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# St. Thomas and the Natural Order of Things

Henry B. Veatch

Surely, it must stand to reason that whatever our respect and even our reverence may be on the occasion of commemorating the 700th anniversary of a particular man's death, the very fact that it is a 700th anniversary must somehow betoken that the man himself is, to say the least, somewhat out of date! And so it is with St. Thomas. Let's face it: in the language of today's slang, he just doesn't seem to be "with it" any more. True, this does not mean that it is not at least conceivable that he might be more "with it" than many of us would ever suspect. Yes, it could even be that in our own very up-to-dateness it is we who are really out-of-date, whereas the seeming out-of-dateness of Aquinas might only serve to conceal his true and proper contemporaneity.

But enough of this. For why indulge ourselves in such paradoxes of mere possibility? Rather let us return for the moment to the seeming present-day actuality of things, and let us try to bring home to ourselves as forcefully and perhaps even as disturbingly as we can just how remote and even alien St. Thomas' very conception of the nature of things, and of the natural order of things, is from that to which we have now-a-days become so accustomed. And to this end, I doubt if one could do better than simply to recall to mind that moving and most eloquent passage from Father Chenu, in which he seeks to evoke for us that truly resplendent picture of the universe and of the nature of things such as St. Thomas conceived them to be:

St. Thomas, going beyond the scientific universe of Aristotle, has recourse to the Platonic theme of emanation and return: since theology is the knowledge of God, one will study all things in their relation to God, be it in their production, or in their final end: *exitus et redivus*. What a magnificent resource of intelligibility: here one finds everything, every being, every action, every destiny as something situated, known, judged in that supreme causality in which their *raison d'être* will be completely revealed in the divine light itself. More than science, it is a wisdom. This amazing neo-Platonic scheme—be it pagan or Christian, matters little for the moment, for in continuity with the epistemology of the Greek philosophers, it develops the very potentiality of the latter far beyond its original horizons, in order to understand the very becoming of created being. A universal order, in which diverse natures, all of them analyzable in terms of genera and species, will take their place, but in which at the same time their very intelligibility will be traced to that common root of nature as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Alas, though, no sooner is such a picture of the over-all nature of things suggested to us and then lightly limned for us, than we all recognize that it is no longer

such a universe that as human beings of the present day we believe ourselves to be occupying. On the contrary, our universe is one that most of us have to take on trust and on the basis merely of what the scientists tell us about it. And this scientific universe, in turn, is unfortunately hardly one that involves any sort of Platonic scheme of *exitus et reditus*, as St. Thomas would have understood it. And so far from its being a universe in which “every thing, every being, every action, every destiny” is able to be “located, known, judged,” in terms of the highest causality, and in which the very reasons for their being will be ultimately and fully revealed in the divine light itself—oh no, there is nothing like that anymore! For just ask yourselves, what reason for being do you have, or do I have, or does anything have in the scientific universe of today? Indeed, the very notion of a reason for being—in the sense in which St. Thomas might have understood such a notion—either for you and me as individuals, or even for the universe as a whole, is a notion which has not just remained unconfirmed in the ongoing progress of the sciences; rather it is a notion which is radically and totally irrelevant in the context of modern science; and as thus irrelevant it does not make sense even to ask for the reason for being of anything—at least not in the context of the latter-day physical and biological sciences.

And as that splendid resource of intelligibility of which Fr. Chenu speaks, in which all things are to be regarded as having all of them proceeded from God and as eventually returning to God as the source from which they came—such a resource of intelligibility just does not exist for the modern scientist. Indeed, not only does it not exist for him, it does not even make sense to him *qua* scientist. For no less than the notions of final cause or of reasons for being, so also the notions of a first cause or an ultimate cause,—and in this sense the notion of God Himself—all such notions are totally alien to the conceptual scheme, or schemes, of present-day science.

Nor would it seem possible for us any longer to go outside the domain of science and into that of metaphysics or of philosophy generally, should we wish to recapture that resource of intelligibility which was so much a part of St. Thomas' conceptual scheme, but which would appear to be totally excluded from the conceptual scheme of present-day science. True, such a move from science to philosophy, shall we say, or from physics to metaphysics, was a not uncommon procedure in the intellectual tradition of Western Christendom, and one that was constantly resorted to throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, and this well after the advent of what has now come to be known as modern science. But somehow in this present day and age the bottom would seem to have dropped out of any such general enterprise of turning from science to philosophy in order to retain or recover even a tiny bit of that general sort of resource of intelligibility which was so much a part of St. Thomas' view of the nature of things and which he exploited so magnificently. Nor does it seem to me that the bottom has dropped out of such an enterprise merely because of any particular successes attaching either to Kant's or to all of the other post-Kantian efforts to mount refutations of the traditional proofs for the existence of God, and so of natural theology generally. For the kind of resource of intelligibility

that we have to do with here is, after all, nothing if not a natural-theological resource. But what has been the cause of the undoing of natural theology in the modern world has not been any refutations of its arguments, it would seem to me, so much as an increasing sense of the irrelevance and even meaninglessness of the very key notions and concepts in terms of which discussions of natural theology would have to be couched. Cause and effect, essence and existence, act and potency, necessity and contingency, infinite regression, even motion and change—these are all notions which either are considered to have no applicability of any kind in the scientific domain; or if they have applicability in science, the meaning of these concepts—e.g., those of cause or of motion—have undergone such fundamental changes of meaning, that for all of their verbal usefulness in science, the words can no longer support such meaning as is requisite for their significant and successful use outside of science, and in metaphysics and natural theology. In other words, the effects of science upon the very language of metaphysics and natural theology has been so deleterious in the last several years that that very resource of intelligibility upon which Aquinas relied so heavily in his understanding of the nature of things has now become little better than a closed book to us in the present-day.

This is not to say, of course, that contemporary philosophy is any longer stuck fast in the mud and mire of those earlier varieties of logical positivism or logical empiricism according to which any and all assertions that transcend the verification procedures of the various sciences are simply to be written off as meaningless. On the contrary, metaphysics, or at least ontology as it is wont to be called, would seem happily to be in full swing again—at least in American philosophy. And yet interestingly enough, it is not a metaphysics such as would ever attempt to tap such resources of intelligibility as Aquinas relied upon. For whether it be a Quine or a Strawson or a Bergmann or a Sellars or a Davidson or whomever one chooses to invoke as an example of the contemporary metaphysician, it is significant that none of these current varieties of metaphysics, or perhaps better ontologies, ever carries us beyond the domain of nature and the natural, as this has come to be worked over and mined by the scientists of the last 200 years. Instead, it is as if these modern metaphysicians—or at least the greater number of them—thought of themselves as taking over various sets of basic categories and principles which have been for the most part simply presupposed by the scientists, but which the scientists have perhaps not thought about directly or tried to order and systematize with any rigor. What the task of the contemporary metaphysician would appear to be, therefore, is very little more than simply to provide an ontological base or ground for science, but always in such a way as not to go beyond or transcend that area or domain of being which has always been acknowledged to be the proper preserve of the scientists. In other words, although there is indeed a sense in which metaphysics might be said to be truly in vogue again on the contemporary American scene, it is not a metaphysics such as countenances a natural theology. And not countenancing natural theology or anything like it, it does not offer us any such

resource of intelligibility, such as St. Thomas thought of himself as being able to invoke.

Very well, then, may we not take the case to have been sufficiently made out that reality and the natural order of things, as St. Thomas took them to be, are not at all what they are for us in the present day; and that the resources of intelligibility—the ways and means of making sense out of our world and of finding any sort of meaning in things—these simply cannot be for us what they were for St. Thomas? And yet have we counted the cost? Have we reckoned with the fact that, given our present-day situation in which our only sources of intelligibility are such as are vouchsafed to us by modern science, we are in consequence threatened with a loss of meaning, directly within our lives and in our human existence, which would seem to be irreparable, and which could even be downright disastrous?

This is not to say, of course, that science does not make a kind of sense of things and of the world we live in. Quite the contrary, it tells us such things, for instance, as that within the earth's atmosphere bodies are subject to gravitation, and that outside this atmosphere they are weightless. It tells us that it is via a circulatory system that our blood courses through our arteries and veins, that yours and my individual traits are largely determined by our genes, and that modern industrialization has greatly altered the more traditional human ways of life and existence. But given that science can thus inform us through trivial examples such as these, and through countless others of far greater import, of what might be called the order of things and indeed of the very "hang" of things, does it not still seem that something is lacking? And granted that through the resources of science, we are made aware of regularities in things and of a certain orderliness in natural processes—all is not sheer chaos and confusion by any means—are we not still inclined to say, "But so what?" For what seems to be left out is anything like a point or purpose. It's a question of why and to what end. After all, St. Thomas could proclaim reality and the nature of things to be such that "every thing, every being, every action, every destiny" is something that can "be located, known, judged, in terms of the highest causality in which the very reason of their being will be fully revealed in the divine light itself." In contrast, we are constrained to face a world and a reality in which no thing, no being, no action, no destiny would appear to have any reason for being, and where, so far from there being any divine light in which the sense and meaning of things is certain to be revealed, there just isn't any light at all. Yes, why should we not just go the whole way with Sartre and simply acknowledge that if our resources of intelligibility are simply those that are proffered to us by modern science, then of being or reality, simply as it is in itself, we can say no more than that it is "uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being," and so "*de trop* for all eternity."

What, indeed, could be a more dramatic counter motif in metaphysics to St. Thomas' theme of *exitus* and *reditus*, than this very Sartrian theme of being or reality as sheerly uncreated, without reason for being, and *de trop* for all eternity?

And where, in turn, does that leave us human beings, supposing that we are indeed confronted with or implicated in a radically meaningless and senseless being or reality, as representing simply the dénouement of our present-day purely scientific resources of intelligibility? Well, it leaves us just where Sartre and the existentialists say that it leaves us—alone, without hope, with nothing to turn to, with no guidelines to follow, there being absolutely no resources of meaning or of sense or of intelligibility anywhere or in the whole of reality. Talk about alienation! We human beings are alienated indeed, and not just from society, or from the political and economic order, or from the fruits of our own labor; no, we men now find ourselves alienated even from being itself, and from reality, and from the very order of nature itself.

But having thus painted this bleak picture of what Touchstone might call the very “parlous state” of man today, we must hasten to add that contemporary philosophers have indeed not been blind to the desperateness of our present situation. Nor have they been altogether unaware—although few of them may have expressed themselves in this way in just so many words—that the root of our present troubles is traceable directly to the loss of just such a world view as that propounded by Aquinas, and its replacement by the general sort of conception of nature and of reality as are characteristic of modern science. But concerned as many contemporary philosophers are with trying to devise remedies for the meaninglessness and loss of intelligibility in today's world, none of them, so far as I am aware, have seen fit to return to anything like St. Thomas' resources of intelligibility in his scheme of *exitus et reditus*. Instead, the contemporary philosophic effort would seem to be to try, by some hook or crook, to reintroduce meaningfulness into our situation, and yet without for a minute doubting that the being and nature of things are pretty much the sort of thing the scientists say they are.

Still, just how is such a thing possible? How can sense and meaning ever be restored to things, if as philosophers we steadfastly refuse to give over that very scientific view of the nature of things which presumably was responsible for depriving things of their sense and meaning in the first place? Now unless I be very much mistaken, the effort of contemporary philosophers to meet the challenge of questions of this sort has been along two main lines. The one line is that which we may loosely term the existentialist line, and the other is the sort of line which many philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition of so-called linguistic analysis have become somewhat partial to in recent years.

Thus so far as the existentialists are concerned, it is as if they would wish to avail themselves of something like Kierkegaard's distinction between subjective knowledge and objective knowledge, or more accurately perhaps between the subjective thinker and the objective thinker. The objective thinker, they say, is one who is concerned only with a knowledge of objects—with their manifold types of behavior, their detectable interrelationships, their observable regularities. Nor is such objective knowledge any different from scientific knowledge: the objects are

simply there, as it were before us, and simply to be observed, without point or purpose, without reason for being, just there, like so many brute facts. In contrast, the subjective thinker is one whose concern is with himself, and with himself as existing, and with his being or existing in such a way as will be meaningful and significant, and meaningful and significant to himself and for himself. His, in other words, is an absolute commitment to being and existing, and to his own being and existing authentically and without sham or pretense, as if right here and now and in such an act of total and authentic commitment were the entire value and worth and sense and meaning of human existence. Here, indeed, is the resource of intelligibility for the existentialist: it is not an intelligibility or a sense and meaning that could in any way be said to be in things, or inscribed in the very order of nature and so, discernible in the light of God's purpose for all things or of His all-embracing scheme of *exitus* and *reditus*.

In fact, there might be no better way of bringing out the contrast between the sort of resources of intelligibility which Aquinas finds inscribed right in the very order of nature itself, and the existentialist's resource of intelligibility, which, so far from being a fact of nature, is rather only a function of the subject's own personal commitment—this contrast, I say, might be brought out by simply quoting a passage from the great contemporary German theologian, Rudolf Bultmann:

In any case the belief in the almighty God is not the conviction given in advance that there exists an almighty being who is able to do all things. Belief in the almighty God is genuine only when it actually takes place in my very existence, as I surrender myself to the power of God who overwhelms me here and now. Once more this does not mean that the belief must express itself in my consciousness as explicit knowledge; it does mean, however, that the statements of belief are not general statements. For example, Luther's statement *terra ubique domini* is not genuine as a dogmatic statement but only here and now when spoken in the decision of my very existence. This distinction, I think, can best be understood today by one for whom the dogmatic statement has become doubtful, that is in the misery of imprisonment in Russia.<sup>2</sup>

But in many ways more interesting is the line which many of the linguistic analysts, presumably inspired by Wittgenstein, would follow in their effort to restore a sense and meaning and intelligibility to a world from which they, like the rest of us, would appear to have been excluded by the contemporary scientific world-view. To this end, these thinkers, as it would seem to me, have really stolen a leaf from Kant and from what he called his transcendental method of philosophizing. For it will be remembered that it was Kant's basic contention that so far from human beings ever being able to know things as they are in themselves, we can rather know them only as they are relative to us and in terms of the modes of perception and understanding in terms of which we receive and structure things in becoming aware of them.

And so it is that some of the neo-Wittgensteinians have made much of a distinction which they like to draw between "seeing new facts" and "new ways of seeing the facts." Thus, for example, a modern scientist, operating within a particular scientific theory, say, that of Newtonian physics, can go on discovering new facts, presumably indefinitely—e.g., about outer-space, about the other side of the moon, about sub-atomic particles, etc. But as contrasted with such a seeing of new facts, what about the possibility of our hitting upon and developing entirely new and different ways of seeing the same facts? Indeed, might there not conceivably be, alongside of a scientific way of seeing the facts, an extra-scientific or non-scientific way of seeing them? And so with reference to the issue of this paper, if the scientist's way of seeing the facts excludes those very resources of meaning and intelligibility with which St. Thomas viewed things, why might we not say that St. Thomas' scheme of *exitus* and *reditus* is but a different and alternative conceptual scheme from that used by the modern scientist—but a new and different way of seeing the facts, in other words. Or if it smacks too much of anachronism to think of novelty as attaching to St. Thomas' way of seeing the facts, or contrasted with that of the modern scientist, why might we not say that when in the 17th century the characteristically mediaeval view of the *natura rerum*, as typified by St. Thomas, came to be displaced by the new scientific outlook, it was not so much the case that the scientists had uncovered new facts which the older theories could no longer fit, as rather the case that the new scientific theories represented but a new way of looking at the facts, which a mediaeval thinker like St. Thomas had seen quite differently, given his radically different conceptual scheme from that of the moderns?

And now consider what the peculiar import is which this more or less Kantian philosophical move on the part of the neo-Wittgensteinians has with respect to religion and ethics and those particular resources of intelligibility that would presumably need to be tapped if our religious and ethical concerns are to have any sense and meaning attaching to them. Let me but quote from a recent expositor of Wittgenstein:

Religious belief, then, is using a picture—letting it regulate your whole life, having it constantly in the foreground of your thinking . . .

This can perhaps be illustrated by recalling R. M. Hare's reply to Flew . . . Hare contended that religious belief is having a *blik*. He illustrated what he meant by *blik* from the case of a lunatic who thinks all dons wish to murder him. The lunatic will not accept any evidence as falsifying his belief about dons: if they are kind to him he interprets this as diabolical cunning intended to put him off-guard. Being unfalsifiable, his *blik* may be said—following Flew—to assert nothing. But it nevertheless makes a world of difference between him and those who do not share it because it determines what, for him, is, and what is not, an explanation. 'Diabolical cunning' explains the good deeds of dons; 'good will' would not. Hare

brings out the all-important point that some men, besides lunatics, have *bliks*. He must, that is, have a way of looking at the world which will determine what, for him, is an explanation and what is not. Suppose for instance, that his *blik* is the uniformity of nature—he sees the world as a system in which like causes always have like effects. Then he will not be satisfied with any explanation which supposes an event to have occurred without the effect, which it has always previously been observed to cause, following.

This religious believer, as such, has his picture—or pictures—his *blik*, his way of looking at the world. If he believes in a Last Judgment, for instance, his account of everything which men do will, in the last analysis, be in terms of reward or punishment, here or hereafter, at the hands of a righteous, Divine Judge. Nothing will count for him, *qua* believer in a Last Judgment, as an explanation of human actions, which does not answer the question: 'How will this look in the Universe and before the Creator of man.'<sup>3</sup>

In other words, religion and what one might call a religious outlook, represent nothing but a new, or at least a different, way of looking at the facts and at the world. Likewise, science in turn and for its part represents but still another and alternative way of looking at the facts and at the world. And what are the facts like, and what is the world like in itself, and apart from our particular ways of seeing or viewing the so-called world, or the facts, or reality, or whatever you may wish to call it? But it is just here that the Kantian presuppositions of such a mode of thought come into play: what things are in themselves, what the world is, what nature is, what the facts are in themselves—these are things that we cannot hope to know. Instead, nature, the facts, reality simply are as they appear to us to be and as we take them to be. Or put still differently, the facts are as varied and as various as our ways of seeing them.

Still, does not this curious neo-Wittgensteinian variant on Kantian criticism actually serve to do the trick, when it comes to re-establishing once more the truth-claims and meaning-claims of religion and ethics, as over against their seemingly having been so utterly and totally discredited at the hands of latter-day scientists and positivistically minded critics? For is it not simply a matter of one's having to conjure up that particular kind of "*blik*" or "form of life" or "picture" that can provide setting and an actual resource of intelligibility for our specifically human moral and religious concerns? Again, let me quote from the same writer as before:

As noted above, any man's *blik*, picture, or way of looking at the world, determines what, for him, does, and what does not, constitute an explanation. The Christian theologian has to work out explanations of world hunger, the Atonement, or whatever is in question, which are consistent with the Christian picture of God.

In so doing, he has to take the picture as he finds it used by believers; but,

at the same time, he has to define it, or the technique of using it, more clearly. If, for instance, he were to say that world hunger occurs because God does not care whether his creatures starve or not, this would be so inconsistent with the picture of God, which Christians use, that it would be quite unacceptable as an explanation. However, suppose our theologian were to say that world hunger is due to human selfishness; and to go on to argue that God evinces his goodness in giving men free will, but in so doing necessarily limits his power over them to that of persuasion. This explanation would define more precisely for some believers, what is meant by the goodness and power, attributed to God in the picture which they use.<sup>4</sup>

Not only that, but the same picture might be exploited still further, so that once again we might find ourselves enjoying much that same resource of intelligibility as St. Thomas enjoyed, and according to which as Father Chenu says "every thing, every being, every action, every destiny will be located, known, and judged . . . in [no less than] the divine light itself." And yet is it really the same intelligibility as St. Thomas thought he had found in things and in nature and the natural order? Of course it isn't. For while the contemporary philosopher, be he an existentialist or a Wittgensteinian analyst, is no doubt deeply concerned with the disastrous loss of meaning and intelligibility that have come to be associated with the contemporary scientific world-view, he nevertheless would attempt to restore intelligibility to things not in the way St. Thomas would do so, but rather by a kind of *tour de force*. For St. Thomas would insist that such an intelligibility is to be found directly in nature and in the natural order, whereas the contemporary philosopher would trace such an intelligibility not to nature, but to how we look at nature. Indeed, the Sartrean existentialist would have us simply impose or even foist a meaning and intelligibility upon being, as it were by a deliberate act of will. Surely, though, anyone can see that such an intelligibility is only and quite literally a factitious one. Nor does the neo-Wittgensteinian do much better, since for him the moral and religious intelligibility of things depends simply upon the way we look at things and the particular sort of "picture" that we exploit as a means simply of seeing things differently and in a new way. And yet what more is needed to discredit this Wittgensteinian resource of intelligibility than simply to call to mind the illustration that R. M. Hare uses in order to show how his master would undertake to restore moral and religious values to things once more. For the illustration was none other than that of a "lunatic who thinks all dons wish to murder him." The lunatic will not accept any evidence as falsifying his belief about dons: if they are kind to him he interprets this as diabolical cunning intended to put him off-guard. Being unfalsifiable his "blik" may be said—following Flew—to assert nothing. But it nevertheless makes a world of difference between him and those who do not share it because it determines what, for him, is, and what is not, an explanation. But surely, this is enough said! For how can any one seriously tolerate a religious apologetic that considers a religious man's outlook and perspective to be on all fours with the outlook and perspective of a lunatic!

Moreover, what kind of a religion must it be in which the god who is worshipped is hardly to be regarded as the lord of all. In fact, he must be regarded as having, as it were, no jurisdiction over the world of fact, or the real world, or the world of nature, that being the preserve of science. No, his power and his might must be kept within the strict bounds of a particular "blik," and so must never be allowed to trespass into the domain of science, or even into that of any rival "blik" of any kind. Somehow, a god so cribbed and confined to a mere "blik" would strike me as being, if not a downright nonsensical god, then certainly a god who was in a fair way to being swallowed up in some kind of polytheism or Manichaeism or even worse!

Is there, then, no resource of intelligibility that is left to us in this present-day mad, mad world of ours? Aquinas' resource of intelligibility would seem to be excluded by the stark scientific realities of nature and the natural order. And the strenuous efforts of both modern existentialists and modern analysts to restore such an intelligibility to our human world once more would seem to be quite discredited in the light of the wholly factitious and even fictitious character of their entire enterprise.

What possible resource, then, is left to us? Surely, there is one, and I wonder if it does not consist in our returning to St. Thomas and to his account of nature and the natural order after all. Indeed, I wonder if the key to such a return is not presented to us directly as a result of some of the most recent developments in science and scientific theory. In other words, the very science that was originally the reason for the downfall of St. Thomas' view of nature and of the natural world may now prove to be the inadvertent and even unwitting reason for a return to that very conception of the natural order which science was once thought to have displaced.

For just look at the matter in the following way. If we forget about modern science for the moment, we would all recognize that when it comes just to our natural human response to nature, a response alike uninhibited and unexcited by technological and scientific sophistication, we surely have neither trouble nor hesitation in recognizing that there are real powers and forces within nature, that natural substances including ourselves, of course, and considered in terms of our own human nature, all have an integrity and capacity for development that are peculiarly their own, and that in terms of these powers, these capacities, these integrities—yes, one is even tempted to say these natural rights—one finds nature to be shot through with purposes, with strivings, with aspirations, with achievements, and indeed withal, with the power and might of the divine. Indeed, is it not just this every day world of nature and of natural order that enjoys just that very kind of intelligibility in which ultimately, as Father Chenu says in his paraphrasing of St. Thomas, "every thing, every being, every action, every destiny" will have a reason for being that is to be disclosed in no less than the divine light itself? And likewise, is it not this same Thomistic view of the natural world, which our unreflecting natural approach

to reality and to the world in which we live still continues to assure us of—is it not just this conception of nature that is grounded in our common human experience of things, that none-the-less would appear now-a-days to have been discredited and put to rout simply as a result of the sophistication that has been borne in upon us as a result of the prestige and authority of science? And yet need this be so?

For consider again that curious move which we found so many of our contemporary would-be apologists for morality and religion to be making. What they would have us do is give over altogether our natural and common sense view of nature and reality and to accept instead the scientific account as being an account of the facts and of the way things really are. And then, in order to save religion and morality, they would have us deny to them any status of any kind in nature or reality, these latter being the province of science, and to bestow upon the former a somewhat factitious and almost make-believe status which, so far from having any warrant in the facts, is subject only to a transcendental justification and is the product of no more than a mysteriously evoked “blik” or “picture” or “form of life” that somehow carries in its train what we might simply designate as a moral and religious outlook or point of view.

But why all this? And why not go at it just the other way around? Why not recognize that instead of the scientific universe being the real world, and the world of religion and morality the factitious and the transcendently justified world, it is rather the world of nature, as we know it naturally and commonsensically, that is the real world, and that naturally provides a basis alike for moral and for religious convictions, it being in contrast the universe of modern science that is the mere “blik” or construct or picture, and that, so far from finding its ultimate warrant in anything like the facts of experience, depends ultimately for its justification upon a sort of transcendental turn?

After all, is it not a commonplace after the work of Sir Karl Popper that it is no longer induction that is to be regarded as decisive in the logic of scientific discovery? Instead, Popper insists that induction, or the observation of natural events and happenings, is not the source of our scientific theories or hypotheses at all. Quite the contrary, induction proves nothing in this regard, our theories and hypotheses in science being quite literally invented or made up out of the whole cloth. In fact, Popper suggests that scientific theory construction is in the final analysis not governed by any sort of logical procedures of any kind, being rather much more analogous to the composition of a symphony or the devising of a plot for a novel. But then if the scientific theories and hypotheses in terms of which the scientist describes nature and the course of nature are not discoverable by any empirical observation of nature, or derived by any logical procedure from such observation, must it not be that the entire scientific account of nature can only be justified transcendently: science is not a description of nature as it is, but only of nature as it is for us, and as we structure and organize our experience of it in terms of such scientific categories and conceptual schemes as we happen to invent and impose upon it.

Yes, many of the younger philosophers of science who have come after Popper have pushed even further and made their own exactly the sort of description that Hare has given of "bliks," except that these younger philosopher-scientists have applied this notion of "bliks" not to morality and religion, but precisely to the theories and hypotheses of science. For no less than the "blik" of Hare's lunatic who thinks all dons wish to murder him, the theories and hypotheses of present-day science are by many held to be in no wise descriptive of the way nature or reality really is in itself; rather they are but so many conceptual schemes or frames of experience to which everything that we experience within that frame of reference must conform, and which in turn nothing can serve to falsify.

But doesn't this, then, solve our problems? For it no longer need be nature and reality as they really are that are found to be incompatible with morality and religion, but only nature and reality as seen and structured from the standpoint of the particular "blik" or conceptual framework of present-day science. However, the incompatibility of morality and religion with any such mere artificial construct as has only this sort of limited range, and is devised merely for such special purposes and restricted uses, poses not the slightest challenge to a morality and religion that are grounded in nature as it truly is, and up to a point are confirmed by the facts of nature understood as it really is, and accessible to a genuine human experience alike of that nature and of man's place in nature.

And where does this leave us? Surely, it has returned us once again right to that very conception of nature and of the natural order that was St. Thomas' own. And with a nature and a natural order so conceived, there follow immediately those very resources of intelligibility that St. Thomas thought that he found directly within nature itself—except that now we should be able to see that these resources of intelligibility that St. Thomas considered that he had found are indeed the reality, and not the mere make-believe that our contemporary philosophers would have us suppose. Instead, it is the scientific world-view that is the function of a mere blik or picture or form of life; and the true reality is just that very natural order in which every thing, every being, every action, every destiny has a reason for being that is illuminated ultimately by no less than the divine light itself. And so it is not St. Thomas that is out-of-date, after all, but rather that peculiar conception of science that has been prevalent for nearly three centuries now, and that up until now has tended to hoodwink us all into thinking that it was indeed a knowledge of reality itself, whereas in fact it is not really fact at all, but only a way of seeing the facts, and of seeing them not as they are in themselves, but only as they appear to us and are manipulated by us. And what is the fact of nature—the real fact or the true fact, that is, and not any mere *blik* or conceptual scheme? Is it not just that fact of *exitus et reditus*, as St. Thomas conceived it to be 700 years ago—a fact which once again has a chance of being reborn, or rather rediscovered again, right in our own time.

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NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> M. D. Chenu, *Introduction a l'etude de Saint Thomas d'Aquinas* (2nd edition; Montreal and Paris, 1954), pp. 260-261.
- <sup>2</sup> R. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, pp. 106-107.
- <sup>3</sup> W. D. Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, pp. 51-54.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

