of fact and judgments of value, first voiced by Hume. It has been my argument in this article that Lonergan's notion of the four levels of consciousness together with his notion of sublation go a long way towards dispelling these long-standing difficulties. In so doing (I believe it could be argued) they provide a basis for a natural law approach to morality in which moral judgments could be accepted as both objective and as saying something real about the world.

1 David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Selby-Bigge edition, p 467–70.
2 I wrote about these previously in *New Blackfriars*. See 'Lonergan and Hume – Epistemology' in *New Blackfriars* March and May 1982.
3 For a clear account by Lonergan of the notion of the four levels of consciousness, see his article 'The Subject' in *A Second Collection*, Darton, Longman and Todd 1972, p 69 f.
4 L. Wittgenstein, 'Lecture on Ethics', edited by Rush Rhees, in *Philosophy Today*, edited by Jerry Hall, Macmillan 1968.
5 See for example, *Method in Theology* by Bernard Lonergan SJ, Darton, Longman and Todd 1972. p 121–2.
6 'Does Finnis get natural rights for everyone?' by Mark R. Discher, *New Blackfriars* January 1999, p 29.

Fides et Ratio: A Response to John Webster

Thomas Weinandy

Professor John Webster is not only a colleague and friend he is also someone with whom I have a good deal of theological affinity. Moreover, and more importantly, while he is an Anglican and I a Roman Catholic, we, on fundamental Christian doctrine, share a common faith. Because of this I read with special interest his article '"Fides et Ratio", articles 64–79' (*New Blackfriars*, Vol. 81 No. 948 (2000) 66–76). I knew that he might be critical of the encyclical at certain points, as would be expected from any serious thinking theologian examining a particular piece of work. What I did not expect was his almost complete lack of sympathy towards the encyclical's aim, his almost thorough disagreement with its approach, arguments, and judgements, as well as at times, his dismissive attitude toward the encyclical, which on occasion, so it appeared to me, to border on the mocking. In response to Professor

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Webster I want to address some of the issues that he raised in an attempt to show that his reading of the encyclical is not the proper reading, and in so doing hopefully demonstrate that the encyclical is not as misconceived and flawed as he thinks.

The Philosophical and Theological 'Rumpus Room'

Webster begins by noting the Pope's leadership in addressing such an important issue as the relationship between faith and reason and in so doing intruding himself into what some academics might consider their privileged and private domain. However, Webster faults the tone of the document.

> At times the document adopts the threateningly paternalistic tone of communications from the Kremlin in the 1940s and 1950s, urging Socialist realism in art or music: not the sort of thing to provoke thinkers to do their best work, so much as a summons to produce the goods to an officially-approved set formula. Partly, again, it's a matter of method: there are points at which the document adopts one of the familiar tactics of intellectual terrorism, namely, labelling something as an 'ism' ('eclecticism,' 'modernism,' 'relativism,' and so on: see art. 52, 55, 86–90), characterising it with a few broad strokes of the brush but naming no names, pointing out its dire faults and then leaving us worrying whether we or our colleagues are examples of it (p. 68).

Webster holds that at times the document also 'reads like a communication to the parents of a disorderly pupil from a patently annoyed headmaster only just keeping his cool: the Holy Father is evidently "disappointed" by the goings on in the rumpus room and thinks it's time to put things in order' (p. 69).

Even if one were benignly to presume that Webster is here presenting a rather humorous and exaggerated caricature of the Pope's intentions and arguments, though he does, I believe, want the reader to take what he says quite literally, it would still be a misrepresentation. While Webster may have an aversion to the encyclical's Episcopal tone, unless he is living in some academic Eden to which I have not gained entrance, he must acknowledge that there are presuppositions, arguments, and judgements within the academy that are inimical to the Christian Gospel. Philosophy and theology, even some that would want to pass as Christian philosophy and theology, are not immune to such hostile presuppositions and opinions. Of course the Pope is not entirely happy with the 'goings on' in the philosophical and theological 'rumpus room'. Moreover, such a negative assessment would be held by any

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Christian theologian who desired to uphold the Gospel as it has been traditionally proclaimed and understood.

Faith and Reason: Parameters and Principles

But this leads to the charge that the encyclical sometimes reads like a missive from the former Kremlin ideologues, the only difference being that the Vatican ideologues are still in place. If John Paul were attempting to dictate a specific philosophical system or even a particular technique of doing philosophy, or if he was endeavouring to restrict legitimate theological enquiry, discussion, and development by prescribing particular theological opinions, stances and methods, then I could endorse Webster's hyperbolic charge that he was no better than the Roman Catholic equivalent of a Soviet ideocrat of the Stalinist era. However, that is far from the encyclical's intent as witnessed from the arguments it advances. For example, it states that 'the Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any particular philosophy in preference to others' (49). Or again, it acknowledges that 'theology seeks to respond [to faith] through speculative enquiry and to the specific demands of disciplined thought' (65).

What the encyclical is attempting to do is merely to lay out the parameters and principles, from within a Catholic and Christian perspective, within which reason and faith are able to retain their rightful integrity and so flourish, and how they are mutually to support and so assist one another in performing their respective tasks to the mutual benefit of both. Within these parameters and principles the encyclical not only allows, it seems to me, a great deal of latitude, but more importantly, ardently encourages philosophers and theologians audaciously to embrace their respective vocations and so use their reason and faith in a creative and imaginative manner.

The lists of 'isms', which Webster decries as 'the familiar tactics of intellectual terrorism', attempt merely to designate theoretical approaches that fall outside legitimate Christian parameters and principles. Granted the list does get a bit long (I am not sure myself what eclecticism is), and while one could wish for a more detailed scholarly discussion, yet I am well acquainted with a scepticism, a relativism, a rationalism, a historicism, and a scientism that would suppress reason's ability to know the truth and/or deny the enduring reality of Gospel of Jesus Christ as it has been traditionally proclaimed and doctrinally defined. What I fear most is not the terrorism of the Pope but the academic terrorism of the 'isms' which would deny me the right to be a Catholic and Christian theologian within the academy.

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The Defence and Endorsement of Reason

If we put aside the rhetoric and simply ask, What is the aim of *Fides et Ratio*?, I think a much more positive response appears. The encyclical is, in many ways, more concerned with the contemporary philosophical attitudes toward reason than it is about the contemporary philosophical attitudes toward faith. John Paul wants to defend and promote the integrity of human reason in that reason is able, within in its own sphere, to grasp the truth, and he wishes to ground such a defence not merely upon philosophy, but more so, as we shall see, upon Christian revelation. He perceives that the history of philosophical thought, beginning with Nominalism and culminating in the Enlightenment and now presently epitomized in postmodernism, has progressively led to the contemporary philosophical situation where reason is no longer afforded the dignity of obtaining truth. The encyclical states that much contemporary philosophy has 'given rise to different forms of agnosticism and relativism which has led philosophical research to lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism' (4). This is not only detrimental to faith, which claims to know the truth of revelation, but more foundationally such philosophical attitudes demean the very dignity of the human person who desires and yearns for the truth. 'One may define the human being, therefore, as *the one who seeks the truth*' (28). This is why the encyclical calls (and to my mind it is a prophetic call) philosophers to be more confident in the innate ability of reason to grasp the truth, even on a metaphysical level (see 56 & 83). Philosophy is called upon to 'verify the human capacity to *know the truth*, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of that *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to which the Scholastic Doctors referred' (82).

If I read Webster correctly, it is precisely here that he believes the encyclical has tactically erred. It has not properly done 'a better job of staking its claims' (p. 68). Webster argues that the encyclical invests too much in a transcendental and phenomenological anthropology—man as the 'seeker' and 'searcher of truth', and in so doing has undermined the biblical truth of who man is as the hearer of the Word (see p. 75). I believe there is some truth to Webster's fear. The encyclical begins with an account of the Ancients' search for the truth—'Know yourself' (1), which helps to confirm my conviction that the encyclical is more concerned about reason than about faith. I believe it would have been better to have started with the biblical proclamation that man is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–27), a passage which is astonishingly never quoted within the encyclical and only alluded to twice (see 80 & 90). This would have provided grounds for a biblical anthropology that would both support man's natural or created ability to

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know the truth and also define man as a hearer of the Word. The encyclical could then have used the ancient philosophers as examples of this biblical truth being put into practice—man's innate desire to know the truth. Moreover, such an anthropology would found the complementary biblical truth that the truth that man seeks by reason only finds its fulfilment in the revelation of God's Word—Jesus Christ. St. Augustine illustrates this twofold biblical truth. His *Confessions* testifies to his desire of and search for the truth only to find that the Holy Spirit was guiding him throughout to the truth of the Gospel.

Nonetheless, I believe that Webster reads too much into the encyclical when he detects a specific philosophical anthropology: 'the curious amalgam of quasi-existentialist anthropology and transcendental metaphysics which had ascendancy in some European Christian circles in the mid-century' (p. 70). Webster mentions Lonergan and the Pope himself, and he may equally have in mind Rahner. What concerns me is that Webster may, in the end, perceive John Paul as 'Schleiermacher in white', where divine revelation is substituted for and reduced to man's reason possessing a sense or taste for the infinite. I believe that such a view would be a total misreading of the encyclical's intention and argument. It simply wants to establish that human beings are created such that they can come to a knowledge of the truth through their use of reason, and that philosophy is beckoned to affirm, defend, and advance this truth. The Pope is supporting no other specific brand of anthropology other than that one. Now Webster may think that even this minimal 'biblical' anthropology is still conceding too much to reason, but I would argue, as does the encyclical (see 90 & 91), that to deny reason's created ability to know the truth within its own sphere would ultimately deny reason's ability to hear God's Word—something Webster would certainly not want to do.

More positively, and something that I do not think Webster fully appreciates, though I would think something to which he would agree, is the answer the encyclical offers to rectify the contemporary mistrust of reason's ability to know the truth. While philosophy has its own autonomous sphere in which it must obey the rules of its own reason and logic, yet it can only do so properly with the help of faith. The Pope calls upon the scholastic adage that grace builds upon and perfects nature (see 43 & 75). Precisely because philosophy is handicapped by the inherent weakness of human reason and more so by sin, faith is needed to purify reason (see 19). 'Faith liberates reason in so far as it allows reason to attain correctly what it seeks to know and to place it within the ultimate order of things, in which everything acquires true meaning' (20). 'As a theological virtue, faith liberates reason', allowing

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reason not only to fulfil courageously the philosophical tasks set before it, but also to address issues that, left to itself, it would never consider (76, see 73, 104 & 106). 'It is faith which stirs reason to move beyond all isolation and willingly to run risks so that it may attain whatever is beautiful, good and true. Faith thus becomes the convinced and convincing advocate of reason' (56, see 106). For John Paul philosophy has lost its 'faith' in reason because it has lost its faith in revelation (see 45). The remedy to the contemporary malaise within philosophical thinking is not a mere exhortation to philosophers to do a better job, but a deeper proclamation to a new conversion to the Gospel. Thus, while Webster may fear that *Fides et Ratio* has given too much primacy to reason and the philosophies that reason spawns, yet he seems unaware of its demand that reason can only truly function properly within the ambit of the Gospel and the enlightenment that it provides reason. If Webster had taken such a solution into account, I believe it would have lessened his fears and would have allowed him to perceive that the encyclical is actually contributing to his own emphasis—the centrality of biblical revelation and Christian doctrine.

Faith and Reason

While defending the integrity of reason to know the truth, *Fides et Ratio* also defends the integrity of revelation and the faith by which it is grasped. 'Underlying the Church's thinking is the awareness that she is the bearer of a message which has its origin in God himself (2 Cor. 4:1–2). The knowledge the Church offers to man has its origin not in any speculation of her own, however sublime, but in the word of God, which she has received in faith (2 Thess. 2:13)' (7, see 8 & 9). Revelation 'is neither the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason' (15), and therefore reason is not permitted to 'pass judgement on the contents of faith, something of which it would be incapable since this is not its function' (42, see 13) Yet, as faith supports and aids reason, so the encyclical wants to elicit reason's support in relationship to faith and to do so on at least three levels.

Firstly, reason in its search for and openness to the truth can direct human beings to the fullness of truth found in God's revelation. Through the knowledge that reason is rightly able to attain within its own sphere it becomes 'a truly propaedeutic path to faith, one which can lead to the acceptance of Revelation without in any way compromising the principles and autonomy of the mind itself' (67). In so doing reason, far from demonstrating that the act of faith is an irrational act, confirms what faith itself already grasps, that is, that the

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act of faith is indeed the most rational act a human person can freely perform (see 13 & 75).

Secondly, 'faith asks that its object be understood with the help of reason; and at the summit of its searching reason acknowledges that it cannot do without what faith presents' (42). Reason in its desire to know the truth apprehends, and so argues in support of faith, that the only truth that will ultimately fulfil it is the knowledge obtained through divine revelation, culminating in 'the full and lasting joy of the contemplation of the Triune God' (15). This revelatory knowledge of God is the locus where reason and faith converge and find their unity (see prologue, 15, 34).

Thirdly, as the first part of the above quotation states, faith in its desire to understand more fully what has been revealed looks to reason for help—faith seeks understanding. It is here that the encyclical enunciates a rather complex, but important, relationship between faith and reason and one that I think Webster again misconceives. The encyclical makes a distinction between the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*. Webster interprets the *auditus fidei* as 'the pretty straightforward matter of mastering the sources, so that theology has the data on the basis of which it can proceed to its much more interesting and intellectually demanding task of speculation' (p. 71).

In response to Webster I want to clarify and inter-relate three points. 1. The *auditus fidei* is not simply the mastery of sources (and even as a mastery of sources only in a nuanced sense) , but something much more profound. It is primarily the *hearing* of the Gospel and the accepting of it in *faith*. For *Fides et Ratio* what is proclaimed and so heard is what is 'expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Church's living Magisterium' (65). What is proposed to the hearer is the Gospel as proclaimed in Scripture as traditionally understood and interpreted and as authoritatively taught by the past and present church (for Roman Catholics, by the Magisterium). Neither reason nor even theology, the *intellectus fidei*, is the discerner or the judge of the truth of this proclamation. It is the given—the object to which faith is called to give obedient assent.

2. There is a sense in which texts are to be mastered within the *auditus fidei*, but only in so far as this aids and clarifies the understanding and reception of the Gospel itself—the *auditus fidei*. Here the *auditus fidei* does call upon the aid of philosophy and theology—not, again, in the sense of being arbiters of the *auditus fidei*, but in the sense of being collaborators with the *auditus fidei*. 'Philosophy contributes specifically to theology in preparing for a correct *auditus fidei* with its study of the structure of knowledge and

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personal communication, especially the various forms and functions of language' (65). Moreover, philosophy can help clarify and so allow a proper interpretation and understanding of the Church's traditional proclamation of the *auditus fidei*, that is, the words and concepts that the Church has employed in the course of formulating and articulating the faith over the centuries (see 65). Nonetheless, I want to emphasize that the *auditus fidei* is ultimately a matter, though an absolutely essential justifying and life-giving matter and so the most spiritually and intellectually exhilarating matter, of accepting in the obedience of faith the truth of the proclaimed Word.

3. Because Webster interprets the *auditus fidei* as the mere mastering of sources, he faults the encyclical for not seeing the *auditus fidei* as 'exegesis', which is the 'enduring theological task—the exegesis of the biblical texts, and dependently, of the canon of Christian commentary and argument on those texts' (p. 71). If my understanding of Webster is correct, he has ironically given to reason here a position more exalted than that of faith and a role that far exceeds that entertained by the Pope, both of which the encyclical has explicitly rejected. The *auditus fidei* is not the exegesis of biblical texts and of the traditional Christian theological commentary upon these texts as if one were, through theological reasoning and judgement, continually attempting to establish anew or even to reaffirm anew what is to be believed. Exegesis of Scripture and of 'the canon of Christian commentary' is, as Webster rightly states but wrongly applies, the 'enduring *theological* (emphasis added) task', and so it is part of the *intellectus fidei*, the doing of theology. While such exegesis may support and encourage the *auditus fidei* in the collaborative sense I described above, the *auditus fidei* itself, what is perennially and authoritatively proclaimed by the Church and accepted in faith, is not determined by or dependent upon it. The *auditus fidei* is the object upon which the *intellectus fidei*, the doing of theology, is founded and the source from which it springs and not vice versa.

This leads to the nature of the *intellectus fidei* and the role of reason/philosophy within it. While the human person marvels in faith within the *auditus fidei* at what God has done, the very fact that it is precisely a rational creature who has accepted in faith such revelation moves the human person, under the impulse of the Spirit, to desire to know more clearly and fully what has been revealed. Again the very nature of faith demands that it seek understanding. Within the encyclical reason and philosophy are called upon to co-operate with this task. Webster is fearful that the encyclical, in wanting to employ philosophy, is advocating the enslavement of revelation within some

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universal philosophical system and so transforming it. Webster writes:

> If we have learned anything from the history of Christian theology in modernity it is surely that the transposition of the contents of Christian teaching out of narrative, doxology, polemic and paraenesis into arguments, and the search for critical and universally communicable concepts, are not innocent matters. These processes almost inevitably involve putting Christian teaching under severe strain, and often threaten to replace aspects of Christian teaching with something which is more amenable to the process of speculative deconstruction (pp. 71–2).

Fides et Ratio wholeheartedly agrees that this is indeed what we have learned, and one of the aims of the encyclical is to contend that this not be done.

> It is not too much to claim that the development of a good part of modern philosophy has seen it move further and further away from Christian Revelation, to the point of setting itself quite explicitly in opposition. This process reached its apogee in the last century. Some representatives of idealism sought in various ways to transform faith and its contents, even the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, into dialectical structures which could be grasped by reason (43).

Kant, Hegel and their ilk are hardly papal exemplars of how the relationship between faith and reason should be established.

What confuses Webster, and I too think there is some ambiguity here, is the use of the phrases 'universal meaning' and 'universal concepts' when applied to how philosophy is to be used within the theological enterprise. The use of these phrases does not imply, as witnessed above, that revelation is reduced to and so transformed within some universalist or all-inclusive philosophical system, one that 'seeks to present its own partial and imperfect view as the complete reading of all reality' (4). Rather, I believe that the encyclical is stating that the mysteries of revelation elicit from reason questions that can only be answered with the help of concepts that contain some universal understanding. Such concepts allow the believer to penetrate more fully the mysteries of faith and so humbly bow before them. Such concepts likewise aid the non-believer in grasping more clearly what it is that Christians do and do not hold in faith.

The encyclical gives such examples as the use of language when speaking of God, the relations within the Trinity and the relationship between the divinity and the humanity in Christ (see 66). Here, I am confident that what is in mind is the use of philosophy when

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interpreting biblical language about God. While philosophy is not permitted to change biblical truth, yet it can be used to explicate that truth so that the enquirer, for example, does not labour under the misconception that God literally possesses eyes and hands. Equally, it is through the use of such terms as 'person' and 'nature' that the Fathers of the Church were able to clarify in what manner the One God is nonetheless Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in what manner the Son existed as God and man. What must be noted here is that such concepts did not simply retain their former meaning when applied to the mysteries of faith, but actually took on an innovative meaning so as to manifest more exactly what the mysteries of faith were. Reason can never fully comprehend and so make fully intelligible the mysteries of faith, but reason can further clarify more precisely what the mysteries of faith are and in so doing make them even more illustrious and awe inspiring. 'The knowledge of faith does not destroy the mystery, it only reveals it the more, showing how necessary it is for people's lives' (13). Thus, Webster rightly states that the contents of the Christian faith are contained within narrative and doxology. However, he seems not to appreciate that these very narratives and doxologies give rise to questions not because they are inadequate, but because they reveal and contain a content that urges and requires reason, under the impulse of the Spirit of truth, to ponder them ever more deeply.

Commenting on paragraph 73 of the encyclical Webster makes much of the muddled use of the spatial metaphors that it employs to clarify the relationship between faith and reason. [I did chuckle at Webster's conclusion: 'I suppose it could be postmodern geography, the triumph of spatial indeterminacy' (p. 74).] I would agree that the metaphors are not helpful and the paragraph attempts to say too much too quickly. (One of the problems with this encyclical is that it needed a good editor. The arguments often lack logical progression with the key ideas expanding as the encyclical progresses. This makes for much circular repetition as each new issue is addressed.) Nonetheless, if one restrains one's impatience and focuses one's mind, it is not impossible to discern what the encyclical is attempting to state.

It seems to me that it wants to make four points. 1. Theology must start with the revealed Word of God. 2. Philosophy can assist faith in its quest for a fuller understanding of the Christian mysteries so that the truth of revelation can be more fully grasped and treasured. 3. Philosophy is able to aid faith because it is guided by faith. Faith does not allow reason/philosophy to stray into error. 4. Philosophy as it comes to the aid of faith is itself enriched. It not only helps the human

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person come to a better understanding of the revealed mysteries, but it simultaneously becomes aware of questions and issues of a purely philosophical nature that left to itself, without the impetus of faith, it would have never considered. Whether the Pope is correct in what he states (I think that he is) is another question, but what he is trying to say is ultimately quite clear.

Sin and Culture

I would like to address one last issue. I agree with Webster that the encyclical could have been more forthright and realistic in its assessment of sin and its effects upon human reason, though I would not want to ally myself entirely, as does Webster, with Calvin. I equally agree with Webster that *Fides et Ratio* could have been more critical of culture 'as a field of wickedness' (p. 73), although it should be recalled that John Paul has often spoken elsewhere of the present 'culture of death'. He does, as Webster notes, somewhat feebly state that cultures, such as exemplified in India, should not be closed to the truth that lies outside them (see 73). I think that the aim here was an attempt to exercise the British art of understatement, and so preclude the street newspaper vendor from bellowing out the headline of his respective tabloid: 'POPE CONDEMNS INDIAN CULTURE: Read ALL about it!' Nonetheless, while every culture embodies truth and human values, yet they can equally enslave those, who live within them, in ignorance and sin. This in turn entangles people in the web of suffering woven by such cultural evils.

I have attempted in my response to Professor Webster to place a more positive 'spin' on John Paul's encyclical, but I hope one that is true to its intentions and arguments. In so doing I equally wanted to show that Professor Webster may have more in common with its views than he at first supposed. Only he can now judge. Moreover, within the present state of Christian theology, where theologians of faith find it difficult at times to find allies, it is best not to dismiss too quickly claims made in the interest of faith, even when made by a Pope, though we may not, in the end, entirely agree with them. Nuanced critique is in order and the forging of alliances is indispensable. Lastly, I entirely agree with Professor Webster that theologians need to be holy men and women of prayer (see p.76), with which I am certain John Paul would wholeheartedly agree, if for no other reason than that it would make his job a great deal easier.

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