ "The soul is the image of God; consequently it cannot be itself except in the avowal of its dependence on a principle whose form it has received. The soul's own self-recognition comes as a result of this submission in which the soul, as it were, realizes its own potential; it doesn't find itself except in this adhesion."—Forest, "Saint Bernard et notre temps," in *Saint Bernard, théologien*, Actes du Congrès de Dijon, Sept. 1953, published in *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis*, IX, Nos. 3-4 (1953), p. 298.

¹⁴ See Forest, "La Recherche philosophique," *Revue Thomiste*, XLIII (1937), p. 69.

which the supernatural love of charity comes to perfect and complete.

A final relationship links the philosophic life of the soul with religious experience: both lead by nature to peace of soul. Again this view seems to run counter to much of contemporary existentialist doctrine stressing the anguish, abandon and exile of men. But Forest's critique of this approach showed there is a profounder reality which underlies all the evil and suffering undergone by men—both in the life of the philosopher and especially in the mystic. The negative orientation of those contemporary doctrines can be traced in large part to a dissociation of the relative from the absolute, the concrete singular from the universal, the finite from the infinite, resulting from an exaggerated, almost irrational obsession with the negative, the contingent, the evil. The approach of spiritual realism, with its stress on participation, mediation and openness, proposes an orientation naturally conducive to a peace of soul clearly comparable in effect to a profound religious faith. "We can arrive at the joy which the intimate accord between self-possession and adhesion to reality provides. But these values suppose the constant taking up of our reflective experience. The peaceful conscience ought to be the metaphysical consciousness of self."¹⁵

Before terminating this discussion of the religious quality adhering to philosophy's object, both being and spirit, some mention should be made of Forest's direct philosophic approach to God. For he insists that this approach is in no way extrinsic to the philosophic consideration of either being or the spirit, and thus comprises another link between philosophy and faith.

But the analysis of the metaphysical experience to which we attempt to give the highest signification, would remain incomplete and false if we did not establish in what sense it is a form of religious experience. Metaphysical thought is nothing but the thought of being;

¹⁵ From Forest's autobiographical article. See also his "L'Acte et l'Absolu," in *Travaux présentés aux Rencontres Universitaires Internationales* (Collège Cévenol, Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, Hte-Loire, Sept., 1953), pp. 57-58.

it is from that, that the originality and quality of our experience arise. But the proof of God is not exterior to this affirmation; the movement which raises us to God is but the continuity of that which carries us towards being.¹⁶

The reason why the proof of God is not exterior to the metaphysical quest is the fact that "it is the very nature of being, not some added quality, that we consider when we seize a situation that demands God in order to assure the intelligibility which this situation entails."¹⁷

Spiritual realism's proper philosophic approach to God, then, is expressly metaphysical. It starts not from a consciousness of misery, nor from the human aspiration for beatitude, nor from any other uniquely subjective approach, but from a metaphysical investigation of being, enriched by constant reflection. Ontology, according to Forest, should hold the primacy in man's philosophic movement toward God; it should be capable of leading men not only to the affirmation of a supreme cause which remains completely unknown, but beyond, to the affirmation of the Free Cause of creation, that is, to a Divine Will which, in fact, corresponds to the fuller Christian revelation of God. In faith, man not only affirms God, he *believes* in Him. Hence, the very idea of God for the believer is a notion specified by his faith. God is attained not specifically as the absolute supreme cause of all being, but as the object of his faith and *in* his faith. This faith, his personal adherence, constitutes an adhesion of his whole person to God which goes far beyond the mere assertion of God's existence.

Now the function of philosophy here is obviously not to attempt to duplicate the role proper to faith. What ontology can and should do, however, is to indicate being's intrinsic character of participation, or more precisely, the presence of Being in beings. This presence alone can give to the concrete beings of direct experience that ultimate meta-

¹⁶ *Consentement et création*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79. This idea is also found in Forest's earlier work, *Du Consentement à l'être* ("Philosophie de l'Esprit," Paris: Aubier, 1936), pp. 93, 104.

physical consistency that philosophy seeks to provide.¹⁸ In stressing the fact that ontological research should reach a *Free Cause* of being, Forest is simply asserting that the ultimate principle attained does not have a '*raison d'être*' outside itself, that there is absolutely no constraint in God, and as the infinite Good, God has no reason for his Being other than Himself. In act as in being, the ultimate Cause must be absolutely free.

The proof of God from reflection on the human spirit is similarly intrinsic to philosophical subjective research. Forest's long article on St. Anselm's ontological argument as taken up by contemporary reflexive philosophy, in particular by Blondel, Paliard, Lavelle and Alquié, succeeds in showing in detail how "the project of reflection is not only to lead us to what is interior in ourselves. It wishes to be a manifestation of the absolute."¹⁹ Speaking specifically of Paliard, Forest asserts that "he shows how the absolute which surpasses us is at the same time the principle of our most intimate processes."²⁰

This repeats the idea that the absolute is first conceived in the primitive fact of the inequality of man's spirit to its own ideal. Through philosophical reflection, man's spirit recognizes an *au-delà* which is not only out in front of it, as it were, but also immanent in it, seized in the very depths of his spirit's interior élan. Interpreted according to such reflexive philosophy, St. Anselm's proof becomes not a movement from the logical to the real, from an objective concept of essence present in the spirit to actual existence—therefore not an argument from representation—but rather an approach based on a grasp of reflexive implication. For reflection

¹⁸ *Consentement et création*, p. 79 *et passim*; also developed in Forest's "Convergences doctrinales en métaphysique," *Giornale di Metafisica*, II (1947), p. 367.

¹⁹ Quoted from Forest, "L'Argument de saint Anselme dans la philosophie réflexive," in *Specilegium Beccense*, I (Congrès international du IX centenaire de l'arrivée d'Anselme au Bec; Paris: J. Vrin, 1959), p. 274.

²⁰ From Forest, "La Pensée de Jacques Paliard," in *Etudes Blondéliennes* (Paris: P.U.F., 1954), III, p. 139.

is not limited to describing what is in man's spirit; its own project is to go to the principle of his spiritual growth and progress, to manifest a presence which can explain both the grandeur and the limitations of thought. Its effort is fundamentally orientated toward its unique problem; the inequality of conscience to its own ideal, or in Augustinian expression quoted by Forest, "the soul is too narrow to contain itself."²¹

In particular, then, the new approach to St. Anselm's proof considers the thought of God as the highest action in man's spirit, so that through an analysis of this idea the *élan* which sustains it can be seized. The proof of God thus understood becomes the passage from the reflexive idea to the originating idea, or the presence which is the principle of the soul's life.

PHILOSOPHY'S METHOD AND FAITH

To the religious dimension revealed in being and in the spirit as comprising the dual object of philosophy, Forest adds the analysis of the same dimension inherent in his own *metaphysical method*, consent to being. It is obvious that if the metaphysical consciousness of the being-spirit relation is endowed with a certain religious quality, the method employed in attaining this object could reasonably be expected to participate in the same characteristic. Thus it is not surprising to find Forest describing consent as "a religious attitude at the same time as metaphysical."²² Through consent, the peace of soul which is one of the principal ends of religious activities is offered in an initial degree, for consent attunes the creature's highest spiritual activities to God by reproducing in the creature in a participated manner the divine creative act. Consent thus acts as the means of bringing metaphysical knowledge into accord with divine Wisdom.

The historical basis for Forest's notion of consent's religious quality is clearly evident in the series of articles he has published over the past few years on consent in St. Bernard. In contrast to the Stoics, St. Bernard defined consent as the

²¹ "L'Argument de saint Anselme," p. 293.

²² See Forest's "La Philosophie de l'Esprit," *Giornale di Metafisica*, I (1946), p. 297.

spiritual élan by which man freely conforms himself to the image of God in his soul. Through consent the soul recognizes that its true dignity lies precisely in its conformity to this divine image. Forest's analysis of consent in Bernard reveals two essential ideas—evidently perfectly indicative of his own doctrine on the matter—spontaneity and adhesion.²³ The spontaneity signified is not that of the natural appetite of man, but rather the spontaneity proper to his spirit—that by which the liberty of his spirit is distinguished from the necessity weighing on his nature. By thus linking consent to liberty, Forest indicates how consent is not something static, absolute, defined. Rather, as in man's exercise of spiritual liberty, there is a real interior progress, an order of degrees or forms of consent. St. Bernard supplies the example of the passage from the will of one's own proper good to the will of the common good, or from cupidity to charity.

As adhesion, consent is the means for according the created will of man with the Uncreated Will in a profound spiritual passivity that constitutes the ultimate basis for all spontaneity and initiative. The value of consent here is exemplified particularly in Bernard's doctrine on the movement of the heart: *ascendere ad cor altum*—rise to the noblest of your heart; consent is precisely the means for progressing toward what is purest, most elevated in man's spirit.

In more practical terms, the idea here is simply that consent is the direct means for inculcating the simplicity and rectitude of the heart, the pureness of the soul's intention and the selflessness of its initiative, action and spontaneity—all of which are as indicative of the religious spirit as they are of the philosophical élan. Thus Forest is justified in qualifying consent, his metaphysical method, as the "means for entering the path to salvation."²⁴ Consent is definitely

²³ Confer "L'Expérience du consentement selon S. Bernard," *Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorum*, XVIII, No. 4 (1956), p. 270.

²⁴ From Forest's "Obéissance et liberté," in *L'Eglise et la liberté* (Semaine des Intellectuels catholiques; Paris: Ed. du Flore, 1952), p. 245. There is no question, of course, of making it the *unique* approach to salvation, as Forest makes abundantly clear in "L'Ordre du salut," *Lumière et Vie*, No. 23 (Sept., 1955), p. 121.

a method proper to metaphysics, for the definitive attainment of the plenitude of self-possession can only be approached through the self-realization given in the experience of consent; and it is precisely this goal of self-consciousness that inspires the greater part of contemporary philosophical studies. But at the same time, consent is a method which by nature tends to union with the absolute, and thus partakes of a certain religious dimension according to Forest's acceptance of the term.²⁵ Consent in fact is a movement which incorporates a high religious significance precisely because it "declares our condition as creatures," since it is both fidelity to the nature of the created spirit, and a response to the creative will manifested in being.²⁶

From these two sections on the religious dimension proper to philosophy's object as well as its method, metaphysical experience can justly be termed a certain type of religious experience. For man's understanding, in its metaphysical investigation and contemplation of being, is naturally opened towards the religious life. "We perceive, at first confusedly, through the sensible signs of nature that this reference to being always gives us 'a movement to go further on,' that being is a call, a suggestion to which we can commit ourselves."²⁷ Forest even compares a certain profundity of being reached in metaphysics to the "depths of God" of which St. Paul speaks. In any case, the central idea in all this matter is simply that man can enter into religious experience by the very fact of deepening his metaphysical search and élan.

PHILOSOPHY'S GOAL AND FAITH

The end or goal of philosophy is often described in terms of contemplative wisdom. It would be well, then, to

²⁵ See Forest's "Pascal et Maurice Blondel," in *Hommage à Maurice Blondel* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1946), pp. 45-46. In his "L'Acte et l'Absolu," p. 56, Forest characterizes the experience of consent as that which unites us to the Absolute.

²⁶ *Consentement et création*, p. 84. A doctrine that expresses the full movement of consciousness is sometimes qualified as "*philosophia naturaliter pia*."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

indicate briefly the religious value of this philosophic contemplation. The Platonic contemplation, the prime analogate for all philosophic contemplation, is more of an intuition than a realized solution to the problem of participation: how to unify without confounding. What this contemplation supposes is an adhesion to a transcendent through the intermediary of experiential reality; there is an attempt to synthesize the notions of presence and appeal.

In medieval scholasticism, philosophic contemplation turned rather on the existential fact, and the metaphysical affirmation, illumined by the doctrine of creation, became the means of elevating the philosopher's regard to a higher order of will and grace actually present in the reality of nature. The philosopher's vision of being was not any disinterested contemplation, for in reaching metaphysical being he reached its relation to the First Will.²⁸ Forest characterizes as "spiritual metaphysics" the doctrine which thus reveals the presence of Being in beings.²⁹ The analysis of nature becomes the very method for a progressively growing appreciation of the possibility of the supernatural in its gratuity. The metaphysical contemplative vision has by its very nature the power to give access to the spiritual order.

The basis for this position, in which Forest is drawing largely on Blondel, consists in regarding nature not as merely something "not repugnant" to the supernatural, but as charged with a certain suitability, fitness, accord for its elevation. There is not an immediate continuity between nature and the supernatural, such as would exist if nature were endowed with a positive exigence for the supernatural. But neither is it correct to view the supernatural as a totally exterior, foreign addition, somehow glued on to the top of nature's perfection. The proper form of the supernatural life, the life of charity, proceeds from a principle of new love interior to man in grace but remaining, nevertheless, the exercise of the human faculty

²⁸ Forest proposes these ideas among other works in "Réflexion et l'être," *Revue Thomiste*, XLIV (1938), p. 182.

²⁹ See Forest's "La Présence de l'être," *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, XV (1960), p. 219.

of his will. Man's religious life is his union with God; but this union cannot be realized either on the natural or the supernatural level without the use of his powers of intellect and will. Supernatural charity can elevate man's powers only in supposing them, and in fact, supposing their continued existence and activity.³⁰

Consequently, there can be no opposition between the supernatural elevation and metaphysical wisdom, but rather a basic harmony. Forest expresses his thought clearly on this fundamental point in his autobiographical article:

It has always seemed to me, however, that the supernatural elevation has not come to contradict the ideal of a metaphysical wisdom in that which is initial in this wisdom. Charity is the divine form of our life, but it would not be supernatural if it did not encounter, to complete it, a value already present in us. The spiritual lessons of philosophy are not opposed to those of the Gospel. The final reason for this is that they proceed, both one and the other, from the same principle. This accord demands not a simple absence of contradiction but, in some form, an interior harmony.³¹

SUMMARY

Under guise of a general conclusion to the analysis of Forest's doctrine on the philosophy-religion relationship, an effort will be made here to tie the more important elements together. It is evident that for Forest there is a fundamental relation of mutual implication between philosophy and religion. The major lines of the analogy between the two have been sketched in this article: the comparison of their proper objects—revealed truth for faith, the laws of being manifested in nature and spirit for philosophy; the similarity of cognitive forces—the very *élan* or "light" of faith, and human reason's natural force; their resemblance in the recollection and spiritual purification which both demand as their proper environment; finally their similar orientation toward self-unification and perfection on the one hand, and toward the universal, the absolute on the other. The peace of conscience envisaged as natural to the perfection of both the metaphysical and the

³⁰ "Pascal et Maurice Blondel," pp. 33-35.

³¹ From Forest's autobiographical article.

religious conscience, is ultimately forged from the identical, basic effort of open adhesion and conformity to reality as it exists. "Thus reflexive philosophy comes to recognize the liaison between self-possession and adhesion. It is in this accord that the essential of religious experience is found."³²

Reflection on this many-sided comparison reveals two over-all ways of conceiving philosophy's relation with faith. One is to insist upon philosophy as incomplete, as essentially an expectation for truths of another order which can satisfy its intrinsic élan of "going-beyond;" in brief, the emphasis is placed on philosophy's ultimate incapacity to fully achieve itself in the natural order. The preceding analyses have brought out the justice of this position. But a second approach, perhaps more indicative of his own personal and most profound thought on this subject, rather views faith as revealing what constitutes the very heart of philosophy's own nature. Forest translates his idea by Kierkegaard's notion of repetition.

Repetition designates a certain attitude before reality. It is the movement by which the immediacy is rendered to us, in opposition to the experience of dissociation, of negativity and of rupture... These categories of thought can be applied to the study of the relations between philosophy and faith. Then it will be possible to speak not only of a going-beyond, but more, from another point of view, of a repetition of philosophy in faith. A new light gives to philosophy the sense of its orientation and reveals to it in some way, its true grandeur.³³

If there is this "repetition of philosophy in faith," then it follows that there is something intrinsic in the very nature of philosophy that renders it capable of elevation by faith, — or, in other words, establishes it in the order of salvation. Nevertheless philosophy itself is not the salvation of the spirit; the presence of the spirit to itself and its openness to reality, does not constitute its proper salvation, union with God. The salvific conforming union with God is not the product of philosophic investigation and research, but of consent—here used in a strictly religious sense—to the supernatural grace of God. Nevertheless, philosophy can be justly termed the

³² From "L'Acte et l'Absolu," pp. 57-58.

³³ See "L'Ordre du salut," pp. 121-22.

attente—the waiting, the expectancy of salvation. This does not signify an intrinsic exigency for the supernatural, but it does mean that philosophy, in its deepest nature, forms an aptitude waiting to be filled, a docility of spirit rendering possible man's supernatural elevation.³⁴

This *attente* of philosophy for completion, fulfillment, ultimately found in faith, is not essentially a chronological phenomenon in Forest's conception. Philosophy is not conceived as a preparation anticipating the arrival of faith, which, once established, drains philosophy of all its value. Rather philosophy is endowed with a permanent value in relation to faith, supplying a need always felt by the believer and demanded by his very faith. Philosophy, in its turn, always rests in need of "opening out" into faith, of being "repeated" by faith. The relation, therefore, which this notion of *attente* established between philosophy and faith can be compared to the distinction regulating the connection between natural theology and theology; natural theology, or theodicy, expresses the rational *intra*-structure of theology, not its *infra*-structure.³⁵

This theory of philosophy as *attente* of salvation is not the product of a philosopher's pious meditations; its immediate motivation is to be found in the teaching experience of Prof. Forest. For in his profession Forest has had first hand contact with the concrete, practical reality of this basic dimension of philosophy. In his superb article describing the vocation of a Catholic professor in a secular university, Forest indicates in what this *attente* consists. It is question of forming the spiritual intelligence of the students, an exigence, a sensibility to truth that becomes progressively more refined and acute. This very formation of the students' spiritual powers has a religious significance, for of all impediments, the greatest obstacle to religious life today is "the blindness to spiritual realities." Thus the teaching of philosophy becomes

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

³⁵ See H. Bouillard, *Karl Barth*, (Paris: Aubier, 1957), vol. III, p. 138; also L. Malevez, "La Foi comme événement et comme signification," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, LXXXI (1959), p. 379.

a "preparation for the understanding of divine things," spiritual truths.

I do not understand by that only those truths which we hold from divine revelation... These truths themselves are always liable to be ignored by the spirit which is not capable of a certain perspective, of a true conversion of attention. Our task is to favor this progress of conscience; without proposing any dogmatic affirmation, we prepare in the spirit of our students the welcome for higher truths.³⁶

Forest thus assigns to philosophy, a permanent, positive role in relation to the salvation proper to faith. But it is a role which is ultimately recognized only in faith. Thus the view of the basic relationship existing between philosophy and faith proposed in this article, is one indicative of a *Christian philosopher*. "Philosophy is not the salvation of the spirit. But it is itself saved, and thus becomes conscious of its proper value, when it recognizes, in the light of faith, its situation in the order of salvation."³⁷

³⁶ From "Qu'est-ce qu'un universitaire catholique?", *Cahiers Universitaires Catholiques* (Oct.-Nov., 1954), p. 48.

³⁷ "L'Ordre du salut," p. 124.