

The University of Oxford

**An Avant-Garde Theological Generation:
The Fourvière Jesuits from 1920 to 1950 and the ‘*Crise Entre-Deux-Guerres*’**

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To Olivia, Isabel, James, John, and Magdalena

—les pèlerins de mon cœur

SHORT ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to offer a clearer understanding of the Jesuit theologians and philosophers who comprised the group known the ‘Fourvière Jesuits’. Led by Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou, they formed part of the *nouvelle théologie*, an influential French reform movement that flourished from the 1930s until its suppression in 1950. After identifying a certain lacuna in the secondary literature, this thesis attempts to remedy certain historical deficiencies by constructing a history both sensitive to the wider intellectual, political, economic, and cultural milieu of the French interwar crisis, and that establishes continuity with the Modernist crisis and the First World War.

Chapter One examines the modern French avant-garde generations that have shaped intellectual and political thought in France, providing context for a historical narrative of the Fourvière Jesuits more sensitive to the wider influences of French culture. This historical narrative of the Fourvière Jesuits follows four stages. Chapter Two examines the influential older generations that flourished from 1893 to 1914, such as the Dreyfus generation, the generation of Catholic Modernists, and two generations of older Jesuits, which were instrumental in the Fourvière Jesuits’ development. Chapter Three explores the influence of the First World War and the years of the 1920s, during which the Jesuits were in religious and intellectual formation, relying heavily on unpublished letters and documents from the Jesuits archives in Paris (Vanves). Chapter Four analyses the crises of the 1930s, the emergence of the Fourvière Jesuits’ wider generation, and their participation in the intellectual thirst for revolution. Chapter Five examines the decade of the 1940s, which saw the rise to prominence of the members of the generation of 1930, who, thanks to their participation in the resistance, emerged from the Second World War, with significant influence on the postwar French intellectual milieu.

LONG ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with a small group of Jesuits at the Fourvière theologate in Lyon, France, in the middle of the twentieth century. Led by Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou, the Fourvière Jesuits, along with the Le Saulchoir Dominicans, led by Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu, formed the nucleus of the *nouvelle théologie*, an influential French reform movement that flourished from the 1930s to its suppression in 1950. This thesis seeks to present a clearer understanding of their philosophical and theological project by situating them more firmly within the wider French milieu from which they emerged.

The Introduction begins by presenting the group and providing short biographies of each of its members, followed by a list of the major theological schools that have drawn inspiration from their work. An examination of the secondary literature reveals the existence of a lacuna, as most treatments of the *nouvelle théologie* restrict themselves to narrower investigations of the immediate life and thought of the *nouveaux théologiens* themselves, with none seeking to present the movement in relation to the wider influences of French interwar culture. Moreover, these treatments fail to establish the movement's firm link with the Modernist crisis and the First World War. The introduction concludes that a historical methodology is required that can offer a more global, historically sensitive narrative of the Fourvière Jesuits.

Chapter One examines the modern French avant-garde generations that shaped the intellectual and political culture of France in the first half of the twentieth century, and is divided into three sections. The first section proposes a methodology based upon generational theory and briefly introduces it. Generational theory allows for collective analysis of a group united by the period of their birth and the milieu of their upbringing. The second section examines the rise of generational consciousness in the nineteenth

century, on which generational theory is based, showing how political upheavals, critical philosophy, and scientific progress all contributed to the phenomenon. The third section explores the phenomenon of generational life in modern France, discussing in turn the first four intellectual generations of avant-garde thinkers, called Dreyfus, Agathon, Fire, and Crisis, which have been the subject of much study by French and American historians. The chapter concludes by arguing that the Fourvière Jesuits in fact are suitable candidates for generational study and states how each remaining chapter will apply generational theory to the Jesuits.

Chapter Two examines the influence of previous generations on the Fourvière Jesuits, also known as ‘sedimentation’, and is divided into five sections. The first section examines the generation of intellectuals who responded to the Dreyfus affair, in which a Jewish army officer was wrongly convicted of treason, resulting in a controversy that split France and reopened the wounds of the French Revolution. The second section explores the generation of Catholic Modernists, led by Alfred Loisy and George Tyrrell, who challenged Church authorities and sought to engage Catholic philosophy and theology with the historical method and modern critical philosophy. The third section continues to discuss the Modernist crisis by examining three thinkers whose work developed along similar lines, Édouard Le Roy, Lucien Laberthonnière, and Maurice Blondel, whose ‘method of immanence’ attempted to prove that human beings are oriented towards the supernatural. The fourth section examines a generation of older Jesuits, led by Léonce de Grandmaison and Jules Lebreton, who sought to develop a theology that was attentive both to orthodoxy and modern scientific methods, such as historical criticism. The fifth section examines a second generation of Jesuits, the immediate mentors of the Fourvière Jesuits, led by Pierre Rousselot, Auguste Valensin, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who

continued de Grandmaison's historical programme, while applying certain Neoplatonic and Blondelian insights to Aquinas.

Chapter Three seeks to examine the years of formation and study of the Fourvière Jesuits during the decade of the 1920s, relying heavily on unpublished letters and documents from the Jesuits archives in Paris (Vanves), and is divided into four sections. As a preamble, section one considers two formative events for the Fourvière Jesuits, their entrance into the novitiate in 1913, in which they first experienced an aversion to the excesses of anti-Modernism, and their experience in the trenches of the First World War, in which they found themselves in a diverse and secular environment. The second section discusses their postwar re-entrance into the Jesuits and their first years of philosophy study, which were characterised by an introduction, thanks to the influence of Valensin, to the thought of Rousselot and Blondel. The influence of these two thinkers, which aroused in them an antipathy for the conservative Scholastic environment of the French Jesuits, caused them to immediately take up the issue for the desire for God and challenge their superiors on the necessity of embracing certain aspects of modern thought. The third section surveys their years of theological study during the later years of the 1920s at Fourvière, where they found themselves under the benevolent guidance of Joseph Huby, a disciple and former friend of Rousselot, who had died in the war. The fourth section examines the generational identity that the Fourvière Jesuits developed during the 1920s, which was manifested in their harsh criticism of the institutional Church and the grand generational mission to reinvigorate Catholic thought and regenerate the culture which they assigned to themselves.

Chapter Four examines the wider generation of 1930 (Crisis), to which the Fourvière Jesuits as well as a number of Left Catholic figures belonged, and is divided into six sections. The first section surveys the crisis years of the 1930s, which were

marked by the Great Depression and the rise of political extremes such as Communism and fascism. In this milieu the generation of 1930 emerged and issued a harsh critique against French society and the preceding generations, which they characterised as overtaken by a bourgeois decadence, rationalism, and individualism responsible for the ‘apocalyptic crisis’ with which they were faced. Despite their harsh assessment, they assigned to themselves a bold task of political, cultural, and intellectual renewal, and they sought to build of a ‘new man’ and a ‘new society’ according to the categories of history, concrete philosophy, and *engagement*. The second section, surveying the historical thinking that marked this generation, examines the metanarratives they constructed to locate the origin of the decadence and crisis in which they were embroiled. Moreover, they each claimed to have retrieved a golden age, such as the Renaissance, the *Ancien régime*, or the French Revolution, which would guide their particular project of regeneration. The third section draws attention to the concrete philosophy of thinkers such as Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, that dominated the intellectual discourse of this generation. The fourth section discusses the emphasis that the generation of 1930 put on the notion of *engagement*, which demanded of intellectuals a political or ideological commitment. The fifth section surveys the Left Catholics of this generation whose thinking fell along the same lines as members of the wider generation of 1930. They condemned the hierarchical Church as rationalistic, decadent, and withdrawn, constructed historical metanarratives that challenged existing assumptions about true spirit of Aquinas, the causes of secularism, and the decline of Catholic thought, insisted on phenomenological starting points which embraced the concrete, and maintained that Catholic thought be engaged and committed. The sixth section also examines the Fourvière Jesuits along these same generational lines. Their historical engagement also constructed metanarratives to find the points of decline in Catholic thought and engaged in

the retrieval of Patristic sources. Their use of Blondelian philosophy provided them a phenomenology, which allowed for a robust social engagement, with which to engage their contemporaries.

Chapter Five surveys the generation of 1930s during the 1940s. The Fourvière Jesuits participated in the resistance during the Second World War, publishing a widely read resistance journal that warned against anti-Semitism and allowed them to develop the programme they had begun in the previous decade. During the war, they continued their strong criticism of the institutional Church. The second section examines their attempt to develop an anthropology along Blondelian lines with historical studies that again sought to trace the degradation of Catholic thought. The third section discusses Fourvière ecclesiology, which emphasized spiritual communion, social and political unity, and temporal action. The fourth section surveys Daniélou's famous 'manifesto', which argued that Catholic thought had to engage history, concrete philosophy, and engagement. The Neoscholastic Dominicans from Toulouse responded vigorously, arguing that the Jesuit embrace of history concealed a certain relativism. The dispute escalated until 1950, when de Lubac and Bouillard were silenced with the release of the papal encyclical *Humani Generis*. The Conclusion summarises the findings of the thesis and suggests avenues for future research.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AAS</i>	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
<i>AJV</i>	<i>Les Archives Jésuites de Vanves</i>
<i>ASS</i>	<i>Acta Sanctae Sedis</i>
<i>CAÉCHL</i>	<i>Centre d'Archives et d'Études des Cardinal Henri de Lubac</i>
<i>CCIF</i>	<i>Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français</i>
<i>HLOC</i>	<i>Henri de Lubac: Œuvres complètes, 50 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1988-)</i>
<i>JOC</i>	<i>Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne</i>
<i>MBOC</i>	<i>Maurice Blondel: Œuvres complètes, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995-1997)</i>
<i>MPF</i>	<i>Mouvement populaire des familles</i>
<i>MRP</i>	<i>Mouvement République Populaire</i>
<i>PCF</i>	<i>Parti communiste français</i>
<i>SFIO</i>	<i>Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
<i>VI</i>	<i>La Vie intellectuelle</i>

CHRONOLOGY

- 1893 The Publication of Blondel's *L'Action*
- 1895 Joseph Maréchal and Pierre Rousselot enter the Jesuits
- 1896 Henri de Lubac and René d'Ouince are born
- 1897 Gaston Fessard, Charles Nicolet, and Robert Hamel are born
- 1898 Alfred de Soras is born and Léonce de Grandmaison is ordained
- 1899 Jean Zupan is born and Auguste Valensin and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin enter the Jesuits
- 1900 Yves de Montcheuil and Pierre Chaillet are born
- 1904 Jules Lebreton is ordained
- 1905 Jean Daniélou is born
- 1908 Henri Bouillard is born
- 1910 *Recherches de science religieuse* begins publication
- 1913 De Lubac, Fessard, d'Ouince, and de Soras enter the Jesuits
- 1915 De Lubac, Fessard, d'Ouince, Nicolet, and de Soras join the military during World War I
- 1917 De Lubac is injured in the war and de Montcheuil enters the Jesuits
- 1919 The militarized Jesuits return to the Society to complete their novitiate
- 1921 De Lubac, Fessard, de Soras, and Nicolet begin their philosophy training at Jersey
- 1924 De Lubac and others begin their theological studies at Ore Place, Hastings
- 1926 De Grandmaison dies, Fessard discovers Hegel, and all the Jesuits, with the exception of de Montcheuil, are united at the Fourvière theologate in Lyon
- 1927 De Lubac is ordained
- 1929 Daniélou enters the Jesuits, de Montcheuil begins studies at Fourvière, and

- de Lubac begins teaching at the *Institut catholique* (Lyon)
- 1934 De Montcheuil is ordained
- 1935 D'Ouince becomes director of *Études*
- 1942 *Sources chrétiennes* is launched
- 1944 De Montcheuil is killed by the Gestapo
- 1946 De Lubac's *Surnaturel* is released and the debate between the Fourvière Jesuits and the Toulouse Dominicans begins
- 1950 *Humani Generis* is released, and de Lubac and Bouillard are removed from Fourvière

INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to establish a clearer understanding of the theological project of a small group of French Jesuits based at the Fourvière theologate in Lyon, France, in the middle of the twentieth century. It does so by situating them more firmly in their historical context than have previous studies, tracing their roots to the crisis in French society that came to a head between the world wars, and relying on unpublished letter and documents from the Jesuits archives in Paris (Vanves). Included among the members of the *nouvelle théologie*, they sought a greater theological appropriation of modern categories of history, concrete philosophy, and political engagement. Drawing on the philosophy of Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), they embarked on a method called *ressourcement* which attempted to ‘return to the sources’ and recover various Neoplatonic Patristic writings which offered a counter-theology to the Neoscholasticism dominant at the time. Led by Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), Jean Daniélou (1905-1974), Henri Bouillard (1908-1981), Gaston Fessard (1897-1978), and Yves de Montcheuil (1900-1904), they published a host of important books and articles in addition to making available in translation a number of Patristic writings. Although initially censured and disciplined, their thought triumphed in the sessions of the Second Vatican Council and is universally seen as having great theological import.

First termed the ‘*nouvelle théologie*’ in a critical article published in *L’Osservatore Romano* in 1942, the name gained widespread currency after a controversial piece published in 1946 by the Neoscholastic Dominican Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange entitled ‘La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?’¹ Although the secondary literature seems to have

¹ Pietro Parente, ‘Nuove tendenze teologiche’, *L’Osservatore Romano* (9-10 Feb. 1942), 1; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?’, *Angelicum* 23 (1946): 126-45. For the history of

settled on the legitimacy of the term, it remains somewhat elusive, not in the least because all the major figures with which it was associated denied the existence of such a movement. It denotes, however, a movement composed primarily of Jesuits and Dominicans that flourished from the mid 1930s until its official condemnation by Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950.

Although there remains some debate surrounding the inclusion of certain peripheral theologians in the *nouvelle théologie*, the core group seems settled: de Lubac, Daniélou, and the Dominicans Marie-Dominique Chenu² and Yves Congar.³ Despite the great personal and intellectual diversity of these four great thinkers, certain broad parallels, aims, and endeavours clearly mark the bounds of a 'movement'. Jürgen Mettepenningen has provided a helpful analysis that includes four central characteristics. The *nouvelle théologie* was: first, fundamentally a French enterprise; secondly, eager to appropriate the historical method; thirdly, strongly favouring positive theology; and finally, hostile to Neoscholasticism.⁴ This last point is central, because it was Neoscholasticism that opposed their particular embrace of history and positive theology. They sought to foment a revolt from its speculative strictures and implement a *ressourcement* methodology which would facilitate a retrieval of medieval sources as well

the naming of the movement, see Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie - New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 5.

² For more on Chenu, see Christophe Potworoski, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Henri Donneaud, 'Histoire d'une histoire: M.-D. Chenu et "La théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle."' in *Les Dominicains en Europe (Mémoire Dominicaine, 9)*; Francesca Murphy, 'Correspondence entre É Gilson et M.-D. Chenu: Un choix de lettres (1923-1969).' *Revue thomiste* 112 (2005): 25-87; Claude Rolland, 'La Père Chenu: théologien au Concile.' in *L'hommage différé au Père Chenu*. Paris: Cerf, 1990. 249-56.

³ For more on Congar, see Gabriel Flynn, ed., *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church* (Louvain: Peeters, 2005); Gabriel Flynn: *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Étienne Fouilloux, 'Comment devient-on expert au Vatican II: Le cas du Père Yves Congar.' in *Le deuxième Concile du Vatican* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1989), 307-31; Étienne Fouilloux, 'Friar Yves, Cardinal Congar, Dominican, Itinerary of a Theologian', *US Catholic Historian* 17 (1999): 63-90; Bernard Sesboüé, 'Le drame de la théologie au XXe siècle: A propos du "Journal d'un théologien (1946-1956)" du P. Yves Congar', *Recherches science et religieuse* 89 (2001): 271-87; André Vauchez, *Cardinal Yves Congar: 1904-1995* (Paris: Cerf, 1999); Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*. Trans. Mary John Ronayne, et al. (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

⁴ Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 7-13.

as various Church Fathers more readily compatible with certain modern philosophical, theological, and political concerns. Far from being an ancillary problem, this was ‘the central issue confronting modern Catholic theology in the twentieth century: the relation between the historical character of human existence and human knowledge and the supposedly absolute, unchanging truth claims of Christian revelation.’⁵

The Fourvière Jesuits: A Short History

The title ‘Fourvière’ is taken from the name of the former Jesuit theologate in Lyon that stood atop the Fourvière hill overlooking the city and situated next to the famous basilica of the same name. The term ‘Fourvière Jesuit’ is given to a small group of close-knit French Jesuits of the same generation, all born between 1895 and 1908, who received their theological training there and shared a similar *esprit* and *élan* which sought to provoke a certain rapprochement between the Church and the modern world. In fact, after their ordinations, most of the Fourvière Jesuits did not actually live there. While de Lubac and Bouillard remained in Lyon until 1950, Fessard, de Montcheuil, and Daniélou all resided in the Jesuit house of *Études* in Paris. Their friendships, however, remained close, and their ministries were punctuated by frequent interaction and correspondence.

The theologate, as Daniélou recounted, was established to be a point of contact between the Church and the modern world: ‘The school of the Fourvière was founded after the war of 1914 from a realization of a certain number of young theologians who understood the necessity of contact with the great currents of contemporary thought. At the beginning of the century, there was, in the face of modernism, a Thomist renewal from which arose great works from the likes of Jacques Maritain, and the Jesuits Pierre Rousselot and Joseph Maréchal. This, however, remained foreign to a culture that was

⁵ Thomas Joseph White, ‘The Precarity of Wisdom: Modern Dominican Theology, Perspectivalism, and the Tasks of Reconstructio’, in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Romanus Cessario*, eds. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 93.

evolving. Thus, some young Jesuits preoccupied themselves with the task of engaging in a dialogue with contemporary thought.’⁶

The Fourvière Jesuits, in addition to the most prominent names given above, include others as well who played important but largely forgotten roles. These include René d’Ouinice, Pierre Chaillet, Robert Hamel, Alfred de Soras, Jean Zupan, and Charles Nicolet. These figures constitute only a single generation of a multigenerational network of French Jesuits who were intensely unified by the common goal of reforming the Church and bringing it into closer contact with the world.

As we shall see, these Fourvière Jesuits were unified by the period of their birth and the crises that shaped them, but their relationships certainly varied in both intensity and character. These not only developed at different times and settings but also waxed and waned as circumstances brought them together and moved them apart. Some were developed during the intense years of formation, while others came later. The relationship between de Lubac and Fessard was the longest. They met during the first months of formation and remained extremely close until the latter’s death. Robert Hamel, also there from the beginning of formation, quickly drops out of the narrative as he had little or no influence in French intellectual circles. De Lubac’s relationships with de Soras, Zupan, and Nicolet appear in their early letters, but they too had no major role in the major events that would surround Fourvière thought. In fact, the latter two only emerge clearly at all on account of de Lubac’s late work, *Three Jesuits Speak*.⁷ De Montcheuil was only a few years behind de Lubac in formation and remained close to him until his death in the war in 1944. He is intellectually the closest to de Lubac, and their work in many ways developed

⁶ Jean Daniélou, *Et qui est mon prochain?: Memoires* (Paris: Stock, 1974), 86.

⁷ Henri de Lubac, *Trois jésuites nous parlent* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1980); *Three Jesuits Speak: Yves De Montcheuil 1899-1944, Charles Nicolet 1897-1961, Jean Zupan 1899-1968*; trans. K.D. Whitehead (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1987). In French works that are available in English, I cite both editions, and unless otherwise stated, quotations are taken from the English edition. Translations from the French are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

in harmony. As the youngest members of this generation, Daniélou and Bouillard entered the Jesuits roughly ten years after the first wave, Daniélou in 1929 and Bouillard in 1932. Thus de Lubac and the older Jesuits initially were mentors to them during their student years at Fourvière, but as they were ordained and became productive academics in their own right, they became colleagues and close friends. De Lubac was undoubtedly the vital and intellectual centre of this group, and he was certainly a mentor to many younger Jesuits after his return to Fourvière in 1934, despite the fact that his teaching was at the *Institute catholique* of Lyon.

De Lubac was born in 1896, and after attending a Jesuit secondary school, he joined the novitiate in 1913.⁸ He was called into the infantry during the First World War and was wounded twice, sustaining a serious head injury at Eparges in 1917. After returning to the Jesuits at the end of 1919, he completed his philosophy at Jersey (1920-1923) and theology at Ore Place (1924-1926) and Fourvière (1926-1928). After ordination in 1927, he took up a teaching position at the *Institut catholique* of Lyon two years later. In 1934 he moved ‘up the hill’ to the Fourvière theologate where he remained until 1950. During the war, he took an active part in the ‘*Résistance spirituelle*’, narrowly avoiding capture by the Gestapo. Theological controversy followed the Second World War for de Lubac, and in 1950 he was sent to the Jesuit house in Paris on the Rue de Sèvres, forbidden to teach. Pope John XXIII called him to serve on Vatican II’s preparatory commission, and he exercised a great influence at the council. He remained active into his nineties and died in 1991.

⁸ For de Lubac’s biography, see the yet to be completed four volume series by Georges Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, vols. I, II, and IV (Paris: Cerf, 2007-2013); Jean Wagner, *Henri de Lubac* (Paris: Cerf, 2001); Jean Wagner, *La théologie fondamentale selon Henri de Lubac* (Paris: Cerf, 1997); for a shorter treatment, see Rudolph Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*; and de Lubac’s own memoirs, *Mémoire sur l’occasion de mes écrits* (Namur: Culture et vérité, 1989), in *HLOC*, vol. 33; *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco CA: Ignaitus Press, 1996).

Born in 1897, Fessard also entered the novitiate in 1913 and was called to military service in 1915.⁹ He saw heavy action on the Front and returned to the Jesuits in 1919 where he almost immediately became close friends with de Lubac. His philosophy study at Jersey (1920-1923) was followed by residency at the Jesuit residence of *Action populaire* where he was encouraged in his work by its head, the Jesuit Gustave Desbuquois. Travelling to Germany in 1926 for language study, he discovered Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* on the tables of an outdoor bookseller, and it had a profound influence on him. Fessard studied philosophy at Fourvière (1926-1930) and was ordained in 1928. After teaching at a Jesuit secondary school in Poitiers, he resided at the Jesuit house of *Études* in Paris until 1963. During the war he lived shortly at Fourvière where he contributed to the *Résistance spirituelle* by assisting in the development of *Témoignage chrétien*, a clandestine intellectual journal of the resistance. In 1963 he was sent to live in the Jesuit house at Chantilly, continuing his research there until his death in 1978.

René d'Ouince was born in 1896 and entered the Society of Jesus in 1913. He was also soon mobilized for military service, and returned to the Jesuits in 1919.¹⁰ After studies at Jersey, Ore Place, and Fourvière, he was ordained and worked at a Jesuit secondary school in Paris, Saint Louis de Gonzague (1930-1934). In 1935 he became the director of *Études* and remained there until 1952. Although his written contributions during that period were minimal, he was tasked during those difficult years with charting the course of *Études*, selecting authors, and editing their contributions. During the war he was supportive of *Témoignage chrétien*. D'Ouince was a good friend and supporter of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit paleontologist, and wrote several books on his thought. He died in 1973.

⁹ Michel Sales, *Gaston Fessard, 1897-1978: genèse d'une pensée ; suivi d'un résumé du "Mystère de la société" par Gaston Fessard* (Bruxelles, Culture et vérité, 1997).

¹⁰ Henri de Gensac, 'René d'Ouince', in *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine, 1. Les Jésuites*, ed. Paul Duclos (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 205.

Born in 1897, Robert Hamel was orphaned at a young age and sent by his aunt to the Jesuit secondary school at Jersey. After serving in the war, he entered the Jesuits in 1919. He completed his philosophy studies at Jersey and theology at Fourvière. In 1936 he was assigned as an *aumônier* in Angers and continued in this capacity in various places for a number of years. He died in 1974.

Born in 1900, Yves de Montcheuil entered the Jesuits in 1917 after abandoning his plans to enter the *École Navale*, following the loss of his brother at Verdun.¹¹ After obligatory military service, he began his philosophy studies at Jersey in 1922, two years behind the older Jesuits who welcomed him into their group and mentored him. Leaving Jersey, he completed a philosophy degree at the Sorbonne (1924-1926) where he was immersed in modern thought. After teaching in Jesuit secondary schools, de Montcheuil began his theology at the Fourvière (1929-1932), was ordained (1932), and took up doctoral studies in Rome (1934-1935), completing his thesis on Malebranche. He was sent to Paris and taught theology at the *Institut catholique* (1935-1944). During the war he received permission to travel to Lyon to minister to members of the resistance and in 1944 was caught by the Gestapo in the Vercors, near Grenoble, and shot. Many of his works were published soon after his death.

Pierre Chaillet was born in 1900 and entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1923 after four years at the seminary at Besançon.¹² After his formation, he taught at Fourvière (1932-1942) and was the driving force behind the *Résistance spirituelle* and its primary clandestine anti-Nazi organ, the intellectual journal *Cahier du Témoignage chrétien*. Launched in 1941, it had a distribution of 500,000 at its peak. Following on this success, he began the more popular newspaper *Courriers*, whose distribution climbed as high as 1,500,000. These publications required an elaborate and secretive network to facilitate

¹¹ Bernard Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil (1900-1944) Précurseur en théologie* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2006).

¹² Henri de Lubac, 'Pierre Chaillet', *Compagnie*, (June 1972): 113-115.

their writing, printing, and distribution. In 1944, he took a post in the post-war provisional government consolidating social services. Towards the end of his life he lived in Grenoble and died there in 1972.

Alfred de Soras was born in 1898 and entered the Jesuits before the First World War. He was mobilised and served in the military, rejoining the novitiate after his discharge. He studied philosophy and theology at Jersey and Fourvière and served as an *aumônier* during the 1930s. He was involved in a serious car accident during these years and suffered a long recovery. He later worked with *Action catholique*, preached, and gave retreats. In 1947, he led a retreat in Paris for Archbishop Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII. He made extensive journeys to Asia and Africa and died in 1966.

Charles Nicolet was born in 1897 and entered the Jesuits in 1914, but was also soon mobilized during the war, returning to the novitiate in 1919.¹³ He completed his philosophy at Jersey and his theology at Ore Place and Fourvière (1924-1928). Although he was a philosopher, strongly influenced by Blondel, his perfectionism did not permit him to publish significantly. He taught at the Jesuit school in Marseilles and was the provincial bursar. He died in 1961.

Born in Slovenia in 1899, on account of the First World War Jean Zupan completed his novitiate in Rome (1917-1919) and was sent to France for studies.¹⁴ He completed his philosophy at Jersey (1921-1923) and theology at Ore Place and Fourvière. Ordained in 1927, he lived in Austria briefly (1929-1930) and then returned to Lyon where he spent significant time assisting the poor. In 1934, he was sent to Bulgaria to found a Jesuit minor seminary on the recommendation of Apostolic Visitor, Bishop Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. Staying there throughout the war voluntarily to comfort the faithful, he finally left in 1950 when the house was finally closed. The remainder of his

¹³ De Lubac, *Trois jésuites*, 56-135; *Three Jesuits*, 63-151.

¹⁴ De Lubac, *Trois jésuites*, 135-174; *Three Jesuits*, 151-195.

life was spent in Nice where he was a superior, remained engaging in numerous apostolic activities until his death in 1968.

Daniélou was born in 1905 and read literature at the Sorbonne during the 1920s, getting to know many of the intellectuals such as Mounier and Sartre, who would later figure prominently in French society. He entered the Jesuits in 1929, studying theology at Fourvière, where he was mentored by de Lubac and ordained in 1938. During the war, he undertook doctoral studies, finishing in 1942, and was involved in the launching of the Patristic series *Sources chrétiennes*. In 1944, Daniélou replaced the older Jesuit Jules Lebreton in the chair of *Origines chrétiennes* at the *Institut catholique*, where he became dean of the theology faculty (1961-1969). During that time he wrote a number of important books and articles on Patristics and the early Church. In 1962, he was named an expert at Vatican II where he made important contributions. He continued to work until his death in 1974.

Bouillard was born in 1908 and entered the Jesuits in 1932 after spending five years at the *Séminaire St-Sulpice* and two additional years obtaining a literature degree.¹⁵ After two years of theology at Fourvière, where he developed close relationships with Hans Urs von Balthasar and de Lubac, he was ordained in 1936 and taught theology at the *Université St-Joseph de Beyrouth*. He undertook doctoral studies in Rome (1938-1939) and began teaching at the *Institut catholique* of Lyon in 1941. He was removed, however, in 1950 with de Lubac during the controversy which culminated in the encyclical *Humani Generis*. In Paris, he undertook a second doctorate, writing on Karl Barth at the Sorbonne, which he defended in 1958 in the presence of Barth himself. In 1965, he became a professor of fundamental theology at the *Institut catholique* of Paris and established, with

¹⁵ Auguste Demoment, 'Henri Bouillard', *Nouvelles Institut Catholiquen de Paris* (December 1981), 225-232.

Daniélou, the *Institut de Science et Théologie des Religions* two years later. He retired in 1978 and died three years later.¹⁶

Recent Treatments

The importance of the theological inheritance of the *nouvelle théologie* is evident in the four significant theological schools that today draw inspiration from its work: first, those gathered around the Catholic journal *Communio*; secondly, the more liberal-minded coalition of Transcendental Thomists and more progressive theologians gathered around the journal *Concilium*; thirdly, the largely Anglican movement of Radical Orthodoxy; and lastly, certain evangelicals who find in the *nouvelle théologie* a deeper sense of tradition.¹⁷

A resurgent interest in the *nouvelle théologie* is strongly attested by a number of recent publications. First, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* includes over thirty essays written by leading theologians with expertise in the area of *ressourcement*, including a number of pertinent historical pieces.¹⁸ Covering a wide range of topics, it is divided into four sections that explore the history of the movement, the central figures, the essential *ressourcement* programme, and the continuing relevance of *ressourcement* for the modern world. The volume provides a wealth of relevant background information, biographical sketches, and useful analysis which will be of importance to the next phase of historical research. Secondly, *Sacramental Ontology*, by Hans Boersma, is one of the most important additions to the secondary literature in recent years and attempts a theological synthesis and overview of the *nouvelle théologie*. It places the movement within its historical context and explores

¹⁶ Although not treated in depth here on account of his Swiss nationality, Hans Urs von Balthasar is sometimes included in the *nouvelle théologie*. Born in 1905, Balthasar was a Swiss Jesuit who was sent to Fourvière for studies from 1932 to 1936. There, under de Lubac's influence, he developed a great love for the Church Fathers which would mark his later work. He left the Jesuits in 1950 and achieved significant notoriety for his theological achievement.

¹⁷ John Milbank, 'The New Divide: Romantic Versus Classic Orthodoxy', *Modern Theology* 26, no. 1, (2010): 26-38.

¹⁸ Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

major nineteenth and twentieth-century theological influences.¹⁹ Boersma's essential aim is to provide an analytical approach that abstracts and synthesizes the fundamentals of the *nouvelle théologie* project. Also, recently several books have been published that re-engage the nature-grace controversy triggered by de Lubac's *Surnaturel*.²⁰ Étienne Fouilloux stands as one of the few trained historians to work extensively on the French controversies surrounding the *nouvelle théologie*. He is well published and widely considered the most competent authority on the subject, having written widely on the period from the Modernist controversy to the Second Vatican Council.²¹ Despite the breadth of Fouilloux's work, he has not undertaken a major work devoted exclusively to the *nouvelle théologie*.

Finally, Jürgen Mettepenningen has produced an important contribution to the field with his recent work on the *ressourcement* movement, *Nouvelle Théologie: Inheritor of*

¹⁹ Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Boersma has also published articles on Pierre Rousselot and the impact of Neoplatonism on the *nouvelle théologie*: 'A Sacramental Journey to the Beatific Vision: The Intellectualism of Pierre Rousselot', *The Heythrop Journal* 49 (2008): 1015-1034; 'Néoplatonisme belgo-français: Nouvelle théologie and the Search for a Sacramental Ontology', *Louvain Studies* 32 (2007): 333-360.

²⁰ Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed. (Ave Maria FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010). Through an exhaustive analysis of Aquinas and his commentators, Feingold makes an argument that de Lubac mishandled the texts of Aquinas, who in speaking of a natural desire to see the vision of God, is referring to the elicited act of inclination toward the essential goodness of knowing the first cause, rather than an innate desire for a supernatural end. For the impact of Feingold's book on the debate and its function as a 'serious scholarly provocation', see the symposium in *Nova et Vetera* 5, no. 1 (2007); Guy Mansini, 'The Abiding Theological Significance of Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel*', *The Thomist* 73, no. 4 (2009): 593-619; Harm Goris, 'Steering Clear of Charybdis: some Directions for Avoiding 'Graces Extrinsicism' in Aquinas', *Nova et Vetera* 5, no. 1 (2007): 67-79.

²¹ Étienne Fouilloux, *Une Église en quête de liberté: La pensée catholique française entre modernisme et Vatican II, 1914-1962* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2006); Étienne Fouilloux, 'Dialogue théologique?' in *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle: Colloque de centenaire de la 'Revue thomiste' (1893-1992)*, Toulouse, 25-28 mars 1993, ed. Serge Bonino (Paris: Saint Paul, 1995), 153-195; also for Jean-Claude Petit's helpful study of Dialogue théologique, which attempts more of a textual analysis of the various articles that were exchanged, see 'La compréhension de la théologie dans la théologie française au XXe siècle: Pour une théologie qui réponde à nos nécessités : la nouvelle théologie', *Laval Theologique et Philosophique* 48 (1992): 415-31; for Aidan Nichols' English version of the events surrounding this period in an account that draws heavily on the work of Fouilloux, see 'Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie', *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 1-19; in *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*, Milbank attempts to untangle and interpret de Lubac's *Surnaturel*, a work whose theological anthropology figures so prominently in the project of Radical Orthodoxy.

Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II.²² It is the first book-length attempt at a serious historical study limited exclusively to the movement and its influence. Mettepenningen has produced a work that functions as an invaluable source for references on the vast primary and secondary literature, and in less than 150 pages provides a historical narrative that runs from the early nineteenth-century Tübingen school to the *nouveaux théologiens* at the eve of the Second Vatican Council, offering a detailed chronology of the events and theological works of the *ressourcement* movement.

Mettepenningen roots his narrative in a four-phase history. The first phase (1935-1942) was dominated by the Dominicans at the Le Saulchoir studium, who called for an embrace of history and a return to the ‘sources of faith’ and the ‘authentic’ thought of Thomas Aquinas rather than that of his commentators. The second phase (1942 to 1950), led by the Fourvière Jesuits, is characterized by *ressourcement*. The third phase (1950 to Vatican II) envisions a phase of internationalization guided by such thinkers as Edward Schillebeeckx and Piet Schoonenberg.²³ Finally, the fourth phase, which Mettepenningen does not treat, is the period of the Second Vatican Council itself, where the ideas of the *nouvelle théologie* came to fruition.

I shall identify three weaknesses in Mettepenningen’s four-phase model, of which the first two stages actually deal with the *nouvelle théologie*. First, he does not treat the Fourvière Jesuits significantly until 1942, and although envisioning a Dominican phase followed by a Jesuit phase has a simplistic appeal, this structure ignores important work the Jesuits were doing throughout the 1930s. Mettepenningen argues that *nouvelle théologie* essentially begins with Congar’s 1935 article in *La Vie catholique*, but this seems arbitrary, and he gives no evidence why this article was more important than others.

²² Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie*; for the exchange between de Lubac and the Jesuit General during the *Surnaturel* affair, see Jürgen Mettepenningen, ‘Quod immutabile est, nemo turnbey et moveat. Les rapports entre H. de Lubac et le P. Général J.-B. Janssens dans les années 1946-48, à propos de documents inédits’, *Christianesimo nella storia* 29 (2008), 139-172.

²³ Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 117-136.

There was also provocative work being undertaken by the Jesuits. For example, de Lubac had published as journal articles what would be the first two chapters of *Surnaturel* as well as several sections of *Catholicisme*, an influential book that argued that the social aspects of dogma were an essential part of Catholic tradition. Secondly, Mettepenningen claims that somehow the movement was an ‘inheritor’ of Modernism, but he provides little personal or intellectual evidence to establish this link. Thus, the origins of the *nouvelle théologie* could be better understood through an examination of its roots in the Modernist period.²⁴ Finally, he does not set the movement within the wider French interwar crisis, and the immense political, cultural, and economic forces that influenced the *nouvelle théologie* are almost totally overlooked. David Grummet writes that ‘Mettepenningen’s narrative could be filled out with more extensive reflection on the major political and social upheavals that shaped the *nouvelle théologie*. The Second World War surely did far more than disrupt the normal scholarly routine and debates in journals: it was generative of the new theology.’²⁵ A single history is needed to take account of these shortcomings. Moreover, neither do the other books and authors we reviewed above attempt to fill these historical gaps. Joseph Komonchak, in several short articles, examines the relationship

²⁴ The relationship between the Modernists and the *nouveaux théologiens* has not been settled. As we shall see, the *ressoucement* thinkers read many of the Modernists extensively, corresponded with them, and even in some cases knew them. No doubt, much of the Modernist project inspired them, as is indicated by Congar’s reaction in 1931 to his reading of the three volumes of Alfred Loisy’s recently released memoirs. He writes that they consequently ‘formed in me, with a very strong critical reaction, the conviction that our generation had the mission of realizing, *within the Church*, what was good in the demands and problems posed by modernism.’ (Yves Congar, *Journal d’un théologien* (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 24.). As we shall see later, Daniélou later argued that the Modernists were in fact asking the right questions, it was only their answers that were problematic. Thus, Boersma’s quick dismissal of any connection between the movements seems untenable (*Nouvelle Théologie*, 17-21). His insistence, that although ‘there is overlap’ between the two movements (*Nouvelle Théologie*, 20) their agendas were ‘fundamentally different’ (*Nouvelle Théologie*, 18), seems simplistic. Gerard Loughlin argues that George Tyrrell’s project was much closer to that of the *nouveaux théologiens* than Boersma admits, and in fact Garrigou-Lagrange’s assessment was correct that the *nouvelle théologie* was ‘going back to Modernism’ (*Nouvelle Théologie: A Return to Modernism?*, in *Ressoucement*, 36-51). Mettepenningen takes a more nuanced position, claiming that the *nouvelle théologie* did not ‘repeat’ the Modernist crisis but ‘developed its core ideas’, in ‘Truth as Issue in a Second Modernist Crisis?’ in *Theology and the Quest for Truth*, eds. M. Lamberigts, *et al.* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 141.

²⁵ David Grummet, review of *Nouvelle Théologie*, by Jürgen Mettepenningen, *New Blackfriars* 92.1037 (2010): 118-120.

between the Fourvière Jesuits and the wider French culture in a very limited investigation into de Lubac's charge that Neoscholastic anthropology was responsible for the rise of secularism and *Action française*. He attempts to show how de Lubac's early work was an antidote to the bifurcation between the secular and the sacred.²⁶

The Need for a Cultural and Global History

The surge of recent interest in the mid-century theological controversies in France has yielded some excellent scholarly work. This research has begun to better crystalize the historical narrative, as well as provide theological insights that might assist in the appropriation of the thought of the *nouvelle théologie* and guide future theology that is indebted to its legacy. However, two deficiencies come to the fore: first, none specifically treats the relationship between the *nouvelle théologie* and wider French interwar culture; and also, the Modernist roots of the *nouvelle théologie* have not been established clearly. Therefore, there is a need for a global and genealogical historical examination which approaches the movement with a deeper interdisciplinary sensitivity to the larger French political, intellectual, religious, and cultural context. The secondary literature seems to neglect the reality that the *nouvelle théologie* was a movement very much shaped by a particular French *mise-en-scène*, a world in political and economic crisis, searching for answers in a number of other intellectual currents such as Marxism, fascism, and existentialism, and responding to much of the turmoil that first boiled over during the fin-de-siècle period as well as the First World War.²⁷ This wider historical examination will ultimately provide a deeper, more contextual understanding of the *nouveaux théologiens* and their theological legacy.

²⁶ Joseph Komonchak, 'Returning from Exile: Catholic Theology in the 1930s', in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, ed. Gregory Baum (New York NY: Maryknoll, 1999), 35-49; and 'Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri De Lubac', *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 579-602.

²⁷ David Curtis, *The French Popular Front and the Catholic Discovery of Marx* (Hull: The University of Hull Press, 1997), 1.

Certainly, the historical theologian cannot be faulted for emphasizing theology or history over the literary, political, and philosophical, but nonetheless, historical theology that attempts to treat adequately the complexities of the French interwar period must utilize a historical approach that ‘glances sideways’ at other disciplines. ‘Global history’ avoids isolating a ‘golden thread’ of theological development from the rich tapestry from which it emerged. Historians call this the ‘tunnel fallacy’, that is, treating history as if it has many separate tunnels that must be explored in isolation. J.H. Hexter describes the effects of this fallacy which effectively splits

the past into a series of tunnels, each continuous from the remote past to the present, but practically self-contained at every point and sealed off from contact with or contamination by anything that was going on in any of the other tunnels. At their entrances these tunnels bore signs saying diplomatic history, political history, institutional history, ecclesiastical history, intellectual history, military history, economic history, legal history, administrative history, art history, colonial history, social history, agricultural history, and so on, and so on.²⁸

Each of these [tunnels] of the past is not merely incomplete but seriously inaccurate, which is what happens when a complex problem is taken apart and its components are extruded into long, thin, ribbons of change. Unpleasant things are apt to happen when one grimy historical tunneler bumps into another, somewhere in the dark, and disputes the right of way with pick and shovel... The tunnelers (few of whom, in this instance, are academic historians) meet in the dark and fight it out, and everybody loses.²⁹

A global history that avoids the tunnel fallacy is essential for a treatment of the *nouvelle théologie* for four reasons. First, the Catholic Church was still a very powerful force in French life and politics. Catholic writers and intellectuals were taken seriously as prominent voices in various cultural debates. Secondly, French culture, especially in the first half of the century, was rooted in an avant-garde literary and philosophical discourse, which also informed theological discussions.³⁰ The French intellectual community at the

²⁸ David Hackett Fischer, *Historians Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 142.

²⁹ Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, 143.

³⁰ Gary Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5; Niilo Kauppi, *French Intellectual Nobility* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

time was relatively small. Many figures from different disciplines, including some *nouveaux théologiens*, not only knew each other but were also intimately engaged in the major public exchanges in the network of French intellectual journals around which intellectual discourse gravitated. Daniélou and Fessard, for example, mixed regularly with the Parisian *savants*.³¹ Thirdly, the period between the wars was very much the beginning of a rich intellectual period, *un moment*, as French philosophers are wont to say, that saw major contributions to twentieth-century culture and thought in a wide range of disciplines.³² Numerous cultural, political, and intellectual currents permeated every facet of French society; and it was the theologians of the *nouvelle théologie* who not only called for a dialogue with the larger culture but were themselves well informed of the major contemporary intellectual developments of their day and were, I shall argue, profoundly shaped by the latest developments in philosophy, politics, and literature. Fourthly, as virtually every book on the period is quick to point out, there was a sense of absolute crisis, and this atmosphere seemingly drew the entire French intellectual world together into an *engagement*. Artists, writers, politicians, philosophers, and theologians were almost universally involved in a search for solutions during these tumultuous events.

An interdisciplinary study of the *nouvelle théologie* will result in a deeper understanding of the essential nature of the movement and its origins and development, and it will assist researchers in evaluating the movement and differentiating what is of lasting and transcendent value from those things embedded in the bygone era of the interwar crisis, less able to inform later theological discussion. A history of the *nouvelle théologie* that is interdisciplinary will rectify these deficiencies and provide a substantial contribution to the secondary literature. For this task, a sophisticated methodology will

³¹ Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 32; Anthony Beevor and Artemis Cooper, *Paris After the Liberation, 1944-1949* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 60.

³² Alain Badiou, 'The French Adventure', *The New Left Review* 35 (2005): 67-77.

need to be developed which can provide a more rigorous analytical structure, by which to analyse the *nouveaux théologiens*.

The construction of a historical narrative of the *ressourcement* movement that is attentive to the full range of cultural forces from which it emerged necessarily requires a methodology that will supply the ‘tools and techniques’ that will enable a cultural penetration beyond the tight sequence of ecclesiastical or theological events and developments. The historical theologian—whether searching for a relevant historical narrative or theological truth—must be aware of the fact that theology does not develop in isolation from the broader culture, and in fact a certain historical sensitivity to interdisciplinary concerns will bear much fruit. Historical theology that provides a deeper and richer sense of context will ultimately provide a clearer historical as well as theological picture. For this I shall utilize two compatible methodological approaches, cultural history, also called *mentalités*, and generational theory. These will offer an interpretive historiographical model that will allow for a dynamic historical reading with greater depth and intercultural sensitivity.

The *ressourcement* theologians repeatedly denied that they were part of a movement, and Mettepenningen does not hesitate to agree with the consensus that there was in fact a ‘*nouvelle théologie* movement’, dismissing their protestations as necessary precautions indicative of the restrictive mood of the times. I would agree on a historiographical level that the term *nouvelle théologie* is useful: they were undoubtedly involved in *something*, and Mettepenningen’s criteria effectively erect the firm boundaries that are sometimes necessary for historical study. However, I would propose that their denials are less indicative of their attempts to conceal a movement as they are evidence of the existence of a much broader and more complex cultural, intellectual, and political French interwar milieu, moved along by an extensive web of social networks, thinkers,

philosophical systems, books, and journals, of which they were part. Thus, I am suggesting that the ‘new theology’ was only a dependent piece of a much larger political, cultural, intellectual, economic, and generational puzzle.

This approach will show that the *nouvelle théologie* is a more historically intricate movement than has been noted. The notorious complexities of the interwar period remain resistant to simplistic causal explanation, reductive analysis, and facile descriptions which spring from superficial treatments that isolate various figures and movements from their larger context. Two world wars and a global depression set the tone for a thirty-year period marked by an intellectual, cultural, political, and religious upheaval that seemed to spare no aspect of country or society. In addition, the turmoil of the *entre-deux-guerres* found deep roots in many of the dilemmas that were raised in the late nineteenth century. Only by turning our attention to these realities can we begin to understand the phenomenon of the *nouvelle théologie* at its deepest point.

Moreover, a generational method attentive to collective aspects of the Fourvière Jesuits will account for an important but often forgotten reality: although de Lubac was the most prominent member, his thinking was closely linked, and even dependent on, his close knit group of friends that surrounded him. Jesuit Jacques Guillet, an intimate of the Fourvière Jesuits, underscored how important de Lubac’s ‘*groupe affinitaire*’, or peer group, was to his work: ‘The great name of this generation will be without a doubt that of Henri de Lubac, and this name owes as much to his person as to his work, to the vigour of his judgement as to the warmth of his friendship. But Henri de Lubac is inseparable from his immediate contemporaries, René d’Ouinice, and Gaston Fessard, Alfred de Soras and Charles Nicolet, all *anciens combattants*, without forgetting Yves de Montcheuil.’³³

³³ Jacques Guillet, ‘Courants théologiques dans la Compagne de Jésus en France (1930-1939)’, in *Spiritualité, théologie et Résistance. Yves de Montcheuil, théologien du maquis au Vercors* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1987), 39.

Thus, this thesis will begin to address these historical shortcomings in the literature of the *nouvelle théologie*. Chapter One will explore the phenomenon of generational consciousness, the development of generational theory, and its application to modern French intellectuals. Chapter Two will begin to apply generational theory to the Fourvière Jesuits, examining the previous intellectual generations who influenced their development. Chapter Three will examine the young student years of the Jesuits during the 1920s and the development of their generational identity, paying attention to the friendships, institutions, networks, intellectual systems, and mentors that shaped them. Chapter Four discusses the grave crisis in French culture in the 1930s, the emergence of the ‘generation of 1930’, to which the Fourvière Jesuits belonged, and their revolutionary proposal to completely remake the sociopolitical culture of France. Chapter Five’s analysis of the Fourvière Jesuits during the 1940s examines the resistance activities of the Jesuits and their rise to prominence in French postwar culture. In this way, I shall approach a clearer understanding of the Fourvière Jesuits and their complex relationship to wider French culture during the interwar crisis.

CHAPTER 1

MODERN FRENCH INTELLECTUAL GENERATIONS

This chapter will present a generational examination of important modern French intellectuals, and will help to situate the Fourvière Jesuits more deeply within the context of French avant-garde life. First, I shall first briefly examine the concept of generation, by which French intellectuals identified themselves. Generational theory is method of cultural history used successfully by French historians to analyse modern intellectual life. Secondly, I shall briefly examine the slow rise of generational consciousness in the nineteenth century, on which later generational theory was ultimately based. This will bring us to a better understanding of our primary concern, generational consciousness in the twentieth century. Thirdly, I shall outline the French intellectual generations of the first half of the twentieth century, the very generations to which the *nouvelle* theologians were responding or belonged.

1.1 Cultural History and Generational Theory

Cultural history uses holistic means to apprehend ‘collective modes of thought’, offering descriptive analysis that characterizes certain essential cultural interrelations.¹ In cultural history, the historian ‘gets to parts of the past that other historians cannot reach. The emphasis on whole “cultures” offers a remedy for the current fragmentation of the discipline into specialists on the history of population, diplomacy, women, ideas, business, warfare, and so on.’² We examined this tendency, called the tunnel fallacy, in the last chapter.

¹ Anna Green, *Cultural History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 6; Jacob Burckhardt is considered the father of modern cultural history, and two of his works, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization* and *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, are still considered classics.

² Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), 1-2.

A number of cultural studies have utilized generational theory as a historical and sociological tool rooted in the idea of *generational consciousness*. It shows how particular generations and their identities are formed in response to moments of crisis.³ French historians have long defined generationally groups of youth who have marked their identity and cultural and political contributions over against those of their predecessors. As we shall see, the generations of 1890, 1912, and 1930 have all played a prominent role in the shaping of modern French intellectual life.⁴ The use of generational theory makes accessible important insights into the internal dynamism that seems to drive the atmosphere of perpetual fermentation and continual ‘self re-creation and transformation’ that has been peculiar to avant-garde French intellectual life for more than a century, and which played a significant role in encouraging the growth of the *nouvelle théologie*.

Generational theory was developed by sociologists and philosophers in the tumultuous years following the First World War in an attempt to understand the growing large-scale trend of European youth who increasingly identified themselves not only in terms of their coevals but also in relationship to the monumental events that had shaped their identity.⁵ Robert Wohl’s groundbreaking book *The Generation of 1914* explores not only the generational identity of those who fought in the First World War but also the concurrent development of generational theory and its historical link with the rise of ‘generational consciousness’.⁶ The link between the crisis of World War I and the development of generational theory is hardly coincidental, and generational theorists

³ Venita Datta, *Birth of a National Icon: The Literary Avant-Garde and the Origins of the Intellectual in France* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 41.

⁴ Datta, *National Icon*, 41.

⁵ For an extensive overview of the use of generations in historical study, see Alan Spitzer, ‘The Historical Problem of Generations’, *The American Historical Review* 73.5 (1973): 1353; for an excellent overview of the literature, see Datta, *National Icon*, 231; Jean-François Sirinelli, ‘La hasard ou la nécessité? un histoire en chantier: l’histoire des intellectuels’, *Vingtième Siècle* 9 (1986): 97-98; and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelles: effets d’âge et phénomènes de génération dans le milieu intellectuel français* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1987).

⁶ Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).

understand the concept of *crisis* as central to the formation of generational identity. In an influential study of generational theory, June Edmunds and Bryan Turner write:

A generation can be defined in terms of a collective response to a traumatic event or catastrophe that unites a particular cohort of individuals into a self-conscious age stratum. The traumatic event uniquely cuts off a generation from its past and separates it from the future. The event becomes the basis of a collective ideology... A generation is constituted by a traumatic event, the emergence of intellectuals who give expression to this traumatic experience, and the growth of a privileged interval that separates successive generations.⁷

The various crises that shaped the French generation born between 1895 and 1910, which contained the members of the *nouvelle théologie*, were compressed into the span of a quarter of a century in a way that seems almost unimaginable today: the angst, decadence and political turmoil of the *fin-de-siècle* era, the First World War, the Great Depression, the rise of Communism and fascism, the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War.⁸ The sense of crisis was so deep and interminable that Charles de Gaulle took to calling the entire period '*la guerre de trente ans*'.⁹ Paul Valéry noted this phenomenon of crisis early on, as he surveyed the devastation of the post-World War I landscape that was filled with a sense of *la mélancholie et la crise*:

An extraordinary shudder ran through the marrow of Europe. She felt in every nucleus of her mind that she was no longer the same, that she was no longer herself, that she was about to lose consciousness... No one can say what will be dead or alive tomorrow, in literature, philosophy, aesthetics; no one yet knows what ideas and modes of expression will be inscribed on the casualty list, what novelties will be proclaimed.¹⁰

Generational theory does not only identify generations who were formed in response to a crisis; it also identifies generations who perceived themselves as such. It is not simply that historians perceive them as a generation; those are the terms in which they

⁷ June Edmunds and Bryon S. Turner, introduction in *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics*, eds. Edmunds and Turner (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 7.

⁸ As we shall see, I am using Ortega's fifteen-year window to characterize generational identity. Thus, instead of 1900-1910, as in Sirinelli and Kleinberg, I shall use 1895-1910 for generational inclusion.

⁹ Christopher Flood, 'Pétain and de Gaulle: Making the Meaning of the Occupation', in *France at War in the Twentieth Century: Propaganda, Myth and Metaphor*, eds. Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 105.

¹⁰ Paul Valéry, 'The Spiritual Crisis', *Athenaeum* 4641 (1919): 182.

identified themselves. This generational identity has permeated the way modern people *think about themselves* and their communities in relationship to the events and crises that shape their formative years. As we shall see, this generational identity profoundly marked French culture in the first half of the century, and the *nouveaux théologiens* likewise saw themselves in generational terms.

The concept of generation first became a formalized sociological tool with Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim's landmark essay 'The Problem of Generations,' published in 1928.¹¹ Mannheim defined a generation as a 'social phenomenon' that 'represents nothing more than a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related "age groups" embedded in a historical-social process.'¹² Generations in this sense are 'people of roughly the same age whose shared experiences significantly distinguish them from contemporaries in other age groups.'¹³ Generational theory holds that common attitudes, assumptions, fears, aspirations, and memories are often shared by people of a similar age, and the isolation of a particular generation as a distinct entity over and against preceding and succeeding generations in the context of the major events of their time can yield great insights into a given historical milieu, as well as the cultural and intellectual bond shared by communities of people. Generation essentially becomes a 'device by which people conceptualize society and seek to transform it.'¹⁴

Generational analysis relies on three fundamental concepts: 'location', 'unit', and 'actuality'. 'Location' refers to a common period of birth that unites members of a generation. 'Units' are subgroups or smaller divisions within the generation that share 'customs, collective usages, traditions, and beliefs that define the real social existence of

¹¹ Karl Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', in his *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge 1959), 276-322.

¹² Mannheim, *Essays*, 292.

¹³ Alan Spitzer, 'The Historical Problem', 1354.

¹⁴ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 5.

each individual.’¹⁵ Often units are mutually antagonistic and are united by common experiences rather than by their responses to those experiences. ‘Actuality’ explains the acquisition of generational consciousness and identity, which results from the exposure of youth to a new set of problems posed by the trauma and conflict of a changing world. Unable to integrate these circumstances into their worldview with the social scripts they have inherited, they forge a collective identity by searching for new answers to existing social problems. In doing this they not only differentiate themselves from older generations, but become conscious of their own historical agency. As a generation coheres and constructs a generational identity through shared responses to social problems, it moves from passivity to actuality. This distinction between ‘generation as location’ and ‘generation as actuality’ is a crucial one for Mannheim.

French theorists speak on the one hand of ‘innate’ influences, or ‘genetic baggage’, which develop as ‘cultural memory’¹⁶ through ‘sedimented generations’ in a *longue durée*, and on the other hand of ‘acquired’ influences, or crises.¹⁷ This insight, that the effect of past events, which were crucial to the shaping of earlier generations, remains in the collective memory of later generations as a formative influence, is important to this study. Thus, drawing on the work of Jean-François Sirinelli and others, the phenomenon in which past crises, the *élan* of previous generations, and certain influential intellectual and cultural currents are transmitted genetically from one generation to the next might be called ‘sedimentation theory’. As we shall see, sedimentation theory will be an important methodological tool in our study of the Fourvière Jesuits.

¹⁵ Spitzer, ‘The Historical Problem’, 1357.

¹⁶ In this sense, I am using the notion of ‘common memory’ as essentially interchangeable with ‘common experience’. For the link between common memory, trauma, and generation, see Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies’, *History and Theory* 41 (May 2002): 179-197. Kansteiner insists that cultural memory is fundamentally social.

¹⁷ Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelles: effets*, 11.

A generational study examines the ‘structures of sociability’ and develops an ‘archaeology of social networks’ which searches for ‘solidarities of age, social origins and study’. These networks might include, for example, institutions, journals, political movements, relationships and affiliations. The first task of this ‘archaeology’ is to ‘reassemble those young student years where friendships are forged easily and influences exert themselves on soft ground. In particular, this retrospective approach, this rise toward the sources of the intellectual and political awakening, allows also for a marking out on a *carte de l’esprit* the intersections where mentors stood, as well as other *éveilleurs* [“intellectuals awakeners”] whose influence is less known but nonetheless remains profound’.¹⁸ We might note that there seems to exist here an intersection between the notions of structures of sociability and sedimentation theory, as certain aspects of the structures themselves, such as institutions and journals, depend on the presence and work of older generations, and *éveilleurs* are in fact influential older mentors. Therefore, we might conclude that sedimentation theory includes an awareness, at least peripheral, of the structures of sensibility, and vice versa.

1.2 The Birth of Generational Consciousness

The development of generational thinking is ultimately rooted in the upheavals at the end of the eighteenth century. In broad outline, the French Revolution, the industrial revolution, and Kant’s Copernican revolution heralded a definitive break with the past and the coming of a new era. The French Revolution, and in particular

its aftermath showed how liberation from the past could be achieved—through political rebellion. At the same time the French events of 1789-1891 taught a powerful lesson in the discontinuity of historical development; four revolutions and restorations went by in dizzy succession, suggesting that every era had its distinctive and authentic quality that walled it off from what had come before and what would come later. Both these ideas—the rooting out of the past for the sake

¹⁸ Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle : khâgneux*, 12.

of the future and the discontinuous nature of human existence—encouraged the equation of youth and cultural renewal.¹⁹

Alan Spitzer has chronicled the formative impact the French Revolution had on the development of the ‘youth culture’ that was rife among those born in the decade following the revolution.²⁰ Spitzer’s integration of generational theory with an interdisciplinary approach attempts to uncover the ‘shared assumptions’ and ‘common temper of mind’ of this generation.

Spitzer argues that the generation born between 1792 and 1803, the decade after the Revolution, gained an identity and collective self-perception by coming of age during a series of complex historical traumas. These *jeunesse française* reacted in a high-minded way against the perceived hypocrisy of the generation of their parents who, after fighting for the revolution, shifted their allegiance to Napoleon, then to Louis XVIII, back to Napoleon during the Hundred Days, and finally, to the Restoration after Waterloo. The generation of 1820, formed in the competitive and repressive schools of the Restoration, constructed a complex series of social networks, including schools, journals, masonic lodges and *cenacles*, through which to channel their creative energies and manifest their perceived generational identity.

Oxford historian Robert Gildea has also recognized the importance of generational analysis in his study of the Revolution and its aftermath, *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799-1914*.²¹ Gildea describes five French generations—1760, 1800, 1830, 1860, and 1890. Each, he argues, responded to and was defined by the almost interminable series of revolutions and upheavals in nineteenth-century France. It is important to emphasize the significance of the seemingly relentless political and cultural turmoil for the development of generational consciousness. Gildea writes:

¹⁹ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 204.

²⁰ Alan Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

²¹ Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: France, 1799-1914* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Generations were not so much biological, born at the same time, as historical, shaped by the same events. These events might be the revolutions of 1789, 1830, 1848 and 1871. They might be the Hundred Days of 1815, when Napoleon returned briefly from exile to power until his overthrow at Waterloo, or defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, or the challenge to French power of British aggression in 1898 or German aggression in 1905 or 1911. These events gave shape to successive generations that differed because of the different events they experienced in their formative years, or later in life. The birth dates of a generation would gravitate around a key year, although individuals defined by the same event might actually be born ten years before or after, so long as they reacted in the same way, most as peers, others as masters or disciples.²²

The rise of generational consciousness was not restricted to France, and signs of its development are evident among the German Romantics as well. Goethe asserted that ‘anybody born only a decade earlier or later might have become a completely different person as far as his own education and sphere of action are concerned’, while in 1812, Friedrich Schlegel distinguished various eighteenth-century literary generations—those of Lessing, Goethe and Schiller.²³ Two decades later, Ranke described historical generations as ‘rows of shining figures who themselves are closely related and in whose antithesis the development of the world continues to progress.’²⁴ In the later decades of the nineteenth century, Comte, Marx, Engels and Durkheim all considered generation in relationship to progress, biology, class or social structures.²⁵

Moreover, concepts of space and time had, on the one hand, been greatly expanded by scientific discoveries such as Darwin’s theory of evolution, which accelerated a general sense of ‘kinship, relatedness and descent’, and, on the other, were compressed by the synchronisation of clocks, the development of a modern postal service and the advent of trains and steamers.²⁶ The nineteenth century saw the urbanization of youth, and associations of artists, writers and intellectuals began to identify themselves generationally. Mass movements were born that recognized the political and social power

²² Gildea, *Children of the Revolution*, 3

²³ Michael Corsten, ‘The Time of Generations’, *The Time Society* 8, no. 249 (1999): 274.

²⁴ Corsten, ‘Time of Generations’, 274.

²⁵ Edmunds and Turner, *Generational Consciousness*, 4.

²⁶ Burnett, *Generations*, 28.

of youth and took on generational identity.²⁷ By the last decade of the century, this movement toward generational identification developed more fully, and specific intellectual generations emerged more distinctly, one after another, vying for the lead role in the cultural drama that was unfolding. In modern French historiography, it is at this point in the fin-de-siècle milieu that the first ‘intellectual generation’ emerges.

The Dreyfus generation was the first generation of left-wing public intellectuals in France who identified themselves as such. Moreover, the period saw the modern birth of extreme left and right political movements in France, as well as a widening of the gap between the sacred and the secular. This divided France, presided over by an intellectual class of elites, would exercise influence on the Fourvière Jesuits through the cultural memory of this generation.

To conclude, generational consciousness was born in many ways as a product of Kantian criticism, the French Revolution, and Darwinian thought, which all gave a character of change and impermanence to modern life. Moreover, the political upheavals in France upended the sense of stability, and urban youth began identifying themselves collectively.

1.3 Twentieth-Century French Intellectual Generations

French generational theorist Michel Winock has made significant contributions to the study of modern French history by using the concept of generation to understand better the formation and development of French intellectuals in the twentieth century and their generational consciousness.²⁸ He has proposed the existence of eight intellectual generations from the beginning of the century to the 1970s. The first four correspond to

²⁷ Burnett, *Generations*, 28.

²⁸ For some of Michel Winock’s contributions to a generational approach to modern French intellectual history, see *L’Effet de generation : Une brève histoire des intellectuels français* (Paris: Thierry Marchaisse, 2011); *Le Siècle des intellectuels* (Paris : Seuil, 1999); and ‘Les Générations intellectuelles’, *Vingtième Siècle* 22 (1989): 17-38.

the wider period treated in this thesis, and I shall use them as a guide in the following survey of the emerging sense of generational consciousness. This survey will provide a useful historical overview of certain aspects of the period that shaped the members of the *nouvelle théologie*. It will chart the rise of generational consciousness in French intellectual circles, as it became more than just a vague awareness of certain intergenerational differences, but rather an effective ideological tool used by certain intellectual activists (sometimes called ‘generationalists’ by theorists) to harness the sentiments of the young and coalesce certain youth movements around antagonism toward the preceding generation. Moreover, it will also provide an opportunity to examine a number of historical works that have successfully employed generational theory as an interpretive mechanism within the context of the historical narrative they propose to study.

To prevent confusion, we should state that, although there is broad agreement concerning the existence of these particular generations, they are named in different ways. For example, a generation can be identified according to their years of birth, such as the ‘generation of 1890’, which could cover those born between roughly 1880 and 1895. Alternatively, the same generation can be identified according to the years in which intellectual maturity was reached or in which those particular events that shaped the generation took place. Again, generations can be identified not by numerical years, but rather by titles, such as the ‘generation of crisis’.

These four generations—the ‘generation of Dreyfus’, the ‘generation of Agathon’, the ‘generation of fire’, and the ‘generation of crisis’—were closely related by both age and circumstance and shared an extraordinary period of French history which saw centuries of bloodshed and political unrest compressed into several decades. These brief generational portraits will illustrate the growing sense of crisis and social dislocation that would ultimately reach their apogee with the ‘generation of crisis’ which came of age in

the early 1930s. Each provided an important genetic element to the cultural blueprint that would shape the *nouvelle théologie*.

1. *La Génération de l'affaire Dreyfus*

The generation of the Dreyfus Affair came of age and into the public spotlight in the fin-de-siècle era of the French Third Republic, an era commonly associated with the birth of the avant-garde intellectual movement that would dominate French culture throughout the twentieth century. The origins of the avant-garde are often traced to the controversy surrounding the Dreyfus Affair in the waning years of the nineteenth century, which saw a Jewish officer in the French military, Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), falsely accused of treason. The affair bitterly divided the country and left its residue in the consciousness of the French people for decades.

The development of generational consciousness amongst the avant-garde French elites has been examined in Venita Datta's *Birth of a National Icon: The Literary Avant-Garde and the Origins of the Intellectual in France*. Datta singles out the 'generation of 1890' (named according to their coming of age) as the first generation of French intellectuals to gain a collective self-realization and understand their role in terms of 'vocation'.²⁹ Datta writes:

The generation of 1890 was the first official 'intellectual' generation, the first generation of intellectuals to view itself as a sociological group with a role to play in French society. Its history is inextricably linked to the cultural and political history of the period. A generational portrait of the young men of 1890, who were highly self-conscious of their historical role at a pivotal time in French history, sheds light on the working of the intellectual milieu and its relationship to the world of politics...[and] the emergence of the intellectual as a figure in the age of mass democracy.³⁰

As a means of exploring the social connections that bound the generation of 1890 together, Datta examines the role that emergent avant-garde journals played in the

²⁹ Datta, *National Icon*, 9.

³⁰ Datta, *National Icon*, 40.

formation and popularisation of the identity of the intellectual elites, and she charts the correspondence between the birth of this first ‘intellectual generation’ and the struggle to realize a national identity in the modern world.³¹ She writes:

Marked by great change, the fin de siècle was a time of cultural crisis. The works of writers and artists of this period reflect the contemporary fear of the manifestations of modernity, which included the emergences of mass democracy, the growth of cities, the rise of the working class, and the entry into public life of Jews and women. France in particular was haunted by the loss of national honor, in light of both defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the precipitous decline of the national birth-rate.³²

In 1891, Jules Huret began his influential *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire*, which comprised interviews with sixty-four prominent writers, such as Émile Zola (1840-1902) and Maurice Barrès (1862-1923), in order to determine the state of French literature. What emerged was a complex of social connections and controversies around movements such as positivism, symbolism, naturalism and anarchism, which constituted a ‘Republic of letters’ in which the writers ‘clearly felt a sense of belonging to a sociological group’.³³ Huret’s piece introduced the writers of this generation of 1890 to the public as well as to their intellectual elders.³⁴

For this generation, its identity had become synonymous with generational rebellion, where ‘youth’ conceived their place in the world collectively in terms of a struggle against the older generation.³⁵

To struggle against the older generation, therefore, became the duty of all men who identified themselves with the cause of the future. The cultural and political history of the nineteenth century shows a steady escalation in the rhetorical violence and determination with which this struggle was waged. The writers of the Sturm und Drang, the French Romantics of 1830, young Italy, young Germany, the Russian revolutionary youth described by Turgenev and Dostoyevsky, and Nietzsche and his followers had prepared and prefigured the system of discourse with which the generation of 1914 would discover and describe itself. Hence in 1900 there was a ready-made language of political and cultural combat that

³¹ Datta, *National Icon*, 63.

³² Datta, *National Icon*, 63.

³³ Datta, *National Icon*, 46.

³⁴ Datta, *National Icon*, 17.

³⁵ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 205.

predisposed European intellectuals to think in generational terms. The young generation had become a tradition.³⁶

Much of the antagonism between the generation of 1890 and its forebears was fuelled by Barrès, nicknamed the ‘Prince of Youth’, who was the most important generationalist of his day.³⁷ Barrès’s most famous novel, *Les Desracinés*, depicts the lives of seven provincial youth. Detached from a strong sense of traditional morality by a Kantian schoolteacher, the story chronicles their move to Paris and subsequent attempt to navigate the complexities of modern life. Wohl, describing the story as a ‘generation portrait’, writes:

Intuiting and brilliantly exploiting the ambiguities inherent in the pronoun *we*, [Barrès] had denounced the generation of his elders, spoken to and for youth, stated as an indisputable law that no one could really be understood by the previous generation, and depicted his generation as sacrificed, sterile and lost, adding that it had a special and unique mission to fulfil. He had also rediscovered the importance of nation, come to a new appreciation of the role of faith and traditional hierarchies, and denounced the materialistic and corrupt mores of the parliamentary Republic.³⁸

At the heart of this generational consciousness is a sense of ‘discontinuity and disassociation from the past’, which leads to an apprehension for the young generation that only two plausible alternatives exist: either to

hurry forward to a new world or seek to return to the old. In either case, the young men of today—that is, the young generation—are lost by definition. Their mission can only be to prepare the way and to build for their successors. Hence the spokesmen for the present generation, once they begin to think of themselves as belonging to a generation, will represent themselves and their coevals as unique, lost, sacrificed, and charged by history with a separate task.³⁹

Charles Péguy (1873-1914), a French poet, essayist and Catholic convert, exemplified this mentality and viewed his generation as a ‘sacrificed generation’ that would atone for the mediocrity of the previous generation with a blood offering. His generation, he wrote, was burdened with a great redemptive mission: ‘We are the last.

³⁶ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 205.

³⁷ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 39.

³⁸ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 39.

³⁹ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 39.

Almost beyond the last. Immediately after us begins another age, a quite different world, the world of those who no longer believe in anything; those for whom this is a source of pride and glory.’⁴⁰ Péguy was convinced that his generation would be forced to atone for the weakness and decadence of its predecessors. We are, he wrote, a ‘generation that was sacrificed. We are not only beaten men, a beaten generation... But our defeat is the worst of all, an obscure defeat, and we shall not even be despised: we shall be unknown... We shall never be great; we shall never be known.’⁴¹

Péguy’s harsh criticism of French decadence, however, belied his belief that the greatness of French culture could not be extinguished forever and would in fact be reignited in the mysticism of future generations: ‘The following generation, the generation coming after that which comes immediately after us, and which will soon be the generation of our children, will at last be a generation of mystics.’⁴² For Winock, Péguy embodied this generation of the Dreyfus Affair more than any other. Péguy, a socialist, nationalist and ardent *dreyfusard*, was profoundly aware of the generational identity he shared with his peers.⁴³ Other members of this generation, born around 1870, were Julien Benda (1867-1956), André Gide (1869-1951), Marcel Proust (1871-1922), and Léon Blum (1872-1950). This generation is considered by French historians to be the first ‘intellectual generation’.

2. *La Génération d’Agathon*

The generation of Agathon, also called the generation of 1912, was born roughly between 1880 and 1890 made its impact in the years before the First World War. It was characterized by a number of works that attempted to mobilize the youth by inciting in

⁴⁰ Charles Péguy, *Charles Péguy: Basic Verities, Prose and Poetry*, trans. Ann and Julian Green (New York NY: Pantheon Books, 1943), 103.

⁴¹ Péguy is quoted in Ronald Thomas Sussex, *The Sacrificed Generation: Studies of Charles Péguy, Ernest Psichari and Alain-Fournier* (Townsville: James Cook University of North Queensland, 1980), 28.

⁴² Péguy, *Basic Verities*, 105.

⁴³ Winock, ‘Les Générations intellectuelles’, 20.

them a sense of generational mission. ‘Agathon’ was the pseudonym of two young intellectuals, Henri Massis (1886-1970) and Alfred de Tarde (1880-1925). Wohl writes that by the time of Agathon ‘generational portraiture and polemic had reached the status of literary genre; and that like all literary genres, the generational manifesto had its rules, its structures, its themes.’⁴⁴ The year 1913 saw the release of three generational manifestos: *A quoi rêvent les jeunes gens* by Emile Henriot, *Aux écoutes de la France qui vient* by Gaston Rioux, and the most influential, an *enquête* published by Massis and de Tarde, who had been heavily influenced by Barrès’s call to youth. They authored a series of anonymous articles in the Parisian journal *L’Opinion* under the pseudonym ‘Agathon’, entitled *Les Jeunes gens d’aujourd’hui*. ‘Agathon’ sought to appeal to the ‘young men of today’ by excoriating the decadence of their predecessors in the ‘generation of 1885’ (referred to above as the ‘generation of 1890’). The generation of 1885 had been ‘pessimistic, self-doubting, morally flabby, overly intellectual and introspective, relativistic, incapable of energetic action, lacking faith, obsessed with decadence, and ready to accept the defeat and eclipse of their country.’⁴⁵ In contrast, they wrote that the ‘man of today’ was energetic, ready for action, and intensely nationalistic. He was spiritual, inclined to the outdoors, sought after absolutes, and often had anti-republican sympathies.⁴⁶ This was the first intellectual generation to define itself over against the previous generation in a systematic way that was central to their critique of society.

The revival of religious and metaphysical questions for this generation influenced the work of a number of important Catholic writers, philosophers and intellectuals, such as Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), Ernest Psichari (1883-1914), Georges Bernanos (1888-1948), and Gabriel Marcel (1888-1973). Philippe Chenaux has examined these thinkers, all of whom were converts except Bernanos, who played a vital role in the development of

⁴⁴ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 39.

⁴⁵ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 8.

⁴⁶ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 9.

Catholic life in the interwar period. His *Entre Maurras et Maritain: Une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)* tells the story of the alliance between Maritain and the Catholic intellectual *convertis* and their allegiance to the Leonine Thomistic revival and the anti-democratic nationalist movement founded by Charles Maurras, *Action française*.⁴⁷ This generation of intellectuals was caught between the Maurras—Maritain split that occurred when the latter renounced the group after the official condemnation of *Action française* in 1926 by Pope Pius XI. Maritain condemned the Maurrassian doctrine, which had given primacy to the political realm over the spiritual, in his book *Primauté du spirituel*. This ecclesial crisis was so severe that Chenaux describes it as ‘something like a new Dreyfus Affaire’.⁴⁸

3. *La Génération du Feu*

With the generational ground prepared by intellectuals of the Dreyfus and Agathon eras, the First World War marked the beginning of a more widespread generational consciousness in the generation of fire, also called the ‘tragic generation’, the ‘lost generation’, the ‘War generation’, and ‘the *génération sacrifiée*’.⁴⁹ This was the generation in which generational consciousness and identity were ‘democratized’. For the first time the working-class experienced generational consciousness in a profound way, together with the intellectual elites. The youth of 1914-18 were the first ‘people’s generation’.⁵⁰

The Great War led to a widespread application of the concept [of generation] to the working class as well as upper class off-spring, albeit within the confines of paradigms of nationhood, and to a model of generations was a mass, national and

⁴⁷ Philippe Cheneux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain. Une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)* (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

⁴⁸ Philippe Chenaux, ‘*Humanisme intégral*’ (1936) de Jacques Maritain (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 23.

⁴⁹ Burnett, *Generations*, 59.

⁵⁰ Burnett, *Generations*, 59.

historically significant cohorts firmly rooted in the social world. Finally, ordinary people could lay claim to a generation as their own.⁵¹

The War holds a prominent place not only for the development of generational consciousness but also for our purposes, as it significantly influenced the generation of the *nouvelle théologie*. De Lubac himself fought in the war, along with Teilhard de Chardin, Étienne Gilson, Rousselot and Péguy. The other *nouveaux théologiens*, although not actively involved, came of age during the war and its aftermath.

Given the wide range of ages of men who served in the War, Wohl recognizes the difficulty of assigning them a single generational identity. Instead, he finds three waves that were shaped by it: those who went to war having already come of age intellectually, those who came of age in the trenches at seventeen or eighteen, and those who were too young to have fought but were nonetheless shaped by it. This distinction is important, because the young soldiers who went to war at seventeen had little in common with those who were sometimes their seniors by twenty years. De Lubac went to war at seventeen, while Péguy was already forty-one; undoubtedly, de Lubac was closer culturally and intellectually to the generation that was formed by the war but remained too young to fight.⁵²

Winock recognizes the wider implications for generational theory: important events are never the sole concern of a single generation. There is a multigenerational dimension to most events. However, that does not mean that all individuals or generations are touched in the same way by events experienced in common. Winock writes that the young are hit with the full force of a crisis during the '*période de réceptivité*' that

⁵¹ Burnett, *Generations*, 59.

⁵² For references on the French post-war works that attempted to resolve the difficulties of positing a single war generation, see Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 244, note 34; Jon Savage offers a more detailed analysis of this inter-generational war-time dynamic in *Teenage: The Creation of Youth* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 185.

characterizes the awakening of their political consciousness. It is at this moment that a new generation is constituted.⁵³

The struggle to win the generational identity of the youth that began with Barrès and Agathon only increased during the last years of the war and the post-war period. Massis, eulogizing Péguy and the writer Psichari, who had also perished in the war, authored *Le Sacrifice, 1914-1916* in 1917.⁵⁴ He wrote: ‘There are few generations who entered into life with such a feeling of renunciation, of humility. [This generation] knew well in advance why it was born, and this is the meaning of the words that were said by one of our men: “We are a sacrificed generation.”’⁵⁵

4. *La Génération de la Crise*

Called ‘*la grande génération du siècle*’, this generation has been much studied, and from this research has emerged the idea of ‘*l’esprit des années 30*’.⁵⁶ The members of this generation, which fought in the First World War as young men in their later teens or came of age during its devastation, emerged into prominence in the decade of the 1930s. It is known as the ‘generation of 1905’, the ‘generation of 1930’, the ‘generation of 1933’, and the ‘generation of crisis’. It is known as the generation of 1905, because its cohort was born between 1895 and 1910, and some call it the generation of 1930 or 1933, according to the years of this or that interwar crisis which they lived through. It is the generation of the *nouvelle théologie*.

This generation experienced an almost interminable series of crises from adolescence onwards: the First World War, the Great Depression, the rise of Communism

⁵³ Winock, ‘Les Générations Intellectuelles’, 18.

⁵⁴ Henri Massis, *Le Sacrifice, 1914-16* (Paris: Plon).

⁵⁵ Massis, *Le Sacrifice*, 7.

⁵⁶ Jean-Louis del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années 30: Une Tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (Paris: Seuil, 1969); Jean Touchard, ‘L’Esprit des années 1930: Une Tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française’, in *Tendances politiques de la vie française depuis 1789* (Paris: Hachette, 1960), 89-118; Pierre Andreu, *Révoltes de l’esprit. Les revues des années 30* (Paris: Kimé, 1991); Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995).

and fascism, and the Second World War. They had a sense that France, and even Western Civilization, had spent itself and remained in a perpetual state of upheaval, and nothing short of revolution would satisfy the need for an '*ordre nouveau*'. The great historian Henri Marrou (1904-1977), also a member of this generation, summed up this deep sentiment of helplessness in 1932 in the opening words of his book *Crise de la culture*:

I write this book at twenty-eight years of age. I am the eldest of nearly all my companions. I was fifteen years old on the day of the armistice. We are the generation *de l'après-guerre*... We have grown up during the 1920's, and this troubled Europe has not yet felt peace. We live in an atmosphere of Apocalypse; we see on all sides cracks that seem to announce the end of the world. We wait for catastrophe: the revolution or the end of the world. No one knows exactly which.⁵⁷

What united this generation, according to Winock, was the notion of '*révolution*', and 'they used [this notion] to signify their *esprit de révolte* against a society they judged to be indefensible.'⁵⁸ The Catholic intellectual Jean de Fabrègues (1906-1983) wrote: 'In fact the revolution has begun. *Les équipes de remplacement* have prepared themselves. Henceforth, therefore, it will be for us to push men to rise up against an inhuman false order, against a veritable disorder.'⁵⁹ According to Ulrich Herbert, the men of this generation had

belonged to a generation that had grown up during the First World War, but had had their politically formative experiences in the chaotic years immediately following the war. These experiences proved to be so impressive that they produced, particularly in the male middle class youth, the widely disbursed self-consciousness of an age group that distinguished itself sharply from other generations. The individual lives were connected by a collective acknowledgement, which drew together their experiences into the categories and value patterns of their 'political generation.'⁶⁰

Intellectual historians discuss this generation's emergence in the decade of the 1930s in terms of three broad political movements: right, left and centre. The extreme right

⁵⁷ Henri Marrou, *Crise de notre temps et réflexion chrétienne: de 1930 à 1975* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1978), 33.

⁵⁸ Winock, 'Les Générations intellectuelles', 26.

⁵⁹ Jean de Fabrègues, 'Nos adversaires et nos voisins', *La Revue du siècle* 10 (1934).

⁶⁰ Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung, und Vernunft, 1903-1989* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), 522, quoted in Michael Wildt, 'Generational Experience and Genocide', in *Biography: Between Structure and Agency*, eds. Volker Berghahn and Simone Lässig (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 148.

included such proponents of nationalism as Robert Brasillach (1909-1945), while Communists on the far left included Jean-Paul Sartre (1904-1980), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Paul Nizan (1905-1940), Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968), and André Malraux (1901-1976). A third way, which attempted to navigate between these two poles, was led by a group that has been called *les non-conformistes* since the groundbreaking work of the same name by Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle. The *non-conformistes*, whom I shall examine in Chapter Four, were a group of intellectuals gathered around the Catholic philosopher Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) and the journal *Esprit*. Other members of this group included Henri Daniel-Rops (1901-1965), Georges Izard (1903-1973) and Marrou. Beyond these political categories were situated other intellectuals such as Raymond Aron (1905-1983), Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968), Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), Maurice Blanchot (1907-2003), Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), Albert Camus (1913-1960), Jean Grenier (1898-1971), Georges Bataille (1897-1962), André Breton (1896-1966) and Louis Aragon (1897-1982).

Numerous attempts were made by intellectuals to continue the work of Agathon by uniting youth sentiment around a generational and political cause. Jean Luchaire (1901-1946), a journalist and politician, founded the weekly *Notre Temps: Les Revue des nouvelles generations* in 1927 in order to unite this generation around a common identity. Devoting space to a series called '*querelle des generations et crise des démocraties*', Luchaire wrote:

A generation is an assembly of humans marked by a great event or a series of great events. Or, with a few rare exceptions, it is a spirit fundamentally marked by a single influential event—to the exclusion of all others. That is to say, the defining event occurred at a time when the spirit was still unscathed by earlier essential pristine impressions.⁶¹

⁶¹ Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle: effets*, 9.

Like Agathon before him, his generation's identity, he insisted, was rooted in antagonism toward the older generations that had come of age before the First World War. The War had imprinted upon the generation of 1930 a great sense of their own generational identity. The French writer Benjamin Crémieux had noted as early as 1926: 'As a consequence of the war, the notion of generation has taken on a sudden lively significance and seems to have a certain new resonance'.⁶² Luchaire argued that an unbridgeable gap existed between 'those who lived before [the War], impregnated by a past heavy with traditions and diverse mysticisms, and those who, coming afterwards, cannot permit themselves to be guided by the intellectual values, ideals and politics accepted before the First World War.'⁶³ His generation, he wrote, 'was born to collective life on the same day. This day was 2 August 1914.'⁶⁴ *Notre Temps* dedicated itself to calling the younger generation 'to preserve themselves from compromising and divisive alliances with their elders.'⁶⁵

French historian Jean Touchard, in his landmark study of the 'spirit of the 1930s', underscored this picture, writing that 'in 1930, a ditch separated those who fought in the war and those who did not, and those who fought it adopted a *mentalité de ancien combattant*'.⁶⁶ The new generation felt deeply that the older generation, Winock's 'génération du feu', which fought in the First World War, had sold them out, acquiesced to a stale nationalism and patriotism after the war, and perpetuated materialistic attitudes that fundamentally uprooted the human *esprit*. Henri Lefebvre wrote:

The veterans demanded for themselves the places, the honours, the rewards, the glory, the women, all while throwing in the balance, with their *titres de souffrance*, the most narrow patriotisms and the most ridiculous conformism. Our shame for the veterans knew no bounds... Never, possibly, had been a generational conflict been so acute, also mingled with other conflicts in other domains.⁶⁷

⁶² Benjamin Crémieux is quoted in Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes*, 31.

⁶³ Luchaire is quoted in Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, 34 and 247.

⁶⁴ Jean Luchaire, *Une Génération réaliste* (Paris: Librairie Valois, 1929), 8.

⁶⁵ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 34.

⁶⁶ Touchard, 'L'Esprit', 97-98.

⁶⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *La Somme et le reste* (Paris: Nef de Paris, 1959), 374-75.

The *Nouvelle Théologie*:

A Theological Cohort of the Generation of 1930

The *nouveaux théologiens* were very much apart of the generation of 1930, and all four central *ressourcement* theologians were born within the fifteen-year span of 1895 to 1910, as well as being born within 250 kilometres of Paris. Chenu was born in 1895 in Soisy-sur-Seine, in Île-de-France. De Lubac was born in 1896 in Cambrai, just south of the Belgian border. Congar was born in 1904 in Sedan, also close to Belgium, and Daniélou was born in 1905 in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine. The Fourvière Jesuits other than de Lubac and Daniélou were born during the same period: d'Ouince (1896-1973), Fessard (1897-1978), de Montcheuil (1900-1944), Chaillet (1900-1972), and Bouillard (1908-1981). These Jesuits follow the same pattern of formation (1920s), intellectual emergence (1930s), and cultural prominence (1940s), as in most other prominent intellectuals of their generation.

Having established generational location, I suggest there are reasons to think the *nouveaux théologiens*, or even the Fourvière Jesuits among them, may be viewed as a particular generational unit. The *nouveaux théologiens* shared a particular common heritage, Catholic priesthood and theology, but more specifically, the history, intellectual culture, and social networks of their respective religious orders and the theologates where they received their formation, the Jesuits at Fourvière in Lyon and the Dominicans at Le Saulchoir in Belgium. Beyond the common life they shared at their theologates, they shared a certain attitude towards the Church in regards to its relationship with the modern world.

Finally, I suggest it is likely that this theological generation of 1930 would have been 'actualized' by the same series of crises and catastrophes that formed the larger generation of crisis. They too came of age during the First World War and were profoundly aware of their own generational identity, marked by a sense of total crisis.

Like the wider French intellectual world of the 1930s, they too would have been taken up with this sense of crisis. A generational portrait in the later chapters of this thesis will show that the thinkers of the *nouvelle théologie* were in fact deeply stamped by these cultural influences and post-war sentiments.

In summary, the generation of 1930 has been a special object of generational study, and in Sirinelli's treatment of the generation at the *École normale*, he provides a methodology attentive to biography, structures of sociability, and generational theory. Moreover, we have suggested that the *nouveaux théologiens* are very much a part of the generation of 1930, and in fact the Fourvière Jesuits constitute a particular unit of the generation, and are thus suitable for generational study.

Sirinelli insists that in seeking to uncover these structures of the modern intellectual milieu, the historian must develop an 'archaeology of social networks' which searches for 'solidarities of age, social origins and study'. These networks might include, for example, institutions, journals, political movements, relationships and affiliations. The first task of this 'archaeology' is to 'reassemble those young student years where friendships are forged easily and influences exert themselves on soft ground. In particular, this retrospective approach, this rise toward the sources of the intellectual and political awakening, allows also for a marking out on a *carte de l'esprit* the intersections where mentors stood, as well as other *éveilleurs* ["intellectuals awakeners"] whose influence is less known but nonetheless remains profound'.⁶⁸

Conclusion

This chapter examined the modern generations that have defined and shaped French avant-garde culture, so as to provide intellectual and political context for a generational study of the Fourvière Jesuits. This approach will address the shortcomings in the literature that I

⁶⁸ Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle: khâgneux*, 12.

identified as vertical, or lacking sufficient connection with Catholic Modernism, and horizontal, that is, lacking sufficient connection to the larger culture. Moreover, generational theory is closely linked with the rise of generational consciousness, which began to emerge with political and philosophical developments in the late eighteenth. This generational consciousness culminated with the rise of certain self-identified French intellectual generations a century later, and we discussed four, the generations of Dreyfus, Agathon, Fire, and Crisis. These intellectual generations identified themselves over and against their elders, whom they held responsible for the ills of society. They used generational consciousness as an ideological tool and ascribed to themselves an intellectual vocation, a mission to engage in a collective struggle ‘for the cause of the future’. Karl Mannheim provided a suitable methodology, based on location, unit, and actuality, to analyse a particular generation, which coalesces around a crisis. Finally, having proposed that the *nouvelle* theologians are suitable for generational study, we shall carry out this study in the remainder of the thesis. Each chapter will undertake a different aspect of generational study. Chapter Two will examine the ‘sedimented generations’ between 1890 and 1914 which were formative for the Fourvière Jesuits and helped shape them as a generational unit. Chapter Three will examine the structures of sociability of the student years of the 1920s, where they first begin to develop as a particular generational unit. Chapter Four will undertake an investigation of the years of the 1930s when the generation of 1930 first emerged on the stage of French intellectual life and began to develop their programme as a response to the larger questions that were raised. Chapter Five will examine how the generation of 1930 rose to the forefront of French intellectual life in the 1940s, through their participation in the resistance, and articulated a broad programme of anthropological and sociopolitical reform.

CHAPTER 2

1893-1914: SEDIMENTED GENERATIONS IN A DIVIDED FRANCE

This chapter will begin to apply generational theory to the Fourvière Jesuits by examining the previous generations that were influential in shaping them. Sedimentation theory, the notion that common experience, previous national trauma, and certain intellectual and cultural impulses are transmitted genetically through previous generations, will help us to see how they influenced the philosophical, theological, and political development of the Jesuits. We shall examine four generational units. I shall discuss the intellectuals belonging to the generation of 1890 (Dreyfus) involved in the Dreyfus affair, the Catholic Modernists, and some Jesuits involved in the crisis led by Léonce de Grandmaison. Finally, I shall examine a younger Jesuit unit of the generation of 1912 (Agathon) led by Pierre Rousselot. Each of these generational units will contribute something important to the genetic blueprint of the Fourvière Jesuits. This approach will allow for a stronger connection to be made between these Jesuits and the Modernists, which will be examined more closely in the next chapter.

2.1 The Dreyfus Generation: A Divided France

The period from 1890 to 1914, called ‘the childhood of our era’, saw sweeping changes in French Society, Politics and the Church that were underscored by Péguy’s declaration in 1913 that ‘the world has changed less since Jesus Christ than it has in the last thirty years.’⁶⁹ Despite rapid economic, industrial, and technological transformation, the period is usually characterized as fraught with pessimism, angst, and a sense of *décadence*.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁹ Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant Garde in France, 1885 to World War I* (New York NY: Vintage Books, 1968), 3; Charles Péguy, quoted in Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, 1.

⁷⁰ For some of the best recent general histories of modern France, see Charles Sowerwine, *France Since 1870: Culture, Society and the Making of the Republic* (New York NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and

1889 centennial of the French Revolution marked an era of intense discord. The Revolution was succeeded by the Napoleonic Empire, revolutions in 1830 and 1848, several periods of monarchical restoration, the Franco-Prussian War, and the brutal violence surrounding the Paris Commune. Established in 1870, the Third Republic had survived but had also deeply divided French sentiment, perpetuating the notion of '*Les deux France*'. On the left stood supporters of the Republic who championed progress, reason, and the principles of the Enlightenment and the Revolution. The right, dominated by those loyal to the Church, the military, and the monarchy, remained distrustful of any notion of progress.⁷¹ Louis-Napoleon had once aptly remarked: 'We make revolutions in France, not reforms.'⁷²

In 1894 these divisions were enflamed when a Jewish officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was wrongly convicted of treason. Émile Zola, in his famous manifesto, '*J'Accuse!*', condemned the conviction, portraying it as part of the great humanist struggle ushered in by the Revolution and rooted in the 'rights of man': 'I am not fighting for a rich *bourgeois*, but for liberty, and for the free development of our great and noble France against a conspiracy of mighty foes—militarism and the Catholic Church allied to the remnants of the old feudal aristocracy. My fight is a continuation in the direct line of the French Revolution.'⁷³ The *anti-Dreyfusards*—comprised of Catholics, monarchists, anti-Semites, and supporters of the military—were incensed by Zola's article and his encroachment on the values of traditional France: 'Mobs paraded through the streets, manifesting. Zola was burnt in effigy and hurled into the Seine. The *Libre Parole* called

Maurice Agulhon, *The French Republic: 1879-1992*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); and for the sense of decadence, see K.W. Swart, *The Sense of Decadence of Nineteenth Century France* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1964), 139.

⁷¹ Maurice Larkin, *Religion, Politics and Preferment: La Belle Époque and its Legacy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

⁷² Alistair Horne, *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune of 1870-71* (London: The Reprint Society, 1967), 24.

⁷³ James D. Young, *Socialism Since 1889: A Biographical History* (Totowa NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988), 109.

fearlessly for the sacking of his house, for his assassination. The rest of the press demanded variously his trial, incarceration, or execution. He had “insulted the army”—so he had—the government, the whole nation.’⁷⁴

To conclude, there were three primary effects of the crisis that will feature in the cultural memory that the Fourvière Jesuits receive. First, the modern legacy of French extremism was born, as exemplified by Charles Maurras’s 1899 founding of the right-wing group *Action française*. He proclaimed: ‘for the continuance and progress of a threatened civilization, all hopes float on the ship of a Counter-Revolution’.⁷⁵ Secondly, the divide between the secular and the sacred was deepened in the 1905 anticlerical backlash that established an official programme of secularism, or *laïcité*, declaring all religious buildings the property of the State and terminating state funding for religious groups. Thirdly, the identity of the national community of France itself became a major point of contention among intellectuals, as different factions articulated vastly different communitarian visions. Finally, the phenomenon was born whereby powerful French intellectual classes, largely left-wing and generational, exercised an enormous influence on the national discourse.⁷⁶ Piers Paul Reed writes that Zola’s manifesto was ‘the first mobilisation in modern times of scholars, writers and artists as a force shaping public opinion... Lucien Herr, the librarian at the *École normale supérieure*, circulated the petition among the scientists and scholars at their institutions. The net was extended by younger writers such as Marcel Proust who went around Paris collecting signatures. “I was

⁷⁴ Matthew Josephson, *Zola and His Times* (New York NY: Macaulay Co., 1928), 445.

⁷⁵ Neil Foxlee, *Albert Camus’s ‘The New Mediterranean Culture’: A Text and Its Contents* (New York NY: Peter Lang, 2010), 150; Bryon Criddle, *Socialists and European Integration: A Study of the French Socialist Party* (London: Routledge, 1969), 10.

⁷⁶ M.B. DeBevoise, Lawrence Kritzman, and Brian Reilly, *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 364-65.

the first Dreyfusard,” Proust would later claim, “for it was I who went to ask Anatole France for his signature.”⁷⁷

2.2 The Modernist Generation: A Divided Church

A second unit of the generation of 1890 was that of the Catholic Modernists, a small group of theologians and philosophers who aligned their cause broadly with that of the Dreyfus intellectuals as they sought to open the Church to modernity. Composed primarily of five figures, Alfred Loisy (1857-1940), George Tyrrell (1861-1909), Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), Lucien Laberthonnière (1860-1932), and Édouard Le Roy (1870-1954),⁷⁸ Bouillard wrote that this generation was one of the richest in the history of French culture: ‘It is approximately the generation of Barrès, Gide, Proust, Péguy, and Claudel, of Matisse and Roualt, of Ravel and Debussy, of Bergson and Brunschvicg.’⁷⁹ Maurice Blondel described the intellectual backdrop of this generation as

a milieu in which one vacillated from dilettantism to scientism, where Russian neo-christianism clashed with the rigorous virtuosity of radical German idealism; where in art and literature, as in philosophy not to say in religious pedagogy itself, the notional, the formal, even the unreal seemed to triumph; where the very efforts that one made to reopen the sources of a profound life and of a fresh art ended only in symbolism, without succeeding in rehabilitating the concrete, the direct, the singular, the incarnate, the living letter which takes the whole human composite, a sacramental practice which introduces into our veins a spirit more spiritual than our spirit, a popular common sense and Catholic realism.⁸⁰

Lasting from 1893 to 1914, the movement crested in 1904, diminishing only with its condemnation by Pius X’s encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* in 1907.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Piers Paul Read, ‘Dreyfus and the Birth of Intellectual Protest’, *Standpoint*, January/February 2012, <http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/4256/full/>.

⁷⁸ I do not mean to ignore other influential Modernists, such as Ernesto Buonaiuti, Freidrich von Hügel, and Henri Bremond, but rather to discuss the central French figures whose work is representative of the movement as a whole.

⁷⁹ Henri Bouillard, ‘The Thought of Maurice Blondel: A Synoptic View’, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (1963): 392.

⁸⁰ Frédéric Lefèvre, *L’Itinéraire philosophique de Maurice Blondel* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1966), quoted in Phyllis Kaminski, ‘Seeking Transcendence in the Modern World’, in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 119.

⁸¹ Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Encyclical letter on the Doctrine of the Modernists (8 September 1907), *AAS* xl (1907), 593-650; Vatican Web site,

The Modernists were responding to the widespread use of the historical method and Kantian philosophy. The historical method, which had been central to nineteenth-century Protestant theology, provided a supposedly scientific methodology to examine the Bible historically as literature, abandoning preconceived notions, inherited traditions, unscientific superstition, and supposedly infallible dogmatic statements. Kantian philosophy was perceived as claiming that categorical knowledge is unable to meet the empirical demands of *Wissenschaft*, and metaphysics is left to explore the existence of subjective a priori categories which merely organize disparate, chaotic sense data. Purporting to have disproved both the ontological and cosmological proofs, Kant claimed that speculative knowledge of God was impossible, and religious knowledge is relegated to the practical. The doctrine of immanence emerged from this, which holds that the search for religious truth cannot commence in things exterior to the mind, such as the natural world or objectively revealed trans-historical dogmas, rather only from within the field of subjectivity.

Against this background, Modernists claimed that despite certain problematic conclusions, Kant's fundamental critique was an advance which could be useful in the development of a modern apologetics. The epistemological realism and posteriori reflection of Scholasticism turned God into an object and was unable to meet the demands of modern thought and religious experience. Neoscholastics claimed, however, that beyond merely an immanent apologetic starting point, the Kantian unseating of objective truth claims and real categorical knowledge severely destabilized the notion of dogma itself, which was further destabilized by the application of the historical method.

Finally, as we shall see, certain Modernists were drawn, at various points, into the national political crisis we examined in the previous section and attempted to articulate

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis_en.html.

various communitarian visions for how the Church should related to the world and overcome the divide between the secular and the sacred that was so profound.

The Classical Narrative

Beneath these specific historicist and philosophical appropriations lay a more fundamental disagreement over the question of modernity itself. Rather than condemn modern thought in its entirety, the Modernists shifted the blame for the very problem of modernity on to the Church itself. To contextualize this move, we shall first review the traditional declension narrative by which the Church had understood the fundamental problems with modernity. We shall call this the ‘Classical Narrative’. John Milbank calls this position ‘classical orthodoxy’ and writes that its defenders

trace secularity simply to a poor use of reason and regard the scholastic legacy, mainly in its ‘Thomistic’ form, as sustaining a true use of reason to this very day. The poor use of reason in Ockham, Descartes, Hume and Kant led eventually to skepticism, nihilism and the exaltation of subjective emotion. For religion and theology, therefore, to try to rebuild itself upon this ground is the most dreadful error imaginable. Instead, we must return to the tradition of the manuals and insist that uninflected human reason can prove the existence of the creator God; that reason can demonstrate the likelihood of God giving a revelation; that reason can likewise argue on the basis of “evidences” for the plausibility of the revelation as claimed by scripture and the Church. This rationalist emphasis will alone convincingly oppose secular hegemony.⁸²

The origin of this metanarrative is difficult to date as it seems to have emerged naturally and was held to be true by many on both sides of the struggle between the Church and progressive intellectuals. The essential metanarrative is the same; it is the valuation that differs. Luther, Descartes and Kant are alternately portrayed as both heroes and villains. For the secular position, Luther’s status throughout the *Aufklärung* as the ‘bringer of freedom’ and ‘liberator of conscience’ was manifested in G.E. Lessing’s famous appeal in 1778 to the ‘spirit’ of Luther over and against his actual ‘writings’: ‘Luther’s spirit absolutely requires that no man be prevented from advancing in the knowledge of truth

⁸² Milbank, ‘New Divide’, 28-29. Interestingly, Luther, who usually figures prominently in the ‘classical metanarrative’, is excluded from Milbank’s genealogy.

according to his own judgment.’⁸³ Writing fifty years later, Heinrich Heine argued that the Reformation was the origin for modern thought. Tracing a line from Luther through the rationalists to Lessing and Kant he wrote: ‘I say that Lessing continued the work of Luther. After Luther had emancipated us from the power of tradition and set up the Bible as the only source of Christianity, there arose a frigid literalism, and the letter of the Bible became as great a tyranny as tradition had formerly been. From this tyranny Lessing was our great liberator.’⁸⁴ The apex for Heine occurs, however, with Kant, who brings about an intellectual revolution that parallels the political revolution in France.⁸⁵

For the papacy in the second half of the nineteenth century, this line of development was far from emancipatory. Seeking to restore the ‘true use of reason’ and eradicate Kantian and Romantic thought from its intellectual life, the Church’s response began to emerge with Pius IX’s encyclical *Qui Pluribus* in 1846 and the interventions that followed between 1855 and 1866.⁸⁶ In 1870 the First Vatican Council issued a strident reassertion that knowledge of God is attainable through natural means apart from revelation, and throughout the pontificates of Leo XIII and Pius X, there was a continual intensification of the condemnation of modern thought.⁸⁷ It is, however, with the Leonine

⁸³ G.E. Lessing, *Lessing’s Theological Writing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956), 2.

⁸⁴ Heinrich Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany: A Fragment* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 101.

⁸⁵ Heine, *Religion*, 102. What is also striking is that often versions of this ‘classical metanarrative’ find a correlation between the Reformation and Rousseau or the French Revolution. Two examples, both written in the 1920’s, are: Preserved Smith, *The Age of the Reformation* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1920); and Jacques Maritain, *Trois réformateurs: Luther–Descartes–Rousseau* (Paris: Plon, 1925); *Three Reformers* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1928).

⁸⁶ *Qui Pluribus* was issued at the beginning of the pontificate of Pius and offered a strong condemnation of the modern philosophical thought which sought to bifurcate faith and reason: Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus*, Encyclical letter on faith and religion (9 November 1846), *Acta Pii IX*, §5; Vatican Web site, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quiplus.htm>. Between 1855 and 1866 there was a tremendous campaign against incursions of Cartesian, post-Kantian and Romantic philosophy in the Church. For a detailed account of this, see McCool, Gerald, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York NY: Fordham University Press, 1989), 129-144. For the impact of Kant on the perceived validity of natural theology as well as natural law was significant, see Augustine Dinoia, ‘Theology in Dialogue’, in *Theology after Liberalism*, eds. John Webster and George Schner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 160-162.

⁸⁷ First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius*, Ch. 2, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, II*, ed. Norman Tanner (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1990), 806. For the scholastic influences on the drafting of *Dei Filius*, see McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism*, 216-226.

encyclical *Aeterni Patris* and the restoration of Thomism that the response to the ‘classical metanarrative’ began to be fully articulated. The realist epistemology that Scholastic philosophy provided sought to be a ‘bulwark of faith and a strong defence of religion’ and the most fitting response to a Neo-Kantianism.⁸⁸ In linking the crisis that gripped the nineteenth century with Reformation, Leo XIII wrote:

But that harmful and deplorable passion for innovation, which was aroused in the sixteenth century, threw first of all into confusion the Christian religion, and next, by natural sequence, invaded the precincts of philosophy, whence it spread amongst all classes of society. From this source, as from a fountain-head, burst forth all those later tenets of unbridled license which, in the midst of the terrible upheavals of the last century, were wildly conceived and boldly proclaimed as the principles and foundation of that new conception of law which was not merely previously unknown, but was at variance on many points with not only the Christian, but even the natural law.⁸⁹

One year earlier Leo had invoked Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei* to illustrate the cultural and intellectual crisis:

The race of man, after its miserable fall from God...separated into two diverse and opposite parts, of which the one steadfastly contends for truth and virtue, the other of those things which are contrary to virtue and to truth. The one is the kingdom of God on earth, namely, the true Church of Jesus Christ; and...the other is the kingdom of Satan...This twofold kingdom St. Augustine keenly discerned and described after the manner of two cities...at every period of time each has been in conflict with the other, with a variety and multiplicity of weapons and of warfare, although not always with equal ardor and assault.⁹⁰

The ‘classical metanarrative’ was not hastily constructed in an atmosphere of historical self-scrutiny and ideology. Rather, it was simply an accepted and common historical

⁸⁸ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, Encyclical letter on the restoration of Christian philosophy (4 August 1879), *ASS* 12 (1879), §2; Vatican Web Site, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html.

⁸⁹ Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, Encyclical letter on the Christian constitution of the states (1 November 1885), *ASS* 18 (1885), §23; Vatican Web site, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01111885_immortale-dei_en.html. For further writings of Leo XIII on the causes of secularism, see *Diuturnum Illud*, Encyclical letter on the origin of civil power (29 June 1881), *ASS* 14 (1881), §23; Vatican Web site, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_29061881_diuturnum_en.html.

⁹⁰ Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, Encyclical letter on freemasonry (20 April 1884), *ASS* 16 (1884), §1-2; Vatican Web site, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18840420_humanum-genus_en.html.

interpretation of the time that was generally recognized by many different thinkers in the modern period.

In conclusion, the Modernists sought to open Catholic theology to three fundamental categories: historicity, subjectivity, and communitarianism. Moreover, included in their historical turn was a new metanarrative that placed the blame for modernity on the Church. I shall now illustrate how these three categories manifest themselves in the work of the primary Modernists. First, I shall examine Loisy and Tyrrell, who are often mentioned together as the primary figures in the movement. Then, I shall examine Blondel, Laberthonnière, and Le Roy, whose work and lives often intersected and were especially interested in philosophical issues.

Loisy and Tyrrell

A brilliant biblical scholar, Loisy is considered the father of Catholic Modernism.⁹¹ He became fascinated by liberal biblical criticism, and in 1883 his doctoral thesis was rejected after implying that the character of Scripture was ‘proportioned to the time and the environment’ of its writing.⁹² He questioned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and proposed a more fluid mode of composition of the biblical books. In 1885 he was dismissed from his post at the *Institut catholique*, eventually ceasing to believe in ‘the soul, free will, a future life or a personal God.’⁹³ Loisy radicalized John Henry Newman’s notion of the ‘Christian idea’ as a means of bridging the gap between revelation and the formation of dogmatic truth, and serious controversy began for him after the publication of the ‘Firmin articles’ between 1898 and 1900 and *L’Évangile et l’Église* in 1902.⁹⁴ These

⁹¹ For an introduction to Loisy’s thought, see Aiden Nichols, *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 72.

⁹² Jon Ratté, *Three Modernists* (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1972), 57.

⁹³ Nichols, *Newman to Congar*, 78-79.

⁹⁴ Alfred Loisy, *Prelude to the Modernist Crisis: The ‘Firmin’ Articles of Alfred Loisy*, trans. C.J.T. Talar (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2010); Alfred Loisy, *L’Évangile et l’Église* (Paris: Picard, 1902); *The Gospel and the Church*, trans. Christopher Home (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1976).

were a supposed corrective to the work of liberal Protestant Adolph von Harnack, who desired to continue the Reformation by freeing Christianity from the notion of dogma, which was a later Hellenistic notion foreign to the Gospel. In these works, Loisy proposed that dogmatic formulae are neither immutable nor even ‘adequate and absolutely perfect expressions of supernatural realities.’⁹⁵ Although he agreed that conceptual knowledge is necessary for dogmatic transmission, concepts remain no more than religious symbols constructed by the community as a response to their spiritual experience, and dogmatic formulae are expressions of the community’s desire to harmonize this experience with science. Unlike Newman, who held that dogmatic assertions were latently contained in the Gospels, Loisy denied Christ’s divinity as a historical fact of revelation.⁹⁶ Neither, he declared, did Christ found the Church and its hierarchy, which was merely the community’s reaction to the life of Christ, or was he even conscious of ‘Christianity’, which has no stable inner essence open to individual seekers, as Harnack held.⁹⁷ Rather, it was external, living, historical, and collective. It was constantly developing and manifesting itself in different historical and cultural expressions. In 1903, five of Loisy’s works were put on the Index, and four years later many of Loisy’s theses were condemned, and he was excommunicated the following year. In his later years, he advocated for a vague ‘church of humanity,’ believing the historical Jesus was inaccessible.

The Irish Jesuit George Tyrrell was born in Dublin in 1861 as an Anglican and converted to Catholicism as a teenager, entering the Society of Jesus in 1879. He became a philosophy professor and staunch Thomist. However, under the influence of Baron Friedrich von Hügel, an English Catholic aristocrat and Modernist who introduced him to

⁹⁵ Nichols, *From Newman to Congar*, 89.

⁹⁶ Francisco Turvasi, *The Condemnation of Alfred Loisy and the Historical Method* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1979), 191.

⁹⁷ Ratté, *Three Modernists*, 113.

the historical-critical method of Harnack and Loisy, he moved away from Scholasticism.⁹⁸ Newman's *Essays*, as interpreted by Loisy, pushed him to engage the question of dogma, and under the influence of Blondel and Bergson, his move from abstract philosophy to the concrete and experiential found expression in the notion of *lex orandi* and *lex credenda*, in which theology becomes merely a handmaid to spirituality, which conforms to the demands of spiritual experience and its manifestations in popular devotion.⁹⁹ In this formulation, the deposit of faith is retained but reduced to being 'a prayerful experience of the heart rather than a communication of beliefs to the mind.'¹⁰⁰ Faith is central here, because it is the faculty that orients us to 'a world beyond the grasp of clear consciousness.'¹⁰¹

Tyrrell's final and most radical phase came with the publication of *Through Scylla and Charybdis* in 1907, where he abandoned both Scholastic and Newmanian conceptions of the development of doctrine. For Scholasticism the apostolic deposit of faith was a kind of primitive theological system from which the truths of revelation can be deduced later and confirmed authoritatively by the Church, relegating the theological understanding of the early Christians to a place of 'relative darkness and chaos' and placing our own knowledge of revelation far above the Fathers and early believers.¹⁰² The Newmanian approach relativizes incomplete early dogmas and creeds, which are framed in inadequate categories and experiences and needing later reformulation, in a way inconceivable to the Fathers, who saw them as immutable.¹⁰³ Rejecting both of these

⁹⁸ Nichols, *Newman to Congar*, 115.

⁹⁹ Ratté, *Three Modernists*, 146.

¹⁰⁰ Nichols, *Newman to Congar*, 118.

¹⁰¹ Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 101.

¹⁰² George Tyrrell, *Through Scylla Charybdis: or the Old Theology and the New* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 8-9; Nichols, *From Newman to Congar*, 131.

¹⁰³ For an analysis of Tyrrell's critique of these two approaches, see Ratté, 221-222. It should be noted that the 'Newmanian' approach of which we speak refers to the development of doctrine as expounded in his University Sermons, which rests on the church's experiential 'vision' of revelation rather than its 'memory'. The notion of development in Newman's essay follows the line of the contemporary scholastic apologists in

approaches, Tyrrell argued that revelation rested on a concrete religious experience of the ‘Kingdom of God’, rather than on propositions. The language that articulated this experience might assist in its apprehension but in no way could closely represent immutable concepts. Dogma served merely as a necessary time-bound attempt to preserve the original religious experience to which revelation pointed.

For Tyrrell, Thomism was destructive in its insistence on absolutes, and in his book *Medievalism. A Reply to Cardinal Mercier*, he provided an early important counter-narrative to the Roman narrative of modernity with important ecclesiological implications, as the social dimension of the Church, fundamentally a sacrament and a mystery, has a living and vital centre grounded on a universal spiritual experience. Moreover, this progressive ecclesiology demands a historicist mind-set that can determine the essentials in a particular age or thinker, such as in Aquinas or Ignatius of Loyola, in whom he found an indispensable ‘spirit’ of creativity, synthesis, adaptability, and openness.¹⁰⁴

Medievalism is an absolute, Modernism a relative term. The former will always stand for the same ideas and institutions; the meaning of the latter slides on with the times. If we must have a sect-name, we might have a worse than one that stands for life and movement as against stagnation and death; for the Catholicism that is of every age as against the sectarianism that is of one... To believe in the living historical Catholic community means to believe that by its corporate life and labour it lies in slowly realizing the ideas and ends in whose service it was founded . . . One’s beliefs in the Church as the organ of religion is to some extent one’s belief in the laws of collective psychology, which are the laws of nature, which are the laws of God.¹⁰⁵

In his last years, Tyrrell held all religious expression to be temporal and relevant only insofar as it can express an ultimate and universal religious experience. In 1906 he was expelled from the Jesuits, prohibited from the sacraments, and later excommunicated,

holding that the deposit of faith was an static core ‘around which “additional” propositions ever group themselves into a doctrinal system’, Ratté, 222.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas Sagovsky, *Between Two Worlds: George Tyrrell’s Relationship to the Thought of Matthew Arnold* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 13; Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University, 1997), 120.

¹⁰⁵ George Tyrrell, *A Reply to Cardinal Mercier* (London: Longman’s, Green, and Co., 1909), 183-184, 144-146, quoted in Marvin O’Connell, *Critics on Trial* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 373.

dying three years later in 1909, deprived of a Catholic burial. Some have seen in Tyrrell a proto-nouvelle theologian, but his programme, I would argue, went much further.

In conclusion, Loisy and Tyrrell sought to bring the Church into an historical and philosophical engagement with modernity and expose the weaknesses of its Scholastic apology. They analysed the Bible, reformulated the notion of dogma, sought to find a larger theological role for spiritual experience, and created a counter-narrative that claimed the Church was in fact at fault in its struggle with modernity. The Fourvière Jesuits will pick up these criticisms and re-articulate them, arguing that the Modernist's methods and questions were not problematic, only certain of their conclusions.

2.3 Philosophical Modernism: Blondel, Laberthonnière, and Le Roy

This section will examine the remaining three Modernists in this study: Blondel and Le Roy, both philosophers, and Lucien Laberthonnière a theologian, contemporaries of Loisy and Tyrrell, major French intellectuals, and deeply involved in the religious crisis. In terms of twentieth-century French Catholic thought, Blondel's influence cannot be overestimated, and it stands at the very centre of this thesis. Le Roy and Laberthonnière both play supporting roles in this narrative. Le Roy and Blondel both grappled with the problem of immanence, and Laberthonnière is included in this section on account of this close personal and intellectual relationship to Blondel.

Maurice Blondel

Born in 1861, Blondel began his studies at the *École normale supérieure* where he hoped to construct a philosophical apology for the Catholic faith in the language and thought of his contemporaries, uniting science and faith and forging a middle path between intellectualism and fideism, while maintaining orthodoxy. This union would allow for 'a perspective at once absolutely natural and absolutely in conformity with the supernatural

order, so that, without minimizing the validity of nature and reason themselves, one might also be brought to see the necessity of the supernatural order within the natural'.¹⁰⁶ The crux at which these two realities would be joined, he determined, was the concept of action. By marrying thought with action, Blondel argued he could avoid inherent weaknesses in both Aristotle and Kant: 'Between Aristotelianism, which depreciates and subordinates practice to thought, and Kantianism, which separates them and exalts the practical order to the detriment of the other, there is something to define, and it is in a very concrete manner through the analysis of action, that I propose to define it.'¹⁰⁷

The first phase of his career (1893-1914) was guided by four works, each contributing an important aspect to his integrated, organic, and totalizing system. First, his 1893 thesis *L'Action*, was an existentialist phenomenology arguing that humans are oriented toward the supernatural; secondly, his *Lettre sur l'apologétique* defended his method and strongly denounced Neoscholasticism; thirdly, *Histoire et dogme* offered a kind of philosophy of history rooted in a conception of tradition which showed how his anthropology might carry the historical and dogmatic weight of Catholic thought; and finally, his *Testis* series provided a socio-political application to his philosophy.¹⁰⁸ Far from being disparate and unrelated, we can very much see in these four works a kind of global and integrated system. We might say that *L'Action* is the Manual, *Lettre* is the

¹⁰⁶ Oliva Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel: A Philosophical Life* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 8.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Dru, introduction to Blondel, *Letter*, 47.

¹⁰⁸ Maurice Blondel, *L'Action: Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique étonnant* (Paris: Alcan, 1893); *Action (1893): Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (South Bend IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Maurice Blondel, *Lettre sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière d'apologétique et sur la méthode de la philosophie dans l'étude du problème religieux* (Saint-Dizier: Thévenot, 1896); Maurice Blondel, *Histoire et Dogme* (La Chapelle: Montligeon, 1904); the latter two works are published together in English as *The Letter on Apologetics & History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illyd Trethowan (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), and all three are found in *Maurice Blondel: Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1 & 2 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995-1997), (*MBOC* hereafter); a facsimile reprint of the *Testis* series with an excellent introduction by Michael Sutton appears under the title *Une Alliance contre nature: Catholicisme et intégrisme* (Brussels: Editions Lessius, 2000); for an excellent history of the affair surrounding the series, see Peter Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française: The Clash over the Church's Role in Society during the Modernist Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

Manifesto, and the Method in its historical and social dimensions is constituted by *Histoire et dogme* and *Testis*. We shall now examine in more detail these four aspects that will be critical to our study of the Fourvière Jesuits.

1. The Manual: The Dramatic, Unified, and Concrete Character of Human Existence

Blondel's thesis, completed in 1893, was entitled simply *L'Action* and attempted to show with an immanent methodology that the necessary and ultimate end of human existence is in a philosophy of the supernatural, which is imposed upon us.¹⁰⁹ In fact, any analysis of human destiny must end with the supernatural.¹¹⁰ Unable to find satisfaction in the natural world, the human will is impelled outward from itself toward a transcendent end, and 'if it is actualized in human action through a gratuitous initiative on the part of God, [it] necessarily entails a revelation, a mediation and a religious practice on the part of man.'¹¹¹

By exploring the dramatic, unified, free, and concrete character of human existence, Blondel provided, with Henri Bergson, an anticipation of existentialism.¹¹² He has been called a 'proto-existentialist', the 'first existentialist', and 'a principal precursor of twentieth-century phenomenology'; John Macquarrie noted that Blondel's philosophy 'certainly prepared the way for a personalistic kind of existentialism', and James Somerville conceded that 'although the term is greatly abused, we must agree that Blondel was an "existentialist"'.¹¹³ Blondel's 'philosophy of insufficiency' attempts to systematize with scientific post-Kantian rigor Augustine's *cor inquietum*, forcing the question of human destiny and demanding a choice, either for or against transcendence.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Oliva Blanchette, 'Blondel's Original Philosophy of the Supernatural', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 49, no. 3 (1993): 414.

¹¹⁰ Blanchette, 'Blondel's Original Philosophy', 427.

¹¹¹ Blanchette, 'Blondel's Original Philosophy', 414.

¹¹² Albert Cartier, *Existence et vérité; philosophie blondélienne de l'action et problématique existentielle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1955), 41; Adam English, *The Possibility of Christian Philosophy: Maurice Blondel at the Intersection of Theology and Philosophy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 24.

¹¹³ John Macquarrie, *Existentialism* (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1972), 39; Macquarrie also quotes James Somerville, *Total Commitment: Blondel's L'Action* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1968), 26.

¹¹⁴ Alexander Dru, introduction to *The Letter on Apolgetics*, 83.

The human person, oriented toward the supernatural, finds existential fulfilment only by recognizing and accepting that they are oriented by a fundamental desire for the supernatural which manifests itself in every thought and actions. Blondel hoped to reassert the question of life's meaning with an irrepressible force that would impel the individual to engage the problem of human destiny. Blondel began *L'Action* with this dramatic line of questioning designed to arouse an intellectual milieu which had forgotten its destiny:

Yes or no, does human life make sense, and does man have a destiny? I act, but without even knowing what action is, without having wished to live, without knowing either who I am or what I am. This appearance of being which flutters about within me, these light and evanescent actions of a shadow, bear in them, I am told, and eternally weighty responsibility, and that, even at the price of blood, I cannot buy nothingness because for me it is no longer. Supposedly, then, I am condemned to life, condemned to death condemned to eternity! Why and by what right, if I did not know it and did not will it?¹¹⁵

To take stock of the immediate evidence, action, in my life, is a fact, the most general and the most constant of all, the expression within me of a universal determinism; it is produced even without me. It is a fact, it is a necessity, which no man denies since such a denial would require a supreme effort, which no man avoids since suicide is still an act; acting is produced even in spite of me.¹¹⁶

Blondelian thought emerged within a fin-de-siècle milieu whose three main currents—positivism, idealism and spiritualism—established certain philosophical presuppositions that would open the French field to phenomenological and existentialist concerns.¹¹⁷ These assumptions were: first, attention to a rigorous scientific methodology; secondly, the importance of *a priori* concepts; and thirdly, the importance of lived experience.¹¹⁸ Moreover, he was writing during an age saturated with 'dilettantism', a frivolous intellectual mind-set that sought to endlessly explore a random variety of human experiences and activities with no concern for finding a unified or even consistent pattern

¹¹⁵ Blondel, *L'Action*, vii; *Action*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Blondel, *L'Action*, ix; *Action*, 4.

¹¹⁷ For a deeper treatment of these three strains, see Gutting, *French Philosophy*, 8-25.

¹¹⁸ Christian Dupont, 'Receptions of Phenomenology in French Philosophy and Religious Thought, 1889-1939' (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1997), 47. Bergson is treated by Dupont as also prefiguring French phenomenology in various ways, 48-80.

in the variety. Such thinkers as Renan, Taine and Baudelaire refused from the outset to even entertain the question of human destiny.¹¹⁹

Blondel's proto-existentialism depends on a certain embrace of Kant's Copernican Revolution, and he conceded the necessity of Kant's critical move that ultimately reduced metaphysics to synthetic *a priori* conditions.¹²⁰ Going even further, Blondel seems to have aligned with a Fichtean dismissal and subjectivizing of Kant's 'thing in itself', the *noumenal*. This allowed for a more radical approach to subjectivity with the effect of subordinating 'the idea to the real and reality to action'.¹²¹ Several studies have examined the similarity between the key issues in Blondel's thought and those of existentialism—freedom, subjectivity, commitment and truth—and have attempted to argue that Blondelianism successfully fulfils the transcendent aspirations of existentialism.¹²² Although in his early years Blondel was not exposed to the work of Husserl—the father of phenomenology whose reception in France after the First World War was foundational for future trends in existentialism and in particular for the work of Jean-Paul Sartre—Henri Duméry has noted several similarities in their work.¹²³

After vigorously asserting that the question of human destiny must guide concrete existence, Blondel had to ensure his followers remain focused on the narrow, rugged, and sometimes obscure phenomenological path he insists will alone bring them to the high alpine vistas of transcendence and anthropological fulfilment. The Blondelian method is essentially all-or-nothing and must be accepted *in extenso*. Any deviation from the map he provides necessarily leads to a journey that is regressive and futile, unable to fulfil the

¹¹⁹ Gutting, *French Philosophy*, 90.

¹²⁰ John McNeil, *The Blondelian Synthesis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 58.

¹²¹ Jacques Haver, 'French Philosophical Tradition Between the Wars', in *Philosophical Thought in France and the United States*, ed. Marvin Farber (Buffalo NY: University of Buffalo Publications in Philosophy, 1950), 8.

¹²² Cartier, *Existence et vérité*; and on John McNeil's website dedicated to Blondel, he provides a helpful paper, 'Necessary Structures of Freedom', which is a summary of his doctoral thesis which he gave at a meeting of the Jesuit Philosophical Association, <http://www.mauriceblondel.com/necess2.pdf>.

¹²³ Henry Duméry, 'Maurice Blondel', in *Les Philosophes célèbres*, ed. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Paris: Éditions d'Art, 1956), 300-301, quoted in Dupont, 'Receptions of Phenomenology', 97.

deepest human aspirations, and he spends much time analysing the various diversions and obstacles that threaten to mislead those seeking *potentia*: ‘the power or capacity for self-actualization, reproduction, growth, survival, success’.¹²⁴

The phenomenological centre and trail head of this journey is the concept of *action*, a category distinct from that of *act*. Action comprises *making, doing and contemplating* as well as all forms of thought: ‘there is nothing in the properly subjective life which is not act; that which is properly subjective is not only what is conscious and known from within...it is what causes the fact of consciousness to be.’¹²⁵ For Blondel, action comprises ‘the total order of things’ and includes action as well as thought, reflection, and contemplation in which even having the idea of action involves action. In sum, Blondel’s use of action is commensurate to the modern philosophical use of ‘existence’.¹²⁶

Blondelian phenomenology then unfolds with what he calls a regressive and reflexive ‘method of immanence’ which follows a dialectical movement of two wills pushing outward through various stages in search of fulfilment, commencing with the senses and then out into the world. Blondel detected an ‘inadequation’ between the object we think we are willing and what we really do will on a deeper level.¹²⁷ The distinction arises from the dialectical conflict between the two wills, the ‘willing will’ (*la volonté voulante*) and the ‘willed will’ (*la volonté voulue*). The latter, the willed will, tends toward immanent and distinct finite objects with which it is never satisfied, and the former, the willing will, is characterized by an unsatiated aspiration or movement toward

¹²⁴ English, *The Possibility*, 93.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Maine de Biran to Sartre*, vol. 9 (Kent: Search Press, 1975), 228.

¹²⁶ Jean Lacroix, *Maurice Blondel: Sa vie, son œuvre, avec un exposé de sa philosophie* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1963), 7, 9-11; *Maurice Blondel: An Introduction to the Man and his Philosophy*, trans. John C. Guinness (New York NY: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 18, 21-22.

¹²⁷ Henri Bouillard, *Blondel et le Christianisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1961), 19; Henri Bouillard, *Blondel and Christianity*, trans. James Somerville (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1970), 7.

transcendence and the infinite. Conflict arises, as the willed will searches for fulfilment and existential satisfaction in temporal objects but is inevitably left unfulfilled, frustrating the movement towards the supernatural of the willing will. Simply put, the willed will we control and direct accordingly, while the willing will always tends toward the infinite. At the heart of this conflict is a choice, or fundamental option, either to affirm the reality of the supernatural, to which the will tends as its final end, or reject it in a futilely circuitous attempt to satisfy itself with finite reality. Blondel writes:

[Life's principal concern] is wholly involved in this necessary conflict that arises at the heart of the human will and imposes on it the obligation of making a practical option between the terms of an inevitable alternative, and alternative such that man either tries to remain his own master, staying entirely within himself, or delivers himself over to the divine order, more or less obscurely revealed to his consciousness.¹²⁸

Blondel does not propose to find that the supernatural exists in the human subject, only to lead them to it through his method of insufficiency, eliciting simply a consciousness of the need: 'It is in our very action that our need for the supernatural is discovered.'¹²⁹ He writes that 'nothing is Christian and Catholic unless it is supernatural, not only transcendent in the simple metaphysical sense of the word...but strictly supernatural, that is to say, beyond the power of man to discover for himself and yet imposed on his thought and will.'¹³⁰

Beginning with the senses, Blondel follows the path of the will as it moves further from its immanent point of departure through various stages. First, the will seeks fulfilment in the sensual but ultimately the fragmentary experience of the sense world followed by a quest for a more complete scientific understanding. Scientific truth, however, is unable to fully satisfy, and a deeper subjectivity is sought, which brings the

¹²⁸ Blondel, *L'Action*, xx-xxi; *Action*, 11-12.

¹²⁹ Maurice Blondel, in a letter to *Revue métaphysique et de moral* (1894), quoted in Bouillard, *Blondel et le Christianisme*, 80; *Blondel and Christianity*, 57.

¹³⁰ Robert St. Hilaire, 'Desire Divided: Nature and Grace in the Neo-Thomism of Pierre Rousselot' (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2008), 97.

will to the threshold of consciousness. This subjectivity presupposes a freedom that can wrestle with determinacy and act in the world, soon realizing it exists within a web of interactions with others: ‘Man is not sufficient unto himself; he has to act for others, with others, through others.’¹³¹ Although this reflection inspires the will to project itself further, seeking metaphysical and moral absolutes, the will is still left grasping for something beyond itself, tempted on the one hand to a ‘superstition’ that seeks to ‘absolutize the world’ and find ultimate meaning in objects, experiences, and superstitious practice, and on the other a mode that recognizes the will’s orientation toward the infinite. Faced with this dilemma, the human person remains essentially at an impasse, unable to turn back, yet continuing to futilely direct their will toward finite objects, incapable of attain what is desired: ‘At the moment one declares the insufficiency of the phenomenon, one becomes attached to it as to the only solid and real being; one persists in being content with what thought and desire recognized to be vain, disappointing, and null; one places one’s all where one otherwise admits there is nothing.’¹³² It is at this point for Blondel, the person becomes open to the possibility of revelation and the divine gift.

2. *The Manifesto: Against a Defensive and Absolute Thomism*

Blondel’s phenomenological method was not a benign attempt to create a ‘competing orthodoxy’ more open to the concerns of modernity and able to function as a humanistic and existential complement to Neoscholasticism. Rather, Blondel repudiated Neoscholasticism, claiming it was in fact subverting authentic Catholic thought and doing great theological, spiritual, and even political harm. Not only was it ineffective against the challenges of modernity, it was itself the *cause* of the secular problem. This all-out frontal assault on Neoscholasticism immediately incited a fierce debate.

¹³¹ Blondel, *L’Action*, 198; *Action*, 192.

¹³² Blondel, *L’Action*, 35; *Action*, 47.

Neoscholastics in turn accused Blondel of Kantian immanentism, charging that his method of immanence was an epistemological fiction, or even a mere psychological account of spiritual experience. To defend himself and reassert the philosophical nature of his project, he published a series of articles in 1896 entitled ‘Lettre sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière d’Apologetique’. They contained not only an apology for his approach but a harsh attack on Thomism. He argued that his method was not a ‘doctrine of immanence’, which merely begins and ends with subjective reality, but rather a ‘method of immanence’, seeking to prove that an immanent and phenomenological examination of human action and aspiration ultimately leads to transcendence. He defines this method as

trying to equate, in our own consciousness, what we appear to think and to will and to do with what we do and will in actual fact—so that behind factitious negations and ends which are not genuinely willed may be discovered our innermost affirmations and the implacable needs which they imply.¹³³

Blondel’s criticism of Neoscholasticism will be repeated and developed continually throughout the twentieth century, and without exaggeration, we might say that he wrote the very manual of anti-Neoscholasticism, providing explicit instructions on how it might be intellectually discredited and dismantled. As we shall see, his disciples, the Fourvière Jesuits, followed his instructions with remarkable results. We shall here briefly overview three central criticisms.

First, the Church’s defensive posture toward modernity was gravely deficient. Blondel passionately wanted to evangelize the modern world in its own intellectual language, and he felt that Thomism was powerless to speak to modernity, borne of bygone controversies and anachronistic philosophical categories. He maintained a fundamentally more positive outlook on the modern project and its ability to be of service to Christianity: we ‘must not be so ready to see nothing but deviations’, ‘perverted minds’, or ‘jaundiced

¹³³ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 128; *Letter*, 157.

outlooks' when we should be considering the great transformations of human perspectives down the ages.'¹³⁴ The Church, Blondel advised, must not take such a rigid and exclusive approach that it cuts itself off from what is good in modern thought, insisting that there were two ways of looking at the history of philosophy:

Either we remain outside the main stream which sweeps through the world of thought and radically exclude everything which is opposed to the system which we have adopted...and that is to cut ourselves off from the only sort of life which is really fruitful. Or else we try to perceive that stirring of parturition with which humanity is always in labour, we set ourselves to profit by this vast effort, to enlighten it, to bring it to fruition, to kindle the smoking flax, to be less ready to suppose that there is nothing of value for ourselves even in those doctrines which seem most opposed to our own, to go to others that they may come to us—and that is to find the source of intellectual fruitfulness.¹³⁵

Secondly, Blondel argued that Neoscholasticism's epistemological commitments and its conception of truth were erroneous. Although Kant's fundamental conclusions were problematic, his critical starting point was a positive development, and he disagreed in the strongest terms with the starting point of Neoscholasticism, that of moderate epistemological realism. The notion that things-in-themselves can be known, and categories of causation and essence have metaphysical weight beyond the epistemological structure of the is deeply problematic to the modern philosophical project, and these robust metaphysical propositions leave the Church's philosophy essentially 'stuck' within a medieval context, unable to speak to the philosophical needs of modernity. Blondel writes:

Since the Thomist starts from principles which, for the most part, are disputed in our time; since he does not offer the means of restoring them by his method; since he presupposes a host of assertions which are just those which are nowadays called into question; since he cannot provide in his system, for the new requirements of minds which must be approached on their own ground, one must not treat this triumphant exposition as the last word.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 119; *Letter*, 147.

¹³⁵ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 120; *Letter*, 147.

¹³⁶ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 119; *Letter*, 146.

Moreover, Blondel claimed that reality was unable to be grasped by abstract conceptual knowledge, and incapable of functioning as a vehicle for religious truth. As I mentioned above, one of the stages where the will can be diverted from its transcendent path in the method of immanence is in the desire to create moral and metaphysical absolutes. The willed will effectively transposes its desire for the Absolute to a concrete particular in the quest for objective knowledge divorced from action and life. This creates a ‘superstitious’ illusion that frustrates the dynamism of the willing will. Thus, we can see how provocative and threatening this doctrine was to Neoscholastic thought, which predicated natural philosophical knowledge as well as dogma on the existence of truth dependent on conceptual knowledge. Blondel did not completely reject the notion that conceptual knowledge had a real value, like Bergson and Le Roy, as we shall see, but rather he took a moderate position insisting that the real could be grasped through conceptual knowledge but only when it worked in conjunction with action and the will: hence, Blondel’s famous and controversial definition of truth as the correspondence between mind and life rather than reality.

Lastly, Blondel constructed a short historical narrative in which he claimed that Baroque Scholasticism had itself been the cause of secularization and atheism.¹³⁷ This was a radical reversal of the Church’s accepted narrative which had placed the blame squarely at the feet of Luther, Descartes and Kant. As we shall also see, the effect of this criticism is tremendous and becomes a repeated theme in the work of the *nouveaux théologiens*, culminating in one of the important theses of *Surnaturel* itself.

In Aristotelian Scholasticism a dualism emerged between nature and grace which juxtaposed the two orders, allowing no communication between them: ‘As a result, when reason, left sole mistress of the knowable world, claimed to find immanent in herself all

¹³⁷ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 120-121; *Letter*, 147-148.

the truths needed for the life of man, the world of faith found itself totally excluded; juxtaposition led to *opposition* and incompatibility.¹³⁸ Blondel claimed that this dualism incited a ‘violent reaction’ among the Protestants who ‘rejected any idea of a rational preparation for faith and began by pulling down the whole edifice of reason and liberty’.¹³⁹

The immense controversy that was incited by Blondel’s philosophy between 1896 and 1907 caused him much anxiety. With the exception of his 1907 *Lettre* that attempted to explain his methodology and *Histoire et dogme* in 1904 that sought to serve as a rejoinder to Loisy’s *L’Évangile et l’Église*, he rarely engaged the polemics surrounding the immanence-transcendence debate. His last public intervention during the Modernist period was one that was political. Although Blondel was not named and condemned in *Pascendi*, his philosophy was given mention, called ‘moderate Modernism’, and was deemed imprudent:

There are also *subjective* ones at the disposal of the Modernists, and for those they return to their doctrine of *immanence*. They endeavour, in fact, to persuade their non-believer that down in the very deeps of his nature and his life lie the need and the desire for religion, and this not a religion of any kind, but the specific religion known as Catholicism, which, they say, is absolutely *postulated* by the perfect development of life. And here we cannot but deplore once more, and grievously, that there are Catholics who, while rejecting *immanence* as a doctrine, employ it as a method of apologetics, and who do this so imprudently that they seem to admit that there is in human nature a true and rigorous necessity with regard to the supernatural order - and not merely a capacity and a suitability for the supernatural order - and not merely a capacity and a suitability for the supernatural, such as has at all times been emphasized by Catholic apologists. Truth to tell it is only the moderate Modernists who make this appeal to an exigency for the Catholic religion.¹⁴⁰

3. *The Method: The Sociohistorical Character of Existence*

Blondel’s anthropology necessarily led him into another confrontation with Neoscholasticism over the problem of dogma and its development. Neoscholastic

¹³⁸ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 121; *Letter*, 148.

¹³⁹ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 120-121; *Letter*, 147-148.

¹⁴⁰ Pius X, *Pascendi*, §37.

propositionalism refused to subject dogma to historical critique, attempting to keep a firm link between current dogmatic formulation and original apostolic teaching and arguing that later developments were deducible from previous statements and formulae. Blondel sought to develop of a middle position between this ahistoricism and Modernist symbolism, which would preserve the deposit of the faith while taking seriously the historical and contextual reality of life. To mediate between these two poles Blondel developed a notion of tradition that will do much more than merely provide an account of the development of doctrine, providing also a historical and social philosophy and methodology with certain undeveloped ecclesiological implications.

Blondel's notion of tradition provides a living and synthetic mediation. Tradition is not simply a record of apostolic teachings transmitted orally and written down later. Rather, 'it preserves not so much the intellectual aspect of the past as its living reality.'¹⁴¹ Beyond a mere dependence on texts, 'it relies primarily on something else, on an experience always in act which enables it to remain in some respects master of the texts instead of being strictly subservient to them.'¹⁴² Thus, for Blondel, tradition is essentially paradoxical in its trans-historical nature. Tradition fundamentally responds in concrete moments of crisis to the needs of the present and 'instructs and initiates', always able 'to teach something new because it transforms what is implicit and "enjoyed" into something explicit and known': 'Whenever the testimony of Tradition has to be invoked to resolve one of the crises of growth in the spiritual life of Christians, it presents the conscious mind with elements previously held back in the depths of faith and practiced, rather than expressed, systematized or reflected upon.'¹⁴³

These developments however, are rooted in a 'power of conservation and preservation' whose discoveries are in fact recoveries, for tradition is 'turned lovingly

¹⁴¹ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 434; *Letter*, 267.

¹⁴² Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 434; *Letter*, 267.

¹⁴³ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 434; *Letter*, 267.

toward the past where its treasure lies'.¹⁴⁴ This historical turn, however, is always oriented toward future development, because 'it moves toward the future, where it conquers and illuminates... However paradoxical it may sound, one can therefore maintain that Tradition anticipates and illuminates the future and is disposed to do so by the effort which it makes to remain faithful to the past.'¹⁴⁵ This notion of development, however, also implies a certain pruning of her branches: 'she can dispense with scaffoldings which were provisionally required to shelter the growth of her work or useful for her spiritual edification but which may have to be cleared away'.¹⁴⁶ Simply put, 'with the help of the past [the Church] liberates the future from the unconscious limitations and illusions of the present.'¹⁴⁷

Blondel's notion of tradition has profound ecclesiological implications; the Church is essentially self-justifying, carrying her own inner proofs within her. Furthermore, the dogma that grounds her belief emerged from historical facts largely by 'the mediation of collective life, and the slow progressive labour of the Christian tradition.'¹⁴⁸ Thus, as her dogma is worked out 'in the matrix of a believing society,' the Church 'adapts herself to the diverse forms of intellectual culture; she borrows the language she needs from philosophical systems so as to confer upon her doctrines the degree of precision required by a given state of civilization'.¹⁴⁹

Blondel concluded by stressing the social character of dogma, which is in fact 'the authentic recognition of collective anticipations and collective certifications.'¹⁵⁰ Thus Blondel's account of dogma and tradition, not surprisingly, depends on his philosophy of action, which proposes a method that has 'feeling for those elements contained in the

¹⁴⁴ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 434; *Letter*, 267.

¹⁴⁵ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 434; *Letter*, 268.

¹⁴⁶ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 446; *Letter*, 281.

¹⁴⁷ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 447; *Letter*, 282.

¹⁴⁸ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 435; *Letter*, 269.

¹⁴⁹ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 438; *Letter*, 271.

¹⁵⁰ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 452; *Letter*, 287.

moral and religious life' that constitute the most profound realities.¹⁵¹ It is Christian practice itself that nurtures our knowledge of God and carries the seeds that will be watered by theological action. Blondel adds that the Church 'has an age-old experience' of this science of action, but he adds in a prophetic tone: 'the theology of it has not been worked out.'¹⁵²

4. The Method: The Sociopolitical Character of Existence

As we saw above, Blondel's method of immanence brings one to an awareness of the social networks on which he or she depends, and it bears repeating Blondel's formulation of this notion: 'Man is not sufficient unto himself; he has to act for others, with others, through others.'¹⁵³ Thus, the inevitable expansion of his philosophy into the realm of social action would have a decisive role in the emergence of the first wave of social Catholicism in France. Also called Left Catholicism, this movement's centres were *Le Sillon*, founded by a former student, Marc Sagnier, and *Semaines sociales*, founded in 1904 by his friend Henri Lorin. *Semaines* was a controversial Catholic social movement that met annually to promote Catholic social teaching, Christian democracy, and certain principles of the Enlightenment and Revolution in direct opposition to the staunchly pro-monarchy position held by the majority of practicing Catholics, as well as much of the hierarchy at the time. Labelled by its critics as 'Social Modernism', its alleged errors included: 'the rejection of all social inequalities, acceptance of the tyranny of the union movement, the collusion with socialism and collectivism, [and] the ignorance of certain fundamental principles of the natural law'.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the movement was criticized for its lack of support for the family and private property, instead championing 'the equality

¹⁵¹ Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 438; *Letter*, 272.

¹⁵² Blondel, *MBOC*, vol. 2, 453; *Letter*, 287.

¹⁵³ Blondel, *L'Action*, 192; *Action*, 198.

¹⁵⁴ Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 18.

and dignity of persons’ and ‘fraternal equivalence’.¹⁵⁵ At the heart of this controversy were two fundamentally different ways to approach the question of modernity and the re-Christianization of France.¹⁵⁶ The first approach of Left Catholicism sought to collaborate with non-Catholic and even anti-Catholic forces that sought common goals such as the improvement of workers rights through democratic structures. The desire of the working class for economic prosperity was ‘an unacknowledged yearning for the Kingdom of God’ itself, a theory that leaves little doubt as to just how influential Blondelian philosophy was on the movement.¹⁵⁷ The second approach, in contrast, was an anti-Republican position of ‘restorationism’ that refused to collaborate with its enemies and envisioned a hierarchical civilization grounded in natural law.

In 1909 after several attacks, at the request of Lorin, Blondel began a series of articles in *Annales*, signed anonymously ‘Testis’, to respond to criticism of the *Semaines*. Social reality, he said, is not merely based on intellectual concepts and hierarchy, but *action* is what binds social reality into an integrative whole in which the natural ‘supposes and presupposes’ the supernatural. For *Action française*, the nature-supernatural relationship, which Blondel labelled ‘monophorism’ is one of superimposition.¹⁵⁸ He wrote that ‘one cannot think or act anywhere as if we do not all have a supernatural destiny. Because, since it concerns the human being such as he is, *in concreto*, in his living and total reality, not in a hypothetical state of nature, nothing is truly complete, even in the natural order.’¹⁵⁹ One of Blondel’s opponents on the question of *Action française* was a young Jesuit, Pedro Descoqs, who would be a philosophy teacher and nemesis of the Fourvière Jesuits.

¹⁵⁵ Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 24.

¹⁵⁶ Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 42.

¹⁵⁷ Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 42.

¹⁵⁸ Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 73.

¹⁵⁹ Maurice Blondel, *Catholicisme et Monophorisme* (Paris: Bloud et Cie, 1910), 32; quoted in Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 74.

Blondel's close friend Laberthonnière sought to theologize his method of immanence, and although, he is seldom remembered, his influence was significant. Having had no attraction to Neoscholasticism early in his life, he was convinced that we 'are engaged in a drama with our whole selves, our entire being.'¹⁶⁰ He sought out modes of thought that eschewed rigid nature-grace dichotomies, remaining open instead to the experiential dimension of faith: 'From my earliest youth I experienced the most lively disquiet within myself. And before long I felt the need of giving the religious problem a philosophical expression, that is to say, of not separating religion from philosophy, as, since the middle ages, there was a tendency, indeed a compulsion, to do. Pascal and Maine de Biran confirmed me in this way of seeing things; and thus I linked up the Augustinian tradition.'¹⁶¹

With this testimony, it is no surprise that Laberthonnière took so strongly to the philosophy of *L'Action*, which he had read in 1894. He wrote to Blondel soon after expressing his gratitude: 'For my part, I don't even dare tell you all the values I see in your book, lest I appear given to exaggeration.'¹⁶² To another friend of Blondel's he later recalled: 'I shall never forget the emotion that I felt, in my worried solitude, after reading the first pages of *L'Action*. I found there finally a living echo of all that stirred within me.'¹⁶³ Laberthonnière, however, attempted to approach the problem of the supernatural 'from above' assuming the truths of Catholic dogma, rather than 'from below', in the

¹⁶⁰ Lucien Laberthonnière, 'L'Apologétique et la méthode de Pascal', in *Réalisme chrétien* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 195.

¹⁶¹ Enrico Castelli, *Laberthonnière*, trans. Louis Canet (Paris: Vrin, 1931), quoted in Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study of Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 92.

¹⁶² Lucien Laberthonnière, quoted in Roger Haight, 'The Unfolding of Modernism in France: Blondel, Laberthonnière, and Le Roy', *Theological Studies* 33 (1974): 640.

¹⁶³ Laberthonnière, in a letter to Archambault, quoted in Marie-Thérèse Perrin, *La Jeunesse de Laberthonnière: Printemps d'une mission prophétique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980), 100.

purely philosophical way that Blondel did.¹⁶⁴ His Blondelian instincts surfaced quickly in an 1897 article entitled ‘Le problème religieux’ in which he argued that the natural and the supernatural can not be separated, examining theologically how the human person can be in contact with God, who penetrates the natural order.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, Laberthonnière took up Blondel’s line of criticism towards Scholasticism in a book that would later be placed on the index, *Le Réalisme chrétien et l’idéalisme grec*, discarding the ‘abstract, speculative, and dualistic’ classical metaphysics of Aristotle which bifurcates the intellect and the will and avoids concrete Christian experience.¹⁶⁶

In a 1901 article entitled ‘L’Apologétique et la method de Pascal’, he argued that the task of apologetics is concerned not only with the problem of the re-evangelization of unbelievers but also the continual strengthening of those already in the Church. How do we do this, he asks: ‘*Voilà la question*’. One may either construct an apology where Christianity is essentially foreign to the human person, imposing itself on us in the same way ‘we take notice of a fact which is present in time and space’, or we can recognize that ‘it is our need and duty as men to learn to live as men, to learn above all what we are and what we must do, preoccupying ourselves with the essential task of finding an explanation for our life and determining an ideal which must direct us.’¹⁶⁷ In these conditions, under the impulse of this need and duty, we can go to encounter Christianity to search for the answers for which we desire.’¹⁶⁸ For Laberthonnière, the first apology conceives of the ‘the supernatural as being added to nature without penetrating or changing it, always remaining beyond and outside of it’, thus erecting two separate and competing orders of

¹⁶⁴ Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence*, 94.

¹⁶⁵ Lucien Laberthonnière, ‘Le Problème religieux à propos de la question apologétique’, *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* 133 (1896-1897): 497-511, published later in the collection *Essais de philosophie religieuse* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1903).

¹⁶⁶ James Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 364; Lucien Laberthonnière, *Le Réalisme chrétien et l’idéalisme grec* (Paris: Lethielleux Libraire-Éditeur, 1904).

¹⁶⁷ Laberthonnière, ‘L’Apologétique’, 171.

¹⁶⁸ Laberthonnière, ‘L’Apologétique’, 171.

truth.¹⁶⁹ Far from attempting to superimpose historical data onto metaphysical abstraction, Pascal insisted that it is about '*essentielement et primordialement* finding a meaning to our existence, explaining what we are in our *réalité vivante*, so foreign and complex, and giving an account for what we must do here below. If there are some things to reconcile, these are the oppositions that we find in ourselves, in our humanity... The problem is not therefore abstract and theoretical, it is concrete and practical. It poses itself in us through the sole fact that we exist and that we are capable of thinking and willing.'¹⁷⁰ Because there is for Laberthonnière 'no natural solution to the problem of human destiny', the orders of nature and the supernatural must be reconciled.¹⁷¹ This reconciliation is necessary, because 'when the two orders are considered objectively and abstractly, they are essentially heterogeneous, otherwise there would not be two. Consequently, one cannot link one to the other, one can only juxtapose them as if the supernatural was only superfluous'.¹⁷² Instead however, Laberthonnière held that all are called to live supernaturally,

with God acting on the heart of each man, penetrating him with his charity. The action itself [of our will], which fundamentally constitutes our life, is actually informed supernaturally by God... Thus in all human life, whether we like it or not, under diverse and opposed attitudes, is there not always the desire to possess God, the desire to be God? But this desire is not natural. Man cannot have him by himself, because one cannot possess God as one possesses a thing. It is necessary that God gives himself. And if man desires to possess God and to be God, it is that God has already given himself to him. This is how nature even finds itself and finds in itself the demand for the supernatural. These demands do not belong to nature *qua* nature, but they belong to nature as already penetrated and invaded by grace. If it is neither legitimate nor possible to hold to a separated philosophy, it is because there is no separated nature.'¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Laberthonnière, 'L'Apologétique', 174.

¹⁷⁰ Laberthonnière, 'L'Apologétique', 178.

¹⁷¹ Laberthonnière, 'L'Apologétique', 182.

¹⁷² Laberthonnière, 'Le Problème religieux', 50.

¹⁷³ Laberthonnière, 'Le Problème religieux', 151.

Given his apologetic approach, it is no surprise that thirty years later de Lubac solicited advice from Laberthonnière on his first article, ‘Apologétique et la théologie’, as well as those that would become the first chapters of *Surnaturel*.¹⁷⁴

In 1905, Laberthonnière became the editor of *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* after Blondel purchased the journal to be the mouthpiece of his thought. In the first issue, he contributed an article that criticized any attempt to separate philosophy from theology: ‘if there are two orders, the natural and the supernatural, which are distinct, they [nevertheless] interpenetrate each other and do not constitute two realities in life.’¹⁷⁵ He was convinced that Christian revelation could not simply be superimposed over self-sufficient philosophical truths; rather, Christianity was itself a true philosophy. The natural and the supernatural were in fact ‘two opposed manners of being and acting, of which one corresponds to what we are, to what we think and to what we do in virtue of our innate egocentrism, while the other corresponds to what we have the obligation of being, of thinking, and of doing through willed generosity.’¹⁷⁶

Laberthonnière pushed *Annales* to offer a more theological interpretation of the method of immanence, putting himself under the spotlight and relieving Blondel of a certain amount of Roman scrutiny. Despite this, he refused to temper his critique of Neoscholasticism, and in 1906, two of his most important books were condemned, *Réalisme chrétien et l'idéalisme grec* and *Essais de philosophie religieuse*. In 1913, *Annales* was put on the index, condemned, and forced to cease publication.

Laberthonnière, although obedient, remained bitter for the remainder of his life, and only after his death in 1932 could much of his writing be published.

¹⁷⁴ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 13; At *the Service*, 16; de Lubac’s article ‘Apologétique et théologie’ is reprinted in *Théologies d’occasion* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1984); ‘Apologetics and Theology’, in *Theological Fragments*, trans. R. H. Balinsky (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1989).

¹⁷⁵ Laberthonnière, in *Annales philosophie chrétienne* 1 (1905-1906): 23, quoted in Daly, *Transcendence*, 93.

¹⁷⁶ Laberthonnière, quoted in Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, 243.

Édouard Le Roy

Le Roy began his studies at the *École normale supérieure* in 1892. A mathematician by training, he took a strong interest in philosophy and metaphysics. Although closely tied to Blondel and Laberthonnière, he was a Bergsonian and diverged sharply from them over the issue of dogma, rejecting the possibility of knowing abstract, timeless, and immutable truths. Instead he grounded dogma in instinct and experience, which provided the faithful with practical guidance. Le Roy's views first surfaced in their mature form in his 1905 article 'Qu'est-ce qu'un dogme?' which generated a firestorm of controversy.¹⁷⁷ In 1907, he published *Dogma and Critique*, attempting to respond to his opponents' objections, but that same year it was condemned and put on the index by the Roman authorities under Pius X.

Le Roy began his treatment not of particular dogmas but of the concept of dogma in general, which he argued is unacceptable in its Neoscholastic Neoscholasticism form. First, modernity demands empirical and verifiable claims, and the false 'intellectualist' conception of dogmatic formulas cannot be proven. Secondly, dogmatic truths impose an 'alien limit', justifying themselves through the supposed authoritative testimony of the one who in fact revealed the dogma.¹⁷⁸ This is irreconcilable with the principle of immanence, which 'is never for us a purely external given similar to I don't know what brute matter; such a given, in fact, would remain absolutely inassimilable; it would be as nothing for us, for how would we grasp it? Experience itself is not at all an acquisition of "things" which would be for us at first totally strange.'¹⁷⁹ Thirdly, dogmas are formulated in the language and categories of historical philosophical systems lacking contemporary relevance. If dogmas clothed in this thinking were immutable, a conversion to Christianity would entail

¹⁷⁷ Le Roy's article 'Qu'est-ce qu'un dogme?' was reprinted in *Dogme et critique* (Paris: Bloud et Cie, 1907).

¹⁷⁸ Guy Mansini, *What is Dogma? The Meaning and Truth of Dogma in Édouard Le Roy and his Opponents* (Rome: Editrice Pontifica Università Gregoriana, 1985), 11.

¹⁷⁹ Le Roy, *Dogme et critique*, 9, quoted in Mansini, *What is Dogma?*, 12.

a conversion to a specific philosophical system.¹⁸⁰ Guy Mansini writes that for Le Roy, dogma

gives us no direct, properly representative concept of supernatural reality: *such concepts are not possible*. It assures us merely that our religious conduct is justified, that supernatural reality is such as to make such conduct reasonable. It gives us such knowledge only within religious experience. Dogma does so, and can do only so, because it is nothing more than the echo of the Object of that experience within the experience, interior to it, and therefore can be express alone in terms of that experience. So doing, it satisfies the principle of immanence.¹⁸¹

To conclude, Maurice Blondel's early work was guided by four essential works, which we can organize around the three categories we identified as central to Modernism—history, subjectivity, and community. First, he constructed a phenomenological approach that sought to link more closely the realms of nature and grace, providing a stinging critique of Neoscholastic epistemology, and eschewing all attempts to articulate Catholic dogma in abstract and supposedly immutable terms (subjectivity). Secondly, he engaged history, providing not only a method for analysing Catholic tradition but also a brief but meaningful metanarrative which attempted to explain the problem of modernity (historicity). Finally, his work had a social dimension, which endeavoured to overcome the divide in France between the sacred and secular, contending in fact that the divide was caused by Neoscholastic rationalism which opposed the orders of nature and grace (communitarian).

Le Roy and Laberthonnière were also engaged with similar questions. While the former was especially interested in the question of dogma in light of modern philosophical objections, the latter continued Blondel's project from a theological standpoint. We shall see how the primary concerns of these Modernists became the primary concerns of the Fourvière Jesuits, who will use their thought—and example—especially that of Blondel,

¹⁸⁰ Mansini, *What is Dogma?*, 16.

¹⁸¹ Mansini, *What is Dogma?*, 25.

to attempt to answer the questions their own generation posed during the interwar crisis of the 1930s.

2.4 The Jesuit Generation of 1890:

De Grandmaison, Lebreton, d'Alès and *Recherches de Science Religieuse*

The generation of thinkers that constituted the Fourvière Jesuits were themselves preceded by two other generations of French Jesuit intellectuals, both of which influenced them greatly. We shall examine these first two generations in this section, as they serve as a point of origin for the great stream of thought that would emerge in Lyon during the 1930s and 1940s. The first, led by Léonce de Grandmaison (1868-1927), Jules Lebreton (1873-1956), and Adhémar d'Alès (1861-1938), belonged, with the Modernists and Dreyfus intellectuals, to the generation of 1890. They served as a kind of Jesuit response to Modernism, attempting to straddle the difficult line between scientific rigour and orthodoxy. The second generation, comprised of Auguste Valensin (1879-1953), Pierre Rousselot (1878-1915), Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), Joseph Huby (1878-1948), Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944), Victor Fontoynt (1880-1958), and Pierre Charles (1883-1954), were an intellectual bridge between the two generations. They were mentored by the generation of 1890 and then played a decisive role in the intellectual formation of the Fourvière Jesuits. An examination of these two generations will highlight the influences within the French Society of Jesus that would shape the Fourvière Jesuits.

Léonce de Grandmaison

Ordained in 1898, de Grandmaison gave a certain '*élan*' to the whole movement of twentieth-century French Jesuit thought.¹⁸² Although he was an authoritative figure during the Modernist crisis, contributing writings on the development of dogma, the act of

¹⁸² Jacques Guillet, 'Courants théologiques dans la Compagnie Jésus en France (1930-1939)', in *Spiritualité, théologie et résistance: Yves de Montcheuil, théologien au maquis du Vercors* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1987), 36.

faith, and Christology, he largely refused to involve himself in the polemics. He carried on an amicable exchange from 1905 to 1906 with Le Roy over the question of dogma, and Loisy claimed that he was the only opposition thinker he would have discussions with on account of his conciliatory attitude.¹⁸³ De Grandmaison saw that despite certain excesses, many of the Modernist questions were necessary, and there was a need for a reform in the way theology was taught.¹⁸⁴ Henri Rondet, the prefect of studies at the Lyonnaise theologate, began the *avant-propos* of his 1946 book *Gratia Christi: Essai d'histoire du dogme et de théologie dogmatique* by invoking his legacy:

When he was still a student in theology (1895-1899), Fr Léonce de Grandmaison wished that at the beginning of every lecture the professor would provide a historical examination to situate the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Fathers, the errors and their condemnation by the magisterium, thus putting the sometimes pervasive speculations of theologians in their true place. He never intended to minimise the role of reflection and speculative research in dogmatic theology. He sought only to reconcile 'positive theologians and scholastic theologians' by orienting them towards the problems of method.¹⁸⁵

De Grandmaison laid out the broad lines of this reform in two articles in *Études* in 1898 where he proposed the incorporation of dogmatic theology within historical theology, and the following year he taught at the newly opened Fourvière theologate, which was moved two years later due to the laïcité restrictions to Canterbury and then to Hastings, where he taught from 1901 to 1908. In 1902, his reservations about propositional, ahistorical apologetic theology became more pronounced during his course in fundamental theology and he wrote:

It is an undeniable fact that today the study of positive theology arouses much interest and generates a lot of writings; there would not be anything abnormal or disquieting about this, if this interest were not always quite exclusive and insufficiently prepared. Unfortunately, it is also certain that in many minds contempt for Scholastic theology goes along with the respect for positive theology and that a deep ignorance of dogmatic positions forms an alliance with a very rich

¹⁸³ Bernard Sesboué, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Theology', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 115 (2007): 31.

¹⁸⁴ Guillet, 'Courants théologiques', 36.

¹⁸⁵ Henri Rondet, *Gratia Christi: Essai d'histoire du dogme et de théologie dogmatique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1948), 13.

historical science. Some among those who work the most actively even seem to mainly look in the documents of the past for objections to traditional theses.¹⁸⁶

De Grandmaison sought to give a ‘reliable orientation to this already powerful but insufficiently guided movement’ by founding a journal of historical and positive theology that would remain more attentive to the demands of orthodoxy than Loisy’s suspect *Revue d’histoire et de littérature religieuse*.¹⁸⁷ Whereas the Jesuit journal *Études* was primarily a more popular review of culture, this periodical would aim for the highest standards of scientific rigour, and other theologians such as Lebreton and d’Alès immediately saw its value. Jesuit Jean Bainvel of the *Institut catholique* articulated the programme of the new journal at a meeting at Canterbury in 1904:

The journal we are planning to found would be devoted exclusively to the history of theology... We could study the theology of the Old Testament, or that of Saint Paul, of Saint John... We would also deal with the theology of the Church Fathers, taken individually or by schools; the doctors of the Middle Ages, the great scholastics of various times and among the authors of the Company of Jesus, even more recent theologians could be the object of studies; also authors of heresies and the main heterodox authors; we would study non-Christian religions and philosophies, at least insofar as they have had an influence on Christian thinking and on theology.¹⁸⁸

The idea of the review was met with considerable approval, but the Jesuit General thought that given the ongoing Modernist crisis plans should be delayed. They had decided that in the interest of scientific integrity journal should be open to outside contributions, and the General felt that under current conditions unimpeachable orthodoxy would be too difficult to maintain, writing that de Grandmaison should ‘postpone, not give up on it to postpone it until the day when we have trained contributors competent enough

¹⁸⁶ Léonce de Grandmaison, from the preamble of a 1903 project proposal submitted to his superiors, quoted in Joseph Lecler, ‘Le Cinquantenaire des Recherches’, in *Recherches de science religieuse, 1910-2010: Théologies et vérité au défi de l’histoire* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 123; ‘The Fiftieth Anniversary of Recherches’, in *Recherches de science religieuse, 1910-2010: Theologies and Truth, the Challenges of History*, trans. Cozette Griffin-Kremer and Robert Kremer, ed. Christoph Theobald (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 125.

¹⁸⁷ Lecler, ‘Le Cinquantenaire’, 123; ‘The Fiftieth Anniversary’, 125.

¹⁸⁸ From a report given on 7 April 1904 at the Canterbury novitiate by Fr. Jean-Vincent Bainvel, one of the initiators of the *Recherches* project, to a number of provincial leaders attending Lebreton’s philosophy defense, quoted in Lecler, ‘Le Cinquantenaire’, 125; ‘The Fiftieth Anniversary’, 127.

to undertake it. Meanwhile, let us prepare these contributors by training talented subjects in the science concerned...'¹⁸⁹ Thus the project lay dormant for four years until 1907.

While Loisy's journal was forced to close, an important Dominican journal, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, had begun publication.¹⁹⁰ The following year, the new Jesuit journal, to be called *Recherches de science religieuse*, was given approval, and de Grandmaison was given control of it as well as *Études*, to which it was to be closely attached. The first issues emerged in 1910, and as expected the following years brought numerous early Church, Patristic, medieval, modern studies.

Jules Lebreton

Lebreton, who had been at Canterbury with de Grandmaison, was closely involved with *Recherches* and went to Paris in 1905 to occupy the newly established chair of Christian origins at the *Institut catholique*. Joined there several years later by de Grandmaison, their alliance was manifest especially in their forays into the Modernist crisis.¹⁹¹ Lebreton was involved in several important Modernist exchanges and was even personally thanked for his services by Pius X, and in 1910, he established himself as a first rank historical theologian with his *Origines du dogme de la Trinité*.¹⁹² When de Grandmaison died unexpectedly in 1927, he assumed control of *Recherches*, remaining its director until 1946. Lebreton's moderate attitude made him suspect along with the de Lubac and the Fourvière Jesuits. At the time of his death in 1953, *Recherches* was even forbidden to publish a tribute to his life and work.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ From a letter of the Superior General, Luis Martin, to the Provincial of Paris on 26 August 1904, quoted in Lecler, 'Le Cinquantenaire', 128; 'The Fiftieth Anniversary', 130.

¹⁹⁰ Lecler, 'Le Cinquantenaire', 129; 'The Fiftieth Anniversary', 131.

¹⁹¹ See Jules Lebreton, *Le Père Léonce de Grandmaison* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932).

¹⁹² Duclos, *Dictionnaire du monde*, 173-174.

¹⁹³ Henri De Lubac, 'La doctrine du Père Lebreton sur la Révélation et la dogme d'après ses écrits antimodernistes', in *Theologie dans l'histoire*, vol. 2 (Paris: Desclée et Brouwer, 1990), 109; 'The Doctrine of Father Lebreton on Revelation and Dogma according to His Anti-Modernist Writings', in *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1996), 318.

Like de Grandmaison, Lebreton was extremely influential in his attempt to cut a middle road between Modernism and integrism. Although staunchly anti-Modernist, he was unhappy with anti-Modernist excesses, criticizing a speculative approach that refused to engage categories of history and experience. De Lubac later noted that

Father Lebreton noted with frankness that the theologians of our century do not always bring solutions that sufficiently illuminate ‘the problems posed on so many sides and with so much anxiety on dogma, revelation, faith and, in a word, on the origin and value of religious knowledge.’ He regretted to find their response generally so summary, so schematic, so poor in experience; he did not hide his suffering at seeing them apparently so little preoccupied ‘with unravelling the difficulties such as they appear to so many souls, who are caught up in them and bruised by them.’¹⁹⁴

De Grandmaison, Lebreton, and d’Alès provided an intellectual reform-minded blueprint for Jesuit thought that sought to construct theology that was both orthodox and attentive to modern science. Avoiding the sharp polemics of the anti-Modernists, these Jesuits charted a course that tried to open Scholastic thought to positive theology, religious experience, and history. De Lubac wrote much later that he ‘had always been taught in the Society to consider [de Grandmaison and Lebreton] as the best of masters.’¹⁹⁵

2.5 The Jesuit Generation of 1912:

Valensin, Rousselot, Huby, Teilhard, Maréchal, Fontoynont, and Charles

Before examining the individual members of this generational unit, we should mention an important aspect of their formation: it was undertaken almost in its entirety in exile, a socio-political backdrop to their formation that undoubtedly influenced their intellectual development.¹⁹⁶ D’Ouinced remarked that the situation of Jesuit formation for Teilhard’s generation was a constant reminder of the divide between the Church and state: ‘deprived

¹⁹⁴ De Lubac, ‘La doctrine du Père Lebreton’, 112; ‘The Doctrine of Father Lebreton’, 321.

¹⁹⁵ De Lubac, ‘La doctrine du Père Lebreton’, 109; ‘The Doctrine of Father Lebreton’, 318.

¹⁹⁶ We shall not discuss Fontoynont and Charles in depth, though both were known and respected by the Fourvière Jesuits. Fontoynont entered the Jesuits in the Aix-en-Provence province in 1899 and became close with the Jesuits during theology at Hastings. He was a Greek scholar at Fourvière during the 1930s, and was a professor of de Lubac. Charles was a Belgian Jesuit who entered the Society also in 1899 and became a noted theologian and missiologist at Louvain. Both Jesuits maintained a close friendship with Teilhard.

of all apostolic activity, these young exiles were forced to spend their free-time meditating on the history of their misfortune, and this examination of conscience regularly led them to find their elders guilty.¹⁹⁷ In fact for them, the divide between the Church and French state and the anti-clerical politics that had been the result were ‘a tragic misunderstanding. However, the accident was not irreparable. What one generation had lost another could fix.’¹⁹⁸

[Thus,] between 1901 and 1914 this analysis of the state of affairs was undertaken by a whole generation of young religious who had been kept outside the borders of their country by hostile legislation. Naturally from one house to another the explanations differed, even more so, the solutions that were determined, because a Jesuit scholasticate in exile is exactly the opposite of a sheepfold very close: books, news, and the *air de siècle* all penetrated it and were a source of intellectual ferment. It was an avant-garde milieu with its fads and fashions, errors and accurate premonitions. Outside of their official studies, the students of this époque pursued personal work—social questions, history of religions, contemporary philosophy—all in the hope renewing the fractured dialogue between the Church and the state.¹⁹⁹

Indeed, as d’Ouinco recounts, the atmosphere of formation in exile was doubly charged by the Modernist crisis, which, although certainly muted in the scholasticate,

nevertheless entered and affected both the students and masters, albeit in different ways. In fact in 1907, four professors [including de Grandmaison] had taken part in the controversy surrounding *Lamentabili*. Despite the fact that many elders had thought the crisis had passed, the students—at least the most lucid among them—were not reassured so easily and uncomprehendingly suspected the importance of the exchange: to them the conscience of modern man in the West had enlarged and was more demanding, and they did not find a response to these demands in the message of the Church... The task of their generation was to make decipherable again the good news of Jesus Christ.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ René d’Ouinco, *Un Prophète en procès: Teilhard de Chardin dans l’Église de son temps*, vol. 1 (Paris: Aubier, 1970), 52.

¹⁹⁸ D’Ouinco, *Prophète*, 52.

¹⁹⁹ D’Ouinco, *Prophète*, 52.

²⁰⁰ D’Ouinco, *Prophète*, 53-54.

Auguste Valensin: A Blondelian Disciple

Although largely forgotten, Valensin's crucial importance lies in his mediation of Blondelian thought to two generations of Jesuits, acting as a '*prophète de Blondel*'.²⁰¹ A member of the generation of Rousselot, Huby, Teilhard, and Maréchal, after the First World War he became a mentor to and trusted philosophical guide to young scholastics in de Lubac's generation, introducing them to Blondel, Rousselot, and a number of other modern thinkers.

Valensin earned his philosophy license under Blondel's direction at Aix-en-Provence from 1897 to 1899. During that period the two forged a life-long friendship that would inspire a rich correspondence which de Lubac would later edit.²⁰² In fact, it was Blondel's influence that encouraged Valensin to enter the Jesuits: 'I read and reread *L'Action* when I was sixteen, and it revealed to me the dramatic character of existence. When I was nineteen, it was this book that intimated to me the order on which to decide.'²⁰³ Valensin entered the Jesuits in 1899 with Teilhard, and the two friends began the two-year novitiate together. In September 1903, after two years of philosophy, Valensin recorded his philosophical inclinations in his journal: 'I shall open my mainsail to philosophy! I have found what I had lost!'²⁰⁴ His eclecticism and historical approach were evident in his interests: 'I have great intellectual projects: to study Aristotle thoroughly in the morning, in the evening Maine de Biran, then to move to Saint Thomas and thus follow the whole stream—the whole history.'²⁰⁵

By 1905, Valensin's provincial had both approved his plan to write his thesis on Kant and the '*esprit kantiste*', indicating he would work as a professional philosopher after

²⁰¹ Michael Sutton, 'Des opposants à l'Action française : Maurice Blondel, son influence, et le repositionnement de Jacques Maritain', in *L'Action française: culture, société, politique*, eds. Michel Leymarie and Jacques Prévotat (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaire Septentrion, 2008), 352.

²⁰² Maurice Blondel et Auguste Valensin, *Correspondence*, 3 vols. (Paris, Aubier, 1957-1965).

²⁰³ Antonio Russo, *Henri de Lubac: Biographie* (Paris: Brepols, 1997), 199.

²⁰⁴ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 33.

²⁰⁵ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 34.

his completion of his theology training.²⁰⁶ Already sensing tension between his philosophical interests and those of the Society, one father had jokingly labelled him an ‘intellectual’, and he wrote about the danger this connotation had: ‘[h]ow important it is not to be seen as a Kantian! And given the nature of certain spirits, how easily one is accused of Kantianism!’²⁰⁷ As the Modernist crisis reached its boiling point, the suspicious climate coloured his interactions: ‘I never discuss with *un ignorant*, someone who does not know the issue in question... Avoid difficulty by assenting to *general, vague* propositions to which great importance is attached. Because agreement thus is a vague agreement that leads to nothing and makes no more sense than the question. For example: are you *for* or *against* Loisy? = A simplistic question. It is necessary to respond: *against*. That alone is true.’²⁰⁸

Valensin went to Ore Place Hastings in 1906 to complete his theology. For the first year, his primary professor was de Grandmaison, who was teaching apologetics. His diary provides a glimpse of his intellectual development during the Modernist crisis, struggling simultaneously to attempt a certain embrace of both orthodoxy and modern scientific thought.²⁰⁹ At the high point of the Modernist crisis, he met and interviewed both Le Roy and Laberthonnière and journeyed to the Belgian scholasticate to meet two Jesuits attempting a synthesis of both Kant and Aquinas: Pierre Scheuer and Joseph Maréchal. Although Scheuer had read Valensin’s work on Kant and was very complimentary, Valensin left the meeting worried that in Scheuer’s project was ‘not a progress or enlargement of ideas, but an excess and wantonness where Hegel, Kant, Blondel, and Saint Thomas were all mixed together... This is astounding!’²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 38.

²⁰⁷ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 38-39.

²⁰⁸ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 44.

²⁰⁹ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 56.

²¹⁰ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 63.

Soon Valensin was directly embroiled in the controversy as his former Greek professor, d'Alès, director of the prestigious *Dictionnaire Apologetique de la Foi catholique*, asked him to author an article on the method of immanence.²¹¹ Treating the task very delicately, as Blondel's name had been surrounded by controversy for over fifteen years, he carefully drafted the text under guidance of his former teacher. Written in tandem with his brother, Albert Valensin, also a Jesuit philosopher, their contributions comprise two parts, the doctrine of immanence, which they charged was incompatible with Catholicism, and the method of immanence, which they defended. The article soon located the crux of Blondelian thought in the attempt to reconcile immanence and transcendence, thus establishing a new apologetic more suited to modern methods. Blondel's phenomenology purported to show the inherent insufficiency of the acting subject toward the natural world. Valensin claimed that if this '*besoin du surnaturel*' can be established without infringing on orthodoxy: '1) the conflict of ideas, the doctrinal antinomy which opposes these two notions, of immanence and the supernatural, would not exist. The theologian would be able to accept the notion of immanence. 2) And once they discovered the existence of this need, the philosopher could embrace the supernatural.'²¹²

Valensin attempted to support his pretensions of orthodoxy—in a move that cannot help but foreshadow de Lubac's approach in *Surnaturel*—by appealing to the Fathers of the Church and especially St Augustine, who 'occasionally insisted on the inconsistent nature of any satisfaction in the natural order'.²¹³ Moreover, we see the influence of Blondel's method of history, which insisted the method of immanence was in fact most ancient and unitive of the tradition. Beyond the Fathers, however, Valensin claimed this position was held by a number of 'mystics, preachers, and even philosophers such as

²¹¹ Auguste Valensin, 'Immanence (Méthode d')', in *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique, sous la direction de A. d'Alès*, vol. 2 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1911).

²¹² Valensin, 'Immanence', 597-612.

²¹³ Valensin, 'Immanence', 590.

Bossuet, Fénelon and Malbranche’, citing even the father of French existentialism: ‘Pascal showed in his research a “*divertissement*” which was the effect of a profound and sickly disposition which essentially betrays a soul *en quête*.’²¹⁴

The second part of the article, written by Albert Valensin, had its ‘point of departure in the reflection of man as we really encounter him in the actual world.’²¹⁵ This concrete examination reveals the ‘need’, ‘aspiration’, and ‘desire’ of the human spirit for God and the supernatural. This desire is in fact stimulated by the method of immanence, and the apologist pushes people to realize that

when the man who searches for the religion that alone carries within itself the signs of the divine truth on earth, has, with the desire of seeing, asked where it is, this will be the task of the apologist to intellectually fix his conscience, which has been already awakened, on the obligation to believe (at least hypothetically) in Revelation... And the apologist will have to show how the distant word of Jesus Christ and that of the contemporary Church require, to be understood as it should, that the desire which calls, the light which discerns, and the love which embraces, proceed from within. He will arouse in the man who searches for religious truth a sharper awareness of its total subordination to God, a feeling more keen for the need for God. He will try to give him an intuition more profound of the guarantees of revelation that comes from God.²¹⁶

The dictionary articles incited an immediate controversy, and the pieces caused a fellow Jesuit, Joseph de Tonquédec, to release an in-depth critique of the Blondelian thought presented in the *Dictionnaire*, the 1913 book *Immanence*. The work signalled the beginning of the anti-Blondelian crusade de Tonquédec would wage for several decades.²¹⁷ For de Tonquédec, the method of immanence was a fundamental acquiescence to Kantian subjectivity: ‘Immanentism is a system that denies or neglects all transcendent reality and encloses the subject in himself.’²¹⁸ Hoping to find within the subject an entry point to transcendence was totally chimerical for de Tonquédec.

²¹⁴ Valensin, ‘Immanence’, 590.

²¹⁵ Albert Valensin, ‘Immanence (Méthode d’): Examen’, in *Dictionnaire apologétique*, 600.

²¹⁶ Albert Valensin, ‘Immanence (Méthode d’), 610-611.

²¹⁷ Joseph de Tonquédec, *Immanence: Essai critique sur la doctrine de M. Maurice Blondel* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1913).

²¹⁸ Tonquédec, *Immanence*, 8.

In 1912, Valensin met Laberthonnière, giving him the manuscript for his dictionary article, and throughout the following year, the '*Affaire d'immanence*' gathered steam.²¹⁹ Valensin wrote to Blondel indicating that he had read de Tonquédec's book, and he 'was nauseous'.²²⁰ In 1914, he wrote to Blondel that a Dominican, 'a theologian of reputation', had referred the article to the Index.²²¹ It seems likely that Ambroise Gardeil, a renowned theologian who had been deeply involved in the Modernist controversy, had denounced him. Gardeil had written to the Holy Office in June 1913: 'the works of Blondel, a layman, have no authority for the faithful or for theologians—but the Dictionary which contains an article (by Auguste and Albert Valensin) on the method of immanence does have authority in France and is used in seminaries.'²²² Soon after, Valensin was abruptly forced to leave his teaching duties in Jersey and return to France to make corrections. The discussion vanished suddenly with the outbreak of the First World War, and Valensin was sent to the Jesuit novitiate at St Leonards-on-Sea near the theologate at Ore Place, where he would have his first contact with the young Fourvière Jesuits who were there for the novitiate.

Despite the relief brought about by the war, Valensin was now a marked man, and his provincial warned him that the Jesuit general was considering delaying his ordination on account of his 'philosophical tendencies'.²²³ An examination of this episode provides a useful portrait of one of the primary influences on the Fourvière Jesuits and gives a vital glimpse into the great divide Blondelian philosophy had caused within the Society of Jesus, as well as among the wider French clergy. In an early letter, Garrigou-Lagrange told Gardeil that Blondel's followers 'represent a considerable part of the young clergy

²¹⁹ Paul Beillevert, *Laberthonnière: l'Homme et l'oeuvre* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1972), 28.

²²⁰ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 87.

²²¹ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 86.

²²² Gianfranco Coffele, *Apologetico e Teologia Fondamentale* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 2004), 215, quoted in John Sullivan, 'Forty Years Under the Cosh: Blondel and Garrigou-Lagrange', *New Blackfriars* 93 (2011): 63.

²²³ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 134.

and that they have the same hatred for us that we have for them.’²²⁴ We shall see in the next chapter that in the decade of the 1920s, Valensin’s troubles over his Blondelian sympathies were only beginning.

In summary, Valensin was very much a Blondelian apostle who acted as kind of generational bridge, uniting his own generation (1912) with those of Blondel (1890) and de Lubac (1930), thus allowing for a broad transmission of Blondelian ideas. Moreover, he modelled an eclectic historical approach to philosophy, which sought to survey ‘the whole stream’ of thought, searching not for a final articulation, but rather for what was essential in each age. This allowed him to argue that Blondel’s method was present in the Fathers and throughout the tradition. Finally, he established many contacts with likeminded Catholic thinkers and philosophers, such as the Louvain Jesuits.

Pierre Rousselot: A Proto-Ressourcement Theologian

A close friend and intellectual companion of Valensin, Teilhard, and Huby, Rousselot was one of the most influential French Catholic thinkers of the twentieth century, and like his generational confreres, he was shaped by the Jesuits of the generation of 1890, de Grandmaison, Lebreton and d’Alès.²²⁵ Although he died prematurely in the First World War, in only seven years he produced an body of work that not only shaped the *nouvelle théologie* but served as the foundation, along with the work of Maréchal, for the school of Transcendental Thomism broadly popularized by Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. Rousselot spent a year with Valensin, Teilhard, and Huby at the Jesuit theologate Ore Place at Hastings from 1908 to 1909, where he forged lifelong bonds with them.²²⁶ He

²²⁴ Ambroise Gardeil, ‘Lettres de Jeunesse au P. Ambroise Gardeil (1903-1909)’, presented by F. van Gunten, *Angelicum* 42 (1965): 166, quoted in Michael Kerlin, ‘Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange: Defending the Faith from “Pascendi dominici gregis” to “Humani Generis”’, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 25, no. 1 (2007): 102.

²²⁵ For short biographies of Rousselot, see the preface by de Grandmaison in *L’Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1924), v-lx; Élie Marty, *Le Témoignage de Pierre Rousselot, S.J. (1878-1915)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1940); Jules Lebreton, “Pierre Rousselot”, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 14: 134-38.

²²⁶ David Grumett, *Teilhard de Chardin: Theology, Humanity, and Cosmos* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 47.

had first read *L'Action* by 1904 and his time with these Jesuits provided fertile ground for the assimilation of Blondelian thought. His later works mentioned Blondel explicitly many times, and in his last years the two philosophers corresponded directly after an introduction by Valensin.

Born in Nantes in 1879 to a large Breton family, Rousselot joined the Jesuits at sixteen, beginning his novitiate at Canterbury in 1895. He excelled in the study of ancient and modern languages, entered the Jersey scholasticate in 1900, and became close friends with the Jesuits of 1890, who judged him to be brilliant.²²⁷ Ordained in 1908, he received his doctorate from the Sorbonne the same year after successfully defending his main thesis, *L'Intellectualisme de St. Thomas*, and his minor thesis, *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au Moyen Age*.²²⁸ Completing his theology in 1909, he joined the *Institute catholique* of Paris where he taught a course on the act of faith, which was published as *Les Yeux de la foi* in the first volume of *Recherches*, for which he had become the secretary.²²⁹ Moreover, he collaborated with Huby on a study on the history of religions and advanced a theory on the development of dogma, which he had first presented as a paper in 1909 during his last year at Hastings, and de Lubac tells us that 'without a doubt among his listeners were Auguste Valensin, Joseph Huby, Pierre Charles, and possibly Teilhard de Chardin'.²³⁰ He remained at the *Institut catholique* until his entrance in the army in 1914 as a stretcher-bearer and was killed at Eparges on 25 April 1915.

²²⁷ Marty, *Le Témoignage*, 34-61.

²²⁸ Pierre Rousselot, *L'Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936); *Intelligence: Sense of Being, Faculty of God*, trans. Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee WI: Marquette University Press, 1999); Pierre Rousselot, *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au moyen âge* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Buchhandlung, 1908); *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages: A Historical Contribution*, trans. Alan Vincelette (Milwaukee WI: Marquette University Press, 2001).

²²⁹ Pierre Rousselot, 'Les Yeux de la foi', *Recherches de science religieuse* 1 (1910): 241-250, 444-475; *The Eyes of Faith*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York NY: Fordham University Press, 1990).

²³⁰ Pierre Rousselot, 'La religion chrétienne', in *Christus: Manuel d'histoire des religions*, ed. Joseph Huby (Paris, 1912); Henri de Lubac, from the avant-propos to 'Petite théorie du développement du dogme', by Pierre Rousselot, *Recherches de science religieuse* 53 (1965): 355-390.

Rousselot constitutes a key bridge between Blondel and Fourvière, providing a certain proto-*ressourcement* blueprint for a synthetic Jesuit methodology open to history, modern philosophy, Neoplatonism, and Thomism. This method anticipated *Surnaturel* by offering a certain Blondelian reading of Aquinas, which used historical criticism to locate certain fundamental principles or ‘architectonic theses’ around which Aquinas’ work revolved.²³¹ Rousselot was a Thomist who argued that certain later additions of Baroque Scholasticism obscured Aquinas’ essential thought, which was much more compatible with varieties of Kantian thought than Neoscholasticism. Beyond this criticism of Late Scholasticism, Rousselot never bound himself to Aquinas alone, insisting rather that ultimate respect for a text implies sometimes correcting, perfecting, or modifying it.²³² Thomas Sheehan lists the central themes that guided Rousselot’s work as the pre-eminence of act in cognition and metaphysics, a strong critique of conceptual knowledge, representational knowledge as providing an implicit affirmation of God and the soul, and ‘interior’ proofs for the existence of God that complement the ‘exterior’ proofs.²³³

Rousselot’s intellectual orientation, like that of Blondel, de Grandmaison, and Lebreton, sought to develop an orthodoxy in dialogue with modernity and is captured by a 1907 letter to his father, in which he articulated his desire to bridge the ‘*deux mentalités*’, orthodoxy and Modernism: ‘More and more, I realize that in our day there is enormous work to be done in religious philosophy. All these errors have been clearly shown by the encyclical [*Pascendi Dominici Gregis*], and my life will certainly be useful if it is entirely devoted to throwing light on these problems. I am struck by how profoundly ignorant many Modernists are of traditional Catholic philosophy. However, orthodox thinkers are

231. Gerald McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism: the Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York NY: Fordham University Press, 1992), 47-8.

232. Thomas Sheehan, *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 1987), 58.

233. Sheehan, *Karl Rahner*, 60.

unable to answer all the Modernist objections, because they misunderstand the importance of these objections and their consequences. Those, I believe, who are versed in both *mentalités* can render a great service to the Church.²³⁴ This eclectic method was underscored by de Grandmaison in 1924: ‘The programme [Rousselot] traced was his own. It was not necessary that his love for the philosophy of the thirteenth century closed his eyes to errors and distortions that have occurred since. On the contrary, he passionately read modern and contemporary philosophy, hoping to expand upon certain partial truths and points of view he found there.’²³⁵

Rousselot wanted to rescue Thomism from the negative critique with which modern philosophers such as Blondel and Henri Bergson had dismissed it.²³⁶ Their thought had a deep impact on him and influenced central themes of his work.²³⁷ Blondel’s philosophy is of particular importance, and for Rousselot ‘Thomas’ metaphysical approach to “intelligence” [*intellectus*] anticipates Blondel’s teaching on the openness or receptivity of human existence to a saving God and eternal life.²³⁸ Moreover, he also looked to German Idealism for solutions to contemporary problems, drawing also heavily on Neoplatonism as well as Pascal, Newman and, Augustine.²³⁹ The religious sentiment present in Laberthonnière’s writings, likewise, struck him, and they began an amiable relationship that eventually soured, as later did the one between Laberthonnière and Blondel.²⁴⁰ Rousselot sought to help this ‘vigorous spirit’ move to more sure philosophical

²³⁴ De Grandmaison, *Intellectualisme*, 2nd ed., xiv.

²³⁵ De Grandmaison, *Intellectualisme*, 2nd ed., 14.

²³⁶ Bergson, like Blondel, reacted against the deterministic philosophy that permeated his era, attempting to resuscitate the notion of free will by developing the notion that humans grasp an intuition of the creative evolving life force of reality, the *élan vital*, when, reflectively, the spirit ‘bends back’ upon itself to grasp the movement of life. This dynamism is processed as static fragments which allow for discursive and logical interactions with the world.

²³⁷ McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 47.

²³⁸ St. Hilaire, ‘Desire Divided’, iii-iv

²³⁹ Edward Brueggeman, ‘A Modern School of Thought on the Supernatural’, *Theological Studies* 6, February (1945): 21.

²⁴⁰ For more on the relationship between Rousselot and Laberthonnière, see McDermott’s lengthy note in *Love and Understanding*, 112-113n7.

ground. He realized, however, after one particular conversation, ‘their philosophical principles were absolutely opposed’ due to Laberthonnière’s strident anti-Thomistic and anti-Roman sentiment.²⁴¹

Conceptualism vs. Intellectualism

Two aspects of Rousselot’s thought, which we shall now examine, will be particularly influential on the Fourvière Jesuits: epistemology and the desire for God. Rousselot’s major doctoral thesis, published as *Intellectualisme de St. Thomas*, became ‘a rallying cry of the new school of thought’ that would include Maréchal and the Fourvière Jesuits. Rousselot’s notion of intellectualism sought to affect ‘a more profound rediscovery of the mind’ and recover the seminal idea of intellectualism, a doctrine buried by Neoscholastic rationalism.²⁴² This doctrine necessitated a certain diminished the realist epistemology, grounded on the abstraction of conceptual knowledge by the discursive reason, that was central to Neoscholasticism.

Evidence of the convergence of Rousselot’s metaphysical moves with those of Blondel emerged in a letter written by the former: ‘The Thomistic notion of possessing intellection (from which have flowed almost all of my philosophical ideas) has led me to a position quite close to yours or which coincides with them.’²⁴³ Certain similarities are present in the first pages of *Intellectualisme*.²⁴⁴ Like Blondel, he attempted to overcome

²⁴¹ Marty, *Le Témoignage*, 258-259.

²⁴² Brueggeman, ‘A Modern School’, 16, 21.

²⁴³ Frederick Scott, ‘Maurice Blondel and Pierre Rousselot’, *The New Scholasticism* 36, no. 3 (1962): 330; Scott’s treatment explores the relationship between Rousselot and Blondel on the relation of knowledge to being and contains extensive excerpts from Rousselot’s notes on Blondel as well as their written exchanges; for the influence of Blondel on Rousselot, see Georges Van Riet, *Thomistic Epistemology: Studies concerning the Problem of Cognition in the Contemporary Thomistic School*, trans. Gabriel Franks, vol. 1 (St. Louis MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1963), 282-283; and the extensive list that Hilaire provides in ‘Desire Divided’, 77n2.

²⁴⁴ Late in his career, Rousselot came to the conclusion that his critique of conceptual knowledge was excessive, and he indicated his intention to amend formally his position when time allowed. He wrote in a letter to Blondel: ‘Also, I willingly grant you that I have exaggerated in my book on St. Thomas the irrationalism of conceptual knowledge. It seems I must maintain my criticism of the idea which the holy doctor has of definition. But about the spontaneous concept I was deceived. For the present other works appear more pressing than a re-edition of this thesis’; Scott, ‘Maurice Blondel and Pierre Rousselot’, 350-351.

the Neoscholastic dualism of the will and the intellect, arguing instead for a certain interpenetration. Intellection, which is the perfect form of possession, is also the perfect form of action. Indeed, Rousselot stated that ‘Thomas considers [intellection] the vital action *par excellence*, and sees in it the deepest and most intense activity of intelligent beings.’²⁴⁵ He claimed a ‘little reflection suffices to get beyond the popular opposition between *thought* and *action*, but it is another thing to see that in itself thought is the most effective and powerful form of action.’²⁴⁶ Intellection is essentially a paradoxical faculty of ‘immanence and exteriorization’ that unites ‘subjective intensity and objective extension.’²⁴⁷ Essentially grounded in immanence, intellection increases in intensity as the life of intensity deepens.²⁴⁸ This exteriorization of the intellect involves a movement ‘from one being to another’ to ‘possess, to grasp, [and] to hold’ the ‘other’ in a ‘unity of being’.²⁴⁹

The intellect for Rousselot is ‘the faculty of the real’ because ‘it is the faculty of the divine’.²⁵⁰ Moreover, ‘the intuitive vision is postulated by the nature of intellect. It would seem that we are so constituted that peace will never be ours except in the possession of God’.²⁵¹ Intellection, he further adds, is ‘a doctrine that places everything of worth, all of life’s intensity, and the very essence of the good, identical with being, in the act of intelligence: everything else can be good only by participation in it.’²⁵²

To understand the importance of intellectual knowledge and its supremacy over conceptual knowledge, Rousselot employs Aquinas’s study of angelic intelligence to illustrate that authentic knowing transcends the material and knows the ideal or spiritual

²⁴⁵ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 7; *Intelligence*, 16.

²⁴⁶ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 11; *Intelligence*, 19.

²⁴⁷ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 7; *Intelligence*, 16.

²⁴⁸ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 5; *Intelligence*, 14.

²⁴⁹ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 11; *Intelligence*, 19.

²⁵⁰ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, v; *Intelligence*, 2.

²⁵¹ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 88-95; *Intelligence*, 77-81.

²⁵² Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, iii; *Intelligence*, 1.

world *purely*, thus enabling a certain unity between the knower and the known. He compared this perfect knowledge with human knowledge, which remains limited and hindered by its reliance on the material world: ‘Matter is the being where the *one* is absolutely impenetrable to the *other*, spirit is what can become wholly *other* while remaining *one*. Pure intuitive beings, each according to its own nature, possess from the outset this totalizing unity; we humans tend toward it by multiplying laborious acts: their natural end is to actualize through them the power of the spirit, to arrive at the maximum of consciousness.’²⁵³ Human cognition remains inferior to the pure intellection of the angels, however, due to its reliance on the faculty of reason to construct conceptual intelligibility of the material world. It ‘strives to imitate or simulate the intellectual grasp of being and substitutes for it composite representations (the concept, science, system, and symbol).’²⁵⁴ This joining together of the intelligence of the knower and the idea or concept of the known leads Rousselot to insist that Thomas’ intellection is grounded in Neoplatonic idealism rather than Aristotelian metaphysics. This was a major concession to the criticism of the day that charged Neoscholasticism with a rationalism which allowed discursive reason a freehand to know being extensively. Gerald McCool, in describing how ultimately Kantian insights are imported into Rousselot’s metaphysics, writes:

Unlike the species of the angelic intellect, human concepts are not intuitions of the intelligible forms that structure beings. They are constructs of the active intellect dependent upon the data of the imagination for their content. The intelligible singularity that distinguishes one individual from another within the unity of their species eludes the abstract concept. Their universality, the ground of human scientific knowledge, is the mark of their imperfect penetration of the real.²⁵⁵

The Desire for God

Rousselot’s work on the desire for God is especially important. We saw in the last chapter that Blondel and Laberthonnière contributed substantially to bringing the issue to the fore

²⁵³ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 45; *Intelligence*, 45.

²⁵⁴ Scott, ‘Maurice Blondel and Pierre Rousselot’, 331.

²⁵⁵ McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 53.

of Catholic thought. Rousselot advanced their argument by attempting to root it within the Thomist tradition. Robert St. Hilaire sees the possible influence of Blondel in Rousselot's thought as he transposed the Blondeian movement of the will to intellection, as certain similarities can be seen in the opening of the intellect to the beatific vision in its appetitive drive to apprehend all of material reality and in his notion of the desire to see God.²⁵⁶ First, as we discussed earlier, for Rousselot, human knowing is significantly diminished by its reliance on conceptual knowledge, and its inability to grasp singulars apart from abstractions creates a kind of 'unreality' to conceptual knowledge.²⁵⁷ Despite this deficiency, and contra Aquinas, Rousselot argued that human reason [*ratio*] does not stop pressing forward toward its desire to grasp particular material objects which are available to the senses alone.²⁵⁸ He wrote: 'Is it possible that these poor abstract ideas, which deceive the hunger of our intelligence, could fulfil our essential longing and be the final goal of our aspirations? Do not the lower faculties, so immediately in touch with reality, suggest a mode of possession infinitely superior to its own?'²⁵⁹ Hilaire writes that for Rousselot this intellectual dynamism toward the beatific vision

manifests itself in *every act of intelligence here on earth*. For every apprehension of individual material being, *ratio* experiences a frustration with not knowing what the senses grasp. As a consequence, it is intrinsically spurred on toward a perfection of knowledge that it can only achieve in heaven. The parallels with Blondel's analysis of human action are obvious. For Blondel, every action presupposes an openness to the supernatural. Similarly, for Rousselot, every intellectual action presupposes the possibility of the beatific vision. Moreover, for both Blondel and Rousselot, the final goal—whether we define this as the philosophical possibility of God or the promise to see God in heaven—is fundamentally unattainable by the human being's own natural powers.²⁶⁰

At this point it should be evident that Rousselot's softening of the distinction between the natural and the supernatural upholds, as with Blondel and Laberthonnière, the

²⁵⁶ St. Hilaire, 'Desire Divided', 100-101.

²⁵⁷ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 95; *Intelligence*, 81-82.

²⁵⁸ St. Hilaire, 'Desire Divided', 102.

²⁵⁹ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 95; *Intelligence*, 146, quoted in St. Hilaire, 'Desire Divided', 103-104.

²⁶⁰ St. Hilaire, 'Desire Divided', 106.

notion that ‘religion and philosophy copenetrate each other so intimately.’²⁶¹ Furthermore, after thoroughly examining the writings of Aquinas, Rousselot argued that ‘it is in the nature of intelligence as such that Thomas finds a certain attraction, a certain appetite for God, for vision of the divine as such.’²⁶² Despite this emphasis on an appetitive intellectual drive to the Beatific Vision, Rousselot still argued for “‘judgments of the absolute order” about things in themselves and defended quidditative definitions, the absolute certitude of reason’s first principles naturally known and self evident, and the irreformable truth of dogmas.’²⁶³ Thus, he essentially attempted to develop a middle way between Cajetan’s notion of a proportionate natural end, and de Lubac’s later theory that human nature is essentially ordered and directed totally by a desire for the beatific vision. Rousselot claimed that Aquinas thought possible ‘a kind of aesthetic beatitude in the purely natural order’, that would not deplete our intellectual capacity; he wrote that we ‘can ponder the value of human speculation in both orders, the possible order of “pure nature” and the actual order of grace which prepares us for the vision of God.’²⁶⁴

Far from being a benign historical work, Rousselot’s minor thesis, *Pour l’histoire du problème de l’amour* is closely related to *l’Intellectualisme* and draws out further implications concerning the nature-supernatural relationship, as well as the desire for God. Resurrecting a twelfth and thirteenth century debate on love, Rousselot returned to the question of how love of self, the desire to achieve a natural happiness and fulfilment, can be reconciled with love of God, or, ‘how the appetite of a being can tend toward that which is not its own good.’²⁶⁵ This ‘Greco-Thomist’ view was challenged by an ‘ecstatic’ position that held that selfish concerns were fundamentally incompatible with love of God, and therefore, self-abnegation was necessary for the pure love of God. The Greco-

²⁶¹ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 226; *Intelligence*, 181.

²⁶² Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 184; *Intelligence*, 149.

²⁶³ John McDermott, ‘Sheehan, Rousselot, and Theological Method’, *Gregorianum* 87, no. 4 (1987): 707.

²⁶⁴ Rousselot, *Intellectualisme*, 173; *Intelligence*, 140, quoted in St. Hilaire, ‘Desire Divided’, 220n73.

²⁶⁵ Rousselot, *Pour l’histoire*, 1; *The Problem of Love*, 76.

Thomist view, which Rousselot defended against the dualism of the ecstatic view, holds that ‘between the love of God and the love of self a fundamental identity’ exists.²⁶⁶ This identity manifests itself in ‘one identical appetite, the deepest and the most natural of all, or better yet, the sole natural appetite.’²⁶⁷ Rousselot furnished three arguments from Aquinas in support of the Greco-Thomist view of love. First, the theory of the whole and the parts claims that the fact that we are naturally disposed to love God more than ourselves as our own greatest good is in the good of the whole. The principle of unity that undergirds this makes clear that by tending toward the greater good on which one depends one acts in one’s own self-interest, thereby strengthening the participatory relationship.²⁶⁸ The second argument, which asserts the notion of a universal appetite or desire all things have for God, is closely related to this and in fact expands upon it. Finally, Rousselot utilizes the theory of the coincidence of spiritual goods with the good in itself. Since our ultimate end is in God, certain sacrifices of the sensual order further the tendency also toward our own immediate good. Rousselot does not stop, however, with an analysis of various Thomistic texts, and he offers a historical survey to show that Aquinas was operating within the Greek and Patristic tradition. On the question of desire for God, for example, Rousselot cites Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine and Plotinus as authorities.²⁶⁹

In developing his doctrine of faith in ‘Les Yeux de la foi’, Rousselot again utilized the Neoplatonic concepts of ‘sympathetic or connatural knowledge’ or knowledge ‘per modum naturae’ which grounds the intellectual movement toward ultimate good. This intellectual movement is tightly joined to rational judgments of credibility, preceding and mutually informing each other in ‘a reciprocal causality’. He wrote that

love arouses the faculty of knowing, and by the same stroke knowledge justifies that love. Without any preceding ‘judgment of credibility,’ the soul instantaneously

²⁶⁶ Rousselot, *Pour l’histoire*, 3; *The Problem of Love*, 78.

²⁶⁷ Rousselot, *Pour l’histoire*, 3; *The Problem of Love*, 78.

²⁶⁸ Rousselot, *Pour l’histoire*, 12; *The Problem of Love*, 90.

²⁶⁹ Rousselot, *Pour l’histoire*, 32-36; *The Problem of Love*, 117-127.

believes and can exclaim ‘My Lord and my God!’ Free election and certain knowledge are wedded in this lightning flash, but each preserves its identity. Election is oriented to the divine Good, to the new way and life that are chosen, not directly to the knowledge as such. And the intelligence, despite the ardent atmosphere of love that may bathe it, can perceive in all security the eminently reasonable and lawful character of the decision it makes.²⁷⁰

In closing, like Valensin, Rousselot had an eclectic style which was influenced by Blondel and sought to put Catholic orthodoxy in dialogue with modernity. Moreover, Rousselot’s attempt to rescue Thomism from certain modern criticisms drew insights from both German idealism and Neoplatonism. He endeavoured to overcome any dualism between the will and the intellect, which was the faculty of the divine, and he stressed the intellect’s desire for the Beatific Vision, which he argued was central to the ‘Greco-Thomist’ tradition.

Joseph Huby: A Disciple of Rousselot

Born in 1878, Huby entered the Jesuits in 1897 and began studying theology under de Grandmaison and Lebreton at Hastings in 1907 with Valensin, Teilhard, and Rousselot. Huby was the ardent disciple of Rousselot and after ordination taught theology at Hastings from 1913 to 1920. During this period, he was involved with *Recherches* from its founding. In 1918, in an article heavily inspired by Rousselot on the discernment of miracles, a subject central to the controversy over faith during the Modernist period, he wrote: ‘It is because the arguments for our faith are stronger than all the arguments of a purely natural science, that we need, in order to receive and hold them, a faculty that is stronger than a purely natural faculty, an intelligence illuminated by the Holy Spirit.’²⁷¹ The following year he wrote an article, also published in *Recherches*, based on notes left by Rousselot, ‘Foi et contemplation d’après Saint Thomas’.²⁷² Huby became a contributor

²⁷⁰ Pierre Rousselot, ‘Les Yeux’, 450-451; *Eyes of Faith*, 50.

²⁷¹ Huby is quoted in Lecler, ‘Le Cinquantenaire’, 134; ‘The Fiftieth Anniversary’, 136.

²⁷² Joseph Huby, ‘Foi et contemplation d’après saint Thomas’, *Recherches de sciences religieuses* 10 (1919): 137-161.

to *Recherches* for thirty-seven years, and his final contribution after the Second World War shortly before his death took up once again the question of faith in Rousselot.²⁷³ Like Valensin with Blondel, Huby's allegiance to the thought of Rousselot caused him significant problems with his Jesuit superiors.

To conclude, by acting as a great promoter and disciple of Rousselot, Huby in some respects modelled Valensin's Blondelian apostleship. In fact, the Fourvière Jesuits ended up directly under Huby's supervision during their theology studies. He mentored them, supported their work, and encouraged their interest in the question of the desire for God and other important themes that Rousselot had occupied himself with.

Teilhard de Chardin: Science, Philosophy, and God

Teilhard, the famous palaeontologist and spiritual writer, entered the Jesuits with Valensin, and they studied philosophy together at Hastings with Rousselot and Huby. Ordained in 1911, Teilhard finished his theological studies at Ore Place, Hastings, in 1912 and was drafted two years later. Highly decorated for his bravery, he served as a stretcher-bearer during some of the most intense fighting on the Western Front at Champagne, Verdun, and the second Battle of the Marne. After the war he resumed his studies in palaeontology and received his doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1921. Attempting to unite modern science with Christianity in a 'mystical science', he soon fell under a cloud of controversy after several essays on original sin in the context of evolution caused alarm amongst Roman authorities. He was forbidden to teach in France and spent the next thirty years under suspicion. His writings, however, were mimeographed, circulated clandestinely, and had significant influence. After his death in 1955, they were entrusted to a layman who organized their publication, and de Lubac was called upon in 1961 by his superiors to introduce and interpret his work in a positive light. During the Conciliar

²⁷³ Joseph Huby, 'Autour du problème de l'acte de foi', *Recherches de science religieuse* 34 (1947): 462-484.

years, de Lubac wrote three books on his thought and edited several volumes of letters which seemed to achieve their desired effect of having an impact on certain aspects of Conciliar theology. Although Teilhard was not a theologian per se, and his influence on the Fourvière Jesuits remains more peripheral than that of the others described in this chapter, he nonetheless is included here on account of his close relationships with them as well their thematic and methodological intersections.

Beginning with an affirmation of evolutionary biology, Teilhard proposed a divinized cosmos evolving according to the principle of ‘orthogenesis’, that is, linear and teleological evolution. This movement inseparably unifies the biological and anthropological (consciousness) development that are manifested in increasing levels of complexity toward a point of evolutionary fulfilment that Teilhard calls the Omega Point, which as the ‘centre of centres’, draws all human activity to completion and fulfilment. Hoping to establish a ‘mysticism of the West’ as a rival to both the insufficient mysticism of the East and Western atheism, Teilhard saw the Incarnation as a certain fulfilment and blessing of the material world: ‘by virtue of the Creation, and still more, of the Incarnation, *nothing* here below is *profane* for those who know how to see.’²⁷⁴ The Incarnation stands at the centre of the cosmological ascent of the world from ‘matter to life to personal spirit.’²⁷⁵

There is evidence that Teilhard had read Blondel at Valensin’s request as early as 1900, and they established a relationship through Valensin soon after the First World War, resulting in an important exchange of letters.²⁷⁶ Regarding this influence, Teilhard wrote: ‘With Blondel I had been in touch (through Auguste Valensin) for about a year (soon after

²⁷⁴ Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), 56; *The Divine Milieu* (London: Collins, 1960), 38.

²⁷⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1991), 84.

²⁷⁶ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Maurice Blondel, *Blondel—Teilhard Correspondance*, in *HLOC*, vol. 26; *Teilhard—Blondel Correspondence, with notes and commentary by Henri de Lubac*, trans. William Whitman (New York NY, Herder & Herder, 1967).

World War I, around 1920). Certain features of his thought had certainly had their effect on me: the value of action (which became for me a quasi-experimental energetics of the biological forces of evolution).²⁷⁷ He later wrote regarding Blondel's notions that 'they struck a note of perfect resonance with my own most vital thoughts.'²⁷⁸ There is no doubt that Blondel had an important influence on various aspects of Teilhard's thought and, as de Lubac says, his influence remains clearly 'recognizable'.²⁷⁹

Using aspects of Blondel's conception of action provided Teilhard a cosmological broadening.²⁸⁰ For Teilhard the human person has a duty to collaborate with the forward movement of evolution and structure his or her action towards the building of the world: 'If evolution...is to continue to progress in a hominized setting, Man, by physical necessity, must *believe, as* forcefully as possible, in the absolute value of the movement which is his duty to forward...In the case of *true action* (by which I mean action into which one puts something of one's own life), I cannot undertake it unless I have the underlying intention of making "a work of abiding value"...A sort of joy of essential instinct makes me in some way feel that the only joy worth experiencing is to collaborate, as one individual atom, in the definitive construction of a World.'²⁸¹

Although Teilhard preoccupied himself with material science, one of his central concerns, the fundamental orientation of nature toward the supernatural, clearly serves as an anticipation of de Lubac's *Surnaturel* thesis.²⁸² Aidan Nichols writes that Teilhard's

²⁷⁷ Claude Cuénot, *Teilhard de Chardin: Les grandes étapes de son evolution* (Paris: Plon, 1958), 55-56; *Teilhard De Chardin: A Biographical Study*, trans. Vincent Colimore (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 39.

²⁷⁸ Teilhard de Chardin, letter to Auguste Valensin, 29 December 1919, quoted in *HLOC*, vol. 26; *Teilhard-Blondel: Correspondence*, 46.

²⁷⁹ Henri de Lubac, *La Pensée religieuse du père Teilhard de Chardin*, *HLOC*, vol. 23, 256n2; *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, trans. René Hague (London: Collins, 1967), 344n27; for the influence of Blondel on his notion of action, also see Philippe Bergeron, *L'Action Humaine dans l'oeuvre de Teilhard de Chardin* (Montreal: Fides, 1969), 88-99, 302-307.

²⁸⁰ David Grumett, *Teilhard de Chardin: Theology, Humanity and Cosmos* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 60-62.

²⁸¹ De Lubac, *La Pensée*, 255; *The Religion of Teilhard*, 177.

²⁸² For more on the link between de Lubac and Teilhard, see David Grumett, 'Eucharist, Matter, and the Supernatural: Why de Lubac Needs Teilhard', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10, no. 2 (2008): 165-178.

work anticipates 'de Lubac's discovery in *Surnaturel* that the world—which must include, therefore, its “ascending” material aspect—has only one ultimate [supernatural] goal'.²⁸³

Balthasar saw the problem of 'natural desire' as being radicalized by Teilhard: 'the entire universe from its lowest level as pure matter is nothing else but this [natural desire]'.²⁸⁴ In Teilhard's 'Hymn to the Eternal Feminine' de Lubac found a central issue in 'nature as essentially a longing and transcendence by virtue of the ordination to a transcendent, uniquely fulfilling principal'.²⁸⁵

To sum up, Teilhard also had an eclectic approach and was animated by many of the same influences, such as Blondel, as the other Jesuits in the generation of 1912. Moreover, like them he was eager to repair the rupture between faith and science, although for his part, he was interested in material science. Thus, he sought to construct a cosmology that was attentive to both the supernatural as well as evolutionary biology. He remained in contact with various Fourvière Jesuits from the early 1920s until his death in the 1950s. With them, his work found immensely popularity in the years after the Second World War.

Joseph Maréchal: Kant and Aquinas

Born in Belgium only six months before Rousselot, Maréchal also joined the Jesuits at sixteen. He was interested in experimental psychology and biology and was sent to study at Louvain, receiving his doctorate in 1905 in the natural sciences. Assigned to teach biology to younger Jesuits, in 1910, he took a philosophy position at the Jesuit College in Louvain. At the beginning of the war, he was sent to England, where he taught

²⁸³ Aidan Nicholas, *No Bloodless Myth: A Guide through Balthasar's Dramatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000), 204.

²⁸⁴ Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 88; noting the link between Blondel and Teilhard, J.M. Somerville writes: 'Together Blondel and Teilhard created the atmosphere that made Vatican II possible, and they seem destined to carry on and justify its best achievements for many decades to come'; Somerville is quoted in a blurb on the back cover of *Continuum* 5, no. 4 (1968).

²⁸⁵ Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 88.

philosophy and began what would be his most important and controversial work, a five-volume work entitled *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique: Leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance*.²⁸⁶

In 1919, after the war, he returned to Belgium and began teaching experimental psychology, writing a number of articles on religious psychology, and between 1922 and 1923 he published the first three volumes of *Le Point*, called *Cahiers*, which contained his lecture notes on the history of philosophy. After the release of the third volume dealing with Kant, he was suspected of strong Kantian sympathies and was forced to defend himself, delaying *Cahier IV* on German Idealism. He released *Cahier V* in 1926, a work that attempted to bring Scholasticism and critical philosophy into dialogue, and he applied a stricter Kantian reading to Aquinas than Rousselot.²⁸⁷ He retired from teaching in 1935, and continued to work until his death in 1944. *Cahier IV* was only published posthumously.

*Blondel, German Idealism, and the Drive toward the Absolute*²⁸⁸

Although Maréchal always professed devotion to Aquinas, his interest in modern philosophy emerged early, and in 1899, he received permission from his superiors to read Kant, and soon found Kant's critical approach to be of tremendous value, and three years later he began studying the works of Bergson, William James, and Blondel.²⁸⁹ His attempt to import Kantian language and concepts into a traditional Thomistic epistemology was influenced by German Idealism, especially that of Fichte, and his subordination of discursive reason to the intellect, and given the active and predominate role Maréchal

²⁸⁶ Joseph Maréchal, *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique: Leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance*, 5 vols., 3rd ed. (Paris: Éditions Desclée de Brouwer, 1944-1949).

²⁸⁷ Dupont, 'Receptions of Phenomenology', 364.

²⁸⁸ Ronald McCamy, *Out of a Kantian Chrysalis: A Maritainian Critique of Fr. Maréchal* (New York NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 109.

²⁸⁹ Dupont, 'Receptions of Phenomenology', 368.

assigns to the intellect over discursive reason, many have found an essential synergy between the projects of Maréchal and Rousselot.²⁹⁰

However, unlike Rousselot, his epistemology was now based on intuition but on an *a priori* intellectual dynamism in which every act of judgement extends beyond the formal objects of the intellect, leaving it only partially unsatisfied.²⁹¹ For Maréchal, a phenomenological examination testifies to an intellectual drive for the infinite.²⁹²

Maréchal was greatly influenced by Blondel, with whom he had been in contact since the early 1900's, and Rousselot. After he read *L'Action* he wrote to Blondel:

I am happy that a popular little philosophical work offers me the opportunity of presenting my respects to you, M. Blondel, as a token of admiration which, though obscure, is considered and very sincere. With several of my colleagues, all of them eager to understand before judging, I read and re-read *Action*: we were won over by the vigour and fullness of a thought which knows how to return to the great metaphysical tradition without ignoring any of the exigencies of the critique of knowledge... Convinced Thomists and devoted sons of the Church, we beg you to believe in our profound and respectful sympathy not only for you as a man as well as a philosopher.²⁹³

Maréchal's idea of the dynamic intellect begins to expose the debt he owed to Blondel.²⁹⁴ A certain 'correlative unity', or reciprocal relationship, exists between the intellect and the will, which are interdependent in the process of intellectual apprehension, and marked by an *a priori* desire for being: 'Therefore, our intellectual nature, before any intellectual act, *must* have in itself, that is to say, in the correlative unity of our two great faculties, considered according to their first respective acts, an *a priori* condition, at the same time formal and dynamic, namely, the capacity and desire, both unlimited, *de l'être*.'²⁹⁵ Thus, for Maréchal, the human mind drives toward the absolute, and although

²⁹⁰ McCamy, *Out of a Kantian Chrysalis*, 22.

²⁹¹ Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 378.

²⁹² Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 380.

²⁹³ Phyllis Kaminski, 'Seeking Transcendence', 134.

²⁹⁴ For a fuller treatment of the Blondelian influence of Maréchal's outline of the relationship between the intellect and the will, see Van Riet, *Thomistic Epistemology*, 270.

²⁹⁵ Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 404.

this desire for God is absolute and unconditional, its fulfilment remains only *possible*, as the intuition of absolute Being is in no way owed by God.²⁹⁶

In conclusion, Maréchal's philosophical work was primarily focused on finding points of contact between Aquinas and Kant. Moreover, like Rousselot, he imported certain Blondelian insights into his thought, such as the dynamism that exists between the intellect and the will. For Maréchal, every act of judgment compels the intellect towards its final end, the Necessary Being of God. The Fourvière Jesuits befriended Maréchal during their years of formation in the 1920s, and his thought was central to their epistemological development.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an analysis of the generations who preceded the Fourvière Jesuits and influenced them through sedimentation. We examined three units from the generation of 1890. The Dreyfus generation saw the birth of a professional class of left wing avant-garde intellectuals who presided over the widening gap in French society which separated the political left and right as well as the sacred and secular. The era saw an increase in political extremes that each attempted to construct a competing national identity and political framework. Animated by many of the same concerns as the Dreyfus intellectuals, the Modernist generation was the first left-wing intellectual Catholic generation, and their work was attentive to the fundamental categories of history, subjectivity, and community—all categories inaccessible to Neoscholasticism, they argued. Maurice Blondel in particular constructed a philosophical system that offered a totalizing vision of human nature, which he argued is oriented towards the divine and has strong social and historical implications. Moreover, he articulated a historical thesis that held Neoscholastic rationalism to be responsible for the trench between the sacred and the

²⁹⁶ Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 422.

secular. The de Grandmaison generation, preferring dialogue over polemics, attempted to engage modernity with positive theology that put Scholasticism in contact with history and modern thought. The journal *Recherches* became a contact point of engagement between Catholic theology and history. Finally, the Rousselot generation of 1912 was mentored by de Grandmaison and applied his emphasis on positive theology to Blondelian, Kantian, and Neoplatonic thought. Valensin diligently championed Blondelian thought to those around him and advocated an historical approach to philosophy that discerned what was important in each age, largely along Blondelian lines. Finally, while Huby was a great disciple of Rousselot, Teilhard and Maréchal each sought their own rapprochement between Catholic thought and material science and Kantian criticism, respectively. We shall now see in the next chapter how the generational thought of these *éveilleurs* provided the sedimentation on which the Fourvière Jesuits would erect their own programme during their years of formation in the 1920s.

CHAPTER 3

1920s: THE FORMATION OF THE JESUIT GENERATION OF 1930

This chapter will continue to apply generational theory to the Fourvière Jesuits, examining their years of religious and intellectual formation during the 1920s. With the assistance of unpublished correspondence and documents from the Jesuit archives in Paris, I shall undertake an ‘archaeology’ of the social networks and institutions of their ‘young student years where friendships are forged easily and influences exert themselves on soft ground’.¹ As a preamble to the chapter, I shall discuss their entrance into the Jesuits in 1913, as well as their formative experiences in the First World War which opened them more fully to Blondelian philosophy. Next, I shall survey their initial philosophical exposure to Blondel, Rousselot, and the question of the desire for God. Then, I shall outline their theological training and first independent intellectual projects. Finally, I shall examine the formation of their generational identity. This study will expose the intellectual roots of the Fourvière Jesuits more deeply and help us in the next chapter to understand better how these roots will direct their intellectual responses to the 1930s crises, to which their generation will respond as emergent intellectuals.

3.1 A Preamble: Early Formation and the War Years

De Lubac, Fessard, d’Ouin, de Soros, and Nicolet all entered the Jesuits in 1913, were exposed immediately to the sharp polemics of the Modernist crisis, and left to fight in the war in 1915. De Lubac was raised in an intensely Catholic environment in Lyon during the politically and religiously contentious period we described in the last chapter,

¹ Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle: khâgneux*, 12.

surrounded by Catholic integrism, *Le Sillon*, *Action française*, and restorationism.² In 1912, after completing his *baccalauréat*, he was deeply influenced by a book by de Grandmaison, Huby, and Rousselot, *Christus: manuel d'histoire des religions*. Entering the Jesuits the following year, he began his novitiate at St Leonards-on-Sea, and he later described two formative events that foreshadowed the direction his formation would take in the years after the war: ‘two memories of the novitiate that cut through the daily grind come back to me. It was at Saint-Leonards that I saw Auguste Valensin for the first time,’ who was at the novitiate for his ‘*troisième an*.’³ De Lubac recalled that Valensin gave two conferences, ‘one on the young Catholic *Normaliens* in Paris that enthralled me.’⁴ We can only wish that notes from this conference were in our possession as they might recount de Lubac’s first exposure to the Blondelian thought that would direct his future work. Recounting the second happening, de Lubac wrote that ‘in January 1914, Father Master read in the refectory—which was something extraordinary, because we were kept far away from news, even religious, and we never, of course, could see a newspaper—an article published by *Études*, “Critiques négatives et tâches nécessaires.” This article made an enormous impression on me, and I was confused over many things.’⁵ Written by de Grandmaison and Benoît Émonet, the *aumônier* of students, the controversial article’s denunciation of anti-Modernist excesses raised the ire of Roman authorities and was a kind of ‘*manifeste contre l’intégrisme*’.⁶ The article states: ‘What is extraordinary and totally confused is the extent of the denunciation. There remains no other way of living in communion with Rome than to follow and put oneself at the mercy of the ringleaders of

² For a description of these early years, see Henri de Lubac, ‘Mémoire sur mes vingt premières années’, in *HLOC*, vol. 23 (Paris: Cerf, 2006).

³ De Lubac, ‘Mémoire sur mes vingt’, 418; in the Jesuit formation a third year of novitiate is undertaken after the completion of one’s philosophy and theology; also, see Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 102n104.

⁴ Two conferences were given on 13 and 20 March, 1915, respectively titled, ‘Le Mouvement religieux en France dans les Universités’, and ‘Le Mouvement religieux à l’École normale et Pierre Poyer’.

⁵ Léonce de Grandmaison et al., ‘Critiques négatives et tâches nécessaires’, *Études* 138 (1914): 5-25; for on overview of this article and its importance, see Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. I, 280-288.

⁶ De Lubac, ‘Mémoire sur mes vingt’, 418.

this campaign.’⁷ This seems to be the first moment when de Lubac was awakened to the controversy surrounding the Church’s strident programme of anti-Modernism, and here we see the influence of the de Grandmaison generation’s preference for dialogue with the Modernists over polemics first sedimented in de Lubac’s generation. Guillet wrote: ‘This article, which had an immediate impact, expressed the malaise and the scandal, not only of intellectual workers but those apostles engaged in the social work of *Action populaire* or in the formation of the young in *Action catholique de la jeunesse française*.’⁸ De Lubac wrote to his mother less than a week after first hearing the article: ‘We were just read an article in the refectory from the 5 January edition of *Études*. All the editors signed it. If Father can get a copy (maybe from Fr Costa), it will surely interest him very much. There are several notable critiques of “*Nouvelliste*” that all hit the mark.’⁹ Finally, we might add a third event, his first encounter with Joseph Huby. De Lubac vividly recounted in a letter to his parents the impact of a ceremony where Huby came from the theologate several miles away at Ore Place for his solemn vows.¹⁰

The First World War

The First World War was a dramatic point of transition which actualized the generation of 1930, effecting a widespread generational awareness outside the narrow intellectual confines of the coffee houses. France suffered the highest casualties among the allied countries, and among those who served, 77 per cent were killed, wounded, or captured.¹¹ Five million of the eight million who were mobilized were killed or wounded, and in all, almost 1.5 million were either killed at the front or died from war-related causes, with

⁷ ‘Critiques négatives’, 6.

⁸ Jacques Guillet, *La Théologie en France*, 3.

⁹ De Lubac, letter to his mother on 11 January from St. Leonards, cited in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. I, 280-281. *Nouvelliste* was an anti-Modernist publication noted for its strong and sometimes excessive denunciations.

¹⁰ De Lubac, ‘Mémoire sur mes vingt’, 418, 454n102.

¹¹ John Horne, *A Companion to World War I* (Chichester: Blackwells, 2012), 251.

another half-million civilians deaths.¹² The *mutilés*—those who returned home disfigured, maimed, mutilated or gassed—numbered 1.1 million.¹³ Beyond these staggering statistics, however, the real cost of the war cannot be known. The economy was left in ruins, seven million acres of farmland in northern France had been devastated, and 250,000 buildings were totally destroyed, with equally that many sustaining serious damage.¹⁴ The upheaval was immense.

Moreover, the socio-cultural rupture that resulted was simply catastrophic, and there was a sense that everything that had been stable before the war had been suddenly uprooted and was unusable for the programme of post-war cultural and intellectual reconstruction. As we discussed in Chapter 1, the younger generation returned from the trenches and viewed their elders as an institutional rear-guard militia, intent on safeguarding an archaic system of values incoherent to modernity. Valéry's elegy to the post-war crisis famously lamented one of the foremost casualties of the war, the almost irrepressible optimism in modernity that so deeply marked the nineteenth century: 'We later civilizations... We too know that we are mortal.'¹⁵ For Valéry, the unthinkable—the very death of European civilization—seemed to be at hand:

We had long heard tell of whole worlds that had vanished, of empires sunk without a trace, gone down with all their men and all their machines into the unexplorable depths of the centuries... And we see now that the abyss of history is deep enough to hold us all. We are aware that a civilization has the same fragility as a life... The military crisis may be over. The economic crisis is still with us in all its force. But the intellectual crisis, being more subtle and by its nature, assuming the most deceptive appearances (since it takes its place in the very realm of dissimulation... this crisis will hardly allow us to grasp its true extent, its phase.¹⁶

¹² Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times: From the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York NY: W.W. Norton, 1995), 306.

¹³ Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 11.

¹⁴ Bernard Cook, 'The Home Front', in *The European Powers in the First World War: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. Spencer Tucker (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 264.

¹⁵ Paul Valéry, 'La Crise de l'esprit', in *Oeuvres de Paul Valéry* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1957), 988; 'The Crisis of the Mind', in *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry: History and Politics*, vol. 10, trans. D. Folliot and J. Mathews (New York NY: Pantheon Books, 1962), 23.

¹⁶ Valéry, 'La Crise', 988; 'Crisis of the Mind', 23.

The War Generation

Literature and art were also shaken by the war, and the

younger generation of artists reacted more violently; many underwent a psychic upheaval. They felt betrayed by the culture they had inherited. From the nightmare world of the trenches, the values and culture of which the nineteenth century had been so proud appeared senseless and meaningless. Even the early works of modernism...seemed childish compared to the destruction the war had wrought.¹⁷ For [the younger generation] the war signified that the culture had been phoney and was probably to blame for the war. In any case, it was dead. The war completed the triumph of modernism, and indeed the term came into use in the 1920s.¹⁸

Out of this milieu, completely uprooted by the war and disillusioned with progressive pre-war notions, Dadaism emerged and sought to protest against established pre-war rationalism, conveying 'a feeling of chaos, fragmentation, assault on the senses, absurdity, frustration of ordinary norms, pastiche, spontaneity, and posed robotic mechanism.'¹⁹ One writer described the post-war era thus:

The meat grinders of Ypres, Tannenberg, the hellish barrages of Verdun and the Isonzo shattered all illusions. A species of men arose from that ghostly landscape of bomb craters and trenches whose bestiality was unconstrained. A free field was given to the Hitlers and Stalins to come... [T]his meant a fall into chaos, into impotence and deprivation, hopelessness and squalor. What today is designated by the collective noun bourgeoisie lived with an imperturbable faith in... 'property and learning.' All the trust in life that these two pillars had supported collapsed together with them. The resulting changes in reality were so sudden, unpredicted and incomprehensible that at first they seemed more like a monstrous nightmare. The desire to wake from the bad dream gave rise to the utopia of the 1920s, one of the worst by-products of which was to be the Third Reich. But most people remained stunned and paralyzed: sleepwalkers in an alien present.²⁰

This generational wedge was manifest strongly in philosophy. Although existentialism is most often associated with the Second World War, various intellectuals have seen the First World War as playing a decisive role in overcoming the still dominant

¹⁷ Sowerwine is using modernism in the more general sense, referring to the sweeping cultural, literary, artistic, and philosophical changes in Western society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

¹⁸ Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 155.

¹⁹ Robert Wicks, *Modern French Philosophy: From Existentialism to Postmodernism* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 10.

²⁰ Paul Valéry, quoted in Robin Darling Young, 'A Soldier of the Great War: Henri de Lubac and the Patristic Sources for a Premodern Theology', in *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, ed. James Heft (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 151.

neo-Kantianism.²¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) claimed that ‘the general awareness of the time was transformed only by the terrible shock that the slaughters of World War I brought’, and ‘with one blow the dominant philosophy that had grown up in the second half of the nineteenth century in renewal of Kant’s critical idealism was rendered untenable.’²² This blow provided an ‘opportunity for students hungry for meaning and relevance to explore the new more “concrete” philosophies, such as phenomenology (Husserl), *Lebensphilosophie* (Simmel, Dilthey), existentialism (Kierkegaard and Nietzsche), and mysticism.’²³ It was these latter two thinkers that Gadamer saw as providing the vocabulary for the post-war philosophical revolution.

The forces that carried out the critique of this dominant Neo-Kantianism philosophy had two powerful precursors: Friedrich Nietzsche’s critique of Platonism and Christianity, and Søren Kierkegaard’s brilliant attack on the *Reflexionsphilosophie* of speculative idealism. The two philosophical catchwords confronted the Neo-Kantian preoccupation with methodology. One was the *irrationality of life*, and of historical life in particular... The other catchword was *Existenz*... Just as Kierkegaard had criticized Hegel as the philosopher of reflection who had forgotten existence, so now the complacent system-building of Neo-Kantian methodologism, which had placed philosophy entirely in the service of establishing scientific cognition, came under a critical attack.²⁴

For Gadamer, the post-war work emergence of Heidegger’s thought ‘effectively communicated to a wide public something of the new spirit that had engulfed philosophy as a result of the convulsions of World War I.’²⁵ Gabriel Marcel, the French existentialist who converted to Catholicism in 1929, in fact argued after the Second World War that the notion of ‘being unto death’ in Heidegger was rooted in the experience of death felt so prevalently by the youth during the First World War.²⁶ Heidegger’s work left readers

²¹ Dermot Moran, introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophy*, ed. Dermot Moran (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 29; Stephen Michelman, *The A to Z of Existentialism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 2.

²² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David Linge (Berkely CA: University of California Press, 1976), 213.

²³ Moran, *Routledge Companion*, 29.

²⁴ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 214.

²⁵ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 214.

²⁶ Gabriel Marcel, ‘Un débat sur le philosophie de l’existence’, *Dieu Vivant* 2 (1946), 121-126.

seized by the vehemence of its passionate protest against the secured cultural world of the older generation and the levelling of all individual forms of life by industrial society, with its ever stronger uniformities and its techniques of communication and public relations that manipulated everything. Heidegger contrasted the concept of the authenticity of Dasein, which is aware of its finitude and resolutely accepts it, with the “They,” “idle chatter” and “curiosity,” as fallen and inauthentic forms of Dasein.²⁷

The deaths soon after the war of two of the leading liberal Protestant theologians who had dominated the theology of the pre-war period, Adolph von Harnack and Ernst Troeltsch, likewise, signalled the end of a theological age. Paul Tillich wrote:

When Harnack spoke in 1923, three years before his own death, at Troeltsch’s funeral, the first earthquake of the world to which both men had belonged had already happened. They died in an atmosphere strange to that in which they had lived for most of their lives. And it seems in that in Europe neo-Protestantism died with them. It had received its first death blow in the hell of the trenches of the First World War and in the following social and political catastrophes.²⁸

Moreover, the effect that the First World War had on the thinking of the French Jesuits cannot be overestimated. Valéry’s ominous foretelling was echoed by de Lubac fifty years later, as he surveyed the post-conciliar world, writing that the spiritual crisis, ‘such that the Church is rarely shaken by...is the fatal aftershock of the *crise de civilization*, initiated by the war of 1914, which has been accelerated by the rapid progress and profound upheavals of every order.’²⁹ D’Ouin wrote that ‘[a]t Jersey and Hastings, Fr Teilhard and his friends had not expected the war to give their programme an entirely different scope. In their eyes, the political and social battles, of which they were the victims, constituted only the symptoms of a battle much more grave in the domain of the spirit’.³⁰ Of the 841 Jesuits who were called into service, 164 were killed.³¹ De Lubac

²⁷ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 214-215.

²⁸ Paul Tillich, ‘The Present Theological Situation in Light of the Continental European Development’, *Theology Today* 6, no. 3 (1949): 301.

²⁹ Henri de Lubac, *La Prière du Père Teilhard de Chardin*, in *HLOC*, vol. 24 (Paris: Cerf, 2007), 379, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 37.

³⁰ D’Ouin, *Prophète*, 53.

³¹ Étienne Fouilloux, ‘Épilogues. Les jésuites de France, du XIX^e au XX^e siècle’, in *Les Jésuites à Lyon: XVI^e-XX^e siècle*, eds. É. Fouilloux and B. Hours (Lyon: École normale supérieure, 2005), 261.

himself was injured twice, once in the arm at Eparges, where Rousselot had been killed, and a second time more seriously at Verdun.

A wide political and social ditch existed before 1914 between Catholic and secular France, as both sides remained suspicious of one another. The war, however, suddenly brought these groups face to face, exposing them to concrete humanity rather than various ideological abstractions. Jesuit historian John Padberg recalls a conversation with Fessard, who stressed the importance of the war in the breaking down of these walls:

Yes, Father [Padberg], that experience of being in the army was revelatory for many of us young French Jesuits. While in exile out of France and cut off from ordinary French life during our studies, we gained the impression, fostered sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly or even unconsciously, that it was Catholics pre-eminently and perhaps alone and perhaps especially religious such as we were who knew what it really meant to be fully people of integrity. Then we got into the trenches during the war, served with men of all points of view, from the ardent, practicing Catholic to the indifferent Catholic, to a man indifferent to any religion, to someone quite incredulous about religion, to another one quite hostile to the Catholic faith and to Catholics as such. And we found persons in that whole range of opinion, including those who were ardently non-Catholic, that there were men of courage, of loyalty, of generosity, of intelligence, of integrity. That experience opened our eyes. And when the war ended, there were among us Jesuits those who resolved that we would never again allow ourselves to be cut off from the real world in which we lived, which we were called to understand and to interact with. How could we be witnesses to the gospel to the men of our times if we did not know those times and those men? That, among other reasons, is why some of us have tried to help change the Society in these many years.³²

Many Jesuits returned from the fighting to enter insular religious houses of formation virtually unchanged from the nineteenth century, fixed in a mode of living and ideology untenable and incoherent to the youth. A sudden generational divide emerged between the scholastics and their professors and superiors. Hamel wrote to de Lubac in 1923: 'If the war had not brought the intellectual and social openings that it did, would we be any broader than our professors, and would we have understood the value of personal work, historicity, and honour for our masters?'³³ Georges Chantraine has noted that those Jesuits who had begun their studies after returning from the war were 'older, more mature,

³² John Padberg, e-mail message to author, 13 September 2013.

³³ Hamel, letter to de Lubac, 21 December 1923, AJV.

and capable of comparing the teaching they received with their own thoughtful experience during the war.³⁴

Thus we can include the wartime military in the structures of sociability that shaped them. The army was a secular institution that essentially forced them into the closest of quarters with an ideologically, religiously, and, as we saw in Chapter One, generationally diverse group of men under the most extreme of circumstances, with whom they ate, slept, talked with, and faced death with on a daily basis. Moreover, the effect of the sudden contrast this environment would have presented against the stark monolithic exile of their conservative Jesuit formation in England would certainly not have been negligible, inspiring them all the more to heal this divide. As d'Ouince remarked in the last chapter, for Teilhard's generation their English formation would have been a constant reminder of the ditch that existed in French society between the secular and the sacred. We can also make that observation in the early life of Blondel, whose life at the *École normale* was a continual reminder of this, as Catholics were singled out and nicknamed *les talas*.³⁵ The image of the trench, in which the Fourvière Jesuits were crowded with men whom they disagreed with but nonetheless depended on for survival, seems itself to be a profound inversion of the images which Blondel and Teilhard's generation were presented with.

Furthermore, this post-war embrace of existentialism by the younger generation of intellectuals helps to explain why the Fourvière Jesuits were so drawn to the concrete, dramatic phenomenology of Blondelian thought. Jesuit Michel Sales writes of Fessard:

This test [of war in the trenches] when he was still almost a child marked him deeply and gave him the style of sensibility that was his all in act, devoid of all sentimentality. At more than seventy years old, he would evoke the decisive experience that marked his entire existence: being face to face with the daily unconscionable reality of death. In addition to this experience and the

³⁴ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 134.

³⁵ Blondel recalls on his first day at the *École* being asked: 'how can a boy who seems intelligent still call himself tala?' Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel*, 4.

overcrowding in the trenches with the millions of soldiers of his generation, he would soon after find in the philosophy of Maurice Blondel an inspiration and a philosophical method able to articulate the *science pratique* which he had lived until then.³⁶

In fact, older Jesuits such as Teilhard and Rousselot went to war already steeped in existential philosophy and saw the war through its lens. In a letter to his cousin, Teilhard spoke of having a ‘nostalgia for the front’.³⁷ Rooted in a razor sharp phenomenal awareness with action as a fundamental principle, Blondel’s surge of the will or Bergson’s *élan vital* explains the collective or social dimension of the war, which serves as a kind of unifying ground:

There is such a feeling, without any doubt at all... The front cannot but attract us, because it is, in one way, the *extreme boundary* between what one is already aware of, and what is still in process of formation. Not only does one see things that you experience nowhere else, but also one sees emerge from within one an underlying stream of clarity, energy, and freedom that is to be found hardly anywhere in the ordinary life—and the new form that the soul then takes on is that of the individual living the quasi-collective life of men, fulfilling a function far higher than that of the individual, and becoming fully conscious of this new state.³⁸

In conclusion, many of the Fourvière Jesuits entered religious life during the Modernist crisis and, through the influence of older Jesuit generations, became wary of the anti-Modernist crusade. Furthermore, the war caused tremendous intellectual and social upheavals in France, and the combat experience of the Fourvière Jesuits left them wanting to open Catholic thought to modernity and Blondelian philosophy. In these two events, their exposure in the novitiate to older generations of Jesuits and their war experiences, we see the presence of the innate and acquired influences we discussed in the last chapter, innate being the genetic baggage handed off, so to say, by older generations and *éveilleurs* and acquired referring to the formative effect of an external crisis.

³⁶ Sales, *Gaston Fessard*, 10.

³⁷ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, letter to his cousin, Marguerite, 25 September 1917, in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Genèse d’une pensée: Lettres 1914-1919* (Paris: Grasset, 1961), 265-267; *The Making of a Mind: Letters from a Soldier Priest—1914-1919*, trans. René Hague (Orlando FL: Harcourt, 1978), 204-206; also, see Teilhard’s essay ‘La Nostalgie du front’, in *Écrits du temps de la guerre* (Paris: Grasset, 1965), 199-215.

³⁸ Teilhard de Chardin, *Genèse*, 266-267; *The Making of a Mind*, 205.

3.2 A Blondelian Philosophical Formation

1919-1920: A First Taste of Rousselot

The Fourvière Jesuits who had served in the war were discharged and re-entered the Society in 1919, and de Montcheuil, who was several years too young to fight, entered in 1917. For three months after his re-entry (25 September-9 December), de Lubac lived in Lyon (Sainte-Fois-lès-Lyon), where he had access to a number of Rousselot's works and unpublished papers, entrusted to Valensin during the war and since deposited there. There were letters to figures such as Blondel and Laberthonnière, as well as papers and notes that would surely have been for de Lubac a kind of sudden immersion into the issues of Modernism. Moreover, articles in the collection such as 'l'Esprit de saint Thomas', 'Métaphysique thomiste et critique de la connaissance', and 'Idéalisme et thomisme', then unpublished, would have unveiled a way of reading Aquinas far removed from the official textbooks.³⁹

Several months later de Lubac was sent to Saint Mary's College in Canterbury (December 1919-September 1920) for a year of Greek, Latin, and French study, and there he first read *l'Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*. Also during these first months, he met and quickly became close friends with Fessard. These novices entered into a Jesuit environment already polemically charged, and the contentious situation they had experienced in the novitiate before the war was now intensified. By 1920, Rousselot's theories had become increasingly popular in the order, and the general of the Jesuits, Wlodomir Ledochowski, convened an international committee of theologians to study them. On 15 July, it was forbidden to teach or defend Rousselot's positions in the Society, and the condemnation contained appendices on the Rousselot's principal theses and his

³⁹ For a list of the Rousselot's papers that de Lubac would have seen, see Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 761-763.

publications.⁴⁰ Throughout that summer an attempt was made to eradicate his influence from the Jesuit scholasticates, as Ledochowski ordered visits to the French province by Jesuit Auguste Bultot. In his memoirs, de Lubac recalls that upon Bultot's arrival at Louvain he was picked up at the train station by Pierre Charles, who asked what he thought of '*Les Yeux de foi*'. Bultot replied: 'I'm coming here precisely to put them out.'⁴¹

Neither Huby nor Valensin escaped the purge. The former, forbidden to teach fundamental theology, was confined to biblical exegesis, and the latter was removed from the Jersey scholasticate.⁴² As we saw in the last chapter, Valensin's superiors had long been wary of him, and quite telling is the note he received from a superior not long before his dismissal: 'I can assure you that no one here thinks you align yourself with Louvain.'⁴³ The only serious reproach they have heard, from a doctrinal point of view, is that you have driven away certain students from the teaching of the professors by encouraging them instead to read Sertillanges and Rousselot.⁴⁴ Although neither one of them is heterodox, their works seem to me a little dangerous.'⁴⁵ Before he left Jersey, however, in what may well have been the post-war resuscitation of the debate concerning the desire for God, Valensin gave a conference on Blondel in which he stressed the '*besoin du Surnaturel*'. All this was 'in the air' at Jersey as de Lubac and the others arrived there at the end of the summer to begin their philosophy studies.

⁴⁰ For an introduction and translation of the first appendix which includes sections on the perception of motives of credibility, the act of faith, and the relationship between the light of faith and good will; see Avery Dulles, introduction to 'Principal Theses of the Position of Pierre Rousselot', in *Eyes of Faith*, by Pierre Rousselot (New York NY: Fordham University Press, 1990), 113-117.

⁴¹ De Lubac, *At the Service*, 21n11; *Mémoire*, 18n12.

⁴² Dulles, 'Principal Theses', 113; Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 91.

⁴³ As we saw in the last chapter, some Belgian Jesuits at Louvain, including Maréchal and Sheuer, were under suspicion in Rome for their supposed enthusiasm for constructing a Kantian and Thomistic synthesis.

⁴⁴ Antonin Sertillanges (1863-1948) was a French Dominican who founded the *Revue thomiste* in 1893 and fell under suspicion during the Modernist crisis for his work on dogma. For a summary of his thought on this question, see Mansisni, *Dogma*, 48-52.

⁴⁵ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 139.

1920-1921: Philosophy Year I—Learning to Read Aquinas

Three years of philosophy were begun at Jersey (September 1920-September 1923), and these first years in many ways laid the foundation for many of the important intellectual projects that would occupy their productive years. They were immersed in the writings of Blondel and Rousselot, and de Lubac's first studies on the question of the desire for God unfolded. Their correspondence reveals an intellectual development almost staggering in its breadth, and during this period Fessard and de Lubac read Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, Plotinus, Blondel, Rousselot, Maréchal, Bergson, Hamelin, Lachelier, de Biran, Boutroux, Leibniz, and Malebranche, as well as secondary literature on Fichte and Schelling. We might wonder whether this breadth was in part stimulated by the memory of Valensin's history of philosophy courses, which spanned 'the entire history of philosophy from the ancient Greeks to contemporary authors such as Lachelier and Hamelin and, of course, Blondel.'⁴⁶ Moreover, they remained current on various theological controversies, recommending or critiquing such figures as Gilson, Maritain, Gardeil, and de Tonquédec. Likewise, many of their early outlines and essays are indicative of future trajectories, and they wrote on such topics as the desire for God, knowledge of God, conceptual knowledge, liberty, and apologetics.⁴⁷

With Valensin gone, the philosophy instruction was handled by two avowed Suarezians, Gabriel Picard and Pedro Descoqs, who we saw in Chapter Two opposed Blondel during the *Semaines sociales* controversy. Letters from this period indicate that these two professors, especially Descoqs, were a continual brake on their desire to pursue modern thought, and according to the students, 'there was a watertight bulkhead between the professors and us (with the exception of P. Valensin)... When we go to see them, they

⁴⁶ Valesin, *Auguste Valensin*, 121.

⁴⁷ For de Lubac's extensive notes and philosophical investigations on these topics during his first years of philosophy, see de Lubac, *Jersey: Dissertations et Gribouillis, Notes de Philosophie*, Les archives jésuites de Vanves (AJV hereafter).

are on the defensive and reserved, as in the face of an attacking enemy which they must fight off; few have the attitude of teachers concerned for their students.⁴⁸

Also, during his first year at Jersey, de Lubac and Fessard continued their introduction to Aquinas, which had begun with Rousselot, through Gilson's controversial *Introduction au système de S. Thomas d'Aquin*, whose provocative first edition had been published two years earlier.⁴⁹ De Lubac wrote much later to Sales:

In our first year of philosophy at Jersey, Gaston Fessard and I clicked right away, and as our only professor, Fr Camille Bonnet... was totally empty of clarity, nobody encouraged us to study Saint Thomas. Thus, it was necessary to figure out how to make our first intellectual steps ourselves... It is thanks to Gilson that I took a certain overall view of Saint Thomas. His *Philosophie de saint Thomas* was kept in a locked cabinet of 'modern philosophy' books in a common room which was opened during holidays.⁵⁰

Gilson was a controversial first guide into the thought of Aquinas, as he argued that for Aquinas philosophy and theology are inseparable. Gilson was also accused of undermining the alleged Aristotelian 'scholastic synthesis'.⁵¹ In regard to the second point, Gilson followed in 1924 with *Le Philosophie de saint Bonaventure*, attempting to show that Bonaventure differed significantly from Aquinas in key areas.⁵²

Likewise, during these early years, de Lubac had read Rousselot extensively, transcribed his unpublished papers, and shared them with the other Jesuits. Besides *l'Intellectualisme de saint Thomas*, which I mentioned above, he had read: *Pour l'histoire de l'amour au Moyen-Age*, 'Les Yeux de la foi', 'Métaphysique thomiste et critique de la connaissance', 'Remarques sur l'histoire de la foi naturelle', and 'Idéalisme et thomisme'.⁵³ Recognizing this influence, Balthasar wrote much later that Rousselot gave de Lubac the 'courage to read out of the texts of Thomas Aquinas what he saw in them

⁴⁸ Chantaine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 121-132, 305-319; a Jesuit is quoted in Chantaine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 121.

⁴⁹ Étienne Gilson, *Introduction au système de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Strasbourg: Vix, 1922).

⁵⁰ De Lubac, letter to Michel Sales, quoted in Chantaine, t. II, 137.

⁵¹ John Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 6.

⁵² Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes*, 6.

⁵³ Chantaine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 214.

with evidence: “the paradox of the spiritual creature that is ordained beyond itself by the innermost reality of its nature to a goal that is unreachable for it and that can only be given by a gift of grace.”⁵⁴ De Lubac’s approach to Aquinas is illuminated in a long letter to de Montcheuil during the period, where he discussed how Rousselot had pushed him to overcome certain problems in Aquinas.

Because if it is true that Thomism’s theory of the agent intellect, the phantasm, and the essence of things is now untenable, as you claim, and also that they constitute the most apparent part of the doctrine of Aquinas, then, on the other hand, it seems to me also true that we find explicitly in St Thomas certain principles even more fundamental. When these are drawn out, they overshadow the famous ‘material essences’, thus permitting a disciple of St Thomas to sacrifice them without being unfaithful to the master. Rousselot remarked in his thesis that if St. Thomas held to the essences, it was because he was preoccupied with higher things. He does not take the trouble to verify the copper treasure that the world of his time thought was gold... More and more I find in St. Thomas texts that open me to other perspectives.⁵⁵

1921-1922: Philosophy Year II—Blondel and the Desire for God

After breathing in for a year the Blondelian and Rousselotian air left by Valensin’s legacy, it is not surprising that question of the desire for God emerged in the Jesuits’ thought. As we saw in the previous chapter, the desire for God was important in both *l’Intellectualisme* and *Pour l’histoire*, in which Rousselot even offered a short history of the centrality of the concept in the Western tradition, mentioning especially Plotinus and Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena, Bernard, William of St-Thierry, Hugh of St-Victor, and most importantly, Aquinas. In fact, Rousselot noted that although Aquinas ‘had not read the classical exposition on the appetite of all things for God that Plotinus gave in his Third Ennead...he would have found there some ideas that he had made his own.’⁵⁶ In fact, Rousselot’s historical survey of Catholic tradition, knowingly or not, offers a dramatic reinforcement of Blondel’s claim in *Histoire et Dogme* that ‘the age old experience’ of the desire for God runs through Catholic tradition.

⁵⁴ Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 13.

⁵⁵ De Lubac, letter to Yves de Montcheuil, dated Thursday, Autumn 1924, AJV

⁵⁶ Rousselot, *Pour l’histoire*, 32; *Problem of love*, 117.

Thus, it seems to be a clear mark of Rousselot's early influence on de Lubac's interest in the question of natural desire that he began studying Plotinus and Augustine in regard to desire for God. A small scrap of notepaper seems to indicate the very first steps de Lubac took in his project which would culminate in the *Surnaturel* controversy twenty-five years later. Given the heading 'Le désir de Dieu: Plotin', it offers only a few general scribbles, such as 'The One does not desire, by nature it is "full." All other beings desire: they are tasked by nature'.⁵⁷ Elsewhere in notes on '*Amour et connaissance*' he writes: 'If the mind is constantly becoming, it desires itself, and, by desiring itself, desires God who alone can realize it.'⁵⁸ He continues: 'The supernatural extends nature, raises it, [and] transforms it... The mystery is in this continuity, which is at the same time a transformation in this survival [*survivance*] of divinized nature... The supernatural realizes nature and transforms it.'⁵⁹

These scraps take on more significance, however, when we examine a letter to his parents written at the end of 1921, where he discussed a presentation on the desire for God in the philosophy of Plotinus and St Augustine which he was to give to a small study group: 'I shall discuss a point of the philosophy of Plotinus. Plotinus is not very accessible, because he is an obscure author, writing in a difficult Greek. The Latin translations are bad enough and French studies on him are insufficient. However, he has great importance concerning certain ideas very common in current philosophy.'⁶⁰ Almost three weeks later after presenting on Plotinus, he indicated that the topic was too broad and Augustine would be carried into January.⁶¹

De Lubac's talk began by examining two aspects of Plotinus' thought, the Platonic concepts of descent and ascent, which hang together on the notion of the desire for God:

⁵⁷ De Lubac, Jersey: Dissertations, AJV.

⁵⁸ De Lubac, Jersey: Dissertations, AJV.

⁵⁹ De Lubac, Jersey: Dissertations, AJV

⁶⁰ De Lubac, letter to his father, 1 December 1921, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 163.

⁶¹ De Lubac, letter to his father, 1 December 1921, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac* t. II, 163.

‘This desire is a desire for being; it is a desire for stability; it is a desire for unity.’⁶²

Rousselot’s influence is evident as de Lubac argues for the centrality of the desire for God in Aquinas as well as the entirety of the tradition: ‘Thus, in his fundamental idea, Plotinus agrees with St Thomas, as well as all the Christian doctors, by showing that beings are suspended from the first Principle, which is Him for whom they search exclusively in all their activities, conscious or unconscious. In the end, we are all, in our deepest centres, “*cris vers Dieu*”, in all that we have as being or desire of being [*tout ce que nous avons d’être ou de désir d’être*].’⁶³ De Lubac cited an article by Rousselot which finds inspiration in the notion of the desire for God, and wrote that ‘the influence of Plotinus crosses a long chain of thinkers and mystics such as Dionysius the Areopagite and Eriugena’, whose ‘immediate master’ was ‘the famous Meister Eckhart’.⁶⁴

It is Augustine, however, who remedies the problem of reminiscences in Plotinus. De Lubac declares that when Augustine discovered Plotinus through the writings of Victorinus, there ‘was in his soul an illumination. He found there, pulsing on each page, this desire for God which since his adolescence had left him without rest.’⁶⁵ De Lubac then discusses two readings of Augustine. The first is the intellectualist reading of the Ontologists and Cartesians, ‘who contemplate eternal truths under that action of divine illumination’, proposing instead a mental dynamism, and the second is the voluntarist position of certain Protestants who insist on a diminishment of the will. Traces of Rousselot emerge again as de Lubac attempts to solve this antinomy by arguing that there exists in Augustine’s thought a ‘mental dynamism’, in which ‘all intellection is eminently

⁶² De Lubac, ‘Le désir de Dieu, dans Plotin et St Augustin’, talks given at Jersey in December and January 1921, Centre d’Archives et d’Études des Cardinal Henri de Lubac (CAÉCHL hereafter), 8.

⁶³ De Lubac, ‘Le désir de Dieu’, CAÉCHL, 11.

⁶⁴ De Lubac, ‘Le désir de Dieu’, CAÉCHL, 17.

⁶⁵ De Lubac, ‘Le désir de Dieu’, CAÉCHL, 19.

active', and in fact, 'perfect intellection is perfect act'.⁶⁶ Fundamental to this dynamism is the desire, which drives the intellect but is nonetheless intrinsic to it.

De Lubac continued his study by quoting Rousselot, and we find between the handwritten pages of the talk a scrap of paper with a short transcription of a letter from Rousselot to Laberthonnière, which we might presume he copied during his first exposure to Rousselot's papers right after the war. Moreover, de Lubac's justification of the questionable presence of this mental dynamism in the thought of Aquinas, which seems to threaten this claim that this dynamism is in fact a unifying concept in Catholic tradition, is a move that Rousselot also made: 'If we find less explicitly this mental dynamism in St Thomas and the other great doctors of the Middle Ages, it is not that there is nothing in their principles that oppose it...but that their preoccupations were not the same.'⁶⁷ Finally, for de Lubac, Augustine 'so clearly understood the necessity of grace and at the same time analysed his intimate cooperation with the *forces de l'esprit*', and 'his entire *oeuvre* is at the same time so profoundly supernatural and so marvellously psychological'.⁶⁸ For Augustine 'Desire' was key, and he 'understood the monstrosity of all philosophy that itself purports to be sufficient'.⁶⁹

It was also during the second year that Blondelian philosophy took a strong hold on de Lubac and Fessard, as Valensin had left a strong 'Blondelian imprint' behind.⁷⁰ Apparently by this point, de Lubac already knew him to some degree and gave evidence of having read him, in fact the his notes during this period indicate that he had read Valensin's article 'Immanence' in the *Dictionnaire*.⁷¹ He wrote to his father: 'I know Valensin a little. He had been a philosophy professor here for a fairly long time, but his

⁶⁶ De Lubac, 'Le désir de Dieu', CAÉCHL, 22.

⁶⁷ De Lubac, 'Le désir de Dieu', CAÉCHL, 25.

⁶⁸ De Lubac, 'Le désir de Dieu', CAÉCHL, 34.

⁶⁹ De Lubac, 'Le désir de Dieu', CAÉCHL, 35.

⁷⁰ Sesbœué, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 141.

⁷¹ For the small unmarked scrap of notepaper containing a quotation from Valensin's article, see De Lubac, *Jersey: Dissertations*, AJV.

health permitted him to teach only a few classes each year. I also know his older brother who has been a professor at the *Faculté catholique* (Lyon).⁷² Chantraine notes that during this time, de Lubac also summarized the long Blondelian conference that Valensin had given at Jersey in 1920 and transcribed an article of his, 'D'une logique de l'action'.⁷³ De Lubac later wrote: 'During the years of my philosophy (1920-1923) on Jersey, I had read with enthusiasm Maurice Blondel's *Action, Lettre* (on apologetics) and various other studies. Through a praiseworthy exception, some of our masters at that time, who were quite strict in what they excluded from our reading, allowed us, though without encouraging us, to study the thought of the philosopher from Aix. Father Robert Hamel and I read him together.'⁷⁴ Hamel wrote to de Lubac that before reading Blondel, he 'could not understand philosophy. The best theory will be the one that casts most exactly real life and gives reasons for its development... I'm pressing on with the reading of *L'Action*, and I think more and more that this is a true masterpiece, especially when one thinks of the difficulty, proven by experience, of making a serious analysis of a state of the soul and treating with scientific precision the logic of feelings.'⁷⁵ Writing to his brother Paul near the end of his second year, de Lubac exclaimed that coursework took up only part of his time, and 'the rest is spent studying Maurice Blondel and some of the innumerable works that have emerged from his thought over the last thirty years. Although it is extremely interesting, it is difficult, because at each step the problems of pure philosophy are themselves complicated because of theological questions which one is obliged to keep an eye on to some degree.'⁷⁶

⁷² De Lubac, letter to his father, 1 December 1921, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 161. De Lubac had no idea why Valensin left Jersey, only finding out much later after going through his old notes and letters.

⁷³ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 162, n. 2; Auguste Valensin, 'D'une logique de l'action', *Revue de philosophie* 1 (1913).

⁷⁴ De Lubac, *Memoire*, 15; *At the Service*, 19.

⁷⁵ Hamel, letter to de Lubac, 12 August 1922, AJV.

⁷⁶ De Lubac, letter to his brother Paul, 23 June 1922, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II.

In many ways Blondelian philosophy was what united de Lubac and his friends, providing, as we have seen, a total system and counter-philosophy, a modern alternative to the all-encompassing system that Neoscholasticism sought to deliver. Bouillard, the youngest member of the Fourvière generation, described the influence of Blondel during his student years, when he

obtained a mimeographed copy of *L'Action*, a book which could not be found in bookstores at that time. This book was suspect, and without a competent guide, it was difficult. But deeply disappointed with the scholastic philosophy and apologetics taught in the seminaries in those days, we were searching there for an initiation into modern thought and, even more, the means, which we had not found elsewhere, to understand and to justify our faith... I have often discussed with my students *L'Action de 1893* and *Lettre de 1896 sur l'Apologétique*, and while drawing on other sources, by and large my lessons were inspired largely by Blondelian thought. Others had long been on this path and more still went there in their turn. Therefore, I must testify not only to what I learned from Blondel but also to the influence he had on numerous theologians as well as throughout the whole *ensemble* of theology.⁷⁷

Recognizing Blondel's influence on the French Jesuits, Bouillard noted: 'These theologians and others too numerous to mention here did not restrict themselves to explaining Blondel's thought but took inspiration from it and made it bear fruit in their own work. Through them it penetrated the fields of apologetics and theology.'⁷⁸

A letter from Hamel to de Lubac after the close of their second year gives an insight into how they even interpreted their hardships through the Blondelian lens:

The past is joined with the present, and I want with Our Lord and Fr Picard, that you should never close yourself, or at least that you open yourself to receive impressions of peace and joy. 'A lost year', you should not take this refrain; it is false. You have suffered and despite your prejudices you have very much indeed suffered. This suffering has not been a punishment but a reward. It has resulted in my full and correct understanding of *la vie surnaturelle*, which I probably would never have had without it.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Henri Bouillard, 'Ce que la théologie doit à la pensée de Maurice Blondel', in *Journées d'inauguration, 30-31 Mars 1973: Textes des interventions* (Louvain: Éditions de l'Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 1973), text of speech, 41.

⁷⁸ Henri Bouillard, 'Ce que la théologie', 40.

⁷⁹ Hamel, letter to de Lubac, Auguste 1922, AJV.

1922-1923: The Third Year—Individual Projects

At the beginning of their third year of philosophy, the Jesuits were clearly more confident in developing their own projects, and the well-known '*Esquisse*' of de Lubac and Fessard, often referred to in their letters, emerged. Numbering forty-seven pages of single-spaced type, it begins by stating: 'We know something. Everyone agrees on this fact... But what is the value and extent of this knowing?'⁸⁰ It then briefly sketches three positions: first, that of scientific Kantianism that denies knowledge of the noumena; secondly, the pragmatist position of Bergson and Le Roy, which subordinates scientific knowing to an intuitional apprehension of the absolute; and finally, a middle position, that of the authors, which attempts to grasp firmly both the objective value of scientific knowing as well as an apprehension of the absolute. Blondelian influence is evident from the beginning, and the *Esquisse* ends with a lengthy religious turn taken expressly from Blondel.

After providing in a single paragraph a global history of the problem of knowing in Western philosophy culminating in Kant and the critical problems he posed, Fessard and de Lubac insisted that this problem of knowing 'is a new problem, unknown since the ancients, and it questions even metaphysics itself. Thus epistemology must be the necessary vestibule of philosophy. It is here where we shall stop the instigators of disorder who have launched bombs into the venerable basilica.'⁸¹ Moreover, there is a denunciation of Scholasticism, which they claim remains fixed in pre-modern categories. It is, however, the great movement of philosophy in its totality that reveals life and truth. This global, historicizing view of philosophy championed by Valensin bears the clear marks of Blondel's method of history, which we examined in Chapter One.

If one considers the historical development of philosophy as a continual evolution, can we not give to the critical problem a more important place? If in each epoch, there is a central point from where one envisages everything, can we not consider

⁸⁰ De Lubac and Fessard, *Esquisse*, AJV, 1.

⁸¹ De Lubac and Fessard, *Esquisse*, AJV, 2.

this problem as that of the point of view of today? Instead of formulating a preliminary thesis which is like a stamp affixed to the package of traditional theses, why not deliberately envisage all the theses according to this new problem? Instead of regarding 'the moderns' as looking for trouble with those who preceded them, why not try to rethink with our minds of today the Eternal Philosophy?⁸²

Following this introduction, the *Esquisse* proceeds for more than thirty pages, attempting to establish an epistemology attentive to both science and transcendence, covering such topics as intuition, reflexive analysis, judgment, conceptual knowledge, and the relationship between the subject and object in knowing, culminating in a Blondelian attempt to find in fundamental acts of the will and intellect an Absolute or Infinite Good, which is underlaid by a desire for God.⁸³

Also during this last year of philosophy Fessard completed his thesis on the nineteenth-century French philosopher de Biran, entitled *La Méthode de réflexion chez Maine de Biran*.⁸⁴ Fessard's choice is telling, given that de Biran exercised a significant influence on Blondel's thought, and Valensin and Laberthonnière had devoted a good deal of time to study of his thought as well.⁸⁵ Much of the significant correspondence between de Lubac and Fessard during this period is taken up with a discussion of the de Biran thesis. Their exchanges are analytic as well as strategic, and both knew the thesis would be controversial as they sought to cloak certain provocative aspects. For example, Fessard commended de Lubac on an excellent suggestion, a '*ruse de guerre*,' that would soften some provocative conclusion: 'You are Machiavellian!'⁸⁶ Despite the manoeuvring, however, the thesis was roundly rejected by all three of its examiners who accused Fessard of using de Biran to propagate his own theories. As the thesis was revised and published in the 1930s, we shall examine it in the next chapter.

⁸² De Lubac and Fessard, *Esquisse*, AJV, 3.

⁸³ De Lubac and Fessard, *Esquisse*, AJV, 39.

⁸⁴ Fessard's thesis, which is available in the AJV, was finally published in in 1938 as *La Méthode de réflexion chez Maine de Biran* (Paris: Bloud & Gat, 1938).

⁸⁵ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 34.

⁸⁶ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 22 March 1924, AJV.

A year after the *Esquisse*, de Lubac summarized his guiding methodology as he offered de Montcheuil certain preconditions for authentic philosophy, which must be grounded in the question of human destiny. The ‘*acte religieux*’ is undertaken when there is a certain realization that what is desired cannot be attained. We must

become aware of the great mystery of existence, and more profoundly, the great mystery of human liberty! Philosophy, therefore, doesn’t resolve anything, rather, it finds something, and through this thing that is found, it explains everything. The one who gains a perfect awareness of the mystery of his liberty, is the one who will explain the world. We should not complain that philosophy is disappointing, that it will be disappointing, that it is not like it seems: because the more one becomes aware of the mystery, the more one has the impression of darkness, and this is good. We don’t want to risk priding ourselves on this, rather, in the act of confidence in God, in the act of abandonment, which springs up spontaneously. Is this not love, the pure love of God of which we are capable as creatures? The supernatural order will only deepen the mystery with the new lights it brings to us, and it will in fact be the source of a great love.⁸⁷

De Lubac is very clear as to what form this ‘ferment of thought’ will take. First, ‘philosophy must not constitute an opposition to the sciences. [Yves], you are right that the chapter in Blondel on this subject is very beautiful and very true.’⁸⁸ Secondly, a true philosophy indeed contains ‘the germ of different developments, and this is why an “objective” history of philosophy is impossible, unless it is absolutely superficial. This is why the True philosophy can profit from everything, even from the most unbelieving thinkers.’⁸⁹ Thirdly, philosophy must ‘return to the method of the ancients’ to restore the proper relationship between nature and the spirit and avoid the dualism of modern thought.

From February to April 1923, de Lubac was sent to the south of France in the hope that serious headaches from his war injury would subside, and he greatly desired to meet Blondel himself while he was there.⁹⁰ Fessard and Hamel both enthusiastically enquired as to when the meeting would take place, and the former wrote: ‘I hope your next letter will finally be the ‘*l’entretien avec M. Blondel*’ for which we have been waiting for so

⁸⁷ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, 13 February 1924, AJV.

⁸⁸ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, 13 February 1924, AJV.

⁸⁹ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, 13 February 1924, AJV.

⁹⁰ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 15; *At the Service*, 19.

long.⁹¹ Hamel also enquired about the impending visit: ‘Have [Blondel] respond to your questions with precision. Then communicate the results of your inquiry and share with us all the riches which we will purify by putting them under Thomistic rubrics. Indeed Valensin does it, why don't we?... Wait until I have a bit more intellectual development before giving me the meat of the ancients to chew on; permit me now to drink the milk of the moderns... We must put *L'Action* into practice; this is the best way of making it shine. If you see M. Blondel, thank him for all he has done for us, and tell him that we pray for him.’⁹² Hamel’s intent to filter Blondel through Aquinas is certainly telling as to how their interpretation of Aquinas will develop and is indicative of Rousselot’s influence. De Lubac finally met with Blondel on 16 March, recounting in a lengthy letter to Fessard the wide-ranging conversation, in which they discussed Valensin, de Biran, and prominent Neoscholastics such as Garrigou, Maritain, and Marie-Benoît Schwalm.⁹³

Finally, Maréchal had a significant influence on the Fourvière Jesuits during these years, and the controversy over his writings unfolded mainly during their final year of philosophy in 1923, as they shared news on the latest regarding his work, Roman suspicion, and the stance Maritain had taken on the question of knowing. On his way back to Jersey in April, de Lubac purchased in Paris a volume of Maréchal's *Cahiers*, which he gave to Descoqs to read up on his return. He wrote that Maréchal had been denounced with ‘almost angry vivacity by Father Pedro Descoqs in the days following the publication of the first *Cahier*, which I had brought from Paris and which Father Descoqs had spent the night reading and assailing.’⁹⁴ After Fessard informed de Lubac that Maréchal’s work had ‘been requested by Rome’, de Lubac responded: ‘I am furious about Maréchal. They

⁹¹ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 18 March 1923, AJV.

⁹² Hamel, letter to de Lubac, 22 March 1923, AJV.

⁹³ Much of the letter is found in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 202-205. For more on the Dominican Marie-Benoît Schwalm (1860-1908), who was the first Neoscholastics to attack Blondel’s *L'Action* in an 1896 article in the *Revue thomiste*, see Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel*, 53-55.

⁹⁴ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 17n11; *At the Service*, 21n10.

will force him to ruin his book, and in any case, to lose considerable time. It is always the same story.⁹⁵ The following year, de Montcheuil travelled to Louvain and spoke at length with Maréchal, showing him some of Rousselot's unpublished writings.⁹⁶ Maréchal gave them an acute sensitivity to Kant, and de Lubac wrote that for Maréchal, 'Kant is a reformer, a liberator from Cartesian dualism.'⁹⁷ In a letter to de Montcheuil, de Lubac attempted to clarify differences between Rousselot and Maréchal:

The language of Rousselot is more personal, while Maréchal writes as a professor, who has the same mentality as Kant. Rousselot starts from the pragmatism of Bergson and Blondel and tries to push them in a transcendental direction to thus meet up with a form of Kantian thought, while Maréchal, a good Belgian professor, has first studied Kant at length to escape his agnostic conclusions and renew Thomism with the help of Blondel.⁹⁸

Less than a year later, however, in October 1923, Fessard and de Lubac drafted an *Esquisse II: Nature et Surnaturel*.⁹⁹ In this short sketch, many of the issues that would emerge as central to the debate two decades later are already present. At a length of thirteen pages, the first two pertain to the desire for God, and the remaining pages take up revelation and dogma. First, they provide the theological data which will guide their analysis: the supernatural is, on the part of God, gratuitous, and on the part of man, obligatory. In fact, the supernatural is offered to man under the form of historical revelation fulfilled by the Incarnation.¹⁰⁰ Then, two primary problems are identified. First, if the supernatural is gratuitous, that is, exceeding the possibility of human nature, how can it be obligatory, that is to say, necessarily sought by man as his sole possible end? Secondly, how can the supernatural be recognised both as supernatural and as the sole possible end of man? Following a brief treatment of nature as a category, the *Esquisse II*

⁹⁵ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 22 November 1923; and De Lubac, letter to Fessard, dated 'end of November 1923', AJV.

⁹⁶ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 600.

⁹⁷ De Lubac, letter to Yves de Montcheuil, 13 February 1924, AJV.

⁹⁸ De Lubac, letter to Yves de Montcheuil, dated only Autumn (Thursday) 1924, AJV.

⁹⁹ De Lubac and Fessard, *Esquisse II*, AJV.

¹⁰⁰ De Lubac, *Esquisse II*, AJV, 1.

insists that ‘if, in his turn, God is conceived as an object, human nature cannot define itself through its relationship to divine nature.’¹⁰¹ After postulating that ‘a nature only attains its end and is satisfied when it has reached a higher level’, Fessard and de Lubac declared that ‘the natural end of man, therefore, is the indefinite progression towards the possession of God.’¹⁰² They claimed that at least several ancient philosophers believed that ‘the end of man was the possession of God’, and if

the moral life is not restrained by a sole natural end, then neither should be the intellectual life. The truth of the most formal principles remains therefore a progressive approximation, but cannot reach the absolute. Why does the subject, while he should recognize his radical impotence, possess a radical confidence in this ‘*limit*’, which represents for him the possession of Being? Maybe because he observes in nature a perpetual ‘*limit*’, and because his intellectual and moral life operates in him already, each of his acts are as the anticipated attaining of this Being, containing a perpetual act of confidence in the elevation which must come from God.¹⁰³

Several months after the *Esquisse II* was written, Fessard announced the arrival of the first of several important interventions in the supernatural debate by the Jesuit Guy de Broglie, which would signal its postwar re-commencement. The debate would be ongoing for the next two decades and culminate in the controversy around *Surnaturel*. De Lubac later described de Broglie’s contributions as a ‘form of passage from the theses in our manuals to the rediscovery of traditional thought.’¹⁰⁴ Fessard had been cultivating a relationship with de Broglie in the months prior to this and recounted to de Lubac: ‘The good Father [de Broglie] found me a little audacious and warned me not to present these views to anyone.’¹⁰⁵ De Broglie, however had been a friend of Valensin, a disciple of Rousselot, and an admirer of Blondel. Soon after he had finished Blondel’s *Action*, he had declared to Valensin that ‘the book is “solid gold.”’¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ De Lubac, *Esquisse II*, AJV, 2.

¹⁰² De Lubac, *Esquisse II*, AJV, 2.

¹⁰³ De Lubac, *Esquisse II*, AJV, 2.

¹⁰⁴ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 33; *At the Service*, 35.

¹⁰⁵ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 22 November 1923, AJV.

¹⁰⁶ Valensin, *Auguste Valensin*, 121.

On a personal level, there was a character of great depth and warmth that marked the early years of these friendships, and d'Ouince wrote later that de Montcheuil 'found in his second and third year [of philosophy] some sensible peers, older than him, who had fought the war of 1914. They were easygoing, self-motivated thinkers who thrived on intellectual collaboration and exchange. Very quickly the newcomer felt attached to this close little group of "*penseurs*", as we call them with humour: Frs Fessard, Hamel, de Lubac, de Soras... Time never loosened the bonds of these friendships.'¹⁰⁷ Clearly, what united them was their approach to the modern world, which differed radically from that of the Neoscholastics. Fortunately, we can reconstruct these friendships through their fairly rich correspondences during the Jersey years, prompted by their various comings and goings.¹⁰⁸ These exchanges mark the deep divide between themselves and the Neoscholastics, to whom they were adamantly opposed and for whom they had no intellectual respect. Their friendships were not merely ideological alliances, however, and their exchanges were laced with encouragement, correction, advice, and expressions of fraternal devotion. De Lubac wrote to de Montcheuil: 'It is good to feel in full communion in thought and desire with friends such as you! I should add that this is indeed something rare. It requires a comprehensive understanding of ideas and never devolves into merely a mutual admiration society of mutual incomprehension.'¹⁰⁹

In conclusion, the first years of formation for the Fourvière Jesuits were pivotal, and although the philosophical formation of the Jesuits was exceptionally broad and historical, their thought developed along Blondelian and Rousselotian lines. Their early exposure to these thinkers guided their future projects, especially de Lubac's interpretation

¹⁰⁷ René d'Ouince, 'Les enfances religieuses du Père de Montcheuil', in *Jesuites de l'Assistance de France* 4 (1958): 11, quoted in Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 22.

¹⁰⁸ The extant correspondence between de Lubac, Fessard, Hamel, and, to a lesser extent, de Montcheuil is significant and typed copies are held at the Jesuit archives in both France and Belgium, but unfortunately, it appears that d'Ouince did not save most of de Lubac's letters from this period.

¹⁰⁹ De Lubac, letter to Yves de Montcheuil, 1 January 1925, cited in Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 79.

of Aquinas and his interest in the question of the desire for God. Moreover, a generational divide emerged more deeply in the Society after the war, leaving the Fourvière Jesuits totally opposed to Neoscholasticism and its Aristotelian moorings. Instead, they wanted to undertake a construction of Catholic thought that was attentive to both orthodoxy and modernity.

3.3 A Theological Formation under Huby

1924-1926: Theology at Ore Place and the Discovery of Hegel

By 1924, when the Jesuits were preparing to begin their theology studies, it was clear that original 1920 sanctions against Rousselot's thought had done little good. The General himself by this time was well aware that 'many of the young Jesuits were wrapped up in the thought of Rousselot [and] Maréchal.'¹¹⁰ There were rumours of impending measures coming from Rome designed to put an end to the movement, and Fessard detailed these intrigues to de Lubac:

I just came from visiting Fr. Bourgeois, who came from Rome and spoke to me in veiled words of all the Roman intrigue... He told me that it is possible that the *Dictionnaire* of Alès and Fr Lebreton might be put on the Index. This stupidity knows no bounds! He also recounted to me a conversation with the General: it seems that in philosophy they want to guard the Society's [*de la Compagnie*] tradition of eclecticism [Suarezianism]... This mentality despises or ignores every system with sharp edges.¹¹¹

In September 1924, de Lubac, along with Fessard and others, began their theology training at Ore Place, and several months before their entrance Fessard wrote to de Lubac that de Broglie had given a talk on the desire for God:

It seems that one or two months ago, there was a meeting of the professors at the Institut Catholique [Paris]. Last time was Fr De Broglie's turn, and he gave a short talk on the desire for Beatitude. Everyone was thrilled, delighted, and very happy. However, Maritain was not there, having, it seems, refused to come because he

¹¹⁰ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 12 June 1924, AJV.

¹¹¹ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 8 April 1924, AJV.

could not agree! He can always write articles in the *Nouvelles Religieuses* in praise of the sect [Neoscholasticism]. On that he will surely agree.¹¹²

Two months later, Fessard announced enthusiastically that ‘an article by Guy de Broglie on the natural desire for the supernatural will be in the next issue of *Recherches*. Very good it seems.’¹¹³ It hardly seems surprising that de Grandmaison’s *Recherches* would be so instrumental in reigniting the debate over the desire for God after the war, given the journal’s reform-minded method of positive theology. It would publish some of the most important articles on the subject throughout the next twenty-five years.

Taking Rousselot’s position, de Broglie argued that the intellect does in fact tend towards the vision of God. Seeking to defend the absolute gratuitousness of the supernatural, he held that human nature neither demands the vision of God nor has a right to it. Furthermore, the intellect cannot be understood fully apart from the supernatural order:

If we are to construct a satisfactory theory of the relationship between nature and grace, it is necessary to invert the perspective in which the moderns place them. They speak as if nature as such is first in the order of intelligible objects.... They seem to believe that divine wisdom presents to God first pure natures, and then secondly, invents means to use them for everything else than for their proper end thanks to the addition of an ingenious superstructure.¹¹⁴

De Lubac arrived at Ore Place soon after and mentioned it in a letter to de Montcheuil, exposing how central Blondel and Rousselot were to his thinking by this point:

Since my arrival here [at Ore Place], the question of the supernatural has been central to my reflections... Surely, you have you read the article by Kiki [a nickname for de Broglie]? I like the basic concept, which is from Rousselot, and several different points strike me [RT this line]. And in any case indeed some aspects of the problem are neglected. It is, however, a beginning. I reread Blondel’s *Lettre*, which Fr Huby loaned me (he is very charming!), and now I understand better certain points which had remained obscure. All this agrees fully, although it is in another language, with the theories of Rousselot on knowing, faith and the development of dogma. Along these lines, the whole question of *Les Yeux*

¹¹² Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 17 March 1924, AJV.

¹¹³ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 27 May 1924, AJV.

¹¹⁴ Guy De Broglie, ‘De la place du surnaturel dans la philosophie de saint Thomas’. *Recherche de science religieuse* 14 (1924): 240

de la foi is also raised: if one thing is clear, it is that no other presents itself... It is necessary to incorporate a Blondelian element more abundantly.¹¹⁵

As the controversy over the de Broglie article increased, de Lubac wrote to de Montcheuil again: 'I regret that [Kiki] is alone now to defend Rousselot's position. There is of course Huby, but he is completely absorbed with scripture, and his hands are tied.'¹¹⁶ By the end of January, however, after a more careful reading, de Lubac had become more critical of de Broglie's piece: 'Recently, I had been reviewing the notes I took on the article by Kiki, and I am decidedly growing more and more severe. It is Rousselot diminished, deformed, dethroned of almost all philosophy.'¹¹⁷ At this same time Fessard indicated that the de Broglie piece had freed him to dispute more openly the question of pure nature: 'You have been taken with this subject [Aquinas on the desire for God], but on the contrary I am just coming to this debate, unaware of this question, at least as it was addressed by Kiki. Thus I shall leave the field free for you to break Thomist lances.'¹¹⁸ Fessard, however also defended the article against certain criticisms of de Lubac: 'This is not a complete theory, it is an exegesis of St Thomas. That is why he holds both ends of the chain... I would be more indulgent than you, and I compare it to what I was saying in the *Esquisse 2* [on nature and the supernatural]: a nature can be assimilated to a superior nature only by the initiative of this superior nature.'¹¹⁹

Moreover, as de Lubac began his philosophy training in the shadow of the Rousselot affair at Jersey, he began his theology at Ore Place under the tutelage of Rousselot's friend and most ardent disciple, Huby, under whose encouragement his *Surnaturel* thesis began to reach a mature form. Soon after he arrived at Ore Place, he had his first conversation with Huby which illustrates how important this older generation was

¹¹⁵ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, dated Autumn 1924, AJV.

¹¹⁶ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, dated December 1924, AJV.

¹¹⁷ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, 26 January 1925, AJV.

¹¹⁸ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 19 March 1925, AJV.

¹¹⁹ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 22 July 1924, AJV.

in his formation. He indicates that Huby was in fact also, along with Valensin, teaching Blondel in class:

I went to see Joseph Huby, and he received me kindly. We spoke a little of Blondel and Rousselot; these are the two masters of Huby. Blondel, which he read during his second year of philosophy, opened him to philosophy after the disappointing teaching he received. Then, Rousselot, his colleague as professor of the Juvenat at Canterbury, finished the job. He loaned me his two courses, 'de Vera religione' and 'de Fide' that he taught before he was confined to sacred Scripture, along with his most developed notes, which he used for his classes on 'de Vera religione'. To show you that he does not lack a certain boldness, I shall cite this phrase on the scholastic apologists: 'Despite the fact that they have such little concern for reaching our contemporaries, they do not hesitate from pouring a little new wine into old wine skins.' The new wine, this is the doctrine of Blondel, which is expressed in a way that is very intelligent, albeit necessarily in a rather elementary manner (as for a class), in pages on the 'method of immanence'. The articles by B. de Saily are also highlighted. In short, I was in familiar territory. He loaned me also the summary of de Grandmaison [...] and the '*Lettre d'apologétique*', of which he possesses an exemplary typed copy. I liked it more than during the second reading I made toward the end of Jersey. I understood certain things in Blondel which up until now had escaped me. I had Ch. Nicolet read it, and we also talk together of Rousselot's ideas, and the '*yeux de la foi*' are developing in him so much that soon I predict he will need glasses.¹²⁰

What became of seminal importance in these first two years of theology at Ore Place was the informal study group of around twenty students called '*La Pensée*'. It gathered around Huby, meeting on Saturday mornings and often reading Blondel and Rousselot. In the spring of 1925 the group took up the question of the supernatural, and by this time de Lubac had conceived of the main lines of his *Surnaturel* thesis, which he had developed at the behest of Huby, who had asked him to undertake a study of the supernatural problem in Aquinas.¹²¹ This inquiry resulted in the certain sections of what would become *Surnaturel*, and de Lubac was beginning to articulate his belief that the notion of pure nature was a later invention of the Scholastics.¹²² In July of that year, after reading one of de Lubac's papers on the supernatural, Fessard wrote to de Lubac: 'I am in full accord with you on the substance, which is, if I'm not wrong, that natural desire is the

¹²⁰ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 537.

¹²¹ Olivier de Berranger, 'Lubac, Henri Sonier de', in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (New York NY: Routledge, 2005), 955.

¹²² Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 555.

method to follow for studying the relationship between nature and the supernatural.¹²³ De

Lubac responded:

I have begun to believe little by little, without having written anything or even thinking deeply about it, that ‘pure nature’ is not only a derived concept but...is a theological invention of these last centuries. It is necessary to be prudent on this point, because this relatively new theological doctrine seems to have received its first consecration by the Magisterium in the Vatican Council.¹²⁴

During the years of 1925 and 1926, Fessard’s thought was also maturing and would take its definitive turn toward German idealism. He had read Fichte and Schelling in translation, and in the summer of 1926 travelled to Munich for language training. While browsing through the tables of an outdoor bookseller, he stumbled upon Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and immediately perceived its importance despite the fact that it was almost totally unknown in France.¹²⁵ He set about translating its introduction as well as other important parts, but his superior would not allow him to publish them.¹²⁶ As we shall see later, Hegel became one of the most important intellectual influences in the 1930s.

1926-1928: Theology at Fourvière

These years also constitute a dramatic point of generational contact and development for the Fourvière Jesuits. By 1926, tensions had sufficiently eased between the French church and state, and the theologate was moved to Lyon. Thus, de Lubac, Hamel, and d’Ouinice resumed their theological training at the Fourvière theologate in Lyon, while Fessard, who had been in Paris from 1923 to 1926 pursuing studies in law, joined them there, and de Montcheuil, who was several years behind, went to Lyon in 1929. Now they were all together, under the benevolent oversight of Rousselot’s foremost disciple, Huby.

¹²³ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 554.

¹²⁴ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 554.

¹²⁵ Sales, *Gaston Fessard*, 20.

¹²⁶ Michel Sales, editor’s preface to *Hegel le Christianisme et l’histoire*, by Gaston Fessard, ed. Michel Sales (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), 9.

Moreover, Valensin lived only down the hill, and de Lubac, Fessard, and Hamel quickly learned the way to his residence. The atmosphere in the house was dramatically different from that at Jersey, and the students were freer to explore their own theological projects. Located centrally in Lyon, one of the centres of Left Catholicism, the Jesuits were suddenly exposed to an active environment of conferences, apostolic activities, and various intellectual engagements. It was a time of intense friendship, as the Jesuits were finally reunited in an environment where certain superiors helped them develop their thought, and de Lubac wrote to de Montcheuil during their first months together: ‘Here, we are all now a band of friends, which makes the atmosphere of the house good to breathe and adds a good flavour to the work.’¹²⁷

De Lubac quickly emerged as one of the most important intellectuals in the house, and the atmosphere was charged with Blondelian thought and debate over the question of the desire for God.¹²⁸ Most of these intellectual exchanges took place within ‘*La Pensée*’, still moderated by Huby, of which de Lubac was elected president during the 1927-1928 academic year.¹²⁹ Also during this time, de Lubac moved from the metaphysical and epistemological focus of the early 1920s to historical studies: ‘My biggest preoccupation during my years of theology had been precisely (following Frs Delaye and Huby) the study of the Tradition according to the most comprehensive method, not losing any of its authentic riches.’¹³⁰ In a 1926 letter to de Montcheuil, de Lubac describes the move he is making from philosophy to history: ‘I have taken a liking to the historical aspect of problems and the study (summary) of the Tradition. This is less fatiguing than metaphysics, which retains its loyal knight, in the person of G. Fessard.’¹³¹

¹²⁷ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, dated early January 1927, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 655.

¹²⁸ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 621.

¹²⁹ See de Lubac’s letter to Sales detailing the group’s meetings in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 677.

¹³⁰ De Lubac, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 374.

¹³¹ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, dated only 1926-1927, AJV.

Moreover, this group provided the context for de Lubac's continued work on the question of the supernatural: 'Father Huby, following the line of reflection inaugurated for us by Rousselot, had warmly urged me to verify whether the doctrine of Saint Thomas on this important point was indeed what was claimed by the Thomist school around the sixteenth century, codified in the seventeenth and asserted with greater emphasis than ever in the twentieth.'¹³² Xavier Tilliette claims that the group 'did not hide their intention to compensate for the deficiencies of their professors with their own personal projects. They aimed at nothing less than a renewal of theology from theses suspected of Modernism, of Blondelianism! Blondel was already a clandestine guest in the library. This active cenacle, studious, observant, but a bit on the margins, aroused the authorities, who saw fit to crack down on it, however clumsily.'¹³³

Thus, the leading thinkers of the group gained a reputation in the Society and were viewed with suspicion, and one of the members of the group, Marcel Méry, was even dismissed from the Jesuits. Moreover, some historians see the condemnation of *Humani Generis* as the dramatic conclusion to the distrust that had shrouded the Fourvière Jesuits since these days in the late 1920s. Fouilloux writes that we 'can see also in the purges that hit Fourvière in 1950 a final recoil of the *affaire de "La Pensée"* twenty years earlier.'¹³⁴ None of the central members of the group were ever allowed to teach other Jesuits: de Lubac was forbidden to undertake doctoral studies, Fessard was sent to teach a high school, and the group was split up. Ordinations came sporadically: de Lubac in 1927, Hamel and Fessard in 1929, and de Montcheuil in 1932.

¹³² De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 33; *At the Service*, 35; for a brief presentation of one such presentation on the supernatural during this time, see Chantaine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 685.

¹³³ Xavier Tilliette, 'Le Père de Lubac et le débat de la philosophie chrétienne', *Les Études philosophiques* 2 (April-June 1995): 194.

¹³⁴ Étienne Fouilloux, *Yves de Montcheuil. Philosophe et théologien jésuite (1900-1944)* (Paris: Média Sèvres, 1995), 279-280.

Our examination of these years of intellectual formation has included three of the four aspects of Blondelian thought which we identified in the previous chapter: first, the method of immanence which recognizes that the human person is oriented toward the supernatural; secondly, the harsh critique of Neoscholasticism; and finally, the historical search to find the ‘authentic riches’ within the ‘tradition’. We shall conclude this intellectual history by examining the influence of the fourth aspect, that of social or Left Catholicism. A lengthy letter from de Lubac to Hamel in the summer of 1928, during a *Semaines sociales* conference, gives a glimpse into its influence on the Fourvière Jesuits. Writing with enthusiasm, de Lubac first described a leading Left Catholic, the Blondelian Abbé Cardijn, who founded one of its most important organizations, the *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* (JOC), which we shall discuss in the next chapter: ‘[Cardijn] for more than two hours spoke of the Belgian JOC with a vigour, a flame, a depth of the supernatural, a realism, a formulaic accuracy, which delighted me. In front of such men and such institutions, one has the direct comforting sensation that our religion is again wonderfully alive, that Christ is always living in others. I felt in very strong way how the deficiencies in the realms of practical action and real life in the Christian formation of today correspond to the speculative framework in our teaching.’¹³⁵ Further, de Lubac quoted a young philosopher, Jean Guitton, whose speech, which cited both Augustine and Blondel, was ‘a sort of execution of integrism’.¹³⁶ Finally, he mentions listening to the talk of a young Jesuit aspirant, Jean Daniélou.

To conclude, the years of theology were a time of intense intellectual development and maturity. De Lubac, in particular, constructed the broad lines of his *Surnaturel* thesis during this period, as he transposed his Blondelian metaphysics onto Aquinas. Finally,

¹³⁵ De Lubac, letter to Hamel, 26 July 1928, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 644-646.

¹³⁶ De Lubac, letter to Hamel, 26 July 1928, quoted in Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 645.

during this time, the Fourvière Jesuits developed fully as a generational unit along Blondelian, historicist, and Left Catholic lines.

3.4 A Generational Desiderata

Throughout these years of formation the Fourvière Jesuits began to develop generationally, identifying themselves over and against the Neoscholastic establishment, which they often criticized. They assigned for themselves a great task of participating in a marvellous renewal of Catholic thought, bringing it to a place of prominence and respect in the modern world by a certain embrace of the ‘concrete’ and ‘real’.

The generational divide in the French Jesuits after the war is illustrated by an exchange between Fessard and Lebreton, in which the latter, in a closed door meeting spoke of the ‘*mentalité* of the young’, declaring: ‘yes, there has been a sudden emergence of a new state of mind. Before the war there were at most only traces, but now it has blossomed. In the face of this, the professors are baffled’; Fessard mused: ‘I do not think he believes we are Bolsheviks, and he sincerely does not want to crush us, but I doubt that he truly understands what separates us from the preceding generation.’¹³⁷ In another instance, Fessard laughingly recounted to de Lubac a sermon by a fellow scholastic directed against the Blondelian apology grounded in the ‘reasons of the heart’:

There was a sermon by Riquet on the ‘apostolate of the heart’, and he understood this as meaning that to convert the unbelievers it is necessary to take people as they are. Thus, its adherents hold that using the arguments of the heart is excellent, because they are indeed successful! You know the link here with my dissertation [on Maine de Biran]! I felt a little like a new Louis XIV hearing the words of Bossuet: ‘You are the man!’¹³⁸ Hamel was sitting near me, and we had a good laugh when we heard the speaker talk of people who had ‘the pretention of turning the world around their brain...it is a sickness of introspection...’ The turn to the self has only one name: pride and egoism. It is necessary to submit to the object. I wish you were there. I thought I was already listening to Gardeil or Garrigou

¹³⁷ Gaston Fessard, letter to Henri de Lubac, 17 January 1925.

¹³⁸ Fessard apparently confuses Bossuet with Bourdaloue, who famously condemned a French king for adultery with the words of the prophet Nathan.

argue against an *Esquisse* that is to come! Naturally he resorted to the Kantian nonsense...Maritain a bit. At least we had a good laugh!¹³⁹

Their disdain for Neoscholasticism permeated their formation, and de Lubac declared that the quarrel between Blondel and the ‘indignant’ de Tonquédec was nothing short of ‘ridiculous’.¹⁴⁰ Fessard continued:

It is true; I have finished *Immanence* by de Tonquédec. This book is quite a monument! It is surely a reminder that one sees only what they want to see... This book is the result of a philosophical formation that excludes the history of philosophy.... If you have a copy on hand, read it with our *Esquisse* on the supernatural in mind...What poverty!... At least in two hundred years, they will certainly not be reading *Immanence*, but they might be commenting on *Action*!¹⁴¹

And again Fessard suggested that de Lubac read parts of Garrigou’s *Sens commun*, ‘if you want to amuse yourself’.¹⁴² Moreover, after hearing a talk given by the conservative intellectual Henri Massis, Fessard recounted to de Lubac:

I was reminded of the sermon by Riquet, where it was all about the ‘descent toward the self’ around which turns all of modern philosophy since Descartes, the father of the *moi individualiste*... Our generation, the generation of relativism, distinguishes itself by a ‘metaphysical fear of the object,’ or at least indifference with regard to it! The generation of objectivity is hilarious!

More than just detesting Neoscholasticism, it seems that they defined themselves in terms of their struggle against it, envisioning themselves as the bearers of the great task of restoring Catholic thought. De Lubac wrote to de Montcheuil that Neoscholasticism

is the philosophy that is in total control, and things are grave. Yet there will come a time when we shall do our best, so that it might not be said that Catholicism is the resignation of thought. Truly this is marvellously exciting, the most powerful ferment of thought of which we can possibly dream. Quite frankly, we must greatly desire the coming of a few bold and humble traditional spirits. The Church needs saints, this is true, but the two needs are not opposed to each other.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 25 Feb. 1923, AJV; the orator was the Jesuit Michel Riquet (1898-1993). He entered the Jesuits having studied with Maritain at the seminary at Versailles, and later in the 1920s after his ordination, he participated in the celebrated meetings at the house of Maritain at Meudon relating to the founding of the journal *Esprit*. For his biography, see Decols, *Dictionnaire du monde*, 280.

¹⁴⁰ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, 13 February 1924, AJV.

¹⁴¹ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 10 March 1923, AJV.

¹⁴² Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 2 June 1923, AJV.

¹⁴³ De Lubac, letter to de Montcheuil, 13 February 1924, AJV.

Fessard echoed these ambitious aspirations: ‘I dream, in a way that is still vague, of great and serious enterprises. It is absolutely necessary to try with all our might to help Catholic thought become relevant again, to regain an authentic dominance without brainwashing and insincere methods and realize the alliance of competent theology and profound religious sentiment.’¹⁴⁴ The Fourvière Jesuits were convinced that converting the elites of France was essential: ‘We do not doubt that France is to be converted from high to low, from the intellectuals to the people.’¹⁴⁵ This is an emphasis that runs through Blondel’s earliest work and emerges very strongly in the spirit of Fourvière. In a more sombre tone, Fessard bemoaned to de Lubac that they need to do some ‘serious reflection, without bitterness. How can we hope to lift Catholic thought if they insist on digging a deeper trench between what they call “Scholastic philosophy” and “modern thought”, against which they maintain a stubborn bias. How can a humble traveller, such as you or me, ever say a word if we cannot search for refuge in the Thomist house?’¹⁴⁶

They whimsically declared that they were ‘revolutionaries’, and they detected a deep divide between their generation and that of their elders.¹⁴⁷ Fessard declared:

Comparing the desiderata of [the older] generation with ours, it seems to me they are satisfied with simple material restatements: did the Council intend to define such and such point? Has this or that Father spoken in such a way? One must absolutely understand a theological concept in only this one single way...etc... Whereas, if I am not mistaken, we would rather go to the foundation and substance of the question by incorporating new philosophies. It is encouraging to note the presence of this disposition especially among those who may be called to power.¹⁴⁸

De Lubac’s letters from the time paint a sombre picture, and there were periods of discouragement and discontent with the state of theology. His continued reading of Blondel’s *Lettre*, with its harsh condemnations of Neoscholasticism, seemed only to fuel this angst, and he wrote to Robert Hamel:

¹⁴⁴ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 10 March 1924, AJV.

¹⁴⁵ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 526.

¹⁴⁶ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 10 May 1924, AJV.

¹⁴⁷ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 27 May 1924, AJV.

¹⁴⁸ Fessard, letter to de Lubac, 27 May 1924, AJV.

Our formation closes our eyes, at least a great number of us; the other day I was rereading Blondel's '*Lettre*', and I was pained to see how for thirty years, there has been from this point of view such little change. There is a need for intense intellectual work among Catholics, but which avoids the Modernist fever. There is a need for informed and sure guides, capable of providing comprehensive leadership. Is it not in the heavens above that such men should be found? Such an immense task! I want to be ambitious, as you say sometimes. In any event, I am too weak to do something serious. I want to put myself at the service of *une entreprise collective*, to assist, encourage good will, stimulate research, collaborate, defend... But there are so few who are preparing themselves! Well, we shall do what we can. As far as the detail of my ideas, they are at the moment *en pleine danse*. Therefore, taking into account the complexity of the problems, it is difficult to arrive at a complete thought! I'm confused, but the direction, the method, the inner stream, they all remain.¹⁴⁹

De Lubac: A New Apologetics

Exactly ten years following de Lubac's postwar re-entry into the Jesuits in Lyon, in which he spent his first months with Rousselot's papers, he began his teaching career at the *Institut catholique* in Lyon at the end of 1929, and his first lecture now reads as a manifesto, signalling de Lubac's entrance into public intellectual life. Xavier Tilliette remarks that de Lubac 'seized the moment of his inaugural lecture in 1929 to manifest his allegiance and gratitude to Blondel.'¹⁵⁰ His preparation for the talk included re-reading Blondel's *Lettre*, as well as travelling to Louvain to meet with Maréchal and other Jesuits there.¹⁵¹ Published as 'Apologetics and Theology', it comes almost exactly three decades after Laberthonnière's similar essay on apologetics which we examined in the last chapter. Moreover, this period also represents the beginning of a rich correspondence between de Lubac and Blondel that amounts to almost one hundred and fifty letters written between March 1930 and December 1948.¹⁵² In his first letter, he told him that '*L'Action, la Lettre sur l'apologétique, Histoire et Dogme*... have been profoundly beneficial, a primary

¹⁴⁹ Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, t. II, 540.

¹⁵⁰ Tilliette, 'Le Père de Lubac', 194.

¹⁵¹ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 17; *At the Service*, 21.

¹⁵² For reproductions of many of the most important letter between the two, see Antonio Russo, *Henri de Lubac: Teologia e Dogma Nella Storia: L'influsso de Blondel* (Rome: Studium, 1990), 23.

influence on the orientation of my thought.’¹⁵³ We can read in this essay all the years of frustration and anxiety during his formation, and he seems unleashed, able to finally strike back at the ‘closed’ Neoscholastic system he so deplored. Moreover, it serves as a bridge between the 1920s and 1930s, connecting the years of formation and the first years of productivity.

He began the essay with a bold generational assessment: ‘It is characteristic of the present generation to be less curious about demonstrations of Christian truth than about its explanations.’¹⁵⁴ After rhetorically asking if the current approach to theology is simply ‘a way of closing oneself in the ivory tower’ of speculation, he proclaimed that the apologetics of his day was ‘small-minded, purely defensive, too opportunistic or completely superficial—not from temporary necessity, but from principle—and thus, its value is meagre. A doctrine inspires little trust when it is reduced to defending itself... If, believing that they can be more effective, its defenders become more opportunistic then things go from bad to worse. By forcing itself to stack, one on top of the other, syncretistic systems that collapse as soon as they are built, to say nothing of the undignified job—sometimes slightly dishonest—to which necessity leads it, it exhausts itself in counterattacks that generally do not effect an objection before it has been replaced by another one.’¹⁵⁵ In a criticism of dogmatic propositionalism and pure nature, which de Lubac will pick up and expand several years later in *Catholicisme*, he excoriated ‘small-minded’ theology that treats dogma as a ‘superstructure’ that is superficial and ‘cut off from all human roots.’¹⁵⁶ This ‘separated theology’ had severed the ‘intimate links’ between theology and philosophy, nature and grace. Moreover, as Blondel also insisted, he maintained this contradicts the spirit and whole of Catholic tradition: ‘Small-minded

¹⁵³ De Lubac, letter to Blondel, 5 March 1930, quoted in Russo, *Teologia*, 153.

¹⁵⁴ De Lubac, ‘Apologetique’, ‘Apologetics’, 91.

¹⁵⁵ De Lubac, ‘Apologetique’, 99; ‘Apologetics’, 92.

¹⁵⁶ De Lubac, ‘Apologetique’, 101-102; ‘Apologetics’, 94-95.

theology that is not even traditional, separated theology, tagging behind a separated philosophy—it is not more the theology of the Fathers than it is that of St. Thomas, and the worthless apologetics that it shaped in its image is no closer to the apologetics whose model has been given to us across the centuries: Speeches and Letters of St. Paul, Justin’s *Apologia*, St. Augustine’s *De vera religione*, St. Thomas’ *Contra gentes*, Savanarola’s *Triumphus Crucis*, and Pascal’s *Pensées*.¹⁵⁷

De Lubac’s apologetic, rooted in history, spiritual experience, and culture, is again reminiscent of the Blondelian path he will take in *Catholicisme*, and must continually ‘study human nature in general in order to discern the call of grace’, listening ‘constantly to the succeeding generations and to their aspirations so as to be able to respond to them, to understand and assimilate their thoughts.’¹⁵⁸ Theology must itself change and evolve as no single man or generation ‘is capable of equally encompassing all of its aspects’; theology is constant, however, in its attempt to provide ‘the explanation of the unique divine response freely given to human aspiration, a response that, in its various aspects, also remains the same in its essence.’¹⁵⁹

Thus de Lubac proposed a kind of unification of theology and apologetics, using the method of immanence to expose the most profound anthropological truths to subjective and dogmatic reflection: ‘the element that one can call “subjective,” “individual,” “natural.” And, if one is careful to explain the nature of human aspirations—what there is in them that comes from the divine source and, hence, what there is in them that is of supernatural and urgent character—then it does not seem erroneous or even imprudent to state that Catholicism is the true religion because it alone

¹⁵⁷ De Lubac, ‘Apologétique’, 102; ‘Apologetics’, 95.

¹⁵⁸ De Lubac, ‘Apologétique’, 103; ‘Apologetics’, 96-97.

¹⁵⁹ De Lubac, ‘Apologétique’, 103; ‘Apologetics’, 97.

brings the adequate response to the aspirations of humanity, and, thus, its supreme guarantee is its own perfection.¹⁶⁰

In this section, we saw that by the end of the decade of the 1920s, the Fourvière Jesuits had developed a strong generational identity. They aligned themselves against most of their elders and institutional Neoscholasticism. Moreover, they had ascribed to themselves an ambitious mission to revitalize Catholic thought, bringing it into contact with modern intellectual currents. The apology they envisioned was open to history and inner experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the Fourvière Jesuits during the 1920s, examining the influential aspects of their generational development: social structures, the process of formation, friendships, mentors and *éveilleurs*, and intellectual interests. The Jesuits developed an immediate aversion to the excesses of anti-Modernism due to the exposure of older generations of Jesuits in the novitiate to their wartime experiences, which opened them to an attitude of dialogue and an embrace of concrete philosophy. The influence of Valensin was also strong, and his broad Blondelian approach to the history of philosophy encouraged them to undertake an exceptionally broad study of influential philosophers. Moreover, he exposed them to the thought of Blondel and Rousselot, the former providing a phenomenology and method of history and the latter outlining an eclectic way of reading Aquinas. Their strong interest in the question of the desire for God sprang directly from their reading of these figures, and their desire to reunite the orders of nature and grace no doubt found its origin, at least partially, in their desire to heal the fractured French society they encountered in the trenches. Their quest for a deeper engagement in French intellectual and social life was fulfilled when the theologate was moved to the Lyon, a

¹⁶⁰ De Lubac, 'Apologétique', 109; 'Apologetics', 101.

centre of Left Catholicism. Finally, we analysed the formation of the generational identity and mission they set themselves. They levelled a harsh critique at Neoscholasticism and sought to renew Catholic thought according to the rubrics of modernity, triggering a kind of rapprochement between the secular and the sacred. We shall see in the next chapter how the larger generation of 1930 emerged and began to set the terms of the debate, which the Fourvière Jesuits responded to along the intellectual lines we surveyed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

1930s: THE CRISIS OF HUMANISM AND THE GENERATION OF 1930

This chapter provides a generational account of the wider intellectual and political French climate of the 1930s, drawing on significant studies of the *génération de révolution* (1930) by Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle and others, to enable us to appreciate the Fourvière Jesuits as a particular unit of this generation. First, I shall examine the sense of crisis and mission of the wider generation and its articulation by young intellectuals. Next, I shall highlight three aspects of their generational programmes, namely, deeper historical thinking, concrete philosophical construction, and active engagement with the world, showing how Catholic thought and projects of ecclesial renewal followed along comparable lines. Finally, I shall demonstrate that the Fourvière Jesuits acted as a particular unit of this generation through their sense of mission to engage with the contemporary crisis, which was inspired by those formative influences on the unit which we examined in the previous chapter. Moreover, this study of avant-garde thought in the 1930s will contextualize the rise of the generation of 1930 to post-war prominence in the 1940s, which we shall examine in the final chapter.

4.1 Crisis and the Generation of 1930

A Decade of Political Crisis

The postwar decade of the 1920s, known in France as '*les années d'illusion*' or '*les années folles*', brought with it an era of optimism and prosperity that came to an abrupt end in the years following the 1929 New York stock market crash. One historian described the period as 'a last Indian summer before the blizzard of the world economic crisis struck in 1931. Nobody foresaw that Europe, politically and economically, lived on borrowed

time.’¹ Although the catastrophic effects would not reach France until the end of 1931, it signalled to the French that they were on the cusp of a new era that would be branded by many historians as ‘*la crise des années 30*’. Loubet has noted that ‘the years of 1930-1932 were those of a cruel *réveil*, which dissipated the dreams of peace and prosperity that had been cultivated since 1918. It is the moment when France began to count the costs of the exhausting struggle that it had endured for four years. France left the war hard hit, both materially and morally.’² The effects of the depression were vast and unimaginable:

By its amplitude and its duration it is without precedent in the contemporary world... The shaking was so grave and so prolonged that the basis of the economic and social order appeared threatened. Individualism, free enterprise, the setting of prices by competition—the foundations of the capitalist system—were in rout. It was not thus only an economic and social crisis, and even a moral crisis; it was a crisis of the collective mind. The *Annus terribilis* which Arnold Toynbee evoked at the beginning of 1932, was not 1914 or 1917, it was 1931.³

From the crisis emerged an atmosphere of sharp political extremism punctuated by violent protest. Under the direct orders of Moscow, the French Communist Party (PCF) abandoned its ‘wrecking policy’ of no compromise with other parties on the left, forming instead a single proletarian front.⁴ In June 1936, Maurice Thorez, the head of the PCF, proposed a *grand tournant*, whereby the ‘class-against-class’ position that had marked Communist policy would be dropped and instead the PCF would propose a broad anti-Fascist coalition of the middle class.⁵ A pact of solidarity between the parties was signed and the coalition became known as the ‘*Front populaire*’. Despite their sweeping reforms, the effects of the depression lingered on unabated, the Popular Front lost crucial support, and the coalition began to splinter.

¹ Hajo Hoburn, *The Political Collapse of Europe* (New York: Knopf, 1951), 134-137, quoted in Amato, *Maritain and Mounier*, 110.

² Loubet del Bayle, *Non-conformistes*, 24.

³ Pierre Renouvin, *Histoire des relations internationales*, t. 8, *La Crise du XXe siècle, de 1929 à 1945* (Paris: Hachette, 1958), 15-16, quoted in Amato, *Maritain and Mounier*, 111.

⁴ James McMillan, *Dreyfus to De Gaulle: Politics in France, 1898-1969* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), 105.

⁵ David Curtis, *The French Popular Front and the Catholic Discovery of Marx* (Hull: The University of Hull Press, 1997), 1.

While France was mired in extremist politics, Hitler sent troops into the Rhineland (1936), seized Austria (1937), and invaded Prague and Poland (1939). The period from September 1939 to May of 1940 is described by historians as the ‘phoney war’, as an ‘illusion of normalcy’ pervaded French society. France remained in denial about the possibility of a large-scale war with Germany and was unable to erect any sense of national unity as they had done before the First World War.⁶ When the Germans did attack in May of 1940, the French were no match and were easily defeated. Their weapons were inferior and their numbers were often woefully inadequate. Encountering only mild resistance, the Germans broke through on 14 May 1940, the French government fled Paris along with two million Frenchmen, and Marshal Pétain, the World War One hero of the Verdun, obtained an armistice on 22 June. Thus ended the tumult of *les années trente* and the Third Republic as well. Although it was only seventy years old, it had been marked by almost unmitigated turmoil and controversy, and as Albert Camus wrote, when it fell, ‘a world ended’. According to Tony Judt, it ‘died unloved. Few sought to seriously defend it in July 1940, and it passed away unmourned.’⁷

During the 1930s, a new generation of young intellectuals rose up to offer a sustained philosophical and economic critique of the very foundations of the Third Republic itself. I shall now examine in more detail the specific manner in which this sense of crisis was manifested and the criticism of French society which was almost universally held among the savants of the decade.

The Emergence of the Generation of 1930

It was during this time of political upheaval that the generation of 1930 emerged and began their call for a new order, a revolution. Their identity was shaped by the trauma of the

⁶ McMillan, *Dreyfus to De Gaulle*, 121.

⁷ Tony Judt, “‘We Have Discovered History’: Defeat, Resistance and the Intellectuals in France’, *The Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992): 147.

First World War and the Great Depression, as well as by the sedimented generations whose cultural memory remained strong. That they were public intellectuals in a climate of political extremism is indicative of the ongoing influence of the generation of 1890, and the thought of Péguy became inspirational.⁸ There was for them in Péguy's work, Mounier later wrote, 'a politics, a style of life, a renewal of their consciousness of France... It was at that moment in the late 1920s and early 1930s when the influence of Péguy began to win over French youth. All those who were unified by a sudden revolutionary awareness of the need to save human values amidst the twentieth century revolution came to group themselves more or less on the points of unity set by the author of *Notre Jeunesse*.'⁹ Moreover, their harsh, unsparing criticism of their elders was a mark of the generation of Agathon. The generation of 1930 seemed more formidable, however. Their criticism was harsher, and their sense of historical mission more defined. The War, as we discussed, had greatly expanded the sense of generational identity across class lines, and the crises they had faced were certainly much more severe than those of previous generations. I suggest that this indeed was such a decisive generation, as we discussed in Chapter One.

The young intellectuals of this generation argued that a profound crisis of civilization existed. Daniel-Rops underscored this in his 1932 book entitled *Les Années tournantes*, writing: 'It is impossible to doubt, I think, that we are living in *les années tournantes*.'¹⁰ Loubet has noted that the year of 1930 was situated with almost equal distance between the armistice of First World War and the first actions of the Second World War and, in fact, represents a turning between two epochs of history in the West.¹¹ The war had badly

⁸ Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (New York NY: New York University Press, 2011), 18; for Péguy's influence on the intellectuals of the 1930s, see Michel Raimond, 'Péguy et la critique du monde moderne dans les années trente', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises* 49 (1997): 355-369.

⁹ Emmanuel Mounier, 'Péguy ressuscité', *Bulletin des amis d'E. Mounier* 12 (June, 1958): 5-6, quoted in Amato, *Maritain and Mounier*, 99.

¹⁰ Henri Daniel-Rops, *Les Années tournantes* (Paris: Éditions du Siècle, 1932).

¹¹ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 13.

shaken the confidence many had had in the nineteenth-century promises of progress, reason, and science, which they were convinced were fundamental social goods integral to the engine of modernity. Instead, however, that ‘science which was to unite and heal had brought the same great indifference to serve the forces of destruction...thus all the scaffolding of the spirit—reason, logic, intelligence—appeared as a mass of blind forces.’¹²

The criticism of the generation of 1930 toward the established order was marked by a contempt for the decadence of its elites, and the words ‘disgust’, ‘revolt’, ‘rejection’, and ‘rupture’ were commonly used.¹³ Jean de Fabrègues wrote in the *Revue du siècle* in 1934: ‘This generation is entirely arrayed against the obtuse egoism of the bourgeois-liberal, against economic and spiritual materialism, and against the impotence of a politics without spirit and without soul.’¹⁴ To this generation, the 1920s seemed *passé*:

[An] era came to an end: the dazzling postwar era where literature flourished. Gide, Montherlant, Proust, Cocteau, surrealism, this fireworks display fell back upon itself. It had expressed its epoch with a marvellous burst but had not brought to man the light of a new destiny. The disappointment, orchestrated by the distant cracks of Wall Street, left these guides with no stars and caused their successors to reflect on the destiny of a civilization that seems still capable of brilliance, but at the price of a certain profound decline. The generation of 1920 had been a generation of young gods, *d’enfants terribles*, sparkling poets. The generation of 1930 was to be a serious generation of youth, grave, engaged with problems, worried for the future...giving itself more intimately to spiritual, philosophical and political investigations.¹⁵

The young intellectuals shared a similar analysis of what they held to be the insoluble problems of the existing order and the role they sought to play in the establishment of a new order. Working closely together to establish a tight network of relationships, they ‘found themselves around the same reviews, speaking the same language, using the same

¹² Jean-Richard Bloch, *Destin du siècle* (Paris: Éditions Rieder, 1931), 199, quoted in Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 24.

¹³ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 199.

¹⁴ Jean de Fabrègues, ‘Esprit et la condition humaine’, *La Revue du Siècle* 10, Feb. (1934): 3, quoted in Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 199.

¹⁵ Emmanuel Mounier, ‘Quelques réflexions sur le personnalisme en France’, *Synthèses* 4 (1947): 25-26.

vocabulary; they all dreamed of going beyond the traditional confrontations, of rejuvenating, of renewing politics in France; they all declared that they were animated by the same revolutionary will.’¹⁶

Though sometimes differing in their political commitments, they organized themselves around important journals: *L’Ordre nouveau*, *Esprit*, *Les Cahiers*, *Réaction*, *la Revue française*, *La Revue du siècle*, and *Combat*. They wrote books such as *Décadence de la nation française* (1931), *Le Cancer Américain* (1931), and *La Révolution nécessaire* (1933), whose stinging indictment was influential in articulating the sense of crisis.¹⁷ *Esprit* was the most influential journal of this generation, popularizing the philosophy of personalism and attempting an important Catholic-Marxist engagement. Called by historians the *non-conformistes*, these young intellectuals significantly influenced the atmosphere of avant-garde thinkers in the 1930s. Their criticism of society was permeated by the exaggerated sense of historical mission so characteristic of generational identity, which was carried forward by an almost utopian political, cultural, and religious vision. They dreamed of nothing less than a complete re-making of France, reversing centuries of decay and illusion, and they sought to develop anthropologies and sociopolitical visions that would inaugurate a new age. One scholar writes:

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the *non-conformistes*, who gathered around a number of small, elite reviews, was the depth of their pessimism. Their writings were pervaded by an all-consuming vision of decadence, a vision that extended beyond their nation to encompass Western civilization itself. Yet, in the end, this seemingly dark vision of the *non-conformistes* was not a recipe for despair; it offered, as a kind of counterpoint, the alluring prospect of total regeneration. Further, displaying an inflated sense of intellectual entitlement, exceptional even among interwar French *littérateurs*, the *non-conformistes* proclaimed that it would be the ‘mission’ of their generation—for whom they

¹⁶ Touchard, ‘L’Esprit des années 1930’, 89.

¹⁷ Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Décadence de la nation française* (Paris: Rieder, 1931); Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Le Cancer Américain* (Paris: Rieder, 1931); and Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire* (Paris: Grasset, 1933).

served, of course, as an advance guard—to undertake the task of national and civilizational regeneration.¹⁸

A Complete Crisis of Civilization: The Elites Undertake an Analysis

The criticism that the generation of 1930 directed toward the international and domestic instability, economic and social disorder, and intellectual and spiritual decadence was total, and they deemed the crisis to be fatal. Their criticism was general and somewhat opaque, following philosophical lines, and the tone of their analysis was urgent, even shrill at times. The very saving of the French national soul demanded immediate action: ‘It appears to us that to remedy the disastrous effects of this [decadence] there still remains one chance, but only one chance.’¹⁹ The ‘role of our generation is to truly resolve, other than by cries of helplessness or routine, *la question Française*.’²⁰ French society was in fact a façade covered with ‘too many traditions and relics of a dead past [that] mask the *réalité Française*.’²¹ The status quo constituted ‘for France the greatest danger’: ‘it is in effect a country which can neither live by routine or habit, [and] cannot progress to its ancient stature.’²²

On an international level, their disillusionment with the preceding generation was tied to its handling of postwar complexities with outmoded nineteenth-century ideas, an overly-juridical notion of reparation and wrongs, and generally fuzzy ideas about new and closer economic relationships.²³ The Treaty of Versailles, they maintained, was fundamentally hypocritical, merely contributing to the hyper-nationalism that had in fact caused the war, and the League of Nations, with its legacy of a ‘*fausse paix*’, had simply applied all the weaknesses of democratic and parliamentary systems to international

¹⁸ Paul Mazgaj, ‘Engagement and the French Nationalist right: The Case of the Jeune Droite’, *European History Quarterly* 32 (2002): 207.

¹⁹ Aron and Dandieu, *La Décadence*, 11.

²⁰ Aron and Dandieu, *La Décadence*, 27.

²¹ Aron and Dandieu, *La Décadence*, 27.

²² Aron and Dandieu, *La Décadence*, 10.

²³ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 202.

politics, putting vote-counting ahead of real conflict resolution and national security beneath financial interest.²⁴

Their domestic criticism was equally unsparing, and the parliamentary system of the Third Republic, which had become a ‘synonym for lying, cowardice, mediocrity, compromise and baseness’, had lost touch with reality and degenerated into an abstract ‘out-dated formalism’, unable to act directly in the lives of the people and meet real, concrete, existential needs.²⁵ Opposing both excessive individualism and centralization, as they only constricted and suppressed the human person and the institutions that allowed him or her to thrive, they instead proposed a ‘third way’, ‘*ni droite, ni gauche*’.²⁶

Also, the *non-conformistes* opposed capitalism, as it disregarded the common good, arguing that an unbridled free market inevitably resulted in social and spiritual disorder. Mounier wrote that ‘history will designate without a doubt anti-capitalism as the common most privileged ground of the *années 1930*’.²⁷ Thrown about by the whims of speculative profit, consumption and production were walled within an economic ‘*monde clos*’, which gravitated around sheer ‘*rendements*’; the results were ‘*fordisme*’, a de-humanizing assembly-line environment which exalted a system of standardization and mechanization presided over by high paid executives whose end was unlimited profit.²⁸ Capitalism’s endemic and excessive reliance on credit and private property only encouraged a culture based on servitude and individuality.

Moreover, they railed against the rationalism and idealism of the ‘*pensée bourgeoise*’ that had infected many prominent writers and intellectuals who had abandoned

²⁴ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 203-204.

²⁵ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 216-217.

²⁶ John Hellman, *The Communitarian third Way: Alexandre Marc and Ordre Nouveau 1930-2000* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 68-69.

²⁷ Emmanuel Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* (Paris: Montaigne, 1936), 145; *A Personalist Manifesto*, trans. by the monks of St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, MN (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938), 169; this quote is my translation from the French.

²⁸ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 240.

concrete reality and caused a ‘*désordre intellectuel et spirituel*’.²⁹ The obsession in 1920s with ‘psychologism’, introspection, and literary abstraction was indicative of this.³⁰ Aron and Dandieu wrote in *Décadence de la nation française*: ‘the bourgeois have a taste for sterile and abstract ideas which enclose them within a formal framework that prevents the reality of things and feelings from entering.’³¹ They added that in the ‘flight from *le concret*, there lies the true betrayal of the intellectuals, whose idealistic cowardice threatens France and the world.’³² Not surprisingly, their denunciation of the spiritual disorder also brought with it a sharp reproach of the Church, as they claimed that bourgeois materialism and superficiality had diminished the Catholic culture of their day. The French hierarchy were themselves the keepers of a decadent bourgeois spirituality which ignored the true demands of the Christian life. Jean de Fabrègues wrote: ‘They think they are pillars of order, but they have never seen Christians, and there is such little place for Christ in their lives... What do they want? They have their places of honour in the Church...but they don’t know where they are going. They have lost the sense of good and evil. There are only for them the old conventions.’³³ They followed the path marked by Péguy and demanded a revolutionary Catholicism open to a radical critique of the existing order, the struggle of the working class, and the spiritual needs of modernity.

Beyond these individual aspects of decadence, they were convinced that the ‘crisis was much more general and much more profound; it was a total crisis of civilization.’³⁴

Loubet writes:

It is in the perspective of a global crisis that [this generation] placed itself... They had in effect the feeling of being engaged in a grand adventure, and they deplored the fact that the true dimension of the situation was lost on many. ‘We were born to life, from infancy or adolescence, in the Lie and the Death,’ declared Mounier,

²⁹ Emmanuel Berl, *Mort de la pensée bourgeoise* (Paris: Grasset, 1929).

³⁰ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 254.

³¹ Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *La Décadence de la nation française* (Paris: Rieder, 1931), 63-64.

³² Aron and Dandieu, *La Décadence*, quoted in Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 259.

³³ Jean de Fabrègues, *Réaction* 3, July (1930), quoted in Loubet, *Les Non-conformistes*, 263.

³⁴ Loubet, *Non-conformistes*, 269.

‘We have not since departed from the great magnitude. Millions of miseries have succeeded millions of deaths and millions of lies. People rise from the shadow of several centuries. Civilizations collapse, while others rise, and barbarities appear. We were not born in one of those periods where men slide on a tradition that assures him.’³⁵

A Generational Mission: A New Humanism

Captivated by a great sense of historical mission, the intellectuals of this generation were convinced that France, and Western Civilization for that matter, would be saved only if their particular programme was followed exclusively. Aron and Dandieu wrote: ‘Up until now our present position has been adopted today by a part of the French youth that is ceaselessly growing: our position is revolutionary by its observation of the *désordre établi* and the shame of a civilization that grows more and more inhuman and abstract, but our revolutionary position cannot join other contemporary revolutions or pseudo-revolutions.’³⁶ This revolution that they hoped to carry out was nothing less than the total remaking of civilization. One historian writes that the ‘mission of their generation—for whom they served, of course, as an advance guard—was to undertake the task of national and civilizational regeneration.’³⁷

Mounier’s programmatic article in the first issue of *Esprit*, ‘*Refaire la Renaissance*’ provides a broad glimpse of not only the personalist project but the common mind among avant-garde elites that sought to completely re-make civilization. First, he sought a ‘rehabilitation of the material world’ in which matter was ‘reinterpreted’ within a spiritual framework over and against the crass individualism that encouraged avarice and disorder; and secondly, he envisioned shaping a new order by a ‘rehabilitation of community’ in which a new humanism corrected four centuries of error that had developed around the individualistic excesses of the Renaissance and the collective excesses of the nineteenth

³⁵ Loubet quotes Mounier’s letter to P. Archambault in *l’Aube* 27 Feb. (1934) in *Non-conformistes*, 270

³⁶ Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution*, 269.

³⁷ Paul Mazgaj, ‘Engagement’, 207.

century.³⁸ This rehabilitation would be nothing less than the construction of a ‘new Christendom’ that in which Christian values would reign over a diverse secular world.

It remains essential to work with all our hearts towards this realization of a new Christendom no longer according to the medieval idea of a Holy Empire but according to the new and much less unitary ideal where the spiritual and moral action of the Church presides over a temporal order composed of a multitude of culturally and politically heterogeneous people whose religious diversities themselves are not near disappearing.³⁹

The creation of this new society rested almost entirely on the development of a new anthropology, and one might argue that humanism was the dominant philosophical fixation of the age. The generation of 1930 was deeply dissatisfied with the progressive optimism of the Enlightenment anthropology that saw human nature as universal, rational and immutable, and eschewing the ‘*homme malade*’ of abstraction and bourgeois culture, they sought to build the ‘new man’ grounded on concrete humanism and lived experience. Aron and Dandieu insisted that ‘we must return to man; but at the same time understand the difficulty and complexity of this return’, which must go beyond the individualism and materialism that ultimately effects an enslavement that alienates the human person from his or her labour.⁴⁰ Every major ideology of the period attempted to re-cast itself in humanistic terms: Marxism, fascism, and republicanism, as well as various streams of Catholic thought, namely Thomism and personalism. Even a humanist approach to French colonialism was attempted.⁴¹

Marxist humanism was born during the 1930s when Marx’s early writings were discovered and made widely known through Auguste Cornu’s *Karl Marx: l’homme et l’oeuvre; de l’hégélianisme au materialisme historique (1818-1845)*.⁴² Inspired by

³⁸ Gérard Lurol, *Emmanuel Mounier: Le Lieu de la Personne*, vol. II (Paris: Harmatton, 2000), 192-193.

³⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Religion et culture* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1930), 46-47, quoted in Amato, *Maritain and Mounier*, 108.

⁴⁰ Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution*, 6.

⁴¹ Nicola Cooper, ‘Colonial Humanism in the 1930s: The Case of Andrée Viollis’, *French Cultural Studies* 17, 2 (2006): 189-205.

⁴² Auguste Cornu, *Karl Marx: l’homme et l’oeuvre; de l’hégélianisme au materialisme historique (1818-1845)* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934); for these early writings, see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German*

Feuerbach's attempt in *The Essence of Christianity* to pull the Hegelian dialectic 'down from the heavens' and appropriate its philosophical idealism for materialistic causes, Marx's early work stressed subjectivity and argued that alienation is a product of human estrangement from labour. In his 1937 autobiography, *Les Fils du peuple*, Thorez signalled that the shift toward humanism, which would come to an abrupt end only several years later, was part of the official PCF programme:

Communism is the struggle for a free and happy man. Far from wanting to destroy human grandeur, communism is bound to life and wants to establish humanity on foundations that are real and true. Communism wants to create the conditions necessary to enable the flourishing of every human faculty, *le communisme est un véritable humanisme*.⁴³

The near-obsession with humanism might be profoundly illustrated by examining a single issue from *Esprit*, published in October 1935. Dedicated almost exclusively to the question of humanism, it contained many of the intellectually dominant themes of the decade: crisis, social regeneration, historical consciousness, concrete philosophy, and political engagement. The issue began with an editorial, entitled *Notre humanisme*, which acknowledged the grave crisis and named the problem: 'We agree on the enemy, and the first battles have begun in the war on capitalism, the bourgeois spirit, proletarianism, imperialism...and the division of productive forces.'⁴⁴ After refusing in no uncertain terms the 'disordered establishment', the writers spelled out their humanistic antidote: 'Our motives are first moral and spiritual, and it is in the name of the dignity and essential aspirations of the person that we reject the current order and work to establish another.'⁴⁵ Their humanistic personalism, which grounds ultimate human identity in its spiritual desire for transcendence, is contrasted with that of Communism and fascism, 'both of which have

Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, 1998); and Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin, 1992).

⁴³ Maurice Thorez, *Le Fils du peuple, Oeuvres*, t. 14 (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1937), 168.

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Mounier et al., 'Notre humanisme (Déclaration collective)', *Esprit* 3, 37 (1935): 1.

⁴⁵ Mounier, 'Notre humanisme', 2.

tried [humanistic] resurrections' and whose formulations are embedded respectively in labour and production or a certain exalted nationalist mythology.⁴⁶

Paul Ricoeur's observation that Mounier's 'great strength is in having, in 1932, linked his way of philosophizing to the awareness of a crisis in civilization and in having dared to envisage, over and above all academic philosophy, a new civilization in its totality' underscores an important point: this plan of social regeneration was fundamentally an intellectual project.⁴⁷ These intellectuals sought to create various 'philosophies of action' around which this new humanism might be constructed. The three interrelated and dependent characteristics of this philosophy were: history, concrete phenomenology, and engagement.

In this section, we saw that during the crisis years of the 1930s an intellectual generation emerged which condemned French society in no uncertain terms as hopelessly decadent. They set out for themselves a revolutionary generational mission, which alone could save France from the materialism, rationalism, and individualism that was destroying it. This project was nothing short of a ground-up construction of a new humanism and a new society built on the three pillars of history, concrete philosophy, and engagement. We shall now examine each of these pillars.

4.2 Historical Consciousness

Before we examine the historical thinking of the generation of 1930s as, we shall briefly establish the link between crisis itself and historical consciousness. This connection is well established, and the analysis of the generation of 1930 was saturated with historical thinking. Invariably stimulated by collective trauma, certain social, political, or philosophical narratives were developed to cope with the crisis and provide explanatory

⁴⁶ Mounier, 'Notre humanisme', 8; for a later example of Marxist humanism, see Jean Lacroix, 'l'Homme marxiste', *La Vie intellectuelle* (August 1947): 26-59.

⁴⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Histoire et vérité* (Paris: Seuil, 1955), 105; *History and Truth*, trans. by Charles Kelbley (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 134.

analysis.⁴⁸ Others even argue that ‘crisis constitutes historical consciousness’, and in fact, ‘there is no historical consciousness without crisis’.⁴⁹ Recognizing the danger of this tendency, Gadamer wrote:

Things that change force themselves on our attention far more than those that remain the same. That is a general law of our intellectual life. Hence the perspectives that result from our experience of historical change are always in danger of being exaggerated because they forget what persists unseen. In modern life, our historical consciousness is constantly overstimulated.⁵⁰

This historical ‘overstimulation’, I suggest, exacerbated by the *crise l’entre-guerres*, shaped not only the historical retrieval of the generation of 1930 but also its assessment of its own contemporary culture and its intellectual needs. Valéry, writing with a more impassioned cry in 1931, underscored the intertwining and danger of history and crisis:

History is the most dangerous product which the chemistry of the mind has concocted. Its properties are well known. It produces dreams and drunkenness. It fills people with false memories, exaggerates their reactions, exacerbates old grievances, torments them in their repose, and encourages either a delusion of grandeur or a delirium of persecution. It makes whole nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable and vainglorious.⁵¹

Nicolai Berdyaev—philosopher, refugee of the Russian revolution, and *non-conformiste*—had presciently noted that ‘catastrophic moments in world history’ invariably incite a sudden embracing of historical speculation. Berdyaev was utterly clear: his contemporary world was in fact gripped by ‘immense crisis’, a ‘fateful and menacing schism and destruction’, and ‘[v]olcanic sources have opened in the historical substrata. Everything is tottering, and we have the impression of a particularly intense and acute

⁴⁸ Some scholars have seen evidence of this link as early as the fifth century in Augustine’s City of God, a historical defence of Christianity in the context of the decline of Rome by the Germanic invasions; for example, see Ernest Fortin, ‘Augustine’s City of God and the Modern Historical Consciousness’, *The Review of Politics* 41, no. 3 (1979): 323-343.

⁴⁹ Jörn Rüsen, ‘Holocaust, Memory and Identity Building: Metahistorical Considerations in the Case of (West) Germany’, in *Disturbing Remains: Memory, History and Crisis in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Michael Roth and Charles Salas (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2001), 253.

⁵⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), xxii.

⁵¹ Paul Valéry, *Regards sur le monde actuel* (Paris: Delamain et Boutelleau, 1931), 43.

movement of historical forces.’⁵² Fessard went even further, arguing that crisis is necessary for history:

‘*Avoir une histoire*’, isn’t this—for both the community as well as the individual—to be engaged in a drama which questions the totality of one’s existence? The sum to prove his value and to save himself by overcoming the perils that menace him?... It follows that the happiness of those people who lack a history [who have never lived through crisis] can hardly be called happiness [*d’une qualité bien relevée*]; strictly speaking, it is hardly a ‘human’ kind of happiness. Indeed, since the dignity of man, both individual and collective, consists in the revelation of the value which permits him to make his destiny and overcome fate, the happiness that eliminates this revelation, and history itself, one must confess, is similar in every respect to that of an animal, and animals do not have histories!⁵³

Competing narratives are often constructed during times of crisis, which offer sometimes radically divergent interpretations of a complex and contentious environment: ‘at times of crisis the importance *and* the difficulty of figuring out what to believe become all the more obvious. Which is the *right* narrative? Which is likely to lead to the best outcome?... The choice of narrative can be a fatal one.’⁵⁴ The construction of narrative is a necessary part of developing a ‘framework’ around which experiences can be structured, and ‘it seems impossible for a historian or sociologist to have access to a crisis in which narrative plays no part. Moreover, narratives differ depending on how one is situated in relationship to the event.’⁵⁵

The revolution of the generation of 1930 relied on an avant-garde task of historical reclamation and synthesis, which Mounier remarked was the inspiration of Péguy, because ‘he alone among our contemporary masters pushed so far a radical synthesis of all French traditions; the Christian tradition, the socialist and revolutionary tradition, the Republican and Revolutionary tradition. Beyond this, Péguy, first socialist and humanist, then

⁵² Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1936), 2; for Joseph Ratzinger’s observation of this phenomenon in his 1953 doctoral thesis, see *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (Chicago IL: Franciscan Herald Press), 1971.

⁵³ Gaston Fessard, ‘Du sens de l’histoire’, *Cité Nouvelle*: 345-346.

⁵⁴ Roth and Salas, *Disturbing Remains*, 4.

⁵⁵ Roth and Salas, *Disturbing Remains*, 5.

socialist and Christian, put us at the threshold of that great revolution which is advancing across the world: 'The Revolution will be moral or not at all.'⁵⁶

Each ideology that vied for supremacy against competitors cast itself as a true humanism, and each was mutually exclusive of the others, claiming to have formulated an authentic anthropology over and against others, and each had its own historical narrative on which it relied for justification to bolster its utopian vision.⁵⁷ These metanarratives were fixated on diagnosing society's ills and locating the historical point at which civilization began its deterioration.⁵⁸ Mounier also, as was prevalent at this time, attempted to uncover the historical roots of the 'disordered establishment':

Historically the crisis that presses upon us is more than a simple political crisis or even a profound economic crisis. We are witnessing the cave-in of a whole era of civilization born towards the end of the Middle Ages and was consolidated and threatened by the industrial age. It is capitalistic in its structure, liberal in its ideology, and bourgeois in its ethics. We are taking part in the birth of a new civilization whose characteristics and beliefs are still confused, mixed with decadent forms or the convulsive products of the civilization that is disappearing. Any program of action that does not attain the dimensions of this historical fact is nothing but servile and empty work. Five centuries of history are in the balance; five centuries of history are undoubtedly beginning to crystalize.⁵⁹

Politics also became saturated with historical consciousness, as competing historical narratives attempted to justify their ideologies by arguing for a 'true France'. Communists and fascists both tried to offer historical constructions that tied them to the authentic France. Rival factions

⁵⁶ Emmanuel Mounier, 'Péguy ressuscité', *Bulletin des amis d'E. Mounier* 12 (June, 1958): 5, quoted in Amato, *Maritain and Mounier*, 99.

⁵⁷ Metanarratives began to flourish in the late 18th century with the birth of historical consciousness, and they reached the apex of their development in the 19th and early 20th centuries; see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

⁵⁸ The use of metanarrative has been at the heart of political struggle since the French Revolution and was central to the interwar cultural and intellectual struggle. Marxism, fascism and republicanism all relied on the metanarrative as an effective and popular principle of self-justification. For the Marxist reliance on a metanarrative that finds a 'redemptive process leading through class struggle and revolutions to socialism and a communist world order', see Zagorin, Perez. 'History, the Referent, and Narrative: Reflections on Postmodernism Now', *History and Theory* 38.1 (1999): 6; for nationalist and fascist use of metanarrative in twentieth century France, see Berger, Stefan, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore. *Writing National Histories Western Europe since 1800* (New York NY: Routledge, 2002); and Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁵⁹ Mounier, *A Personalist Manifesto*, 7-8.

campaigned to win universal acceptance of their interpretation of the past and to suppress interpretations which were likely to deprive them of legitimacy. 'Français, vous avez la mémoire courte,' Marshal Pétain told the nation in 1941. But this was usually a studied forgetfulness...[T]he same event or figure was often the subject of different constructions by different communities, each trying to privilege its own interpretations of others. Thus whether the French Revolution was triumph or tragedy was the object of furious debate between rival political communities, while Napoleon, Joan of Arc and Proudhon were the victims of tug-of-war between rival political communities, each seeking to legitimate its cause by making its own presentation of these figures prevail.⁶⁰

The leaders of the Popular Front led by the PCF immediately attempted to tie the spirit of the movement to the Revolution of 1792, thereby supplanting any supposed allegiance with Moscow or class-on-class struggle with a nationalistic devotion to France. In a speech in August of 1936, Thorez said:

We can say that the Popular Front (and we Communists, are part of it for good reason), is in this sense a truly French Front, a Front of the people of France, heirs and sons of the Great Revolution, against the pacts of foreign agents, against a modern version of the Treaty of Coblenz. A French front in the heroic tradition of our people's struggle and liberty, with the strains of the 'Marseillaise' of 1792 mixed in with those of our 'International', under the flag of Valmy and the red flag of the Commune, a Front against anti-French traitors.⁶¹

In philosophy, the rediscovery of Hegel, as we shall see later in the chapter, marked one of the pivotal intellectual turns of the decade and helped bring history to the forefront of French intellectual thinking. The philosophy of history became a 'foundation for understanding the modern world and for providing insight into how that world might be changed for the better.'⁶² The appropriation of Hegel became a means for 'confronting the historical, for thinking about the connection between history and knowing.'⁶³

In conclusion, having discussed the link between crisis and historical thinking, we can state that the generation of 1930 was saturated with historical thinking, and their various humanistic constructions of the age were grounded in justificatory metanarratives

⁶⁰ Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 11.

⁶¹ Maurice Thorez, speech 6 August, 1936, quoted in Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Influential Left in Postwar France* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 25.

⁶² Michael Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), ix.

⁶³ Roth, *Knowing*, ix, 2.

that traced their thought to a golden age. Moreover, they sought to undermine their competitors historically, by locating the precise point of divergence from a more authentic tradition.

4.3 Philosophy: Towards the Concrete

It has been said that French philosophy in the 1930's was dominated by the 'generation of the three H's': Hegel, Heidegger, and Husserl.⁶⁴ The influence of these three thinkers—and especially Hegel—signalled a sea-change in the intellectual atmosphere of the period: 'There is no clearer sign of the changes in mentality—the revolt against neo-Kantianism, the decline of Bergsonianism—than the triumphal return of Hegel. Banished by the neo-Kantians, he curiously and suddenly, became a vanguard writer, quoted with respect in leading circles.'⁶⁵ In fact, Hegelianism was a 'vehicle for confronting the historical' which also allowed for an integration of other intellectual currents such as Marxism, phenomenology, existentialism, surrealism.⁶⁶ Moreover, the 'return to Marx' was in no small part linked to and dependent on a concurrent 'return to Hegel', for whom the generation of crisis found a philosophical ground on which to unite the three dominant tendencies through which they hoped to create a new man and new society: history, concrete philosophy, and *engagement*.⁶⁷

The Hegelian renaissance was driven by four philosophers: Jean Wahl (1888--1974), Alexandre Koyré (1892-1964), Alexandre Kojève, and Jean Hyppolite, figures some of the Fourvière Jesuits knew well and with whom they had significant intellectual exchange.⁶⁸ At the beginning of the decade there was an almost total absence of any

⁶⁴ Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3.

⁶⁵ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, 9.

⁶⁶ Roth, *Knowing*, 2.

⁶⁷ Curtiss, *The French Popular Front*, 63.

⁶⁸ For example, Fessard, was introduced to Wahl by Valensin, and for his friendship with Kojève, see Hugh Gillis, 'Kojève-Fessard Documents', *Interpretation* 19, no. 2 (1991-1992): 185-200. Daniélou knew Hyppolite and attended certain Parisian intellectual gatherings with him.

interest in Hegelian studies in France, yet by 1946 Merleau-Ponty wrote in the preface to *Les Temps modernes*: ‘all the great philosophical ideas of the past century—the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, phenomenology, German existentialism, and psychoanalysis—had their beginnings in Hegel.’⁶⁹

The French Hegel, influenced significantly by the developing sense of crisis and the desire to ‘turn towards the concrete’, was not the German system builder himself, but rather, for the French elites, Hegel was a ‘budding existentialist’ able to give an synthetic account of desire, history, concrete experience, and action. Judith Butler provides an insight into the empowerment that Hegel provided during the crisis years of the 1930s:

The *Phenomenology*’s vision of an active and creating subjectivity, a journeying subject empowered by the work of negation, served as a source of hope during these years of political and personal crisis. Hegel provided a way to discern reason in the negative, that is, to derive the transformative potential from every experience of defeat. The destruction of institutions and ways of life, the mass annihilation and sacrifice of human life, revealed the contingency of existence in brutal and indisputable terms. Hence, the turn to Hegel can be seen as an effort to excise ambiguity from the experience of negation.⁷⁰

The French retrieval was begun in 1930 by Wahl’s influential book *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*, and its move towards the ‘real’ was pivotal for the young philosophers of this generation.⁷¹ Sartre wrote later of Wahl’s influence:

What interested us, however, was ‘real men’ with their work and their pain... A book that was very popular among us during this period was Jean Wahl’s *Vers le concret*. Yet we were disappointed with this ‘towards’: it is the *concret total* from which we wanted to depart, it is to *concret absolu* that we wanted to arrive. But the work pleased us, because it embarrassed idealism by discovering paradoxes, ambiguities and conflicts that could not be resolved in the universe.⁷²

Wahl’s primary theme was the ‘unhappy consciousness’, which derives from the essential driving force of human history, the ‘alienation’ experienced between the human

⁶⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 79; *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 63.

⁷⁰ Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-century France* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), 62.

⁷¹ Michael Kelly, *Hegel in France* (Birmingham AL: University of Birmingham, 1992), 35.

⁷² Jean Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique, précédé de Question de méthode*, t. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 23-24.

person, the ‘unchangeable’, and the quest to overcome that separation in a fulfilled or unified existence. This ultimate unification, however, is never achieved, as each resolution brings only further separation, discord, and strife. The abstraction of Hegel’s dialectic—thesis, antithesis and synthesis—is romanticized by Wahl, brought into contact with the concrete world of experience, and grounded in this sense of alienation, despair and hope, which achieves a certain synthesis in the form of wisdom. This essentially religious reading of Hegel holds that ‘the motif of division, sin and torment...little by little is transformed into that of reconciliation and beatitude.’⁷³ For Wahl, this movement toward spiritual reconciliation is manifested in the unfolding of history, which is in fact a narrative of spiritual development in which the unhappy consciousness finds its unity only through this continual struggle and the movement of history that is directed towards reconciliation.⁷⁴

The most influential Hegelian philosopher of the decade, though, was Russian émigré and Marxist philosopher, Kojève, whose lectures (1933-1939) gained significant notoriety and were well attended by a number of young intellectuals who would assume positions of cultural dominance after the Second World War: Bataille, Lacan, Queneau, Aron, Merleau-Ponty, Weil, Breton, Levinas, de Beauvoir, and Fessard.⁷⁵ Kojève primarily undertook what has been called a ‘*ménage à trois*’ integration of Hegel with Marx and Heidegger, but the broad range of influences that he attempted to synthesize is remarkable.⁷⁶

Those attending the seminar represented a mélange of intellectuals who came looking for answers to the concerns of a changing France and the questions presented by the events of World War I. Kojève brought to the table a new way of doing philosophy... He presented a reading of Hegel that drew from Einstein’s physics, Bergson’s intuitionism, Husserl’s phenomenology, Heidegger’s ontology,

⁷³ Jean Wahl, *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Rieder, 1929), 29.

⁷⁴ Roth, *Knowing*, 4.

⁷⁵ Kleinberg, *Generation*, 66.

⁷⁶ Aimé Patri, ‘Dialectique de maître et de l’esclave’, *Le Contrat social* 5, no. 4 (1961): 234.

and Marx's politics. For the young French intellectuals, everything Kojève gave them seemed new.⁷⁷

Hegel allowed Kojève to construct an anthropology deeply influenced by the fundamental concepts of 'Self-Consciousness', 'Desire', and 'Action'. Moreover, he was deeply influenced by the recently discovered *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which are included among Marx's older, more humanistic, writings which provided a richer sense of action and history.⁷⁸ Marx's 'inverted' reading of Hegel provided Kojève with a materialist notion of history, emphasizing labour and production in the human re-ordering of the world on which human fulfilment depends.

The path to this human fulfilment begins when the human subject turns away from contemplation, which reveals nothing more than the object that is contemplated, and is 'brought back to himself' by Desire, for example, the 'desire to eat'.⁷⁹ It is through these very basic animal desires that 'man is formed and revealed to himself', as well as to others.⁸⁰ The 'very being of man, the self-consciousness of being, therefore implies and presupposes Desire.'⁸¹ This animal desire, then, is only satisfied through action and a certain 'negation' or 'destruction' of the object which is sought after, such as food if the desire is hunger.⁸² Self-Consciousness can only be attained by going beyond what is natural, and since Desire itself is the only thing that goes beyond a given reality by directing itself towards another Desire in a 'negating-negativity', the 'I' emerges.⁸³ This 'I' will be action itself as it feeds on Desire, which is realized solely through action. Far from being static, it will be a 'becoming' that exists in time rather than space. The 'I' that

⁷⁷ Kleinberg, *Generation*, 67.

⁷⁸ Butler, *Subjects*, 64.

⁷⁹ André Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 11; *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, 1969), 3.

⁸⁰ Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 11; *Introduction*, 4.

⁸¹ Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 11; *Introduction*, 4.

⁸² Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 11-12; *Introduction*, 4.

⁸³ Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 12-13; *Introduction*, 5.

emerges from this process is ‘individual’, ‘historical’, and ‘free’.⁸⁴ Authentic humanity comes into being only when the animal nature is overcome by human desire. Kojève wrote: ‘man’s humanity “comes to light” only if he risks his (animal) life for the sake of human Desire.’⁸⁵ The human person desires ultimately that the value he or she represents be the value that the other person desires. This is the product of desiring a Desire, which has its end only in achieving a certain “recognition” by the other.

Kojève considered Heidegger to be the ‘heir to the anthropocentric philosophy of the *Phenomenology*’, and he attempted to impose certain Heideggerian elements onto Hegelian concepts, which, he maintained, have a corresponding value.⁸⁶ The situation into which the human person finds himself or herself *thrown* is one marked by an ontic desire for recognition. In the master-slave dialectic that ensues, the slave begins to transform and overcome nature through a ‘coping mechanism’ that facilitates a certain acceptance of one’s situation, which he will not overcome until his or her *Angst* or fear of death is transcended.

Moreover, Kojève’s Hegelian vision is one that offers a secular reading that de-theologizes the absolute, culminating in a ‘fight to the death for pure prestige’, where one Desire confronts another and endangers itself ‘in order to be “recognized” by the other, to impose itself on the other as the ultimate value; accordingly, their meeting can be only a fight to the death.’⁸⁷ This struggle produces two fundamentally different forms of anthropogenic behaviour, one dominant (the master) and one submissive (the slave), representing those who have overcome their animal desires and those who have not. The slave fears, gives in to, refuses to sacrifice for recognition, and fundamentally relinquishes

⁸⁴ Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 13; *Introduction*, 5.

⁸⁵ Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 14; *Introduction*, 7.

⁸⁶ Roth, *Knowing*, 90.

⁸⁷ Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 14; *Introduction*, 7.

his or her desire for recognition. Having subjugated the slave, the master is not satisfied and seeks to be further desired by others.

Within this struggle, Kojève found that history is nothing more than a dialectical process between the master and slave. The master, having his material needs met, becomes materially satiated, but the slave, by working to provide for the master, continues to suppress his own desires until he overcomes his fear of death and revolts against his oppressor. Kojève traced the evolution of the human being through history to its ultimate goal of Self-Consciousness. This dialectical struggle, which becomes the slaughter bench of history, develops as it moves through pagan, Christian, and bourgeois states. Only with the coming of the French Revolution, and its herald Napoleon, was freedom articulated philosophically and self-consciousness attained through the overcoming of God, and thus was the fear of death overcome. Kojève wrote that it is ‘Hegel, the author of the *Phenomenology*, who is somehow Napoleon’s Self-Consciousness. And since the perfect Man, the Man fully “satisfied” by what he *is*, can only be a fully *self-conscious* Man who *knows* what he is, it is Napoleon’s existence as *revealed* to all men in and by the *Phenomenology* that is the realized ideal of human existence.’⁸⁸

In conclusion, the generation of 1930 was convinced that abstraction and rationalism were meaningless categories to modernity. Instead, philosophy needed to embrace history, phenomenology and existentialism, and political and ideological engagement. A phenomenological account of Hegel, rooted in action, and history served to explain and justify the sense of crisis and decadence. In this philosophy of history, the concept of desire becomes a central driving force in the progress of human consciousness, which emerges as the master-slave dialectic unfolds. Moreover, these humanistic categories allowed for a totalizing anthropological and political narrative to be

⁸⁸ Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture*, 153-157; *Introduction*, 69-70.

constructed, in which there was a mutual dependence on individual and social flourishing within a materialist framework.

4.4 *Engagement*

For the avant-garde thinkers of the generation of 1930, to be an intellectual was to be *engagé*, that is, morally committed to an ideology, cause, or political programme.

Engagement was an attitude that undergirded their intellectual sense and permeated their generational mission, and to be un-engaged was to exemplify all the intellectual bourgeois characteristics that they detested: abstraction, individualism, and decadence. This sense of *engagement* was not something extraneous to their historical and philosophical approaches, which we have just examined, but rather, the three aspects form one dynamism, each interpenetrating the other: existence itself was concrete, historical, and politically. Historical thinking sought to undermine one's adversaries and justify certain political convictions and intellectual commitments. Moreover, concrete philosophy, such as that in Kojève's thought, sought to locate the historical process by which the oppressed would be freed and political equilibrium established.

The necessity of *engagement* for the intellectuals of this period was first articulated in 1932 by Paul Nizan (1905-1940), a brilliant *normalien* philosopher, convinced Communist, and close friend of Sartre and de Beauvoir, in *The Watchdogs: Philosophers of the Established Order*.⁸⁹ Nizan, like the *non-conformistes*, recognized that a grave situation was at hand: 'At the present time the world is in the grip of what is generally known as a crisis. It is like one of those horrendous epidemics that swept across the face of the earth during the Middle Ages, striking fear into the hearts of men.'⁹⁰ Thus, the *Watchdogs* is a kind of philosophical manifesto against one of the cause of the crisis,

⁸⁹ Paul Nizan, *Les chiens de garde* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1968); *The Watchdogs: Philosophers of the Established Order* (New York NY: Monthly Review, 1960).

⁹⁰ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 103; *Watchdogs*, 115; for more on Nizan, see Jean-Jacques Brochier, ed., *Paul Nizan, intellectual communist: 1926-1940* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001).

bourgeois rationalism, which included for Nizan both Neoscholasticism such as Maritain as well as Neo-Kantians like Brunschvicg, who divorced thought from life: ‘Bourgeois civilization is not sick because it has enemies; rather, enemies have risen up in protest against the sickness of this civilization.’⁹¹ Men who ‘have the power to destroy the old ideas’ are ‘now demanding a new philosophy, a useful philosophy’, because to ‘expose philosophical illusions which...prevent French youth from seeing their true situation is a necessary and urgent task.’⁹² Nizan argued that rationalistic philosophy was powerless to improve the daily lives of people:

People are already realizing that they have already waited too long for the scholars to intervene on their behalf. They are amazed that the scholars are, for all practical purposes, impotent; that they cannot provide them with the means of overcoming the incredible hardships that plague them from the cradle to the grave. Nothing is happening. The chains around their necks are tighter than ever before. How vast is the gulf between what the scholars have promised and what they can actually accomplish.⁹³

Bourgeois thought prevents reason ‘from serving men in a concrete fashion, from performing certain basic functions in their lives, from protecting them and effectively illuminating their existence’.⁹⁴ Instead it offers ‘a purely spiritual form of salvation, but the blows which rain down on men’s heads are not spiritual at all.’⁹⁵ Philosophy must be grounded on ‘reality’, make contact with life, and be ‘concerned above all with human actions and their practical consequences.’⁹⁶ Thus, the philosopher of tomorrow

must seek to be of service to other men—and not to play the apostle. In the years ahead, the philosopher will finally be put in his place. The trivial needs and wants of human beings will become his own, and he will have no alternative but to serve as the ‘technician’ of their demands. His sole function will be to give expression to the unconscious urges and vague revolutionary impulses now stirring in men’s brains. His sole mission will be to denounce all the conditions which prevent men from being human, to describe and explain these conditions so thoroughly that all

⁹¹ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 108; *Watchdogs*, 121.

⁹² Nizan, *Les chiens*, 116; *Watchdogs*, 130.

⁹³ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 118; *Watchdogs*, 133.

⁹⁴ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 120; *Watchdogs*, 135.

⁹⁵ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 120-121; *Watchdogs*, 135.

⁹⁶ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 124; *Watchdogs*, 139.

those who do not yet understand why they are living as they do will become fully conscious of the realities of their situation.

Philosophy for Nizan was not univocal, but rather should be concerned with ‘men’ in their contextualized and concrete existence, and the history of philosophy is not the story of ‘privileged characters, freed from the exigencies of fleeting time and the chains of geographical fixity, [who] patiently exchange rigorously ordered pronouncements on themes as timeless as these individuals themselves.’⁹⁷ Philosophers have never been ‘pure spirits or native inhabitants of celestial regions’, but rather real contextualized humans whose intellectual systems must be seen within the milieu of their creation and brought into the ‘tumult and turbulence of earthly life’; ‘purity is imaginary. Every philosopher, though he may consider he does not, participates in the impure reality of his age.’⁹⁸

In summary, for the generation of 1930, concrete, historical thinking was necessarily engaged ideologically and politically, and un-engaged philosophy was merely bourgeois decadence. They insisted that thought make contact with life and be attentive to the real needs of the ‘men of today’, their deepest cares and concerns, assisting in the construction a new order.

4.5 Catholics in the Generation of 1930

French Catholic intellectuals in the 1930s were driven by many of the same intellectual and political tendencies that moved the savants in the wider culture, and this period saw the sudden rise of Left Catholicism. Thus, two competing visions of the Church’s role in French society emerged and vied for influence, which Fouilloux has termed ‘*catholiques de mouvement*’ and ‘*catholiques de position*’.⁹⁹ While the former sought to articulate the faith in concrete, engaged, and historical terms, the latter viewed the faith as timeless and

⁹⁷ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 105; *Watchdogs*, 117.

⁹⁸ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 107; *Watchdogs*, 119.

⁹⁹ Étienne Fouilloux, ‘Courants de pensée, piété, apostolate’, in *Histoire du Christianisme, Tome 12: Guerres mondiales et totalitarismes (1914-1958)*, ed. Jean-Marie Mayeur (Paris: Desclée-Fayard, 1990), 223; René Rémond, *Les Catholiques*, 14-16.

absolute in certain respects. As we saw in Chapter 2, progressive Catholics in France had existed since the turn of the century in a very limited scale in such movements as the *Semaines sociales* and Mark Sagnier's *Le Sillon*. This new surge had a dramatic effect on the life of the French Church as well as on wider French society during the 1930s, the Second World War, and into the postwar period of the late 1940s. In fact, the year of 1930 marks the beginning of '*un second ralliement*', that is, an attempt to reconcile the French Church with the government and modern society.¹⁰⁰ While the first *ralliement*, declared by Pope Leo XIII in 1890, was largely unsuccessful the third definitive victory for *ralliement* would unfold in the years after the Second World War. This middle attempt at a rapprochement was initiated by the policies of Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI, and the 1926 condemnation of *Action française* was the catalyst, forcing right-wing Catholic intellectuals to largely abandon their defensive posture.

Out of this complex milieu developed a network of important journals, lay movements, initiatives, and priests, theologians and bishops who were sympathetic to the cause of a more socially-engaged Catholicism, more open to modernity and secularism, and more sympathetic to the plight of the working class. This approach sought to offer a revitalized Christian humanism attentive to the needs of a new 'spiritual communion' and able to combat individualism and materialism. I shall now briefly outline the important developments that make up this progressive Catholic turn in which the *nouveaux théologiens* were so involved. This milieu provides the socio-religious context for the theology of the *nouvelle théologie*, and it comprises many of the networks, associations and support channels in which they moved. This decade is still one that is revered by liberal Catholics as a 'watershed' moment, a '*petite Pentecôte*', and a golden age, where Catholics abandoned solely defensive positions, opting for dialogue, affirmation,

¹⁰⁰ René Rémond, *Les Catholiques dans la France des années 30* (Paris: Cana, 1979), 14.

appropriation, engagement, and collaboration instead of recrimination and condemnation.¹⁰¹

Crisis: A Decadent, Rationalistic, and Individualistic Church

The avant-garde criticism we examined above that was directed against French society and institutions was repeated, almost verbatim in many cases, by French Catholic intellectuals against the Church. To illustrate this, we shall explore an important article by Congar, which Mettepenningen marks as the beginning of the *nouvelle théologie*. The 1935 article, ‘Une conclusion théologique à l’enquête sur les raisons actuelles de l’incroyance’, was a contribution to a larger series in *La Vie intellectuelle* examining the reasons for modern unbelief.¹⁰² He argued that it was the Church that must examine itself and take responsibility for much of the modern discord that existed between the sacred and secular. In fact, secularism and unbelief were the result of an overly defensive posture assumed by the Church during the post-Reformation era. Congar’s criticism followed almost the identical lines of that made by other members of the generation of 1930 against larger French society, which we examined above. The Church, he held, was saturated with individualism, bourgeois rationalism, and decadence, which had resulted in a rupture between faith and life. This rupture, he claimed, ‘does violence to the faith and constitutes for it a deadly poison, the worst killer.’¹⁰³ The Church was fixated on a private, sentimental spirituality, removed from the most important aspects of *la vie*. Essentially divorced from the ‘*toute la vie*’, it had become merely ‘a particular thing’, not permeating all of concrete existence.¹⁰⁴ Congar called for a ‘total’ Christianity, ‘*réel*’ and ‘*concret*’, to ‘invade and

¹⁰¹ Nord, ‘Catholic Culture in Interwar France’, *French Politics, Culture and Society* 21, no. 3 (2003): 1; also see Curtiss, *The French Popular Front*, 133.

¹⁰² Congar, Yves. ‘Une conclusion théologique à l’enquête sur les raisons actuelles de l’incroyance’, *La Vie intellectuelle* 37 (1935): 214-249; ‘The Reasons for the Unbelief of our Time: A Theological Conclusion’, Part I, *Integration* (August 1938), 13-21 and Part II, *Integration* (December 1938), 10-26.

¹⁰³ Congar, ‘Une conclusion’, 216.

¹⁰⁴ Congar, ‘Une conclusion’, 224.

transform' every aspect of life, because a humanistic foundation was a necessary condition for modern belief: 'to be humanly accessible and effectively proposed, the faith must appear totally linked to *la vie*, the *valeurs de vie*.'¹⁰⁵

After envisioning this ideal Christian culture that would nourish a more engaged and authentic faith, Congar undertook an historical study of the beginnings of the '*laïcisation progressive de l'état de chrétienté*' which had begun in the early years of the fourteenth century with the rise of bourgeois leadership and the gradual secularization of politics, education, family life, and charity: 'Thus, little by little, all human movements and realities began functioning outside of the Church, even evading the faith. The *curés* were relegated to the sacristies, and religion was declared a private affair'; the Church became essentially 'distended and opposed in her very nature.'¹⁰⁶

The relegation of the Church to the private sphere left a 'mystical humanism', characterized by rationalism, immanentism, and the spirit of progress, to flourish in the public and intellectual realms. This optimistic anthropocentric cosmology resulted in both a '*mystique de science*', which engendered mechanistic, technocratic values, and a '*mystique de humanité*', which sought to preserve humanity's primacy in the universe. The two tendencies were complementary and prevented the Church from infusing authentic spiritual values into the culture. The influence of this atheistic humanism spread and eventually permeated almost every facet of French culture: secular schools, literature, journals, and political movements on both the left and right.

Against this 'triple attack' of secularism, the Reformation, and rationalism, the Church had drawn tightly within itself and had ceased to confront the world productively in an attempt to meet its spiritual needs.¹⁰⁷ Instead she was like a 'mother who has lost her children in an accident...and therefore, her voice bristles with defensive warning that

¹⁰⁵ Congar, 'Une conclusion', 220, 223.

¹⁰⁶ Congar, 'Une conclusion', 227.

¹⁰⁷ Congar, 'Une conclusion', 239.

prevent the survivors from playing freely'.¹⁰⁸ The faith became 'disincarnated' and 'divorced from the concrete', and by '[c]ollapsing in on itself, separated from life, religion has not provided to souls this milieu of *totale vie* where the faith has found adequate expression, the vibration of all its harmonics, and, so to say, its full human visibility.'¹⁰⁹ Congar cast the Church as exhibiting a certain decadence, without 'warmth and without joy', and the 'lifeless interiority' of this decadence was so widespread that it permeated spirituality, preaching, teaching, education, catechism, sacred art, and liturgy.¹¹⁰

Utilizing the principle of incarnation, Congar argued that the Church needed to forcefully open itself to the modern world: 'the Church enclosed within itself and concentrating on itself, constituted a conservative world apart, where it acted to guard itself, and where men, isolated from the movement of history, repeated in one language to them their problems, they exploited the treasures of dogma almost exclusively in 'scholastic' abstractions. Thenceforth, an immense segment of human activity, a great expansion of humanity, of human flesh—the modern life with its science, its miseries, its grandeurs—has not had the Incarnation of the Word; the Church has not given her soul to this body which would hear and would have to receive, as all human value, communication from the Spirit of Christ to become thus his Body and give glory to God.'¹¹¹

Congar insisted that this deep engagement with the world would not compromise the Church's essential transcendent orientation: 'Certainly the supernatural remains transcendent, it must not be *humanized* in the sense that one would identify the Kingdom of God or the Mystical Body with the visible realizations of Christianity.'¹¹² The faith must invade all of humanity and very much inspire it, and Congar concluded by imploring the Church to overcome the rupture between faith and life, allowing faith 'to penetrate us,

¹⁰⁸ Congar, 'Une conclusion', 239.

¹⁰⁹ Congar, 'Une conclusion', 243.

¹¹⁰ Congar, 'Une conclusion', 244.

¹¹¹ Congar, 'Une conclusion', 241.

¹¹² Congar, 'Une conclusion', 241.

move us to the absolute Good, and engage and expand within all the activities of the believer.’¹¹³

History: The Real Spirit of Aquinas

Catholic intellectuals, like their secular counterparts, also used history as a way of justifying their claims or decadence and rupture. Likewise, they sought to construct sweeping metanarratives that would not only locate a precise point of decline but also a certain golden age whose spirit must be reclaimed in modern clothing. One of the most important, and controversial, examples of this is the St Thomas’s day lecture given by Chenu at Le Saulchoir only seven months after Congar’s provocative article, in which he drew out Congar’s criticisms and composed his own historical narrative on the meaning and development of Thomism. Published in 1937 as *Une École de théologie: Le Saulchoir*, it caused a storm of controversy and Chenu was reprimanded and forced to resign as the rector of Le Saulchoir.¹¹⁴ In a totalizing historical narrative stretching from the origins of the order in the thirteenth century to his own day, he sought both to recover the true ‘*esprit*’ of the Dominican charism as well as show that Neoscholasticism was an historical aberration. Chenu’s account of the Church in the Middle Ages bears remarkable similarities to the French Church in the 1930s.

For Chenu, ‘revelatory of the [Dominican] destiny’ was the establishment of the original convents in centres of newly flourishing university towns, and also, Dominic’s decision to have his friars follow regularly the course of studies at the universities and be integrated among the teachers.¹¹⁵ In a thinly veiled allusion to the ecclesiastical mindset of his own day, Chenu recounted the story of a medieval abbot, fearful of the intellectual seduction and curiosity of the urban universities, who encouraged his monks to avoid them

¹¹³ Congar, ‘Une conclusion’, 249.

¹¹⁴ Chenu, Marie-Dominique. *Une École de théologie: le Saulchoir* (Paris: Cerf, 1985).

¹¹⁵ Chenu, *Une École*, 95.

and stay in the monastery. This conservative and cautionary attitude is juxtaposed with the liberality of Dominic, who straightaway sent his priests into the heart of Paris.¹¹⁶ Chenu saw in this medieval milieu, marked by profound economic and social development and rapid modernization, a world and a Church remarkably like his own. The ‘*nouveauté de régime*’ of the Dominican spirit was a necessary liberal ferment to a closed monastic culture that carried the ‘weight of an institutional conservatism that had lost contact with the *temps nouveau*.’¹¹⁷

Beyond the out-dated framework of the land system, an intense economic renewal was undertaken by the development of urban areas, where an elite class sought to conquer—softly or with violence—their work, the richness, their liberty, and their culture. At the heart of this urban power, and near the cathedral that it symbolized, episcopal schools developed, peopled by new generations whose *turbulente curiosité* could no longer be limited by monastic discipline. The geographical shift alone provides evidence of this spiritual transfer, or the social and political emancipation of the [urban governments that had been freed from the power of the feudal lords] highlights this impact. On the intellectual level, universities were eager to achieve the same independence as the guilds and constructed a similar system founded on an autonomous internal government, animated by the same spirit of enterprise and progress. Aristotle arrived at this point in the milieu, ready to receive its *nouveautés*. The intellectual emancipation would attach itself to the social emancipation.¹¹⁸

Chenu hardly disguised his attempt to use this medieval era of ‘sensational innovation’ to justify the hopes of the Left Catholics of his day: ‘We are not ready to welcome new truths’, he wrote, ‘if socially and institutionally we are closed in on ourselves.’¹¹⁹ Moreover, he upheld Aquinas himself as a model for standing against oppressive conservatism: ‘When the great feudal lord Thomas Aquinas renounced his paternal inheritance together with the Abbey of Monte Casino, he broke the solidarity with an outdated and crumbling system and at the same time guaranteed the liberty of his vocation, the institutional liberty of his brothers, and the liberty of his future institutional

¹¹⁶ Chenu, *Une École*, 103.

¹¹⁷ Chenu, *Une École*, 95.

¹¹⁸ Chenu, *Une École*, 96.

¹¹⁹ Chenu, *Une École*, 96.

work.’¹²⁰ Moreover, Aquinas realized with ‘audacity’ and ‘lucidity’ the spiritual dangers that a faith ‘closed to the world’ represented to the life of the Church.¹²¹ Instead he sought to break through the restrictive edited editions of philosophy that were mandated in favour of an ‘incarnation of the Christian faith’ within Greek and Arab thought.¹²² At the Convent of Saint Jacques in Paris, Thomas and Albert the Great were able to break through this resistance—which Albert denounced so vehemently—and bring about an ‘intellectual revolution’.

This golden age, which liberally sought contact with the world and the sources of the faith, was suddenly threatened by the emergence in the seventeenth century of a ‘decadent’ and ‘disillusioned’ scholasticism, ‘hardly evangelistic’, that ultimately prevailed in the nineteenth century, despite the efforts of some in the order who fought against it. The centralization of the Church, the officialised theology of Aquinas, and the situation of laicization all contributed to a certain isolation of the theology faculties from the universities that developed within the modern world. For Chenu, this separation between theologians and the universities, which fostered important ‘intimate exchanges between teachers and students’, was a great loss for theology. He concluded his narrative with an urgent call for the barrier to be overcome between Dominican houses and secular universities, a divide, he argued, that was contrary to the very nature of the Order, which demanded unswerving inclusion in the currents of modernity.¹²³

The Concrete Philosophical Foundations of Left Catholic Theology

Currents in Catholic thought also, as in wider French intellectual life, sought to engage the real and concrete. Intellectual abstraction was likewise seen as a decadent and dehumanizing rationalism. To illustrate this we shall discuss two examples of this

¹²⁰ Chenu, *Une École*, 96.

¹²¹ Chenu, *Une École*, 98.

¹²² Chenu, *Une École*, 104.

¹²³ Chenu, *Une École*, 113.

tendency, which both sought to merge the secular and sacred, thereby grounding Catholic life, spirituality, and political engagement in existential reality. First, Maritain's epoch-making book *Humanisme intégral* (1936) was one of the most important catalysts for the growth of liberal Catholicism, in many ways defining the era and providing a definitive opening for a Catholic embrace of the left.¹²⁴ Gerd-Rainer Horn writes that this work was 'the most famous product of—and inspiration for—the wave of innovations [of the period]... No other author came even close to assuming Jacques Maritain's status as an *éminence grise* or *spiritus rector* of left Catholic experiments in the late 1930s, the crucial 1940s—and beyond.'¹²⁵ In his full-length study, Philippe Chenaux calls *Humanisme intégral* 'the veritable "little red book" of an entire generation of Catholics.'¹²⁶

After an historical analysis of the birth and development of the 'dialectic of anthropocentric humanism', Maritain boldly laid out his humanistic plans for a 'new Christendom', largely communitarian and democratic but grounded on Christian principles, which recognize the inherent spiritual ends of the human person rooted in freedom and autonomy. Ultimately, this humanism was an antidote to the 'tragedy' of modern humanism, which had closed off humanity to the divine. Despite insisting that the spirituality of the person be at the base of this anthropological vision, Maritain essentially made distinctions between the religious and the profane, which included political and economic affairs. A network of Catholic activities would gain for the Church a certain civic respect, the 'first beginnings' of this 'virtual Christendom'.¹²⁷ The future of this Christendom of which Maritain dreamed was every bit as grand as that envisioned by the young intellectuals who looked to him for guidance:

¹²⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, (Paris: Aubier, 1936); *True Humanism*, trans. M.R. Adamson (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938).

¹²⁵ Gerd-Rainer Horn, *Western European Liberation Theology: The First Wave (1924-1959)* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), 89.

¹²⁶ Chenaux, *Humanisme intégral*, 7.

¹²⁷ Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, 320; *True Humanism*, 297.

For this new epoch...there is but one way of progress for the history of the world, that is for, a Christian order, howsoever it may be otherwise: that the creature should be truly respected in his connection with God *because* he is totally dependent on Him; humanism indeed, but a theocentric humanism, rooted in what is radical in man: integral humanism, the humanism of the Incarnation.¹²⁸

The *nouveaux théologiens* applauded Maritain's 'secular' Christendom

enthusiastically and, as Chenu wrote, he attempted to go beyond 'the unitary metaphysics of the Middle Ages' to 'an order characterized by a pluralism in the economic, social, political and even religious sphere, inasmuch as, by a normal process of differentiation, the autonomy of the temporal order comes into its own'.¹²⁹

Many French theologians of this period searched for theological idioms that would express the demand of the elites that philosophy be rooted in history, phenomenology, and action. For them, theology had to be both *mystical* and *real*, providing a 'concrete psychology of grace and faith'.¹³⁰ Theological critiques of the economic situation as well as appraisals of the theological dimension of the working class were attempted, and theologies of work and the laity were developed. The *nouveaux théologiens* were at the centre of this intellectual activity, and the journals that they gathered around and exercised influence over often published some of the most important articles that defined this movement.

Moreover, the doctrine of the 'Mystical Body of Christ' became one of the most important and influential theological ideas of the interwar period as it provided a motif that could be exploited by Left Catholics. Scholars have seen three dimensions to its development: first, its Christological, and specifically incarnational emphasis; secondly, its 'inner and outer' reality explained in terms of sacramentality; and finally, its social or

¹²⁸ Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, 81-82; *True Humanism*, 65.

¹²⁹ Marie-Dominique Chenu, review of *Humanisme intégral*, by Jacques Maritain, *Bulletin thomiste* 15 (April-June 1938), 362, quoted in Gerd-Rainer Horn, 'Western Liberation Theology in Western Europe in the 1940s', in *Left Catholicism 1943-1955: Catholics and Society in Western Europe at the Point of Liberation*, eds. Gerd-Rainer Horn and Emmanuel Gerard (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 27.

¹³⁰ Brueggeman, 'A Modern School', 17.

unitive dimension.¹³¹ The work of Belgian Jesuit Émile Mersch was behind the renewed emphasis on the Mystical Body Christ, and his extensive historical studies brought to light a forgotten Patristic emphasis on the Mystical Body, which had been eclipsed by a hierarchical ecclesiology. The Le Saulchoir Dominicans, as well as those gathered around the journal *La Vie intellectuelle*, played a significant role in the popularization of the Mystical Body and its application to the social and practical sphere: Chenu, Congar, and Sertillanges all made noteworthy contributions and emphasized its importance.

Engagement: The Rise of Catholic Action

Finally, echoing Nizan's call that thought needed to be in 'contact with life' to be authentic, a number of Catholic initiatives were born that sought to push the Church towards a deeper engagement with French society. Many youth organizations were born under the umbrella of *Action catholique*, the most well known being *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* (JOC), begun in 1926 by a French priest, Georges Guérin, who had been influenced before the war by *Le Sillon*. After ministering in the working class Parisian neighbourhood of Cligny, Guérin became attentive to the spiritual and material needs of Catholic workers. During the 1920s, the rapid industrial expansion in the Parisian suburbs allowed for the sudden spread of Communist influence, and Catholic practice in some of these neighbourhoods became almost non-existent.¹³² Thus, a new evangelization of the working class was called for, and beyond the JOC, a whole network of other organizations was formed that carried these hopes: the *Jeunesse agricole chrétienne*, the *Jeunesse étudiante chrétienne*, and the *Ligue ouvrière chrétienne*.¹³³

Also, several important newspapers and journals emerged and flourished after the condemnation of *Action française*. *L'Aube* was a widely read daily newspaper that

¹³¹ J. Eileen Scully, 'Theology of the Mystical Body in French Theology 1930-1950: A Review and Assessment', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (March 1992): 58-59.

¹³² Horn, *Western European*, 24.

¹³³ See Dansette for a table of the principle movements within *Action catholique*, 86-87.

championed Christian democracy, while three intellectual journals, *Esprit*, which we have already discussed, *La Vie intellectuelle*, and *Sept*, provided vehicles for progressive Catholic intellectual reflection. All three were heavily influenced by Maritain, and the latter two were both Dominican publications. Founded by the Dominican Marie-Vincent Bernadot at the express wishes of Pius XI, *La Vie intellectuelle* was run by former disciples of *Le Sillon* and Marc Sagnier. They sought to integrate the *non-conformiste* desire to construct a ‘new Christianity’ with Maritainian Thomism and elements of personalism.¹³⁴ The journal took an important role in the question of Catholic-Communist dialogue as well as the movement to examine the Church’s own responsibility for some of the problems of modernity.¹³⁵ *Sept* was a radical product of the Juvisy Dominicans. The priests there,

despite their traditional tonsure and flowing white robes, were experimental communities, operating from a modern convent structure in the middle of a ‘Red Belt’ (Communist leaning) Parisian working-class neighbourhood, a bit like Daniel in the lion’s den. These Spartan elite priests, who ‘prayed seven times a day’ and were all the more ‘loved for that,’ were visited by social workers and professors, pastors, chaplains of Catholic Action groups, film producers, and trade unionists... [They were] a spiritualist, communitarian alternative to Marxism in tough ‘pagan,’ Stalinist territory.¹³⁶

The *non-conformiste* Marc Alexandre had an important part in the running of *Sept*, which was administered by several Dominicans, including Chenu, Congar, and Sertillanges, and contributors included a ‘who’s who’ of French intellectuals such as Maritain, Gilson, and Daniel-Rops. *Sept* attempted a progressive ‘cutting edge’ approach, neither liberal nor conservative, that sought to guide the *Action catholique* movement.¹³⁷ In 1937, however, authorities forced its closure due to conservative pressure, and the publication was reintroduced as *Temps présent* under different leadership, although Chenu

¹³⁴ Jean-Claude Delbreil, *La revue "La Vie intellectuelle": Marc Sagnier, le thomisme et le personnalisme* (Paris: Cerf, 2008), 27.

¹³⁵ Fouilloux, *Une Église*, 84.

¹³⁶ Hellman, *The Communitarian*, 112.

¹³⁷ For an overview, see Hellman, *The Communitarian*, 112-117.

still maintained an active role. Finally, under the umbrella of Jesuit influence was Francisque Gay, a Blondelian who had been strongly influenced by *Le Sillon*. Gay had created the avant-garde intellectual journal *La Vie catholique* and a popular daily newspaper championing social democracy, *l'Aube*, which we mentioned above.

The rise of progressive Catholicism seems linked to the rise of French Communism, and the question of how to respond to this movement was central to the ongoing discussion about the modern world. In a radio address on the evening of 17 April 1936, Maurice Thorez, who had always condemned Christianity in no uncertain terms, attempted to broaden the appeal of the PCF by extending to Catholics an offer of collaboration, *le main tendue*: '[w]e stretch out our hand to you, Catholic, worker, employee, tradesman, peasant; we who are *laïc* stretch out our hand to you because you are our brother, and you, like us, are burdened by the same cares...' ¹³⁸

There was no question of a wholesale embrace of Communist ideals by Catholic progressives; rather, it was a question of attitude and response. There was initially a considerable sense that the overture was simply a political ruse, and in fact it seems now that Thorez had been ordered against his will by Moscow to make the overture, but nonetheless, many Catholic workers and intellectuals felt that an important question had been broached. François Mauriac wrote that the question was 'most serious—maybe the most serious of all those which today demand our attention'. ¹³⁹ Mauriac further elaborated on the dilemma at hand: 'Do we have the right to collaborate—albeit only in terms of social work—with the regime of an adversary for whom it is necessary to destroy in man the image of God and rebuild man in his or his own image?' ¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Maurice Thorez, a radio address given on 17 April, 1936, quoted in Francis Murphy, *Communists and Catholics in France, 1936-1939: The Politics of the Outstretched Hand* (Gainesville FL: University of Florida Press, 1989), 16.

¹³⁹ François Mauriac, *Le Communisme et Les Chrétiens* (Paris: Plon, 1937), 1.

¹⁴⁰ Mauriac, *Le Communisme*, 3

Left Catholics rejected harsh denunciations, favouring, rather, a ‘positive anti-Communism’.¹⁴¹ Maritain and Mounier did much to create a kind of culture of affirmation surrounding Marxism, that is, to encourage what was authentic and noble in its aspirations: ‘Catholic intellectuals such as Maritain saw it as their task to bend the announced anti-capitalistic revolution of the *Front Populaire* into a revolution which would be in line with Catholic social teachings, such as were to be found in *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*. Maritain posed very clearly that a liquidation of the capitalistic system is necessary in order to make possible an adequate temporal order.’¹⁴²

Likewise it is not surprising that conservative Catholics were scandalized by the appearance of *Humanisme intégrale*, as half of it was devoted to an analysis of Marxism and Communism—often written in a glowing and sympathetic tone. Maritain lays immediate blame for the rise of Communism on the failure of Christians to achieve a certain ‘socio-temporal realization of the Gospel.’¹⁴³ He lauded Marx’s ‘profound intuition’ and anthropological insight, which was for him a ‘great lightning-flash of truth’: capitalism and ‘wage-slavery’ produces ‘heteronomy and loss of freedom’, dehumanizing the ‘possessing class and the proletariat alike.’¹⁴⁴ Maritain recognized the profound spiritual implications of Marxism: material conditions can bear greatly on spiritual well-being.¹⁴⁵ Mounier travelled even further by offering an analysis of the beneficial contributions of Marxist thought: first, it allows for a certain recognition of the historical role of the proletariat; secondly, it finds and explores concealed interests and motivations within bourgeois capitalism; thirdly, it has undertaken a plan of liberation to justify the needs of the oppressed; and finally, it rightly seeks to understand the alienation of modern

¹⁴¹ Curtiss, ‘True and False Modernity’, 74.

¹⁴² Hendrik Optebecq, ‘Respect and Democracy: The Legacy of Jacques Maritain’s *Humanisme intégral*’, in *Respect and Economic Democracy*, eds. Luk Bouckaert and Pasquale Arena (Antwerp: Garant, 2010), 61.

¹⁴³ Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, 51; *True Humanism*, 35.

¹⁴⁴ Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, 55; *True Humanism*, 39.

¹⁴⁵ Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, 58-59; *True Humanism*, 42.

men and women from their work and life.¹⁴⁶ Both thinkers agreed that bourgeois ideology was at the root of the cultural crisis, and Mounier wrote: '[o]n the altar of this sad world, there is but one god, smiling and hideous; the Bourgeois. He has lost the true sense of being, he moves only amongst things, and things that are practical and have been denuded of their mystery. He is a man without love, a Christian without conscience, an unbeliever without passion.'¹⁴⁷

We conclude this section on the generational mentality of the 1930s by examining a 1937 article in *La Vie intellectuelle* written by Chenu and dedicated to the chaplains of the JOC called 'Dimension nouvelle de la Chrétienté'.¹⁴⁸ This piece serves as a superb illustration of the interrelated dynamism—composed of crisis, historical critique, philosophical programme, engagement, and finally, a vision of progress—central to the intellectual projects of this generation. Chenu began with a radically negative critique of the contemporary Church, writing that it seemed 'at the point of death', fixed in its defensive positions, content to merely 'conserve its heritage'.¹⁴⁹ It was 'not current, always behind the times, with no imagination in the face of the future, with no effective hold on the institutions and evolutions of the day.'¹⁵⁰ Unable to appropriate for itself modern words such as 'progress', or 'liberty', which even had anti-Christian connotations, it rejected this '*nouveauté permanente*', the source of 'inexhaustible resources', and was simply left behind in the flow of history.¹⁵¹

The catalyst for a *Chrétienté nouvelle*, however, was a radical engagement with the world rooted in the phenomenologically concrete and real. For Chenu, the fact of the Incarnation is a reality that binds humanity together into a unity, even with all its modern

¹⁴⁶ Emmanuel Mounier, *Manifeste*, 31-32; *A Personalist Manifesto*, 17-18.

¹⁴⁷ Mounier, *Manifeste*, 31-32; *A Personalist Manifesto*, 17-18.

¹⁴⁸ Chenu, 'Dimension nouvelle de La Chrétienté', in *La Parole de Dieu*, t. II (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 87.

¹⁴⁹ Chenu, 'Dimension', 88.

¹⁵⁰ Chenu, 'Dimension', 88.

¹⁵¹ Chenu, 'Dimension', 88.

social complexity. The ‘law of the Incarnation’ is that Christ divinized everything properly human by taking the highest as well as lowest things of human nature into himself: family, society, and political life. This new Christianity, of which the working class would be touchstone, would be realized only through a *nouvel apostolat*, such as that being attempted by *Action catholique*, with its dual apostolic themes of an apostolate ‘*du milieu par le milieu*’ and a ‘*conquête de la masse*’.¹⁵² The former method of evangelization relied on an organization of ‘*mouvements specialises*’, which were the appropriate means to incarnate divine life within the *milieu* of workers, farmers, seamen, students, employers, and financiers, without levelling out, under the guise of sanctification [*sans que soient nivelées, sous couleur d’être sanctifiées*], the proper values of these bodies or work, of these states of life, where each continually draws the resources of his work.’¹⁵³ The latter approach, the ‘conquest of the masses’, underscores the scope of this project to re-Christianize the working class. In fact, Chenu points out, these two methods are related, as smaller specialized movements are oriented towards penetrating the new ‘phenomenon of the masses’.¹⁵⁴ Chenu closed with a rousing affirmation of the legitimate aspirations of the working class, which had been activated by Marxist ideology: ‘The awareness of the dignity and the solidarity of the workers, the awareness of human dignity offended and humiliated, the awareness of a historic mission, these are the chief historical gains of our time. Marxism has activated—and deformed—this awareness; it called this the rise of the proletariat to the consciousness of class, and from this it elaborated its theory of class warfare.’¹⁵⁵ To underscore this, Chenu quoted from *Humanisme intégral*:

¹⁵² Chenu, ‘Dimension’, 96.

¹⁵³ Chenu, ‘Dimension’, 97-98.

¹⁵⁴ Chenu, ‘Dimension’, 98.

¹⁵⁵ Chenu, ‘Dimension’, 104-105.

‘However, freed from these errors, this awareness appears as considerable historical progress.’¹⁵⁶

For Chenu, this contact with life opened a stunning vista of possibilities. He recounted some words of Sertillanges, who had been asked if ‘faced with the speed and accelerated entangling of human events and the network of political and economic competition that is now enclosing the entire globe’, we are not approaching ‘the “*fin du monde*”, a tragic and grandiose completion of Christianity, two thousand years after Christ silently inaugurated the terrestrial kingdom of God.’ Chenu recounted the reply:

Fr Sertillanges responded all in one break... ‘*Mais non!* We are again at the beginning of the human history of the world. We are again in the prime youth of Christianity. Will not Christians in thousands of years consider our times as one of the first stages of the Church, endowed with a freshness and vitality from its apostolic youth, of this creative *élan* which comes from Jerusalem and Rome only to carry it through concentric circles to the ends of the earth?’¹⁵⁷

To conclude, Catholics of the generation of 1930 were in many ways swept along by the same project as the other members of their generation, and a broad movement of Left Catholics turned the grammar of crisis against the Church, arguing, to paraphrase Nizan’s quip about the French society, the Church was not sick because she had enemies, she had enemies because she was sick.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, these social Catholics envisioned a vast programme of ecclesiastical regeneration along the similar lines of history, concrete philosophy, and *engagement*. They constructed historical narratives to justify their claims against the Church, developed philosophies able to respond to the concrete needs of the age, and built a network of progressive activities to engage and dialogue with modernity.

4.6 The Fourvière Jesuits

We shall now analyse the project of the Fourvière Jesuits and search for parallels between the larger secular and Catholic programmes we examined above. Following the same

¹⁵⁶ Chenu, ‘Dimension’, 105.

¹⁵⁷ Chenu, ‘Dimension’, 87.

¹⁵⁸ Nizan, *Les chiens*, 108; *The Watchdogs*, 121.

outline, we shall first examine their diagnosis of crisis and determination of a certain generational task, then we shall discuss their methodology, which follows the same lines of history, modern philosophy, and engagement.

Within the work of the Fourvière Jesuits, and especially in that of de Lubac, we find that historical thinking permeates almost every aspect of their work, even more than most of their contemporaries. As we saw in Chapter 2, Blondel's method of history as well as Rousselot's historical approach to Aquinas were both influential, but I would suggest that de Grandmaison's renewal of historical studies and positive theology in his journal, *Recherches*, was especially important, as it provided an institutional outlet for the proliferation of historical studies, which was necessary to develop more fully Blondel's notion of tradition and Rousselot's historical reappraisal of Aquinas, two projects at the centre of Fourvière thought. *Recherches* certainly marked the character of French Jesuit intellectual life and was a kind of generational and programmatic link, tying together three generations of Jesuits with a common method and outlook. The sudden death of de Grandmaison left the leadership in the hands of Lebreton, and as the Fourvière Jesuits were ordained, finished their formation, and began their teaching or ministry positions around the year of 1930, Lebreton began to prepare the young Jesuits for a more prominent role in the running of the journal: 'We may note, from 1931 on, the discreet appearance of a young team: H. de Lubac (1931)...Y. de Moncheuil (1933), G. Fessard (1934),... H. Rondet, C. de Mondésert (1936), J. Daniélou (1940). Thus, under the far-sighted guidance of F. Lebreton, the younger generation was gradually to take over responsibilities.'¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Lecler, 'Le Cinquantenaire', 138; 'The Fiftieth Anniversary', 140.

Crisis and Renewal

Responding to the ‘mood of the times’ and made up of ‘bits and pieces’, de Lubac’s *Catholicisme* is composed of various lectures given during the 1930s at the *Faculté catholique* (Lyon), as well as articles published in the *Chronique sociale*, the journal of *Semaines sociales*, to whose directors in Lyon he had been introduced by Albert Valensin, and the *Union missionnaire du clergé*.¹⁶⁰ The project would have been forgotten if not for a chance visit of Congar in 1935 or 1936 to Fourvière, where he encouraged its publication as a volume in his new ecclesiology series *Unam Sanctum*.¹⁶¹ Called ‘programmatic’ by Balthasar, it is undoubtedly one of the most important Catholic books of the twentieth century, and I shall suggest there is no other book that offers such a rich portrait into the *mentalité* of Fourvière thinking during the 1930s in regard to their diagnosis of the crisis as well as the great task they hoped to undertake. Moreover, de Lubac shows the Patristic revival of de Grandmaison and *Recherches de science religieuse* to be in full bloom, as he offers a myriad of Patristic quotations attempting to show that Blondel’s philosophical instincts are in fact the most traditional and authentic elements of Catholic tradition. In fact the four main aspects of Blondel’s work that we examined in Chapter 2, his method of immanence, historical method, social programme, and anti-conceptualism/anti-Neoscholasticism, are very much the guiding features of this work. *Catholicisme*, however, is very much an intellectual application of Blondelian thought to the crises of the 1930s, as the young intellectuals perceived them. Thus, all the central features of the avant-garde thought of the decade also is readily apparent: crisis, diagnosis, regeneration, historicism, concrete philosophy, and engagement.

Catholicisme offers an ecclesiological remedy for what was perceived to be the great intellectual sickness of the age, the endemic individualism at the root of the modern

¹⁶⁰ De Lubac, *Mémoire sur l’occasion*, 25; *At the Service*, 27.

¹⁶¹ De Lubac, *Mémoire sur l’occasion*, 26; *At the Service*, 28.

crisis. De Lubac argued, over and against the other competing humanisms of the decade, that Catholicism is the true community which can provide a humanism able to fulfil the deepest aspirations of mankind. He asserted, however, that ‘a strong, sometimes a very strong, admixture of individualism’ had crept into the Church and manifested itself in an over-emphasis on personal salvation rather than temporal solidarity.¹⁶² In its overly defensive posture, inflexibility and juridicism arose, and the faithful ‘learned [their] catechism too much against Luther, against Baius, or even against Loisy.’¹⁶³ To underscore the disastrous effects of this, de Lubac quoted from a well-known speech given at a recent *Semaines sociales*. Our theology

must be saved from the individualism with which for the sake of clarity and the needs of controversy we seem to have allowed it to be associated since the sixteenth century. Our treatises on Grace and the Sacraments, on the Eucharist, even on the Church are fashioned so as to give the impression that God the Redeemer is never faced with anything but an untold number of individuals, every one of them regulating on his own account the measure of his personal relationship with God.¹⁶⁴

For de Lubac one of the insidious roots of this mentality was the ‘separated theology’ that caused many to ‘see salvation only in a complete severance between the natural and the supernatural.’¹⁶⁵ ‘Organic links’ between the two orders were cut, and the supernatural became a mere copy of the natural world, with the latter soon having no use for the former.¹⁶⁶ However, de Lubac was clear that the ‘hoped for cure has already begun’, and ‘theologians have set to work’.¹⁶⁷ The ‘signs of the times’ that Chenu would speak of are manifest in de Lubac’s assessment: ‘on every side, moreover, in our divided world there are appearing desires for unity’.¹⁶⁸ The Jesuit’s Blondelian sympathies were

¹⁶² De Lubac, *Catholicisme: Les Aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris: Cerf, 1947), in *HLOC*, vol. 7, 265; *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), 307.

¹⁶³ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 268; *Catholicism*, 310.

¹⁶⁴ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 277; *Catholicism*, 320.

¹⁶⁵ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 271; *Catholicism*, 313.

¹⁶⁶ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 271; *Catholicism*, 313.

¹⁶⁷ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 276-277; *Catholicism*, 319-320.

¹⁶⁸ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 307; *Catholicism*, 351; for Chenu’s popularization of this term, see Marie-Dominique Chenu, ‘Les Signes des temps’, *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 97 (1965): 29-39.

on full display as he insisted that the world must be shown that outside ‘Christianity nothing attains its end, that only end, toward which, unknowingly, all human desires, all human endeavours, are in movement: the embrace of God in Christ. The most admirable, the most vigorous of these endeavours needs—absolutely—to be impregnated with Christianity if it is to bear eternal fruit, and as long as Christianity is lacking, in spite of appearance’.¹⁶⁹

De Lubac was well aware of the competing humanisms of his age, and he argued that they are ultimately ineffectual, unable to deliver what they promise. In a clear criticism of the Hegelianism that was so en vogue, he wrote: ‘At the present day we are submerged in time. The enormous success of the philosophies of “becoming” as well as the distressing results which have lately imperilled their authority have had in this respect the same effect. Empty dreams and fears, exacerbated by the violence of their contrast, hope in the future and anxiety for the morrow, have laid hold of our consciousness.’¹⁷⁰ Moreover, this had given way to extreme political solutions:

Visions of concord among men and of indefinite progress, or tragic realization of the chaos in which we flounder, weighed down by the intolerable burden of the day, our terror of approaching catastrophes or our straining toward an unknown future from which every advantage is expected, all hide the present reality from our eyes, and in an age when man, as a reward for his immense effort, has at last achieved a degree of repose, he is no longer able to achieve that fundamental repose that would save him from himself and at the same time enable him to find himself.¹⁷¹

With the present situation ascertained, de Lubac declared the beginning of a ‘great common task’.¹⁷² A task that is ‘in many respects far more delicate than that required in the Patristic age, in Aquinas’ time, or even in the “humanist” epoch.’¹⁷³ It demanded a comprehensive combination of opposing qualities, each of them brought to a high degree

¹⁶⁹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 186; *Catholicism*, 224.

¹⁷⁰ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 312; *Catholicism*, 357.

¹⁷¹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 312; *Catholicism*, 357.

¹⁷² De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 280; *Catholicism*, 324.

¹⁷³ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 280; *Catholicism*, 323.

of excellence, one buttressed, so to say, on another, and braced with the greatest tension.¹⁷⁴ De Lubac remained vague on the task, declaring, nonetheless, that even

in these times of intoxication mingled with anxiety, amidst the most pressing necessities, it is the role of the Christian, a man among his brother men, buoyed up by the same aspirations and cast down by the same anxieties, to raise his voice and remind those who forget it of their own nobility; man is only himself, he only exists for himself *here and now* if he can discover within himself, in silence, some untouched region, some mysterious background which...is not encroached upon by the cares of the present.¹⁷⁵

He was clear that this task involved a rejection of Scholasticism, for which ‘many are already growing impatient’.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, he pointed to signs of renewal, ‘so many little streams, which promise well for the mighty river that our century needs.’¹⁷⁷ He declared that ‘the task may appear heavy. But the preparation has been going forward for some time...For what gives ground for the greatest confidence is that this is no mere surface agitation, that the theologians themselves, the interpreters of the living tradition, are urged forward by a revival which is reflected primarily in events because it springs from the very depths of Catholic conscience.’¹⁷⁸

This last quotation, stressing the centrality of ‘events’, or rather, we might say, ‘action’, highlights how central Blondelian thought is to de Lubac’s conception of the ‘great common task’, which certainly is theological, philosophical, social and missiological. Seen in this light, we can understand why ‘adaptation’ is required in the mission of the Church to show that only within Christianity do things attain their final end. This adaptation is not one merely of outward forms, however, it is nothing short of an ‘inner transformation’ which seeks to study deeply the ‘customs, morals, and beliefs’ of those to be converted, avoid useless controversy, and provide ‘toothings stones’ to assist in

¹⁷⁴ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 280; *Catholicism*, 323.

¹⁷⁵ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 313; *Catholicism*, 357-358.

¹⁷⁶ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 280; *Catholicism*, 324.

¹⁷⁷ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 278; *Catholicism*, 321.

¹⁷⁸ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 277; *Catholicism*, 320.

the cultivation of truth.¹⁷⁹ De Lubac insisted that this ‘is a method of immanence, the most traditional of all, and its application is not confined to discussion of books. When it is genuine, loving, and straightforward—a single word or gesture can bring it to light. An unobtrusive work of art can epitomize much patient negotiation.’¹⁸⁰ The ambition of the Church is ‘to gather the whole family together’, while embracing ‘certain outstanding varieties of religious experience.’¹⁸¹ This Church seeks to deepen and ‘purify, and give fresh life to [her members]. This method, however, must avoid rigidity: ‘The story of a few Dominicans kidnapping Aristotle’ is not rare in the Church, where too often she has been unable to adapt to the needs of humanity; ‘she does not share the illusion of some of her children for whom there now remain no more to do [since the harmonies of Greece and Rome]; since the miracle of the past must continue, she believes in fresh providential harmonies for her further expansion.’¹⁸² Nothing ‘authentically human, whatever its origin, can be alien’ to the Church, in which ‘man’s desires and God’s have their meeting-place’, and all ‘men are one in community of their divine origin and destiny’; the Church ‘wishes to satisfy and more than satisfy the yearnings of each soul of every age’.¹⁸³

De Lubac insisted that this new method of apologetics is in fact the most ancient: faced with these ‘contrasting but complementary difficulties we can see taking shape not, indeed, a new apologetics but a renewal of the most traditional form of apologetics—and should not apologetics, just like any other discipline, enjoy constant renewals if it is to remain alive?’¹⁸⁴ The approach is grounded in the reality that ‘the desire [for the vision of God] is at the very root of every soul’.¹⁸⁵ Dogma, for this new apologetics, is paradoxical and grounded in reflexive justification. Far from fleeing this contradiction, the mind is

¹⁷⁹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 248; *Catholicism*, 290.

¹⁸⁰ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 251; *Catholicism*, 292.

¹⁸¹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 252-253; *Catholicism*, 294.

¹⁸² De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 253; *Catholicism*, 295.

¹⁸³ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 254-256; *Catholicism*, 297-299.

¹⁸⁴ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 308; *Catholicism*, 352.

¹⁸⁵ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 284; *Catholicism*, 327.

stimulated: ‘despite its natural laziness it is almost obliged to delve beneath these superficial contradictions and to penetrate into those deeper regions where what was hitherto a stumbling-block becomes darkness visible.’¹⁸⁶ ‘Humanity should have a meeting-place in which, in every generation, it can be gathered together, a centre to which it can converge, and Eternal to make it complete, an Absolute which, in the strongest and most real sense of the word, will make it *exist*.’¹⁸⁷ De Lubac put tremendous hope in Blondel’s method of immanence, not only to show humanity its inner need for God but also its inner need for human unity, which for humans are inseparable. This is the only antidote to a social humanism, ‘which is the present phase of man’s hopeless endeavour to save himself.’¹⁸⁸

The unity of this human family as a whole is the subject, we have said, of some of the deepest yearnings of our age. It longs to organize it, to bring it to complete awareness of itself, to humanize it by making it fully one. The Catholic cannot adopt this program as it stands, nor can he simply reject it as a disastrous illusion. But just as he can use man’s aspirations to go beyond himself and ‘play the God’ to persuade him to accept that death to self which is the indispensable condition of entering on Life, so can he use the no less profound, no less natural desire for human unity—often stifled, often perverted as it is—to lead men of Good will to the threshold of Catholicism, which alone can effect this unity in its highest sense.¹⁸⁹

A Methodological Blueprint: The Tübingen School

This Fourvière task of theological reconstruction, which drew on a Patristic *ressourcement* and Blondelian anthropology, found great inspiration in their discovery during the 1930s of the nineteenth-century Catholic Tübingen school, which offered them a kind of methodological blueprint for intellectual engagement. The Tübingen theologians would confirm and stimulate their anthropological and ecclesiological projects, which we shall examine in more detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁸⁶ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 284; *Catholicism*, 327.

¹⁸⁷ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 310; *Catholicism*, 354.

¹⁸⁸ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 311; *Catholicism*, 355.

¹⁸⁹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 309; *Catholicism*, 353.

Led by theologians Johann Sebastian Drey (1777-1853) and Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), the school was influenced by Romantic thinkers such as Kant, Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Schelling. They sought to develop a theological methodology rooted in history and spiritual experience. Tübingen's developments in ecclesiology, Christology, methodology, Biblical hermeneutics, and anthropology would follow lines similar to those later traced by the *nouveaux théologiens*, and specifically those of the Fourvière Jesuits. The importance of the theology of Tübingen to that of Fourvière is attested to in de Lubac's *Catholicisme*, which in many ways serves as blueprint for Fourvière ecclesiology. After bemoaning the individualism and rationalism of his theological milieu, de Lubac had declared that although the task is daunting,

the preparation has been going forward for some time. An endeavour like that of the Catholic school of theology at Tübingen, begun upward of a century ago...stull shows that the sap is strongly rising. In 1819 in the prospectus of its official organ, the *Theologische Quartalschrift*, could be read an attempted definition of the Spirit and Essence of Catholicism: 'The central fact is the revelation of the plan realized by God in humanity: this plan is an organic whole with a progressive development in history.' Drey, Möhler, and their disciples commented on this definition in magnificent fashion.¹⁹⁰

Although we shall not examine Tübingen anthropology in any detail here, we might offer one suggestive quote by Möhler that is strikingly reminiscent of certain elements of de Lubac's anthropology which we shall examine. Möhler wrote: 'The idea of God is a fact of consciousness, and what could be more evident to us than such a fact? ...If the idea of God is based in an impulse of our spiritual nature, of our deepest being, if I grasp myself in this impulse and give it the form of representation, how can this not reflect an existent? How can it not be knowledge?'¹⁹¹

Theology, they held, had been in continual decline since the Middle Ages, and they sought to recover a mystical spirituality. Their Patristic retrieval represents the first

¹⁹⁰ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 277-278; *Catholicism*, 320-321.

¹⁹¹ Johann Möhler, from *Theologische Quartalschrift* (1827): 503; quoted in Hervé Savon, *Johann Adam Möhler* (Paris: Fleurus, 1965), 35; *Johann Adam Möhler*, trans. Charles McGrath (Glen Rock NJ: Paulist Press, 1966), 29.

modern Catholic attempt to present dogma historically. The establishment of the journal *Theologische Quartalschrift* in 1819 represents their essential programme of putting theology and tradition in dialogue with modernity. For the theologians of Tübingen, revelation was the essential light that illuminated the deepest needs of the human person and functioned as a kind of ‘education of the human race’.¹⁹² Revelation, however, is not limited to Scripture: ‘But if there exists a living objective reality which is generally recognized as the continuance of the originating event and therefore as its most authentic tradition, the historical witness is found in and through it. This is the reality of the Church.’¹⁹³

Published in 1825, Möhler’s first book was entitled *Unity in the Church or the Principle of Catholicism: Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*.¹⁹⁴ As the subtitle indicates, the work was inspired by Möhler’s study of certain Fathers: ‘A careful study of the Fathers has stirred up much in me. While undertaking it I discovered for the first time a living, fresh, full Christianity, and Christ desires that I do not leave fruitless that which he gave life to and awakened for his full defence.’¹⁹⁵ Divided into two parts, the first examines the inner life of the Church, while the second looks at her external relations.

Möhler began his study by arguing that the Holy Spirit’s presence in the Church is the ground of unity; it is ‘the Spirit of God whose action in the Church continues in an uninterrupted manner’.¹⁹⁶ However, contrary to the ecclesiology of Bellarmine’s ‘perfect society’ that primarily emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis the Church’s

¹⁹² John Thiel, ‘The Universal in the Particular: Johann Sebastian Drey on the Hermeneutics of Tradition’, in *The Legacy of the Tübingen School: The Relevance of Nineteenth Century Theology for the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Dietrich Donald and Michael Himes (New York NY: Crossroad, 1997), 57.

¹⁹³ Johann Sebastian von Drey, quoted in Livingston, *Modern Catholic Thought*, 190.

¹⁹⁴ Johann Möhler, *Unity in the Church or the Principle of Catholicism: Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*, trans. Peter Erb (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1996).

¹⁹⁵ Peter Erb, introduction to *Unity in the Church*, 1.

¹⁹⁶ Johann Adam Möhler, quoted in Peter Riga, ‘The Ecclesiology of Johann Adam Möhler’, *Theological Studies* 22 (1961), 573.

hierarchy', Möhler argued that the principle of unity was the Church's 'soul', that is, the interior lives of Christians, because 'the Spirit fills her, the Church, the totality of believers that the Spirit forms, is the unconquerable treasure of the new life principle, ever renewing and rejuvenating herself, the uncreated source of nourishment for all.'¹⁹⁷ Thus, Möhler's point of departure in the *Unity of the Church* is the community's inner spiritual life: 'Doctrine, liturgy, polity—all the forms of the external Church—are expressions of the spiritual needs and convictions of the Christian community.'¹⁹⁸ In addition, Möhler insisted that there is an incarnational quality to the Church: no one can know Christ except through the Church. The Church is in fact the Incarnation of Christ: 'Thus, the visible Church, from the point of view here taken, is the Son of God himself, everlastingly manifesting himself among men in a human form, perpetually renovated and eternally young—the permanent incarnation of the same, as in Holy Writ, even the faithful are called the body of Christ.'¹⁹⁹

One of the most striking similarities between the ecclesiology of the Fourvière Jesuits and the Tübingen theologians is the intimate link between their respective anthropology and ecclesiology. Möhler wrote:

A human being is set in a great whole to act and to view himself or herself as a *member* in it. One must acknowledge this and dare neither oppose oneself to the whole nor set oneself above it. This is what the schools call oneness with the *universal whole*, the harmony of universal and individual lives. This oneness with the *universal whole* is at the same time true existence in God, the source of true knowledge of God, of the creator of the *universal whole*, *because the universal whole as such is grounded in God and is his total revelation*. Thus, just as each individual in the whole is grounded in God, God can be known by the individual only in the whole.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Michael Himes, 'The Development of Ecclesiology: Modernity to the Twentieth Century', in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook Ecclesiology*, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 56.

¹⁹⁸ Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 193.

¹⁹⁹ Johann Möhler, *Symbolism* (New York NY: Crossroad, 1997), 259.

²⁰⁰ Johann Möhler, *Unity in the Church*, 153.

A first important contact between the *nouveaux théologiens* and Tübingen had occurred in 1928 when Chenu's gave Möhler's *Unity of the Church* to Congar.²⁰¹ From that point, Möhler would be an important guide for Congar's ecclesiological development. The first Fourvière contact with Tübingen, it seems, came through Chaillet's various trips through Germany during the early 1930s. In 1936-1937, Chaillet was in Rome to write his thesis on the ecclesiology of the Catholic school of Tübingen, but he was unfortunately unable to finish the work.²⁰² Nonetheless, he heartily encouraged the French translation of *Unity of the Church*, which was published as the second volume of the *Unam Sanctum* series that Congar had started. He did publish, however, a collection of essays on Möhler by French and German scholars to which he contributed the introduction.²⁰³ Chaillet was convinced that the internal, organic unity with which the Tübingen theologians conceived doctrine, tradition, ecclesiology, and Scripture would meet the spiritual demands of modernity. In a 1937 article for *Esprit* on Christian humanism, he wrote: 'the return to the live forces of revelation [by Tübingen thinkers] has raised up, little by little, a more mystical, a more organic, and a more dynamic conception of the Church. With a very sure sense of unity, by working to spread a theology that answered to the new demands of souls, these theologians had the humble assurance of answering to the call of the Spirit.'²⁰⁴ As the Fourvière theologians discovered Tübingen through Congar and Chaillet, it became clear that Möhler and Drey presented exemplary models of proto-*ressourcement* methods. Chaillet wrote: 'All Drey's studies on the Church, its organic unity, its living tradition, its progressive development, and its communal life vivified by the Holy Spirit, were the fruit of his careful reading of the Bible and the Fathers, and of his truly spiritual study of

²⁰¹ Elizabeth Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 41.

²⁰² De Lubac, *Resistance*, 37.

²⁰³ Pierre Chaillet, *L'Eglise est une: Hommage à Möhler* (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1939).

²⁰⁴ Riga, 'The Ecclesiology', 573.

history.²⁰⁵ In fact, it is not surprising that the work of Blondel and Laberthonnière has been seen by some as ‘continuing the work’ of Tübingen.²⁰⁶

History: Finding Blondel in the Tradition

Historical thinking is present in Fourvière in different ways. Like their counterparts in the wider generation of 1930, they used history to locate a point of origin as well as a golden thread of authentic tradition. While Kojève argued that a desire for recognition is the driving force of history which continues to evolve, the Jesuits would attempt to show that the Blondelian notion of desire for the supernatural and its dogmatic expression in history is in fact what must be identified and recovered. Thus, certain similarities exist between the French Hegelians and the French Jesuits, as they both must identify what is the essential dynamic spirit in each age.

Thus, the Fourvière desire to return to what they saw as the Church’s traditional apologetics required a great task of returning to the Fathers and their ecclesiological understanding, which was at base social, de Lubac argued. This return to a ‘more authentic tradition’, however, was not merely an academic exercise in resuscitating a ‘dead past’, because we ‘should gain nothing at all by breaking with an unhealthy individualism if in its place we dreamed of an impossible return to the past, for that is either an illusion which breeds schisms or a childish fancy which dulls the mind.’²⁰⁷ Rather, it was an attempt at a radical appropriation of historical thought so as to meet modern needs—especially those of building a new and audacious Christian humanism which might transform society: ‘Just to imitate primitive Christianity or the Middle Ages will not be enough. We can revive the Fathers’ all-embracing humanism and recover the spirit of their mystical exegesis only by an assimilation that is at the same time a

²⁰⁵ Pierre Chaillet, quoted in Riga, ‘The Ecclesiology’, 569.

²⁰⁶ Iltyd Trethowan, Introduction to *Letter on Apologetics*, 48.

²⁰⁷ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 279; *Catholicism*, 322.

transformation. For although the Church rests on eternal foundations, it is in a continual state of rebuilding, and since the Fathers' time it has undergone many changes in style.²⁰⁸

The presence of Blondel's notion of tradition seems to offer a backdrop to this, as de Lubac condemns an 'impossible return to the past'. Like Blondel, he grounds the present singular unity of Christian dogma in a living and dynamic presence clothed in contingent historical data and rooted in religious experience and action. In a passage clearly inspired by Blondel's insistence that truth is the mind's correspondence with life, and not the thing, as the Neoscholastics insisted, he wrote that we must recognize 'the great diversity of the theories which have been professed in the course of Christian history on those innumerable subjects where religious truth comes in contact with our human preoccupations' and are very dependent 'on social, intellectual or cultural conditions in a state of constant development.'²⁰⁹

De Lubac insisted that an authentic 'return to the sources of antiquity will be the very opposite of an escape into a dead past' and was antithetical to 'the notion that the modern age [had] experienced outside the Church only error and decadence.'²¹⁰ That is an illusion, a temptation to which we have yielded only too often. The epoch of a "separated" philosophy was providential, like all others, and the fruits of the immense effort of thought which was undertaken in its name, and is still being undertaken, ought not, through our fault, to be left outside of Catholicism.'²¹¹ From this age came many advancements, and de Lubac maintained: 'how disastrous it would be if we were to forego the great heritage which comes to us from the centuries of analysis and scientific research as well as from definitive results, the clarifications, which emerge from the

²⁰⁸ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 278; *Catholicism*, 321-322.

²⁰⁹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 279; *Catholicism*, 322.

²¹⁰ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 279-280; *Catholicism*, 323.

²¹¹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 280; *Catholicism*, 323.

controversies.²¹² Finally, appearing to pre-empt charges of employing a method of subjectivist historicism, de Lubac wrote that we ‘should not condemn self-examination or spiritual experience as if they derived from a merely individualist psychology or narcissist introspection, any more than by an analogous method of interpretation, we shall confuse transcendental speculation with an abstract discarnate idealism.’²¹³

Thus, to meet the contentious and conflicted philosophical needs of the French intelligentsia, which clamoured for a true and authentic humanistic sense of community, de Lubac turned to the Church Fathers, convinced they might provide a solution. As Chenu and others before him, he turned to the Patristic notion of the Mystical Body of Christ, which has ‘a supernatural unity which supposes a previous natural unity, the unity of the human race.’²¹⁴ De Lubac declared that the Fathers ‘kept constantly before them this Body of Christ, and in dealing with the creation were not content only to mention the formation of individuals, the first man and the first woman, but delighted to contemplate God creating humanity as a whole.’²¹⁵ Moreover, he made the bold historical assertion that the ‘whole Latin Middle Ages were nourished on this teaching.’²¹⁶ Coupled with the Mystical Body was the notion that all humans were created in the image of God, a doctrine that was the ‘inspiration of a whole tradition’.²¹⁷ Thus, de Lubac implored that we should ‘abide by the outlook of the Fathers’, whose view of the redemption was that it was a ‘recovery of a lost unity—the recovery of a supernatural unity of man with God, but equally of the unity of men among themselves.’²¹⁸

The Jesuit approach began with a certain ecclesiastical, social, and political analysis of the ‘needs of today’. Once a thorough study of the present milieu is

²¹² De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 279; *Catholicism*, 322.

²¹³ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 279; *Catholicism*, 323.

²¹⁴ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 3; *Catholicism*, 25.

²¹⁵ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 3; *Catholicism*, 25.

²¹⁶ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 66; *Catholicism*, 93.

²¹⁷ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 8; *Catholicism*, 30.

²¹⁸ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 13; *Catholicism*, 35.

ascertained, there seems to be a process of circularity whereby the present is used to judge the past and the past is used to judge the present—all with the intention of shaping a future theology better suited to their analysis of the present. An attempt is made to look into the past in a search for historical forms that might answer present shortcomings, and when historical currents are apprehended, there is no attempt at antiquarian retrieval; they are configured to align with perceived current needs in a theology that is at once novel yet claims to stand on tradition. Thus, we have a kind of ‘transhistorical triptych’ that flits between the past, present and future. One theologian asked: ‘What else does the work of a de Lubac or a Congar, which paved the way for an *aggiornamento* of Catholic theology, consist of but comparing present theological experience with what the Fathers said—and producing something as novel as it is traditional in the process?’²¹⁹

For the Jesuit historian John O’Malley, *ressourcement*, although sometimes embracing theological development, is predicated necessarily on a fundamental break with contemporary thought in favour of a theological path forward rooted in the historical reconstruction of a former period. Seeing that the programme is much more complex than appears at face value, and the fact that despite its conservative outer garments it has a potential to be extremely radical, O’Malley sums this method up: ‘we are no longer going to move along path X, we are going back to the fork in the road and will now take, instead, path Y, a better path.’²²⁰ However, the leaving of ‘path X’ for ‘path Y’ is not an altogether simple task, especially since ‘path X’ in this case was an official course initiated by papal decree, ratified by a series of successive papal initiatives, and embodied in the very structure of the Church’s intellectual formation and theological positioning. For *ressourcement* to backtrack along ‘path X’ to the fork where ‘path Y’ diverges necessarily requires the construction of an elaborate system of metanarratives that

²¹⁹ Eric Sharpe, ‘A Runaway World Revisited’, *New Blackfriars* 50.587 (1968): 375.

²²⁰ John O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 42, 301.

demonstrate why ‘path X’ leads in the wrong direction and why ‘path Y’, which will serve as an effective corrective to that erroneous route, was in fact the correct path all along.

In a move reminiscent of Chenu’s controversial argument in *Une École* that the Aristotelian appropriation of Aquinas was more practical or evangelical than ideological, de Lubac wrote that the philosophical speculation of the Fathers ‘was conditioned less by consideration of philosophy than by a keen realization of the needs of Christianity.’ Stoicism and Platonism allowed the Fathers to ‘make the most’ of the Biblical metaphor of the Body of Christ and appropriate a ‘horizontal view’ of redemption, which made human unity ‘fuller than before’.²²¹

De Montcheuil made a similar move, suggesting that the text of Aquinas is subordinate to what he discerned to be the spirit and centre of Aquinas, in a St Thomas’s day lecture he gave at Fourvière in 1932, four years earlier than Chenu’s address. He began by stating he would not offer an intellectual panegyric to Aquinas but instead search in his life for something to imitate.²²² This was the embrace Aquinas made of the pagan philosophy of Aristotle. Despite serious opposition from theologians as well as certain members of the Church hierarchy, Aquinas studied Aristotle deeply. De Montcheuil declared that Aquinas ‘neither accepted nor rejected the pagan philosopher outright. Likewise, he did not attempt to sanitize the philosopher. Rather, he was enriched by all that was good in him in order to develop a Christian philosophy.’²²³ De Montcheuil’s appeal to the ‘Christian philosophy’ of Aquinas is not surprising, as the debate on the possibility of Christian philosophy had already begun. Moreover, de Montcheuil’s listeners would surely have detected a faint but unmistakable apology for the Blondelian method of immanence in his insistence that even a study of Plato’s reminiscences can

²²¹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 17-20; *Catholicism*, 40-43.

²²² Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 32.

²²³ Yves de Montcheuil, quoted in Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 32.

cause an unbeliever to turn inward and ‘realize what lies dormant with them’.²²⁴ Later, Fessard would also appeal to these principles to which Aquinas adhered as necessary to offer a rejoinder to the problems posed by modern philosophy.

Finally, during the 1930s, de Lubac began publishing certain sections of what would become *Surnaturel*. Offering a Blondelian reading of Aquinas was essential to showing that Aquinas stood in fundamental continuity with the Fathers on the question of natural desire, and as we saw in the last chapter, even in his first year of philosophy, de Lubac was upholding Rousselot’s point on this. Thus, although it is an historical work, its intentions were very much to bring Aquinas in line with contemporary thought, and in fact, the Blondelian anthropology of *Surnaturel* is the hinge on which the entirety of de Lubac’s humanistic construction turns.²²⁵ This decade saw the publication of three of de Lubac’s articles which would make up the first three parts of *Surnaturel*: ‘Deux Augustiniens fourvoyés: Baius et Jansenius’, in *Recherches des science religieuse* (1931); ‘Remarques sur l’histoire du mot “Surnaturel”’, in *Nouvelle revue théologique* (1934); and ‘Esprit et liberté’, in *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* (1939).²²⁶

In 1932, de Lubac wrote to Blondel, sending him a sketch of what would become *Surnaturel*: ‘You see, Monsieur, how I let myself speak to you with all the freedom of a disciple. It is in fact the study of your work that made me begin, some eleven years ago, to reflect on these problems, and I believe that I have remained faithful to its inspiration.’²²⁷ De Lubac also indicated his gratitude to Laberthonnière in the beginning of 1932: ‘Having read your work almost entirely, I believe, over the last ten years, I have

²²⁴ Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 33.

²²⁵ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 33-34; *At the Service*, 36.

²²⁶ De Lubac indicated that the first three chapters of *Surnaturel*, on Baius and Jansen, were written much earlier than their publication date of 1931; for the background of the release of *Surnaturel*, see *Mémoire*, 33-36; *At the Service*, 34-38.

²²⁷ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 189; *At the Service*, 185.

found in your work light and comfort, and I search for the means of expressing to you my gratitude.²²⁸

Moreover, the attempt to unify Aquinas and Blondel was finally publicly proposed by Maréchal in 1933 in a response to Blondel during the debate on the possibility of Christian philosophy. He proposed that Blondel and Aquinas might be united through the concept of ‘natural desire.’ And we know that de Lubac was aware of this remark, because in 1936 he penned an article summarizing the debate.²²⁹

The thought of Blondel appeared even here to be right in line, not only with Augustinian thought, but also with the thought of St. Thomas...Blondel cannot in any way share the concerns of St. Thomas...but it is all the more significant to see that within a completely different context of problems and concepts, medieval philosophy, and particularly Thomism, held out a doctrine identical to much of twentieth-century thought: the doctrine of a natural desire to see God.²³⁰

Thus, this project, undertaken by Valesin, Rousselot and the Jesuits at Louvain before the war, had been picked up and developed by de Lubac under the watchful eye of Huby and had now come to fruition.

Modern Philosophy: Fessard, Hegel, and Marx

We saw above that the Fourvière Jesuits were convinced that Blondelian thought would offer a modern philosophical apology able to reach the French elites and their attempt to understand concrete experience, action, desire, and engagement. Thus their philosophical projects largely follow Blondelian lines. In some cases they could not make direct studies of Blondel, so they attempted to find traces of his thought in other thinkers such as Hegel, Malebranche, and de Biran.

As we discussed in the last chapter, one of the defining points in Fessard’s intellectual development was his discovery of Hegel on a trip to Germany in the mid-1920s,

²²⁸ Fouilloux, *Une Église*, 157n24.

²²⁹ Henri de Lubac, ‘Sur la philosophie chrétienne’, *Nouvelle revue théologique* 63, no. 3 (1936): 125-153; Reprinted in *Recherches dans la foi* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979); ET ‘On Christian Philosophy’, trans. Sharon Mollerus and Susan Clements, *Communio* 19 (Fall, 1992): 478-506.

²³⁰ De Lubac, *Recherches dans la foi*, 131-132; ‘On Christian Philosophy’, 483.

and his superiors denied his request to translate and publish the preface and introduction to the *Phenomenology*. After his discovery of Hegel, he immediately saw parallels between Blondel's *L'Action* and the *Phenomenology*. He returned to Fourvière eager to share this insight with Valensin, with whom he had grown close. Fessard recounted the story:

[Valensin] cried out, 'My poor friend, they have nothing in common! Hegel is all being, non-being, becoming, and so on, which are mere logical abstractions! Blondel, on the other hand, is concrete, real life!' Like a modest disciple, I protested somewhat, but of course without making a dent in the master's convictions. Well shortly after the publication of Wahl's book, when I happened to return to see him, he welcomed me with uplifted hands and numerous exclamations, 'You are a wonderful, astonishing, extraordinary fellow! Jean Wahl says the same thing about Hegel as you do!' And he immediately quoted the beginning of Wahl's preface: 'Hegel's philosophy cannot be reduced to a few simple formulas. Or rather, these formulas cover up something which is not purely logical origin... At the beginning of this doctrine...there is a kind of mystical intuition and affective warmth... Before being a philosopher, he was a theologian.' Because of this enthusiasm Valensin soon put me in touch with Jean Wahl, who at that time was a professor at the University of Lyon.²³¹

After ordination, Fessard left Lyon under suspicion, sent to teach in a high school for three years in Poitiers. During these years, he continued an intensive study of Hegel, and in 1931 wrote a manuscript reinterpreting the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius from a Hegelian standpoint, of which typed copies would circulate among young Jesuits for two decades until its publication in 1955.²³² This synthesis sought to unite human history and the infinite, as well as human liberty with divine liberty. In 1934, he was sent to Paris, where he took a position as an editor at *Études*. Fessard's return to Paris coincided with Kojève's Hegel lectures, which he attended, even delivering closing remarks at their conclusion in 1939. Fessard remained involved in the crises that shaped the 1930s, publishing books on the *main tendue* as well a larger work on political theology, *Pax nostra*.

²³¹ Édouard Pousset, *La vie dans la foi et la liberté: Essai sur les Exercices Spirituels de St Ignace de Loyola* (Paris: C.E.R.P., 1972), 7; *Life in Faith and Freedom: An Essay Presenting Gaston Fessard's Analysis of the Dialectic of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. E.L. Dona (St. Louis MO, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980), xxi-xxii.

²³² Gaston Fessard, *La dialectique ignatienne des Exercices spirituels* (Paris: Centre Sèvres, 1988).

Moreover, he finally published his thesis on de Biran in 1938 with very few changes, and he saw parallels between Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Biranian anthropology, and *L'Action* of Blondel: 'I believe we can compare the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of Hegel to the *Anthopologie* [of Maine de Biran] which has laid the foundation. It is at least from this *oeuvre* that we want to assimilate the seminal work which, by its contents no less than its inspiration, seems to have developed most faithfully, in the line of French philosophy, the seeds sown by Maine de Biran: *L'Action* of Maurice Blondel.'²³³

The dialectical structure of this essay has unmistakable Blondelian overtones.²³⁴ The '*acte moral*' stimulates a realization of an ultimate '*Désir de Être*', which stimulates the '*volanté voulante*' to construct a certain objectification of God. Furthermore, Fessard saw in de Biran, whom he called 'our Kant', a useful phenomenology which held that all knowledge was experiential and conditioned by an inner life. His phenomenological method is essentially reflexive: 'the psychological study of the self constitutes the basis for reflection in the ethical and religious spheres.'²³⁵ Within the self there is a certain self-manifestation of the absolute. Thus, for de Biran, philosophy and theology are intertwined as 'the spirit of man, which cannot know or conceive of anything except under certain relations, always aspires to the absolute and the unconditional.'²³⁶ Central to this reflexive approach is action and the will, and for de Biran acting and knowing happen simultaneously.

De Montcheuil arrived at Fourvière in 1928, and although, de Lubac had moved 'down the hill', the other young Jesuits to whom he had grown close were still there. It was during these years in Lyon that he was able to develop his relationship with Valensin, only strengthening his Blondelian instincts. As we shall see during these years the

²³³ Gaston Fessard, *La Méthode de réflexion chez Maine de Biran* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1938), 183.

²³⁴ Sales, *Gaston Fessard*, 21.

²³⁵ Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 9, 35.

²³⁶ Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 9, 29.

question of the desire for God was still strong, and in March 1930, he developed an eight-page essay on the question.²³⁷ He wrote to Blondel in 1931: ‘Fr Valensin has to write to you as he has asked me to help in the preparation of extracts of your writing to be published in a collection by Abbé Baudin. Indeed, I willingly accepted, and I hope we can begin quickly.’²³⁸ This volume of excerpts from *L’Action* marked a certain milestone in the resurgence of Blondelian thought that had been initiated by the publication of [Lefebvre 1928]. Valensin had sought such a project since 1928 [?], but had been prevented from doing so. The book was released in 1934, and although Ledochowski was unable to stop the publication, as it had gone to press, he did forbid a second printing.²³⁹ The following year, however, Valensin was assigned to Nice in 1935.²⁴⁰

Moreover, he published an article in 1931 on Blondel’s minor thesis that had accompanied *L’Action*. It treated the *Vinculum Substantiale* of Leibniz and the Christological basis for the spiritual unity of humanity. In the same letter cited above, he expressed his gratitude for Blondel’s influence on his thinking: ‘Since I have the opportunity, I do not want to miss the chance to thank you. Your books, and particularly *L’Action*, have not been for me objects for speculative study. It has helped give me a correct understanding of the issue of “Christian philosophy” and its demands even in the realm of practical life, and I can even say that they have a significant influence on the conception I am developing little by little of the interior life.’²⁴¹

De Montcheuil was ordained in August of that year and completed his theological formation at Fourvière the following year in 1933. After a year in Paray-le-Monial, he went to Rome to complete a doctorate in theology under Charles Boyer, choosing to write

²³⁷ This essay has been reprinted in Sesboué, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 350-359.

²³⁸ Yves de Montcheuil, letter to Maurice Blondel, quoted in Sesboué, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 29.

²³⁹ Antonio Russo, ‘Yves de Montcheuil et Maurice Blondel’, in *Blondel entre “L’Action” et la “Trilogie”*: *Actes du colloque international sur les écrits intermédiaires de Maurice Blondel* (Brussels: Lessius, 2003), 137.

²⁴⁰ Étienne Fouilloux, ‘A New “Lyon School” (1919-1939)’, in *Ressourcement*, 93.

²⁴¹ De Montcheuil, letter to Blondel, 25 February 1931, quoted in Fouilloux, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 19.

on the French philosopher Nicholas Malebranche (1638-1715) in a thesis entitled *L'Intervention de Malebranche dans la querelle du pur amour*.²⁴² Not only is it telling that de Montcheuil sought to examine a philosopher who sought a certain synthesis between Augustine and Descartes, but his topic, the dispute over disinterested love, is certainly evocative of Rousselot's thesis over twenty years earlier. Bernard Sesboüé offers three reasons for de Montcheuil's choice of topic: first, the link between philosophy and theology; secondly, theological anthropology in Augustine and Aquinas; and finally, the spiritual problem of love.

According to de Montcheuil, Malebranche, in a debate with Lamy, argued against Quietism, insisting that love devoid of a desire for happiness is 'an attitude not only condemned but also quite impossible to take because it contradicts the nature of our will and the laws on which God founded it.'²⁴³ De Montcheuil stated that Malebranche insists this desire is not due to the Fall and human weakness, but it is rooted in human nature itself: 'it constitutes the normal state of man.'²⁴⁴ Sesboüé remarks that undoubtedly de Montcheuil was alluding to Blondel: 'as Malebranche also made an appeal to Scripture and the consensus of the Fathers, de Montcheuil remarked that the Scripture passages invoked on the desire for God and reward are necessary if one takes Malebranche's position on man, the nature of the will, and grace.'²⁴⁵ Thus the anthropology of Malebranche is directed by a possession of liberty, the will's desire for happiness, and the necessity of grace to fulfil its aspiration. Malebranche spent a significant amount of time defending his thesis against the charge that a love of God rooted in a love of self and pleasure is fundamentally selfish. The human desire for happiness pertains not only to God but also to the temporal order. De Montcheuil, however, found a conflict at times

²⁴² Yves de Montcheuil, *Malebranche et le quiétisme* (Paris: Aubier, 1946).

²⁴³ De Montcheuil, *Malebranche*, 107.

²⁴⁴ De Montcheuil, *Malebranche*, 108.

²⁴⁵ Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 118.

between a desire for order and the pursuit of happiness which he resolved by preferencing order over happiness: ‘The glory of God is nothing other than the realization of order, Montcheuil asserted, and its pursuit demands that the soul desires salvation above all else.’²⁴⁶ De Montcheuil sought to demonstrate that Malebranche did not subordinate theology to philosophy: ‘There is not for Malebranche first a philosophy, then a theology, any more than first a nature, then a supernature, which flows into the framework of nature. Rather, there is one plan, unique and divine, which wants them both harmonized, one to the other.’²⁴⁷

Engagement: Reading the Fathers through Blondel

Finally, for the Fourvière Jesuits intellectual life had to be engaged, and they practised this in different ways, such as arguing that dogma has social and practical roots, dialoguing with Communists, and supporting *Action Catholique*, which they held in very high esteem. De Lubac’s attempt to give Catholic dogma contact with life seems certainly influenced by Blondel’s *Histoire et dogme*, in which he expressed his hope that the social implications of dogma would be explicated.²⁴⁸ De Lubac sought to show how these horizontal concerns for humanism and social unity permeated all of Catholic dogma: ‘all infidelity to the divine image that man bears in him, every breach with God, is at the same time a disruption of human unity.’²⁴⁹ He treated aspects such as ecclesiology, salvation, the sacraments, and revelation and sought to establish the unity and authority of the Fathers, offering an enormous amount of Patristic quotations and footnoted references. Although some seem to be lacking theological or historical context, the sheer quantity of

²⁴⁶ David Grumett, ‘Yves de Montcheuil: Action, Justice, and the Kingdom in Spiritual Resistance to Nazism’, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 622.

²⁴⁷ Yves de Montcheuil, quoted in Sesboüé, *Yves de Montcheuil*, 130.

²⁴⁸ Blondel, *Histoire*, 452-453; *Letter*, 287.

²⁴⁹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 10; *Catholicism*, 33.

diverse citations attempts to prove that the aims of Left-Catholicism and *Action catholique* were essentially in union with the great tradition.

Beyond these dogmatic concerns, the Jesuits were at the forefront of a Catholic engagement with Communism. Before we examine specific attempts at dialogue by the Fourvière thinkers, we should briefly mention an important Jesuit organization, *Action populaire*, which was at the centre of the ‘third way’ politics that sought a reappraisal of communist aspirations. Founded in 1904 by two Jesuits, Henri-Joseph Leroy and Gustave Desbuquois, the journal was preoccupied—in the spirit of *Rerum novarum*—with the social and economic conditions in France. For French historian René Remond, the formation of this organization was a first significant step toward the left for French Jesuits:

At what moment did the Society of Jesus, after having incarnated the most intransigent tradition, begin to turn in France toward a more conciliatory attitude? Here also social preoccupations have been determinant, and in this important change for the history of the Church in France, the role played by the *Action populaire* and its director, Father Desbuquois, cannot have been negligible.²⁵⁰

Certainly, the debate over a proper response was intense within the Jesuit order and played out strongly in the publication of *Action populaire*. Attempting to ascertain the position of Catholics toward the Communist surge, they devoted a series of twelve articles from 1936 to 1937 to a series called ‘Enquête sur le Communisme en France’. The articles sought to analyse the responses from a questionnaire on Communism to ten thousand readers.²⁵¹

Communists had never been far from the mind of *Action populaire*. ‘From 1930-1931, articles are so numerous and so varied that it is impossible to do even an overview... Each of the fathers of the house has dealt with Communism in multiple conferences, courses, social weeks, study circles and before the most varied audiences.’ Already in the 1920s the then general superior of the Jesuits Wlodimir Ledochowski, thought that *Action populaire* was not doing enough to denounce the danger of bolshevism, its radicals and its propaganda. In 1936 at a meeting of Ledochowski and Desbuquois in Rome, the two disagreed, with Desbuquois

²⁵⁰ René Remond, *La Droite en France* (Paris: Aubier, 1982), 241-242, quoted by in John Padberg ‘Above and Beyond Party: The Dilemma of Dossiers de l’Action Populaire in the 1930s’, in *In the Presence of the Past: Essays in Honor of Frank Manuel*, in eds. Richard Bienvenu and Mordechai Feingold (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 269.

²⁵¹ Paul Droulers, *Politique sociale et christianisme: Le Père Desbuquois et l’Action Populaire*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1969), 193n246.

arguing against a simple denunciation and Ledochowski, striking his hand on the table for emphasis, declaring ‘Any dialogue with such men is impossible.’²⁵²

The rise of Marxism also occupied a prominent place in *Catholicisme*. He approvingly quotes Maritain’s claim in *Humanisme intégrale* that Marxism was in fact attempting to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of humanity which had been suffocated by the climate of individualism. During the same period, de Lubac addressed the question of Communism more directly in a 1937 Jesuit response to the *Antireligious Manual* which had been published by the Central Council of the Union of Militant Godless of the U.S.S.R.²⁵³ Covering such areas as evolution, the existence of God and Christianity, capitalism, progress, and dialectical materialism, the work attempted a topical rebuttal in which de Lubac authored the section on the origin of God. Aiming to undermine Communist assertions about the origins and development of religion among primitive humans, de Lubac argued that far from examining ‘only the fact’, as Leninists claim, they began with their own a priori presuppositions and assumptions which avoided the reality that the religious development in early human is an ‘insoluble problem’, ‘shrouded in impenetrable darkness’.²⁵⁴

By further trying to refute the claim that monotheistic development was a product of economic life and oppression, the influences of Blondel and Rousselot are made plain. Authentic monotheism, he writes, is grounded in ‘deep philosophical speculation’ and remains a ‘principle of liberation’. Although the idea of God is always ready ‘to be awakened’ in the intellect, poor intellectual conditions and an ‘original moral deviation’ constantly threaten to stifle it. In a clear criticism of Neoscholasticism, de Lubac claimed that this deviation was in fact responsible for our need to ‘borrow elements’ of nature to

²⁵² Padberg, ‘Above and Beyond Party’, 279.

²⁵³ Ivan Kologriwof, ed., *Essai d’une somme catholique contre le Sans-Dieu* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1936); *God and Man in the Universe*, trans. Aloysius Ambrozzi (London: Coldwell, 1937).

²⁵⁴ Henri de Lubac, ‘L’origine de la religion’, in *Essai d’une somme catholique*, 234; ‘The Origin of Religion’, in *God and Man in the Universe*, 251.

construct ideas of God, developing analogies which harden into lifeless abstractions or facile anthropomorphisms.²⁵⁵ These ideas of God, which have been ‘enslaved and made subservient to profane ends’ need to undergo a purification to which atheism contributes. The atheist, for his or her part, must recognize the deeply religious character of the soul, ‘which always ends in adoring in one form or another, for adoration is the most deeply seated craving of the soul and its essential duty as well. God is the pole that irresistibly attracts man, and even those that imagine they deny Him, bear witness in spite of their own self, to His existence, because as the great Origen said: “they merely refer their indestructible notion of God to something else rather than to God himself.”’²⁵⁶

In 1936, during the rise of the turmoil surrounding the rise of the Popular Front, Fessard published *Pax Nostra*, which attempted to weigh in on the personalism debate as well as assess the political crisis. Fessard, in a move that would echo de Lubac’s famous line in *Catholicisme*, examined how Christ ‘reveals to humanity the concept of *person*’, which is ‘itself the principle, the end and the means of the genesis or personal becoming of every human being.’²⁵⁷ Each person is unique and equal to all others; however, each is also endowed with a ‘common prerogative’,²⁵⁸

[Christian revelation] has expanded to the utmost horizons of the human community into which every ‘I’ is born, and at the same time it has consolidated to the maximum the existence of this I, a tiny element of this community. Revelation of universal brotherhood in Christ, such are the two poles (which it is impossible to dissociate). The term ‘person’ is perfectly suited to signify the twofold property that we thus hold of our supernatural destiny: on the one hand, it serves to mark for us that each of us acquires, by reason of this destiny, a value incommensurate with all the rest of nature, to such a degree that it becomes for all the object of sovereign respect; and, on the other hand, in this absolute value communicated by Christ, our freedom finds the sole end worthy of it: to achieve among us a perfect community.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ De Lubac, ‘L’origine’, 265; ‘The Origin’, 284.

²⁵⁶ De Lubac, ‘L’origine’, 265; ‘The Origin’, 284.

²⁵⁷ Sales, *Gaston Fessard*, 38.

²⁵⁸ Gaston Fessard, *Pax nostra* (Paris, Cerf, 1936), 45.

²⁵⁹ Fessard, *Pax Nostra*, 39-40, quoted by Henri de Lubac in ‘Explication chrétienne de notre temps’, in *HLOC*, vol. 34, 142; ‘Christian Explanation of our Times’, in *Theology in History*, 451-452.

For Fessard, history had to be understood through ‘the dialectic of the pagan and Jew’, which was central to his work of explaining the religious roots of totalitarian regimes. These categories of pagan and Jew were also fundamentally existential. The Jew is the man who hides behind his law and, attached to his particularity, is rejected because of his incredulity. The pagan on the other hand clings to the universal and is condemned because he tries to absolutize the sensible. It is with this dialectic that Fessard attempted to understand the rise of Communism (the Jew) and Fascism (the pagan). To this thesis and antithesis, Christ for Fessard is the synthesis. The pagan must turn away from nature and idols, and the Jew from sterile pharisaism, and the end of history is ultimately dependent on the unification of these two groups in the Church. We can readily see the Blondelian influence on Fessard, and these categories that he constructed bear more than a little resemblance to Blondel’s method of immanence, which denounced both the scepticism of the dilettante and the absolutizing of Neoscholastic epistemology.

The following year in 1937, Fessard published the most sophisticated analysis of Communism in his book *La Main tendue: Le Dialogue catholique-communiste est-il possible?*, arguing that it was not an authentic humanism²⁶⁰ Moreover, authentic dialogue remained impossible as long as a dogmatic atheism remained central to Communism. Fessard quoted extensively from Marx’s 1844 manuscript to claim that the Communist Party’s atheism emerged from Lenin’s misreading of Marx. Lenin, it seemed, relied too heavily on Hegel’s *Logic*, apparently unaware of Marx’s 1844 writings which he admitted were dependent on Hegel’s *Phenomenology*.²⁶¹ This path left the Communist essentially bound to a contradiction that rendered it fundamentally anti-humanist: a utopian notion of progress with no end.²⁶² Fessard reasoned that this impasse was overcome by a turn to the

²⁶⁰ John Hellman, ‘French “Left-Catholics” and Communism in the 1930s’, *Church History* 45, 4 (December, 1976): 522.

²⁶¹ Hellman, ‘French “Left-Catholics”’, 522.

²⁶² Curtis, *The French Popular Front*, 159.

early text of 1844, which contained an Hegelian notion of an end to history, thus allowing an authentic engagement with Catholicism and a simultaneous embrace of its own deepest humanistic aspirations.²⁶³ David Curtis wrote that the Communist would be forced to admit that ‘the “End” has sense only if Marx’s “real humanism” is “secrètement, mais réellement ouvert sur “Infini,” on the transcendent, and thus this opening in turn acquires its full sense only if Marx’s affirmation of “l’Humanité-Dieu” (that is to say of humanity “passant réellement à la limite d’elle-même”)) is recognized as that of the Mystical Body of Christ, of which Marx may be seen as “un theorecticien inconscient et un constructeur involontaire.”’²⁶⁴

In this section, we have seen that the diagnosis the Fourvière Jesuits made of the Church of their day followed similar lines to that made by the larger generation of 1930 of France in general. Moreover, they proposed an anthropological and socio-ecclesiological solution to the crisis rooted in the four Blondelian threads we identified in Chapter 2, which they argued were in line with the traditional thought of the Fathers. This traditional thought was fundamentally engaged, and the Jesuits were deeply involved with the question of Catholic-Communist dialogue.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the *mentalité* of the wider generation of 1930 and its manifestation in the Left Catholic milieu of the decade, as well as in the thought of the Fourvière Jesuits. The intellectuals of this generation not only levelled a harsh critique against French society but also assigned themselves a vast generational mission of total cultural regeneration, which sought to rebuild France by the construction of a new anthropology and a corresponding sociopolitical organism. Anchored in a three-fold inter-related dynamism, their programme of renewal was grounded in historical consciousness,

²⁶³ Hellman, ‘French “Left-Catholics”’, 523.

²⁶⁴ Curtis, *The French Popular Front*, 160.

concrete philosophy, and contact or engagement with life. Moreover, the social, political, and spiritual criticisms of this generation was repeated almost verbatim by Catholic intellectuals, in their assessment of the French Church, and their project of reform moved along the same three lines as their generational confreres. Finally, the Fourvière Jesuits responded to the same concerns and proposed plan of reform largely along the Blondelian lines that we examined in Chapter 2. With the Fourvière Jesuits and the Left Catholic networks, from within which they operated, seated firmly within their wider generation, we shall now see how this thought plays an important part of the resistance against the Nazism and emerges onto the centre stage of French political, cultural and intellectual life after the war.

CHAPTER 5

1940s: TRIUMPH OF A POSTWAR THEOLOGICAL GENERATION

This final chapter provides an analysis of the Fourvière Jesuits during the years of the Second World War, as well as the controversial postwar era when their influence was at its peak. First, I shall examine the fall of France and the wartime work of the Jesuits, which included the spearheading of the *Résistance spirituelle*. They continued the analysis they had begun during the 1930s of the social and ecclesiastical crisis, ascribing to themselves a great task of regeneration. Next, I shall sketch the intellectual atmosphere of the postwar milieu, in which Communists, existentialists, and Left Catholics emerged from the war with tremendous influence in French culture. Then, I shall survey the Fourvière project to develop a new anthropology and ecclesiology according to the intellectual categories championed by the generation of 1930, historicity, modern philosophy, and engagement. Finally, I shall discuss Daniélou's famous 1946 manifesto, its relationship to the larger postwar landscape, and the controversy it incited with the Toulouse Dominicans.

5.1 The War Years

On 14 June 1940, German troops entered Paris, marching past the Arc de Triomphe and down the Champs-Élysées to the Place de la Concorde, bringing an end to the Third Republic, which had been shrouded in perpetual acrimony and division since 1870. One week later an armistice was signed, dividing France into two zones. Paris and the northern zone remained occupied, while south of the demarcation line remained 'free', under the jurisdiction of a new government whose capital was in the town of Vichy. One month after the fall of Paris, Marshal Pétain, a celebrated general from the First World War and national hero, was elected by the National Assembly as Chief of State. He sought to

implement a *Révolution nationale* under the motto of ‘*Travail, Famille, Patrie*’, a direct repudiation of the ideals of the French Revolution, ‘*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*’.

Throughout the course of the war, the ‘free zone’ in the south became the centre of resistance activity against the Germans. The resistance was comprised primarily of Communists, Left Catholics, various Republicans, and members of the French army. Increasingly however, as the war progressed, the Vichy government collaborated with the Nazis, eventually providing active support for the German SS in its effort to stamp out resistance fighters, known as ‘*maquis*’. Thus, in this complex milieu, Frenchmen were essentially forced into positions of ‘collaboration’ or ‘resistance’, and the intellectuals of the generation of 1930 put their literary talents at the service of both sides. Many of them made up what has come to be known as the *Résistance intellectuelle*, which included Catholics such as François Mauriac and existentialists like Camus, whose resistance publication *Combat* was widely circulated.¹ As a unit of the generation of 1930, the Fourvière Jesuits also were significantly engaged in the resistance, and their influential efforts came to be known as the *Résistance spirituelle*, which we shall now briefly outline. Thus, as Sartre and Camus produced works such as *The Plague* and *The Flies* that both advanced their existentialist philosophies and contributed to the resistance, the Fourvière Jesuits continued to develop themes that had interested them in the previous decade. Moreover, we cannot but see the effects of generational sedimentation emerge, as the writers of the generation of 1930, by taking up their pens against anti-Semitism in the *Resistance intellectuelle*, remind us of those *dreyfusard* writers in the generation of 1890 such as Péguy and Zola, who ascribed for themselves a similar mission.

¹ For the *Résistance intellectuelle*, see James Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 25-109.

La Résistance Spirituelle

Soon after the defeat of France in 1940, Fessard, coming from the Jesuit house of *Études* in Paris, joined Chaillet, returning from ministry in Hungary, at Fourvière where de Lubac was living. Their concern about the anti-Semitism of the Vichy Regime was encouraged by certain older Jesuits and mentors who had long been alarmed by these tendencies in Europe.² Both Chaillet and Fessard understood the phenomenon of Nazism well, as Chaillet had made a detailed examination of it during his studies in Germany, and Fessard and de Montcheuil had attended one of the first Nazi congresses in Nuremberg in the early 1930s.³ In 1941, Chaillet began formulating a plan for a clandestine journal which would offer theological and spiritual resistance to Nazi ideology and the Vichy Regime, the latter having made itself an accomplice of the former. Called *Cahiers du Témoignage Chrétien*, the journal in various degrees would involve other members of the Fourvière Jesuits, such as Daniélou, de Montcheuil, and Hamel, and alert people to the spiritual and moral dangers of racism, the myth of Aryan supremacy, and the violence against the peoples that Nazi ideology supposed to be inferior.⁴ Beyond this negative critique, *Témoignage's* writings sought to construct a Christian humanism by elucidating the infinite dignity of all persons, who are likewise infinitely loved by God.⁵

Between November 1941 and July 1944, a total of fifteen issues were published, and at its peak, around 50,000 copies were printed and distributed in a clandestine network throughout France. Each issue was devoted to a single theme and often had several authors, written not only by Jesuits but also by a '*petite phalange d'intellectuels laïcs*',

² Henri de Lubac, *Résistance chrétienne au nazisme* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), in *HLOC*, vol. 34; *Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism: Memories from 1940-1944*, trans. Anne Englund (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), 25.

³ De Lubac, *Résistance chrétienne*, 513-515; *Christian Resistance*, 36-38.

⁴ François Bédarida and Renée Bédarida, eds., introduction to *La Résistance spirituelle, 1941-1944 : Les Cahiers clandestins du Témoignage chrétien* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), 10.

⁵ Bédarida, *La Résistance*, 22.

comprised of both Catholic and Protestants.⁶ Fessard wrote the first issue entitled *France, prends garde de perdre ton âme*, and others followed, treating such subjects as anti-Semitism, deportation, collaboration, and human rights. The journal disclosed that Vichy was intending to turn foreign-born Jews over to the Nazis and first broke the news that Germany was killing hundreds of thousands in Polish gas chambers.⁷ Pétain and his regime had enjoyed enormous support at the beginning of the war, and *Témoignage* played a significant role in its demystification.

Moreover, *Témoignage* also served as an important bridge between the dynamic theological developments of the 1930s and the controversial years after the war when the Fourvière Jesuits would rise to positions of intellectual prominence. Noting this continuity with the 1930s, François and Renée Bédarida write:

Nourished by theology—speculative and moral—, ecclesiology, Christology, Patristics, and exegesis, the culture of *Témoignage chrétien* was undoubtedly rooted in the intellectual heritage of the 1930s. We find in it the influence of Péguy, Blondel, Mounier, Mauriac, Bernanos, and more than any other, Maritain—the Maritain of *Humanisme intégral*, his masterwork of 1936, which, contrary to totalitarianism’s reliance on the State to build a ‘*nouveau homme*’, defended the vision of a new humanism respectful of persons, social bodies, and all nations, while recognizing the legitimacy of a proper space for the temporal and its autonomy.⁸

The Bédaridas identify four central theological aspects of *Témoignage* that established theological continuity with the preceding decade. First, a theology of the Incarnation sought to provide a spiritual meaning to the temporal world and demonstrate the profound solidarity of God with the human race, avoiding theological abstraction and providing a path for concrete spiritual reflection. Secondly, a return to Patristic sources made possible a dynamic engagement with the world. This move allowed for ecclesiological reflections rooted in the Mystical Body of Christ which gave an account of

⁶ Bédarida, *La Résistance*, 28.

⁷ Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust: 1930-1965* (Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 2000), 128.

⁸ François Bédarida and Renée Bédarida, *Témoignage Chrétien, 1941-1944: Les Armes de l’esprit* (Paris: Ouvrières, 1977), 23.

the mystery of Christian and human solidarity, beyond mere individual, juridical or hierarchical understandings. Thirdly, apostolic and strongly rooted in the *Action catholique* movement that had emerged in the interwar era, the journal sought to be politically engaged and attentive to the re-Christianization of France. Finally, recent Scriptural studies had brought to light the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, and a certain unity between the two religions had been re-established, which strengthened the need to combat anti-Semitism. These four aspects of the *Résistance* offer a strong reminder that the methodological prerequisites of the 1930s, history, concrete philosophy, and engagement, were still central to the Jesuits during the war years.

Témoignage also continued to the Fourvière project of developing a Christian humanism, and Bernard Comte lists five broader humanistic aspects of the *résistance spirituelle*.⁹ First, truth (*la vérité*) was promoted against the propaganda of the official press of the Vichy regime. Secondly, justice (*la justice*) was held up as an ideal that would safeguard the rights of all and protect the weakest. Thirdly, the Jesuits upheld the primacy of conscience (*primat de la conscience*) as a means of combatting the ‘hitlerian’ perversion of conscience and ‘denaturing of Christian values’.¹⁰ Fourthly, the traditional values of France (*la patrie*) were upheld: liberty, political pluralism and esteem for the dignity of the person. Finally, the journal sought to espouse a humanism that transcended politics.¹¹

In addition, there were two other important wartime projects that bore significant fruit, attracted much attention, and helped develop the vision that was expressed in the pages of *Témoignage*, the collections *Sources chrétiennes*, which published certain

⁹ Bernard Comte, *L'Honneur et la conscience* (Paris: l'Atelier, 2008), 231-250.

¹⁰ Comte, *L'Honneur*, 237.

¹¹ Étienne Fouilloux, in *Les Chrétiens français entre crise et libération: 1937-1947* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), begins with the larger political context of the mid-1930s and paints the Vatican as essentially trapped between Hitler and Stalin, with a fading Pope Pius XI unable to manage the situation. After the commencement of hostilities and the fall of France, Catholics were effectively caught between resistance and collaboration.

Patristic texts, and *Théologie*, a series of positive theology works. *Sources chrétiennes* offered French translations of Patristic works which had fallen into obscurity or were generally unknown and which were thought to be more open to humanistic concerns.¹² Originally conceived by Fontoynont during the 1930s, the project sought to offer translations and republications of texts by the Greek Fathers, which, Fontoynont had hoped, might stimulate a fruitful ecumenical exchange.¹³ Fontoynont had gone to Fourvière in 1932 where he was the prefect of studies as well as professor of Biblical Greek and fundamental theology, and in 1937, he enlisted the help of Chaillet and, with the encouragement of Rondet and Lebreton, sought to realize the series. Approval, however, was not given by the Jesuit general, and the plan was shelved for several years until de Lubac, Daniélou, and another Jesuit, Claude Mondésert, were able to make a more successful attempt.¹⁴ The Jesuits enlisted experts to provide unabridged translations of various texts of the Greek and Latin Fathers with historical introductions, and despite the great success of the series, which had published over four-hundred volumes by the turn of the century, it generated controversy, as we shall see, as some accused it of using the Neoplatonic writers to stimulate a kind of counter-theology. The first volumes included works from Gregory of Nyssa, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Maximus the Confessor. Undoubtedly, this project can be seen as an outgrowth of de Grandmaison's *Recherches*, the premier French theology journal, which had been attempting a certain historical engagement for three decades.

Théologie sought to encourage works of positive theology rooted in the Biblical, Patristic, and liturgical *ressourcement*. The first three publications were all released in 1944: Bouillard's controversial *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*,

¹² Étienne Fouilloux, *La Collection «Sources chrétiennes»* (Paris: Cerf, 2005).

¹³ Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, 50.

¹⁴ Fouilloux, *La Collection*, 79-113.

Daniélou's *Platonisme et théologie mystique: doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, and de Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum*.

A Critique of the Church: 'A Crisis of Progress'

During this period, de Lubac continued the project that occupied much of his work, identifying the anthropological and ecclesiological causes of the current crisis. Moreover, the criticism of the generation of 1930, which claimed that it was indeed the final apocalyptic end of a failed civilization, seemed justified by the war. For de Lubac the 'crisis of civilization' was not merely external, rather it was from within: 'the whole edifice of European civilization seems to be collapsing. The fundamental values by which, across various regimes and with various success, numerous generations have lived seem today to be vanishing, leaving us a kind of chaos.'¹⁵ De Lubac gave two talks early in the war which were published in 1942 as 'Causes internes de l'atténuation et de la disparition du sens du sacré' and 'Explication chrétienne de notre temps'.¹⁶ These articles both find an earlier expression in his *Catholicisme*, and de Lubac wrote all this with an eye towards a new 'Catholic renaissance'. As always with de Lubac, the link between social crisis, historical analysis, and a certain futurism is the philosophy of Blondel. The crisis was born from a rejection of, or at least a distancing from, the Blondelian impulse which de Lubac argued was at the heart of authentic Catholic tradition: the 'problem of destiny', which is at the heart of the 'religious problem'.¹⁷

The anthropological crisis was rooted a loss of the 'sense of the Sacred', and the concept of pure nature was predominantly to blame, as it was doctrine against which 'all

¹⁵ De Lubac, 'Explication chrétienne', 128; 'Christian Explanation', 441.

¹⁶ Henri de Lubac, 'Causes internes de l'atténuation et la disparition du sens du sacré', in *HLOC*, vol. 31, 315-343; 'Internal Causes of the Weakening and Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred', in *Theology and History* (San Francisco CA, Ignatius Press, 1996), 223-240; 'Explication chrétienne', 127-148; 'Christian Explanation', 440-456.

¹⁷ De Lubac, 'Explication chrétienne', 127; 'Christian Explanation', 440.

Tradition rises up'.¹⁸ This doctrine emerged in the sixteenth century as a reaction against Baianism, and it bifurcated the realms of nature and, obscuring the reality that nature 'was made for the supernatural, and, without having any right over it, nature is not explained without it. As a result, the whole natural order, not only in man but in the destiny of man, is already penetrated by something supernatural that shapes and attracts it.'¹⁹ This separation caused the supernatural to be 'relegated to some distant corner where it could only remain sterile. They exiled it to a separate province, which they willingly abandoned to us, leaving it to die little by little under our care.'²⁰ We shall return to this issue more fully when we arrive at the *Surnaturel* controversy later in the chapter.

De Lubac's ecclesiological criticism was that the Church was conservative and withdrawn, and the result was the individualism and abstraction against which the generation of 1930 continually railed. As the modern world began to adopt progressive political and social ideas, the Church remained in a defensive posture, unwilling or unable to engage modern science, producing instead only 'confused, incomplete theories, which fail to satisfy the mind.'²¹ 'Thorny problems' regarding difficult issues such as the development of dogma, the supernatural, and Biblical criticism, have all been met with silence. De Lubac argued that an important area such as ecclesiology was almost totally presented defensively, mired in a hierarchical and juridical presentation, which remained essentially closed to positive theology. Likewise, the theology of the Eucharist was almost totally taken up with the 'real presence', ignoring important unitive and social dimensions.²² The Church's theology refused to confront the mysteries of the faith with 'the most rigorous methods', declining to ask such questions as '[w]hat is the real presence?', or '[w]hat is the Man-God?', or again '[w]hat is the Church?' The withdrawal

¹⁸ De Lubac, 'Causes internes', 326; 'Internal Causes', 230.

¹⁹ De Lubac, 'Causes internes', 327-328; 'Internal Causes', 231.

²⁰ De Lubac, 'Causes internes', 329; 'Internal Causes', 232.

²¹ De Lubac, 'Causes internes', 321; 'Internal Causes', 226.

²² De Lubac, 'Causes internes', 325; 'Internal Causes', 229.

of the Church allowed for the sense of a living God to be obscured by abstractions and phenomena. Thus, the ‘consequence is not only a social imbalance. The world appears “broken.” There is at the innermost part of the consciousness, a metaphysical despair. It was of this hunger and this thirst that the prophet Amos once spoke: *absolute* hunger and thirst, because they are a futile hunger and thirst *for the Absolute*. Hunger and thirst that, in many cases, do not even know themselves to be such but that leave on the deepest palate a taste of death.’²³ When this hunger for the Absolute, however, remains unsatisfied, ‘something like a great call for air is produced in this inner void’, which opens the person to an ‘invasion of positive forces’ that instil a deep rationalism.²⁴ This rationalism, spawned by an abuse of critical philosophy, ‘*has expelled mystery: myth takes its place*.’²⁵ For de Lubac, this rationalistic approach had created a kind of ‘secular God’: ‘What dryness, so unattractive and poorly conformed to the secret expectation of man’, devoid of human experience and unable to ‘communicate the feeling of divine mystery!’²⁶ This is a criticism he will take up in his examination of atheist humanism, which we shall survey below.

Engagement and the Task of Construction

The war also represented for the intellectuals of the generation of 1930 a definitive and radical break from the past and the decadent institutions which had in fact been the cause of the crises. Thus, the great task which they had assigned for themselves in the previous decade seemed at last attainable, and the idea of progress through decomposition, which found its popular expression in the Hegelian retrieval of the 1930s, seemed even more imperative. De Lubac stated boldly that ‘the process of decomposition is full of seeds of

²³ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 130-131; ‘Christian Explanation’, 443.

²⁴ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 131; ‘Christian Explanation’, 443.

²⁵ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 132; ‘Christian Explanation’, 444. We should remember here Blondel’s charge that rationalism that seeks metaphysical and moral absolutes ends in a kind of suspicion or myth.

²⁶ De Lubac, ‘Causes internes’, 334; ‘Internal Causes’, 235.

progress.²⁷ He further quoted a recent work by Teilhard that attempted to contextualize the analysis of crisis that permeated the decade:

The collapses of the past are recalled; the physical and moral signs of decadence are enumerated. Intellectual myopia in all that. Let us put these events back into the total phenomenon. Their irregularities become insignificant in the majesty and sureness of the overall movement. Life has gone around or reversed all the obstacles that it has encountered for millions of years...What is happening today that is so critical in the West must be a crisis of progress. Despite all contrary evidence, we can and we must believe it: we are advancing.²⁸

De Lubac insisted that a remedy for this ‘crisis of growth and progress’ did not lie in ‘dreams of reaction or restoration’, but in a return to the past.²⁹ Far from trying to resuscitate an extinct or bygone era, this return, rather, attempted to penetrate and recover Christian tradition and ‘go back, beyond the errors and dislocation’ of recent centuries’ to a ‘Christian past whose lessons remain vivid.’³⁰ This would constitute nothing less than an ‘effort to rediscover the spiritual sources of our civilization’ and the ‘ever-open truth’ whose unearthing will allow for the building of tomorrow’s Church.³¹ This ‘work of construction’, the undertaking of a ‘human revolution’, had to be animated by a ‘new spirit’, and in a move that can only remind us of the generational manifestos so common since 1890, de Lubac dreamt of ‘a generation of young Frenchmen *who took Christianity seriously*’: ‘I saw these young Frenchmen, reflecting on the profound causes of our present misery, determined to bring true remedies to it... They were not organized into a party, most were even little occupied with politics, but all were...ever concerned about human relations with men, very alert to the spiritual dangers that threaten us today.’³² Although some were believers and others were not, all ‘were really Christians’ and recognized by the Church as her own.

²⁷ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 133; ‘Christian Explanation’, 444.

²⁸ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 133-134; ‘Christian Explanation’, 445.

²⁹ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 134-135; ‘Christian Explanation’, 446.

³⁰ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 135; ‘Christian Explanation’, 446.

³¹ De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 135; ‘Christian Explanation’, 446.

³² De Lubac, ‘Explication chrétienne’, 147; ‘Christian Explanation’, 455.

And, carrying my gaze ten years, twenty years, thirty years forward, I perceived each of their activities, although without a concerted plan, rejoin the activities of others in a more and more closely woven fabric: I saw each of their initiatives, just as each of their examples, reunite with those of others in order to give rise to even more. So a vast and irresistible movement would arise from which the country would come out and be reconciled, enlarged, returned to its destinies, not for undertakings of brutal conquest or disorder, but in order to add new, more beautiful and more fruitful episodes than all the preceding to the *Gesta Dei per Francos*.

In conclusion, the *Résistance spirituelle* of the Fourvière Jesuits not only gave them great moral standing in the postwar years when Communists, existentialists, and Left Catholics developed competing humanisms but also allowed them to further develop their programme which drew on Patristic *ressourcement*, the Mystical Body, the notion of incarnation, and the Blondelianism. Moreover, they continued their sociological critique of the Church, charging that it was individualistic, juridical, conservative, and withdrawn, and the notion of pure nature played no small part in the chasm between the secular and the sacred that existed in French society. However, for de Lubac the decomposition of the Church and society bore with it great signs of hope for renewal, and the great task of regeneration depended on a re-engagement with a past that was more vital and open to the supernatural. This anthropological and ecclesiological vision would be the fruit of a methodological synthesis of a modern philosophy of action, cultural analysis, historical retrieval, and contact with the world.

5.2 The Task: A New Humanism

This Catholic renaissance depended almost entirely on new formulations of ‘person’ and ‘community’, a project with which the intellectuals of generation of 1930s had been fixated. Communists attempted to frame their political project in humanitarian terms, and Marxist intellectuals such as Kojève developed sophisticated claims that anthropological and political fulfilment develop simultaneously through historical dialectic. Moreover, the political right articulated the project of Vichy as nothing less than the building of a ‘new

man' and a 'new society'. Likewise, the Fourvière Jesuits transposed this philosophical and political project onto theological terrain as anthropology and ecclesiology. For them, authentic notions of person and community, which are revealed to us by the method of immanence and the ecclesiological community, the Church, in a double movement of interiorization and universalization, are essentially interdependent and alone can solve the problem of destiny with which de Lubac began.

The next two sections will examine the Fourvière Jesuits attempt during the war years to offer their own humanistic solutions to these questions that would heal the divide between the secular and sacred which had preoccupied them deeply since their time in the trenches of the First World War. Still working along Blondelian lines, they sought to convince the elites that although some of their aims were noble, they were fundamentally doomed to fail, as they did not recognize the supernatural orientation of these aspirations.

The Roots of Atheist Humanism

De Lubac's development of a new anthropology, as we have seen in so many other places in this thesis, will hinge on a historical critique designed to probe the roots of the problem. Thus in 1941 and 1943, he published in *Cité nouvelle* two articles identifying the sources of atheistic humanism in nineteenth-century philosophy. With the addition of a third piece, these articles were published together in 1945 as the *Le Drame de humanisme athée* and offer a striking example de Lubac's deep immersion in the generational struggle of the 1930s to create a new humanism. The book is arranged around authors and themes that were seminal for the generation of 1930: the influence of Feuerbach and Hegel on the humanism of the young Marx, Nietzsche and his *Übermensch*, Kierkegaard, and

Dostoevsky, and the footnotes give a sense of de Lubac's profound engagement with the literature of the period.³³

We shall examine briefly de Lubac's use of the latter three of these existentialists, whom he enthusiastically enlists to continue the generation of 1930's reproach of rationalism, individualism, and abstraction. For de Lubac, all three thinkers formed a common front against this decadence, but while Nietzsche sought to exalt humanity through the death of God, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky realised that humanity's grandeur depended on its recognition of its final end, God himself. De Lubac's analysis simultaneously offers an explanation of the causes of atheist humanism, which is a 'tragic mistake', and a stinging criticism of Neoscholasticism, whose failures can only be remedied by the intuitions of Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky, which for de Lubac have Blondelian implications.

With characteristic drama, de Lubac claimed that 'if we look down the course of the ages to the dawn of modern times' we discover that humanity began to see God as an enemy and the Church's anthropology as merely a burden. Nietzsche claimed that humanity's grandeur depends on God's death, and this death was achieved with the tools available at the time: 'resources of dialectic, of genetic analysis, of psychology, of the history of ideas, of the study of religion. A vast accumulation of work, most of it distorted by a mass of prejudices, supplied them with a whole arsenal.'³⁴ Soon, however, spiritual and temporal alienation became interdependent, and the human person became a merely a 'socio-historical' being, an abstraction cut off from authentic social relations: 'There is

³³ De Lubac cites existentialists (Heidegger, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, Marcel, Karl Jaspers, and Camus), *non-conformistes* (Dandieu, Aron, Berdaev, Moré, and Mounier), French philosophers (Wahl, Hyppolite, Lacroix, Bergson, Brunschvige, Riceour, Teilhard, Pascal, de Brian, Émile Brehier, and Fessard), French authors (Bernanos, Claudel, Péguy, Gide, Malraux, Bloy and Barrès), and Catholic theologians (de Montcheuil, Rondet, Rahner, Louis Boyer, Jean Mouroux, Loisy, Laberthonnière, and Congar) among others.

³⁴ De Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée* (Paris: Spes, 1945), in *HLOC*, vol. 2, 57; *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1995), 60.

nothing to prevent his being used as a tool either for the preparation of some future society or for ensuring, here and now, the dominance of one privileged group.’³⁵ This end, however, was inevitable: ‘Atheist humanism was bound to end in bankruptcy. Man is himself only because his face is illuminated by a divine ray... If the fire disappears, the reflected gleam immediately dies out.’³⁶

The Jesuit, however, found a sympathetic figure in the Nietzsche, who also struggled against a ‘shallow and impoverished’ intellectualism and feeble rationalism which merely divorced thought from life. Blondel is again in the shadows of this analysis, as de Lubac claimed that in the last half-century, much had been done to bring back a sense of ‘mystery’, for which ‘abstract principles are no substitute’.³⁷ This mystery, which will ‘shatter individuality’, is ‘like a peace descending from heaven’ through which man ‘discovers the secret of his own nobility’ and feels ‘the need to go back to the deep springs, to investigate them with other instruments than clear ideas alone, to re-establish a life-giving and fruitful contact with the fostering soil... We will no longer tolerate a divorce between knowledge and life.’³⁸

Although Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were both ‘enemies of system and abstraction’, it is the latter who ‘restores faith to its towering height and brings man back into genuine contact with God’ by showing that ‘belief is not speculative; the real individual is face to face with a real God.’³⁹ Quoting Kierkegaard enthusiastically, de Lubac yet again criticized the religious rationalism against which he struggled: ‘The speculative man is perhaps farther from Christianity than anyone, and it is conceivably

³⁵ De Lubac, *Le drame*, 63; *The Drama*, 66.

³⁶ De Lubac, *Le drame*, 64; *The Drama*, 67.

³⁷ De Lubac, *Le drame*, 85; *The Drama*, 85.

³⁸ De Lubac, *Le drame*, 85, 91-92; *The Drama*, 85, 91.

³⁹ De Lubac, *Le drame*, 96, 102, 105; *The Drama*, 95, 100, 103.

much better to be shocked by Christianity—thus after all, still bearing some relation to it—rather than to be a speculative man who “understands” it.’⁴⁰

Dostoevsky’s ‘instinctive disdain for the absolute, unassailable proofs of a “reason” impervious to the things of the spirit’ bolsters de Lubac’s case against Neoscholastic rationalism: ‘the poor women of the people will triumph over the learned, because they express more simply but more completely...the incoercible aspiration of the soul in God’s image.’⁴¹ For Dostoevsky, ‘to kill God in man is to kill man himself’, who is ‘tormented by a need for universal union.’⁴² With language reminiscent of *non-conformistes* polemics of French society, de Lubac contrasted this existential ideal with the ‘tragedy’ he saw permeating Catholicism: ‘the Christianity of today, *your* Christianity, is the enemy of Life, because it is itself no longer alive’; it is ‘humdrum, listless, sclerotic’, ‘lapsing into formalism and routine’, it is a ‘religion of ceremonies and observances, of ornaments and trivial solaces, with no depth or seriousness, no real hold upon human activities—sometimes with no sincerity either’.⁴³

An Anthropological Ontology: A Blondelian Reading of Aquinas

The backbone of de Lubac’s anthropological project remained the work that began in 1921 and sought to show that the doctrine that the human person has a natural desire for the beatific vision is in fact rooted in Catholic tradition. Finally published in 1946 as a complete monograph, *Surnaturel* was a bold historical analysis that alleged that ‘modern theology had parted company with ancient theology’.⁴⁴ Neoscholasticism —and the

⁴⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, quoted in de Lubac, *Le drame*, 106-107; *The Drama*, 105.

⁴¹ De Lubac, *Le drame*, 316, 361; *The Drama*, 302, 346.

⁴² De Lubac, *Le drame*, 342, 344; *The Drama*, 327, 329.

⁴³ De Lubac, *Le drame*, 129; *The Drama*, 124-125.

⁴⁴ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 123; in 1965, de Lubac republished Part I of *Surnaturel* as *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1965), in *HLOC*, vol. 13; *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York NY: Crossroad, 2000), and *Le mystère du surnaturel* Paris: Aubier, 1965), in *HLOC*, vol. 12; *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York NY: Crossroad, 1998), which sought to develop certain aspects of *Surnaturel*, such as the paradoxical nature of the natural desire for the beatific vision, human freedom and the gratuitous character of the supernatural.

doctrine of pure nature on which it depended—had corrupted the authentic interpretation of Aquinas and had forced a reading on it that was erroneous. The result was an artificial separation of the natural from the supernatural in a way completely unknown to the great theological tradition of the Church. De Lubac's thesis held that a state of pure nature is inconceivable given the absolute nature of our desire for the beatific vision, and moreover, this immediate orientation toward the divine, although absolute and infrustrable, remains willed by God freely and gratuitously.⁴⁵ The inefficacious nature of the desire—which simply implies that the spirit is incapable of producing the effect toward which it tends, namely, the beatific vision—supposedly guarded the gratuitousness of grace, and the absolute, infrustrable or constitutive character of the human drive toward the vision of God was incompatible with the natural end on which the concept of pure nature depended.⁴⁶

The magnitude of the controversy was further fuelled by the grievous harm de Lubac claimed had been inflicted by the doctrine of pure nature, which accorded for human nature its own finite proportional ends apart from the beatific vision. The adverse effects of the doctrine, he claimed, were much more pernicious than the mere propagation of an overly-rationalistic philosophy unable to speak to modernity. It was all that, he contended, but it had been much more disastrous.

It teaches the complete sufficiency of human nature left to itself; man becomes absolute, completely enclosed and confined to a natural order; he confronts God with rights and demands; the supernatural is reduced to something extrinsic, a superficial accretion, an unwarranted, and therefore unwanted, intrusion into temporal life in all its self-sufficient spheres.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Philip Donnelly, 'Discussions on the Supernatural Order', *Theological Studies* 9 (1948), 242.

⁴⁶ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 484.

⁴⁷ Philip Donnelly, 'The Surnaturel of P. De Lubac, S.J.', *Proceedings from the Catholic Theological Society of America* 3 (1948), 115.

De Lubac argued that it had been one of the causes of secularism itself, contributing to the very ‘loss of the feeling of the sacred’ in modernity.⁴⁸ Moreover, it was a historical fraud, unfaithful to Aquinas and the ‘unanimous Tradition’ of the Fathers and Doctors of ‘fifteen centuries’. *Surnaturel* not only attempted to provide a definitive critique of the concept of pure nature and its allegedly disastrous bifurcation of nature and grace, but it also sought to recover the authentic teaching on the natural desire to see God.

In part, de Lubac blamed the problem of pure nature on Aquinas’s baptizing of the Aristotelian notion of ‘nature’, which excludes the Patristic distinction between nature and spirit and opened the way for the diminishing of the Patristic *imago Dei* under the philosophical category of nature, which seemed to reduce human nature to the purely natural.⁴⁹ Holding that this nature was foreign to the Fathers as well as the Schoolmen, who would never have conceived of the human person as having been created with finite proportionate ends, de Lubac held that the Patristic anthropology was one in which human nature was imprinted with the image of God and constituted by an innate desire for the beatific vision. Its intelligibility emerged only in respect to its divinization, which was its final end. A nature-grace dualism would have been unthinkable, and instead, only the order of grace, to which all creation was ordered, would have been intelligible:

My finality which is expressed by this desire is inscribed upon my very being as it has been put into this universe by God... As soon as I exist, in fact, all indetermination vanishes...[and] no other finality now seems possible for me than that which is now really inscribed in the depths of my nature, there is only one end, and therefore I bear within me, consciously or otherwise, a ‘natural desire’ for it...⁵⁰

If pure nature had been the cause of the problem, then *Surnaturel* sought to be the remedy, putting theology back in contact with modern intellectual currents. De Lubac recounts what was essential to *Surnaturel*:

⁴⁸ De Lubac, ‘Causes internes’, 326; ‘Internal Causes’, 230.

⁴⁹ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 113-118.

⁵⁰ De Lubac, *Le mystère*, 81; *The Mystery*, 54-55.

The work thus constituted a sort of attempt to re-establish contact between Catholic theology and contemporary thought, or at least to eliminate one basic obstacle to that contact—not with a view to any ‘adaptation’ whatsoever to that thought, but rather with a view to engaging in dialogue with it—which, as always when it is a question of serious ideas, could only be a confrontation, a combat.⁵¹

De Lubac claimed this unanimous tradition upheld the creation of the human person in God’s own image. This actuality, de Lubac wrote, is what grounds the authentic teaching of Aquinas, uncorrupted by later accretions: ‘for St. Thomas, there is a human nature as such, because it is spiritual, a desire, a natural appetite, a sign of an ontological ordination, which could not remain ever unsatisfied without the work of the Creator having failed and which could be satisfied in no way but through the very vision of God, face to face.’⁵²

Although there is heterogeneity between the orders of nature and grace, de Lubac remained convinced that nature’s orientation toward the supernatural is manifested in ‘an intimate relationship between them, an ordination, a finality’. He continued by explaining that nature ‘was made for the supernatural’ and cannot be explained without it, and ‘the whole natural order, not only in man but in the destiny of man, is already penetrated by something supernatural that shapes and attracts it.’⁵³

Beyond the complex issues surrounding the interpretation of Aquinas on natural desire, however, de Lubac attempted to undermine late Scholasticism with the charge that the roots of its textual missteps lay in the rationalistic atmosphere that permeated the Baroque era and caused an overreaction against Baianism and a confusion of the orders of nature and grace. He wrote that

The distortions which we have just witnessed were even more likely since the system that they prepared found itself already molded in the tendencies of the epoch... Pure nature was not an invention or a product of any of the old schools, nor was it included in any of the principles among them. It became common among those who comprised late scholasticism. Given the general conceptions which formed in some way the intellectual atmosphere breathed thus indistinctly

⁵¹ De Lubac, *Mémoire*, 34-35; *At the Service*, 36-37.

⁵² De Lubac, ‘Causes internes’, 326; ‘Internal Causes’, 230.

⁵³ De Lubac, ‘Causes internes’, 327-328; ‘Internal Causes’, 231.

by theologians of every party, it had become impossible to oppose Baius without falling into his error.⁵⁴

This accusation—that the late scholastics were unduly influenced by an excessively juridical and rationalistic atmosphere—played no small part in de Lubac’s thesis and functioned as the contextual historicizing backdrop against which Aquinas could be interpreted. Additionally, it allowed for a certain dismissal of the entire commentatorial tradition as unable to read Aquinas with the objectivity that was needed. De Lubac charged that they misread Aquinas as well as the Fathers on the issue of natural desire.

One cannot overstate the tremendous implications of de Lubac’s thesis, whose ‘attack’ on accepted theological assumptions hit ‘like a bombshell’.⁵⁵ Not only had Catholic theologians been seriously misguided for centuries, the officialised Aquinas that had been propagated by Rome after *Aeterni patris* had constructed an erroneous and deficient apologetic method. Iltyd Trethowan wrote of *Surnaturel*:

There is no space to show how revolutionary these conclusions are. All that can be done is to suggest that theologians will need to make a most earnest study of this book. If P. de Lubac is right to say that modern theologians have largely departed from the teaching of the Fathers and of St Augustine on this great question, that they have misunderstood the commentators, that they have failed to appreciate the true significance of Ruysbroeck’s teaching because they have lost the ‘spiritual eye’, then they must set to work to put their house in order.⁵⁶

However, de Lubac’s thesis was immediately and fiercely contested on a textual as well as historical level. He had insisted that the development of his thesis was strictly guided by the historical and textual facts. Reminiscing about the *Surnaturel* project many years later, he asserted that he had been ‘objective and precise’ in his historical analysis, careful ‘not to introduce personal assumptions’ into his methodology.⁵⁷ Yet soon after the release of *Surnaturel*, several well-known Jesuit theologians objected vigorously to de

⁵⁴ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 150.

⁵⁵ Louis Dupre, introduction to *Augustinianism*, ix.

⁵⁶ Iltyd Trethowan, quoted in Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 100.

⁵⁷ Henri de Lubac, *Entretien autour de Vatican II: Souvenirs et réflexions* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 30.

Lubac's thesis. Philip Donnelly charged that although de Lubac 'offered no documentation to establish the prevalence of this intellectual decadence' he nonetheless made 'apodictic assertions' about it. Furthermore, it was de Lubac himself who was motivated by a personal agenda. Donnelly wrote with some irony:

Setting for himself explicitly the modest limit of a mere attempt at outlining the history of the supernatural order...it is evident, nevertheless, from the outset that P. De Lubac's historical studies are controlled and directed implicitly by a historical thesis which he considers final, and of a consistency which must eventually win the adherence of all theologians.⁵⁸

Moreover, de Lubac's Jesuit interlocutors argued that the Patristic sources did support a primitive notion of pure nature. Furthermore, they admitted that textual difficulties existed but insisted that for Aquinas the natural desire to see God referred to a natural proportionate end rather than the beatific vision. Countering de Lubac's attempt to historicize the Late Scholastics, one Jesuit countered by historicizing the intellectual atmosphere of Aquinas to provide reasons for why he did not need to explicitly elucidate the reality of pure nature.

Anthropological Epistemology: Recognizing the Desire

In broad lines, one of the primary purposes of *Surnaturel* is to clear away the abstract, conceptual Neoscholastic debris that is so fatal to Blondel's method of immanence. Our approach to the supernatural must be concrete and existential. One year before the publication of *Surnaturel*, de Lubac released a short treatise on epistemology titled *De la connaissance de Dieu*. This work, so reminiscent of the first years of his formation, when he and Fessard studied intensely the thought of Blondel, Rousselot, and Maréchal on the question of knowing God, is an enthusiastic apology for the method of immanence.

For de Lubac, the method of immanence demands that we wean ourselves off a superstitious reliance on supposedly absolute metaphysical knowledge and undergo a kind

⁵⁸ Donnelly, 'The Surnaturel', 110.

of intellectual purification whereby we begin to reflect on ourselves in a ‘real’ and ‘concrete’ science.⁵⁹ Knowledge of God is not a ‘human acquisition’ but an ‘imprint’ or ‘seal’ upon us that is discovered not by discarding reason but instead ‘digging down to its foundation.’⁶⁰ It is recognized only after a certain ‘awakening’ to the ‘true vocation’ of the human person.⁶¹ There is at first ‘an encounter, a contact, a certain apperception, or whatever term, according to the case, be applied to it—an illumination of the intellect, vision, hearing, faith.’⁶² This encounter precedes knowledge that is conceptual and sensory, for every intellectual or volitional act ‘rests secretly upon God’.⁶³

Thus, there exists a certain convergence between the task of the mystic and the philosopher, when the latter becomes aware of the nature and high vocation of the human spirit. For the mystic, the approach to God is more passive and experiential, while for the philosopher it is active and rational. Nonetheless, there is a common dialectic that is engaged. A philosopher, at least one ‘who is worthy of his name’, will instinctively move beyond the limits of his field, and perceiving ‘his own inadequacy’, he seeks to push ‘back the frontiers of thought’ and ‘explore the ways by which the intelligence moves to the point at which he discovered the spiritual appetite within.’⁶⁴

This discovery depends on recognising the close relationship between the intellect and the will, which are not mutually exclusive and cannot work against each other. Thus, in this unitive approach to God, the mind’s relation to the Absolute, which ‘carries us to God’, is constant and there is knowledge of a certain ‘basic experience—the presence of nonconceptual being to consciousness which is common to the philosopher and to all

⁵⁹ Henri de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, HLOC, vol. 1, 83; *The Discovery of God*, trans. Alexander Dru (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 67.

⁶⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 13; *The Discovery of God*, 7.

⁶¹ De Lubac, *De la connaissance de Dieu* (Paris: Témoignage chrétien, 1946), 24.

⁶² De Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 41; *The Discovery*, 32.

⁶³ De Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 45; *The Discovery*, 36.

⁶⁴ De Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 175; *The Discovery*, 153.

men.’⁶⁵ It is this dynamism of the mind, drawn to the Absolute, that provides stability for traditional metaphysics arguments which nonetheless ‘leave the door open to an element of doubt.’⁶⁶ A proof based on conceptual knowledge depends on this dynamism, which ‘elaborates the proof’ and ‘implies finality’.⁶⁷

Despite the high calling of this philosophical approach, the modern world refuses to embark on this purification and, unable to recognise its fundamental desire for God, instead looks to fulfil this yearning in a multitude of frivolous ways:

The most distressing diagnosis that can be made of the present age, and the most alarming, is that to all appearances at least it has lost the taste for God. Man prefers himself to God. And so he deflects the movement which leads to God, or since he is unable to alter his direction, he persists in interpreting it falsely. He imagines he has liquidated the proofs. He turns away from that which convinces him. If the taste returned, we may be sure that the proofs would soon be restored in everybody’s eyes, and would seem—what they really are if one considers the kernel of them—clearer than day.⁶⁸

In conclusion, de Lubac’s anthropological construction relies on historical works that on the one hand seek to locate the point of decline for important theological aspects of Catholic thought and on the other retrieve a golden thread of authentic Catholic tradition. His analysis of nineteenth century existentialism sought to both identify the flawed point of origin of atheist humanism and at the same time show that the theistic existentialism of the period recognized the orientation of the human person toward the divine. In *Surnaturel*, de Lubac found the denigration of modern Catholic thought rooted in the development of pure nature in the sixteenth century, which eclipsed the Patristic notion of *Imago Dei*. Finally, de Lubac drew on Blondel’s method of immanence to articulate an epistemology in which the intellect is fundamentally oriented towards the absolute.

⁶⁵ De Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 46, 71; *The Discovery*, 37, 57.

⁶⁶ De Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 53; *The Discovery*, 42.

⁶⁷ De Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 71; *The Discovery*, 57.

⁶⁸ De Lubac, *Sur les chemins*, 105; *The Discovery*, 83.

5.3 The Task: A New Ecclesiology

As we stated above, Fourvière anthropology and ecclesiology were interdependent, and for them the Church is '*that which calls all men to unite in a single spiritual whole.*'

Moreover, it is the Church that calls the human person to his or her fundamental orientation, a transcendence 'surpassing all the limitations of earthly ends'.⁶⁹ It is here that we see an interdependence between Blondelian philosophy and the doctrine of the Mystical Body:

But, for the person to find his complete blossoming, for him to achieve full interiority, full possession of himself, he must be taken up into a more immense and profound community, into a community of a different nature: not simply earthly, like those of family and homeland, but a community of an eternal essence, like the person himself. Such is the Church, that Church which the Apostle Paul called the 'Body of Christ' and which we also commonly designate as being the 'Mystical Body of Christ.'... In her final reality, the Church is according to our faith, nothing but the community of persons, the society of men gathered together in Christ for all eternity. She is the environment within which each human person must become himself, be enlarged, so to speak, to the dimensions of the world and deepened to the dimensions of God; and the good of this community, or universal common good, coincides in the final analysis, in a perfect way with the personal good of each.⁷⁰

Corpus Mysticum:

Deconstructing a Decadent and Individual Ecclesiology

De Lubac's most influential work on ecclesiology, *Corpus Mysticum*, attempts to locate the point of decline in ecclesiology, which led to the onset of a certain individualist fixation and devotion to the notion of the 'real presence', whose sense misrepresented the traditional understanding of the Eucharist which stressed an inner link between the presence of Christ and the unity of the Church.⁷¹ De Lubac began by outlining the early Pauline and Patristic sense of the phrase 'Body of Christ' that had a threefold unitive meaning: first, the historical body born from Mary; secondly, the sacramental body; and

⁶⁹ De Lubac, 'Explication chrétienne', 140; 'Christian Explanation', 450.

⁷⁰ De Lubac, 'Explication chrétienne', 141; 'Christian Explanation', 450-451.

⁷¹ Henri de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum: L'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge*, HLOC, vol. 15; *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds (London: SMC Press, 2006).

finally, the ecclesial body. This understanding, de Lubac argued, maintained an authentic unity between the Eucharist and the Church which he famously expressed by saying ‘the Eucharist makes the Church’.⁷² He continued: ‘the bread *of the sacrament* led them directly to the *unity of the body*. In their eyes the Eucharist was essentially, as it was already for St. Paul and for the Fathers, the *mystery of unity* and the *sacrament of conjunction, alliance, and unification*, given to us “to unite our race.”’⁷³ De Lubac writes that because of this understanding, ‘little by little, the “*whole Christ*” comes into being, who is always in our minds as the ultimate end of the mystery. So much so that, in this perspective of totality and of unity, there is virtually no need to search for formulations or expressions to distinguish one “body” from another.’⁷⁴ That the word ‘Mystical’ had qualified ‘Body’ to describe the Eucharistic species was a matter of no small importance as the word ‘mystical’ at that time did not signify a kind ecstatic spiritual experience, as we would conceive it now, but was ‘more of an action than a thing’, implying that rather than being cut off from the liturgy and the community, it effected a deep ecclesial unity.⁷⁵

Thus, de Lubac undertook a very subtle analysis of certain linguistic shifts that occurred in the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist. A decisive shift happened during the controversies surrounding the ‘real presence’ in the ninth century, between Ratramnus and Paschasius Radbertus, and the eleventh century, between Berengar and Lanfranc. In order to defend the doctrine of the real presence, there was an overreaction that caused a shift in terminology, and the terms True Body (*Corpus Verum*) and Mystical Body were inverted. The term True Body, which had signified the Church, came to mean the Eucharist, and the Mystical Body came to signify the Church, causing a

⁷² De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 103.

⁷³ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 17.

⁷⁴ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 23.

⁷⁵ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 49.

certain opposition to develop. What was once a unity now became a dichotomy, which exaggerated the juridical and hierarchical aspects of the Church. This dichotomy,

once it had begun to dissolve the social edifice of Christendom, finally played a role in the breaking up of the Church itself. An exaggeration had been made to assimilate the ‘mystical body’ with the ‘visible body,’ chiefly to the benefit of the most exterior element of the Church in its most contingent forms—that is the power claimed by the papacy over temporal matters. This lack of prudence would exact a heavy price. Beyond any of these abuses, the objections of the likes of Wycliffe, Jan Huss, Luther or Calvin would assail Catholicism itself, and the inverted excesses of their ‘spiritualist’ reaction would lead to the total dissociation of the mystical body of Christ from the visible body the Church. In its own turn, and in spite of more than one notable exception, Catholic theology itself would not avoid experiencing the repercussions of such a dissociation.⁷⁶

De Montcheuil’s Blondelian Ecclesiology

Whereas de Lubac provided an important declension narrative, De Montcheuil offered positive ecclesiological constructions that are fundamentally Christological, though bearing the stamp of Blondel and Tübingen. For de Montcheuil, it is Christ who is at the centre of all religious knowing and it is through the Word Incarnate that we know the Trinity; he reveals our destiny and final end, and as Redeemer, he illuminates both our degradation *and* our forgiveness: ‘Without his light, abstract reasons are powerless *apprendre le péché*; experience alone does not suffice. It is by seeing the redeemer that we know Him, as well as our misery and grandeur.’⁷⁷

Moreover, Christ is the centre of history, which is revealed most fully in the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles offers a reminder that it is necessary ‘to prepare minds for the *révélation complète*’ by pointing to Christ as the one we are expecting.⁷⁸ In the Gospels, Christ ‘spiritualizes the idea of the Kingdom of God’ and exemplifies in a deep way the orientation of the human person towards God.⁷⁹ It is Paul that who provides a profound ecclesiological sense in the notion that true human unity is found in the Body

⁷⁶ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 116-117.

⁷⁷ Yves de Montcheuil, *Leçons sur Christ* (Paris, Epi, 1949), 14.

⁷⁸ De Montcheuil, *Leçons*, 16.

⁷⁹ De Montcheuil, *Leçons*, 17.

of Christ: 'Thus we see how Christ is at the centre of history, not only because he comes to inaugurate a definitive work but also because in the duration of the world, it is his body which is being built. This is the solid reality of history.'⁸⁰ For de Montcheuil, this historiocentric emphasis was central to the Pauline Christology of the Fathers, and it is one that must be reclaimed.

The incarnational aspect of de Montcheuil's ecclesiology reveals itself in his insistence that the Body of Christ is built through our apostolate, through our '*effort humain tout entire*': 'because this effort, on any terrain on which it unfolds, has the final goal of a world in which all relationships are established in Christ and all institutions are penetrated by the Spirit of Christ.'⁸¹ Furthermore, the Incarnation is the key to the de Montcheuil's Christology and is interpreted in terms of the fundamental *rapport* it brings to human beings.

The Christ is man: but the believer does not see in him only a man amongst men. He is the *Chef de l'Humanité*. The desire, which grows at the bottom of every human heart of being united to its like kind to constitute a society founded on love, is derived from the influence of Christ. The triumph of this generous disposition over egoism that looks to make others an instrument of rejoicing is the work of the grace of Christ, creating in us the free will to do Good. The achievement of this unification is the perfect assimilation to Christ, the participation in his life. There is no real love outside that which the Christ gives by being united to him. The impulse that departs from him, returns to him, because he is the one through which men are in communion. If it is not in them to conceive of a union to give themselves one to another through love, then it is Christ who gives this desire, who pursues the realization for us, and achieves it by divinizing us. We can say that the only way to have humanity is through Christ, because for man there is no other alternative.⁸²

For de Montcheuil, the path to Christ rests on the method of immanence, and as long as phenomenological interior turn is avoided the necessity of Christ will not be understood:

We have a need to be united to God through an action that comes from God. It is this that we must first understand. To understand this, we must only realize the

⁸⁰ De Montcheuil, *Leçons*, 20.

⁸¹ De Montcheuil, *Leçons*, 23.

⁸² Yves de Montcheuil, *Mélanges théologiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 285.

distance created between God and us by the central aspects of our condition, that of creature and sinner. Because we have not understood this, Christ appears irrelevant. Much indifference, both theoretical and practical, is explained by the fact that we do not really unite ourselves to God, or we do not have the profound sentiment that an immense abyss remains to be crossed. Fr de Grandmaison has admirably described this abyss in his work on Jesus Christ. In order to fill it, God inclines himself toward us in Jesus Christ.⁸³

De Montcheuil attempted to broaden the understanding of the Church beyond merely that of a 'visible' 'sociological fact'. Rather, the Church has a 'spiritual and supernatural reality' because she is a 'mother' who 'brings us to new life', all the while 'keeping us at her breast'.⁸⁴ Moreover, she is a 'temple' made of living stones, the 'spouse' of Christ, the 'new Israel', and the 'Kingdom of God'. These characterizations present to us certain important opportunities for an exploration rooted in an understanding that the Church is fundamentally a mystery whose interior life is intimately related to her exterior life. With this conception in mind, we begin to see an explicit link between the inner Christological life of the individual and interior dimension of the Church: 'if the Church is the mother of Christians, if one can only become a Christian by participating in the Church, the interior life of the Christian then is a participation in the life of the Church.'⁸⁵

For de Montcheuil, there are four aspects to this inner life of the Church. First, the Church is *personal*. The Church does not wish to stifle individual expression and thought in a 'collective *élan*', subsuming all individuality in collective exterior expression.⁸⁶ Rather, our relationship to the Church, which emerges most deeply in our prayer life, is an active and living reality, which expresses the 'temperament, psychology, [and] character' of each of her members.⁸⁷ Secondly, the inner life of the Church is one of *communion*. Manifesting itself in the common life of prayer and sacrifice to Christ made by believers

⁸³ De Montcheuil, *Leçons*, 100.

⁸⁴ Yves de Montcheuil, *Aspects de l'Église* (Paris: Seuil, 1962), 23.

⁸⁵ De Montcheuil, *Aspects*, 51

⁸⁶ De Montcheuil, *Aspects*, 52.

⁸⁷ De Montcheuil, *Aspects*, 53.

and in the mutual help they offer one another, this aspect is richly illustrated by the notion of the Body of Christ, which we explored earlier. Thirdly, the inner life of the Church is *divinizing*. We are given the assistance to participate in the life of God, a life rooted in faith, hope, and love. Finally, the inner life of the Church is essentially *Trinitarian*, a fact which only underscores the unitive or communal dimension. The Church ‘comes from the Father, from which all things proceed; he gives it to us through his Son, Jesus Christ, who, as St. Paul says, is the head of the Body; but Christ in his turn communicates with us through his Spirit.’⁸⁸

Having examined the foundations of Fourvière ecclesiology, both the positive construction as well as the declension narrative, we shall conclude this section by briefly examining two important aspects that flow from it, a theology of temporal action as well as one of the missions. For de Montcheuil, the mystery of *communion* that is at the heart of the inner life of the Church must be reflected in the temporal domain, as charity must spill outside the confines of Christianity. Moreover, the natural, which is oriented towards the supernatural, by itself remains incomplete. Thus, the Church must work to order the temporal towards the supernatural in such a way that it helps, not hinders, the human person in realizing his or her orientation towards the supernatural: ‘Our realizations in this world must therefore be in some way, if we are faithful to the action of grace, the outline of what will be the heavenly city. Because the intimate tendencies [toward the supernatural] are only real in the measure that they can be translated into acts.’⁸⁹

Consequently, the temporal cannot be abandoned for the ‘pseudomysticism’ that looks only to an eternal reward; rather, the great value of the temporal order must be recognized and imprinted by the Church, which reminds all people of the final end to which they are oriented. De Montcheuil argued that the spiritual penetration into the temporal acts as an

⁸⁸ De Montcheuil, *Aspects*, 58.

⁸⁹ De Montcheuil, *Aspects*, 165-166.

‘enveloping influence’, provoking many transformations.⁹⁰ Given this theology of engagement, it is not difficult to understand the deep hope that the Fourvière Jesuits placed in movements such as *Action catholique*, which represented ‘an immense gain’ for the Church. In fact, they were the very spirit of the Church.⁹¹

The dynamism of *communion*, which characterizes the Church’s inner life, demands a certain robust temporal engagement with secular society which also governs the fact that she is essentially *missionary* in her nature: ‘she is therefore not only missionary in some of her members, charged with a specialized function. She is so in all her members, which are jointly responsible for a common growth.’⁹² This communal aspect of the Church is intimately related to the Church’s Trinitarian centre: the Father sent the Son, who in turn commissioned the apostles and were finally guided by the Holy Spirit, who was sent to them.

For de Montcheuil, the same drive that calls her to transform secular society also calls her to missionary activity: ‘The Church has within her the power to assimilate and transform the whole of humanity, even in its deepest fibres, and this power, it wants and it must expand it entirely.’⁹³ This desire to ‘transform’ other cultures with the message of Christ represents a significant shift away from the traditional theology of the missions, which was oriented toward saving the souls of pagans. To illustrate this, de Lubac borrowed a phrase from the prominent Left Catholic Canon Glorieux: ‘for the infidel in general, the missions are not so much a matter of life and death as of the fullness of life.’⁹⁴ De Lubac argued that he was not doing away with the concept of salvation, but rather he was shifting its meaning from the negative understanding, which seeks to save souls from

⁹⁰ De Montcheuil, *Aspects*, 166.

⁹¹ De Lubac, ‘Action Catholique’, in *HLOC*, 278; ‘Catholic Action’, in *Theology in History*, 241.

⁹² De Lubac, ‘Le fondement théologique des missions’, in *HLOC*, vol. 34, 36; ‘The Theological Foundation of the Missions’, in *Theology in History*, 370.

⁹³ De Montcheuil, *Aspects*, 173.

⁹⁴ De Lubac, ‘Le fondement théologique’, 52; ‘The Theological Foundation’, 384.

hell, to a the positive one, which would expand the visible presence of the Church so as to enrich unbelievers with the Christian faith.⁹⁵ De Lubac has no desire to quibble about the meaning of ‘salvation’ and ‘conversion’:

Let us not introduce into our inquiry vain disputes of an overly finicky Scholasticism. It is perfectly just to say in general that the missions tend to procure the conversion and, in the final result, the salvation of souls... The formula, then, can be retained: but on one condition, we will specify, that this ‘salvation’ be conceived, as we said above, in a positive way (let us say, then: salvation and sanctification)... on the condition that this “salvation of the soul” be considered, not in an individualist way, but in its relation to a collective salvation.⁹⁶

It seems that the notion of corporate salvation is a necessary move for the Fourvière Jesuits. Certainly the idea of a populated hell might be an embarrassment to their aim of making Christianity credible to the French elites, whom they hoped to convert. Moreover, the notion of hell would put in jeopardy their formulation of Christian humanism, which depends for an entry point on the method of immanence. This method demands a certain total phenomenological and existential reflection and awareness. The notion of judgement and hell is a radical distraction from that: it encourages individualism, abstraction, fear, and a certain platonic contempt for the world—all the things they detested and which fundamentally undermine the very method on which they depend. It seems that Blondelian reflection in some way demands that the doctrine be cut loose—or at least radically tempered—because otherwise it diminishes existential mindfulness of the deepest need for God to which every thought and action is directed and the social solidarity and political solidarity on which it is supported.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Pierre Charles, who de Lubac quotes in his essay ‘Theological Foundations’, was a Belgian Jesuit at Louvain close to both Maréchal and Sheuer, and his influential missiology in *Études missiologiques* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1956) shifted missiological emphasis from individual salvation to a more socio-cultural understanding which emphasized the centrality of an indigenous clergy and hierarchy.

⁹⁶ De Lubac, ‘Le fondement théologique’, 58-59; ‘The Theological Foundation’, 389-390.

⁹⁷ That de Lubac’s project is dependent on a soteriological move from individual to corporate salvation is attested even in the first pages of *Catholicism*, where he described the problem against which the rest of the book serves as an antidote: a spirituality rooted in personal salvation (vii-xii; ET 13-18). De Lubac claimed this tendency, manifesting itself in various ‘failings’ such as ‘selfish piety, the narrow religious outlook, the neglect of ordinary duties in the multiplication of “devotions”, the swamping of the spiritual life by the

In summary, Fourvière ecclesiology engaged in a *ressourcement* of Patristic and medieval sources that supported their Blondelian anthropology. De Lubac, once again, sought to show conclusively where modern ecclesiology, fundamentally individualistic, hierarchical, and juridical, had gone wrong. To rebuild an authentic ecclesiology, theologians needed to unite once again the Eucharist and the community, getting away from a fixation on the real presence. Finally, the Jesuits continued to exploit various insights from the notion of the Mystical Body, emphasising the inner life of the Church and its connection to the inner life of Christians. Moreover, the Church had to be fundamentally engaged and incarnated in the affairs of the world, trying to further the temporal salvation of humanity.

5.4 The Liberation and the Rise of the Generation of 1930

The liberation of France on 25 August 1944 brought an end to the war and a beginning to the Fourth Republic. Although French elections and the constitution of the Fourth

detestable “I”, the failure to realize that prayer is essentially the prayer of all for all’, is responsible for a great misunderstanding, and not surprisingly, he quotes a Left Catholic writer from the *Semaines sociales*, who declared that ‘the Gospel is obsessed with the idea of the unity of human society’ (ix-x; ET 15-16). Although de Lubac framed his move as necessary to rectify these deformities, he is vague and one wonders if, on an apologetic level at least, it is the doctrine of a populated hell itself which is the problem, because these ‘failings’ could have been blamed in some respects on the founder of the Jesuits himself, Ignatius of Loyola, who included in the *Spiritual Exercises* a detailed meditation of one’s particular judgment and the torments of hell. Daniélou, in his work *Le Mystère du salut des nations* (Paris: Seuil, 1946), followed a similar line, claiming that ‘most theologians’ believe that salvation does not absolutely depend on membership in the visible Church (137-138), and in *Essai sur le mystère de l’histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1953), he says: ‘Too often we conceive of [hope] in an overly individualistic manner only in terms of our personal salvation. But hope relates to the great actions of God concerning his entire creation. It is the expectation of the Second Coming, the Return of the Lord, which will bring history to its fulfillment. It thus relates to the destiny of the whole of humanity. It is the salvation of the world on which we wait... In reality hope bears on the salvation of all men—and it is only in the measure that I am included in them that it bears on me.’ (340). De Montcheuil argued that even those who explicitly reject the Gospel might not be culpable (*Aspects de L’Église*, 125-126) and claimed that in fact ‘the only way of escaping damnation’ is to renounce the individualistic, or egotistical, conception of salvation (132). Moreover, Fessard, in ‘Enfer éternel ou salut universel?’ in *Le Mythe de la peine, Colloque Castelli* (Paris: Aubier, 1967), 223-265, used his dialectic to justify his hope that all will be saved in the end (254). Finally, we might quote Balthasar’s work *Dare We Hope* (San Francisco CA, Ignatius, 1988), in which he examined Blondel on the question of universal salvation extensively, finally including himself amongst a remarkable group of French thinkers who hold to the possibility of universal salvation: ‘I discover myself in the best of company here. Present are (as I showed earlier)... Henri Cardinal de Lubac; my old teacher Rondet; my friend Fessard; His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris; the great Blondel; the former socialist Péguy, who wants to be a Catholic only if he may have hope for all; Claudel in his famous *Cantique de la Palmyre* (*Prose*, Pleiade, pp. 703f); Gabriel Marcel; the tempestuous Leon Bloy...’ (168).

Republic did not come until several months after the German surrender in May 1945, the intellectual lines that would shape postwar France were already laid by the three parties that emerged from the war as victors: Communists, existentialists, and Left Catholics. In national elections four months after the surrender of Germany, the Communist Party (PCF), the French Socialist Party (SFIO), and the Catholic Social Democrats (MRP) had a virtual electoral tie.

A 'cultural power vacuum' had been created by the fall of the Republic. The political and Catholic right had been discredited, by a real or perceived support of the Vichy regime, as well as the older generation, for its association with the failed Third Republic.⁹⁸ The left-wing intellectuals, philosophers, writers, and theologians of the generation of 1930, whose intellectual projects had matured during the previous decade, found themselves heroically legitimized by their opposition to Vichy and participation in the Resistance, and they stepped into a virtually uncontested void in full intellectual ferment. Tony Judt explains this complexity:

Superficially, Resistance-era intellectuals were divided in many ways. On the one hand there were the Catholics, themselves split along political lines and also by generation (the intellectual and cultural gulf separating Francois Mauriac from the Esprit circle, e.g., was quite unbridgeable); then there were the unattached intellectuals soon to be associated with Sartre and *Les temps modernes*. Beyond these there were the "politicals" - socialists, communists, and Gaullists, and beyond them an important if disparate group of intellectuals whose distinctive identity was formed in the Resistance itself, men like Claude Bourdet or Albert Camus.⁹⁹

This atmosphere is captured by a conversation between the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Suhard, and a young activist priest on the day after the liberation when the Cardinal himself, because of his Pétainist sympathies, was prevented from joining De Gaulle's *Te Deum* in Notre Dame Cathedral:

⁹⁸ Patrick Baert, 'The Sudden Rise of French Existentialism: A Case-Study in the Sociology of Intellectual Life', *Theory and Society* 40 (2011): 631.

⁹⁹ Judt, 'We have discovered', 163.

I would like you to explain to me what the Liberation means for the suburban working class. I entirely share their joy at the Germans leaving. But apart from that? Marshal Pétain is a prisoner. There is no longer any government in France. General de Gaulle arrives and forms a new government. *His government replaces the old one.*

—But Eminence, oh, no! It is not a change in government which has just happened: it is really something quite different! It is the Liberation of France, it is a revolution! It is not only the Germans who are going, it is those who desired their victory. And for the common people, it is hope which is arriving with General de Gaulle, hope for more justice and dignity. For France, it is a new beginning.

—Yes, it is different: I have failed to understand that. If this is a revolution, many things will change. But for us... should we not pursue the same tasks? One must preach the Gospel, even to a revolution.¹⁰⁰

The revolutionary *non-conformiste* 1930s rhetoric that articulated total social and political regeneration now became predominant. As Michael Kelly explains, the project of postwar reconstruction employed a highly coded language around words such as ‘revolution’, ‘crisis’, ‘rebirth’, ‘renewal’, and ‘restoration’.¹⁰¹ Mounier wrote at the end of 1944: ‘Whether it is called a revolution or a crisis of development, a vast and radical transformation is at work in the world. We announced it in France when no one believed it.’¹⁰² Judt explained that the term *revolution* was used in three distinct ways.¹⁰³ First, revolution was the ‘natural and necessary outcome...of the hopes and allegiances of the wartime years.’¹⁰⁴ Although Mounier had been calling for Revolution since the early 1930s, ‘the difference in 1945 was that the cumulative experience of the defeat, Vichy, the horrors of occupation and deportation, the sacrifices of the Resistance, and the revelation of France’s decline made it seem realistic to believe in a coming moment of catastrophic and total change, in a way that had not been the case before 1940.’¹⁰⁵ Secondly, revolution

¹⁰⁰ Jean Vinatier, *Le Cardinal Suhard* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1983), 204-205, quoted in Emmanuel Godin and Christopher Flood, ‘French Catholic Intellectuals and the Nation in Post-War France’, *South Central Review* 17, no. 4 (2000): 47.

¹⁰¹ Michael Kelly, *The Cultural and Intellectual Rebuilding of France after the Second World War: 1944-1947* (New York NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 33-58.

¹⁰² Kelly, *The Cultural and Intellectual Rebuilding of France*, 46.

¹⁰³ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 39.

¹⁰⁵ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 39.

meant the building of a new order and an end to the perceived disorder of the capitalistic bourgeois spirit that permeated the Third Republic. Finally, revolution was used in a Sartrean sense that saw it as a ‘moral imperative’ and an ‘a priori existential requirement’: ‘action (of a revolutionary nature) is what sustains the authenticity of the individual.’¹⁰⁶

The intellectual air in Paris was heady, and the generation of 1930 found a younger generation of enthusiastic followers. Simone de Beauvoir later wrote that to be ‘twenty or twenty-five in 1944 seemed a great stroke of luck: all roads opened up. Journalists, writers, budding film-makers discussed, planned, made decisions with passion, as if their future depended only on themselves... I was old. I was thirty-six.’¹⁰⁷ Anthony Beevor describes the ‘hunger for the new that permeated the atmosphere’:

the students seemed to live off nervous energy and ideas. The greatest hunger was for reading material, yet there was so little time and so much to read—Aragon, Camus, Sartre, and Beauvoir, as well as Apollinaire, Lautrémont, Gide... Everything formerly banned must be seen—whether the plays of Garcia Lorca or the films of Bunuel. Philosophy student or not, you needed to be able to discuss Hegel’s master-slave paradigm, the collected works of Karl Marx, and existentialism’s less than apostolic succession from Soren Kierkegaard and the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, via Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.¹⁰⁸

Amidst this call for radical change, Communists, Left Catholics, and existentialists all promoted a version of humanism which they claimed would be the groundwork of this new order, and humanism became something of an ‘umbrella term’ around which the left could fuse.¹⁰⁹ This struggle of competing humanisms that had originated during the 1930s now dominated French discourse to such an extent that one intellectual observed that nowadays, ‘everybody is a humanist... If Marxists can claim to be humanists, then followers of the various religions—Christians, Hindus, and many others—can also claim

¹⁰⁶ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Antony Beevor and Artemis Cooper, *Paris after the Liberation: 1944-1949* (London: Penguin, 1994), 170.

¹⁰⁸ Beevor, *Paris*, 170-172.

¹⁰⁹ Baert, ‘The Sudden Rise’, 634.

to be humanists, as do the existentialists in turn.’¹¹⁰ The celebrated author André Malraux addressed an influential international audience at a UNESCO sponsored forum, arguing from the podium of the main amphitheatre at the Sorbonne that the most profound casualty of the Second World War was the ‘concept of man itself’.¹¹¹ It was the task of the postwar era to offer an anthropological reconstruction.

A 1945 article in *Esprit* gives a sense of how dominant existentialism was in postwar France, claiming that everything ‘that matters today in the created order is inspired by a tragic humanism. Liberalism and Marxism have already been exceeded. A generation baptized in Kierkegaardian fonts, with Kafka for a godfather and Nietzsche for a grandfather, find themselves today facing *tâches positives*. We can speak reasonably enough of a political existentialism and maybe show that, from the *Mythe de Sisyphe* to those gathered around *Combat*, the link is neither paradoxical nor romantic.’¹¹² Iris Murdoch wrote that Sartre’s postwar ‘presence in the city was that of a pop star’, and the Left Bank existentialist coffee shops in Saint-Germain-des-Prés became the cultural centre of the West: ‘Saint-Germain-des-Prés was unlike anywhere else in the post-war Europe... In Paris, the Liberation had given the intelligentsia a powerful symbol of hope, even though the country was bankrupt. Rather as the Grandmaison doctrine in 1914 had represented the passionate belief that French *élan* would triumph over German artillery,’¹¹³ for intellectuals after the Liberation it was an article of faith that ideas would triumph over “filthy money.”’¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Pierre Neville, discussion in Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’Existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1946), 118-119; *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. C Macomber (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007), 62-63; quoted in Edward Baring, ‘Humanist Pretensions: Catholics, Communists, and Sartre’s Struggle for Existentialism in Postwar France’, *Modern Intellectual History* 7, no. 3 (2010): 581.

¹¹¹ Charles Blend, *André Malraux: Tragic Humanist* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 12.

¹¹² Roger Secrétain, ‘Echec de la résistance’, *Esprit* (June 1945), 13.

¹¹³ Not to be confused with the Jesuit de Grandmaison, Louis de Grandmaison articulated a military doctrine before the First World War that championed battlefield aggressiveness and all-out offensives as the key to victory.

¹¹⁴ Beevor, *Paris*, 185; Iris Murdoch is quoted in the preface to *Being and Nothingness*, by Jean Paul Sartre, trans. Hazel Barnes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), ix.

On 29 October, the existentialist movement is said to have become a sensation, as it was on that night Sartre gave his infamous lecture at the *Club Maintenant*, which was published as *Existentialisme est un humanisme?*¹¹⁵ Although Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* had been released two years earlier, it was just now gaining notoriety, his successful plays *Les mouches* and *Huis clos* were first performed respectively in 1943 and 1944, and the first volume of *Les Chemins de la liberté* was published in 1945. Moreover, de Beauvoir had begun to enjoy critical success with her novel *L'Invitée* (1943) and *Le Sang des autres* (1945), and Camus for his part had emerged as an influential writer with *L'Étranger* (1942) and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942). Only three weeks before the election, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Camus, and Aron had launched the journal *Les Temps modernes*, which would become the main voice of the existentialist movement and the most influential post-war journal, and Camus's Communist-friendly newspaper of the resistance, *Combat*, had a circulation of almost 200,000 per day.¹¹⁶

In many ways, existentialism was successful in the post-war years due to Sartre's timing, and Baert argues that its rise was in part because of the movement's ability to 'articulate and come to terms with' the trauma of the era.¹¹⁷ First, Sartre sought to explain the complexities that surrounded the period of occupation, claiming that the French were unified in their resistance, even if it was only mental at times. Secondly, he provided a vocabulary with which to deal with the trauma: existence, freedom, responsibility, and bad faith. Finally, Sartre's support of the *épuration*, that is, the trials and executions of those writers who collaborated with Vichy, indicated the high esteem which he held writers and the moral importance he attributed to them. Not only had collaborationist writers done great harm with their pens but resistance writers, and he controversially counted himself amongst this group, had heroically done good.

¹¹⁵ Baert, 'The Sudden Rise', 634.

¹¹⁶ Baert, 'The Sudden Rise', 633.

¹¹⁷ Baert, 'The Sudden Rise', 636.

In the first issue of *Les Temps modernes*, Merleau-Ponty contributed an article, ‘La Guerre a eu lieu’, which served as a ‘founding manifesto for the first generation of post-war intellectuals’ as it blamed the atrocities of the war, in effect, on the decadent rationalism of the older generation.¹¹⁸ He levelled a harsh critique at the pre-war intellectual milieu, where ‘generations of socialist professors’ ignored the fact of existence and the ‘elements of history’.¹¹⁹ These Cartesians lived in an abstract ‘world of thought’ where societal reality was decontextualized and obscured by cultural myths and a perceived ‘sum of consciousness’, which was unduly optimistic.¹²⁰ The anti-Semitism of the war had shown that historical myths only served to hide concrete reality, and an ‘anti-Semite could not stand to see Jews tortured if he really saw them, if he perceived that suffering and agony in a real life—but this is just the point: he does not see Jews suffering; he is blinded by the myth of *the* Jews. He tortures and murders the Jews through these concrete beings; he struggles with dream figures, and his blows strike living faces. Anti-Semitic passion is not triggered by, nor does it aim at, individuals.’¹²¹ Consciousnesses ‘have the strange power to alienate each other and to withdraw from themselves’ and ignore individuals.¹²² For Merleau-Ponty, the occupation dissuaded intellectuals from clinging to a ‘pure morality’ of universal prohibition or injunctions. Rather, they learned ‘a kind of vulgar immoralism, which is healthy.’¹²³ Everyone had been compromised and contextualized to one degree or another. In the midst of this, freedom must be sought through real contact with the world, and the Resistance offered a glimpse of this: a participation in historical action that remained personal and intimate. This turn towards

¹¹⁸ Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, 35.

¹¹⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ‘La guerre a eu lieu’, in *Sense et non-sens*, 169; ‘The War has Taken Place’, in *The Merleau Ponty Reader*, eds. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 41.

¹²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, ‘La guerre’, 169; ‘The War’, 41.

¹²¹ Merleau-Ponty, ‘La guerre’, 173-174; ‘The War’, 44-45.

¹²² Merleau-Ponty, ‘La guerre’, 175; ‘The War’, 46.

¹²³ Merleau-Ponty, ‘La guerre’, 178-179; ‘The War’, 48.

‘the real’ found value as ‘another way of designating human relationships’, and he argued that in ‘man’s co-existence with man, of which these years have made us aware, morals, doctrines, thoughts and customs, laws, works and words all express each other; everything signifies everything. And outside of this unique fulguration of existence there is nothing.’¹²⁴

Likewise, Left Catholicism emerged from the liberation victorious and had an influential place in the post-war milieu that sought to rebuild France. The sense that a break had occurred permeated even conservative clergy. On Easter 1947, Cardinal Suhard released a pastoral letter entitled *Essor ou déclin de l’Eglise?*, in which he proclaimed that the Church could neither cling to the past nor acquiesce to modernity.¹²⁵ Rather, ‘*tradition et progrès, transcendance et incarnation*’ had to be affirmed.¹²⁶ In 1945, the *Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français* (CCIF) was formed to help intellectuals organize and confront modernity, and the Abbé Berrar, who had taken part in its development, remarked: ‘We were aware of living in a heroic time, in the sense that Péguy understands it, a historic moment when time is more compact and dense, when the world takes a leap forward.’¹²⁷

The *Mouvement République Populaire* (MRP), the political party of Christian Democrats, agreed on the necessity of this break, and in the elections of 1945 and 1946, they split the vote with socialists and Communists. Their progressive ideology was present in their first manifesto which plainly stated: ‘we want a revolution... This revolution requires on a social level a collective and complete organization of the material

¹²⁴ Merleau-Ponty, ‘La guerre’, 184-185; ‘The War’, 53.

¹²⁵ Nettlebeck, ‘The Eldest Daughter and the Trente Glorieuses: Catholicism and National Identity in Postwar France’, *Modern and Contemporary France* 6, no. 4 (1998): 451; see also Adrien Dansette on this pastoral letter in *Destin du catholicisme français* (1926-1956) (Paris: Flammarion, 1957), 135.

¹²⁶ Nettlebeck, ‘The Eldest Daughter’, 451.

¹²⁷ Godin, ‘French Catholic Intellectuals’, 46.

security of each and every zone, a new reorganization of private property in order to avoid any further enslavement of human beings to capital.’¹²⁸

In addition to political clout, progressive Catholic intellectuals like Mounier and his journal *Esprit* placed the philosophy of personalism at the centre of intellectual life, and in 1944 Sartre exclaimed to the *non-conformiste* Denis de Rougemont that ‘you Personalists are the victors; in France now everyone is a Personalist.’¹²⁹ In Sartre’s famous lecture on existentialism and humanism, he sought to contextualize his own position by opposing it to certain Christian varieties of existentialism propounded by Marcel and Jaspers, and in April 1946, Mounier published an article in *Esprit* entitled ‘Existentialismes’, which sought to provide a global account—and history—of existentialism and its specifically Christian roots. An image of a tree illustrated this, beginning with Augustine and running through Pascal and Kierkegaard, and finally dividing into a number a separate limbs and branches.¹³⁰

The interest in Christian existentialism was in many ways the result of this break from the past we have been sketching. In the interwar years, thinkers had been more bound to Aquinas, forced to search for novelties in the tradition as a justification for their study. However, after the liberation, thinkers were able to move more freely out from the shadow of Scholasticism. Horn writes: ‘The theology of Christ-the-King and the mystical body of Christ were quickly superseded by new theologies that were no longer couched in the terminology of the past. The reorientation towards a radiant future rather than the glorious past opened up the critical faculties of Catholic scholars to present-day problems in a way that had been unthinkable prior to the Second World War... The theological terrain having been carefully prepared by a judicious return to the sources in the inter-war

¹²⁸ Horn, ‘Left Catholicism’, 19.

¹²⁹ Andrew Dudley and Steven Unger, *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 140.

¹³⁰ Emmanuel Mounier, ‘Introduction to existentialismes’, *Esprit* (April 1946).

years, the cataclysm of war, counter-revolution, resistance, and liberation opened up the floodgates of unencumbered new theological elaborations.¹³¹ Horn continues to explain this dynamic movement by quoting Roger Aubert: ‘a theology of the body, a theology of work, a theology of progress, a theology of politics, a theology of terrestrial realities, etc.; these themes and countless analogous topics were more and more readily tackled in a sometimes rather diffuse mixture of theology, philosophy, sociology, or literary studies, but sometimes also in thoughtful and solid pieces of work.’¹³²

Beyond intellectual labour, the apostolic work that would characterize aspects of the post-war milieu began during the occupation. In 1941, Cardinal Suhard established the *Mission de France* to train priests to re-evangelize the working class. Studying factory and agricultural work, the programme gave birth to the worker-priest movement where priests were sent into factories in areas where the practice of Catholicism had almost completely disappeared. Involving themselves in trade unions and issues involving workers’ rights, at its peak it had one hundred priests doing factory work. The movement had been given a great impetus by the 1943 book, *La France, pays de mission?*, where two priest chaplains of the JOC, Henri Godin and Yvan Daniel, provided statistical analysis of the rapid de-Christianization of the French working class.¹³³ They argued that direct evangelistic efforts were needed in industrial areas. The youth who had been engaged in *Action Catholique* during the 1930s were now well into adulthood and began to take a more active role in leadership. One example is the *Mouvement Populaire des Familles* (MPF), a left-leaning organization involved in numerous activities such as food distribution, job training, and advocacy for women and the homeless. Although they were the largest and most influential postwar organization of *Action Catholique*, with a

¹³¹ Horn, *Western European*, 81.

¹³² Horn, *Western European*, 81.

¹³³ Henri Godin and Daniel Yvan, *La France, pays de mission* (Paris: Union Générale, 1943).

membership of 100,000, they were radicalized and eventually fell out of favour with the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

This triumph of Left Catholicism might be illustrated by an examination of the *Semaines sociales* conference of 1947, which was held in Paris at the *Institute catholique*. *The Tablet*, which reported on the event, could not help but see that the choice of venue had ‘special significance’ since the topic of the conference was *Le Catholicisme sociale face aux grands courants contemporains*.¹³⁴ Beyond even its location in central Paris, the turnout indicated the prominence which Left Catholicism had gained in the post-war years: ‘Six thousand persons—among them prelates, cabinet ministers, politicians, university professors, priests, friars, nuns of diverse orders, youthful seminarists, lay men and women from all walks of life and from almost every nation filled the lecture halls and precincts.’¹³⁵ The list of speakers was comprised of the most prominent progressive Catholic thinkers in France. Besides Blondel and de Lubac, lectures were given by Chenu; philosopher Jean Lacroix, co-founder of *Esprit* and principal philosophical reviewer for *Le Monde*; Paul Archambault, President of the *Confederation Generale des Families*; Joseph Folliet, Professor of Sociology at Lyons University; Fr Bigo, S.J., of *Action Populaire*; Beuve-Mery, Editor of *Le Monde*; and Georges Hourdin, Director of *Vie Catholique Illustrie*.

For Blondel, whose paper was read by his son Charles on account of his poor health, this conference would have seemed like nothing short of the great triumph of social Catholicism for whose cause he had been struggling for decades. Only adding to this victory was the fact that his most prominent disciple, de Lubac, who was theologizing his work and attempting to root it in Catholic tradition, was also presenting at the conference. Thus, it would hardly seem coincidental that Blondel in fact began his paper by recalling

¹³⁴ Bernard Morgan, ‘The Semaine Sociale’, *The Tablet*, 16 August 1947, accessed 15 June 2014, <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/16th-august-1947/9/the-semaine-sociale>

¹³⁵ Morgan, ‘The Semaine Sociale’.

that decisive moment twenty-eight years earlier at the 1909 *Semaines sociales* in Bordeaux when the president Henri Lorin publicly called on him to offer a philosophical defence of social Catholicism. As we saw in Chapter Two, the result was the controversial *Testis* series.

The Tablet concluded its analysis by observing that there were differences in approach among the various speakers, but ‘all, however, agreed that the present hour was the moment for a grand Christian renaissance.’¹³⁶ It is here that we shall examine briefly de Lubac’s contribution to the conference, the paper given entitled, ‘The Search for a New Man.’¹³⁷ The title of his paper is again indicative of the strong emphasis the generation of 1930 had on a building a new humanism. De Lubac saw his time as a moment of ‘awakening and transformation’ rooted in the notion that ‘a kind of new man is being constituted, transforming at one stroke the idea that man has had more or less up to now of himself, of his history, of his destiny. In idea, therefore, as well as in fact, it is something like an extraordinary “shedding of skins.”’¹³⁸

This turn toward a new man, insisted de Lubac, must be attentive to the dual characteristics of ‘historicity and interiority’.¹³⁹ Thus he called for an ‘inner revolution’ on which any ‘outward revolution’ depended. It was an interior upheaval that first recognized ‘that the current ills of man cannot be reduced to some poor organization of the city.’ Quoting a fellow Jesuit of the same generation, he observed: ‘The ills of man are infinitely more profound, more mysterious, his situation infinitely more tragic.’¹⁴⁰ However, these temporal issues can be ‘resolved in light of our total destiny’, and Christianity, beyond individual dogma, ‘is lived only on condition of being, as they say

¹³⁶ Morgan, ‘The Semaine Sociale’.

¹³⁷ De Lubac, ‘La recherche d’un homme nouveaux’, in *HLOC*, 241-305; ‘The Search for a New Man’, in *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 399-468.

¹³⁸ De Lubac, ‘La recherche’, 246; ‘The Search’, 402.

¹³⁹ De Lubac, ‘La recherche’, 270; ‘The Search’, 429.

¹⁴⁰ De Lubac, ‘La recherche’, 291-292; ‘The Search’, 453.

today, fully incarnated.’¹⁴¹ This incarnation rests on the virtue of hope in temporal progress: ‘The authentic reign of the “supernatural” is never established on a depreciation of the “natural.” On the contrary, “the greater the capacity of the vase, the more it cries out for fullness.” It is the same for Humanity, taken as a whole, as for each individual. Let it develop thus indefinitely in its order, let it cross more and more elevated thresholds.’¹⁴² This transformation is not a question of ‘passing over into a new degree in the same order’, for

the *supernatural* is not a higher, more beautiful or more fruitful nature. It is not, as is sometimes said today through a poor neologism, an overnature. It is the irruption of a wholly different principle... A ‘new creation,’ the creation of a ‘new heart.’ Literally, ‘new birth’—whose first benefit for the Christian will be the revival of a new childhood. Nature evolves and advances all through time: through the supernatural, we pass endlessly from time to eternity. The first builds the earthly city: the second introduces us to the kingdom of God... The bonds are real and close between nature and the supernatural, since it is the first that weaves, so to speak, the body of the second. The Christian does not need to raise his gaze higher; it is not all in renouncing all better organization of temporal life that he can open himself to divine life.¹⁴³

This quote underscores once again how central the Blondelian notion of the desire for God was for de Lubac’s realisation of a new man. Moreover, we see the move to undo Neoscholastic abstraction that is central to the method of immanence: to grasp the supernatural, one need not ‘raise his gaze higher’.

In this postwar milieu saw the dramatic rise of Communism, existentialism, and Left Catholicism. The intellectuals of the generation of 1930 now had an uncontested platform from which they could dispense their programmes which had been formulated during the 1930s. The dramatic collapse of the Third Republic and discrediting of the Catholic right only validated their pessimistic diagnoses and dire predictions from the previous decade. In fact, the war had offered proof of the danger and decadence of abstract, individualistic rationalism. Moreover, Left Catholicism capitalized on its

¹⁴¹ De Lubac, ‘La recherche’, 300; ‘The Search’, 462-463.

¹⁴² De Lubac, ‘La recherche’, 302; ‘The Search’, 465.

¹⁴³ De Lubac, ‘La recherche’, 303-304; ‘The Search’, 466-467.

postwar prominence by aligning itself broadly with progressive issues so as to make contact with life.

A Generational Manifesto

Daniélou's oft-cited 1946 'manifesto', 'Les Orientations des présentes pensée religieuse', is frequently seen as the definitive programmatic statement of *nouvelle théologie* methodology.¹⁴⁴ Echoing the criticism of Left Catholics during the 1930s, Daniélou decried the 'rupture' between theology and life, a breach first felt by the generation of Modernists. Although their answers were problematic, they had asked the right questions and were responding to two deficiencies in Scholastic theology: 'on the one hand, the loss of the sense of transcendence by a rationalized theology that treated God as an object of the mind; on the other hand, the mummification of a thought that remained fixed in its scholastic forms [*formes scolaires*] and had lost contact with the movement of philosophy and science.'¹⁴⁵ Daniélou quoted de Montcheuil to articulate a key distinction between the Neoscholastics, for whom modern thought was a profound rebellion against truth, and Blondel and the Fourvière Jesuits, who were convinced that the aspirations of modern thought were in many ways noble but misguided searches for transcendence: 'Modernism will not be liquidated while we do not satisfy in the theological method the exigencies from which Modernism was born.'¹⁴⁶ However, Daniélou added that this rationalism divorced from action and contact with life had run its course, and the need for the *engagement* of which the Marxists and existentialists spoke was also felt keenly by Christians of the day. For Daniélou, modern souls demanded that theology be grounded in history, contemporary philosophy, and engagement, and these three categories structured the remainder of his essay.

¹⁴⁴ For example, see Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 1; Daley, 'The Nouvelle Théologie'.

¹⁴⁵ Daniélou, 'Les Orientations', 6.

¹⁴⁶ Daniélou, 'Les Orientations', 7.

Daniélou declared that the historical method, *ressourcement*, had found a central place in French intellectual life on account of the turn to Hegel and Marx and must be attentive to three aspects of theology: Scripture, Patristics, and the liturgy. The fruit of this historical approach, Daniélou claimed, are in works such as de Lubac's *Catholicisme* and those that draw on notions of the Mystical Body and corporate salvation, ideas which have both been beneficial for *Action catholique*. The embrace of modern philosophy, for Daniélou, included embracing insights of Marxism and existentialism. The Marxist use of the Hegelian dialectic 'represents an expansion of our vision of the external world', which corresponds to the 'discovery the immensities of space and time in which the destiny of the individual and that of the human species appear only as minimal episodes', and engender 'faith in a general sense of progress in which the grandeur of man is found in his capacity to submit himself, with disinterest for his proper destiny.'¹⁴⁷ Existentialism, on the other hand, opens up the abyss of the human person. Daniélou lists three of the figures that were central thinkers for the generation of 1930, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, followed by a who's who of contemporary existentialists, Marcel, Jaspers, Scheler, de Beauvoir, Camus, and Sartre. Finally, the third part of the article amounts to a full-fledged apology for *Action catholique*, and Daniélou began by quoting the early Marx in a passage often cited during the 1930s: 'philosophy has until now only interpreted the world, now it is about transforming it.'¹⁴⁸ Theology must 'give value to all human realities' and 'situate them in a total Christian vision.'¹⁴⁹

Written at the highpoint of Parisian existentialist euphoria, the article reflects the mood of the times. Daniélou, during his years at the Sorbonne in the 1920s had known most of the principal figures who would lead the existentialist movement. Furthermore, during the early 1940s, while he was writing his doctoral thesis on Gregory of Nyssa, he

¹⁴⁷ Daniélou, 'Les Orientations', 13.

¹⁴⁸ Daniélou, 'Les Orientations', 17.

¹⁴⁹ Daniélou, 'Les Orientations', 20.

lived at the Jesuit house in St. Germain-des-Prés, only three blocks from the existentialist coffee houses where Sartre, at the café Flore, was finishing *L'Être et le Néant* and Simone de Beauvoir was working on *Le Sang des autres*. Thus, I suggest that if we examine this article in conjunction with two others of the period, one also by Daniélou and another by Koyré, we can offer a fuller history of this piece, more deeply rooted in the cultural atmosphere of Left Bank Paris. Furthermore, I shall propose that a richer historical study of this article is in fact necessary, as the programme for which Daniélou advocates is itself predicated on his reading 'the signs of the times', as they were manifest in postwar Paris to his 'men of today'.¹⁵⁰

In 1946, the Hegelian philosopher Koyré observed that 'the familiar landscape [of French philosophy] has been completely upturned by the upsurge of existentialism and the revival of Catholic philosophy (Fessard, de Lubac, Blondel, Nedoncelle,¹⁵¹ G. Marcel). Under this double impact everything—even the "climate" of philosophy—has changed. Philosophy has become a socially mighty phenomenon.'¹⁵² Moreover, referring to the influence of existentialism within institutional Catholicism, Koyré remarked that the 'flood' or 'landslide' of existentialism had 'infiltrate[ed] into enemy camps', and instead of holding against the error of existentialism the truth of Thomism, [Catholics had] become themselves infected by the new way of thinking and either try to oppose to the atheist existentialism of Heidegger and Sartre, as Gabriel Marcel, a Christian existentialist—that of Pascal and St. Augustine—or even, as Prof. Gilson, in the latest edition of his well known book on St. Thomas, tries to explain to us that the *Doctor Angelicus* was already an existentialist in the best and truest sense of the word.'¹⁵³ Koyré

¹⁵⁰ For a similar postwar attempt to understand the existentialist phenomenon, see Jean Wahl, 'Existentialism: A Preface', *New Republic* (October 1946), 442-444.

¹⁵¹ Maurice Nedoncelle (1905-1976) was a member of the generation of 1930 and a French personalist.

¹⁵² Alexandre Koyré, 'Present Trends of French Philosophical Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59, no. 3 (1998): 532.

¹⁵³ Koyré, 'Present Trends', 533.

attempted to explain the reasons even why even non-philosophers were fascinated with existentialism: first, because of the younger generation's deep dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy and their preference for praxis over a theoretical approach; secondly, on account of the ability of the leading existentialists to distil their philosophical ideas into literary works; thirdly, because of the 'black pessimism', 'absurdity', and 'utterly disillusioned and uncompromising nihilism' that resonates with the mood of the times and offers a kind of '*auto-interpretation* of modern man'; and finally, as a result of existentialism's willingness to deal with the essential philosophical question: '*What is man?*'¹⁵⁴

Daniélou, in a less cerebral account of French postwar thought, offered an article written at the end of 1945, 'La Vie intellectuelle en France: Communisme, Existentialisme, Christianisme'.¹⁵⁵ He wrote that after four years of repression 'the vital forces of French thought have begun to take shape, and they are aware of the presumptuous enterprise but convinced also of its importance. Because we are now commencing with the dialogue that will echo through the decades [*remplir les décades*], and *Nouvelle France* depends on a loyal and fraternal exchange rather than a duel to the death.'¹⁵⁶ After giving an overview of all the tendencies within these three groups, Daniélou asked rhetorically if one should be optimistic about this intellectual milieu, responding in the affirmative: 'Surely the time has come to begin using the considerable scientific riches, the phenomenological descriptions, and the historical events that the last forty years has brought, which exists now only in fragments, to construct a new vision of the world, as did Proclus, Thomas Aquinas, or Hegel.'¹⁵⁷ For Daniélou, this vision of the world depended on 'a theology and an anthropology driven by Scripture and the Fathers of

¹⁵⁴ Koyré, 'Present Trends', 534-535.

¹⁵⁵ Jean Daniélou, 'La Vie intellectuelle en France: Communisme, Existentialisme, Christianisme', *Études* (September 1945): 241-254.

¹⁵⁶ Daniélou, 'La Vie intellectuelle', 241.

¹⁵⁷ Daniélou, 'La Vie intellectuelle', 253.

the Church and framed in the categories of the contemporary world: *historicité*, *subjectivité*, and *communauté*.¹⁵⁸ These three aspects are in fact the generational features that we explored in the previous chapter.

Thus we might consider ‘Les Orientations’ as an extension of this article, as it in fact elucidates how theology might better exploit these three categories around which the thinking of the generation of 1930 revolved. However, I suggest that for our purposes it does more than this and stands as a point of convergence for the lines I have been carrying forward in this thesis: generational identity, the harsh critique of the ‘old order’, a bold promise of total regeneration, the Modernist concerns to embrace history and religious experience, the currents of modern philosophy we explored in the last chapter, and finally, social engagement and the concerns of Left Catholics.

The revolutionary jargon of the 1930s permeated the article. Daniélou insisted that ‘men must be awakened’, men who have ‘an acute sense of the needs of their times’.¹⁵⁹ ‘The future is full of promise’, he declared, because a ‘great call of spirits and souls’ had arisen that demanded ‘a living Christian thought’.¹⁶⁰ This living Christian thought was one that left speculative thought behind and embraced existential reality. In keeping with the rhetoric of the post-war elites, Daniélou claimed that ‘the great lines of the task’ of renewing Christian thought had been drawn, ‘the time is decisive for the construction’: ‘previous generations have accumulated materials; now it is about building.’¹⁶¹

The Fourvière Jesuits frequently spoke about being attentive to ‘the needs of our times’, and clearly Daniélou intuited that importing the language and thought of Left Bank existentialists was one of those needs, indicating several years earlier in a letter to de Lubac that he was deeply immersed in phenomenology and existentialism, reading

¹⁵⁸ Daniélou, ‘La Vie intellectuelle’, 254.

¹⁵⁹ Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 21.

¹⁶⁰ Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 5.

¹⁶¹ Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 21.

Heidegger, Sartre, Camus and Bataille; in addition he was known to accompany from time to time the intellectual elites of Paris in their evening discussions.

Also, the language of the article is permeated throughout with the idea that reality had placed them at the juncture of great forces that required heroic action; they were the ‘men of today’.¹⁶² It referred with authoritative language to the ‘modern soul’ and the ‘demands of souls’ who must enter this ‘decisive time’ to begin as the ‘great lines of the task’ have been laid out.¹⁶³ This was all very typical language of the time for intellectuals, and much of the language used to describe the ‘needs of our time’ is particularly existentialist: theology must now respond to ‘experience’, consider new dimensions of ‘space and time’, have a ‘concrete attitude to face existence’, respond to these ‘aspirations’, and ‘engage the whole man’. Existentialism ‘opens up the abyss’, and is more sensitive to ‘the absurdity of the world’.¹⁶⁴ It embraces the ‘tragic sentiment of transcendence’, explores ‘history, subjectivity and coexistence’, affirms human ‘freedom’, and transforms the ‘conditions of life’.¹⁶⁵ ‘Subjects’ must take priority over ‘essences’, the ‘world of people, the *universels concrets* transcend all essences and are distinguished only by existence’, and theology must be open to the ‘absurdity of the world’, must have ‘irreducibility’ and be based on ‘descriptions’. It must have ‘contact with life’ and give value to ‘reality’.¹⁶⁶

Dialogue Théologique: The Toulouse Objection

When Daniélou’s manifesto was published during the postwar euphoria, Left Catholic influence was reaching its zenith in French religious and intellectual circles. However, the article triggered a fierce controversy as the Toulouse Dominicans, led by Michel

¹⁶² Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 8.

¹⁶³ Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 19, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 13-14.

¹⁶⁵ Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 14.

¹⁶⁶ Daniélou, ‘Orientations’, 14.

Labourdette, the editor of the *Revue thomiste*, Raymond Bruckberger, and M.-J. Nicolas began to question their approach. Labourdette responded quickly with an article in the *Revue thomiste* that expressed reservations that Daniélou was engaging in a cavalier and superficial encounter with Marxism and existentialism.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, he proposed that a ‘hidden agenda’ was behind the collections *Sources chrétiennes* and *Théologie*, and it seems that Labourdette suspected that Daniélou’s article was the interpretive key to the two projects, which sought to undermine Neoscholasticism.¹⁶⁸ Labourdette worried that the animating spirit behind the collections was a ‘pseudo-philosophy’ fated to end in relativism on account of its insistence that intellectual systems be judged not according to objective standards of truth but rather by the subjective intentions and experiences of their authors, who were conditioned by certain historical contexts.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, he criticised the intellectual tendency to view conceptual realities as symbolic of an interior life, which had been articulated four years earlier in Balthasar’s book on Gregory of Nyssa, in which he implored the theologian, who is ‘devoted to a study of the past’, to ‘rise up’ and discern the inner spirit of his or her own epoch.¹⁷⁰ Labourdette in fact quoted Balthasar:

The situation of the theologian in today’s world is strangely paradoxical. In terms of vocation he is devoted to a study of the past, where God has manifested himself. Even beyond this study of the past, though, he is a man devoted to the contemplation of the eternal. By the very fact of his existence, he is immersed in a world that is teetering on its foundations and seems ready to collapse...If he has taken any trouble to look around him and to rise high enough above the fray to seek to understand what is happening, he cannot but think that he belongs to an ‘epoch’...where the established order, to all outward appearances still solid, is in reality sapped from within. Undoubtedly there remains for him the contemplation of the ‘eternal verities’. He knows well enough that they, at least, do ‘resist’ the tumultuous storms of our times...[but] must be incarnated in temporal forms?¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Michel Labourdette, ‘La Théologie et ses sources’, *Revue thomiste* 46 (1946): 353-371.

¹⁶⁸ Nichols, ‘Nouvelle Théologie’, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Labourdette, *Dialogue théologique*, 38-43.

¹⁷⁰ Labourdette, *Dialogue théologique*, 55.

¹⁷¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1995), 9.

Balthasar elaborated on this return to the past: it was a retrieval oriented towards creative construction:

This [historical] return will be beneficial, but only on one condition: that [the theologian] understand well that history, far from dispensing us from creative effort, imposes it on us... A Greek temple, a Romanesque church, a Gothic cathedral all merit our admiration...but to reproduce them now in our present day would constitute an anachronism.¹⁷²

Bruckberger claimed that Balthasar was wrongly subjecting concepts to historical categories and analysis, and he pushed the argument from perceived, misapplied charges of anachronism back to the questions of '*valeur scientifique*' and supra-historical '*loi*' that remain at the heart of scholastic method:

We do not reconstruct cathedrals, and we do not despise them either. With St Thomas it is not only a style of theology that is a question, it is the scientific value of his work. There are Greek temples as well as Romanesque and Gothic churches. The Palace of Versailles and Baroque monuments are diverse expressions of identical and invariable laws that constitute the universal code of architecture; the elementary law of gravity and resistance a native applies instinctually by building his hut and Mansart observed in drawing the palace of the king. Without the application of these laws there would never be either a hut or a chateau. The same is true for St Thomas; his value is not in having constructed a magnificent theological edifice of admirable style that is now outdated, it is having gone further than any other in theological knowledge, in scientific systematization, to the point of having written the manual *par excellence* for the theologian. It will always be relevant for the pure and simple study of becoming an architect of theology.¹⁷³

Soon after the Jesuits responded to Labourdette in an anonymous article in *Recherches*.¹⁷⁴

Nichols, however, notes that their response constituted a rebuttal but not a refutation of the original charges of historical and theological relativism.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Nichols writes that the Jesuits 'ridiculed the Dominicans as intellectually second rate. Surely, wrote de Lubac, their time would be better spent in choir.'¹⁷⁶ In 1948, as the controversy grew, the

¹⁷² Balthasar, *Presence*, 10.

¹⁷³ Marie-Michel Labourdette, Marie-Joseph Nicholas, and Raymond-Léopold Bruckberger, *Dialogue théologique: Pièces du débat entre 'La Revue Thomiste' d'une part et les R.R. P.P. de Lubac, Daniélou, Bouillard, Fessard, von Balthasar, S.J., d'autre part* (Toulouse: Saint-Maxim: Revue Thomiste, 1947), 11.

¹⁷⁴ The Jesuits responded anonymously in 'La théologie et ses sources: Réponse', *Recherches de science religieuse* 33 (1946): 385-401.

¹⁷⁵ Nichols, 'Nouvelle Théologie', 15.

¹⁷⁶ Nichols, 'Nouvelle Théologie', 15.

Jesuit General forbade the Fourvière theologians from further exchanges, and in 1950, after the release of *Humani Generis*, de Lubac and Bouillard were transferred from Fourvière, had many of their works removed from Jesuit libraries, and were prohibited from publishing.¹⁷⁷

Thus, the dismissive tone of the Jesuit response and their refusal to discuss the charge of historical relativism any further left the matter essentially unsettled. We might suggest that this generational study offers certain insights into why this Jesuit cohort that championed engagement and dialogue was so reluctant and impatient with the Dominican concerns. As we saw as early as Chapter Three, even during their years of formation, the Fourvière Jesuits considered themselves serious intellectuals and, as is obvious from their correspondence, they had no regard for Neoscholasticism, which for them was intellectually bankrupt and destructive. The engagement they desired was with the thinkers of their generation who shared their same avant-garde concerns. The Toulouse Dominicans were in fact intellectual representatives of the decadent rationalism the Fourvière Jesuits despised, and therefore they merited little significant attention.

That these questions, which had been broached during the brief Toulouse-Fourvière exchange, would not be settled during that tumultuous period is intimated in an article written by Merleau-Ponty in the first issue of *Les Temps modernes*. Merleau-Ponty, himself an ex-Catholic who had been a devoté of Blondel, knew well these intra-Catholic debates, and in the article, titled the ‘The Battle over Existentialism’, he

¹⁷⁷ Throughout 1947 and 1948, Garrigou-Lagrange engaged in a fierce exchange with Bouillard and another Dominican, Bruno de Solages, over the nature of truth. Réginal Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘Vérité et immutabilité du dogme’, *Angelicum* 24 (1947): 124-139; Idem, ‘Les Notions consacré par les conciles’, *Angelicum* 25 (1948): 217-230; Idem, ‘Nécessité de revenir à la définition traditionnelle de la vérité’, *Angelicum* 25 (1948): 217-230; Bruno de Solages, ‘Pour l’honneur de la théologie: Les contre-sens du R.P. Garrigou-Lagrange’, *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 48 (1947): 64-84; Henri Bouillard, ‘Notions conciliaires et analogie de la vérité’, *Recherches de science de religieuse* 35 (1948): 251-271; for an over view of the debate on truth, see Agnès Desmazières, ‘La “nouvelle théologie”, premise d’une théologie herméneutique? La controverse sur l’analogie de la vérité (1946-1949)’, *Revue thomiste* 104 (2004): 241-272.

attempted to respond to Catholic and Marxist objections to existentialism, and he acknowledged the ongoing Catholic struggle:

Perhaps they are right in the end, when all is said and done. Perhaps the only way to sustain Christianity as theology is on the basis of Thomism, perhaps the Pascalian concept of being as a blind thing and of spirit as volubility leaves only room for mystical action with no dogmatic content and for a faith which, like Kierkegaard's, is not faith in any being. Perhaps in the end the religion of God-made-man arrives by an unavoidable dialectic at an anthropology and not a theology.¹⁷⁸

The closure that came to the debate in 1950 did nothing to settle the fundamental question Merleau-Ponty had recognized. Labourdette and the Toulouse Dominicans had hoped the Magisterium would not settle the issue for the reason that they knew it could only be definitively concluded after a robust intellectual exchange. During the sudden turn against Neoscholasticism in the years during and after Vatican II, de Lubac and the Fourvière Jesuits were thought to have been vindicated, and their work enjoyed almost universal acceptance. De Lubac himself stopped just short of announcing their final victory, writing blandly that the 'separated Neoscholastic theology' had 'finished its course'.¹⁷⁹ Walter Kasper celebrated the triumph more enthusiastically by claiming there

is no doubt that the outstanding event in the Catholic theology of our century is the surmounting of neo-scholasticism. Neo-scholasticism was the attempt to solve the modern crisis of theology by picking up the thread of the high scholastic tradition of medieval times. The aim was to provide a timeless unified theology that would provide a norm for the universal church...but in the long run a restoration of this kind was bound to fail.¹⁸⁰

However the renewal of interest in the debate between the *nouvelle théologie* and the Neoscholastics is a reminder that the most controversial Catholic theological debate of the twentieth century was in fact never settled. Twice the debate was artificially truncated, first officially by Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis*, which effectively silenced the

¹⁷⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Le querelle de l'existentialisme', in *Sens et non-sens*, 93-94; 'The Battle over Existentialism', in *Sense and Non-sense*, 76.

¹⁷⁹ De Lubac, *Le mystère*, 15; *Mystery of the Supernatural*, xxxv

¹⁸⁰ Walter Kasper, *Theology and the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 1.

nouveaux théologiens, and again a dozen years when Neoscholasticism was rejected during the 1960s.

Jean-Paul Sartre, writing just after the war, had a clear sense of just how difficult his period's history would be to write, claiming it would take a century to see the historical field clearly: 'In one hundred years we will determine the...currents of this *après-guerre*; in one hundred years we will be able to give an appropriate account.'¹⁸¹ With now almost seventy-five years standing between us and the birth of the *nouvelle théologie*, it seems that finally sufficient historical space is emerging to allow for the history to be written as Labourdette had hoped.

In summary, the fall of the Third Republic and the political and religious right left the postwar atmosphere in France charged with the intellectual energy of the generation of 1930, which found itself holding the reins of cultural, political, and philosophical discourse. Communists, existentialists, and Left Catholics all presented themselves as the only authentic humanism. At the highpoint of this phenomenon, Daniélou released a generational manifesto with coded revolutionary language which called for Catholic thought to embrace these currents and frame itself in the categories of history, concrete philosophy, and *engagement*. The Toulouse Dominicans challenged this approach, arguing instead for a return to speculative theology rooted in absolutes, but the Fourvière Jesuits did not engage significantly with their criticisms.

In this chapter we examined the work of the Jesuits within the context of the years during and after the Second World War. As with many of the intellectuals of the generation on 1930, they participated in the intellectual resistance, and their project came to be known as the *Résistance spirituelle*. The war only increased their sentiment that the old political and religious order had run its course and was in need of a rebirth, and their

¹⁸¹ Jean Paul Sartre, *Situations II: Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 40. Sartre refers here to the history of the novel, which he sees as bearing a central role in shaping culture and intellectual identity.

historical analyses of the crisis attested to this. The Fourvière Jesuits articulated an anthropology that claimed authentic humanistic aspirations could be fulfilled only when the human person was led to recognize his or her fundamental orientation towards the supernatural. Furthermore, as social bonds had to be developed that encouraged this realization, the Jesuits articulated an ecclesiology with temporal, pluralistic, and secular implications. Finally, Daniélou's manifesto insisted that Catholic theology abandon speculative thought and embrace modern categories of history, concrete philosophy, and *engagement*. Writing at the highpoint of the existentialist movement, he adamantly claimed that theology would only be relevant if it found its expression in the experiences of modernity. The Toulouse Dominicans objected vigorously to the Fourvière use of history, which they charged led to relativism.¹⁸² However, after a short exchange, the matter was closed essentially by papal decree.

¹⁸² Labourdette, *Dialogue théologique*, 47-54.

CONCLUSION

This thesis undertook a re-examination of the Fourvière Jesuits, who were influential members of the Catholic reform movement known as the *nouvelle théologie*, which flourished during the 1930s and 1940s until its suppression in 1950. After surveying the historical treatments of this influential theological project, I showed that there are no studies that root the movement firmly within the larger French political, intellectual, economic, and cultural interwar period. Drawing on the successful use of generational theory by French historians, which allowed for the development of richer historical narratives attentive to the cultural, political, and intellectual currents that shaped it, this approach allowed the movement to be tied more closely to the Modernist crisis as well as the complex interwar crisis during the 1930s.

Chapter One identified generational theory as suitable methodologies for this study, explored the development of generational consciousness, and identified certain influential modern French intellectual generations, suggesting a four-phase approach to the Fourvière Jesuits to be followed in the remaining four chapters. Chapter Two covered the period from 1890 to 1914, examining the sedimentation of four generational units who were influential on the Fourvière Jesuits through their approach to the political, intellectual, and religious divides in French society. Chapter Three examined the Fourvière Jesuits' experience during the war and their years of formation during the 1920s. Their exposure to the thought of Blondel and Rousselot was formative and provided them with a methodology and anthropology with which they could respond to the crises of their time. In Chapter Four, we explored the generation of 1930's emergence into mainstream intellectual life, their criticism of their predecessors, and their plan of

regeneration. They sought to develop a ‘new man’ and ‘new society’ on a foundation of history, concrete philosophy, and *engagement*. The Fourvière Jesuits were in fact a part of this generation. Chapter Five surveyed the work of the Fourvière Jesuits during the 1940s, their role in the resistance, and rise to prominence in the postwar era.

The use of generational theory and cultural history allowed for a range of historical investigations to be undertaken in this thesis. First, they allowed for genetic links, both personal and intellectual, to be established between the *nouvelle théologie* and the Modernist generation. We were able to identify the most important aspects of Blondelian thought and trace their influence through the generation of 1912 to the Fourvière Jesuits. Secondly, our discussion of the First World War provided important insights into the Jesuit desire to appropriate intellectual categories more acceptable to modernity and heal the divisions in French society. Thirdly, generational theory allowed us to analyse the Fourvière Jesuits in terms of their generational thinking, which was manifest in their harsh critique of their predecessors, the ambitious task they set for themselves, and the intellectual parameters that dictated their work. Finally, a generational approach allowed us to trace the anthropological and ecclesiological poles in Fourvière thought to the wider generation, which sought to provide a new humanistic construction, rooted in history, phenomenology, and engagement, of the relationship between the individual and society.

Moreover, we can now understand some of the central elements of the Fourvière programme in light of this generational study. Their construction of metanarratives designed to shift the blame for secularism away from modern thought and towards the Church and Neoscholastic theology mirrors the use of metanarratives by members of the wider generation, as does their attempt to recover a certain golden age. Also, their insistence that philosophical thought be essentially phenomenological and able to account for human experience and freedom were also concerns shared by many in their generation.

Moreover, they insisted that intellectual activity had to make contact with life and be engaged, and they echoed the criticism of the wider generation of 1930 that unengaged thought was merely decadent abstraction. Similarly, their anthropological attempt to construct a 'new man' was a fixation shared across their generation, which sought to develop a humanism along the lines of history, phenomenology, and engagement, and the Fourvière Jesuits employed Blondelian thought in an attempt to convince their generational confreres that the temporal aspirations with which they were concerned were in fact rooted in a fundamental human orientation towards the supernatural. Lastly, the Fourvière attempt to construct an ecclesiology attentive to historical development, religious experience, political and social unity, and temporal action can likewise be seen in generational terms, as other intellectuals attempted to develop political notions that would offer humanistic fulfilment.

This thesis is a first attempt to apply generational theory to the *nouveaux théologiens*, and it opens up various possibilities for future research. The project attempts to provide a kind of historiographical model that might be useful for future work on the *nouvelle théologie*. As this thesis only treats the Jesuits, there is work to be done examining the Le Saulchoir Dominicans in terms of the wider generation, and Chenu in particular was deeply involved in the larger social current of the interwar period. Moreover, Fessard, Daniélou, and Bouillard, each cultivated an extensive network of contacts with French intellectuals which can be explored. Finally, the Toulouse Dominicans were also a unit of the generation of 1930, yet they responded to the questions of their day in an entirely different manner, and we might wonder what cultural, intellectual, or institutional factors contributed to the development of their position.

While this thesis attempted a broader, more global study of the Fourvière Jesuits, it did not seek to answer the question of whether the movement's theology was successful as

theology or not. This presents a further avenue for theological research. Making a judgment about the success of this movement depends on the criteria that one uses, and these would vary from one theological perspective to another. For instance, while one theology might judge the *nouvelle théologie* positively because they were deeply engaged in their culture and open to dialogue with it, another, as we saw with the Toulouse Dominicans, might judge them more negatively because their embrace of the philosophies of their day was at the expense of speculative theology. Moreover, while some aspects of their thought are broadly appreciated, such as their ecclesiological orientation toward communion, others aspects of their work have begun to be debated again, such as the relationship between the natural and the supernatural, their conception of cultural engagement, the danger of historical relativism, and their use of certain metanarratives. Now that some of these issues are in play again, by using generational theory, we have sought a clearer understanding of the foundations of the *nouvelle théologie* and its complex legacy.

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