PHILOSOPHIC NATURE AND PHILOSOPHICAL TEMPER

By

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For the Love of Wisdom

Jacques Maritain writes about the power of the philosopher in society. He defines the philosopher as "a man in search of wisdom" (Maritain, 1961: 3). Maritain sees the nobility of this profession in the fact that "wisdom does not indeed seem to be an exceedingly widespread commodity; there has never been over production in this field." And for this reason, "the greater the scarcity of what the philosopher is supposed to be concerned with, the more we feel inclined to think that society needs the philosopher badly" (Maritain: 3-4). The philosopher is therefore concerned with how the happy life can be attained, thus the themes of: justice, virtue, value, good order and others related to the human good preoccupy him or her.

Thomas Aquinas upholds the dignity of the philosopher through his reverence for "the office of the Wiseman" (Aquinas, 1955). The philosopher occupies the office of the wise man which has a twofold task of refuting errors and propagating truth. For Aquinas, the wise man is one who is capable of 'tasting all kinds of knowledge" (Aquinas, 1947: Q.46). The wise man is the opposite of the fool who is a person whose senses are paralyzed by fear or pleasure. While the fool is a person stupefied by the things he encounters, the wise man who is willing to taste all kinds of knowledge with delight seeks to understand the totality of being. This desire to understand the totality of being aligns with human nature and human knowing. Aquinas in his epistemology avers: "the soul is in a way all things." The intellectual soul is capable of knowing itself, things below itself and things above itself. In as much as the

intellective soul is capable of knowing the totality of being, and in so far as being and truth are convertible, the human intellect is described as *carpax omnia* (Schall, 2001).

The Philosopher in Josef Pieper's thought is capable of understanding not only the "totality of things" but also the "essence of things." This capacity to understand the nature of things includes things pertaining to the "visible and the invisible worlds." In fact, the "human spirit" is not confined to a particular geographical location, to a habitat like other higher animals. The human spirit has the ability to transcend geographical boundaries, to transcend the visible world, it ascends to things invisible, yet real. The real but invisible things concerned with are the subject of metaphysics and the spiritual horizon for Christian philosophers. It is capable of moving from the physical to the metaphysical, thus, the human spirit belongs to the universe, and for this reason, the human person does not only belongs to the world, but has a "world". The world of every person is constituted by multiplicity of relationships with other beings which he/she seeks to understand and connect with. This is what constitutes a horizon— a horizon capable of being expanded as we increase our wealth of knowledge.

The philosopher's desire to understand the totality of being is that which sets him/her on the quest for wisdom. Pieper tells us that this loving search for wisdom is his/her distinctive characteristic. This loving search for wisdom which is really "the ability to enter into a relationship with the totality of being" is always a journey undertaken in the spirit of hope, the hope of moving from the known to the unknown with certitude because being as being is infinitely knowable. The philosopher sets out as a seeker, he/she wonders, for the quality of wonder—the ability to be taken by surprise by the beauty of things that call for our praise reveal something fundamental about the philosopher's mind, "only the person who does not know wonders" (Pieper, 2004: 60), yet this wondering which is a "not knowing is never a source of despair, rather it is this not knowing that motivates the seeker. The acknowledgement that one does not yet

know - that one is a *viatores* and does not yet know with clarity, is a prerequisite for searching.

The task of philosophy, like other sciences is mapped out. When philosophers understand their task and perform it well, the society gains authentic lovers of wisdom who work tirelessly to ensure that the *Polis* enjoys being ordered by virtue and governed by the virtuous. The seven branches of philosophy coalesce in their common objective of seasoning potential and actual philosophers through a genuine liberal education that makes them fit for life in a civilized society where the "higher things" are valued for their own sake. Pieper makes a distinction between "authentic philosophers" and "pseudo philosophers" (Pieper: 99). The distinction between these two groups lies in the way they perceive and carry out the philosophical act. To succeed at the philosophical enterprise, it is necessary for philosophers to understand the following: philosophic nature, philosophical temper, philosophical interpretation, use of language in philosophy, and the possibilities of development in the field—all of these to be achieved within the limits of philosophy.

In this paper, we shall not concern ourselves with any particular philosophical question or any of the specific branches of philosophy, we are interested in considering those particular principles and operations which give the philosophical act and philosophic labour its unique sense as a science. John Henry Newman makes the distinction between the original process of reasoning and the process of investigating our reasoning. He posits that "all men have a reason, but not all men can give a reason. We may denote, then, these two exercises of mind as reasoning and arguing, or as conscious and unconscious reasoning or as Implicit reason and Explicit reason. And to the latter belong the words: science, method, development, analysis, criticism, proof, system, principles, rules, laws, and others of a like nature" (Newman, 1898: 7-9, 259). Drawing from this, the science of Philosophy is one in which the exercise of reason is explicit. This explicit reasoning reveals itself in the unfolding of the philosophical task. It is this 'manner of reasoning" that account for what is called a "philosophic nature."

Philosophic Nature

Plato gives us insights into what we mean when we talk of a philosophic nature. He avers:

> Another thing to observe when you judge whether a nature is philosophic or not; be sure it has no slavishness in it. Nothing is so inimical as pettiness to a soul that always strives to reach the whole of everything human and divine
>
> "Most true, "said Glaucon.
>
> Do you suppose a mind endowed with grandeur and the ability to view all time and all being can think much of the human life?"
>
> "Impossible" (cited in Schall, 2001).

This excerpt from *Plato's Dialogues* takes us to the heart of the question, how do we establish if a nature is philosophic*?* Horizons differ and differ validly in many cases. Different groups of people can view the same reality differently. There is such thing as psychological, sociological, theological and philosophical approach to a question (e.g the question of evil). Just as horizons differ, methods too differ. Plato's position is "slavishness" is inimical to philosophic nature. This statement aligns with the nature of truth itself and academic freedom. Truth is subject to none, and resists any attempts at "slavishness" for utilitarian motives. The philosophizing person is subjective and dangers abound over this subjectivity, but objective truth must be the goal of every subjective quest because human beings are capable of judging of the truthfulness of things within the range of human reason. This the very object of human reason itself.

In Pieper's work, *For the Love of Wisdom,* he takes the pains to describe the philosophical task elaborately. He basically tells us what philosophy is and what it is not, and how to go about it. Drawing from the Ancients such as Plato and Aristotle, passing through the Medievals such as Thomas Aquinas and down to the moderns such as

Alfred Whitehead and Lonergan, quoting them as the occasion warrants, we are reminded that the nature and task of philosophy has not changed over time. The Medievals showed us that philosophical inquiry involves two distinct intellectual activities, namely: *intellectus* (inspiration) *and ratio* "intellectual labour" (Pieper: 14). Simply put, philosophical insights are gotten either through inspiration which is an effortless experience derived from genuine leisure or from intellectual labour which is achieved through a love for studiousness. Pieper explains that it is specific to the nature of philosophy that in spite of the depth achieved in many questions, the philosopher is still unable and will never be able to "grab the well-rounded truth about anything" not even the well-rounded truth about "the nature of a mosquito." He writes "for it belongs to the essence of philosophical question that one cannot grab hold of 'the well-rounded truth' (as Parmenides calls it), the way one can, a freshly picked apple" (Pieper: 29). The philosopher's inability to comprehend the whole truth about any being is not a negation of the human capacity to know, rather, it is a statement about the human manner of knowing, the fact that we know in bits through division and multiplication, and the fact that being as being is wondrous, and this wondrousness or mysterious nature of being manifest itself even in the smallest of beings (even a mosquito) in its inexhaustible character.

Pieper also highlights the importance of philosophical anthropology in understanding the philosophizing act. The link between philosophy and the essence of man contributes something to philosophic nature. The philosopher is a human being and the questions he/she addresses concern human beings directly or indirectly, in so far as humans are the ones who need to and seek to know. Pieper is of the opinion that only a man or woman who has experienced the existential shocks of *eros* (love) and *death* which are the doors of transcendence that can "wonder" and only the person who wonders can be a true philosopher. It is only a person who has been shaken by the experience of falling in love or the experience of death (the death of loved ones or a near death experience) who can transcend the day to day world of work and see things differently.

This is because the twin shocks of love and death are experiences that shaken a person and makes him/her experience "the inconclusiveness of the world." The authentic philosopher is one who has been shaken to the point that the things of the world falls "mute" to him/her. Such a person is submerged in wonder to the point that the "philosophizing person never emerges out of wonder." The philosophizing person is forever fascinated by the things and ideas born out of them.

There are pseudo philosophers, as there are pseudo artists, as there are pseudo praying persons. These are people who try to carry out the philosophical act, the artistic act and the praying act without having experienced the twin existential shocks of love and death. Pieper tells us that such "pseudo philosophies" are usually dry and cut off from the wellspring of the wondrous. The philosophical act is really about entering into a relation with the totality of being, it is about encountering the reality of the visible and invisible worlds, and it is about transcending the "workday world" in order to "direct one's glance at the totality of the world" (Pieper: 52).

The Philosophizing person is, therefore, someone who wonders because he/she "does not know," yet, someone who is essentially a *viatores, 'underway',* but also, someone who does not resign to this "not knowing" but sets off on a quest, encountering reality through his personal experiences and the experiences of others through their works which are encountered and read with a listening and conscious intentionality, and interpreting these works from a philosophical perspective. Philosophy understood in this manner is a not a 'functional knowledge," rather, it is a "gentleman's knowledge, thus the theoretical character emerges. Philosophizing is said to be the "purest form of *theoria, of speculari,* of a purely receptive gazing of reality, in which the things alone provide the measure and the soul only receives this measure" (Pieper: 39).

The Essence of Philosophy and the Essence of Man

The correlation between the philosophizing person and the philosophizing act are of utmost importance. Pieper says to see the connection between the essence of man and the act of philosophizing

is "to enter one of Philosophy's innermost provinces" (Pieper: 29). When we ask the question "what does it mean to philosophize? It is a question that falls within the field of philosophical anthropology.

Though every human being can be said to "have a philosophy" not everyone is considered a philosopher in the professional sense. In fact, Pieper identified two other groups of people who have an affinity with the philosophizing person in the exercise of their professions: "the poet and the praying person" because all three acts: philosophy, poetry and prayer have their origin in "wonder." The three distinct acts are set in motion by the question "why there is something at all rather than nothing?" Charles R. Swindoll in *Come Before Winter and Share My Hope* defines wonder as "involuntary praise" (Swindoll, 1985), an involuntary praise that occurs as a result of being astounded. This is praise that is the result of amazement at the intelligent ground which is the cause of that which we see. To that effect, wonder is often accompanied by a certain sense of gratitude. G. K. Chesterton define gratitude as "wonder doubled by joy" (Chesterton, 1951: 59). Pieper cites Heidegger's proposition that wonder is "the most fundamental question of all metaphysics" (Pieper: 32). The person in wonder often 'takes a step beyond" the ordinary activities of the" workday world" and the world of utility as a whole. This step beyond the world of work often leads to a state of 'unhousedness' where one as it were gazes at the skies in admiration of the stars—if only for a short while "for the stars do not put a roof on one's head" (Pieper: 52). This state of unhousedness is not a permanent state, for no one can spend his/her whole life just admiring stars. This state of wondering or unhousedness is always a step beyond the surface of things which always leaves a possibility of return to the world of activities. Pieper sums it nicely by stating that for the person stroke by wonder 'the earth is removed from under his feet" (Pieper: 58). He/she feels shaken—even if only for a while:

> But the meaning of wonder lies in the experience that the world is more profound, more commodious, more mysterious than it appears to everyday understanding. The inner intentionality of wonder is fulfilled in the

> development of a sense of mystery. This inner directionality does not aim at raising doubt but at awakening the knowledge that Being as Being is incomprehensible and mysterious (Pieper: 59).

The profound existential shocks of *eros* and death, which brings us "to the boundaries of human existence' and makes us experience the "inconclusiveness of the world' binds the three acts of: philosophizing, prayer and the fine arts in such a way that when one member of the genus is affectively denied, the others cannot flourish. Pieper posits:

> This affinity asserts itself to such a degree that wherever one member of the genus is effectively denied, none of the others can flourish, so that in a world of total work, all these forms and means of transcending must dry up (or better said, would have to dry up, if it were possible to destroy man's nature completely): where religion is not allowed to bloom, where the artistic finds no home, where the twin shocks of death and *eros* are robbed of their death and trivialized—there, as well philosophy and philosophizing cannot flourish.
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> Worse still than their mere muting and extinction is their degeneration into sham and spurious forms; and there are such pseudo-realizations of these basic behaviours that only appear to pierce through the dome. There exists a form of prayer in which "this' world is not transcended, in which, rather, the attempt is made to incorporate the divine in the instrumentality network of the workday as a functioning component. There is the degeneration of religion into magic—not devotion to the divine, but rather the attempt to overpower the divine and to make it available; there is the degeneration of prayer into practice, precisely in order to continue making life under the doom bearable. Moreover, there is a degeneration of *eros* that involves making one's devotional energies subservient to

> the purpose of the constricted self and that arises from the fearful resistance to shocks from that larger and more powerful world into which only those who truly love are able to enter. Pseudo-forms of the artistic exist; there is, in particular, a sham poetry, which, instead of penetrating the dome of the workday, paints, as it were, only deceptive ornaments on its inner wall and offers itself up as private or even 'instrumental poetry" [*Gebrauchsdichtung*] more or less openly in the service of the world of work: such "poetry" does not transcend, even superficially (and it is clear that authentic philosophizing has more in common with the exact specialized sciences than with such *pseudo*-poetry) [Pieper: 34-35].

"I exist to be astounded" says Pieper. Here, Pieper places an accent on the beauty of being wrapped up in the wondrous. However, the person in "wonder" is "warned" that wonder does not make one "industrious." Pieper is of the opinion that wonder does not make a person "industrious" The person overtaken by wonder might lose his/her grip on the workday world. The philosophizing person is not expected to shun the workday world or the day to day activities that characterizes human living, but that in the midst of all these, he/she keeps the sense of wonder and be able to break through it. He explains it thus:

> Let us recall those things that today dominate man's workday, our workday; it requires no special feat of intellectual exertion to imagine them: we stand very much in the midst of the workday. There is, first of all, the daily running and chasing after the bare necessities of physical existence, after foodstuffs, clothing, shelter, warmth; then, transcending the cares of the individual (and at the same time conditioning them), come the demands of the new political order and of reconstruction, particular in our own country, but in Europe and the world generally. Power struggles in competition for the goods of this earth,

> conflicts of interest on a large and small scale. We find extreme tension and stress everywhere, only apparently mitigated by hastily enjoyed distractions and pause: newspaper, cinema, cigarette. I need not describe this in further detail; we all know from our life together what this world looks like. It is, however, not necessary that we consider only those crisis-like extremes that manifest themselves today; that to which I am referring corresponds simply to the everyday of work, in which one must put one's back into what one is doing, in which extremely concrete objectives are carried through and realized—objectives that must be kept in view with fixed eye toward what is next and nearest. And it is far from being our intention to deprecate this workday world from putatively superior standpoint of philosophical festiveness. It would be superfluous to point out that even in this world of work, the fundamentals of physical existence must first be secured, in the absence which no man can philosophize. Nevertheless, let us imagine that among the voices that fill the workplace and the market (how is this or that thing relating to our daily needs to be acquired? How does one get this? Where do we find that?) Suddenly one voice grows loud with the question "why is there something at all rather than nothing? (Pieper: 31-32).

Wonder is therefore the hallmark of the philosophizing person, but this wonder also leads to the cultivation of a particular temperament suited for the philosophical act. This is appropriately called a philosophical temper.

The Philosophical Temper

To succeed at the task of philosophy, one needs a certain disposition of mind. Sobriety of mind is indicated by a certain manner of approaching philosophical questions and staying with them until a certain justice has been done to them. An attitude of wonder is a

perquisite for authentic philosophizing. Because the "philosopher never emerges out of wonder" he or she must maintain this sense of wonder throughout all his/her philosophizing. This attitude of wonder is not some artificial attitude of consciousness directed at a philosophical subject; in reality it is a conscious staying with the philosophical question, even in the midst of mundane affairs in such a way that the question "why is there anything at all?" remains valid.

According to Thomas Aquinas, "judgment is the most distinctive quality of the philosopher" (Aquinas, 1947: II-II, Q.46). To be able to achievement the quality of passing sound judgment on things with a certain dexterity, the philosopher needs to have what Newman calls a "Philosophical temper." This is Newman's definition of a philosophical temper:

> Again: modesty, patience, and caution, are dispositions of mind quite as requisite in philosophical inquiries as seriousness and earnestness, though not so obviously requisite. Rashness of assertion, hastiness in drawing conclusions, unhesitating reliance on our own acuteness and powers of reasoning are inconsistent with the homage which nature exacts of those who know her hidden wonders. She refuses to reveal her mysteries to those who come otherwise in the humble and reverential spirit of learners and disciples....
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> Here, too may be mentioned the harm which has been done to the interests of science by excessive attachment to system. The love of order and regularity, and that perception of beauty which is keen in highly-gifted minds, has too often led men astray in their scientific researches. From seeing but detached parts of the system of nature, they have carried on without data, to arrange, supply, and complete. They have been impatient knowing but in part, and of waiting for future discoveries; they have inferred from slender promises, and conjectured when they could not proof. It is by a tedious discipline

> that the mind is taught to overcome those baser principles which impede it in philosophical investigation, and to moderate those nobler faculties and feelings which are prejudicial when in excess. To be dispassionate and cautious, to be fair in discussion, to give to each phenomenon which nature successively presents its due weight, candidly to admit those which militates against our own theory, to be willing to be ignorant for a time, to submit to difficulties, and patiently and meekly proceed waiting for farther light, is a temper…it is the only temper in which we can hope to become interpreters of nature (Newman: 7-9).

Newman identifies two specific things that are contrary to a genuine philosophical temper: "the love of paradox" which would impose on philosophy, a language different from that which she really speaks. More so, the "indulgence of the imagination, though a more specious fault, is equally hostile to the spirit of true philosophy."

Josef Pieper, has shown us that the philosopher, the praying person and the artist all share a love for the *mirandum*, the wondrous. All those exercising these three acts equally need a philosophical temper. The language and methods of the philosopher, the poet and the praying person may differ, but their attitude toward their respective fields requires the same philosophical temperament.

The British author Samuel Johnson in his book *Rasselas, The Prince of Abyssinia* sketched a wonderful portrait of a poet's philosophical temper. What is said of the poet's attitude here may well apply to the philosophy. This except captures it well:

> Being resolved to be a poet, I saw everything with a new purpose; my sphere of attention was suddenly magnified; no kind of knowledge was to be overlooked. I ranged mountains and deserts for images and resemblances, and pictured upon my mind every tree of the forest and flower of the valley. I observed with equal care the crags of the rock and the pinnacles of the palace. Sometimes I

> wandered along mazes of the rivulet, and sometimes watched the changes of summer clouds. To a poet nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful and whatever is dreadful must be familiar to his imagination; he must be conversant with all that is awfully vast or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the mineral of the earth, and meteors of the sky, must all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety; for every idea is useful for the enforcement or decoration of moral or religious truth, and he who knows most will have most power of diversifying his scenes and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions and unexpected instruction (Johnson, 1958).

Part of having a philosophical temper is being able to know and respect the boundaries and limits of one's own subject. Philosophy, like every other sciences has its field, but also has its limits. John Paul II in *fides et Ratio* gives us insight about the limits of reason alone, which also is the limits of philosophy, for philosophy is concerned with truths which can be known by human reason alone. Knowing the limits of philosophy is necessary if we are to appreciate its specific contributions and the process of dialectics with other fields. Its limit contribute to its values. Philosophy is one subject that has a wide range and can conveniently fit into other fields: we can have a philosophy of science, a philosophy of law, a philosophy of football, a philosophy of etc. Notwithstanding, philosophy has its boundaries.

Still on Johnson's discussion on the task of the poet, we learn about the limits of a subject. That poetry and philosophy have an affinity in their philosophic nature is that we can infer from Johnson text:

> This business of a poet…is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances. He does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades of verdure of the forest.

> He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature, such prominent and striking features or recall the original to every mind, and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked and another have neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness…but the knowledge of nature is only half the task of a poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life. His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition, observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and trace the changes of the human mind, as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate and custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude. He must divest himself, of the prejudices of his age and country; he must consider right and wrong in the abstracted invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths; which will always be the same. He must therefore, content himself with the slow progress of his name, contemn the praise of his own time, and commit his claims to the justice of posterity. He must write as the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over thoughts and manners of future generations, as a being superior to time and place… His labour is not yet at an end. He must know many languages and many sciences, and, that his style may be worthy of his thoughts, must by incessant practice familiarize to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony (Johnson, 1958).

A genuine philosophical temper applied to the philosophizing task leads to what Newman identifies as “conscious reasoning as opposed to unconscious reasoning” This philosophical temper is also necessary in the task of interpretation because a philosophic interpretation bears certain marks.

The Task of Philosophical Interpretations

Philosophers view and interprets the world and events differently. The philosopher's outlook as described by Pieper is not the result of any conscious effort to stand out, rather, the philosophizing person realizes that things have a profound meaning to the gaze, things have a meaning that seems hidden to the ordinary eye. Also, a philosophical interpretation has to do with the state of a person's mind. Newman identifies different states of minds in different group of persons:

> I have said that minds in different states and circumstances cannot understand one another, and that in all cases they must be instructed according to their capacity, and, if not taught step by step, they learn only so much less; that children do not apprehend the thoughts of grown people, nor savages the instincts of civilization, nor blind men the perceptions of sight, nor pagans the doctrines of Christianity, nor men the experiences of Angels. In the same way, there are people of matter-of-fact, prosaic minds, who cannot take in the fancies of poets; and others shallow, inaccurate minds, who cannot take in the ideas of philosophical inquirers.

Thus, philosophers ought to have the intellectual capacity to take in ideas of philosophical inquirers and "deprive things of their matter-of-factness." Pieper writes:

> Philosophical questioning is then, ultimately, clearly directed towards what lies before our eyes every day. What lies before our eyes become, however, transparent to the questioner from one moment to the next; it loses it compactness, its apparent finality, its matter-of-factness. The things present an alien, an unknown, an unfamiliar, a more profound physiognomy. The questioner, Socrates, who knows how to deprive things abruptly of their matter-of-factness likens himself to a stingray whose sting

> paralyzes. Every day we tell ourselves, this is "my' friend, 'my' wife, 'my' house; that one 'has" and 'possesses" all this. All of a sudden, we stop short: do we really have all these "possessions"? Can they be "had" at all? What does it mean to possess something?
>
> Philosophizing means distancing oneself, not from the things of everyday life, but from their common interpretation, from their prevailing valuations given these things. And this distancing takes place, not on the basis of any decision to stand out, to think "differently" from the many, but because, suddenly, the things have acquired a new physiognomy. It is just this state of affairs, that is, that the more profound physiognomy of the real becomes perceivable in the manipulated things of everyday life (and not in a realm of "essence", distinct from the "everyday" or whatever one chooses to call it); that is, that the extraordinary, that which is no longer self-evident concerning these things, opposes itself to our gaze, which is directed toward things encountered in everyday experience—it is just this state of affairs that corresponds to that inner event in which one has always recognized, as constituting the origin of philosophy - wonder (Pieper: 56).

Josef Pieper is of the opinion that the person who will interpret an author's work adequately has to be able to read and listen to that author attentively. This is a prerequisite for interpreting an author's work (Pieper: 218-219). Philosophers ought to listen to: nature, people, to themselves, take into account the broad spectrum of human experiences through encountering the works of others, and even listen to critics as well. This listening is part of the philosophical task. Only a person who listens can interpret, for an "interpretation consists in bringing to expression something that was intended by what someone else has already brought to expression" (Lonergan, 1957: 586).

Human experiences are a source of philosophical knowledge. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between knowledge gained from experience and knowledge gained through studiousness. Knowledge gained from experience is "connatural." He is of the opinion that people who have undergone certain experiences gain the ability to preside or judge over matters related to such experiences. He defines experience as "knowledge based on immediate contact with reality." Because of the validity of this kind of knowledge, Pieper holds that no human experience should be neglected in the process of philosophizing. He makes recourse to A.N. Whitehead here:

> Nothing can be omitted, experience drunk and experience sober, experience sleeping and experience waking, experience drowsy and experience wide-awake, experience self-conscious and experience self-forgetting, experience intellectual and experience physical, experience religious and experience skeptical, experience anxious and experience care-free, experience anticipatory and experience retrospective, experience happy and experience grieving, experience dominated by motion, and experience under self-restraint, experience in the light and experience in the dark, experience normal and experience abnormal (Whitehead, 2004: 290f)

The knowledge of reality which is derived from experience or "evidential findings, do not disappear when the experiential act comes to an end as we are told. On the contrary, this knowledge is "stored and preserved" in the great institutions, in whatever men do, in language and the great works of language, in the reassure houses of science" (Pieper: 146). Thus experiences can be reflected upon many times over after the original experience is over. Many years after the end of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Holocaust, Colonialism, the World Wars; people are still reflecting and writing on these topics. Experience is only one way of knowing reality, though Aquinas calls it "the material cause of knowledge," there is inspiration as a way of

knowing, studiousness as a way of knowing, and prayer as a way of knowing.

The Language of the Philosopher

Marie Dominique Chenu informs us that the *modus loquendi* (way of speaking) of an author can be discerned by observing his/her style of writing. This refers to the grammar, the imagery, manner of conceptualizing things and this is all included in the literary genre employed by the author (Chenu, 1964: 141). In other words, every philosopher has a unique way of speaking. The philosopher is one who trades in wit. Wit is useful to all in a literary profession and James Boswell gives us a profound description of wit. Wit in general is occasioned by many diverse scenes, accidents and circumstances and anyone who trades in wit bears witness to this fact. We are here presented with a beautiful definition of wit:

> But first (says the learned preacher) it may be demanded, what the thing we speak of is? Or what facetiousness (or wit as he calls it before) doth import? To which question I might reply, as Democritus did to him that asked the definition of a man. 'Tis that which we see and know.' Any one better apprehends what it is by acquaintance, than I can inform him by description. It is, indeed, a thing so versatile and multiform, appearing in so many shapes, so many garbs, so variously apprehended by several eyes and judgments, that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain notion thereof, than to make a portrait of Proteus, or to define the figure of the fleeting air. Sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in a seasonable application of trivial saying, or in forging an opposite tale; sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of the sense, or the affinity of their sound: sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of humorous expression: sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude: sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer, in a quirkish reason, in a shrewd

intimation, in cunning diverting or clever retorting an objection: sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a lusty hyperbole, in a startling metaphor, in a plausible reconciliation of contradictions, or in acute nonsense: sometimes scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimical look or gesture, passeth for it: sometimes an affected simplicity, sometimes a presumptuous bluntness giveth it being: sometimes it riseth only from a lucky hitting upon what is strange: sometimes from a crafty wresting obvious matter to the purpose. Often it consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable, an inexplicable; being answerable to the numberless rovings of fancy, and windings of language. It is, in short, a manner of speaking of the simple and plain way, (such as reason teacheth and proveth things by,) which by a pretty surprising uncoouthness in conceit or expression, doth affect and amuse the fancy, stirring in it some wonder, and breeding some delight thereto. It raiseth admiration, as signifying a nimble sagacity of apprehension, a special felicity of invention, a vivacity of spirit, and reach of wit more than vulgar; it seeming to argue a rare quickness of parts, that one can fetch in remote conceits applicable; a notable skill, that he can dextrously accommodate them to the purpose before him; together with a lively briskness of humour, not apt to damp those sportful flashes of imagination (whence in Aristotle such people are termed …, dextrous men, and …., men of facile or versatile manners, who can easily turn themselves to all things, or turn all things to themselves.) It also procureth delight, by gratifying curiosity with its rareness, as semblance of difficulty: (as monsters, not for their beauty, but their rarity; as juggling tricks, not for their use, but their abstruseness, are beheld with pleasure:) by diverting the

> mind from its road of serious thoughts; by instilling gaiety and airiness of spirit; by provoking to such dispositions of spirit in way of emulation or complaisance; and by seasoning matters, otherwise distasteful or insipid, with an unusual and thence grateful tang (Boswell, 1952: 476)

As concerns language and the philosophizing person, Pieper raises a few issues related to language use in philosophy. Drawing inspiration from Aquinas, he identifies different linguistic categories operational in the philosophical enterprise: general linguistic usage, word origin and word sense, language and terminology, inauthentic word use, translatability, enlightening speech and finally a distinction between the language of poetry and the language of philosophy. What we gain in this discourse is that Pieper in line with Aquinas holds that the philosopher should use the language of the multitudes or everyday language in his/her task. He talks about the need to keep in mind the evolving nature of languages which sometimes shows itself in the distance between the etymology of a w*ord (etymologia*) and word sense (signification) [Pieper: 198-199]. He insists on the relevance of terminology to philosophy because, terminologies are scientific in nature, "terminology is the legitimate vehicle for understanding in science." Terminologies are "made" or are artificial and these terminologies make possible, precision and accuracy which transforms simple sentences to scientific ones. The language of philosophy is different from the language of poetry for example in that "the language of poetry is sensuous form, image, rhythm, and sound; the language of the philosophizing person is nonintuitive, full of conceptualization and abstraction (whereby it is worth recalling that "abstraction" clearly includes recourse to what is intuitive and concrete)." Finally, Pieper believes that philosophy should be "enlightening speech" whereby the philosopher's communication "cause a light to go off" his/her interlocutor with regards to a certain state of affairs or a specific aspect of reality. In this enlightening experience, "the spirit of the person who listens and now for the first times sees or understands illuminates." Language which is a vehicle

of thoughts in all its complexities and beauty is important to the philosophizing person.

Progress in Philosophy

Bernard Lonergan holds that development in any field of studies or the advancement of that science is the result of collaborative effort in intellectual labour. This often happens when one generation of scholars show "belief" in the findings of previous generations and go forth to build on them. There is therefore some kind of process of division of labour in knowledge acquisition whereby one generation builds on the findings of another. He terms this "the social character of human knowledge" (Lonergan, 1971: 43). A look at the history of philosophy shows us how far philosophy has come. From it early beginnings in the Ancients, through the Medieval, to the Moderns and Post-Modern eras, the stream of philosophy continues to run its course and it is ever fresh. The question here is whether one generation of philosophers can be said to have achieved more depth and contributed to the progress of philosophy more than another. Pieper responds thus:

> "Progress" is in fact a problematic category in the philosophical realm if what is meant by progress is a steady enrichment of our collective knowledge that increases *eo ipso* in a manner commensurate with the passage of time. In this respect, there is an analogy, again, with poetry. No one asked whether Goethe came farther than Homer. Philosophical progress exists certainly, but not so much across generations as in the inner life experience of the philosophizing person—and that in the same proportion in which he, silent and attentive, catches sight of the depth of and breath of his at once new and primeval object (Pieper: 136).

Philosophical progress is therefore not always a cross generational ideal. This means every philosopher has to be evaluated on his proper contributions to the field. Time is not always the

strongest determiner in the relevance of a school of thought or a philosopher's work. It is possible to find depths and vigour in the Ancients that is missing in the Moderns. Samuel Johnson, talking about literature said the Ancients were the sun while the Moderns the moon (Bowell, 1952), adding "we shine with a reflected light." Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and a host of the Ancients remain a point of reference in Philosophy, but we ought to keep in mind that époques and their defining questions passes directly into the work of philosophers. In fact, our Modern and Post-Modern cultures is viewed as promoting a culture of "shallowness" which robs philosophers of depth and therefore of authentic progress. Conflict is also another important element necessary for progress in Philosophy. Pieper explains the idea thus:

> Conflicts are not only possible here but absolutely unavoidable as the natural concomitant of spiritual progress. One might see precisely in the preparedness for such disagreements and in the willingness to endure them patiently without rash attempts at reconciliation or premature resignation, the hallmark of genuine philosophical education. And one is reminded of the platitude according to which the superiority of a philosophy that truly incorporates all attainable data manifest itself, not in its ability to offer more refined philosophical solutions, but rather in making the mysterious nature of reality more intuitively apparent to our eyes (Pieper: 156).

Newman has told us that ideas develop in a "warfare of ideas." Philosophical ideas develop in the same way, in the measure to which they are exposed to the world and are allowed to interact with other ideas while being sharpened.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have touched generally on some important aspects related to the task of philosophy. The aspects identified above are

certain characteristic valid for philosophizing at all times. Following Pieper, we conclude by saying the aim of philosophy "is to understand reality in terms of a single unified principle". It is also clear that this quest of "a loving and hopeful pursuit" of wisdom, carried within the limits of human reason using the rational tools of science, makes it a delightful and illuminating task.

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