SOCIIOLOGY AND SACRITU: PAUL HANLY FURFEY, FRANZ MUELLER, AND
LUIGI STURZO ON “SUPERNATURAL SOCIOLOGY,” A TRANS-ATLANTIC
DEBATE, 1928-1946

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is thematically organized around the U.S. debate about “supernatural sociology” from 1940 through 1946. Formally, it examines how this debate engaged the emerging science of sociology in order to conceive anew the natural-supernatural distinction. And materially, it focuses on the contributions of the debate’s three leading lights. These figures included American priest-sociologist Paul Hanly Furfey (1896-1992), German social-scientist Franz Mueller (1900-1994), and Italian priest-social theorist Luigi Sturzo (1871-1959).

Of these three figures, this dissertation focuses especially on Luigi Sturzo and two key areas of his life and work. The first is centered on Sturzo’s evaluation of the trailblazing “philosophy of the supernatural” of French philosopher Maurice Blondel (1861-1949). And the second is centered on Sturzo’s adaptation of Blondel’s thought through his own trailblazing “sociology of the supernatural.”
Finally, this dissertation seeks to show how the U.S. debate about “supernatural sociology” paralleled the 1930s debate about “Christian philosophy” in France. Thus, it seeks to show how, just as the debate about “Christian philosophy” examined the opening of philosophy to the supernatural, so too did the debate about “supernatural sociology” examine the opening of sociology to the same.
Dedicated to Kathy Menno, One for the Other, Both for God

and to Kevin Hansen, Friend and Faithful Departed
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INTRODUCTION

SOCIOLOGY AND SANCTITY

No work in theology over the past thirty years has generated as much discussion across academic disciplines as John Milbank’s *Theology and Social Theory* (1990). And it is fair to say that no work in theology over this same time period has ignited as much controversy. For the most part, this controversy has swirled around the book’s central and sprawling thesis against the presumed self-sufficiency of “secular reason.” And sprawling it is. In *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank disputes some of the most notable figures in modern philosophy and sociology. And to boot, he disputes even more in modern and medieval theology. All are accused of cooperating in some way to either create or entrench the presumed self-sufficiency of “secular reason,” and all are found guilty to greater or lesser degrees.

The force and scope of Milbank’s central argument has no doubt afforded him broad attention. And it has likewise exposed him to pointed criticisms and complaints. Almost every area of *Theology and Social Theory* has been subject to fine-grained examination. And almost every claim within it has been subject to critical scrutiny.

Yet despite this vast body of criticism, one important subject in *Theology and Social Theory* has received little to no attention so far. Specifically, the subject of Milbank’s treatment of Luigi Sturzo (1871-1959) and his “sociology of the supernatural” has largely
gone unnoticed. Few reviews have remarked on this subject.¹ And no review has given it thematic attention.

In light of Milbank’s treatment of Sturzo, this neglect is surprising for at least two reasons. First, in *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank does not hide his debt to Sturzo’s work on sociology of the supernatural. Nor does he hide his admiration for it. In fact, he explicitly calls Sturzo’s work on this subject nothing less than “remarkable.”² Moreover, based on this judgment, Milbank even goes so far as to enlist Sturzo’s work in his own constructive project. Thus, he makes clear that he intends to take up and “resume Sturzo’s endeavor” in the final chapter of *Theology and Social Theory*, albeit under the “guise” of a “social theology.”³ Second, in light of various critical reviews of this final chapter, it is important to examine whether Milbank succeeded in his stated goal. That is, it is important to examine whether he successfully resumed “Sturzo’s endeavor.” But to date, no one has undertaken this task.

This apparent lack of attention is somewhat surprising, but not entirely so. To ask whether Milbank succeeded in resuming “Sturzo’s endeavor” presupposes some knowledge of Sturzo’s actual endeavor in the first place. But there are few scholars in the English-speaking world who are familiar with Sturzo’s work. And there are fewer still who are familiar with his work in sociology. Thus, in order to better evaluate Milbank’s resumption of Sturzo’s work, it is important to give closer attention to the original context of the latter.

But to see this task through, it is necessary to examine the connection between the work of Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) and that of Sturzo. Specifically, it is necessary to

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¹ Kieran Flanagan is one of the few who has given even passing attention to Milbank’s use of Sturzo’s work. See his article “Sublime Policing: Sociology and Milbank’s City of God,” *New Blackfriars*, vol. 73, no. 861 (June 1992): 340.
³ Ibid., 227.
examine the historical and substantive connections between Blondel’s philosophy of the supernatural and Sturzo’s sociology of the supernatural.\textsuperscript{4} The connections between the two are not lost on Milbank. And nor do they pass without mention in \textit{Theology and Social Theory}. In light of examining Sturzo’s attempt to unfold the necessary implication of the supernatural in every human act, Milbank is quick to commend the “Blondelian position” of Sturzo’s work.\textsuperscript{5} And he is even quicker to appropriate it for purposes of his larger project. But at no point does Milbank examine the finer details of Sturzo’s adaptation of Blondel’s work. Thus, he does not pause to consider whether his use of Sturzo’s sociology of the supernatural is adequate. That is, Milbank does not pause to consider whether his use is at all opposed to the historically-specific presuppositions of Sturzo’s work.

The evaluation of Milbank’s use helps to bring the two major focal points of this dissertation into view. The first is centered on Sturzo’s assessment and adaptation of Blondel’s work from 1928 to 1939. And the second is focused on the U.S. reception and modification of it in the debate about supernatural sociology from 1940 to 1946. In terms of the first context, it is important to note that Sturzo first elaborated his sociology of the supernatural in an attempt to help reconcile oppositions between Italian neo-scholasticism and Italian neo-idealism in the 1930s. And in terms of the second context, it is important to note that Sturzo put his work forward to help mediate disputes concerning the nature-supernatural distinction in the debate about “supernatural sociology.” In particular, he put his work forward to mediate between the more naturalist approach of Franz Mueller (1900-1994) and the more supernaturalist approach of Paul Hanly Furfey (1896-1992).

\textsuperscript{4} Jean-Dominique Durand has examined some of the general historical connections between Blondel’s work and Sturzo’s work in his article “Luigi Sturzo Interprète de Maurice Blondel,” in \textit{Blondel entre L’Action et la Trilogie} ed. Marc Leclerc (Bruxelles: Lessius, 2003): 381-391. But he has not examined the substantive connections between the respective work of each.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 226.
But before turning to these two contexts in detail, it is helpful to provide a brief overview of each. Thus, it is important to turn first to a brief biography of Sturzo’s life and work, and then to a brief synopsis of the U.S. debate about supernatural sociology.

**Brief Biography**

Luigi Sturzo was born on November 26, 1871 in Caltarigone, Sicily. Along with his twin sister Emanuela, he was the youngest of Felice and Caterina Sturzo’s seven children. At the time of his birth, only a year had passed since the capture of Rome and subsequent end of the Papal States. Like many other devout families in Italy, his parents protested this development through their resistance to State education and its compulsory secularism. Thus, Sturzo attended a series of seminaries across Sicily from 1883 until his ordination to the priesthood in 1894.

Soon after his ordination, Sturzo was sent to Gregorian University for graduate studies in theology. He was quite familiar with the poverty of mine workers and tenant farmers in Sicily. And he had even observed the Fasci Siciliani, the popular uprisings across Sicily from 1892 to 1893. But in 1895, during his Easter visits in a working class district of Rome, he witnessed poverty unlike any he had ever seen before. From that point on, he resolved to integrate his academic studies with social action. At Gregorian University, he combined theological and philosophical studies with extra courses in sociology. And in the parish of San Giorgio in Rome, he helped to establish the parish’s first labor committee in

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1895. Moreover, from 1895 to 1898, he worked to integrate academic pursuits and social action during his summer pastoral residence in Sicily. He taught courses in canon law and philosophy at Caltarigone’s Seminario Vescovile. And through his work on Caltarigone’s Catholic Diocesan Committee, he helped to create some of the first rural banks and cooperatives in Sicily.

In 1898, Sturzo returned to Sicily shortly after completing his graduate degree in philosophy. He joined the faculty at Caltarigone’s Seminario Vescovile and resumed teaching courses in canon law and philosophy. But in a notable twist, he became the first faculty member to deliver lectures in sociology. The introduction of these lectures was no doubt novel, but it was not an isolated development. In fact, Sturzo introduced them precisely in service to the Thomistic revival taking place in Sicily at the turn of the twentieth century.7

From 1898 to 1906 at Seminario Vescovile, Sturzo worked to promote the Thomistic revival’s twofold goal of social and intellectual renewal. And key to this work was his collaboration with fellow Sicilian priest and social reformer Ignazio Torregrossa (1864-1922).8 On the intellectual front, the two worked to diffuse Thomism more widely across Sicily through the journal La Favilla. And on the social front, the two worked to create labor associations for peasant farmers and mine workers. Moreover, each wrote for Il Sole, a weekly newspaper in Palermo dedicated to informing locals about current events in labor and labor policy. And Sturzo even launched his own weekly newspaper in Caltarigone, Il Croce di Costantino, in order to do the same.

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7 On this effort, see Rosalia Azzaro Pulvirenti, La rinascita del Tomismo in Sicilia nel secolo XIX (Città del Vaticano: Libreria editrice vaticana, 1986): 34-40.
But in 1902, the collaboration between the two started to weaken in the wake of allegations against Torregrossa for supporting a modern biblical theory endorsing the separation of divine and human elements in Scripture. Soon after, Torregrossa had to step down from his philosophy chair at San Mamiliano Seminary in Palermo. Two years later, he was formally vindicated of these allegations, but suspicions against him remained. In fact, over the next three years, they only intensified in light of his association with Romolo Murri (1870-1944). Finally, in 1907, as controversy around Murri reached a boiling point, Torregrossa ceased all political and social action. And shortly thereafter, he retired to the life of a simple parish priest.

Sturzo took a different path. After much discernment, he left teaching in 1906 and embraced his “political vocation.” Sturzo reached this decision not long after being elected deputy mayor of Caltarigone a year earlier. The political office was indeed important, but it was not his first. In 1899, Sturzo first entered politics through his election to Caltarigone’s municipal council. And in 1902, he followed this position up with an appointment to the National Association of Italian Municipalities. Like many other devout Catholics in Italy,

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9 In a review article in 1902, Torregrossa cited and apparently praised a scholarly hypothesis that treated the historical sections of the first six books in the Old Testament in Nestorian terms. In brief, this hypothesis proposed that the historical sections contained a divine element endowed with divine certainty and a human element devoid of such certainty. Though this hypothesis was not formally condemned, the Holy Office considered it “reckless and irreverent.” In light of hearing about Torregrossa’s review, Cardinal Mariano Rampolla (1843-1914), then Vatican Secretary of State, contacted the Archbishop of Palermo to urge Torregrossa to retract his comments on the hypothesis in question. Torregrossa obeyed and promptly issued a retraction. Pope Leo XIII appreciated Torregrossa’s gesture and told Rampolla to consider the matter closed. See Guirintano, 9-10.

10 Ordained a priest in 1893, Romolo Murri devoted much of his time and attention to the promotion of democracy in Italy at the turn of the century. In 1898, Murri founded the Lega Democratica Nazionale, a political association independent of the Catholic hierarchy. And in 1906, he started his own journal, Rivista di Cultura, to promote his vision for the modern renewal of Catholicism. His journal published the work of kindred spirits like Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) and George Tyrrell (1861-1909). Unlike Sturzo, Murri deliberately resisted the Non expedit’s prohibitions against federal campaigning in Italy. In April of 1907, he was formally suspended from priestly duties. And in 1909, after his election to the national Chamber of Deputies, he was excommunicated nominatim.

11 Ibid., 10-13, 31-32.

12 On Sturzo’s discernment and embrace of this “vocation,” see Sturzo, “My Political Vocation,” Commonweal (September 26, 1941): 537-539.
Sturzo had been inspired to pursue politics in the wake of the national government’s heavy-handed response to social unrest in 1898. In the midst of this unrest, the national government had violently put down protests and had formally suppressed opposition parties. Due to the binding force of Pope Pius IX’s Non expedit, Catholics were still required to abstain from national politics. But in a notable shift, they were now encouraged to become more and more involved in local and regional governments.

From 1905 to 1914, Sturzo served in a variety of political roles and offices. He was reelected to multiple terms as deputy mayor of Caltarigone. He was appointed to the provincial council of Catania in Sicily. And in 1908, he was installed as the political secretary of Sicily’s Electoral Union. But his most important political activity over this time was his role in rebuilding Christian Democracy in Italy from the ground up. In 1901, Sturzo witnessed the first launch of the Christian Democrat party. But seeking to work within the limits of the Non expedit, he maintained some distance from the party due to Murri’s national ambitions for it.

In a very short time, the Christian Democrat party grew considerably through an influx of members from the Catholic social action organization Opera dei Congressi. And in an even shorter time, it ended up collapsing precisely because of this influx. The intermingling of the Christian Democrat party’s political mission and the Opera dei Congressi’s non-political mission was bound to create to conflict, and it did. Within the span of less than two years, the non-political mission of the latter became less clear to some members and even undesirable to others. Soon enough, mission confusion led to internal strife. Due to this intensifying disarray, Pope Pius IX decided to disband the Opera dei Congressi in 1904. And later that same year, he publicly disavowed the Christian Democrat party for its growing
resistance to the *Non expedit*. The party imploded soon thereafter, and wound up folding before the end of 1904.

From the ashes of this implosion, Sturzo sought to reconstitute Christian Democracy in Italy under a new vision. On December 29, 1905, he presented this vision to members of Caltarigone’s study circle. In his speech entitled *I problemi della vita nazionale dei cattolici*, Sturzo proposed to re-charter Christian Democracy along non-confessional lines. Unlike Murri, he did not seek to ignore the *Non expedit*. But he did encourage the further relaxation of its prohibitions.\(^\text{13}\) Sturzo remained confident that the Church could foster the moral and spiritual dispositions necessary to revive Italy’s fledgling democracy. But he insisted that it could only do so if Church authorities saw democracy as more than just a political method to be tolerated.

In the wake of this speech, Sturzo soon became one of the leading exponents of Christian Democracy in Italy. And over the next eight years, he used Caltarigone as a proving-ground for his ideas. He pushed several institutional reforms to Caltarigone’s municipal government. But owing to the interference of local notables and even the mafia, they were largely blocked or ignored. In turn, Sturzo grew more and more frustrated with his stalled reforms and began to question whether they could be better realized elsewhere. After much discernment, he decided to press his reform efforts from the heart of the Church and Italian political life. In 1914, he moved to Rome.

Not long after his arrival, Sturzo entered the political scene in Rome. In 1915, he was elected vice-president of the National Association of Italian Municipalities. And later that same year, he was appointed to administer the Popular Union’s Catholic Action arm.

\(^{13}\) In 1905, Pope Pius X softened some of the *Non expedit’s* prohibitions in his encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito*. In particular, he permitted Catholics to lobby for particular pieces of national legislation in cases of “strict necessity.”
But these roles paled in comparison to his work in navigating Italy’s Christian Democracy movement through the challenges of the First World War. From the start, the question of Italy’s intervention had divided Catholics in general and proponents of Christian Democracy in particular. Sturzo knew that he risked alienating supporters of Christian Democracy through a public stance on the question, but he took one anyway. In contrast to the Vatican’s position of neutrality, Sturzo supported a qualified interventionist stance. And soon enough he parted ways with the Vatican on the issue of whether to resolve the Roman Question through the war. In contrast to the Vatican’s explicit refusal to negotiate a settlement, Sturzo basically endorsed the idea. When the war formally ended in November of 1918, Sturzo did not prevail in resolving the Roman Question in the near term. But he did prevail in sustaining the Christian Democracy movement.

Less than a week after the war’s formal conclusion, Sturzo met with several other prominent Italian Catholics to discuss the national strategy of Christian Democracy going forward. At this meeting, Sturzo proposed founding a national party based upon the principles of Christian Democracy. Cardinal Andrea Ferrari, who was in attendance, did not disagree with this proposal. But he did question whether the founding of such a party was permissible under the *Non expedit*. Sturzo requested clarification from Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the Vatican Secretary of State. In reply, Gasparri noted that, even though the *Non expedit* still prohibited participation in national politics, it did not bar the formation of a national party. And with this opening, Sturzo officially launched the *Partito Popolare Italiano* (*PPI*) on January 19, 1919.

The *PPI*’s charter membership included a diverse cross-section of Italian society, including industrialists and trade-unionists. And its charter platform included an even more diverse array of political goals, including statutory language on family rights and religious
freedom, social insurance, proportional representation, and the enfranchisement of women to name a few. But so long as the *Non expedit* remained in force, the *PPI* could not advance these goals. Sturzo knew that Pope Benedict XV was quietly supportive of the *PPI*, and so he lobbied him to remove the *Non expedit*. Pope Benedict XV did not immediately agree to do so, but he did eventually relent in a close call. With only five days to spare before the national elections, Pope Benedict XV lifted the *Non expedit*. Seizing the opportunity, Sturzo immediately rushed *PPI* candidates onto the ballot.

When Italians went to the polls on November 16, 1919, Sturzo did not think that *PPI* candidates stood much of a chance with so short a campaign season. But the election results far exceeded his expectations. The *PPI* won the second largest number of seats in the National Chamber, and the party soon went to work on translating its electoral victory into legislative successes. In service to this effort, Sturzo was appointed the party secretary of the *PPI*. In this role, he helped to set the party’s legislative agenda and hoped to see it pass through. But success proved to be elusive.

Almost immediately after the national elections, the *PPI* was beset by significant internal and external tensions. On the external side, the party lacked a coordinated response to the social turmoil of Italy’s “Red Two Years” from 1919 to 1921. And based on this lack, on the internal side, it underwent a growing rift between its conservative and *estremista* factions.¹⁴ Unable to address widespread rent protests, factory occupations, and peasant league revolts, the *PPI* soon suffered a loss of popular confidence. And other national

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¹⁴ The conservative faction was led by Fr. Agostino Gemelli, the founder of the Catholic University of Milan. And the *estremista* faction was led by Guido Miglioli. Unlike Gemelli, Miglioli was sympathetic to socialist methods of militant class struggle. In fact, he was so sympathetic to these methods that he proposed changing the party’s name to “The Party of the Christian Proletariat” at the *PPI*’s annual congress in 1920. In no time, his proposal stoked controversy and even raised grave concerns among Vatican officials, including Pope Benedict XV, about the future direction of the *PPI*. On this controversy, see John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the Pursuit of Peace* (New York: Continuum, 1999): 177-178.
parties, likewise in disarray, fared no better. In the midst of this breakdown of trust, Sturzo worried that the insurgent Fascist movement would exploit this situation. And it did.

In October of 1922, Fascist forces marched on Rome and seized political power. In the wake of this power grab, Sturzo advised *PPI* members against cooperation with Mussolini’s first cabinet. But few heeded his advice. He later reiterated this same advice in a speech at the party’s annual congress in April of 1923. But he was again ignored. Mussolini, however, took notice of Sturzo’s speech. And in attempt to undermine Sturzo’s authority, Mussolini ordered loyalists to ransack the *PPI*’s party office and to oust several of their representatives from parliament. Furthermore, in his attempt to root out political dissent and further isolate Sturzo, Mussolini threatened to attack churches in Rome if elections in July of 1923 did not go his way. Despite these threats, Sturzo kept up his resistance through attempts to stall electoral bills favoring the Fascist party. In response, Mussolini warned the Vatican that he would settle the Roman Question unilaterally. But he did promise to relent if the Vatican found a way to corral Sturzo. For the sake of the Church and civil peace, the Vatican prodded Sturzo to resign from his party secretary position. He obeyed and subsequently stepped down.

One month later though, Sturzo returned to the political arena in an effort to drive Mussolini from power. Under a cloud of suspicion for orchestrating the murder of a prominent member of parliament, Mussolini saw a swift collapse in political support. All opposition parties, including the *PPI*, withdrew from parliament in protest. Sensing Mussolini’s vulnerability, Sturzo called on *PPI*’s remaining members in parliament to return to parliament and press their protest through legislative and procedural means. But again, he was ignored. Popular outrage eventually subsided and, within less than four months, had lost much of its force. In light of this, Mussolini was emboldened to sideline Sturzo from
politics once and for all. He pressured the Vatican to either exile him or watch him suffer a worse fate. In no uncertain terms, the Vatican insisted that Sturzo relocate to London. Sturzo once again obeyed, and on October 25, 1923, he left Italy under the guise of a study leave.

Sturzo arrived in London with dreams dashed, few friends to call on, and next to no facility in English. Nonetheless, he made the best of his stay and soon went to work reconstructing his life and political efforts in exile. Sturzo continued to protest Mussolini’s rule from afar. And Mussolini, in turn, continued to try and isolate him further through various means. But despite these newest intimidation tactics, Sturzo persevered in his political opposition.

During his exile in London from 1923 to 1940, Sturzo worked primarily as a political commentator and organizer of Christian Democracy. He received some support through mass stipends. But, for the most part, he sustained his vocation through writing and speaking fees. In London, no person did more to help support this vocation than Barbara Barclay Carter (1900-1951). Carter, who was a Catholic convert of American birth, had studied philosophy and literature at the Sorbonne and was fluent in at least three languages. From 1926 onward, she helped to translate most of Sturzo’s scholarly writings and commentaries into English. And furthermore, from 1933 to 1940, she helped to house him in an apartment that she shared with her surrogate mother Cicely Mary Marshall (1872-1950). According to Marshall, the three soon became a “piccola famiglia.”

Aside from his political work in London, Sturzo returned to intellectual pursuits that he had long-deferred. In 1928, Sturzo re-engaged Maurice Blondel’s philosophical work. And over the next few years, he soon became one of Blondel’s more important interpreters.

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in Europe. But even more important was his adaptation of Blondel’s work in sociology. From 1934 to 1939, Sturzo formulated and then developed his original “integral sociology” in three successive books: *Essai de Sociologie* (1935), *L’Église et L’État* (1937), and *La vera vita: sociologia di soprannaturale* (1940*). He planned to continue to pursue this development even further from London, but his time there soon ran short.

In the midst of the German bombing campaign of London, Sturzo was forced to relocate to the U.S. in late September of 1940. For the first few months, Sturzo stayed in Brooklyn, New York. But Mussolini soon mounted another pressure campaign on the Vatican to keep Sturzo away from political centers. Using Sturzo’s health problems as a pretext, the Vatican then sent Sturzo to Jacksonville, Florida in December of 1940. Yet, despite the isolation of his “new exile,” he continued to comment on Italian politics and to organize support for Christian Democracy. And he likewise continued to develop his work on integral sociology. But unlike his previous development of this work, Sturzo tested it from within the context of the debate about supernatural sociology in the U.S. In light of his contributions to this debate, he achieved some notable recognition. And building on this recognition, he turned to further promote his work in a more organized manner. Thus, together with several friends and boosters, he created the Sturzo Foundation for Sociological Studies in March of 1944.

After the war formally concluded in May of 1945, Sturzo requested to return to Italy. But his request was denied due to concerns on the part of the Vatican and Alcide de Gasperi, the de facto head of the *Democrazia Cristiana* (*CD*) in Italy. For various reasons, each feared that Sturzo would unduly influence the approval of a national referendum on

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*Sturzo completed writing this book in 1940. But due to the upheaval of the war, he not able to get it published until 1943. And when it was, it was first published in English under the title *The True Life: Sociology of the Supernatural.*
whether to reinstate a monarchy or a republic. Once approved, Sturzo again requested to return. And once again, his request was denied. On June 2, 1946, the national referendum took place and those in favor of republican government emerged victorious. In the wake of this result, the Vatican and De Gasperi finally relented on Sturzo’s request. On August 27, 1946, Sturzo set sail from New York on a steam-ship bound for Italy.

When Sturzo arrived in Naples less than two weeks later, he brought his more than two-decade long exile to a close. But he was not able to enjoy his homecoming for long. Almost immediately, he rushed headlong into the work of Italy’s social and political reconstruction. He advised CD members and representatives. And in 1952, he was even appointed to the honorific position of Senator for life in the Italian Senate. But these were not happy roles. In the decade following his return, Sturzo spent a great deal of his time criticizing members of his own party. He exhorted them to remain true to the principles of Christian Democracy. But coming full circle to his time in the PPI, he was for the most part ignored. Sturzo returned every now and then to his work in sociology. He published Del metodo sociologico in 1950. And in Rome, he reorganized the Sturzo Institute for Sociological Studies as the Istituto Luigi Sturzo. But he struggled to find advocates for his work as debates like the one about supernatural sociology passed on.

Amidst the many disappointments and discouragements of his life in exile and in Italy, Sturzo remained a priest to the end. On June 23, 1959, he collapsed while celebrating mass. Many went to his bedside, including Pope John XXIII, who offered him a final blessing.\textsuperscript{17} Two weeks later, Sturzo died on August 8, 1959. He was given a State funeral and was then buried in the crypt of San Lorenzo al Verano.

\textsuperscript{17} On this bedside visit, see Luigi Giuliani, \textit{Don Luigi Sturzo: Tesimonianze sull'Uomo di Dio} (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo Edizioni, 2001): 69.
In 1962, his body was exhumed and returned to Caltarigone. Sturzo was then reinterred in the mausoleum of the church of the Most Holy Savior, the same church where he celebrated his first mass in 1894. Four decades later, the cause for his canonization was officially opened on May 3, 2002 at the Diocesan Tribunal of the Roman Vicariate.

The Debate about Supernatural Sociology

To understand the U.S. debate about supernatural sociology from 1939 to 1946, it is helpful to compare and contrast it with two other contemporaneous debates in Catholic intellectual life. The first debate in question is the French debate about Christian philosophy from 1931 to 1936. And the second is the U.S. debate about Catholic sociology from 1940 to 1962. Sturzo was familiar with both of these debates, and he even commented on each. But he did not directly participate in either.

Unlike the debate about Christian philosophy, the debate about supernatural sociology did not take place across multiple academic societies. And nor did it take place among various Catholic, Protestant, and secular interlocutors. Moreover, unlike the former debate, the latter did not contest its central theme in special journal issues devoted to the subject. And nor did it contest its central theme in special conferences and days of study. And finally, unlike the former debate, the latter did not inspire book-length treatments. The debate about supernatural sociology did address similar substantive questions about whether sciences other than theology are intrinsically open to the supernatural. But unlike the debate about Christian philosophy, it did so while dealing with the unresolved question of whether sociology was even a science in the first place.

In contrast, the debate about Catholic sociology shared quite a bit in common with the debate about supernatural sociology. Each addressed similar questions. And each featured some of the same participants. But important differences distinguished the two. Unlike the former, the debate about supernatural sociology did not focus primarily on questions about Catholic identity. Nor did it focus primarily on questions about professional status and distinction. The debate about supernatural sociology did address questions about the identity and mission of the American Catholic Sociological Society (ACSS). And it did address questions about this organization’s relationship to secular counterparts in the Academy. But unlike the former, it did not drive its reflection through these questions.

In distinction, the debate about supernatural sociology constituted itself materially through the respective contributions of three key figures. The first was American priest and sociologist Paul Hanly Furfey (1896-1992). The second was German refugee professor and social scientist Franz Mueller (1900-1994). And the third was Sturzo. But even more important, the debate constituted itself formally through the interweaving of four basic questions. The first concerned the delimitation of sociology’s formal object and scope. The second treated the justification of sociology as a science. The third addressed the relation of sociology to other sciences. And the fourth and final examined the implication of the supernatural in sociology.

Content and Plan of Dissertation

To better understand the development of Sturzo’s pioneering work in sociology, this dissertation focuses on a critical and creative two-decade stretch running from 1928 to 1946. In terms of Sturzo’s life, this period covers the greater part of his London exile, the whole of

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his American exile, and the early part of his return to Italy. More specifically, in terms of his Sturzo’s work, it traces his initial development of integral sociology in England and France, his subsequent refinement of it in the U.S., and his final summary of it in Italy. Over the time under consideration, the impacts of each world war certainly made a material difference to the development of Sturzo’s work. But it is important to note that the impacts of the Modernist controversy in Catholic intellectual life made an even more important formal difference.

For the most part, Sturzo has been treated as a peripheral figure in accounts of the Modernist controversy. But it is fair to say that there were few who confronted this controversy’s nexus of intellectual, political, and social concerns more directly and creatively than he did. Sturzo witnessed the perils of this controversy up close. He saw his friend Torregrossa forced to step aside from academic life due to his engagement of modern biblical theories. And he saw his fellow priest and political advocate Murri forced from active ministry due to his resistance of the Non expedit. Sturzo even saw his own political career almost cut short due his personal views on the Roman Question. And he later had this same career derailed as leverage to the settlement of the Roman Question. But no two responses to the Modernist controversy were as important to Sturzo as those of his brother Mario’s neo-synthetic theory of knowledge and Blondel’s philosophy of the supernatural.

20 In 1910, Sturzo got caught in the turmoil of the Modernist controversy after he told a journalist that he did not agree with the Vatican’s position that Rome should be returned to the Pope. After his comments were reported, the editors of the clerical journal L’Unità Cattolica pounced. Soon after, Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val (1865-1930), then the Vatican Secretary of State, contacted Sturzo’s bishop in Caltarignone to conduct an inquiry. And not long after that, Sturzo was summoned to a private audience with Pope Pius X. Fortunately, Pope Pius X, who was aware of Sturzo’s comments, had no serious issue with Sturzo. In recounting this meeting, Sturzo noted that Pope Pius X, after his initial welcome, tried to cut the tension by asking, in a joking aside, if anyone had “excommunicated” him “yet.” After Sturzo’s replied that no one had done so, Pope Pius X then assured him that he did not intend to do so either. But he did warn Sturzo to watch out for those who still remained suspicious of him. On this incident, see Sturzo, “The Roman Question before and after Fascism,” The Review of Politics, vol. 5, no. 4 (October 1943): 488-489.

21 In the 1920s, Mario Sturzo attempted to reconcile neo-scholasticism and neo-Idealism in Italy through an original theory of knowledge that he named neo-sintetismo. He articulated this theory in various articles. But he
And no two trials ensuing from this controversy were as decisive to the development of his work in sociology as those of these two.\(^{22}\)

In an attempt to demonstrate this last point, this dissertation advances three main arguments. First, based on Sturzo’s adaptation of the respective philosophical work of his brother Mario and Blondel, he helped to achieve what many had presumptively ruled out in sociology. That is, Sturzo helped to clarify sociology’s intrinsic relation to sciences like philosophy and theology. And even more significantly, he helped to show that sociology necessarily implied more than mere immanent terms. Second, as important as this achievement was in its own right, it is important to note that it was only made possible through Sturzo’s more fundamental achievement in parsing the nature-supernatural distinction. Based on Sturzo’s adaptation of Blondel’s integral philosophy of nature and the supernatural, he was the first to formulate an explicit “integral sociology” of nature and the supernatural. And third and finally, in bringing his integral sociology to bear on the debate about supernatural sociology, Sturzo was able to strengthen the debate’s consensus on the indispensability of the nature-supernatural distinction in conceiving sociology. But due to the debate’s internal lack of consensus on how to parse this distinction, Sturzo was unable to overcome the limits of his own integral formulation.

In order to support these three arguments, this dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter focuses on Sturzo’s initial attempt to bring Blondel’s philosophical work to bear on his brother Mario’s neo-synthetic theory of knowledge. Using

\(^{22}\) In March of 1931, the Congregation of the Holy Office formally admonished several propositions in Mario Sturzo’s work. He was instructed to issue a retraction, and he did. From that point onward, he dropped his public pursuit of philosophy and no longer published on the subject. On this incident and the ensuing fallout, see Gabriele De Rosa, “Introduzione” in *Luigi Sturzo- Mario Sturzo Carteggio*, vol. 1 (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1985): XVII-XVIII.
a content analysis, this chapter organizes the brothers’ shared examination of the problem of knowledge around their conflicted discussion of Blondel in correspondence with each other from 1928 to 1931. The second chapter details Sturzo’s appropriation of Blondel’s philosophy of the supernatural and his subsequent pioneering attempt to adapt it in sociology from 1931 to 1937. In analyzing this appropriation and adaptation, this chapter turns to Sturzo’s commentaries on Blondel’s work, his first major work on integral sociology, and his correspondence with Blondel.

The third chapter focuses on Sturzo’s crowning work in sociology and places it alongside two analogous efforts developed between 1935 and 1939. Using a comparative analysis, this chapter examines the convergences between Sturzo’s sociology of the supernatural, Furfey’s supernatural sociology, and Mueller’s theology of sociology. The fourth chapter then turns to the joining of these three accounts in first half of the debate about supernatural sociology from 1939 to early 1944. For the most part, this chapter concentrates on how each figure helped to set the terms of the debate through their respective articles and books on sociology. And finally, the fifth chapter summarizes the unraveling of this debate through the clash of the respective work of Furfey, Mueller, and Sturzo from early 1944 through 1946. In analyzing this work and their public and private correspondence with each other, this chapter clarifies the intellectual impasses and unresolved questions that eventually brought the debate to a halt.
CHAPTER I
WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY TO GOD

This first chapter plans to examine Luigi Sturzo’s gradual, but definite turn toward Maurice Blondel’s thought from late 1928 to 1931. And specifically, it plans to examine three intertwined factors that prompted this turn. These factors include 1) Luigi Sturzo’s assessment of Thomistic intellectualism and Continental intuitionism, especially in interwar France, 2) his evaluation of Blondel’s account of the will, and 3) his growing philosophical disagreements with his brother Mario.

In service to this examination, this chapter is divided into four parts. In the first part, this chapter plans to focus on the debate between Luigi and Mario about the nature of intuition and the problem of knowledge. In the second part, it intends to investigate the links between their overlapping debates about the will’s “tendency to the infinite” and Blondel’s account of “the willed will” and “the willing will.” Then in the third part, it seeks to show how subsequent disputes between Luigi and Mario culminated in their divergent evaluation of Blondel’s case for the supernatural. Finally, in the fourth part, it aims to chronicle the conclusion of their philosophical debates after Mario’s formal admonishment by Vatican authorities in 1931.

Part I: The Interwar Intellectual Context

Neo-Synthesism

Throughout the 1920s, Mario Sturzo had worked on developing a sui generis theory of knowledge. He called it neo-synthesism (neo-sintetismo). In the first half of the 1920s,
Mario had sketched the basic outlines of neo-synthesism. And in so doing, he had a simple aim: to harmonize neo-scholastic theories of knowledge and neo-idealist theories of knowledge. But the work to achieve this resolution was anything but simple. Barely a decade had passed since Pascendi had basically dismissed the possibility of reconciling “modern philosophy” with “scholastic philosophy.”

At the beginning of the 1920s though, intellectual shifts in Italy had occasioned a re-examination of this very possibility. Positivism was on the decline and neo-idealism was on the rise. For many in Italy schooled in neo-scholasticism, this shift was greeted as a welcome development. On the whole, neo-idealism was seen as a less problematic trajectory in modern philosophy. Consequently, over the first half of the 1920s, there was a sort of missionary burst of energy on the part of many in Italy like Mario to engage neo-idealism. Under this quietly permitted charter, they set out to establish points of convergence between neo-scholasticism and neo-idealism, especially in terms of the problem of knowledge.

Mario made his first major contribution to this effort in his book *Il Problema della conoscenza*, published in 1925. For the most part, this book surveyed modern and scholastic

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1 In particular, Mario tried to reconcile neo-scholasticism with the thought of his friend Benedetto Croce (1860-1952). For more on this friendship, see chapter one, “Mario Sturzo e la Revisione della Neoscolastica,” in Felice Battaglia’s *Croce e i fratelli Mario e Luigi Sturzo* (Ravenna: Longo editore, 1973). Croce interchangeably called his thought “absolute idealism” or “absolute historicism.” In his metaphysical account, Croce aimed to overcome the abstract idealism of transcendentalism and the occasionalist impressionism of positivism. He regarded each as less than real. In response, Croce proposed the “immamentism” of lived human experience as real, and real alone. He maintained that *philosophy is inseparable from history*, a claim that Luigi would later advance in his “integral sociology.” See *infra* Chapter II. Other important aspects of Croce’s work included the priority of beauty or aesthetics in the account of knowledge, and the derivative priority of intuition in accessing knowledge. For more on Croce’s thought, see M.E. Moss, *Benedetto Croce Reconsidered: Truth and Error in Theories of Art, Literature, and History* (London: University of New England Press, 1987).

2 The phrase “modern philosophy” appears at least five times in *Pascendi*, and in each instance, it is cast as a foil to the truth of “scholasticism” or “scholastic philosophy.”


debates about the problem of knowledge. But toward the end, Mario gestured toward a possible resolution of these debates. Three years later, after considerable public and private discussion of the problem of knowledge, he provided a fully developed theory of this resolution in *Il Neo-sintetismo*.

In many ways, this latter book marked the most ambitious attempt in interwar Italy to bridge the substantive differences between neo-scholasticism and neo-idealism.

In his development of neo-sythesism, Mario sought to resolve two key questions in the philosophy of knowledge. The first treated whether, and in what way, sense and intellect are joined in the act of knowing the concrete. And the second, presuming the real synthesis of sense and intellect in this act, asked whether the synthesis in question not only accesses, but represents extra-mental reality or not. Mario maintained that the central difficulties of medieval and modern philosophy turned on these two questions. Yet, he remained unconvinced by the two prevailing responses he found in neo-idealism and neo-scholasticism. Mario noted that neo-idealism emphasized the significance of concrete being through attention to the unitive and synthetic character of experience. And he similarly noted that neo-scholasticism stressed the significance of intelligible being through scrutiny of the analytic and abstractive character of the intellect. But he insisted that neither captured the proper interplay of intelligible being and concrete being in the act of knowledge.

In proposing neo-synthesis as a corrective, Mario advanced three important arguments. First, Mario argued against the neo-scholastic juxtaposition of sensation and intellection. Unlike neo-scholastics, Mario did not ground the act of knowing in terms of

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the operations of the intellect alone. Instead, he grounded it in terms of the synthetic unity of all operations of the human person. He emphasized that it is not the intellect that knows nor the sense that feels nor the will that wills. Rather, it is the human person who is the proper subject of all these operations. And inasmuch as there is a real synthetic unity of sensation and intellection in the act of knowing, Mario concluded that the bridge of the agent intellect could be cast aside.

Second, Mario challenged the neo-scholastic definition of truth as the adequation of the mind and the thing itself (adequatio rei et intellectus). In view of his priority of the subject rather than the intellect in the act of knowing, Mario indicated that a definition of truth that limited its apprehension to the intellect alone was insufficient. Thus, he posited that the apprehension of truth was more properly a matter of the subject entering through cognition into synthesis with the external object than it was of the adequation of the mind and the thing itself.

And third and finally, Mario pushed back against prioritizing the category of essence in the act of knowing. In contrast to neo-scholastics, Mario emphasized that category of relation. In fact, he argued that universals are principally derived, not from the element of essences, but from the element of relations. Mario maintained that the knower is not united to the object known by identity through possession of its form. Rather, he claimed that the knower is united to the object known by synthesis through the relation drawing the two together. And in support, he enlisted the authority of Aquinas, citing Aquinas’ distinction between the abstraction of common sensible matter and that of individual sensible matter.  

7 On this distinction, see ST I, q. 85, a. 1, ad. 2.
The enlistment of Aquinas was not merely strategic. In advancing neo-synthesisism, Mario presented his work as indeed continuous with Thomistic thought in the early twentieth century. And even more specifically, he presented it as continuous with the “school” of Thomistic thought, then predominant in Catholic intellectual life. But it is important to note that continuous did not mean identical.

Mario differed from the “school” of Thomistic thought in terms of attitude and content. Unlike most in this “school,” Mario sought to consider philosophical subjects in more open contact with modern philosophy. He believed that the desire to think “according to the school” had unduly narrowed the horizons of Catholic intellectual life. And in consequence, as Marco Aleo has noted, he believed that this desire had occasioned “a lack of effectiveness in confronting the needs, the errors, and the achievements of modern thought.” Thus, in an effort to better engage modern thought, Mario promoted neo-synthesisism as a “conserving renewal (rinnovare conservando)” of Thomistic thought.

In terms of content, Mario challenged various commentaries from this school. In fact, from 1927-1930, he challenged dozens of them in his self-published journal Rivista di Autoformazione. And in a not so subtle knock against members of this school, he proposed alternative interpretations “according to St. Thomas” himself. For the most part, he tackled subjects organized around the problem of knowledge. These included notional knowledge

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9 Ibid.
10 Mario Sturzo, “Il problema tomistico delle potenze dell’anima” Rivista di Autoformazione, fasc. 6 (November-December, 1928), quoted in Aleo, 46.
of the particular,\(^{11}\) logical abstraction,\(^{12}\) epistemological analyticism,\(^{13}\) epistemological exteriorism,\(^{14}\) and self-knowledge,\(^{15}\) to name a few.

Mario did not run into trouble by identifying deficiencies in commentaries on Aquinas. Members of the “school” often did so among themselves. But he did run into trouble eventually by suggesting deficiencies in the thought of Aquinas himself. Mario certainly saw his work as conserving and purifying.\(^{16}\) But his critics would think otherwise. In fact, they would see it as downright irresponsible and even reckless.

Since the release of *Aeterni Patris* in 1879, the Church had endorsed the “doctrine of St. Thomas” as a bulwark against modern errors. Thus, in the eyes of Mario’s critics, to challenge this doctrine was not just to weaken the Church’s defenses. It was to undercut nothing less than the Church’s very authority to teach and minister. And it was this last point that they would press against Mario in the months and years ahead.

In the meanwhile, certain unnamed “Thomists” started to test Mario as early as 1928. But at the time, they apparently did little to deter him from advancing neo-synthesism. Even so, Mario seemed to recognize that he could not support his theory of knowledge all on his own. Thus, in November of 1928, he tried to recruit Luigi in defense of his work.\(^{17}\)

From the start, Mario told Luigi that they would likely meet significant resistance in advancing this defense. And in a somewhat backhanded comment, he said that it would

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\(^{11}\) Mario Sturzo, “Della conoscenza intellettiva del particolare secondo S. Tomasso,” *Rivista di Autoformazione*, fasc. 5 (September-October 1929).

\(^{12}\) Mario Sturzo, “Dell’astrazione logica secondo S. Tomasso” *Rivista di Autoformazione*, fasc. 6 (November-December 1928).

\(^{13}\) Mario Sturzo, “L’analitismo gnoseologico di S. Tomasso” *Rivista di Autoformazione*, fasc. 5, (September-October 1930).


\(^{16}\) See Aleo, 47.

\(^{17}\) Mario to Luigi Sturzo, November 2, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 339-340.
likely come from the “safe philosophy (filosofía sicuro)” of Thomism.\textsuperscript{18} Mario warned that this school of thought “has a great camp,” and so was not to be taken lightly.\textsuperscript{19} Nonetheless, he believed that status quo in Catholic intellectual life was untenable. Thus, he argued that challenging Thomism on certain points was worth the risk.

Mario framed the advance of neo-synthesis as a much needed “renewal” of thought.\textsuperscript{20} And he encouraged Luigi to join in this task. Luigi knew more about neo-synthesisism than most. And he had “much knowledge” of Thomism.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, Mario asserted that Luigi could “make an invaluable contribution” to “the renewal” in question. In fact, he declared that, together they could achieve the enrichment of what he somewhat prematurely called “our philosophy.”\textsuperscript{22} At the very least, he figured tongue-in-cheek that it would strike “the nerves of our good Thomists, who think that God will rest—the Righteous would say—upon a cushion of syllogisms.”\textsuperscript{23} A good joke, no doubt. But unfortunately for him, Mario would not have the last laugh.

\textit{On Intuition}

In response to Mario, Luigi demurred on the question of joining “the renewal.” Instead, he returned to their disagreements on the problem of knowledge. In so doing, he addressed the subject of intuition once again. Luigi acknowledged upfront that he conceived intuition in a somewhat unique way.\textsuperscript{24} Unlike most traditional philosophers, he did not define intuition solely in terms of perception. And unlike some more avant-garde philosophers, he did not define it solely in terms of reasoning. In short, he maintained that

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] Ibid., 340.
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Ibid., 340.
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] Ibid., 340.
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Ibid., 340.
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] Ibid., 340.
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{24}] Luigi to Mario, November 8, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 343.
\end{itemize}
intuition was not reducible to perception or reasoning. But at the same time, he maintained that it was likewise not inseparable from either.

In this light, Luigi proposed that intuition has two elements. First, he asserted that there is an element that “remains such” independent of reasoning. And second, he said that there is another that “passes into reasoning without losing its nature.” To unpack the difference, Luigi commented on how knowledge is composed of two elements, one rational, the other non-rational. Then applying this point, he claimed that, in intuition, there is one element that is “transmuted into discursive and analytical knowledge,” and “another” that is not. And given this clarification, he indicated that traditional and avant-garde accounts of intuition each failed to consider intuition in toto. In light of this failure, Luigi stated that if Mario preferred “another word” for what he called intuition, he had no quibble. What mattered most to him was “the idea” underlying the word.

Mario thought that Luigi’s distinction of word and idea was beside the point. In fact, he asserted that, on the subject of intuition, it is “not a question of words” at all. “Knowledge,” Mario maintained, “is either perception or reasoning. Another does not supply it.” Now in saying this, he conceded that angels were a special case. Mario remarked that “if the soul were not conditioned by the body,” then “intuition, that is, the perception of spiritual things” could indeed be considered knowledge. But in the case of human beings, this was no more than an empty caveat. Mario likewise dismissed Luigi’s claim that an element of intuition passes into reasoning. At best, he thought that what Luigi

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21 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, November 15, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 347.
29 Ibid.
called intuition could be categorized as an “implicit or less determined or less reflected knowledge.” But he left no doubt whatsoever that intuition does not pass into reasoning. And thus, it does not supply knowledge as such.

In a follow-up letter, Mario traced Luigi’s account of intuition to an erroneous conflation. Specifically, he claimed that Luigi had blurred the distinction between “cognitive powers” and “intuitive powers.” Mario made clear that intuition “necessarily” involved “perceiving directly and immediately.” But he again insisted that it did not involve reasoning. In support, Mario invited Luigi to consider “the beautiful.” He asserted that the “intuitive powers (the senses) do not seize (non colgono) the beautiful.” And because these powers cannot seize it, they cannot, in turn, express it as an act of knowledge. Mario noted that subjects can indeed express the beautiful as “an act of admiration.” But he maintained that they cannot do so as an act of knowledge, inasmuch as it is reserved to cognitive powers alone.

In response, Luigi did not deny the role of cognitive powers in knowledge. But he did deny that he had somehow prescinded from these powers in his account of intuition. Furthermore, in a counter-jab at Mario, he asserted that he had not made them “an insurmountable barrier, like the old theories of the faculties.” That is, he did not rule out the possibility of intuition supplying knowledge. In the end, Luigi agreed with Mario “on the

30 Ibid., 348.
31 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, November 18, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 349.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 351-352.
expressive value of the intellect.”  

But he did not agree that intellectual expressions pertained to cognitive powers alone.

*The Mystical Context*

Luigi was not unique in suggesting that non-cognitive expressions like intuition could supply a way of knowing. In fact, throughout interwar Europe, various thinkers promoted the very same idea.  

On one hand, this promotion was a reaction against the apparent narrowing of reason in modern philosophy. That is, it was a reaction against the reduction of reason to calculative and instrumental terms. And on the other, it was a turn toward the supra-rational in literature and thought. For Luigi, nowhere was this turn more evident than in the “mystical movement” now afoot.

In late November of 1928, Luigi called attention to this very “movement” in conversation with Mario.  

In this letter, he did not try to further justify his account of intuition. But in different tack, he did try to better situate it. Thus, he invited Mario to “give due importance to the intuitionist and mystical movement” now underway, especially in France.  

He mentioned that it had been “developing large-scale for quite some time.” And he further noted that it had been “responding more to the modern sense (*sentire*).” And to be

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35 Ibid., 352.
36 On this development, see Gabriele De Rosa’s comments in *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 11-12, footnote 1. De Rosa drew attention to the respective work of Georg Simmel, Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, and Henri Bergson. He noted that Simmel parsed intuition in terms of “philosophy of life,” Dilthey, in terms of “intuitionism of the Interests (*Erlebnise*) of German historicism,” Husserl and Scheler, in terms of “eidetic intuition,” and Bergson, in terms of the “intuition of the end of temporal duration.”
37 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, November 23, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 351.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
clear, he explained that this “sense” was none other than the “worthless rationalism or intellectualism of the idealists.”

Despite his enthusiasm, Luigi made clear that the “mystical movement” should not be embraced uncritically. Thus, he advised Mario to engage it “not by accepting all of its conclusions, but by assigning it the place it deserves.” As a good entry point into the mystical movement, Luigi then suggested the literary work and criticism of Henri Brémond (1865-1933). He especially recommended Bremond’s “interesting books” La poésie pure and Prière et Poésie. And he further recommended “the discussion” following them. In so doing, Luigi thought that Mario could at the very least better understand the insurgent “reaction against the cold discursive and classical poetry of France.”

In a subsequent letter, Luigi attempted to clarify the link between the reappraisal of intuition and the recovery of the mystical. Luigi argued that this link was a more or less common attempt to consider alternative paths to knowledge. In this effort, the “mystical movement” tried, for the most part, to reconcile intuitionist accounts of knowledge with discursive accounts of knowledge. But in light of this effort, Luigi noted that at least two main objections had arisen. On one hand, there were those like Mario who denied that intuition could be considered a distinct form of knowledge. And on the other, there were those like Brémond who exaggerated the role of intuition in supplying knowledge. Yet, despite their differences, each presumed to separate intuition and reasoning in the account of

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Bremond, La poésie pure avec un débat sur la poésie par Robert de Souza (Paris: Grasset, 1926).
43 Bremond, Prière et Poésie (Paris: Grasset, 1925).
44 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, November 23, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 352.
knowing. Luigi not only argued against this presumption. He claimed that it was necessary to unite intuition and reasoning in the account of knowing.

In opposition to the more intellectualist position, Luigi took aim at Mario. He argued that Mario had conceived intuition in overly-occasionalist terms. In particular, he claimed that, in the case of the beautiful, whatever “synthesis” intuition supplied could not be reduced to a “spontaneous and admirative moment.” And nor could it be reduced to the “mood (stato d’animo) in the subject” conditioning this moment. And nor even could it be reduced to the correlative “object capable of sustaining this mood (stato d’animo).” Luigi acknowledged that the subject and object of such admirative moments were each important. And he likewise acknowledged that the conditions of such moments were similarly important. But he asserted that most important was “relationship that forms between object and subject in such conditions.” And to be clear, this is what he called “intuition.”

Nonetheless, Luigi qualified that the relationship between subject and object in admirative moments was not like “other cognitive relationships.” Thus, it remained “non-resolvable in other types of knowledge.” Luigi did not specify what these “other types” were. But he did claim that, “to varying degrees” in these “other types,” the relationship in question “participates in the senses and affectivity and intelligence.” Needless to say, this puzzling claim needed to be unpacked. But without further comment, Luigi then turned his sights on Brémond.

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46 Ibid., 356.
47 Ibid., 357.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
Unlike Mario who denied that intuition participated in discursive knowledge, Luigi claimed that Brémond committed the opposite error. That is, Brémond maintained “discursive knowledge does not participate in intuition.”52 By itself, this holding was problematic. But in combination with Brémond’s claim that intuition “responds to our inmost nature,”53 it was downright troubling. If Brémond was right, it seemed to follow that reasoning could not be considered the defining feature of human being.

In response, Luigi was quick to note that this conclusion followed only insofar as Brémond’s major thesis was granted. That is, it only followed insofar as “the mystical” is indeed not just a formal element, but the most formal element of human being.54 Luigi admitted that what Brémond meant by “the mystical” was not entirely clear. He noted that, at the very least, Brémond seemed to use the term in a “broad rather than specific sense.” Yet despite this broadness, he indicated that Brémond’s conception of the mystical “as a mysterious contact between us and nature, us and our state, and us and God” seemed to be clear enough.55

This is not to say that Luigi agreed with this conception. In fact, he did not. Nonetheless, he maintained that Brémond’s conception of the mystical helped to illuminate knowledge from the side of the receiver. Then in a significant application, he advanced a sui generis claim about the role of the mystical in knowledge. Specifically, Luigi posited that the mystical “supplies elements of interpretation in our knowledge that pure rationalism cannot give.”56 In other words, rationalism, with its emphasis on “analysis of factors, disintegration,

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52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
and decomposition” could not adequately provide knowledge alone.\textsuperscript{57} Fortunately though, it seemed that “intuitive knowledge” could step into the breach with its emphasis on “synthesis, integration, and compenetration.”\textsuperscript{58} Or so Luigi seemed to suggest.

In response, Mario was beside himself with puzzlement.\textsuperscript{59} In terms of intellectual terrain, he no longer had any idea of where to place Luigi. But at least he had some idea where \textit{not} to place him. And he issued his indictment in no uncertain terms. “You are no longer for Thomism or even for my synthetism,” Mario declared to Luigi. What Luigi was for, Mario could not say with certainty. Instead, he surmised that Luigi seemed to be “in a state of very unspecific eclecticism.”\textsuperscript{60}

In a measured reply, Luigi didn’t deny his brother’s charge outright.\textsuperscript{61} He said that he was “unsure” if he was “going through a period of eclecticism.” But neither did he confirm it. Luigi did, however, defend his current reappraisal of the problem of knowledge. He explained to Mario that he was “trying to penetrate some elements of synthetic knowledge and put them in relationship with neo-synthetism.” Some of these elements included “intuition” and “the non-rational in knowledge.” And in a new development, he added “natural mysticism” to this list.\textsuperscript{62}

Luigi then attributed his approach, in part, to his exile context in London. He told Mario that he had scrutinized “intuition” and “the non-rational” at some length precisely because “these elements are found developed in English and French culture today.”\textsuperscript{63} Thus,
in defending his attention to them, he sought to give Mario “a meaning” and himself “an explanation.” In this light, Luigi pushed back against Mario’s recent criticism of his approach to knowledge. He claimed that, far from abandoning neo-syntesism, he was in fact trying to put Mario’s work into closer contact with English and French culture. He even suggested certain affinities between Mario’s work and this culture, asserting that “neo-synthesism much lends itself to it.”

But even granting points of contact, Luigi did not pretend as if no frictions existed. He confessed that he had “the impression” that Mario refused in principle to consider “elements” like intuition in the account of knowledge. And even if Mario did not, he indicated that Mario would only do so in terms “cognitive formulas of relations.” That is, Mario would only do so by stripping these elements of non-cognitive content. If this was the case, Luigi asserted that nothing would distinguish them in the act of knowing. Thus, Mario would be right to treat them as no more than “insignificant expressions.” But believing that Mario started from faulty premises, Luigi did not think that Mario was right to “deny all intuitionism.” And he would press this point in the months ahead.

The Philosophical Context of Interwar France

In further defense of his treatment of intuition, Luigi situated his work in a much larger struggle in interwar France. Specifically, he framed this struggle in terms of two opposing intellectual currents. On one side was “intuitionism” and “voluntarism.” And, on the other, was “intellectualism” and “neo-scholasticism.” Needless to say, the tensions

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 On this explicit identification, see Luigi to Mario Sturzo, March 20, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 31.
68 On this explicit identification, see Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 1, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 46-47.
between these two were pronounced. Luigi agreed that intellectualist currents, in virtue of their emphasis on analysis, tended to conceive philosophy as the breakdown of reality into component parts. In so doing, he stated that proponents of this approach basically assumed the role of an “anatomist.” Thus, they tended to treat reality like a “lifeless body.” At the very least then, Luigi indicated that they depreciated the dynamism and drama of being. And at worst, they cut themselves off from the vital relations of human life.

In light of these inadequacies, Luigi viewed the counter-currents of intuitionism and voluntarism more sympathetically. He was especially impressed by their influence in French culture outside of academia. He told Mario that few currents had ever achieved this reach in France. And neo-scholasticism was no exception. Luigi bemoaned the fact that neo-scholasticism has “no field of influence, save that of Catholic theology.” Yet despite this lack of influence, he did not think that neo-scholasticism simply needed to downplay its intellectualist emphases. Instead, he suggested that it needed to assimilate the insights of other theories of knowledge.

Luigi posited that neo-synthesis could play a key role in this effort. In fact, he ambitiously claimed that neo-synthesis could be “the decisive step of neo-scholasticism toward extra-philosophical activity.” And he further claimed that it could stimulate “the recovery of influence in thought and culture.” But in order to make strides toward this end, Luigi said that Mario had to take up at least three tasks. First, Mario had to reconsider intuitionist currents. Second, he had to reassess the definition of intuition in terms of

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69 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, February 6, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 17.
70 Ibid.
71 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, January 19, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 12.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
“simple sensitive perception” alone. And third, he had to rethink the reduction of “all
cognitive values to reasoning.” Luigi asserted that, if this happened, Mario could then
examine the possibility of a “direct cognitive element” internal to intuition. The formula
forward seemed simple enough. But whether it was convincing was another matter.

**Part II: The Promise and Limits of Blondel**

In the meantime, Luigi commended Maurice Blondel’s work to Mario as a decisive
step forward in philosophy. Luigi was no stranger to Blondel’s work. In fact, he had first
encountered Blondel’s work three decades earlier in 1895. Fr. Ignazio Torregrossa (1864-
1922), his friend and fellow labor priest in Sicily, had introduced him to it. Torregrossa had
a long-running interest in modern philosophy, so his familiarity with someone like Blondel
did not strike Luigi as unusual at the time. However, what did strike Luigi as unusual was
Torregrossa’s palpable admiration for Blondel. In fact, Luigi described it as nothing less
than a “volcanic enthusiasm.” And he suggested that it even approached something like an
evangelical fervor. Luigi reported that Torregrossa passed along his personal copy of the
first edition of Blondel’s pioneering work *L’Action* to him. And he further noted
Torregrossa insisted that he take and read it.

And this is apparently just what Luigi did. Upon reading *L’Action* for the first time,
Luigi later confessed that he found Blondel’s thought intriguing. The book not only

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74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 On this first encounter, see Luigi Sturzo to Maurice Blondel, March 24, 1934, Archivio Luigi Sturzo (ALS),
folder 414.
77 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 5, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 38.
78 See Claudia Giurintano, *Ignazio Torregrossa: carità cristiana e giustizia sociale* (Torino: Società editrice
79 Luigi Sturzo to Maurice Blondel, March 24, 1934, Archivio Luigi Sturzo (ALS), folder 414.
80 Ibid.
81 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 5, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 38.
captured his attention, but made a strong impression on his own thought for quite some time afterward. Yet, even in light of the book’s strong initial impact, Luigi noted that he was not entirely persuaded by the specifics of Blondel’s claims. In particular, he recounted that, in the wake of reading *L’Action*, Blondel’s thought “crept” into his own as an “orientation” but not as a “thesis.”

What this “thesis” was or what it entailed, he did not say. But he did confess to having doubts about it from the start.

Nonetheless, despite these doubts, Luigi continued to engage Blondel’s work. Over the next few years, he further examined Blondel’s work. But he apparently did so in a rather limited and derivative manner. Soon enough, passing contact with Blondel’s work gave way to a near complete halt. By 1901, Luigi’s doubts about Blondel’s “thesis” had apparently reached a tipping point. Unable to overcome them, he opted to bring his examination of Blondel’s work to a close. No specific reasons were given for this sudden stop. But he did offer a somewhat oblique response. In his later recounting, Luigi chalked up his first period of contact with Blondel’s work to nothing more than a youthful excitement. And like most youthful excitementes, Luigi indicated that this one soon waned. Thus, not long after the turn of the century, he reported that he dropped his engagement with “Blondelism” and laid it aside indefinitely.

Nonetheless, after a more than two-decade interlude, Luigi eventually returned to Blondel’s work. In July of 1928, Luigi wrote to Mario to tell him about two recent

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84 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 5, 1929, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 38.

85 Ibid.

86 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, July 10, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 272.
commentaries on Blondel’s work on integral realism and the destiny of thought. He noted that each appealed to Blondel’s thought in order to critique “voluntarism.” He encouraged Mario to read each if he got the chance. And Mario apparently took his advice. About one month later, Mario wrote back to Luigi to report that he had just “read Archambault on Blondel.” He said that Archambault’s book had provided him with “copious material to study.” But he made clear that he was no fan of Blondel’s thought.

Mario took issue with “two problems” in Blondel’s work, and he argued that “the whole philosophy of Blondel” appeared “to center around” them. The first problem concerned “the problem of extra-subjective knowledge as extra-subjective.” And the second concerned “the problem of the transcendent.” Mario did not say how these two problems were related in Blondel’s thought. And nor did he discuss the details of Blondel’s philosophical method for resolving the two. Rather, he simply stated that these two problems could not be resolved in the way that Blondel had proposed. And even more specifically, he claimed that the two problems in question could not be resolved so long as Blondel disallowed what he called the “original unity of sensation and intellection.” Then in

87 See Ibid. The two commentaries that Luigi mentioned were Paul Archambault’s Vers un realisme intégral, L’oeuvre philosophique de Maurice Blondel (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1928), and Frederic Lefèvre’s L’itinéraire philosophique de Maurice Blondel (Paris: Spes, 1928).
88 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid. What this “original unity” entailed or how Blondel problematically conceived it, Mario did not specify. Nonetheless, Mario’s critical comments offered above indicate that he was treating one of the more contested areas of Blondel’s work: that of the relation of notional knowledge to real knowledge. Blondel had long argued that modern philosophy, and even modern appropriations of medieval philosophy in neo-scholasticism, had presumed a divorce between the act of knowing and the subjectivity of the knower. This presumed opposition had not only led to a one-sided stress on notional knowledge, but even more importantly, had worked to diminish real knowledge. In short, Blondel maintained that most modern accounts of knowledge were insufficiently realist. In particular, he thought that these accounts basically reduced all knowledge to representive knowledge—knowledge achieved in and through the organization of our perceptive and discursive life by sense experience, science, and metaphysics. For Blondel, representive knowledge was indeed an essential element in knowledge. But it was only one element in what he called “the essential duality of knowledge.” The other element in this duality, he claimed, was an element of presence whereby the knower
a final cutting remark, Mario concluded that Blondel’s integral realism was not only implausible, but “not possible” as an account of knowledge.  

Luigi did not immediately address Mario’s critique. But he did encourage Mario to maintain contact with Blondel’s work if only for self-interested purposes. Mario hoped to diffuse neo-synthesism beyond Italy, and he thought that he could make inroads among French Catholic philosophers, especially Étienne Gilson (1884-1970). Like Mario, Gilson was interested in the question of reconciling realist and idealist accounts of knowledge. In late July of 1928, Luigi prodded Mario to reach out to Gilson. And he apparently convinced him. Less than a week later, Mario wrote to Gilson and enclosed a copy of his

was assimilated and even united to the object known. Each element presupposed the other. And each could only reach fulfillment in vital cooperation with the other. Thus, insofar as the element of presence in question was neglected, Blondel concluded that knowledge as such could not be adequately explained. For more on Blondel’s account of knowledge, see Peter J. Bernardi, S.J., Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009): 232-238 and Oliva Blanchette, Maurice Blondel: A Philosophical Life (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010): 327-330.

93 Ibid. Mario was far from alone in his criticism of Blondel’s account of knowledge. Despite Blondel’s claim that his account of knowledge had restored real knowledge to prominence, critics accused him of undermining the realist character of notional knowledge. Thus, they took issue with Blondel’s formulation of the concept and the role it played in the act of knowing. Unlike the standard neo-scholastic account of the spontaneous concept as the means by which reality is known, Blondel apparently understood the concept in Cartesian terms as the immediate object of knowledge. The distinction between the two was especially important for critics. By formulating the concept as the object of notional knowledge rather than the means, critics argued that Blondel seemed unable to avoid the conclusion that the mind could never adequately reach the real by notions. In short, he seemed to maintain that the concept could only provide access to intra-mental reality, and not extra-mental reality. And if this was indeed an accurate summation, then Mario seemed to be justified in his criticism of Blondel’s account of knowledge, later in this same letter, as lapsing into “idealism.” For a more detailed discussion of criticisms of Blondel’s account of knowledge, see Bernardi, Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française, 232-238.


95 The two, however, diverged quite a bit on this very question. Marco Aleo has drawn attention to this very contrast. For Gilson, the differences between realism and idealism were simply unbridgeable. He made this point plain in Realisme thomiste, claiming that “the opposition of realism and of idealism is absolute.” Gilson, Realisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance (Paris: Vrin, 1939): 238, quoted in Aleo, 57, footnote 28. Aleo claims that, in light of Gilson’s presumption of “the irreducibility of classical thought and modern thought,” attempts to reconcile realism and idealism in Thomistic currents like “Cartesian-Thomism” and “Kantian-Thomism” were not just incoherent, but bound to fail from the start. Gilson believed that a “good disagreement in philosophy is better than the appearance of agreement in confusion.” Thus, he urged Thomists to acknowledge the incommensurability of realism and idealism. See Gilson, Realisme thomiste, 7, quoted in Aleo, 57, footnote 28. Mario Sturzo, however, thought otherwise. In particular, Aleo claims that Mario Sturzo tried to work out “a communication” between ancient and modern modes of thought so as to realize “a recuperation of the method of epistemological immanence typical of modern thought.” Aleo, 57, footnote 28.

96 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, July 30, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 282.
recent book *Il Neo-sintetismo*.97 In his letter, Mario politely asked if Gilson could read his book.98 He mentioned his plans for a French translation, and he even remarked that he had a translator lined up. But he noted that he still needed someone to write an introduction. Thus, in a final request, he asked if Gilson would be willing to consider this task.

About a month later, Mario received a reply from Gilson.99 And it was discouraging to say the least. In his summary, Mario told Luigi that Gilson’s response ranged between “lazy and rude.” He mentioned that Gilson had received his book, but had not read it. And it seemed that Gilson had no plans to do so at any point in the near future. Moreover, Mario noted that Gilson had basically ignored his “request to say a few words in the preface-introduction.” In fact, he incredulously remarked that Gilson had said “nothing” at all.100

In the wake of Gilson’s slight, Luigi tried to console Mario. He suggested that academic politics might have played a part.101 At the moment, Luigi noted that, within the wider spectrum of Thomist scholars, Gilson was “not well-regarded in the more orthodox camp.”102 Thus, he speculated that Gilson refused to consider Mario’s work due to reputational concerns. And he even wondered aloud about whether Gilson “perhaps fears compromising his Thomist name.”103 Whatever the reason, Luigi counseled Mario to forget about Gilson and search for someone else in France instead.

Two weeks later, Luigi pitched the idea of reaching out to Blondel.104 He told Mario that he had recently talked to a friend in France about the idea, and his friend had mentioned

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97 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, August 3, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 285.  
98 See Mario to Luigi Sturzo, September 6, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 303.  
99 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, September 6, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 303.  
100 Ibid.  
101 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, September 15, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 309.  
102 Ibid.  
103 Ibid.  
104 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, September 29, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 1, 318.
that Blondel could at least help Mario navigate the “difficulties” of the “French market” for “foreign books.”

Luigi passed along Blondel’s mailing address. And he further noted, in a not so subtle sweetener, that Blondel had students in Corsica and southern France who spoke fluent Italian. Thus, he suggested that if the translator for Mario’s book on neo-synthesisism did not work out, Mario could readily find another in this group.

Mario found Luigi’s idea less appealing though. In reply, Mario talked about at least two serious reservations he had. First, he questioned the fit between his work and that of Blondel’s. In fact, he plainly asserted that “Blondel professes a quite different philosophy” than his own. And second and even more significantly, he worried about the cloud of suspicion still lingering around Blondel. Mario admitted that he was anxious about damage to his own work through association with Blondel. And he even confessed that he feared that Blondel’s “name is not to my advantage and can harm me.”

Luigi did not try to downplay Mario’s concerns. And in response, he even agreed that Blondel was “not suitable” in certain respects. Yet despite these concerns, Luigi nonetheless encouraged Mario to write to Blondel anyway. Luigi did not deny that there were risks involved in reaching out to Blondel. But he indicated that the rewards were even greater, especially in light of growing interest in Blondel’s work in France at the moment. In this vein, Luigi nudged Mario to consider the fact Blondel “has a school that is spreading more today than yesterday.” Nonetheless, Mario declined Luigi’s invitation in the end. Mario did not write to Blondel in the fall of 1928. And nor would he at any point in the

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105 Ibid.
106 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, October 5, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 321.
107 Ibid.
108 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 9, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 324.
109 Ibid.
future. In so doing, Mario passed on close contact with Blondel. But as his letters to Luigi would soon indicate, he would not pass on further engaging Blondel’s work.

The Resolution of the Roman Question

At the start of 1929, intellectual concerns remained predominant in the correspondence between Luigi and Mario. Yet despite this predominance, political concerns entered into the mix every now and then. On February 11, 1929, the Lateran Pacts were formally ratified. These accords secured the Italian State’s formal recognition of the Vatican’s sovereignty, and the Vatican’s formal recognition of the Italian State. In the wake of them, the long contentious Roman Question was brought to a close. The accords did not resolve all disputes between the Vatican and the Italian State. But they did mark an important milestone in modern Church-State relations. That is, they marked an end to the Vatican’s decades-long strategy of intransigence toward modern States.

Mario and Luigi both welcomed the Lateran Pacts. But they differed in their degree of enthusiasm. Mario, for his part, was thrilled at the news. In his first letter to Luigi after the accords were signed, Mario confessed that he had a “soul full of holy joy” and could only “thank Providence.” And he was far from alone in this joy. In heralding the accords shortly after they were signed, Pope Pius XI declared that God had been “restored to Italy and Italy to God.”

In contrast, Luigi was a bit more composed. Now in his fifth year of exile, the Lateran Pacts had come about at no small cost to him. Luigi certainly did not deny the role

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of providence in helping to secure them. But neither did he assign providence a place of prominence. For Luigi, the Lateran Pacts were less about the guiding hand of God than they were about the levers of political calculation. In their wake, Mussolini was able to pacify his most formidable political opponent. And the Vatican, in turn, was able to avert a further incursion on the Church’s temporal authority. The accords were no doubt significant in securing a tentative peace between the Vatican and the Italian State. But mostly forgotten in the wake of their signing were those like Luigi whose obedience and sacrifice had helped make them possible in the first place. In any case, Luigi did not dwell long on the significance of the Lateran Pacts. Other subjects awaited him.

*Situating Blondel*

In late March of 1929, Luigi wrote to Mario again on the subject of Blondel. In his letter, Luigi attempted to explain the significance of Blondel’s place and influence in interwar France. He highlighted Blondel’s trailblazing course through the dominant interwar polarities of intellectualism and intuitionism. Luigi told Mario that Blondel had developed a philosophy in France that was, on one hand, “a bit in reaction to the narrow Thomism

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113 In the immediate wake of the signing of the Lateran Treaty, Luigi Sturzo did not explicitly mention the resolution of the Roman Question in correspondence with Mario, but he did gesture toward it, albeit in a fairly oblique and understated way. See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, February 12, 1928, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 387-388. Gabriele De Rosa sees evidence of this in the aforementioned letter, written a day after the signing of the Lateran Pact. In this letter, Luigi remarks that he had begun his “study of the Church and State theme,” and in turn asks Mario if he could pass along the encyclicals of Leo XIII and other documents related to this theme. In addition to these remarks, De Rosa notes that soon after the signing of the Lateran Treaty, Luigi penned an article on the resolution of the Roman Question for *The Review of Reviews*. See Luigi Sturzo, “Discussion on the Solution of the Roman Question,” *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 1 (February 15, 1928): 172-176. De Rosa claims that, in light of this article and the contents of the abovementioned letter, it is “evident that Sturzo wrote to his brother in the wake of the impact (sobre l’impressione) of the signing of the Lateran Pact, having occurred on February 11, 1929.” De Rosa, 18-19, footnote 1.


there.” And on the other, it was “a bit in contraposition to the intuitionism of Bergson.” But to be clear, Luigi emphasized that these currents were not equivalent in their respective reach in French thought and culture. He stressed that intuitionism cast a much larger shadow. Thus, he maintained that Blondel’s work was primarily an effort “to divert Bergsonian currents.”

Luigi insisted that this was no easy task. In fact, he asserted that intuitionist currents were “very strong, even in Catholics.” And he cited Brémond as a leading example. Nonetheless, Luigi observed that counter-currents did exist. He pointed to the work of Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), and noted that Maritain had stood fast against intuitionist currents. But in light of “the fall of Action Française,” he reported that “the star of Maritain has faded.” In consequence, he suggested the task of challenging intuitionism had passed to Blondel.

The circumstances of Blondel’s rise to intellectual prominence in interwar France were no doubt fortuitous. But Luigi made clear that Blondel’s rise had, for the most part, been halting and even perilous. He supplied Mario with a brief chronicle of Blondel’s journey. To start, Luigi focused on the controversy surrounding Blondel’s work in the heat of the modernist crisis. Luigi noted that, after the publication of Blondel’s groundbreaking work in philosophy L’Action (1893), some had “threatened to see his book submitted to Holy Office.” Yet despite this threat, Luigi said that Pope Pius X intervened to

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117 Ibid.
118 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, March 26, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 33.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
ensure that this censure did not happen. Nonetheless, Blondel had to withdraw “the last remaining copies in circulation” and “not make another edition (for the time being).”\textsuperscript{124} Blondel obeyed, but suspicions about his work continued to linger long after his apparent acquittal in \textit{Pascendi} (1907).

Over the next two decades, Luigi mentioned that two distinct forces perpetuated and even intensified these suspicions. On one hand, he asserted that Blondel “suffered modernist preoccupations.”\textsuperscript{125} And on the other, he stated that Blondel endured the even stronger “offensive of \textit{Action Française}.” And if this was not enough already, Luigi added that this “offensive” extended even to “the defenders of the Church.”\textsuperscript{126} Yet despite these multiple pressures, the offensive against Blondel finally relented. On December 29, 1926, Pope Pius XI formally condemned \textit{Action Française}. And thereafter, the cloud of suspicion surrounding Blondel’s work dissipated.

In the wake of these developments, Luigi declared that Blondel’s thought was now undergoing a “revival” in France.\textsuperscript{127} He reported that “editions of \textit{L’Action} not only circulate now, but are discussed by former students and admirers.”\textsuperscript{128} This revival was no doubt important in its own right. But even more important was the apparent vindication of Blondel’s doctrinal integrity. Luigi asserted that the current revival of Blondel’s thought had not just assumed “the orthodox position of Blondel,” but had even “strengthened” it.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 5, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 38.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, March 26, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 33.
And in support, he told Mario to look no further than the “small, but faithful” school that had already been organized around Blondel’s thought.\footnote{Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 5, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 38.}

Luigi could scarcely have imagined it at the moment, but he would join this very “school” soon enough. Yet, he would not arrive there through some general appreciation of Blondel’s life and work. Rather, he would arrive there through a contentious scrutiny of one specific area of Blondel’s thought: the disproportion between the ‘willing will’ and the ‘willed will.’

\textit{The Tendency to the Infinite}

No issue proved to be more decisive in inclining Luigi to Blondel than the problem of the will’s intrinsic link to the infinite. And no issue proved to be more decisive in dividing him from Mario than the same. Luigi first broached the problem of the will’s intrinsic link to the infinite right after discussing the recent revival of Blondel’s thought.\footnote{Ibid.} In fact, he did so in the same letter. To start, Luigi noted that, like Mario, he categorized the will as a “practical cognitive faculty.”\footnote{Ibid.} But he was quick to note that, unlike Mario, he conceived the will’s relation to the infinite in a different way. Specifically, Luigi maintained that what he called “the tendency to the infinite” is in the will itself.\footnote{Ibid.} And even more specifically, he maintained that this “tendency” is \textit{inherent} to the will itself.

In advancing this position, Luigi laid out two basic premises. First, he asserted that we cannot be satisfied with end short of the infinite. And second, our desire for this end is a matter of the whole human person, not just a specific faculty like the intellect. Thus, Luigi
determined that the will’s practical activity bears an inherent relation to the infinite. If it did not, then the troubling conclusion that “we would be satisfied with finite goods” seemed to follow.\textsuperscript{134}

\textit{Critique of Mario on the Tendency to the Infinite}

Unfortunately, Luigi indicated it was this very point that Mario seemed unable to avoid in his work. In his neo-synthesis, Mario no doubt emphasized the synthetic unity of human willing, knowing, and affectivity. But Mario seemed to not apply this emphasis consistently, especially in regard to our relation to the infinite. Luigi pointed out that Mario tended “to demarcate mind and will” in natural and not just logical terms.\textsuperscript{135} And in the wake of this demarcation, he claimed that Mario had thereby designated two ontologically different ends specific to the mind and will. In other words, Mario had ended up, in regard to the mind and will, “assigning the infinite to the first and the finite to the second.”\textsuperscript{136} Thus, in light of this ontological difference, Mario seemed to endorse a two ends theory of the human person. But if this were so, it seemed to divide us irrevocably from within.

To resolve this problem, Luigi set out to distinguish his account of the will and the tendency to the infinite from the respective accounts of Mario and Blondel. In reference to Mario, Luigi drew attention to two questions. First, he asked if the tendency to the infinite is affective. And second, he asked if it is natural. But before doing so, Luigi made clear that he was going to be “very careful to say what precisely the infinite is, because it is not comprehensible by us.”\textsuperscript{137} Luigi did not dispute the long established position in philosophy

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\item \textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 15, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 42
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that the infinite is naturally unknowable. But he did dispute Mario’s position that this lack of comprehension implied that we necessarily lacked a natural tendency to the infinite. Luigi agreed that Mario’s position was logical enough. Mario maintained that every tendency presupposes the logically anterior possession of a power to realize it. And he further maintained that we naturally lack the power of the infinite. Thus, Mario concluded that we naturally lack the tendency to the infinite.

Yet despite its apparent airtight logic, Luigi took issue with Mario on an important detail. He claimed that Mario had erroneously conceived the idea of tendency “in the strict sense” as if it was akin to “potentiality.” That is, he claimed that Mario had conceived the idea of tendency as standing in relation to power as potency does to act. Luigi did not address whether Mario was right to ascribe the tendency to the infinite to a power like the will rather to the human person as a whole. But it would be an important question going forward.

In the meanwhile, Luigi challenged Mario on another important detail. Mario maintained that knowledge of the infinite necessarily entailed love of the infinite. Thus, Mario claimed that the tendency to the infinite has an expressly affective character. Luigi, however, questioned this judgment. Unlike Mario, Luigi did not think we could naturally know “if there was an affective tendency that makes us turn toward” the infinite as an “unknown object.” Thus, he did not think that this tendency could not be categorized as affective from the start.

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138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
For Luigi, the mode of knowledge uniting the tendency to the infinite to knowledge of the infinite remained subject to dispute. Luigi conceded that this mode of knowledge could indeed be generated by affection or by love. Nonetheless, other possibilities had to be considered. In this regard, Luigi noted that the mode in question could alternatively be generated “dialectically or by mystical intuition or by revelation and tradition.” In other words, the mode’s causal roots remained indeterminate at best. And to complicate matters further, Luigi suggested that the mode in question might not even be ascertainable from within the order of knowledge. That is, it might not be accessible in terms of discursive reason.

In this light, Luigi suggested opening that the problem of the tendency to the infinite to other paths of knowing. In fact, he even went so far as to claim it “touches on the foundation of modern mysticism” and even “relates to the problem of the sacred.” Luigi did not elaborate further on this significant, albeit suggestive claim. But he did indicate that the resolution of this problem resided in a power at or near the threshold of nature and grace. Luigi did not identify this power. Nor did he specify how it could be known. Instead, he asserted that the power in question was a power to “know” the infinite “in some indirect way, and to love it,” but “more with grace than by pure nature.” What Luigi meant by “pure nature,” he did not say. And what his assertion implied about the nature-grace distinction, he did not say either. But he would elaborate on each going forward, especially in his discussion of Blondel.

Critique of Blondel on the Tendency to the Infinite

140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
In comparison to his critique of Mario above, Luigi took an even harder line with Blondel on the problem of the tendency to the infinite. Blondel never explicitly referred to this problem. But Luigi nonetheless detected an analogous treatment of it in Blondel’s work. Luigi identified the analogous treatment in question as Blondel’s account of the non-equality inherent in the will itself. And in particular, he identified it as Blondel’s account of the disproportion between ‘the willing will’ and ‘the willed will.’

Luigi declared that he found Blondel’s account wanting. In fact, he flatly asserted that “Blondel’s idea of disproportion does not convince me.” In saying this, Luigi pushed back against one of the most innovative areas of Blondel’s thought. In parsing the idea of the will’s inherent disproportion, Blondel aimed to articulate the immanent but inaccessible presence of the infinite in us. Furthermore, Blondel sought to do so in terms of the dynamic interplay and incommensurability of what he called ‘the willing will’ and the willed will.’ Blondel characterized ‘the willing will’ in terms of an unquenchable élan to attain to the infinite. And in contrast, he characterized the ‘willed will’ in terms of those concrete instances of willing that always fall short of the infinite itself. In examining the interplay of each, Blondel argued that the concrete effort to equate the willing will and the willed will revealed two significant aspects about human life and desire. First, Blondel claimed that this effort demonstrated our longing to achieve the perfection of our freedom. And second, and

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143 For Blondel, the distinction and relation between “the willed will (la volonté voulue)” and “the willing will (la volonté voulante)” was essential. The essential inequivalence between these two was not just crucial to demonstrating our indigence in last analysis. It was crucial to demonstrating our nobility too. In other words, not only did it reveal our ultimate insufficiency to attain the satiating end we necessarily seek. But even more significantly, it suggested an intrinsic opening from within our own action to the presence and operation of what could: the supernatural. For a more in-depth summary of this distinction, see Blanchette, 68, 72, 614, 618. On the idea of the “disproportion” of the willed will and the willing will, see Raymond Saint-Jean Genèse de l’Action (Paris-Bruges: Desclée, 1965). Saint-Jean notes that Blondel first introduced the distinction between the willed will and the willing will in April of 1891 as he prepared to write his doctoral thesis. Quoted in Blanchette, 58.

144 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 15, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 42. Emphases in the original.
even more significantly, he claimed that it opened out at its summit to the necessary hypothesis of the supernatural and the option to be for or against God.

Luigi did not dispute Blondel’s conclusions about the idea of the will’s inherent disproportion. Instead, he disputed whether there could be any disproportion natural to us in the first place. “In nature,” Luigi insisted, “there are no inherent disproportions, that is, natural ones.” Rather, he stated that there are “only accidental ones, that is, in concrete individuals by defect, not by essence.”\(^{145}\) The philosophical issue at hand was technical, but it was nonetheless significant. Inasmuch as proportions are always specific to powers belonging to our natural faculties, Luigi indicated that any disproportion, by definition, could not be considered natural. Nonetheless, he did not completely close the door to Blondel’s idea of disproportion. That is, he did not dismiss outright the possibility of a disproportion between the will and the tendency to the infinite. But for now, Luigi still had other issues to sort through in Blondel’s work.

Like so many others before him, Luigi struggled to comprehend Blondel’s idea of action.\(^{146}\) And he admitted as much to Mario. “Action lacks reality,” Luigi declared. Furthermore, he said that in Blondel’s account of action the same point applied to “all men who are exteriorized (esteriorizzati).”\(^{147}\) In saying this, Luigi seemed to take issue with Blondel’s elaboration of the transitive character of action. That is, he seemed to take issue with Blondel’s claim that, in action, one produces something other than oneself in order to become oneself.\(^{148}\) In contrast, Luigi left no doubt about his next target of criticism. In fact, he went straight after the ontological character of action. In a rhetorical jab, Luigi pondered

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\(^{145}\) Ibid. Emphases in the original.

\(^{146}\) Say more here about those critics who were confused by Blondel’s idea of action.

\(^{147}\) Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 18, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 43.

\(^{148}\) See Blanchette,
out loud how Blondel’s account of action could be evaluated or even conceived in terms independent of thought and being. “Inaction does not exist,” he bluntly asserted. “Thought either is action or it is nothing.”\textsuperscript{149} Whether action has reality apart from thought, Luigi obviously did not consider at the moment. But these would not be his final thoughts on the subject.

Less than two weeks later though, Luigi tempered his criticism of Blondel’s idea of action. He confessed that, in light of further reading, he had been “persuaded” to further study Blondel’s idea.\textsuperscript{150} Luigi did not supply reasons for this change. But he did tell Mario that Blondel’s “attempt to rest on action is worthy to be kept in mind.” Furthermore, he added that it was “to be developed by the contradictions and uncertainties” internal to Blondel’s attempt itself.\textsuperscript{151}

Luigi seemed somewhat surprised by his newfound appreciation of Blondel’s idea of action. But he made clear that it remained provisional. Luigi indicated that his change of heart was based in part on apparent changes in Blondel’s thought. Luigi did not identify any specific changes in Blondel’s thought. But he did confide to Mario that “after thirty years and through the threat of the Index” he remained confident that “it has been modified.”\textsuperscript{152} Moreover, Luigi further confided that his change of heart was likewise based in part on Blondel’s response to intellectualist currents in France. He was especially impressed with Blondel’s willingness to challenge neo-scholasticism. Luigi had previously asserted that Blondel’s work was primarily an effort to divert intuitionist currents in France.\textsuperscript{153} But now in

\textsuperscript{149} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 18, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 43.
\textsuperscript{150} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 1, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 46.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} See infra pg. 14, Luigi to Mario Sturzo, March 26, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 33
an apparent reversal, he claimed that, “more than any other,” Blondel’s work was “an attempt to escape the clutches of French neo-scholasticism.” Luigi noted that he could not say anything more at the moment without further study. But he indicated that he would. And he would follow through.

Reassessing Blondel

To better understand Luigi’s reassessment of Blondel, it is important to examine two intertwined subjects of discussion from April through July of 1929. The first dealt with the method and thrust of Blondel’s thought. And the second pertained to Luigi’s continuing debate with Mario on the tendency to the infinite.

On April 18, 1929, Luigi wrote to Mario to ask if he had further thoughts on the question of our aspiration to the infinite, especially in light of their discussion of Blondel. For his part, Luigi asserted that he did not support Blondel’s thought and approach, at least at the moment. “I am not with him,” he reassured Mario. Nonetheless, he conceded that he was “interested” in Blondel’s work. And as mentioned above, it was Blondel’s idea of action that had piqued his interest.

Four days later, Luigi reiterated his interest in Blondel’s work. But he made clear that this interest did not extend to Blondel’s method. Luigi lamented that he found Blondel’s “method of associating the reader with the strains of his research to be a bit tiring.” Yet, despite this apparently taxing method, Luigi indicated that studying Blondel’s

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154 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 1, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 46.
155 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 18, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 43.
156 Ibid.
157 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 22, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 43.
work was nonetheless worth the effort. Thus, he once again recommended Archambault’s recent exposition on Blondel’s thought to Mario.\textsuperscript{158}

Over the next few weeks, Luigi studied Blondel’s work at greater length. And as he did, he apparently developed a greater appreciation of it. On May 10, 1929, Luigi wrote to Mario on the general course of Blondel’s thought. He noted that, in contrast to intellectualist and rationalist currents in modern French thought, Blondel’s work was “responsive to the mystical currents that crop up everywhere today.”\textsuperscript{159} Furthermore, he asserted that “the attempt” that Blondel had “now taken up so fervently” was “very important,” for it responded to “a much felt need.” Luigi explained that this “need” was the desire “to overcome the very arid Cartesian intellectualism” of modern French thought. And this was no small challenge, inasmuch as this intellectualism had “formed a large camp in the French mentality.”\textsuperscript{160} At the very least then, Luigi suggested that Blondel deserved attention for taking up this challenge.

The content of this challenge was no doubt important. But even more important was its apparent spirit of opposition according to Luigi. Luigi indicated that Blondel’s work captured the growing resistance to intellectualism in interwar French thought and culture. He told Mario that “theories apply not only to what they contain, but even to the moods they represent.”\textsuperscript{161} And inasmuch as Blondel’s work distinctively combined content and moods, he concluded that Mario could not “deny value to that of Blondel.”\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 10, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 51.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
In the midst of reassessing Blondel’s work, Luigi parsed the problem of the tendency to the infinite in greater depth and finer detail. In so doing, he laid out a major premise of his up front. Specifically, Luigi claimed that “every nature, as such, postulates certain exigencies and tendencies.” Now in saying this, he made clear that the exigencies and tendencies in question are not reducible to each other. But he likewise made clear that they are not separable from each other. In reference to these exigencies and tendencies, Luigi advanced two important claims. First, he posited that these two distinct elements are ingredient to our nature. And second, he claimed that they specify a “mode of realization and development,” operative at once “independently (under the aspect of exigency or nature) and “conjointly (under the aspect of actuation).”

Luigi then applied this point to the nature of our knowing. He attested that every “knowing subject tends toward the true, by himself,” that is, “by nature.” And he further added in an apparent rebuke to Kant that “this truth, for man, is taken from sensible reality, and certainly not from a priori forms.” In other words, by our “way of drawing truth,” human knowledge is materially proportioned to limited sense data. Nonetheless, Luigi posited that human knowledge is formally disposed to “absolute and necessary truth.” In fact, he insisted that “one does not halt” short of it. Luigi attributed this drive to a “tendency” in us, but did not specify it. Moreover, Luigi indicated that, by itself, this tendency remained incapable of attaining the absolute goal it disposed us to. In this light, he claimed that,

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163 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 25, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 44.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
although the “tendency” in question is “inherent in nature,” it “cannot stretch (by its own mode) to infinity.”

In this lapidary claim, Luigi spelled out the central problem of the tendency to the infinite. In brief, he maintained that our reach toward the infinite always exceeded our grasp. Thus, the problem contained a basic paradox. On one hand, Luigi affirmed that “the absolute, the infinite, is not a corollary of its own speculative logic, as any scientific truth would be.” But on the other hand, he posited that, in the face of this apparent difficulty, there arises “a need, of what postulates a satisfaction.” Luigi did not say what this need entailed. Nor did he say how it could be known. But he did claim that in the concrete postulation of this need “is the base of human mysticism.” And he further claimed that, when “elevated,” it “becomes divine mysticism.” But beyond these remarks, he offered no further comment on either suggestive claim.

In the very next line of his letter though, Luigi did offer some further comments on Blondel’s idea of action. Unlike Blondel, Luigi did not distinguish action from thought and being. Rather, he saw the idea of action writ large in “every activity.” Turning to the “distinction between active life and contemplative life,” Luigi asserted that he saw “action” especially in “contemplation,” at least in a “broad sense (senso largo).” The connection between Blondel’s idea of action and the problem of the tendency to the infinite may have been a happenstance. But in the context of Luigi’s disputes with Mario, it seemed more like a fruitful possibility to consider going forward.

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167 Ibid., 44-45.
168 Ibid., 45.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid. Emphases in the original.
On Common Knowledge of God

Over the next two months, Luigi and Mario further debated the tendency to the infinite. And in so doing, each ventured into the quite technical terrain of scholastic philosophy. Terms were specified, differences were clarified, and refinements were made. New ways of conceiving particular terms were even introduced, but not without challenge.

The argot of scholastic philosophy supplied the basic terms of their debate. But it did not set an absolute limit to it. In fact, Luigi would soon indicate that the problem of the tendency to the infinite required the assistance of Patristic, monastic, and even modern thought. Furthermore, he would indicate that this problem had to be put into vital contact with mystical and intuitionist currents. In other words, he would suggest that this problem could only be resolved through the mutual illumination of notional knowledge and other ways of knowing.

To this end, Luigi first introduced a crucial, but contentious redefinition. Specifically, he redefined the term “tendency.” And in turn, he redefined the term “tendency to the infinite.” Luigi argued that, in scholastic philosophy, the distinct categories of “tendency” and “power” had been delineated too rigidly. In response, he proposed redefining “tendency” as an “active power.” And in light of this, he then proposed redefining the “tendency to the infinite” as an “active power,” at once “in us,” but nonetheless “confused by our being.”

These redefinitions were certainly not without problems. And Luigi was not unaware of them. Luigi had to answer the charge that he had erroneously conflated the

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173 Ibid.
category of tendency with that of power. And he further had to answer the charge that, in redefining tendency as an “active power,” he had equivocated in his use of the term “power.”\textsuperscript{174} In response, Luigi attempted to show that the categories of tendency and power were not reducible to each other. And in particular, he attempted to show that tendencies are properly \textit{powers of the person}, not powers of the faculties.

To understand the significance of this distinction, it is important to contrast Mario and Luigi on the idea of tendency. For his part, Mario subordinated the idea of tendency to the controlling categories of act and potency. In this regard, he maintained that the categories of act and potency were not just ingredient to the elaboration of the idea of tendency. Rather, they were ingredient to the very definition of tendency itself. In contrast, Luigi did not dispute the significance of the categories of act and potency in elaborating the idea of tendency. But he did dispute that these categories controlled the definition of the idea. Specifically, Luigi maintained that the category of relation or what he called “relationality” controlled the definition of tendency.\textsuperscript{175} In regard to the idea of tendency then, Mario attributed causality to act and potency, and Luigi attributed causality to relation or relationality.

The difference between the two was no mere word game or hairsplitting matter. Rather, it was a substantive disagreement about a specific philosophical problem. Mario framed the problem of the tendency to the infinite in terms of four key premises. First, tendency is a motion guided by relation.\textsuperscript{176} Second, potency determines powers to act likewise “in relation and by relation.”\textsuperscript{177} Third, though similar, potency is nonetheless distinct

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 28, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol 2, 46.
\textsuperscript{176} Mario to Luigi Sturzo, June 11, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 72.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
from tendency in that tendency follows logically after potency. That is, tendency is not a motive inherent to powers like the faculties. Rather, it is a motion that is logically consequent to the prior determinations of potency. And fourth and finally, tendency not only follows logically upon the relation given by potency, but even upon the relation implemented by act. Based on these four premises, Mario concluded that the relation guiding a specific tendency is derived only from the logically prior operations of act and potency.

In this light, Mario asserted that to think otherwise was to advance logical absurdities. And in particular, he asserted that it was to advance the “irrelative.” Again, Mario maintained that no relation could be given prior to the operations of act and potency. Thus, he ruled out Luigi’s idea that tendencies have operations anterior to those of act and potency. If true, Luigi had to toss out his redefinition of the idea of tendency. Or at the very least, he had to explain how he could coherently talk about a tendency to the infinite if he could not know what this tendency is related to in the first place. Furthermore, based on Mario’s position, Luigi had to confront how he could avoid reducing the infinite to immanent terms alone. Luigi seemed to suggest that the relation guiding tendencies derives only from our own powers. Thus, in regard to the tendency to the infinite, he seemed to resolve the relation to the infinite into finite terms alone.

In response to these problems, Luigi countered the charge that he conceived the category of tendency in such a way as to render it necessarily “irrelative.” To start, he made clear that, unlike Mario, he did not characterize tendency as an active state of potency.

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178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
180 On this accusation, see Luigi’s response Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 14, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 51.
Rather, he characterized it in terms of what “is inherent in nature.”\textsuperscript{181} That is, he conceived it as something like a substantial principle of operation in us. Furthermore, Luigi made clear that, unlike Mario, he did not characterize tendency as a motion, as something consequent to an act. In fact, he insisted that, in conceiving tendency, he did “not indicate the concrete motion to a particular object.”\textsuperscript{182} In other words, he did not conceive tendency as subordinate to the categories of act and potency.

Luigi stressed this last point in no uncertain terms. In opposition to Mario, he asserted that the category of tendency “is necessarily prior to act, and is an active power in itself.”\textsuperscript{183} Nonetheless, in an important qualification, he asserted that, unlike other active powers, it cannot “implement the concrete object” that it tends toward. Like Mario, Luigi reserved the implementation of such objects to the operation of act. But unlike Mario, he indicated that the primary “principle” that received the relation or “relativity” of tendencies is not potency. Rather, it is the human person. Specifically, Luigi claimed that “the active principle that accepts the relativity is the subject, because he has the power to fix the relativity.”\textsuperscript{184} Thus, he thought that it was apparent that he did not conceive tendency in “irrelative” terms.\textsuperscript{185}

Given this point, Luigi pushed back against Mario’s other charge that he had reduced the infinite to finite terms alone. He reiterated his claim that the active power of tendency is logically prior to that of act. Thus, he indicated that the relations specific to tendencies are not simply contingent upon the operations of act. In this light, Luigi outlined the possibility

\textsuperscript{181} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 25, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 44.  
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
of a relation to the infinite on our part that was irreducible to finite terms alone. That is, he outlined the possibility of a relation to the infinite that could be received by us, but was not contingent on the operations of our nature alone. The possibility certainly seemed like a breakthrough. But Luigi still had other challenges to face before he could justify this possibility.

Significantly, Luigi had to address how a relation to the infinite, to what by definition lacks no potency whatsoever, could be implemented by beings like us composed of potency. In response, Luigi reiterated his claim that the proper receiver of the relation of tendencies is the human person, not human nature. This point was important, inasmuch as the category of relation, unlike those of act and potency, can be applied without any implications for the nature of what it is being applied to.186 Thus, it seemed that the tendency to the infinite could indeed be conceived in terms of a tendency belonging to us, not by nature, but as persons in virtue of a relation.

Luigi seemed to hint at this very conclusion in a further clarification of the tendency to the infinite. Luigi claimed that, “in concrete existence,” to “speak of the tendency to the infinite” does “not mean that it is a continuous act, but an implemented succession of relationality.”187 And he added that the same applied to speaking about “the Sacred and the divine.” In making this claim, Luigi indicated the tendency to the infinite is not an act. Nor is it even a principle of acts. Thus, it is not a form operative in human beings like nature and grace.

These negative clarifications were no doubt important. But Luigi left open many remaining questions. For example, in defining the tendency to the infinite is an “implemented succession of relationality,” Luigi did not identify who the primary agent of this implementation is. That is, he did not say whether this implementation is done in us or by us. Furthermore, in conceiving the tendency to the infinite as an “active principle,” but not tied to acts, Luigi did not identify where he rooted this principle. That is, he did not explain how he overcame the traditional scholastic rooting of principles in forms operative in our nature. Yet, in spite of these unresolved questions, Luigi nonetheless suggested an innovative way forward in thinking about natural access to God.

On the Tendency to the Infinite and Knowledge of God

Luigi subsequently refined this suggestion in his intertwined discussion of intuition, the tendency to the infinite, and knowledge of God. To start, Luigi brought the tendency to the infinite to bear on knowledge of God. Luigi conceded that our knowledge of the object of the tendency to the infinite does not stretch as far the object of our knowledge of God. Luigi conceded that our knowledge of the object of the tendency to the infinite does not stretch as far the object of our knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{188} In particular, he conceded that it does not stretch this far so long as this tendency is natural. Luigi agreed with Mario that if the tendency to the infinite is “a tendency of nature,” then it implies “the tendency to the true” whereby “the tendency to the infinite is resolved.”\textsuperscript{189} Furthermore, he agreed that if this is so, then the tendency to the infinite “does not necessarily imply development up to knowledge of the existence of a personal God” or “pure spirit.”\textsuperscript{190} In short, he conceded that the tendency to the infinite does not supply immediate knowledge of God.

\textsuperscript{188} Luigi to Sturzo, May 4, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol 2, 48.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
Nonetheless, Luigi did not agree that the tendency to the infinite failed to indicate any knowledge of God or the absolute. In fact, he argued that this tendency could indeed “arrive at the idea of the absolute in relation to the contingent.”\(^{191}\) But to be clear, he qualified that this achievement did not result from reasoning. Rather, he asserted that it resulted from “intuitive forms.” And even more specifically, he asserted that it resulted from is “now called the sense of the Sacred.” Luigi then reiterated his support for classifying this sense as natural.

Luigi had two major goals in mind in intertwining the subjects of intuition, the tendency to the infinite, and knowledge of God. First, in reference to knowledge of God, he aimed to critique overly-intellectualist treatments of the subject. And second, he intended to correct them through clarifying the modes of popular knowledge of God.

In regard to the first goal, Luigi took aim at Mario. In general, he cautioned Mario not to “confuse theory with reality.”\(^ {192}\) Luigi no doubt affirmed that theory is an “interpretation of the real.” And he further affirmed that it “facilitates the intellectual process from created things to God.” But he insisted that no theory could exhaust this process. In this light, Luigi advised Mario not to exaggerate the role played by the “scholastic” theory of potency and act in supplying knowledge of God. He argued that it was “not necessary to reach God” through this theory alone. In support, he pointed to the innumerable people, who “without knowing anything of potency and act,” had attained knowledge of God. Luigi did not dispute the merits of scholastic theory in explaining how “from knowledge of created things (in us and outside of us) we reach God.”\(^ {193}\) But he did

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\(^ {191}\) Ibid.
\(^ {192}\) Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 19, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 54.
\(^ {193}\) Ibid.
dispute elevating this theory to the exclusion of all others. And even more specifically, he disputed using it “to exclude what is today called either experience of the divine or intuition (in the broad sense) of the divine.”

In light of this critique, Luigi then advanced his second goal. In reference to experience or intuition of the divine, Luigi did not deny that each involved “reasoning.” But he nonetheless maintained that each, “in substance,” was “more a way of feeling.” Furthermore, he indicated that experience or intuition of the divine was the most primary path to knowledge of God. At base, Luigi argued that scholastic theory had confused experience of God with reflection on experience of God. In other words, it had confused what is “primary and direct” with what is “secondary and derivative.” Thus, it erroneously elevated reasoning to a preeminent role in understanding knowledge of God. In light of this error, Luigi called for a return to what is “primary and direct.” That is, he called for a return to the experience of God itself.

**Part III: Reason, Supra-Reason, and the Supernatural**

*On Rationalism in Theology*

In service to this return, Luigi appealed to the resources of history. The problem of treating knowledge of God in an overly-intellectualist way certainly had a purchase in modern thought. But Luigi did not think that this problem could be imputed to modern thought alone. He claimed that it reached much further back in time. In fact, he insisted that it reached back at least as far as scholastic disputes in the twelfth century. Specifically,

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194 Ibid., 54-55.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
Luigi claimed that “the scholastics, responding to a need of the times, intellectualized knowledge of God too much and rationalized it too much.”\textsuperscript{197} Whether this claim was directly aimed at current day neo-scholastics, Luigi did not say. But it certainly seemed like a shot across their bow.

To support his claim above, Luigi turned to Peter Abelard. And in so doing, he gestured toward some of the faults internal to neo-scholasticism.\textsuperscript{198} But on the surface, he concentrated on the errors traditionally ascribed to Abelard. Luigi called to mind Bernard of Clairvaux’s reproach of Abelard. He noted that Bernard criticized Abelard for apparently being preoccupied, not with reverencing the mysteries of God, but with seeking to make them “reasonable.”\textsuperscript{199} Building on this critique, Luigi asserted that Abelard had “rationalized theology too much” through his distinct approach to these mysteries and the “diverse exigencies of man.”\textsuperscript{200} In brief then, he maintained that Abelard erred by measuring the divine mysteries by reason rather than the other way around.

Whether this criticism was fair or not, Luigi warned against the temptation of Abelard’s approach. That is, he warned against the temptation to make reason, not the servant, but the master of mystery. In this light, Luigi made clear that the principal subject of divine mysteries, and especially of divine providence, does not concern “how we attend to and interpret history.”\textsuperscript{201} In other words, it does not concern our own formulas of

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} De Rosa has indicated that Sturzo’s criticism of Peter Abelard (1079-1142) was basically a proxy for his general criticism of scholastic thought. De Rosa summarizes Abelard’s thought as an “attempt to conceive philosophical reflection as a rational inquiry about faith.” In light of this conception, De Rosa explains that the “task of this reflection was to carry out an interpretation of Christian truth starting from the teachings of reason which in its autonomy could alone approach the true meaning of faith.” It was this “stress on the rational perspective,” he claims, that “induced Sturzo’s criticism of the whole of the scholastic tradition.” De Rosa, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 56-57, footnote 1.
\textsuperscript{199} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 27, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 62.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
explanation. On the contrary, he stated that the principal subject of divine providence concerned other divine or theandric mysteries. These included “human freedom, predestination,” and “divine action from the outside” to name a few. Luigi insisted that remaining “in this sea of mysteries will be good for a theologian.”202 For within this sea, one could “distinguish what is right to say and what is not.” But outside of it, he indicated that one risked being stranded on the shoals of rationalism.

Given this risk, Luigi warned against “explaining” the divine mysteries. That is, he warned against seeking to encompass these mysteries by reason alone. Luigi did not just think that this effort was presumptuous. He thought that it was incoherent from the start, inasmuch as each divine mystery “would not be such if it could be explained.”203 Nonetheless, Luigi affirmed that theology entailed reasoning from within the faith. Thus, it always remained open to the insights of intellectualist currents.

From the twelfth century onwards, Luigi noted that intellectualist currents had ebbed and flowed.204 And over this time, various currents had appeared. Yet despite their distinctness, Luigi maintained that each current shared a common rationalist heritage. In support, he posited a somewhat controversial lineage. Luigi theorized that the “revival of Thomism from the 19th c. onwards” could be considered “an effect of distance in time from the neo-rationalism of the 17th-18th centuries.”205 In other words, Enlightenment rationalism was not just the foil of neo-Thomism. It was its father.

202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.
204 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 22, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 56.
205 Ibid.
Building on this point, Luigi then traced these two currents back to a common source even farther back in time. In a bold and sweeping claim, he asserted that the thought of “the scholastics, from Abelard onwards, was a rationalism in its own way.” In part, this was a diagnosis of the past. But even more importantly, in light of Mario’s clash with certain unnamed Thomists, it was an indictment of the present. Luigi proposed Mario’s “synthesism” as a possible corrective, but left the details of this solution to a later discussion.

On the Constitution of Real Knowledge

To remedy the pitfalls of intellectualism, Luigi indicated that a broader tradition of inquiry had to be recovered in Catholic intellectual life. In service to this goal, he singled out two key areas. The first concerned the more deliberate incorporation of mystical and voluntarist currents. And the second concerned closer attention to the distinction between real knowledge and notional knowledge.

In reference to the first area, Luigi argued against narrowing Catholic intellectual life to intellectualist currents.206 In brief, he argued against narrowing it to scholastic thought. Luigi maintained that this limitation was neither necessary nor right. And in support, he turned to the history of the Catholic intellectual tradition itself. Specifically, Luigi pointed to the Patristic period in a challenge to the putative unitary approach of the scholastics. “For the better part of a millennium the Fathers and theologians followed diverse ways,” he asserted.207 And furthermore, he added that “no one can say that they are irrational or unorthodox.” Thus, it seemed reasonable to employ diverse approaches in addressing

206 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 19, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 55.
207 Ibid.
questions like knowledge of God. Needless to say, this was no small challenge to the contemporary “scholastics” who Luigi gestured towards.208

Given the apparent legitimacy of diverse approaches, Luigi maintained that the important question was not whether “mystical and voluntarist exigencies” should be “overcome.”209 Rather, it was how “they should be assessed, taken into account, appreciated and put in their proper place.”210 In this effort, Luigi recommended examining the history of “religious thought.” Based upon this examination, he said that it was possible to make determinations about the status of “mystical and voluntarist currents.” And even more to the point, it was possible to make determinations about their import vis-à-vis intellectualist currents. Luigi posited that, from “the point of view of religious thought, mystical and voluntarist currents have had a much greater value than those that are purely intellectualistic.”211

Now Luigi did not identify what the measure of this “value” was. But he did indicate at least one possibility in the same letter. In reference to mystical and voluntarist currents, Luigi suggested that they cast light on an “exigence for intuitive knowledge.”212 And in so doing, he further suggested they revealed the import of this “exigence.” In particular, Luigi claimed that “the exigence for intuitive knowledge, in contrast to notional or rational or discursive knowledge, is real in humans.”213 In other words, in the order of being, this exigence had a preeminent status. Or at least, it had a preeminent status in comparison to notional knowledge. In this light, Luigi insisted that exigence for intuitive knowledge

208 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
could not be reduced to the plane of notional knowledge. And in particular, he asserted that one could “not resolve these types of knowledge (conoscenze) into one another without dissolving them.”214 In this regard, each type of knowledge entailed a similarly distinct synthesis. Thus, Luigi urged that the syntheses in question “ought to be explained.”215

Mario took up Luigi’s call. And in so doing, he sought to cast some light on the difference between real knowledge and notional knowledge. Mario first addressed whether “intuitive knowledge” exists.216 In no uncertain terms, he replied in the negative. In support, Mario reasserted that knowledge presupposes reasoning. And he made clear that, by “reasoning (raziocinio),” he meant “discursive” reasoning.217 Thus, he ruled out the possibility of knowledge deriving from any source, including intuition.

Nonetheless, in a twist on this conclusion, Mario conceded that intuition could supply knowledge in theory. But in order for this to be true, intuition had to be conceived as an aspect of reasoning, not a mode independent of it. In other words, Mario said that this could only be true if intuition was defined as “less simple” reasoning.218 He noted that the relevant distinction in question was not between “intuition” and “reasoning.” Rather, it was between “more simple” reasoning and “less simple” reasoning.219 In the end, Mario insisted that reserving knowledge to reasoning alone was not just an important point, but an “essential comment.”220

214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
But Luigi disputed whether Mario’s comment was essential or not.\textsuperscript{221} To test its plausibility, Luigi turned to the question of the origin of intuition. And specifically, he turned to the question of whether intuition is an inherent activity or an acquired activity. Luigi maintained that Mario affirmed the latter. And in particular, he noted that Mario did so because he reduced intuition to the efficient terms of human development. For Mario, the origin of intuition resided in what he called “first intuition.”\textsuperscript{222} Mario maintained that this instance occurred prior to the discrimination of one term from another in speech. Furthermore, he maintained that this process of discrimination in speech occurred prior to what he called “first knowledge.”\textsuperscript{223} Thus, due to the temporal separation of “first intuition” from “first knowledge,” Mario indicated that intuition, at best, played an ancillary part in the generation of knowledge. But he remained adamant that it played no formal role whatsoever.\textsuperscript{224}

In response, Luigi contested Mario’s conclusion. To start, he pushed back Mario’s claim that “the distinction between intuition and reasoning is abstractive.”\textsuperscript{225} That is, he disputed Mario’s claim that the distinction between intuition and reasoning is notional, but not real. Luigi maintained that Mario was right to note that intuition is prior to discourse in human development. But he asserted that Mario was not right to use this temporal distinction as the basis for ruling out intuition as a mode of knowledge. In support, Luigi posited that intuition was properly defined not as prior to discourse, and thereby precluded from participation in subsequent acts knowledge. Rather, it was properly defined as a


\textsuperscript{222}Mario to Luigi Sturzo, May 27, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 61.

\textsuperscript{223}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{224}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{225}Luigi to Mario Sturzo, June 2, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 65.
“beginning of discourse.” Moreover, Luigi clarified that this “beginning” did not point ahead to some sort of staggered sequence in human development. Instead, it pointed to a distinct mode of knowledge inherent in us. In sum, Luigi concluded that intuition is properly conceived in terms of what “the philosophers” call the “real before the other (reale di fronte all’altro).” In other words, he indicated that intuition bore on real knowledge.

But this was not all that Luigi had to say on the nature of intuition. In a recent letter, Luigi did not hesitate at all to say that intuition entails a distinct mode of knowledge. And to justify this claim, he distinguished the “learning process” into “two kinds.” First, Luigi stated that there is the “discursive” kind that “leads us to so-called (cosidetta) notional knowledge.” And second, there is the “intuitive” kind that “leads us to so-called real knowledge.” Luigi noted that each kind of knowledge entails a different “cognitive synthesis.” Thus, each kind entails a “different tone or different quality.”

To clarify the difference between the two, Luigi pointed to an apparent duality in aesthetic knowledge. Luigi asserted that aesthetic knowledge is either “notional, discursive” or “real, intuitive.” He mentioned that it is the former type “if it treats the technical reasons why a sculpture or musical piece is beautiful.” And he said that it is the latter type “if the subject identifies himself with the work and experiences aesthetic emotion,” that is, “the feeling in itself.”

226 Ibid.
227 Ibid. Emphases in original.
229 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
232 Ibid., 63, 64.
233 Ibid., 63-64.
234 Ibid., 64.
Luigi then applied this clarification to knowledge of God. In a significant move, he claimed that, just as there are two types of aesthetic knowledge, so too are there two types of knowledge of God. He posited that the first type “gives rise to the discursive, and by itself reaches the absolute, the creator,” or “the first cause.” And drawing together some of his previous work, he posited that the second “gives rise to knowledge that derives from intuition of the sacred, the infinite, or from so-called interior experience.” Each type was no doubt important. But Luigi maintained that the latter was especially important in terms of its popular reach and depth. Of the two, he asserted that intuitive knowledge of God is far more common. In fact, he emphasized that intuitive knowledge of God is so common that “certain theologians do not deny it even to non-Catholics.” And even more significantly, he asserted that, in “common experience,” intuitive knowledge of God is “more elevated and profound.”

Mario did not deny that intuition had an extensive reach in “common experience.” But unlike Luigi, he did not hold this “experience” in high regard. Mario seemed to imply that “common experience (l’esperienza volgare)” was, at best, error-prone and obscure. Thus, even if intuition supplied knowledge of God, Mario suggested that it could not be considered a more elevated form of knowledge.

Finally, Luigi highlighted one further disagreement on the subject of intuition. And it was an important hinge between the discussion of intuition and that of the nature-grace distinction. Luigi revisited his disagreement with Mario on the cognitive status of intuition.

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235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
Luigi noted Mario had modified his position on this question somewhat. Unlike his previous position that intuition involved perception alone, and thereby played no part in knowledge, Mario now apparently conceived intuition as “the perceptual element of the cognitive synthesis.” Yet despite this modification, Luigi remained unsatisfied. Mario still subsumed intuition under the function of perception alone. In this light, Luigi again charged Mario with neglecting the “other side” of intuition. To be clear, he did not think that Mario ignored the “concrete sensible” in “the synthetic process of knowledge. In fact, he noted that Mario was right to situate this “sensible” within the operation of perception. But he insisted that Mario ignored “the relation of sympathy” and “unification” in “the synthetic process of knowledge.” And in light of this, he added that Mario further ignored “the relation” of “the supra-sensible (the beautiful-the true-the good-the sacred).” In so doing, Luigi indicated that Mario had not overlooked some insignificant part of the act of knowing. Rather, he asserted that, in ignoring the relation in question, Mario had overlooked precisely what “binds us to the object known, cherished, admired,” and “loved” in this act.

On Supra-Reason and the Supernatural

Over the past year, Luigi had tried numerous times to achieve some sort of consensus with Mario on the subject of intuition. But so far, he had little to show for his efforts. In fact, he was basically locked in a stalemate with Mario. Yet despite this lack of progress, Luigi sought to press forward in their debate. And specifically, he sought to press forward to the very threshold of one of the most contested topics then in Catholic

239 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, June 7, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 67.
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
intellectual life: the mystery of the supernatural. It is important to note that Luigi would not approach this threshold by stepping forward to a new topic. Rather, he would approach it by turning back to two previous disagreements. On one hand, he would re-litigate the fundamental terms of intuition. And on the other, he would further reassess the merits of Blondel’s work.

In reference to the former, Luigi once again proposed understanding intuition in terms of the union of knower and known. Luigi reasserted his position that intuition is best understood not as “the act of distinction, division,” and “analysis.”244 Rather, it is best understood as the act of “synthesis, union, composition” and even “compenetration with the intuited object.”245 In conceiving intuition in this way, Luigi reemphasized two important points. First, he insisted that intuition is a mode of knowledge, and thus has cognitive elements. And second, he made clear that the act of union, and not distinction, took priority in intuition.

In response, Mario once again disagreed. But in so doing, he actually indicated some agreements with Luigi. In fact, in elaborating his conception, Mario seemed to integrate at least two of Luigi’s positions on intuition. The first concerned the causal power of relation in the exercise of intuition. And the second concerned the intrinsic openness of intuition to the mystical. In an important modification, Mario introduced some new terms into his definition of intuition. Specifically, he defined intuition as the power “to distinguish, categorize, volitionize (volizionare),” and “relationize (rapportualize), what in varied content, is logical, moral, aesthetic,” or “mystical.”246 Yet despite this apparent modification, Mario

244 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, June 5, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 67.
246 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, June 13, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 72.
insisted that his position remained the same. He even regarded his new remarks as deriving “from the study of the human act and from its genesis.”\footnote{247} That is, he regarded them as a simple corollary of his account of human action.

But it was precisely this account that Luigi and Blondel seemed to each question. Unlike these two, Mario conceived the genesis of human action almost exclusively in terms of human development. That is, he conceived it almost exclusively in terms of efficient causality. Mario started from the premise that each individual “from the beginning is ignorant and progressively grows in knowledge.”\footnote{248} Thus, he rooted the genesis of human action in “the beginning of cognitive-volitional life” in each individual. In other words, he rooted it in an “historical position,” and not an ontological horizon.\footnote{249}

Mario regarded this position as obvious. In fact, he regarded it as so obvious that he took exception to anyone who disagreed with him. Of those, Mario singled out two in particular. In a scathing critique, he took Blondel and Brémond to task for their respective positions on the genesis of human action.\footnote{250} Specifically, Mario rebuked “Blondel” and “Brémond” for treating “the genesis superficially.” And then twisting the knife, he scoffed that each did “no more than make abrasive philosophy and colorful poetry.”\footnote{251}

In a follow-up letter two days later, Mario toned down his polemics. Yet despite his more reserved tone, he dialed up his critique of Blondel on substantive issues.\footnote{252} And he especially focused on those pertaining to the supernatural. To start, Mario addressed the

\footnote{247} Ibid.\
\footnote{248} Mario to Luigi Sturzo, May 27, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 61.\
\footnote{249} Ibid.\
\footnote{250} Mario to Luigi Sturzo, June 13, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 72.\
\footnote{251} Mario to Luigi Sturzo, June 13, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 72.\
\footnote{252} Mario to Luigi Sturzo, June 15, 1929, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 74.
respective modes of philosophy and theology in the act of knowing. And specifically, he addressed whether these different modes could cooperate in the act of knowing. In contrast to idealists like Croce, Mario insisted that “there is no contradiction” between these two modes. 253 Thus, he maintained that “there is harmony in the unity of the act of knowing.” Now whether this presumed harmony extended to the mode of sacred theology, he did not say. But he did make clear that it applied to theology understood as “theodicy or natural theology.” 254 Even so, the question of what linked philosophy and theology together in the act of knowing remained unanswered.

In response, Mario proposed “the idea of the absolute.” 255 He noted that philosophy and theology each aspired to this idea. And in the case of philosophy, he even asserted that this idea was necessary to its very exercise as a “systematic science (sistema-scienza).” 256 Thus, given their common aspiration to the idea of the absolute, Mario indicated that there had to be some sort of unity between philosophy and theology in the act of knowing.

Yet despite this apparent unity, Mario cautioned that, in approaching the idea of the absolute, it was necessary to maintain a certain intellectual sobriety and restraint. And this was especially true for philosophy. To approach the idea otherwise ran the risk of compromising its integrity. Mario explained that this was so precisely because the idea of the absolute “contains an element of supra-reason (sopra-ragione).” 257 And in virtue of this

253 Ibid.
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid. Specifically, Mario said that “philosophy does not constitute itself in its form as a systematic science, except when thought reaches the idea of the absolute.”
257 Ibid., 75.
element, he further explained that this idea is not comprehensible to the resources of reason alone.

Unfortunately, Mario lamented that philosophers tended to lapse into one of two errors in approaching the idea of the absolute. On one hand, he said that some tended to ignore the element of supra-reason. And in so doing, they either overstretched reason or reduced the idea of the absolute to natural terms alone. On the other hand, he mentioned that another set tended to confuse the element of supra-reason with other elements. And in so doing, they either compromised the integrity of nature or undercut the gratuity of grace.

Mario indicated that Blondel belonged in the latter category. And he based this classification on Blondel’s apparent conflation of supra-reason with the supernatural. Specifically, Mario asserted that, what “Blondel inappropriately calls supernatural,” he should instead call “supra-reason.” And in turn, he suggested that Blondel understood neither “supra-reason” nor the “supernatural.” And if this was the case, it seemed that Blondel’s category mistake undermined his hypothesis of the supernatural at the very least. And at worst, it undercut his trailblazing philosophy of action. In short, without the keystone of the supernatural, Blondel’s work lay in rubble.

Going forward, Mario called attention to a double challenge in approaching the idea of the absolute. On one hand, he maintained that the element of supra-reason internal to this idea had to be acknowledged in philosophy. But on the other, he insisted that, once this element was acknowledged, it had to be hedged off from any further philosophical examination. Specifically, Mario asserted that this element “should remain distinct from

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258 Ibid.
philosophy.” If it did not, then philosophy risked collapsing transcendence into immanence. But this was more than just a possible risk. In fact, Mario insisted that it was already happening throughout “modern philosophy.” Thus, he concluded that “modern philosophy” had basically become “pantheist,” inasmuch as it had resolved “supra-reason into philosophy.”

On this point, Blondel did not disagree. But Blondel and Mario did disagree on how philosophy should approach the idea of the absolute. And they further disagreed on what philosophy could say in encountering it. Mario argued that, before the idea of the absolute, silence must ensue because philosophy could say no more on its own. In contrast, Blondel argued that at least one more word could be said. And not only could it be said, but it must be said.

Scattered Remarks

Yet despite this opportunity, from July of 1929 to December of 1930, not much more was said on Blondel. In August of 1929, Mario commented briefly on Blondel’s account of knowledge of God.

262 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, August 28, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 113.
263 See Mario Sturzo, Il pensiero dell’avvenire (Trani: Vecchi & C., 1930): 98-99. Specifically, Mario took issue with Blondel’s critique of speculative knowledge of God. He argued that Blondel not only overstated his case, but even went so far as to undermine classical speculative demonstrations of God. Summarizing Blondel’s critique, Mario noted that Blondel “says that those who seek God with the intellect do not find God, but an idol.” Thus, for Blondel, “God must be sought with action.” In response, Mario suggested that Blondel could only establish this claim by subsuming speculation under the category of action. Thus, he concluded that Blondel ended up preserving the classical speculative demonstrations of God, albeit under his category of action. But in so doing, Mario maintained that Blondel introduced a lot of unnecessary confusion. Quoted in Aleo, 57-58, footnote 28.
September of 1929, Mario touched briefly on Blondel’s “law of universal determinism.” And in a notable change, he pointed to agreements with Blondel. In fact, he even commended Blondel for emphasizing the corporeal basis of all our knowledge. But like his previous comments, he did not comment much on his reasons.

Over this same period, Luigi had a little more to say about Blondel, but not much more. In October of 1929, he remarked that Blondel seemed to be vigorously pursuing “the renewal of philosophy” in France. Or at least, he noted that Blondel seemed to be more vigorously pursuing it than Maritain. And in April of 1930, Luigi mentioned that Blondel had experienced some pushback against his “theory” of immanence in France. He was not surprised by the dispute. That is, he acknowledged that “immanence” is “difficult for us to understand,” especially in virtue of the “abuse of the word.” Nonetheless, he considered the dispute in question a “strange controversy.” Luigi did not identify who the interlocutors in this controversy were. But he did note that it involved two French Jesuits who took opposing sides on Blondel’s “theory” of immanence. One rejected it as “immanentistic.” And the other regarded it as “orthodox.”

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264 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, September 26, 1929, Carteggio, vol. 2, 127. On Blondel’s account of the universal determinism of human action, in it ascension from discrete objects of the will all the way up to the infinite and the practical option to be for or against God, see Blanchette, Maurice Blondel, 12-13, 72-75.
265 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid. Based on Luigi’s letter, it seems that he was referring to Auguste Valensin, S.J. (1879-1953), who supported Blondel’s theory of immanence, and Joseph de Tonquédec, S.J. (1868-1962), who did not. With the assistance of Blondel, Valensin had an article on “immanence” published in Dicti
toire apologétique de la Foi catholique in 1912. See Blanchette, Maurice Blondel, 288-289. Though the dictionary was under the direction of the Jesuits, not all Jesuits approved of Valensin’s article. One such Jesuit was Tonquédec, who went after Blondel’s theory in his book Immanence: essai critique sur la doctrine de Maurice Blondel (Paris: Beauchesne, 1913). In 1926, the editor of the Dictionnaire removed Valensin’s article on “immanence.” In turn, he replaced it with one on the same subject by Tonquédec.
A Final Substantive Exchange on Blondel

Despite his relative inattention to Blondel’s work over the past year and a half, Luigi enthusiastically returned to it in January of 1931. And he had an abundance of new material to sort through. In 1930 alone, Blondel had produced three lengthy articles on Augustine’s thought in commemoration of the fifteenth centenary of Augustine’s death. Moreover, he had even completed an extensive revision of his secondary dissertation on Leibniz’s thought. Though different in their own ways, each of these works seemed to share a common concern. Specifically, each seemed to center on or around the centrality of the nature-supernatural distinction to the exercise of philosophy itself.

And it was precisely this concern that Luigi addressed in his letter to Mario. To start, Luigi called attention to Blondel’s recent publications on Augustine and Leibniz in *Vie Catholique*. He told Mario that they were both “interesting to know.” And he made clear that they were “interesting” precisely because of “a certain attempt at synthesis between the natural and the supernatural” in each. He urged Mario to read both.

Luigi then pressed Mario further still. He insisted that Mario could benefit from closer contact with Blondel’s work. And specifically, he insisted that Mario could benefit

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275 The publications in question were *Une énigme historique* and “La fécondité toujours renouvelée de la pensée augustinienne.” See De Rosa, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 404, footnote 2.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
from Blondel's account of the “synthesis between the natural and the supernatural.” In
reference to this synthesis, Luigi touted that it should be a central focus of Mario’s
“synthesis.”279 In fact, he declared that it “should be the highlight (le clou).”280

**Part IV: A Sudden Halt**

But, alas, Mario did not seize on this task. And nor would he at any point in the
future. The reasons for this omission were somewhat varied. But they all more or less
involved the slow-burn of controversy surrounding Mario’s philosophical work, especially
on neo-synthesis. Mario had taken up this work in the early 1920s riding a wave of
optimism about the possible concord between neo-idealism and neo-scholasticism in Italy.
But, by the mid-1920s, the tide had begun to turn.281 Optimism about the possible concord
between these two schools of thought soon gave way to skepticism. And by end of the
1920s, skepticism had transformed into bitter antagonism.

And bitter it had become. In 1929, tensions flared at the National Congress of
Philosophy in Rome.282 Agostino Gemelli, who then served as rector of *Università Cattolica del
Sacro Cuore* in Milan, gave voice to these tensions. In his keynote address, Gemelli assailed
the possibility of harmonizing scholasticism with idealism. In no uncertain terms, he
denounced idealism as a “poison.”283 Thus, he argued had any and all attempts to harmonize
the two had to cease. And Gemelli was far from alone in this sentiment. In fact, certain
officials in the Holy Office not only shared this sentiment, but even championed it.284

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279 Ibid.
280 Ibid. Emphases in the original.
281 See Aleo, *Mario Sturzo*, 42-43
282 Ibid., 44.
283 Quoted in Aleo, 44.
284 See Aleo, 44-47.
Mario was not oblivious to these seismic shifts in attitude. But they apparently did not deter him from working to reconcile neo-scholasticism and neo-idealism, at least at first. Thus, throughout the 1920s, Mario remained hopeful that the tide would turn again in his favor. But it did not turn. And it would soon engulf him.

The immediate cause of Mario’s downfall did not involve his general attempt to reconcile neo-scholasticism and neo-idealism. And nor did it involve his specific promotion of neo-synthesism. Rather, it involved his apparent challenge to certain key teachings of St. Thomas. From late 1928 to late 1929, Mario wrote and published a series of critical articles on several teachings of St. Thomas. These teachings included, but were not limited to the powers of the soul, logical abstraction, and intellectual knowledge of the particular.\(^{285}\) Mario presumed a certain tension between “the spirit” and “the letter” of St. Thomas’ teachings.\(^{286}\) Thus, he framed his criticisms as an effort to shift the discussion of St. Thomas from “literality to spirituality.”\(^{287}\)

Unfortunately, Mario ended up provoking a different discussion. And it did not center on St. Thomas’ teachings. Rather, it focused on Mario’s interpretation of these teachings. And the verdict was not good. In fact, Catholic and secular critics alike panned Mario’s work. In Italy, secular critics objected that Mario’s work did not go far enough in embracing modern thought. One reviewer in *Corriere della sera* said that he did not dispute that Mario’s neo-synthesism “respects Aristotelian-Thomistic thought.”\(^{288}\) But he insisted

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\(^{285}\) See Mario Sturzo, “Il problema tomistico delle potenze dell’anima” in *Rivista di Autoformazione*, fasc. 6 (November-December 1928), Mario Sturzo, “Dell’astrazione logica secondo S. Tomasso” in *Rivista di Autoformazione*, fasc. 6 (November-December 1928), and Mario Sturzo, “Della conoscenza intellettiva del particolare secondo S. Tomasso,” in *Rivista di Autoformazione*, fasc. 5 (September-October 1929).

\(^{286}\) Mario Sturzo, “Il problema tomistico delle potenze dell’anima” in *Rivista di Autoformazione*, fasc. 6 (November-December 1928): 270, quoted in Aleo, 46-47.

\(^{287}\) Ibid.

\(^{288}\) See *Corriere della sera* (March 25, 1931), quoted in De Rosa, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 451, footnote 1.
that it “does not really respect modern thought.” Furthermore, he indicated that Mario’s attempt to reconcile scholasticism and idealism had resulted in a mess. Thus, he ridiculed Mario’s work as “neosincretismo (neo-syncretism).”

Catholic critics in Italy tended to be even more severe. In a reverse of secular criticism, some claimed that Mario’s work respected modern thought too much. In fact, in a formal note in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the editors pinned this very charge on Mario. Specifically, they accused him of drawing too much on the thought of Italian idealists like Croce and Gentile. Then building on this critique, they claimed that Mario had not just introduced subjectivist elements into scholastic thought. They declared that he had introduced nothing less than a “new system of relativism.”

Unfair as this alarming criticism was, unfortunately it did not subside. Mario was not unaware of such criticism. And nor was he unmoved. In latter half of 1930, he even tried to answer some of this criticism. But in a fateful decision, he seemed to neither modify nor moderate his work. He continued to criticize St. Thomas on the subject of knowledge, and even took on other teachings. Furthermore, Mario ratcheted up his criticism certain unnamed Thomists. In October of 1930, he wrote to Luigi to blast the apparent complacency among “Thomists” in Italy. He grumbled that there was no urgency among

289 Ibid.
290 Luigi drew Mario’s attention to this insult. See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, March 31, 1931, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 451
293 Ibid.
them to address current intellectual problems with courage and creativity. And he even attacked them for putting on “a miserable show of acute and growing fetishism and fossilism (fossilismo).” Certain Thomists apparently did not think much of Mario either. But they did not resort to private broadsides in this dispute. Instead, they sought to put Mario on quasi-public trial.

In December of 1930, the Holy Office launched an investigation into Mario’s work. As part of this probe, they ordered Mario not to release the November-December 1930 volume of his journal. And they further ordered him to send all materials related to it to Rome. Mario obeyed. But in so doing, he had his journal placed in a type of canonical limbo. In the meanwhile, Mario said nothing about the Holy Office’s investigation to Luigi. He continued to talk with Luigi about philosophical subjects in the first few months of 1931. Nonetheless, Luigi detected that something was amiss.

Luigi had noticed that the November-December 1930 volume of Mario’s journal had not come out on time. And he thought it strange that Mario had said nothing to him about this hitch. In late February of 1931, Luigi raised this concern with Mario. He told Mario he had recently read some back issues of the Rivista. And he then gently asked if the most recent volume had been released. On its face, Luigi’s question was matter-of-fact, but it seemed to hint at something more. Luigi had been closely following the contentious reception of Mario’s work. And he did not find it coincidental that Mario had suddenly stopped publishing his journal in this atmosphere. In fact, Luigi seemed to surmise that the

296 Ibid.
297 See Guccione, “Mario Sturzo il vescovo filosofo stroncato dal Sant’Uffizio e dal fascismo,” 213.
298 See De Rosa, Carteggio, vol. 2, 455, footnote 2.
300 Ibid.
Holy Office had intervened. But Mario did not immediately say whether this was the case or not. Needless to say, Luigi found Mario’s silence disturbing, inasmuch as it suggested serious trouble.

Il Monito

And serious it was. When the gathering storm of trouble finally broke, it did so with unexpected force. In early April of 1931, the Holy Office concluded their investigation of Mario’s work, and their judgment was not at all favorable to him. In fact, it was downright damning. They determined that Mario’s work contained various doctrinal errors. And inasmuch as this was true, they further determined that Mario had compromised the authority of the Holy See in his oversight of the local seminary in Piazza Armerina. Thus, they issued Mario a retraction statement and ordered him to sign it.

But this was not all. Additionally, the Holy Office further instructed Mario to read his retraction out loud at a solemn pontifical mass. And they specified that it was to be held the very next Sunday in his cathedral church. Mario obeyed. On April 8, 1931, he carried out his specific instructions in *La Cattedrale di Maria Santissima Delle Vittorie* in Piazza Armerina. On the altar, Mario read his retraction aloud to the congregation, including all of the local seminarians who were in attendance. Mario denounced “all that he had written and published in books, in the *Rivista de Autoformazione*, and in the journal *La Tradizione* of Palermo against Catholic doctrine.” Furthermore, he denounced all that he had written and published “against what the Holy See and Sovereign Pontiffs, especially in recent times,

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301 De Rosa seems to suggest as much in his comments on a letter that Mario sent to Luigi on April 9, 1931. See De Rosa, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 455, footnote 2.

302 On this incident, see Guccione, and De Rosa, “Introduzione,” *Carteggio*, vol. 1, XVII-XVIII.

303 The text of Mario Sturzo’s retraction was reprinted in *L’Osservatore Romano* on April 19, 1931. See Aleo, 40.
have inculcated, recommended, and ordered for the study of Scholastic philosophy in seminaries.”  From that day forward, Mario would not publish a single word on philosophy ever again.

On the day after his public retraction, Mario wrote to Luigi to break the news to his admonishment. Mario apologized for his recent evasion of certain topics. He lamented that there were “many things” that he had not spoken about. And he acknowledged that Luigi had asked him about these things “many times.” But in light of recent events, he figured that Luigi now understood why he had remained silent.

Mario then addressed the status of his philosophical work. He told Luigi that he would be laying it aside for good. Even so, Mario let Luigi know that he could speak to him about any and all philosophical subjects. But he made clear that their conversations about these subjects would be limited to Luigi’s “thought” alone. “My thought,” Mario advised, “let’s leave it be.” These comments were no doubt accented with sadness. But Mario nonetheless remained firm that his response was for the best going forward.

Mario acknowledged that he had to make a decision about whether to shutter his journal or not. The Holy Office had not explicitly instructed Mario to cease further publication. But in light of the scandal now enveloping him, it seemed wise to do so. Moreover, he stated that too many now saw in his journal a “struggle,” and “not a service.” Thus, he had decided to suspend the publication of the Rivista. Mario made clear that he had not reached this decision in light of “the attitude of our good friends.” Rather,

304 Ibid.
305 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, April 9, 1931, Carteggio, vol. 2, 455-456.
306 Ibid.
307 Ibid.
308 Ibid.
he said that he had been more or less pushed toward it in light of “something higher and more authoritative.” And he was not referring to God. But he figured that Luigi did not need this tongue-in-cheek comment spelled out.  

Despite the controversy now surrounding him, Mario seemed to be somewhat at peace. He confided that he was now at once “calm and resigned.” He explained that he was calm insofar as his faith rose above “the contingency of human conflict.” But he was resigned insofar as his philosophical work remained mired in it. Mario told Luigi that he had already assembled a “farewell file.” And he further noted that he had placed his “work on synthesis” in this file. Despite protests to the contrary, he insisted that it “had to go.”  

In saying this, Mario acknowledged that he could no longer renew Catholic intellectual life along philosophical paths. But there were others that remained. And there was one in particular that Mario seemed inclined toward. “I hope to achieve with prayer,” Mario declared, “the good that I have not been able to realize in my poor work.” In other words, he now aimed to renew this life along the path of holiness. But in taking up this new path, Mario made clear that he would need “many prayers.” And most immediately, he needed these prayers in discerning “the will of God” for his work in his diocese.  

Luigi readily agreed to Mario’s request. Later that same week, he wrote to Mario to let him know that he had celebrated mass for him and for his intentions. Furthermore, he let him know that he agreed his decision to suspend the Rivista. In fact, he stated that it was

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310 Ibid.
311 Ibid.
312 Ibid.
313 Ibid.
314 Ibid., 455.
315 Ibid.
316 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 459.
the “only” decision that Mario could have made “given the circumstances.” But more than anything else, Luigi encouraged Mario to remain confident in Christ. In so doing, he trusted that Christ would indeed “reward” Mario with “his sweet and abundant grace.”

Divided by distance, Luigi and Mario remained united in Christ. Thus, even as they suffered in their different types of exile, they promised to persevere through prayer and obedience.

Conclusion

Luigi and Mario each sought to move forward by pursuing sanctity. And in the subsequent months and years ahead, they would indeed pursue it in a deliberate and thematic manner. In particular, each would focus on the subject of sanctity in their respective work. But they would so in different ways. And nowhere were these differences more pronounced than in their respective consideration of philosophy. From 1931 onward, Mario would discuss sanctity in terms of mystical theology and the spiritual heritage of the Church.

But he would not say a single word about how it informs philosophy. Luigi, on other hand,

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317 Ibid.
318 In regard to embodying the promise of obedience, Aleo has remarked that “not to write philosophy any longer in obedience to the admonishment (monito) is experienced by the Bishop of Piazza Armerina as a great sacrifice of obedience offered to God.” In light of this event, it is important to note that Mario’s sacrifice presupposed a great deal of humility. On the very day that word of his admonishment reached Piazza Armerina, Mario reportedly told the rector of the local seminary to “gather the seminarians, read the pontifical admonishment to them, which I accept in full, so that they may learn from the bishop to be obedient.” See In memoria di Mons. Mario Sturzo, Vescovo di Piazza Armerina (Palermo: Tipografia Pontifica, 1942):13, quoted in Aleo, 48, footnote 54. Furthermore, it is likewise important to note that Mario’s sacrifice of obedience was no stoic act. Instead, it was an act of peace in service to entering the mystery of God’s love more deeply. In a letter to Luigi less than a month after his admonishment, Mario sought to make clear that setting aside his philosophical work was no great and painful burden as some imagined it to be. “What has happened,” Mario reported, “has done nothing but extinguish a series of thoughts in me, in order to awaken others in a peace, and in a joy in a flurry of activity that I do not know how to explain (render conto), if you do not know that God loves us more than we love ourselves.” Mario to Luigi Sturzo, May 6, 1931, Carteggio, vol. 2, 421, quoted in Aleo, 49, footnote 57. Finally, in addition to the above, Mario later clarified that, just as obedience to the Church and fidelity to God were co-principles of each other, so too were disobedience and rebellion against God. “The heretic,” Mario affirmed, “is the man who rebels against the authority of the Church, which is the expression of the authority of God, to adhere to the authority of his own mind.” Mario Sturzo, La santità nell’itinerario dell’anima in Dio (Asti: Scuola tipografica S. Giuseppe, 1935): 102-103, quoted in Aleo, 49, footnote 56.

319 See Mario Sturzo, La santità nell’itinerario dell’anima in Dio.
would not just discuss how sanctity informs philosophy. He would even go so far as to explain how it is necessary to the very practice of sociology.

In so doing, Luigi would lean on Blondel’s thought. In fact, no resource would prove to be more decisive. In applying Blondel’s thought to sociology, Luigi would seek to demonstrate that this connection was no forced marriage. And furthermore, he would seek to demonstrate that, in the context of sociology, Blondel’s thought could illuminate the immanent conditions of sanctity and of the natural-supernatural synthesis. No doubt, this was an ambitious task. But with the support of Blondel’s thought, it was a task that Luigi not only judged conceivable, but even necessary.
CHAPTER II

FOR AN INTEGRAL SOCIOLOGY

This second chapter plans to examine Luigi Sturzo’s pioneering development of “historicist sociology” from 1931 to 1935. Specifically, it plans to examine two important factors that contributed to this development. First, in terms of content, this chapter aims to detail Luigi’s indictment of philosophy in the interwar period on two key counts. Then in the wake of this indictment, it seeks to explain Luigi’s turn to sociology as a corrective. Thus, this chapter plans to first explore Luigi’s charge that philosophy, from the seventeenth century onward, had progressively separated questions of thought from questions of life. And in light of this separation, it then plans to explore his related charge that philosophy had forgotten how to conceive the immanent terms of the natural-supernatural synthesis.

Second, in terms of sources, this chapter seeks to show how, despite this indictment, Luigi turned to philosophy in his development of historicist sociology. In particular, it seeks to show how, in his own work, Luigi integrated important elements of Mario’s neo-synthesisism and Blondel’s reflections on thought. Thus, it aims to demonstrate that Luigi used the philosophical resources of each to correct the two philosophical errors mentioned above.

In service to this examination, this chapter is divided into five parts. In the first part, this chapter plans to focus on two new philosophical subjects that Luigi pursued in the immediate wake of Mario’s admonishment. Specifically, it plans to focus on what Luigi called the “heteronomy of mystery” and “human process.” In the second part, it seeks to
show how Luigi incorporated these two subjects and other previously discussed topics in his formal introduction to historicist sociology. Then in the third part, it aims to examine how Luigi’s dispute with Mario on conceiving the natural-supernatural synthesis shaped his further development of historicist sociology. In the fourth part, it plans to chronicle Luigi’s extensive study of Blondel’s two volume work *La Pensée*. And finally, in the fifth part, it seeks to show how Luigi adapted this very work in his elaboration of historicist sociology.

**Part I: New Subjects**

In the month after Mario’s admonishment, Luigi did not talk to Mario all that much about philosophy. Needless to say, the impact of Mario’s admonishment was still raw. Mario had promised to withdraw from public commentary on philosophy, and now he had to adjust. Thus, he understandably preferred to talk about other subjects.

But it did not take long for the two to return to the subject of philosophy. In fact, barely a month after his admonishment, Mario raised this very subject with Luigi. On May 15, 1931, Mario called attention to a recent debate between two Italian Catholic philosophers on the problem of authority in philosophy.¹ He noted that the debate had spilled over into the related problem of theology’s authority in philosophy. Mario did not dive into the details of this debate. But he did encourage Luigi to review it. And he even prodded Luigi to treat the problems that it focused on.

Luigi readily obliged. Over the next two weeks, he read through the various exchanges in the debate. And not long after, he summarized his findings to Mario. Overall, Luigi found the debate “interesting,” inasmuch as it attempted to delineate philosophy and

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¹ Mario to Luigi Sturzo, May 15, 1931, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 476. The two philosophers in question were Antonio Banfi and Agostino Gemelli. From December of 1930 to April of 1930, they each hashed out their differences in *La civiltà moderna*. See De Rosa, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 476, footnote 1.
theology. Yet despite this attempt, he nonetheless thought that it departed from faulty premises. Specifically, Luigi claimed that the debate’s interlocutors placed philosophy and theology far too much in “contraposition” to each other. In support, he pointed to their definitions of each science. He noted that, on one hand, they each seemed to define philosophy as “systematic knowledge of the rational.” And on the other, they each seemed to define theology as “systematic knowledge of the super-rational (super-razionale).” Thus, in virtue of their contrasting objects, they indicated that philosophy and theology supply separate types of knowledge, each impermeable to the other.

In response, Luigi disputed the soundness of dividing philosophy and theology from each other. He argued that it did not square with life in the concrete. Specifically, he claimed that life is “not divisible.” And building on this point, he indicated that, in the concrete, neither are the distinct objects of knowledge in philosophy and theology. In this light, Luigi maintained that philosophy bears on all knowledge of “rational and historical” elements, including those of the “super-rational.” And likewise, he maintained that theology bears on all knowledge of “super-rational” elements, including those of the “so-called pure rational.” To be clear, Luigi affirmed that, for “analytic” purposes, it is indeed “appropriate” to distinguish philosophy and theology. But he insisted that it was not at all appropriate to oppose them.

To further strengthen this point, Luigi appealed to history. In brief, he argued that the presumed “divorce” between philosophy and theology was not natural. Rather, it was a

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2 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, June 6, 1931, Carteggio, vol. 2, 488.
3 Ibid., 489.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
contingent historical development. And even more specifically, it was a development rooted in the re-emergence of rationalism in the seventeenth century. In the wake of this development, Luigi asserted that philosophy did not reject theology. And nor did it reject God in principle. Instead, he claimed that, through its modern trajectories of “pantheism, idealism, and positivism,” it transformed itself into a “theology of an imagined God.”

In reaction, Luigi noted that “Catholics” did not seek to reunite philosophy and theology. Instead, they likewise “divided philosophy from theology.” But in contrast to secular developments, they did so in a dual attempt to protect theology and purify philosophy. Thus, they quarantined theology so as to free it from the contagion of rationalism’s “imagined God.” And they similarly sequestered philosophy so as to return to a more “pure” state. Yet despite this attempt, the results proved to be damaging to each. Luigi claimed that the strategic division of philosophy and theology degraded “the nature of thought.” And he further claimed, in an important wrinkle, that it did so precisely because it “omitted the philosophy-theology synthesis” internal to thought itself.

The Mystical and the Philosophy-Theology Synthesis

The idea of the “philosophy-theology synthesis” was certainly new. And in light of Luigi’s argument above, it certainly seemed like crucial element in the reconciliation of philosophy and theology. But Luigi had said little about it so far.

In his next letter, Luigi say a bit more about the “philosophy-theology synthesis of thought,” but not much more. For the most part, Luigi drew attention to this synthesis in

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
order to support another previously discussed argument. That is, he drew attention to it in order to support his argument for the necessary presence of the mystical element in thought.

Like his previous discussion of the mystical element, Luigi turned to “positive religion” to make his case. To start, he laid out three interlocking premises. First, “every theology,” save “pure speculation,” has “reference to a positive religion.” Second, “every positive religion has its formation in a tradition.” And third, every tradition, whether in “pure form or impure admixture, derives from the revelation of God to man,” at least in general terms. Based on these premises, Luigi made a novel determination about the immanent terms ingredient to theology. “All historical theology,” he concluded, “has then a mystical content-limit.” Luigi did not immediately define this “content-limit,” but he did emphasize its significance. Specifically, he asserted that it was significant inasmuch as it belongs to “philosophy-theology synthesis of thought.”

The connection between the two was important to Luigi’s argument against the presumed opposition of philosophy and theology. Luigi maintained that, just as rationalism had sought to resolve theology into philosophy, so too had it sought to resolve the mystical into the rational. And like the first erroneous resolution, the second similarly resulted in undermining the integrity of thought. To restore this integrity, Luigi insisted that it was vital “to maintain the mystical element in its autonomy.” And to be clear, he insisted that it was vital precisely because it supplied philosophy with an “external limit.” In other words, it set the boundaries of philosophical inquiry. Thus, unless the mystical element was restored to its proper place in thought, it seemed that rationalism could not be checked.

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15 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, June 9, 1931, Carteggio, vol. 2, 490.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
Luigi stressed that the external limit of the mystical was not arbitrary. And nor was it external to thought itself. In fact, he claimed that it derived from “the internal limit” of what he called “the heteronomy of mystical-rational thought.” Luigi had previously gestured toward the idea of this heteronomy in his account of the rational and non-rational elements of knowledge. But this was the first time that he had explicitly mentioned the idea. Like his prior elaboration on the rational and irrational elements of knowledge, Luigi employed the idea of “the heteronomy of mystical rational thought” for a similar purpose. That is, he employed it to draw attention to neglected elements ingredient to thought itself. But unlike his prior elaboration, Luigi put the latter idea to work for a further purpose. Specifically, he called attention to “the heteronomy of mystical-rational thought” to show that philosophy was unable, by its own resources, to explain the entire content of thought. In other words, it demonstrated the limits of philosophy’s grasp.

On the flip side, Luigi likewise focused on “the heteronomy of mystical-rational thought” to demonstrate the promise of philosophy’s reach. That is, he focused on it to show how philosophy opened up internally to extra-philosophical dimensions of thought like the mystical. Nonetheless, Luigi made clear philosophy’s opening to the mystical did not entail understanding it. Thus, a further opening was needed. In this light, Luigi argued that, in order to understand the content of the mystical, philosophy had to open up to extra-philosophical authorities. And specifically, he argued that it had to open up to the authority and competency of positive religion. Unfortunately, it was a step that many in philosophy apparently refused to take.

21 Ibid.
22 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, August 19, 1928, Carteggio, vol. 1, 292-293.
Luigi lamented that this refusal was harmful to philosophy’s very exercise and authority. He made clear that opposing “external religious intervention” in philosophy did not just deny “the heteronomy of thought.” In fact, he stated that it had the further knock-on consequences of “impoverishing the mystical element” and “reducing thought to pure rationality.” These were grave consequences indeed. But Luigi insisted that the gravest of them all was philosophy’s self-imposed inability to “represent the living concrete.” Thus, he concluded that inasmuch as philosophy was unable to soar to the heights of its inquiry, it was unable to penetrate the depths of life. In other words, the attempt to make philosophy sovereign had undermined not only its authority to interpret life, but even thought itself.

In an effort to impress this point on Mario, Luigi elaborated further on the idea of the heteronomy of thought. Like his previous letter, he emphasized his opposition to the division of philosophy and theology. But in a new tack to overcoming this division, he posited that philosophy and theology are each interchangeable with history. In fact, he plainly stated that each “is history and vice versa.” Needless to say, this novel assertion cried out for further clarification. In support of this task, Luigi returned to his recent claim about philosophy’s internal opening to religion. He explained that history provides ample witness to “positive religions mixed of rationality and mystery.” And in light of this, he determined that, due its opening to religion, philosophy could not deny “mystery.” And nor could it “reduce it to mere rationality.” Thus, he determined that it is necessary to acknowledge rationality and mystery as the constituting elements of thought.

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
In light of this conclusion, Luigi argued that the heteronomy of thought revealed the necessary entailment of not just one more heteronomy, but two. Specifically, he argued that it revealed the necessary entailment of “the heteronomy of the systematization of thought” and “the heteronomy of history.” He identified the constituting elements of the first as “philosophy and theology,” and those of the second as “humanism and revelation.” Then in an important suggestion, Luigi indicated that, even though each heteronomy is irreducible to the other, they nonetheless remain inseparable. And given this point, he insisted that “true history” could not be elaborated “without the conception of creation and the fall.” And nor could “true philosophy” could be elaborated “without the conception of the mysterious absolute” in historic religion.

The Heteronomy of Mystery

In a subsequent commentary on the heteronomy of thought, Luigi drew attention to one final heteronomy. And it is important to note that, in so doing, he put forward a preliminary sketch of how the supernatural is implicated in thought itself. Specifically, Luigi drew attention to what he called “the heteronomy of mystery.” Unlike his previous letter, he did not identify the constituting elements of this heteronomy. Rather, he focused on its function as an “internal limit” to thought. To start, Luigi noted that “believers” accepted “authority as an “external and social limit” to “reasoning.” And he insisted that this was no unreasonable assent. In this light, he disputed the rationalist contention that believers are not “free in philosophy” inasmuch as they accept authority as a limit. Luigi found this position naïve. He argued that rationalists did “not comprehend” that the external limit of authority

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
“is by itself internal,”34 and so is “intrinsic to reasoning.”35 And in saying this, he indicated that thought’s external limit is rooted in it very own internal limit.

Luigi then identified this internal limit as “the heteronomy of mystery.”36 And he made clear that rationalists did not and could not understand it. Luigi reiterated that rationalists denied the essential element of mystery in thought. And in virtue of this denial, he noted that they did not accept the “external authority” of historic religions to interpret this element of thought.37 In the end then, rationalists could “only conceive” such authority as an imposition on thought.38

But this was not all. In fact, Luigi claimed that, based on their shortsightedness above, rationalists lapsed into at least two further errors. On one hand, he stated that, in their effort to reduce all to “rational knowledge,” rationalist did not, in truth, reject the “super-rational” or “non-rational things (irrazionalizzabile).”39 Rather, he asserted they made “arbitrary constructions” of them. Thus, they committed some serious category mistakes. On the other hand, and worse still, Luigi decried that rationalists ignored the necessary resolution of thought in society. He noted that, inasmuch as thought implies internal and external limits, it entails a “social bond (vincolo sociale).”40 And it was precisely this “bond” that rationalists ruled out due to their individualist “prejudice.”41 Unable then to acknowledge the “heteronomy of mystery” and the “social bond” of thought, rationalism remained doubly deficient.

34 Ibid., 499-500.
35 Ibid., 500.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
Given the significant function of the heteronomy of mystery, Luigi then turned to its constituting elements. And in so doing, he outlined his vision of how thought advanced to the threshold of the supernatural. Luigi identified the constituting elements of this heteronomy as “natural” mystery and “supernatural” mystery.\textsuperscript{42} And in support, he reasserted his claim that in “our knowledge, there are always residues (residui) irreducible to rationality.” He pointed to the “non-rational” as one example.\textsuperscript{43} Luigi insisted that, unless these “residues” are acknowledged, we cannot know what is integral to “the life and fire” of our knowledge. And so inasmuch as we acknowledge these residues, we do not just employ reasoning. In fact, we employ “reasoning above reason (ragioniamo sopra).”\textsuperscript{44} Thus, Luigi suggested that, in and through this exercise, thought naturally reaches out to a term exceeding reason. And specifically, he determined that, in and through the “different grades” of this exercise, thought naturally “encounters the supernatural and intrinsic mystery.”\textsuperscript{45}

\textit{On the Idea of Process}

Luigi did not immediately say more about the natural opening to the supernatural in thought. But it did not take him too long to do so. In fact, Luigi returned to this subject just over three months later in his discussion of the idea of process. In short order, he would advance this discussion in order to accomplish two goals. First, Luigi would discuss the idea of process in order to clarify the immanent terms of the natural-supernatural synthesis. And second, he would discuss it in order to launch his emerging thematic treatment of sociology. In tandem, these two goals would assist Luigi in tracing the outlines

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
of an integral philosophy of the natural and the supernatural. And even more significantly, they would likewise assist his development of the same in the context of sociology.

In an effort to better explain the implication of the supernatural in history, Luigi turned to the idea of process. And specifically, he turned to the idea of process in human life and history. Luigi did not define the idea at first. Instead, he attempted to clarify it by parsing three distinctions. These included the distinction between God and created being, permanent and processual being, and dogma and history.

In terms of the first distinction, Luigi drew attention to the internal basis of process. He noted that, before process ever becomes “external” in historical process, it is first and foremost “interior” to us. This was so, he explained, because process is rooted in “our consciousness.” Luigi maintained that process pertained to created realities composed of “potency and act.” Thus, he made clear that this idea did not apply to God, inasmuch as God is “pure act.”

Yet, despite the clear ontological difference between created and uncreated being, Luigi insisted that, in the concrete, “processual” being and “permanent” being do not oppose each other. In fact, he plainly asserted that they “do not contradict each other.” In support, Luigi posited that, in the created realm, process links processual being and permanent being together. And he claimed that, in the moral realm, “process does not deny permanent values” like those enumerated in the “Decalogue.” On the contrary, it “actualizes

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46 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 5, 1931, Carteggio, vol. 2, 548. In this letter, Luigi challenged Mario “to explain history without the supernatural.” He argued that “naturalistic history” had led to the denial of the “supernatural in life.” And he further argued that it had led to the reduction of philosophy into “materialistic” and “idealistic” variants.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
them in human reality,” that is, in “our consciousness.”\textsuperscript{51} At the very least then, it seemed to follow that, in the concrete realm of history, processual being and permanent being coincide in us.

But Luigi took this point one step further. He did not just think that processual being and permanent being coincide in us. Rather, he thought that each is integrated in us. That is, he maintained that “the being (essere) of each individual is processual and permanent.”\textsuperscript{52} This indwelling was no doubt significant in itself. But it was especially significant in thinking about the immanent terms of the natural-supernatural synthesis. Luigi asserted that, inasmuch as processual and permanent being dwells in each of us, the “natural and supernatural merge” in our “self-consciousness and processual existence.”\textsuperscript{53} Thus, he concluded that every human being can be considered a “synthesis” of the natural and the supernatural.\textsuperscript{54}

Finally, Luigi turned to the distinction between dogma and history. And in particular, he turned to the question of how “Revelation actualizes (realizza) and historicizes (storicizza) in us.”\textsuperscript{55} At the very least, the pairing of revelation and historicism seemed to raise the problem of reconciling permanence and relativity. Nonetheless, Luigi suggested that this was only a problem insofar as the term of permanence is conceived as extrinsic to history. He stated that “history is the result of human processes.”\textsuperscript{56} And inasmuch as this is so, history necessarily participates in the mutual indwelling of permanent and processual being in us. Thus, permanent being is intrinsic to history.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 555.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 554.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 555.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 554.
For Luigi, this conclusion grounded two important points going forward. First, it established that history, inasmuch as it participates in permanent being, can receive what is “constant” like dogma without change or diminishment.\(^\text{57}\) Thus, it assuaged concerns about history’s supposed dilution of dogma. And second, it established in turn that history “does not exclude constant values” like “truth.” Thus, it undercut the pretensions of “a vulgar pragmatism.”\(^\text{58}\)

**Disagreements on the Idea of Process**

In response, Mario did not dispute the synthesis of permanent and processual being in human being and history.\(^\text{59}\) Like Luigi, he agreed that “human life” and “history” do not exist separate from God. And he added that the same applied to “thought” and “philosophy.”\(^\text{60}\) Moreover, like Luigi, Mario agreed that, in principle, every individual “knows God.” Thereby, every individual “communicates” with God “naturally, historically, and philosophically.” In sum then, Mario agreed that God and “the eternal” can be known in a “processual” and “natural mode.”\(^\text{61}\)

Nonetheless, Mario disputed the idea that the supernatural could be historicized. He indicated to Luigi that they each presumed different conceptions of history. Thus, their disagreement was in part traceable to these different conceptions. Mario set forth his definition of history as “the reconstructed life of the mind.” Furthermore, he noted that this “reconstructed life” embraced “temporality,” “history,” “philosophy,” and “nature.” But he made clear that it did not embrace “all of reality.” And specifically, he made clear that it did not embrace “the supernatural.” Mario affirmed that our “natural mode” of knowing God

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\(^\text{57}\) Ibid., 555.  
\(^\text{58}\) Ibid.  
\(^\text{59}\) Mario to Luigi Sturzo, October 19, 1931, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 555.  
\(^\text{60}\) Ibid.  
\(^\text{61}\) Ibid.
“in process, that is, in history, and in philosophy, changes with men and with the times.”

And he further affirmed that, through these changes, this mode “historicizes.”\textsuperscript{62}

But in a crucial distinction, Mario laid out why the supernatural cannot be historicized. In this effort, he clarified that revelation’s “object and mode coincide under the formality (il rispetto) of faith, and not under that of philosophy.”\textsuperscript{63} And pressing this point further, he distinguished the formal origins of philosophy and theology in clear and concise terms. Mario noted that, whereas “the analogical tradition generates philosophy,” it is “faith” that “generates theology.”\textsuperscript{64} He then drew these points together in summarizing three essential characteristics of dogma. Mario stated that “dogma is supernatural in object, fixed (immobile) in theological mode, and unfixed (mobile) in analogical-philosophical mode.”\textsuperscript{65}

Thus, he concluded that, “as fixed,” dogma “does not historicize (non si storicizza).”\textsuperscript{66}

In reply, Luigi agreed with Mario’s claim that he presumed a different concept of history. In fact, he noted that, in contrast to Mario, he defined history as “the temporal process of human consciousness.”\textsuperscript{67} Nonetheless, he disagreed with Mario’s case for the separation of history and dogma. Luigi found Mario’s case oversimplified. That is, he thought that Mario too easily ascribed history to process alone and dogma to permanence alone. Luigi did not deny the rightness of seeking to preserve the integrity of history and dogma. But he disputed whether Mario’s approach actually pulled it off. In fact, he argued that it did not.

Luigi traced deficiencies in Mario’s approach to his underlying account of the natural-supernatural distinction. He indicated that Mario had too rigidly juxtaposed the

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 555-556.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 556.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 22, 1931, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 2, 557.
natural and the supernatural. And he called attention to Mario’s treatment of “synthetic human reality” as a case in point. Luigi asserted that, in treating this reality, Mario had divided “the natural process from that of the supernatural.” And inasmuch as historical process derives from human processes, he further asserted that Mario had done the same in his treatment of history. He charged that Mario had divided history into “natural history,” on one hand, and “supernatural meta-history (suprastoria),” on the other.

In opposition, Luigi promoted a more integral conception of the natural and the supernatural. Specifically, he maintained that “nature and the supernatural (soprannatura), since creation, and the elevation and fall of Adam, reside in us (sono nell’uomo) in undividable synthesis.” Now to be clear, Luigi acknowledged that the “integrity (valori)” of each could change in virtue of “our faults.” Nonetheless, his central point still held. That is, he affirmed that, despite our faults, the “historical process” always implicates “the natural and supernatural together.” Thus, he insisted that, in “the historical concrete,” human reality cannot be divided into “natural process” and “supernatural non-process.”

Finally, Luigi distilled the basic terms of the conflict. He noted that, on one hand, Mario affirmed that, in us, “nature is processual and the supernatural (suprannatura) is not.” And on the other, he affirmed that, in us, “nature and the supernatural (suprannatura) are each processual.” In virtue of our “processual” existence, Luigi did not think that human life and history could be conceived otherwise. But he recognized that Mario disagreed. Thus, it seemed apparent that new terms were needed in order to overcome their disagreement on how to best conceive the natural-supernatural distinction in human life and history. Luigi

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
would soon take up this task. And he would do so precisely by turning to the emerging
discipline of sociology.

**Part II: Historicist Sociology**

Luigi did not immediately engage sociology in late October of 1931. In fact, over the
next four months, he hardly mentioned the subject at all. Like usual, he continued to range
over previously discussed topics in philosophy and history. And he even talked with Mario
about a few new ones like the debate about Christian philosophy in France. But just as
springtime was approaching in 1932, Luigi turned his focus to the subject of sociology.

On March 17, 1932, Luigi told Mario about a new project that he was working on. He
mentioned that he was drafting a book on the nature and development of Church-State
relations. But he had not gotten all that far. In fact, he was still writing the preface to it.
Nonetheless, Luigi indicated that he planned to approach the study of Church-State relations
from a unique perspective. In particular, he planned to approach it from the perspective of
what he called “historicist sociology.” What this approach involved, he did not say at the
moment. But he did say that he intended “to justify” it in the preface now underway.

In response, Mario expressed “lively interest” in Luigi’s proposed study. He
declared that it could make “a real contribution” to clarifying “the problem of history.”
And he even recommended a few books for Luigi to consider going forward. But Mario did
not press Luigi to explain “historicist sociology.” In fact, he did not address the subject at all.

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74 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 26, 1931, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 559, and Luigi to Mario Sturzo, December 18,
1931, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 586. In October of 1931, Luigi apparently read Gilson’s article “Le problème de la
philosophie chrétienne” in *La Vie Intellectuelle* 12 (1931). He later sent it to Mario, but it is unclear if Mario ever
read it.
75 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, March 17, 1932, *Carteggio*, vol. 3, 47.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
Nonetheless, Luigi volunteered a brief commentary on his distinctive approach a few days later. He focused on the preface to his study of Church-State relations. And in particular, he focused on its scope and aim. Luigi made clear that he did not plan to tackle the “theme of history in its entirety.” Rather, he had a much more limited and specific goal in mind. He told Mario that he intended “only to clarify” how he conceives “historicist sociology.”

In a brief preview, Luigi sketched the contours of his approach. To start, he contrasted his account of society with what he called the “ontological” account of society. Luigi noted that his account was based on three presuppositions. First, “that man is always associative and associated.” Second, “that society is none other than reality of individual man.” And third, “that individual man without society does not exist.” Thus, Luigi did not presume an ontological opposition between individual and society. Nonetheless, his position remained an outlier in sociology at the moment.

In this light, Luigi lamented that most major accounts in sociology conceived society in ontological terms. And to illustrate this point, he called attention to two predominant trajectories. He identified the first as the “positivist” account, and the second as the “idealist” account. Furthermore, he noted that the first understood society as a “bio-physical” entity, and the second understood it as either a “Spirit-Being” or “the State” itself. Yet despite these differences, Luigi indicated they each conceived society as an entity.

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
independent of human existence. In other words, each affirmed the ontological conception of society.

On a parting note, Luigi conceded that the ontological account of society possessed a certain analytical simplicity. In fact, he even considered it “an abstraction useful for understanding.” Yet, he insisted that it remained “unrealistic” at base. Thus, it was necessary to contest it. And this is precisely what he intended to do.

*From Preface to Free-Standing Monograph*

Throughout the spring and summer of 1932, Luigi focused on the development of his “historicist sociology.” In drafting his presentation, he talked to Mario about various new and old subjects that he was incorporating into it. These included transcendence, human process, different senses of history, and true and false historicism to name a few. Based on these conversations, the overall purpose of his presentation at once became clearer and grander. At base, Luigi still planned to clarify his conception of “historicist sociology.” But as his presentation developed, he did not just seek to carve out a place for his conception in the larger field of sociology. That is, he did not just seek to justify it as distinct and legitimate approach in sociology. Rather, he sought to demonstrate that sociology, inasmuch as it formally treated society in the concrete, could only be rightly conceived in historicist terms.

But this was not all. In fact, Luigi would come to set his presentation in a much larger and ultimate horizon. Inasmuch as historicist sociology treated human life in the concrete, it treated the integral reality and resolution of this life in society. Thus, it seemed apparent that it bore on the natural-supernatural synthesis in social life. In this light, as he

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
would later write, he would seek to do nothing less than “clarify the natural sociological laws of human society” and “the supernatural end they are called to.”

The ambition of this task was not lost on Luigi. And over the course of the summer of 1932, he eventually realized that his presentation on “historicist sociology” had to be expanded. That is, he realized that it could not be sufficiently elaborated in a preface alone. In turn, Luigi decided to develop the subject of “historicist sociology” as a free-standing monograph. And he had provisionally entitled it “Introduzione.” By mid-August, he had finished the opening chapter of this work, and had sent it along to Mario for review.

*Introduzione to Historicist Sociology*

Luigi articulated his theory of “historicist sociology” in his *Introduzione.* And he clarified it in terms of five key subjects. These included human process, history, the history-philosophy synthesis, historicism, and the extra-historical (*estrastorico*).

Drawing on his recent conversations with Mario, Luigi first addressed the key subject of human process. In brief, he defined “human process” as the “continuous striving toward the integral and most intimate possession of rationality.” In other words, it is the continuous striving toward “unification in rationality” by “means of knowledge and

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89 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, February 24, 1937, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 192. In this letter, Luigi clarified the distinct and related purposes of his three major works *Saggio di Sociologia*, *Chiesa e Stato*, and *Vita Soprannaturale*.

90 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, September 6, 1932, *Carteggio*, vol. 3, 132. Based on this letter, it seems that Luigi had sent his *Introduzione* to Mario sometime during the last two weeks of August or the first few days of September that year.

91 The piece in question later became the “Introduzione” to his book *La società. Sua natura e leggi. Sociologia storica* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano Edizione Atlas, 1949). This book was first published in French under the title *Essai de Sociologie*, traduit de italien par Juliette Bertrand (Paris: Librairie Bloud et Gay, 1935). Then it was later published in English under the title *Inner Laws of Society: A New Sociology*, trans. Barbara Barclay Carter (P.J. Kenedy & Sons: New York, 1944). In what follows, four notes are important. First, I assume that Luigi did not make substantial revisions to his *Introduzione* between his initial draft in August of 1932 and his later publication of it as the “Introduction” to *Essai de Sociologie* (1935). I make this assumption based on De Rosa’s comments on the conversations between Luigi and Mario about the *Introduzione*. See De Rosa, *Carteggio*, vol. 3, 156, 158, 172, 173. Second, I cite the English translation of the *Introduzione* in *Inner Laws of Society* (1944). Third, based on the text of *Essai de Sociologie*, it is important to note that Luigi did not make any revisions whatsoever to the *Introduzione in Inner Laws of Society*. And fourth, based on the Italian text *La società*, I amended a few translations in *Inner Law of Society*.

92 *Inner Laws*, xxiii-xxiv.
purpose.” Now in saying this, Luigi made clear that, the goal of “unification in rationality” does not involve dissolution into another term external to us. Thus, in opposition to positivist and idealist accounts, he asserted that human process does not involve our absorption into “Nature” or “Spirit” or other like terms.

Furthermore, Luigi asserted that it was likewise wrong to conceive the goal of human process in merely individualistic and immanent terms. Instead, he claimed that human process involves a “two-fold unification.” On one hand, he agreed that it is “immanent,” inasmuch as it is realized “in the rationality of thinking individuals.” But on the other, he insisted that it is “transcendent,” inasmuch as it is realized “in the Absolute.” Thus, each type of unification remains rooted in us, but they nonetheless differed in object. And Luigi added that they likewise differed in mode of knowing.

In explaining these different modes, Luigi seemed to gesture toward his account of the heteronomy of thought. And in particular, he seemed to gesture toward the rational and non-rational elements composing this heteronomy. Like rationality, Luigi noted that the immanent type of unification “reveals itself in us under diverse aspects of our experience.” And like mystery, the transcendent type remains only “tendential in us.” Thus, our experience of it remains “indirect” at best “under certain limited intuitive aspects.” Yet despite its limits, Luigi maintained that this mode nonetheless opens up to “mystical” and even “supernatural experience.”

In virtue of the apparent heteronomy of human process, Luigi reiterated his warning against the reduction of human process to immanent terms alone. Inasmuch as one did not

93 Ibid., xxiv.
94 Ibid., xx.
95 Ibid., xxiii.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., xxiii.
98 Ibid., xxiii, footnote 1.
heed this warning, he asserted that one of two errors logically ensued. Luigi said that one lapsed into “exasperating rational anthropocentrism” or “pseudo-humanism.” Thus, it was imperative to recognize the transcendent element in the unification of human process. In fact, Luigi stated that it was only in virtue of this recognition that one could conceive how human process opens up from within itself to the “unification of the human in the divine.”

Luigi next addressed the key subject of history. In order to clarify his historicist approach to sociology, he stated that it was necessary to define history. Or at least, it was necessary to define his use of the term. Luigi conceded that this task was indeed difficult. That is, he acknowledged that there were “many and various” definitions of history to choose from. Nonetheless, he insisted that the term was “needful to define.”

Luigi put forth three definitions currently in use. Building on his foregoing consideration, he maintained that each aligned with “the fundamental idea of human process.” The first defined history simply as “the course of events.” The second defined it as “the systematic and rational exposition of those events that are known.” And the third and final defined it as “the consciousness of the past of a determined human group as such.” Luigi observed that all three presupposed the “common element” of “thought.” But he insisted that the second definition emphasized it most explicitly. Thus, he concluded that the second definition could be considered history “proper.”

In support, Luigi explained why the other two definitions were necessarily derivative. In evaluating the first definition, he testified that it formally treated “historical process,” and

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99 Ibid., xxiv.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., xxvii.
104 Ibid.
not history itself. That is, it treated the process whereby events “become history.” And in evaluating the third, he testified that it formally considered “historical consciousness,” and, again, not history itself. That is, it considered the “recollection of events” and “their inner efficacy among determined groups.” Luigi then distilled this brief analysis to reaffirm his central point about defining history in terms of rationality. He clarified that it is “not the material of events that constitutes history.” Rather, it is “the rational systemization of events.”

Finally, Luigi used this clarification to establish rationality as the intrinsic link between human process and history. And he argued this was so inasmuch as rationality remains the principle of each subject. Laying this point out, he remarked that just as “rationality” is “the principle of operation in man,” and thereby human process, so is it the systematizing principle of history.” Thus, in grounding his historicist approach to sociology, Luigi concluded that it was essential to stress the element of rationality.

Using this point as a hinge, Luigi then elaborated on the history-philosophy synthesis in thought as the third key subject. Like his discussion of the previous subject, he again gestured toward his account of the heteronomy of thought. And in particular, he gestured toward the composition of this heteronomy in terms of inseparable historical and philosophical elements.

In light of this inseparability, Luigi suggested that history and philosophy remain somewhat interchangeable. At the very least, each supplied a distinct way of examining human activity. Luigi noted that, on one hand, history is “the rationality of existing reality,

\[105\] Ibid.
\[106\] Ibid., xxix.
\[107\] Ibid.
systematized according the general laws of human thought and action.”108 And on the other, philosophy is “the rational systemization of the general laws of human thought and action as derived from existing reality.” In other words, history is ordered to “systematizing reality in accordance with ideas,” and philosophy, to “systematizing ideas drawn from reality.”109

The direction of each inquiry was no doubt different. But Luigi emphasized that the object of each remained the same. In particular, he stated that history and philosophy each seek “the rationality that finds realization in human events according to the general laws governing reality.”110 Or briefly put, they each seek the “indestructible value of rationality.”111 Thus, based on their common object, Luigi concluded that history and philosophy “might be said to be interchangeable (si scambiano).”112

To justify this provocative conclusion, Luigi turned to the fourth key subject of his historicist approach. An in particular, he turned to the subject of true and false accounts of historicism. To start, he identified the “idealist conception” as a false account.113 He explained that it was false for the same reason that its account of society was false. The idealist conception reduced all social and historical activity to immanent terms alone. Thus, it undercut our unification in rationality through human process.

To avoid this pitfall, Luigi proposed a broader and sounder conception of historicism. And in so doing, he drew together the three key subjects that he had previously discussed. Thus, he defined historicism as “the systematic conception of history as human process,

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid., xxx.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid., xxix-xxx.
113 Ibid.
realized by immanent forces, unified in rationality, yet moving from a transcendental and absolute principle toward a transcendental and absolute end.”

The idea of conceiving transcendence as intrinsic to historicism certainly ran hard against the grain of contemporary thought. But Luigi insisted that it was necessary in order understand historicism in integral terms. To justify this point, he circled back to a problem that he had discussed earlier with Mario. Specifically, he addressed the “the problem of the unification of the contingent in the absolute.” And like his earlier address, he gestured toward his account of the tendency to the infinite as key to its solution.

But before commenting on any particular solution, Luigi first spoke in more general terms about valid and invalid solutions. On the invalid side, he placed all “monistic” systems like idealism. Luigi explained that these systems failed because they collapse the contingent into the absolute. That is, they absorbed the contingent into “the sole reality of the whole.” Thus, they foreclosed the possibility of transcendence to the contingent. In contrast, Luigi placed “dualistic” systems like his own on the valid side. He explained that, unlike the former, these systems acknowledged the irreducibility of the contingent and the absolute. Thus, they secured for the contingent “a proper existential objectivity.” And in virtue of this preservation, he further explained that they likewise opened up the possibility of a “relationship of transcendence” between the contingent and the absolute.

The justification of this possibility was indeed important. But more difficult problems remained. And chief among these was the problem of how “the absolute can be

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114 Ibid. Emphases in original.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid. Emphases in original.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid. Emphases in original.
119 Ibid., xxxi.
120 Ibid., xxx.
historicized in the contingent.” Yet, to even address this problem, one had to figure out how to conceive the unifying relationship between the contingent and the absolute in the first place. Luigi floated an initial possibility. He proposed that, like the unifying relationship between rationality and mystery in us, that between the contingent and the absolute could be conceived as “inward and immanent.” But he quickly rejected this possibility, inasmuch as it seemed to reduce the latter to “immamentism.”

Nonetheless, Luigi thought the error of immamentism could be avoided here. Specifically, he thought that, in conceiving the relationship between the contingent and the absolute, we could “find an initial immanence that suffices for unification without letting us lapse into immamentism.” Luigi pointed to the relationship between God and created being to clarify what he meant. He noted that “in creating, God does not communicate His divine nature to created being.” Instead, God communicates “an activity appropriate to created being and immanent in it.” Luigi then applied this point to the relationship between God and human beings. And in turn, he argued that the immanence of God’s activity in us is actualized without diminishment of our own. That is, he argued that our “dependence on God, rationally translated into an idea” does not hinder human activity. Rather, it “becomes a motive” in this idea for all human activity, including “religious belief and worship,” and “intellectual and moral” affairs. In this light, Luigi affirmed that “the reflection of God in creation and its laws, translated into an idea, is historicized by means of human activities.” And given this point, he concluded that the absolute is and can be historicized in the contingent.

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121 Ibid., xxxi.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., xxxii.
125 Ibid., xxxii-xxxiii.
126 Ibid., xxxiii.
Building on this conclusion, Luigi then addressed the fifth and final subject of his historicist approach. And specifically, he addressed the subject of how “extra-historical (estrastorico)” elements like the supernatural are implied in human process and history.\(^{127}\)

From the start, Luigi sought to avert the accusation of confusing the natural and the supernatural. Thus, he made two points upfront. First, in terms of origin, he affirmed that the “appraisement of the supernatural” belongs to “faith,” and not to reason.\(^{128}\) And second, in terms of operation, he maintained that extra-historical elements like the supernatural do not undermine the integrity of “immanent powers (forze)” in human process. He insisted that human process is “always realized by immanent powers (forze) unified in rationality.”\(^{129}\)

The distinction of the natural and supernatural in these two ways helped to structure Luigi’s analysis of human process. But it was his emphasis on the concrete unity of the natural and supernatural orders that truly drove it. Luigi pivoted to this emphasis in his discussion of the act of faith. To start, he indicated that, inasmuch as this act is supernatural in origin, it transcends human process. Yet, he stated that, inasmuch as it is an “act of man,” it “enters into human process,” and so takes flesh in immanent terms.\(^{130}\) Thus, he attested that, even in “supernatural revelation,” God’s work can “become for consequent and dependent human activity elements of human process and history.” In other words, whether in “nature” or “revelation,” the “divine imprint” can become incarnate in our activity.

Now in saying this, Luigi conceded that the recognition of this “imprint” presupposed an ability to interpret creation and history. Yet, despite these subjective

\(^{127}\) Ibid., xxxiv.  
\(^{128}\) Ibid., xxxiii.  
\(^{129}\) Ibid., xxxiv.  
\(^{130}\) Ibid.
conditions, he insisted that his central point still held. That is, he maintained that the divine
imprint that “historicizes itself” does “not break the laws of human process.” But in a
significant development, Luigi then extended this position even further. He claimed that the
divine imprint that “historicizes itself” does not just preserve “the laws of human process,” it
can even “be said to complete (integra) them.”\footnote{131}

This claim was no doubt alien to modern historical inquiry. In fact, given its secular
register, this inquiry seemed to rule it out from the start. Luigi acknowledged as much and
pointed to a logical consequence. In brief, he claimed that historians, “who believe that it is
not their business to admit an extra-historical beginning and term, cannot explain the divine
in human process.”\footnote{132} But even worse, he further claimed that they cannot even explain
human process in the first place. Luigi then posited that, inasmuch as historians ruled out
the implication of extra-historical elements in human process, they denied the full range of
“powers (forze) immanent” in human process. In other words, they denied “human process
in its true nature.”\footnote{133} Thus, in order to understand human process as such, Luigi determined
that it was necessary for historians to admit “the insertion of divine manifestations” into it
“as historical elements.”\footnote{134}

In light of addressing this methodological problem, Luigi addressed one last
substantive challenge to his historicist approach. And he laid this challenge in terms of two
prongs. On one hand, he reaffirmed that, in human process, revelation is “subject, so to
speak, to unification in rationality.”\footnote{135} But on the other, he insisted that revelation is not
irreducible to rationality. And he further insisted that it is “not knowable to reason.”\footnote{136}

\footnote{131} Ibid., xxxiv.
\footnote{132} Ibid., xxxiv.
\footnote{133} Ibid.
\footnote{134} Ibid., xxxiv-xxxv.
\footnote{135} Ibid., xxxv.
\footnote{136} Ibid.
Thus, it remained unclear as to how revelation’s insertion in human process can be known without reduction or even at all.

In reply, Luigi appealed to the distinction between “rational understanding” and “practical cognizance.” And in turn, he applied it to thinking about our proper mode of knowing revelation’s insertion in human process. Luigi quickly dismissed the possibility of the former. That is, he noted that, inasmuch as divine mysteries are irreducible to reason, they cannot be known by “rational understanding” in human process.\textsuperscript{137} He then turned to the possibility of “practical cognizance.”\textsuperscript{138} Luigi indicated that this term referred to something like inchoate knowledge of truths necessary for common life. And he further indicated that, inasmuch as common life is integral to human process, practical cognizance seemed like the most adequate way of recognizing the implications of human process. In fact, Luigi went so far as to assert that without it “human process itself would be incomprehensible” to us.\textsuperscript{139} Thus, if human process includes the insertion of divine revelation, it seemed necessary to turn to practical cognizance for answers.

Luigi tested this point in terms of Christian life and doctrine. He noted that Christian dogma, “historically manifested in the revelation of Jesus Christ,” has had an enduring impact on the world.\textsuperscript{140} In fact, he noted that, in “the Church,” it has become the basis for “a permanent activity in the world.” Furthermore, he stated that, inasmuch as this activity has impelled innumerable people to “action,” it has largely taken on the “character of practical rationality.” Thus, he maintained that one could “truly say” that Christian life and doctrine has “come to form part of human process” and “history.”\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., xxxv-xxxvi.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., xxxv.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
At this point, Luigi pulled his overall argument together. He maintained that to admit the insertion of Christian life and doctrine in history was to admit the insertion of revelation in human process. And he further maintained that it was only in light of this acknowledgment that a “true historicism” could be established.\(^{142}\) Luigi did not deny that historians and sociologists could adopt “different attitudes” toward revelation. But he insisted that they could not deny the insertion of revelation into human process and history. Thus, to ground a “true historicism,” he concluded that it was necessary to affirm that the “historical process has an initial causality and a finalistic term that are extra-historical and transcendent.”\(^{143}\)

**Part III: Thinking Through the Natural-Supernatural Distinction**

Right after completing his *Introduzione* to historicist sociology, Luigi expounded further on the subject of the extra-historical with Mario. And through this discussion, he raised the even more significant subject of the natural-supernatural synthesis in human life and history. The clarification of each subject would be important to Luigi’s further development of historicist sociology. But it was the latter that would be even more important to his development of other projects in the years ahead.

In the meanwhile, Luigi had to answer some of Mario’s criticisms first. And in particular, he had to answer Mario’s criticism of his discussion of the “extrahistorical” in human process. In brief, Mario did not like Luigi’s use of the term “extra-historical (*estrastorica*).” And even more basically, he did not like the term itself. In contrast to Luigi’s appeal to “extra-history (*estrastoria*), Mario preferred the term “meta-history (*soprastoria*).”\(^{144}\) And to be clear, he did not prefer this term based on etymological reasons. That is, he did

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\(^{142}\) Ibid., xxxvi.

\(^{143}\) Ibid.

\(^{144}\) Mario to Luigi Sturzo, August, 19, 1932, *Carteggi*, vol. 3, 126.
not suggest that it was better to talk about what resides above history (soprastoria) than about what resides beyond history (estrastoria). Rather, he preferred the term based on cognitional reasons. In fact, he maintained that it better captured how supernatural elements like faith are known in history and by means of history.

In support of his preference, Mario distinguished between two modes of knowing meta-history. First, he commented on the historical mode of knowing meta-history. He clarified how meta-history is known insofar as it “enters history.” Mario identified the mode in question as “extra-speculative (estraspeculativo) analogical cognition.” Though unwieldy as this formulation was, Mario insisted that it was precise. In reference to this mode, he explained that it was “extra-speculative” inasmuch as it is “cognition” of what exceeds reason’s grasp like revelation. And it was “analogical” inasmuch as it is “cognition” of historical expressions and not the source itself of these expressions.

To further clarify these points, Mario addressed the analogical expression of revelation in the act of faith. He noted that this expression was extra-speculative inasmuch as it is “unknowable” to reason alone. Thus, strictly speaking, “it is not truly known, but believed.” And he further noted that it was analogical inasmuch as it is communicated to us in terms adequate to human life and history. Thus, it belongs to the historical mode of knowing “meta-history.”

In contrast, Mario indicated that “the object” of revelation is not known in the same way. In fact, he insisted that it simply could not be in virtue of its transcendence of history. Thus, it seemed clear that knowledge of this object belongs to a meta-historical

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145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
mode. And given this point, Mario maintained that two important conclusions could be drawn. First, that assent to analogical expressions of revelation belongs to “history.”150 And second, that assent to “that which indicates the analogical terms” belongs to “meta-history.”151

In reply, Luigi did not contest Mario’s preference for the term “meta-history.”152 In fact, he was willing to grant it, so long as they agreed on its underlying concept. Rather, he contested an implied point about the natural-supernatural distinction in Mario’s defense of his preference. Specifically, Luigi pushed back against Mario’s insistence that “faith” belongs to “meta-history” alone. And in turn, he pushed back against Mario’s derivative conclusion that “faith” cannot “enter into history as history.”153 In brief, he challenged Mario’s position that faith is incomprehensible to history, and that it cannot be considered otherwise without loss of its supernatural character.

At base, Luigi accused Mario of too rigidly assigning “the natural” to “history” and “the supernatural” to “meta-history.”154 He did not find the sharp juxtaposition of “history” and “meta-history” plausible. And nor did he find its underlying juxtaposition of the natural and the supernatural plausible as well. At best, Luigi thought that these two types of juxtaposition could be useful for analytic purposes. But he insisted that they simply could not be justified in synthetic and realist terms.

In contrast to Mario, Luigi did not reduce history to natural terms alone. In other words, he did “not conceive history as a process that is exclusively natural.”155 Rather, he conceived it as a “mixed process (processo misto),” that is, as a process of “continuous

150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, August 22, 1932, Carteggio, vol. 3, 128.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
resolution of the natural and supernatural.” And building on this point, Luigi insisted that history has always been constituted in this way. In fact, he asserted history has always been so “from the day that Adam was elevated to the supernatural state” until now. And to be clear, he noted that this has remained true of history even after Adam “fell.” Thus, he maintained that the history of all peoples “does not lack supernaturality (non manca di sopranaturalità).”

Finally, Luigi clarified that his difference with Mario on conceiving the supernatural’s implication in history foundered on a pivotal problem. And in particular, he clarified that it foundered on the problem of whether history is a “species of the supernatural’s immanence (specie di immanenza del sopranaturale)” or not. Luigi affirmed that history is such a species, and Mario did not. In this light, it is not too much to say that, in view of their far-ranging debates on questions of transcendence and immanence, they all seemed to be rooted in this very problem. And furthermore, it is not too much to say that, in the wake of Pascendi, the same seemed to apply more broadly to similar debates in Catholic intellectual life. At the very least, Luigi had identified the central problem at hand in his recent debates with Mario. Through his Introduzione to historicist sociology, he had some significant strides in addressing it. But he still had a long way to go in parsing it more finely in his work ahead.

In subsequent letters, Luigi tried to persuade Mario to reconsider his position on the terms of “history.” He pressed Mario to question whether his account of history was natural or “naturalistic.” And in an even harder press, he challenged him to question whether his account of history was qualitatively all that different from rationalist accounts of philosophy. In this light, Luigi reemphasized that “true history” is “synthetic,” and thereby pertains to

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156 Ibid.
157 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, August 26, 1932, Carteggio, vol. 3, 129.
“complete and concrete reality.” Thus, it includes the insertion of “divine facts” like “Creation, Revelation,” and “the Church.” And inasmuch as this is so, Luigi concluded that “true history” is and always has been “jointly natural and supernatural.”

At first, Mario simply doubled-down on his own position. In opposition to Luigi, he argued that not all events in history could be considered events of history. But a short time afterward, he did rethink at least one aspect. In particular, Mario conceded that history was “modified and elevated” through “Jesus Christ.” He affirmed that it was “elevated” insofar as it “acquired a meta-historical element (soprastorico element).” And he likewise affirmed it was “modified” insofar as it “became a unity of temporal and universal.”

Yet, despite this small change, Luigi still found Mario’s position fundamentally flawed. In contrast to Mario, he maintained that the supernatural is not some addition to history, and thereby extrinsic to it. Rather, he insisted that the supernatural is integral to history from the very start. Luigi did not dispute that Christ’s redemption has had exceedingly significant effects on history. But he made clear that it did not divide history into “two.” That is, it did not divide history into one without meta-historical elements and another with them. In this light, Luigi reiterated that there is “only one history,” and it begins with the elevation of Adam. Thus, it is constituted by the natural and supernatural through and through.

Debating Christian Philosophy

Throughout the fall of 1932, Luigi further discussed the details of his Introduzione off and on with Mario. Yet, in the midst of these conversations, he turned his attention briefly
to the subject of Christian philosophy. On October 10, 1932, Luigi drew attention to Blondel’s most recent intervention in the debate about Christian philosophy in France.\footnote{Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 10, 1932, Carteggio, vol. 3, 148.} He told Mario that he had just read a recent review of Blondel’s latest book \textit{Le Problème de la philosophie catholique}.\footnote{Blondel, \textit{Le Problème de la philosophie catholique} (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1932).} The review noted that Blondel’s book was a formal response to the discussion of Christian philosophy at the March 1931 meeting of the \textit{Société française de Philosophie}.\footnote{See Louis Lavelle, review of \textit{Le Problème de philosophie catholique} in \textit{Le Temps} (October 9, 1932).} And it ranged over Blondel’s clarification of the conflict between faith and reason, his summation of three responses to it, and his formulation of a provisional solution.\footnote{In his commentary on this review, De Rosa notes that Lavelle outlines the three positions on the conflict between faith and reason as 1) “irreducible opposition,” 2) “an accord configuring faith and reason as two aspects of the same reality,” that is, like “the same text written in two different languages,” and 3) a symbiosis wherein reason is tasked to be the “advocate of faith,” inasmuch as it at once acknowledges that it cannot access faith, but nonetheless deems it “alone” necessary to fill the “inner emptiness” of every individual. Furthermore, De Rosa notes that Lavelle summarizes Blondel’s solution as one wherein every philosopher is tasked “to propel reason as far as possible on the way to knowledge inasmuch as it will better emerge from the interior needs of individual who alone can respond to faith.” See De Rosa, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 3, footnote, 148-149.} Luigi said that he planned to read Blondel’s book as soon as possible.\footnote{Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 10, 1932, Carteggio, vol. 3, 148.} And he encouraged Mario do to the same. At the very least, he urged Mario to read the review in question. And to twist his arm a bit further, he even let Mario know that it was already in the mail for him.\footnote{Ibid. Mario apparently did not seize the opportunity. In two follow-up letters, Luigi asked Mario if he had the review in question. But in each case Mario gave no indication that he had. See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 21, 1932, Carteggio, vol. 3, 153, and Luigi to Mario Sturzo, November 7, 1932, Carteggio, vol. 3, 160.}

Luigi had followed contributions to the debate about Christian philosophy more or less from the start. In fact, for a debate still in its infancy, he had kept a somewhat watchful eye on its development. So far, Luigi had read contributions by Blondel\footnote{Besides Lavelle’s review of \textit{Le Problème de philosophie catholique}, Luigi had already read Blondel’s article “La fécondité toujours renouvelée de la pensée augustienne,” \textit{Cabiers de la Nouvelle Journée} 17 (1930): 1-20. See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, January 17, 1931, Carteggio, vol. 2, 404.} and Gilson.\footnote{Étienne Gilson, “Le problème de la philosophie chrétienne” in \textit{La Vie Intellectuelle} 12 (1931). See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 26, 1931, Carteggio, vol. 2, 559.}
And to this list, he soon added another by Régis Jolivet.\textsuperscript{172} Thus, side-by-side, the threads of Luigi’s consideration of Christian philosophy and his development of historicist sociology ran together in late 1931. Nonetheless, Luigi gave no indication that he planned to intertwine them. And even more to point, he gave no indication that he had even thought about such a task.

By the start of 1933, Luigi had outlined the first half of his monograph on historicist sociology. In a letter updating his progress to Mario, he broke down his outline into chapters and sub-chapters.\textsuperscript{173} In general, Luigi planned to address two major subjects in the first half. These included the concretization of sociality and the different primary forms of sociality, including the family form, the religious form, and the political form.\textsuperscript{174} And in a subsequent letter a few days later, he even sketched some ideas for the second half.\textsuperscript{175}

Over the next eight months, Luigi worked on the first half of his monograph off and on. He passed along a few chapters to Mario for comment. Like usual, Mario offered a few criticisms in response. And like usual, Luigi offered rejoinders to each. But this was not Luigi’s only iron in the fire. Over this same time period, Luigi worked at even greater length on the first volume of his monograph on Church-State relations. Yet despite the time-consuming nature of each project, Luigi made significant headway on each. In fact, by early September of 1933, he had at least finished the first seven chapters of the latter work, and the entire first half of the former.\textsuperscript{176}


\textsuperscript{173} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, January 6, 1933, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 3, 177-179.

\textsuperscript{174} Luigi followed this very outline, for the most part, in the first half of \textit{Inner Laws}. He later added chapters on the secondary forms of sociality, including the economic form and the international community form.

\textsuperscript{175} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, January 10, 1933, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 3, 180-181. One of the more important ideas that he mentioned, and that he later discussed in \textit{Inner Laws}, was the “sociological diarchy” of Church and State.

\textsuperscript{176} See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, September 5, 1933, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 3, 247. In this letter, Luigi commented on the contents of his last chapter in the first half of \textit{Inner Laws}.

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At right around the same time, Luigi turned his attention once again to the debate about Christian philosophy. The debate had picked up steam over the past year, and had become a primary subject of discussion at one conference in France, and the organizing theme of another. On September 14, 1933, Luigi wrote to Mario with excitement to update him on the latter. He reported that several “Catholic philosophers” had met just three days earlier to discuss “the thesis of whether Christian philosophy can be granted or not.” And to be clear, he emphasized that this was no humdrum question. In fact, he noted that the question was “very passionate in France,” especially in light of previous contributions from “Gilson, Maritain, and Blondel.” Luigi did not know what “the outcome” of the “debate” was. But he made clear that he was looking “forward to learning” about it the once the conference “proceedings” were published.

Mario did not share Luigi’s enthusiasm. In fact, he had little regard for the debate itself. Despite Luigi’s previous coaxing, Mario had not said much about the subject of Christian philosophy. But in the wake of Luigi’s recent letter, he did not hold back. To start, Mario bluntly asserted that the question of whether there is a Christian philosophy showed “little understanding of what philosophy is.” That is, the debate did not clearly delimit “philosophical reason” to the “data of rational inquiry.” Now to be clear, Mario did

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177 The first conference was held by the Société de Études Philosophiques in November of 1932. Responding to the society’s invitation, Blondel presented a paper on the subject of Christian philosophy.
178 The second conference was held by the Société thomiste on September 12, 1933.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid. The proceeding were in fact published fairly promptly under the title La philosophie chrétienne, Juvigny 11 Septembre 1933 (Paris: Cerf, 1933).
182 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, September 19, 1933, Carteggio, vol. 3, 251.
not conceive philosophy as floating free from history. In fact, he insisted that it is “strictly tied to history.” Thus, it assumes a “specific” and “unmistakable character.”

In this light, Mario did not deny the historical existence of Christian philosophy. And nor did he deny its internal plausibility. But he did deny that it belongs to philosophy proper. In brief, Mario maintained that, inasmuch as it is historically rooted in “dogmatic truths and those related” to them, Christian philosophy is basically “dogmatic.” In other words, it is basically a theological mode of thought. Thus, Mario found the current attempt to justify Christian philosophy as philosophy wrongheaded at best. And at worst, he found it ironic, insofar as it seemed to lack any discernible Christian content. Whether Mario drew on Gilson’s very similar conclusions to make this point, he did not say. But he certainly seemed to echo them.

In response, Luigi took Mario to task on two points. First, he argued that Mario had reduced the debate about Christian philosophy to the perspective of history “alone.” Luigi did not deny that Mario was right to correct an apparent tendency in the debate to treat history’s influence on philosophy as merely “external.” But he said that, in advancing this corrective, Mario had almost entirely ignored the “theoretical point of view.” Second, Luigi further argued that Mario had conceived philosophy in an overly-narrow sense. He asserted that Mario had limited philosophy to “the philosophy of being or metaphysics,” and so had limited its consideration to abstract being. Luigi questioned whether this was defensible, “given the coincidence of some aspects of being and those of revealed being in ratiocinative knowledge.” And even more to point, he questioned whether it was defensible, given “the

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183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 For the main lines of Gilson’s position, Gilson, “La notion de la philosophie chrétienne” in Account of Meetings, Société française de Philosophie, March 21, 1931, Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie, vol. 31 (1931).
186 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, September 23, 1933, Carteggio, vol. 3, 1933.
influence of the historical data of revelation on philosophy.” In this light, Luigi said that he was inclined to agree with those in the debate like Antonin Motte, O.P. who claimed that “the independence of philosophy from Christianity remains only formal.” He did not further elaborate on this point. But in parting, he did suggest that Mario should read Motte’s most recent intervention.  

In a follow-up letter, Mario modified his attack on the debate about Christian philosophy. But he did not walk it back entirely. Instead, he focused on one of the debate’s specific strands. Mario did not identify Blondel by name. But in view of Mario’s explicit criticism of “Catholic philosophy,” it seemed clear that he had Blondel in mind. Mario did not pull his punches. In brief, he argued that “Catholic philosophy” cannot and should not be affirmed. And to emphasize this point, he asserted that anyone who claimed otherwise “speaks badly.” Furthermore, in a not so subtle pushback against Luigi, he clarified that this would remain true even for those like him who apparently “limit philosophy to being as being, that is, in the abstract.” What mattered most was not a broader or narrower account of philosophy as such. Rather, what mattered most was a proper account of Christian philosophy as historically conceived and developed.

In the end, Mario concluded that to do Christian philosophy rightly was to make the current debate about it obsolete. He reiterated to do Christian philosophy rightly was to “admit dogma.” And once “admitted,” he stated that one “has already conditioned his philosophy so as to not to bear the name of Christian philosophy.” On this point, Mario rested. And on this point, he considered the current debate “resolved.”

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187 Ibid. The article that Luigi seemed to suggest was Motte’s “Vers un solution doctrinale du problème de la philosophie chrétienne,” in La philosophie chrétienne, Juin 11 Septembre 1933 (Paris: Cerf, 1933).
188 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, September 27, 1933, Carteggio, vol. 3, 254.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
Needless to say, Luigi had his doubts. In reply, he told Mario that his criticisms of the current debate seemed to be at cross-purposes with his previous discussion of the problem of theology’s authority in philosophy.\(^{192}\) That is, it seemed to be at cross-purposes with Mario’s goal to resolve this problem in a way that did not separate philosophy from theology.\(^{193}\) Luigi did not elaborate much further. But he did note that he intended to respond to Mario through his ongoing work on historicist sociology.\(^{194}\)

**Part IV: Interpreting Blondel**

In the meantime, Luigi had a few articles and reviews to complete first. After almost ten years in London, writing stipends still remained his primary source of income. Unsurprisingly, the pay was meager and the work was irregular. Thus, Luigi was almost always on the lookout for new outlets and new opportunities. In early 1933, he just so happened to find both in the French Catholic journal *Politique*. Founded in 1926, it was dedicated to the promotion of Christian democracy in Europe.\(^{195}\) In this light, it certainly aligned with Luigi’s long-running political interests. But even more importantly, it would soon assist Luigi in developing his work on historicist sociology and beyond. The decisive factor, however, would not be the journal’s forum. Rather, it would be a common family connection between its two co-editors, Charles Flory and Charles Blondel. Each was related to Maurice Blondel, the first as his son-in-law, and the second as his first-born son.

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\(^{192}\) Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 2, 1933, *Carteggio*, vol. 3, 256. See footnote 1 in *Carteggio*, vol. 3, 256, where De Rosa traces Luigi’s remark back to Mario’s comments in a previous letter, Mario to Luigi Sturzo, May 15, 1931, *Carteggio*, vol. 2, 476.

\(^{193}\) For more on this goal, see infra Ch. 2, pg. 2, footnote 1.

\(^{194}\) Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 2, 1933, *Carteggio*, vol. 3, 256.

\(^{195}\) For more on the history of this journal, see “Politique, Prêlot et la famille Blondel” in *Luigi Sturzo e gli Intelletuali Cattolici Francesi, Carteggi (1925-1945)*, ed. Émile Goichot (Soveria Manelli: Rubbettino, 2003): 53-55.
Luigi pitched most of his ideas to Flory at first. And in turn, he worked with Flory to get his first two articles published in *Politique.* But he reached out to the latter Charles soon enough. In December of 1933, Luigi discussed some new articles ideas with Charles Blondel. Over the next three months, he floated the possibility of an article on theories of war prevention, and another on the social thought of Francesco Ferrari. And not long after, he got Charles Blondel agree to each request. Luigi even nudged him to consider some proposals from his friends in Italy, Spain, and England. But in his first few letters, he did not say a word about the latter’s more famous father.

The silence did not last long though. In late February of 1934, Luigi contacted Charles Blondel ostensibly to say that he had just finished an article for *Politique.* He noted that he had already sent it along. And he further noted that it was a quick read. But then he got down to the real business of his letter. In a sly transition, Luigi told Charles Blondel that he had just heard about the first volume of his father’s new book *La Pensée.* He had seen a recent notice about it in *Le Temps,* and indicated that he hoped to read it soon. Then without pause, he asked if he could have “the honor” of reviewing it for *Politique.* The delicacy of this request was not lost on Luigi. Thus, he tried to assuage any and all anxieties about his intended posture from the start. Luigi made clear, in a wink, that his review would not be “alien” to the journal itself. In other words, it would be positive through and through.

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197 Luigi Sturzo to Charles Blondel, December 13, 1933, *Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi,* 99-100.
199 Francesco Luigi Ferrari (1889-1933) was an original member of the *Partito Popolare.* He was later exiled to France due to his public opposition to Mussolini. Despite his short life, Ferrari founded two journals dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democracy. He established the first, *Il Domani d’Italia,* in Italy in 1922. And after his exile, he founded the second, *Res Publica,* in France in 1930.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
In response, Charles Blondel did not immediately say yes. But neither did he say no. He said he was open to Luigi’s request, but he questioned whether his father’s book would be a good fit for review. Specifically, he questioned whether his political journal would review an “essentially metaphysical” book. Nonetheless, he told Luigi that his father was “very touched” by his request and would like to thank him. And he informed Luigi that there was now a copy of his father’s book in the mail to him.

In light of this gift, Charles Blondel made clear that his father did not expect some sort of return gesture. Nonetheless, he said that his father would be “very pleased” if Luigi could prepare a review of the first volume of *La Pensée* in an English journal or two. Luigi said that he was would be “very happy” to oblige, but he was under no illusion about the work ahead. Only four weeks earlier, he had learned that Bloud &Gay had tentatively agreed to publish his monograph on historicist sociology, though it still remained unfinished. Luigi would then go forward on a dual track of interpreting Blondel’s thought and developing his historicist sociology. But the journey would not be short. Rather, it would decisively shape his work in the months and years and even decades ahead.

**First Review of *La Pensée***

Due to an extended illness in the spring of 1934, Luigi had to delay his review of *La Pensée*. Nonetheless, he reassured Charles Blondel that it would soon appear in an English journal. By July of 1934, *The Contemporary Review* had agreed to publish it. Luigi made haste to finish his review later that same month, but it would not appear until November.
Under the bland title “A French Philosopher,” Luigi commenced his interpretation of Blondel’s thought. This review would be the first of three. And at barely three pages in length, it would be the shortest by far. Furthermore, it would be the only one to focus on the first volume of La Pensée alone. Yet, despite its bland title, Luigi argued throughout his review that Blondel’s book was nothing short of remarkable.

To start, Luigi declared that it was “no exaggeration” to say that La Pensée rivaled Descartes’ Discours sur la Méthode and Leibniz’s Monadologie in terms of philosophical import. It was a bold claim no doubt. But due to space constraints, he did not develop it at great length. Instead, Luigi focused, for the most part, on two tasks. First, he identified the book’s philosophical character. He clarified that it was a study of “metaphysics, and not of “theories of cognition.” And second, he summarized its general structure and specific content. Thus, he talked in brief about thought’s progression from “cosmic” thought to “organic” thought to “psychic” thought and finally to what Blondel called “thinking thought.”

Luigi stated that the unique import La Pensée resided in Blondel’s discussion of thought’s essential “duality.” He identified Blondel’s discussion as the book’s “fundamental motif,” and argued that it was its signal achievement. Now to be clear, Luigi noted that Blondel was not the first philosopher to pin-point thought’s essential “duality.” Nor was he the first to describe it in terms of “noetic” and “pneumatic” elements. And nor even was he the first to explain the interplay of these elements in terms of a paradoxical

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211 Maurice Blondel, La Pensée. La genèse de la pensée et les paliers de son ascension spontanée. vol. 1 (Paris: Alcan, 1934).
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid., 632, 633.
215 Ibid., 633.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
“heterogeneity” and “symbiosis.” Rather, Luigi emphasized that Blondel, in analyzing this interplay, was the first to show what thought opens out toward in the end. That is, he was the first to show how, at its limit, thought opens out toward “the intervention of freedom, of an option necessarily prepared, or more or less deliberately exercised, in the presence of opposing terms.” In short, Blondel demonstrated how thought ultimately gives rise to the option to be for or against God.

In closing, Luigi asserted that Blondel did not seek to supplant the traditional proofs of God. Rather, he said that Blondel aimed to clarify the goal of thought and its necessary implications. In this regard, Blondel sought only to “to insist on the final exigency of thought.” And in turn, he sought to show how it not only “brings into play the exercise of freedom,” but “calls for the crowning intervention of the will.”

**Blondel’s Reaction**

Blondel read Luigi’s review shortly after it appeared and wrote at once to Luigi to thank him. In his letter, Blondel acclaimed Luigi’s review. He called the “most benevolent” and “most remarkable” review of *La Pensée* that he had read to date. Furthermore, he marveled at the depth and succinctness of Luigi’s commentary. In just a “few pages,” Blondel said that Luigi had been able “to convey and appreciate” not only his book’s “intentions” and “method,” but its “successive steps” and “provisional solutions.” In this light, he told Luigi that it was “truly impossible to be a more exact interpreter.”

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218 Ibid., 634.
219 Ibid., quoting Blondel, 202.
220 Ibid., 634.
221 Ibid.
222 Maurice Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, November 12, 1934, *Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi*, 110.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
Blondel acknowledged that Luigi’s review surely advanced his own philosophical work. But he insisted that it advanced an even greater cause. That is, he asserted that it promoted the search for a philosophy “more completely consonant with speculation and Christian life.” Blondel indicated that La Pensée was dedicated to this very task. He then noted that the second volume of this work was due out any day now, and he promised to send along a copy to Luigi “as soon as possible.” In the meanwhile, he said that he would lobby his son to accept Luigi’s proposal to review the book in Politique.

Blondel kept both of his promises. In February of 1935, Luigi received the second volume of La Pensée. And later the next month, he was formally asked to review it for Politique. The timing of this request was very good. Luigi had just finished his monograph on historicist sociology, and would soon approve its translation. Thus, he now had more time to study Blondel’s latest work, and it would show in his next review.

Second Review of La Pensée

After roughly three months of study, Luigi commenced his second review of La Pensée in early May of 1935. He finished it by the end of the month, and sent it off to Charles Blondel for review. During the review and translation process over the next three months, Luigi did not make any substantial revisions to it. Thus, it remained virtually

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225 Ibid.
226 Ibid.
227 Luigi Sturzo to Charles Blondel, February 9, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 112.
228 Charles Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, March 4, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 113.
229 Based on his correspondence with Paul Archambault, it seems that Luigi finished his monograph either just before the start of 1935 or just after. See Luigi Sturzo to Paul Archambault, January 1, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 267.
230 See Luigi Sturzo to Paul Archambault, March 15, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 269.
231 See Luigi Sturzo to Charles Blondel, May 6, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 114.
233 See Luigi Sturzo to Charles Flory, July 20, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 119-120.
unchanged from his initial draft. In September of 1935, it appeared in *Politique* under the title “Un problème d’orientation sociale dans la “pensée” de Maurice Blondel.”

Using the review’s title as a departure point, Luigi set out to summarize Blondel’s account of the social dimensions of thought. In particular, he set out to summarize Blondel’s account of how the problem of our “social orientation” necessarily derives from the problem of thought. In this light, Luigi suggested that Blondel’s account demonstrates sociology’s intrinsic link to philosophy. And building on this suggestion, he even went so far as to claim that it helps “to establish the basics of a sound social science.” Luigi developed this claim in four parts.

First, Luigi focused on Blondel’s clarification of the duality of “thinking thought (pensée pensante).” Like his earlier review, he noted how Blondel distinguishes this duality into “noetic” and “pneumatic” dimensions. But unlike his earlier review, he noted how Blondel examined it in order to explain “the innovative character of human thought.” Luigi made clear that, for Blondel, the noetic and pneumatic dimensions of thought are not “modalities which alternate” or “qualities which fuse” or even “systems which integrate.” Rather, they are essentially “two heterogenous thoughts, belonging to the same human thought.” Thus, in virtue of “their origin” and “their actual function,” they cannot give rise to a “complete and completed unification.”

Yet, despite this incompleteness, Luigi remarked that Blondel nonetheless insisted that the noetic and pneumatic dimensions of thought do not collapse into the “thinking

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235 Ibid., 701.
236 Ibid., 698.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid., 699.
239 Ibid.
Instead, Blondel argued that they “spark in us the continual tension toward a term of pacification and synthesis always sought,” even though it “always escapes immediate view.” That is, they indicate an orientation in our thought toward a term that “is not and cannot be solely individual.” And so they impel us to search for this term in our social life with others.

Second, building on this point, Luigi then turned to Blondel’s emphasis on the social nature of thought. He noted that, for Blondel, “thinking thought, even if it is enclosed in the most intimate part of our mind,” is always “by itself a social act.” In this light, thought is not social in consequence, but in constitution. Or in other words, it is not social by external effect, but by intrinsic necessity. Thus, there can be no such thing as an “incommunicable thought.”

Luigi then applied this conclusion to the task of defining society. He explained that, inasmuch as society is rooted in thought, it is not first and foremost “a gathering of men living under common laws.” Rather, it is the “thought” or “consciousness of communion.” In light of this definition, Luigi determined that society is “never perfect” and cannot ever be, inasmuch as it rooted in thought, and thought is “never finished.” Instead, like thought, society is “a beginning and a continual perfecting,” stretching out toward “a coveted and never won future.” Thus, like thought, it is ever dynamic and ever insufficient. To think otherwise would not just undercut society, but even lead to its “fatal stagnation.” Luigi asserted that if society presumed to rest in some sort of immanent term like the State, then it would lose its essential “orientation to the future.” And if it lost this orientation, it

240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
245 Ibid.
would not just “weaken,” but even “dissolve.”²⁴⁶ In the end, Luigi maintained that society lives and moves and has its being as “a type of thickened and implicit thought.”²⁴⁷

Third, in virtue of society’s rooting in thought, Luigi argued that Blondel’s work supplies the outlines of an adequate sociology. That is, he asserted it helps “to establish the basics of a sound social science.”²⁴⁸ Luigi turned to Blondel’s account of the noetic and pneumatic dimensions of thought to make his case. Like the noetic dimension, he noted that society, on one hand, appears “as a stable armature, an organic fixity, and a logical unchangeable rationality.”²⁴⁹ And like the pneumatic dimension, he likewise noted that society, on the other, is “constituted by the always mobile and dynamic coexistence of individuals.”²⁵⁰

At the very least, Luigi claimed that Blondel’s work helped to obviate the possibility of “an isolating individualism and an absorbing collectivism” in social science.²⁵¹ Inasmuch as thought, on one hand, “tends to manifest or bind the links which make human beings an integral assembly,” it rules out the former.²⁵² And inasmuch as thought, on the other, “tends to constitute the original center of perception, of awareness and activity, in brief, of persons,” it rules out the latter.²⁵³ In the effort to find an adequate ground for society, Luigi was quick to note that Blondel’s work is not simply negative. In fact, he maintained that it illuminated the only sound basis for society: the “man-person.”²⁵⁴ Luigi insisted that it is only the “man-person” who can supply society with a sound and secure foundation. That is,

²⁴⁶ Ibid.
²⁴⁸ Ibid., 701.
²⁴⁹ Ibid., 702
²⁵⁰ Ibid.
²⁵¹ Ibid., 701
²⁵² Ibid., quoting Blondel, *La Pensée*. vol. 2, 158.
²⁵³ Ibid.
²⁵⁴ Ibid., 702.
given “the orientation of his thought” and “the effort to realize it,” it is only the “man-
person” who “can give society a concrete, stable, and dynamic form.”255

Now in saying this, Luigi made clear that, like the human person, society is not and
cannot be an ultimate satiating term. Drawing on Blondel, he rejected any and all attempts
to construct a perfect society as “faulty” from the start.256 In short, no society here “below”
can “satisfy human thought and aspiration.”257 To claim otherwise was to conjure up a
“mirage” that was “harmful to the individual and society,” inasmuch as it “freezes both in a
bewitching and unreal circle.”258 And given that society “never finds in itself the pacification
of thought,” Luigi indicated that it must rest in some other term.259

Fourth, in the effort to discover this term, Luigi recommended Blondel’s proposal in
the final two chapters of La Pensée. He noted that, once the search for an immanent term of
completion had been exhausted, it was necessary to examine “the reasons of spiritual life and
of the interior way up to the absolute limits of mystery.”260 In so doing, Luigi noted that it
prepares a bridge to Blondel’s “forthcoming volumes on being and acting.” But even more
importantly to the task at hand, he asserted that it clearly illumines the “problem of social
orientation.”261

Luigi reiterated that, in his use of the term “social,” he meant “all the relations of
associated life.”262 And he further reiterated that these “relations” can only be considered
“truly human” insofar as they “rely on thought as the essence of conscious life,” that is, “as

255 Ibid.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid., 703.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid., 708.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
the light that enlightens the finalities of human action.”263 In other words, the problem of social orientation is none other than the problem of human thought and action. Applying this point, Luigi stated that, inasmuch as society “cannot be an end to itself,” its orientation “must coincide with the final orientation of individuals.”264 And inasmuch as thought’s final orientation seeks a term that it alone cannot provide, the same must be said of society’s final orientation.

In the end, Luigi stated that society’s “fundamental insufficiency” brings us to “the threshold of mystery.”265 But even here society’s final orientation does not rest. Rather, it points one step further. Inasmuch as one “surpasses” himself in society “through the interior life of the spirit,” Luigi testified that one “can form a connection (conjunction), not only speculative and ethical, but even spiritual with God.”266 Thus, society’s final orientation brings us to the mystery of God. And in so doing, it “renders us fluent (nous rendra facile)” to offer “a meritorious response.”267 Luigi certainly left much unsaid about the details of this orientation’s final step and response. But he would soon comment further on each in his third and final review.

**Third Review of La Pensée**

Soon after completing his second review of *La Pensée*, Luigi was commissioned to write a third for *The Hibbert Journal* in June of 1935. Lawrence Jacks, the journal’s editor, had initially been reluctant to approve such a review. He worried that Blondel’s work was too “highly technical” for the journal’s audience.268 Nonetheless, after a few months of lobbying,

263 Ibid.
264 Ibid., 709.
265 Ibid., 710.
266 Ibid., 709, 710.
267 Ibid., 710.
Luigi eventually prevailed on Jacks. As like his previous two reviews, Luigi was given wide latitude in the drafting stage. But unlike the previous two, he was asked to address at least one discrete issue. In particular, he was asked to address the apparent “affinities” between Blondel and Bergson on the “distinction between movement and the concept of movement.”

Luigi reached out to Blondel to help him clarify this subject, and Blondel was happy to oblige. In a lengthy reply, Blondel laid out his work on movement and the concept of movement. And in turn, he contrasted it with Bergson’s work on the same in at least three ways. First, Blondel distinguished his work from that of Bergson’s in terms of the idea of transcendence. He noted that Bergson’s “philosophy of duration” and “immanence” prescinded from such an idea throughout. Thus, lacking a “precise notion” of transcendence, Bergson conceived “creative evolution” as proceeding from “a force behind.” And to be clear, for Bergson, this “force” is the “élan vital.” In contrast, Blondel stated that he conceived this evolution or “created beginning” as proceeding from “a transcendence” above “already in act.” In this light, this beginning, “where all levels mark at once the active presence of organizing reason and a directed cooperation,” cannot be driven by a merely immanent “élan vital.” Rather, Blondel insisted that it must be stimulated by a “divine plan,” and no less.

Second, in light of this difference above, Blondel further distinguished his work from that of Bergson’s in terms of his treatment of becoming. He noted that Bergson collapsed all becoming into his philosophy of duration. In contrast, Blondel stated that he set out “to

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269 See Luigi Sturzo to Maurice Blondel, June 19, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 116.
270 Ibid.
271 Maurice Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, June 23, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 116-118.
272 Ibid., 117.
273 Ibid.
reintegrate all becoming in a philosophy of eternity and transcendence." And to be clear, he did so “not in order to depreciate the value of phenomena or beings in development.” Rather, he did so “in order to link them solidly,” as “secondary causes,” to “the First Cause.”

Finally, in light of the preceding differences above, Blondel sharply differentiated his work from that of Bergson’s in terms of his treatment of movement. He asserted that Bergson basically conceived movement as “the sole subsistent reality,” and thereby “his God.” And then pivoting to Bergson’s discussion of the source and term of movement, Blondel indicated that he found it even less plausible. In short, he considered it a mess. In support, he noted that Bergson discussed “moving without indicating if it is that which is moved or that which is moving.” And he further noted that Bergson discussed it “as if the fact of the mobile image can suffice as a reality independent of the invisible cause and ultimate reality of things moved and moving.” In contrast, Blondel affirmed that he sought “the explanation and point of movement in a superior order of space and time.” Thus, he attempted to show how “the solidity of creatures consists in their final linking (rattachement) to their first cause and their supreme end.” In this light, he aimed to show how all existence, and the “whole movement” it depends upon, is ultimately “found reintegrated” and “solidified in the eternal consistence of God.”

In response, Luigi told Blondel that he was very grateful for the latter’s clarification. Yet, despite this clarification, Blondel felt compelled to give his thought

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274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
276 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 Luigi Sturzo to Maurice Blondel, June 29, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 118.
greater context. The distinction of his work from that of Bergson’s was no doubt important. But he indicated that even more important was the distinction of his work from that of his neo-scholastic critics. Luigi had already expressed an interest in how neo-scholastic critics had recently parsed Blondel’s. And Luigi had even requested copies of their studies in preparation for his upcoming review of La Pensée.

Blondel soon had Flory pass along a few of these studies. But in the meanwhile, he attempted to summarize a few of the more important for Luigi. Blondel drew attention to studies by Carlo Mazzatini and by M.M. Gorce, O.P. And he especially recommended another by Gaston Rabeau, inasmuch as it corrected several “misunderstandings” in the two just mentioned. But the review that he focused on most was a very recent one by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. Blondel had taken issue with a few points in this review, and had subsequently reached out to Garrigou-Lagrange about them. In light of this exchange, Blondel was happy to report that Garrigou-Langrange had not only reconsidered his initial critique, but had even “modified his attitude” toward him. Furthermore, Blondel mentioned that Garrigou-Langrange had even agreed to publicly pronounce his “acquittal” in upcoming issue of the Revue thomiste. Whether this signaled a more general shift in the attitude of neo-scholastics toward his work, he did not say. But it was indeed promising.

282 Luigi had apparently requested these studies from Charles Flory sometime in July or early August 1935. See Maurice Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, August 8, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 121-122.
283 Maurice Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, August 8, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 121-122.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid. Garrigou-Lagrange had invited Blondel to respond to his recent critique in the Revue thomiste. In turn, Blondel wrote “Fidélité conserve par la croissance meme de la tradition,” Revue thomiste, 40 (November-
Luigi finished his third and final review of *La Pensée* about a month after Blondel’s note. He sent a draft to Charles Blondel soon after, and asked if his father could read it over. In a quick turnaround, the elder Blondel thanked Luigi once again for his “multiple testimonies” to “my philosophical effort.” Moreover, based on the draft testimony that he now had in hand, he said that he was even more confident that the “English public” would be “interested in a method and approach quite different from the intellects they are accustomed to seeing.” Nonetheless, Blondel asked Luigi if he could make at least one change. Luigi had apparently provided a brief survey of the controversies surrounding Blondel’s work and his eventual vindication. Blondel gently noted that he did not think it was “helpful” to re-litigate “the mistakes of a time already distant.” He did not dispute that he had suffered “incomprehensible severities” in the past. But he insisted that they had now virtually “disappeared.” Still, Blondel conceded that a redoubt or two of criticism remained like the “Institut catholique de Toulouse.” Yet, despite their resistance, he dismissed these places as on the wane. Thus, he encouraged Luigi to ignore them.

It is unclear if Luigi modified his third and final review of *La Pensée* based on Blondel’s comments. He might have scaled back his historical introduction to Blondel’s work, but he certainly did not drop it. At the beginning of his review, Luigi commented in brief on the controversy surrounding Blondel’s first major work *L’Action*. In the immediate wake of its publication, he asserted that Blondel had been “wrongly classed” among the

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293 Ibid.
“immanentists” and the “pragmatists.” And he further asserted that “anti-modernists” had wrongly placed him “side-by-side” with “Tyrrell, La Berthonnière,” and “Loisy.” He noted that, unlike the other three, Blondel was “never condemned.” Furthermore, Luigi stated that Blondel had subsequently “withstood the assault” of other foes, including “formalist rationalism, neo-thomist intellectualism,” and “Bergsonian intuitionism.” Yet despite these assaults, he said that Blondel had managed to thrive in his work. Luigi considered this fact “remarkable” and deserving of attention. Thus, he commended Blondel’s work on thought not just to “philosophers,” but “every cultured person.”

In another part of his review, Luigi seemed to show much greater deference to Blondel’s recent comments on Bergson. In fact, in a section addressing differences between Blondel and Bergson, he seemed to draw directly on them. Luigi called attention to Bergson’s idea of “evolution créatrice,” and noted that Blondel did not endorse it. He explained that, unlike Bergson, Blondel did not conceive the “movement” of thought as proceeding from a “vis a tergo,” that is, a force from behind. Rather, he noted that Blondel conceived it as proceeding from a “fresh transcendence in the process of thought,” albeit one that “cannot and should not be dissociated from immanence.” Finally, he contrasted Blondel’s “élan spiritual” with Bergson’s élan vital, noting that the former originated, not in “material causes” down below, but in “an original creativity” from above.

For the most part, Luigi ranged over material that he had previously covered in his first two reviews. He even duplicated several paragraphs from his second review almost

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295 Ibid., 341.
296 Ibid.
297 Ibid., 342.
298 Ibid.
299 Ibid., 345.
300 Ibid.
301 Ibid., 349.
302 Ibid., 350.
verbatim. Nonetheless, his final review did have some unique elements, and the most notable appeared toward the end. There Luigi commented on Blondel’s account of the “exigency for God” implicit in thought itself. He called it “one the most characteristic aspects” of Blondel’s work. And he stated that it was one of the most crucial, inasmuch as it linked Blondel’s “philosophy of insufficiency” to his “philosophy of superabundance.”

In elaborating the “exigency for God,” Luigi noted that Blondel first asked whether thought can “reach the idea of God and catch a glimpse of His infinite reality.” And to be clear, this was no discrete problem of thought. Rather, Luigi explained that, for Blondel, it is the problem underlying all other problems of thought. But the problem had to be conceived properly. In this regard, Luigi remarked that Blondel insisted that it is to be conceived “not as something clear, logical, and mathematical, but inward, insinuating,” and “stimulating.” In other words, the idea of God is to be conceived, not as an object to be reached in thought’s journey, but as the ever present term impelling it from the start.

Luigi emphasized that this term remains ever mysterious to thought. In fact, he noted that, for Blondel, the idea of God manifests itself in various ways. Thus, “at one moment,” it can appear as “a sense of emptiness that constrains us to a movement of transcendence.” At another, it can appear as “the joy of possession of truth that brings us near to Him.” And still at another, it can appear as “an inner darkness that makes us feel the throbbing life of the spirit, hungering for absolute perfection.” Thus, Luigi noted that Blondel did not hang access to the idea of God on the traditional proofs for God’s existence alone. Nonetheless, he made clear that Blondel “neither rejects nor attenuates” them.

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303 Ibid., 353.
304 Ibid.
305 Ibid.
306 Ibid., 354.
307 Ibid.
Rather, Blondel attributed “maximum efficacy to their ensemble in the inner vitality of thought.” But in order to do so, it is necessary to re-conceive the traditional basis for the proofs for God’s existence. In brief, it is necessary to re-conceive the idea of contingency.

In this effort, Luigi explained that Blondel sought to root the idea of contingency in us more integrally. Specifically, Blondel aimed to overcome its reduction to “space or time” or “limitation or number or other abstract ideas.” In other words, he aimed to overcome its reduction to “a logical concept external to our spirit.” In contrast, Luigi clarified that Blondel rooted it in the “intrinsic nature of our thought.” And in so doing, Blondel demonstrated that how the idea of absolute, inasmuch as it remains “touchstone of all our ideas,” penetrates our thought “by an inner necessity.” Thus, Blondel showed how thought lives and moves and has its end in the idea of God.

Finally, Luigi touched on how the very necessity of the idea of God does not just enhance our freedom, but even occasions it. To be clear, he noted that, for Blondel, the necessity of the idea of God does not diminish our contingent and even deficient grasp of it. In fact, he remarked that the recognition of this deficiency is essential in the itinerary and completion of thought. For Blondel, the idea of God, by virtue of its deficiency in us, not only begets “a principle of freedom” and “a source of responsibility” in us. It even goes so far as to beget “a destiny that does not allow human thought to enclose itself in a stabilized, isolated, and self-contented philosophy,” exclusive of “all other spiritual disciplines.” Thus, at the end of its “dialectical effort,” thought opens itself up through an “intellective option” to be assimilated to the presence of God or not.

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308 Ibid.
309 Ibid.
310 Ibid.
313 Ibid., 355,356.
Part V: Adapting Blondel

After a more than year-long study of La Pensée, Luigi had accomplished much. He had produced three reviews of this two-volume work. He had earned Blondel’s admiration and respect. And he had even made strides to get La Pensée published in English. But it is important to note that over this time Luigi did not just interpret and promote Blondel’s work on thought. He even adapted it in his own monograph on historicist sociology.

In his initial effort, Luigi did not draw on each volume of La Pensée. Rather, he limited it to the first volume alone. In fact, he could not have done otherwise. Luigi received the second volume of La Pensée only after he had completed his monograph on historicist sociology in late December of 1934. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that Luigi drew on at least one discrete area of Blondel’s work, and that he applied it toward the end of his monograph.

Dual Dualities

It seems clear that Luigi adapted Blondel’s work on the duality of thought. And the evidence can be found in Luigi’s account of what he called the “sociological duality.” Like Blondel, Luigi rooted this duality in human nature. And like Blondel, he distinguished it into two elements. Furthermore, like Blondel, he characterized these two elements in terms of a mutual irreducibility and inseparability. In other words, he characterized them as heterogenous and integral to each other. The similarity between Blondel’s duality of thought and Luigi’s sociological duality was not just nominal. Nor was the similarity between the characteristic of the former and the characteristics of the latter just coincidental. Rather, Luigi based his account of the sociological duality on two of Blondel’s discussion in the

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314 See Charles Flory to Luigi Sturzo, December 5, 1934, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intelletuali Cattolici Francesi, 111.
315 Luigi Sturzo, Inner Laws, 246.
excursus to the first volume of La Pensée. In particular, he based his account on Blondel’s discussion of the diversity of thought’s convergent operations, and on Blondel’s explication of the noetic and pneumatic elements of thought. Now to be clear, Luigi did not cite Blondel in his discussion of the sociological duality. And nor did he cite Blondel in his monograph at any point before or afterward. Nonetheless, he did rely on Blondel in advancing this discussion, and he even employed some of the very same words and phrases that Blondel used.

Before identifying these specific appropriations though, it is important to turn to what immediately led-up to them in Luigi’s monograph. At the beginning of his chapter on duality, Luigi argued that everything that is social, inasmuch as it derives from human nature, is formed by a duality composed of three distinct pairings. These include “the ideal and the practical, the spiritual and the material,” and “the finalistic and the conditioned.”

Moreover, he stated that this duality is expressed and extended throughout all area of social life. It finds realization then in “philosophy, art, religion, politics,” and “economics” to name a few. To be clear, Luigi insisted that this duality is not some “mere tendency” or “transient expression” of social formation. Rather, he asserted that, in “the concrete,” it remains a permanent feature of “all the diversity and variety of life.”

In acting according to this duality, Luigi noted that institutions are formed. Now in saying this, he clarified that, by institution, he did not mean some mere “legal construction.” And he certainly did not mean some separate entity “outside and above the wills that bring it into being.” Rather, by institution, Luigi meant “the crystallization of the

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316 Ibid., 241.
317 Ibid.
318 Ibid., 243.
diverse currents of activity in structural form.” And he further elaborated that through this form, these currents became “permanent organs and means for achieving determined ends.” In this light, the institution is not just an “outcome” of human activity and its ends, but its “objectification.”

Luigi then laid out how the sociological duality is manifest at every moment of the historical process. He mentioned that it tends to appear as a conflict between static and dynamic considerations of particular organizations and sometimes even the same organization. For example, he noted that, on one hand, some defend the stability of organizations, and thus “shrink from changes.” And on other hand, some do not, and thus seek to “modify” them in the name of “an ideal justice, a wider prosperity,” or even “an overcoming of evil.” Luigi then defined these distinct and opposing attitudes in terms of “two currents.” He said that former represents “organization in act,” and the latter, “the urge toward its becoming.”

In defining the sociological duality in terms of “two currents,” Luigi seems to have drawn directly on Blondel’s discussion of the initial interior receptivity of thought. There Blondel notes that, in the “Semitic tradition,” this receptivity has been conceived as a type of “divine illumination.” Now in saying this, Blondel makes clear that, inasmuch as this receptivity does reveal itself through positive determinations, it can only be discovered and appreciated through “negative means.” It is thereby necessary to make an inventory of thought’s halting movement through “opinion, doubt,” and “reflection.” Yet despite the

319 Ibid.
320 Ibid.
321 Ibid., 246.
322 Ibid.
323 Ibid., 247.
325 Ibid.
dangers of these imperfections along the way, Blondel insists that we can make progress in
discovering thought’s initial receptivity “through the development of personal life.” 326 In
particular, he maintains that, through this development, “the truth” of this receptivity
“germinates in our consciousness.” 327 Thus, in thought’s journey, the “agitation” of our soul
does not necessarily diminish this truth. 328 In fact, it can function as a “sign of the interior
conception,” originally “generated in the heart.” Finally, given this “interior conception,” or
at least its “sign,” Blondel claims that one could then understand how “two currents derive”
from it. 329

Luigi seems to have made use of Blondel’s subsequent identification of these two
currents and his clarification of their relationship. A comparison of their respective texts
appears to make this clear. Immediately after mentioning these “two currents” in his
excursus, Blondel identifies them as “a development of a learned conceptualism” and “a
deepening of the mystical life.” 330 For his part, immediately after mentioning these “two
currents” in his discussion of the “sociological duality,” Luigi identifies them as the
“organizational” and the “mystical.” 331 Moreover, Luigi seemed to make use of Blondel’s
clarification of the relationship between the two. Right after identifying the “two currents”
in question in his excursus, Blondel states that they at once “oppose each other” and “tend
to rejoin and complete each other.” 332 And for his part, right after identifying the “two
currents” in question in the discussion above, Luigi states that they constantly engage “in
conflict” and “in cooperation” in pursuit of a particular end. 333

326 Ibid., 261-262.
327 Ibid., 261.
328 Ibid., 262.
329 Ibid.
330 Ibid.
331 Sturzo, Inner Laws, 247.
332 Blondel, La Pensée, vol. 1, 262.
333 Sturzo, Inner Laws, 248.
But Luigi went even further in his adaptation of Blondel’s work. And evidence for this can be found in Luigi’s clarification of the “organizational” and “mystical” elements of the sociological duality. In brief, it mirrors Blondel’s clarification of the “noetic” and “pneumatic” elements of the duality of thought. In his excursus, Blondel describes the “noetic” element as “the intelligible, conceivable object in its most adequate and impersonal form.” And similarly, Luigi describes the “organizational” element as signifying what is “intellectual and rational,” or in other words, what is “perceived as an idea.” Furthermore, in his excursus, Blondel describes the “pneumatic” element as something like thought’s “interior life and its mysterious respiration.” And similarly, Luigi describes it as a “sense of faith, adherence, and affection, and even “something mysterious, like a superior impelling power.”

Finally, Luigi seemed to once again draw directly on Blondel in rounding out his discussion of the sociological duality. In particular, he seemed to draw directly on Blondel in elucidating the reciprocal influence of each element in the sociological duality. In his excursus, Blondel characterizes the influence of the noetic element on the pneumatic element as something like a “crystalloid” in chemistry. That is, the noetic element bears on the pneumatic element in order to establish correlations and connections in thought. And similarly, Luigi characterizes the influence of the organizational element on the mystical element in much the same way. He maintains that it is the organizational element that

335 Blondel, La Pensée, vol. 1, 272.
336 Sturzo, Inner Laws, 247.
337 Blondel, La Pensée, vol. 1, 274.
338 Sturzo, Inner Laws, 247.
339 Blondel, La Pensée, vol. 1, 276.
“crystallizes the mystical ideal into institutions.” Furthermore, in his excursus, Blondel characterizes the influence of the pneumatic element on the noetic element as something like a “colloid” in chemistry. That is, the pneumatic element bears on the noetic element in order to create dispersions and deployments in thought. And similarly, Luigi characterizes the influence of the mystical element on the noetic element in much the same way. He maintains that it is the mystical element that “makes the organization living and progressive,” and that goes so far as to “stir up ideas” and “urge reforms.”

Conclusion

In his brief adaptation of Blondel’s work, Luigi had certainly stirred up some important ideas in his historicist sociology. But they would not be his only ideas. Soon enough, Luigi would set out to further adapt Blondel’s work in a future monograph. And in this future work, Luigi’s adaptation would not just be a discrete feature. Instead, it would be a central frame and focus.

In the meanwhile, Luigi put the final touches on his monograph on historicist sociology. He secured a nihil obstat in October of 1935, and an imprimatur later the next month. His monograph then went to press in mid-December of 1935 under the title Essai de Sociologie.

Soon after its publication, Blondel wrote to Luigi to congratulate him. Blondel first commended him for “the dispatch (l’envoi)” of his work. But even more significantly, he commended him for “the dedication” of his “so important and so suggestive work of

341 Blondel, La Pensée, vol. 1, 276.
342 Sturzo, Inner Laws, 248, 247.
343 See E. Magnin to Luigi Sturzo, October 18, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 285.
344 See Francisque Gay to Luigi Sturzo, October 31, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 287. In this letter, Gay tells Luigi that he would receive an imprimatur on or around November 15, 1935.
345 Francisque Gay to Luigi Sturzo, December 7, 1935, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 290.
346 Maurice Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, January 22, 1936, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 127.
sociology at once philosophical and Christian.” Due to this double character, Blondel made clear that it was not to be lightly read. Rather, he insisted that it “must read in meditation.” Blondel considered the book a testament to Luigi’s “profoundly lived Catholicism,” and he expressed his hope for “the diffusion and practice” of its “ideas.”

In closing, Blondel thanked Luigi once again for his “multiples testimonies to La Pensée.” But this was not all. Blondel then gently interjected that he just had a new book come out on the subject of being, and noted that he would be very happy if Luigi could review it. And coaxing him a bit further, he suggested that his “philosophical effort” would not go far without Luigi’s assistance. He asserted that, without Luigi’s recent reviews, “readers in England and France” would have remained “ignorant” of his work’s “scope and meaning.” Thus, Blondel appealed for Luigi’s help. Luigi would not just answer the call. He would embrace it going forward.

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347 Ibid.
348 Ibid.
350 Maurice Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, January 22, 1936, Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi, 127.
351 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

SOCIOLOGY AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE SUPERNATURAL

This third chapter plans to examine three attempts to delimit sociology in terms of the supernatural from 1936 to late 1939. Specifically, it plans to examine the respective attempts of Luigi Sturzo, American priest-sociologist Paul Hanly Furfey (1896-1992), and German social-scientist Franz Mueller (1900-1994). In so doing, this chapter aims to accomplish two specific tasks. First, it seeks to show how, in the effort to delimit sociology, each attempt applied a distinctive conception of the natural-supernatural synthesis. And second, it seeks to show how, in virtue of this effort, each attempt sowed the seeds of their later clash in the 1940s debate about “supernatural sociology” in the U.S.

In service to this examination, this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, this chapter turns to Luigi Sturzo’s crowning adaptation of Blondel’s work. In particular, it turns to Sturzo’s adaptation of Blondel’s “philosophy of the supernatural” in his own pioneering “sociology of the supernatural.” In the second part, this chapter intends to detail Furfey’s similarly pioneering work in his development of “supernatural sociology.” Then in the third and final part, it considers Mueller’s use of Thomistic thought to distinguish sociology from all other “cognate” and “auxiliary” sciences.

Part I: Sturzo’s Attempt

Luigi honored Blondel’s request to read L’Être et les êtres. But due to other commitments, he did not immediately pursue opportunities to review it. Throughout much of 1936, Luigi worked to complete his monograph on Church-State relations. He finished it
in late October, and subsequently sent off a copy of its conclusion to Blondel.¹ Luigi had commented on Blondel’s work there at some length, and he wanted to make sure that it was accurate. Thus, he asked Blondel if he could review it.²

Blondel wrote back a few weeks later to offer his approval and express his thanks.³ And like his previous letters, he encouraged Luigi to continue interpreting his thought. Luigi promised that he would. But in the meanwhile, he had a couple of items to complete before his book could be published. Luigi had received the proofs for his book in early January of 1937.⁴ He made some minor corrections and sent them back toward the end of the month. And not long after, he secured an imprimatur.⁵ Finally, in April of 1937, his book went to press under the title *L’Église et L’État*.⁶

**Applying Historicist Sociology**

Luigi conceived *L’Église et L’État* as a continuation of his historicist sociology, and he made as much clear in the introduction to this work.⁷ There he wrote that *L’Église et L’État* can be considered “an application” of his previous work to conceive sociology in integral and historicist terms.⁸ Moreover, like his previous work, he stated that *L’Église et L’État* is neither “juridical” nor “theological” in character. Rather, it is “simply sociological” through and through. Luigi aimed to study the “social facts that have given rise to the formation and development of the relations between Church and State in different eras and different

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¹ Charles Flory to Luigi Sturzo, November 8, 1936, *Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi*, 132-133.
² Ibid.
⁵ Luigi to Mario Sturzo, March 5, 1937, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 194.
⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, xv.
countries,” no more, no less. Thus, he planned to remain “constantly in contact with the facts and with the ideological motives (motifs) of these facts.”

To drive this point home, Luigi insisted that his study has “no apologetic intention.” He clarified that it does not seek “to demonstrate any thesis” pertaining to “the relations of Church and State.” Nor does it seek to plead for one “power” or the other. And nor even does it seek “to justify this or that historical structure of Church or State and their relations.” To do otherwise was to venture outside “the limits of sociology.” Luigi intended to remain within these limits. Thus, he intended to focus on “how social formations act and react in the face of problems that set before them (leur posent) either contact or conflict with the religious values of Christianity.” And over the next six-hundred plus pages, this is just what he did.

In his conclusion, Luigi nonetheless advanced at least one theoretical consideration. There he argued that, despite the rise of modern secular States, they had not displaced the Confessional State form. Rather, they had replicated the latter through a disguised “confessionalism” of their own. In this light, Luigi indicated that modern secular States had not set aside the natural-supernatural distinction, but had instead warped it. In particular, he claimed that, for “over two centuries,” these States had attempted to “separate the natural and supernatural.” And he further claimed that they had done so in order “to achieve the absorption of the supernatural in the natural as much as possible.” Few seemed to

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., xv-xvi.
understand this “fundamental error,” and even fewer still seemed to possess the intellectual creativity to address it sufficiently.15

Yet, despite this apparent lack, Luigi pointed to Blondel as a notable exception. Many had tried and failed “to bridge the ever more open and irreducible cleavage (in modern thought) between nature and the Christian experience.”16 But Luigi maintained that Blondel had actually done so. In this effort, he explained that Blondel considered “Christian experience” under three aspects.17 The first treated it “as a continuous and indestructible historical experience.”18 The second treated it “as a spiritual integration not of nature in the abstract, but in terms of initial grace.” And the third and final treated it “as an orientation guiding even those who are outside of it” in virtue of the “luminous quality of its doctrine and works.” In distinction and combination, each aspect was important to affirm inasmuch as Christian experience not only intertwines “nature and Christianity,” but, through this action, “is transformed into spiritual experience.”19

To explain this point, Sturzo summarized Blondel’s integral philosophy of the natural and supernatural in brief. For Blondel, Sturzo noted that the transformation of Christian experience into spiritual experience is not just possible. Rather, it has happened and continues to happen “through the communication of grace that God willed to give man from his very first appearance.”20 Thus, Blondel determined that “there has never been a strictly natural moment of humanity that has not at the same time been graciously supernatural.”21

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 248.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 249.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
On the face of it, this conclusion seemed to collapse the distinct orders of nature and grace. But Luigi was quick to note that Blondel’s position neither implied nor condoned such a conclusion. In analyzing the “rational and natural motives” of history, Blondel agreed that many do so with “the praiseworthy aim of not confusing” the “natural and the supernatural.” Nonetheless, this aim is “inadequate” by itself to address the situation at hand. In order “to fight the original separatism that is at the base of modern crisis,” Blondel insisted that it is necessary to better conceive “the synthetic values of reality.”22 In other words, it is necessary to better conceive the interpenetration of the natural and the supernatural in “concrete reality.”23

Luigi did not say much more about Blondel’s proposed solution. Thus, his comments on bridging the divide between nature and Christian experience in modern States remained suggestive at best. Nonetheless, Luigi would soon say more about Blondel’s proposed solution in a third and final work on historicist sociology.

La Vita Soprannaturale

In early February of 1937, Blondel sent Luigi the first volume of his recent revision of L’Action.24 Luigi pored over it almost immediately. The original version of L’Action had inspired Luigi to first pursue the study of Blondel’s thought. Now over four decades later, it would soon prompt an even more significant pursuit.

Less than three weeks after receiving the first volume of L’Action, Luigi told Mario that he planned to write a “new work” on sociology.25 He had even given it a title. He called it “Vita Soprannaturale.” Luigi had mentioned the possibility of writing a book on the

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 248.
“interior life” a few months earlier.26 But it had remained just an idea until now. Luigi had big plans for his new work, and he even went so far as to say that it would “complete” his “thought.”27 He then outlined how it would be “a continuation” of his two most recent books.28 Luigi explained that Essai de Sociologie was “the attempt to clarify the natural sociological laws of human society, which are called to a supernatural end.” In distinction, he clarified that L’Eglise et L’État was “the study, on the historical plane, of the laws of relations between the earthly and supernatural ends of society, their clash (cozzo), and their various attempts at coordination.”29 And finally, he said that “Vita Soprannaturale” would be a “study of sociological laws and historical experiences on the supernatural plane of Grace.”30 Luigi declared that this last work would be his culminating study and he prayed for strength to carry it through.

A few weeks later, Luigi provided some further details about his new book. Once again, he explained to Mario how his book would be a continuation of the previous two.31 But unlike his first letter, he did not focus on their distinct purposes. Instead, he called attention to the “conclusions” of the first two.32 Luigi noted that Essai de Sociologie ended with “the appeal that social life is transcendence,” and L’Eglise et L’État, with “the observation that humanism and Christianity are historically inseparable as nature and supernature.”33 For his new book though, Luigi did not have a conclusion in mind. But he did have a “starting point.” Unlike his first two books, it would not depart from a principle “given in the concrete.” Rather, it would depart from the principle of “a complete, perfected nature, valid

26 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, October 10, 1936, Carteggio, vol. 4, 170.
28 Ibid., 192.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 193.
32 Ibid., 196.
33 Ibid., 195, 196.
for the ends of man.” To be clear, this was not some sort of pure nature starting point. Luigi clarified that human nature can only be considered “complete” inasmuch as it has been “elevated to the supernatural order.” And given this starting point, he then laid out the central thesis of his new book. In sum, Luigi planned to argue that “nature, fallen and restored, is so intimately bound to the supernatural as not to be autonomous any longer.”

Further Debating the Natural-Supernatural Distinction

In reply, Mario challenged Luigi’s thesis on at least two points. First, Mario disputed the idea of an intrinsic call, not just in human nature, but in human life to the supernatural. He asserted that “individual and social life, by itself, does not appeal to the supernatural.” And second, Mario disputed the idea that a supernaturally elevated nature can be considered a datum, accessible to sociological scrutiny. He asserted that “the supernatural” is properly “gratuitous and not owed.” In other words, it is a sheer gift. Mario made clear that he did not endorse a “separation” between the natural and the supernatural. One would not simply be “imperfect” in such a separation, but would “cease existence.” Rather, he sought to maintain the gratuity of grace. Mario thus insisted that, even in Christian life, “the perfection of nature is not given by its own development, but is given by God, and from God, and in God.”

In his next letter, Mario ratcheted up his criticism even further. In a recent review of *Essai*, Luigi had been accused of endorsing *avant garde* theories on the natural exigency for the vision of God. Luigi told Mario that his historicist sociology was not some covert

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34 Ibid., 196.
35 Ibid.
36 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, March 25, 1937, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 197.
37 Ibid.
38 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, April 1, 1937, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 198-199.
endorsement of these theories. But he did not deny them either.\textsuperscript{40} In reply, Mario made his stance clear on this issue. He asserted that, from the sociological standpoint, one “cannot affirm the exigency for the supernatural.”\textsuperscript{41} No theory sufficed, even those pertaining to the “acknowledgement of human deficiencies.”\textsuperscript{42} Mario did not dispute that philosophy uses “historical and sociological data” to “infer proofs of the existence of God and of the natural and inalienable relations of man to God.”\textsuperscript{43} But he disputed that “true knowledge of social laws and exigencies” rests on affirming either the inseparability of “God and man” or “the action of God (Providence) in the world.” In the end, Mario dismissed Luigi’s attempt to create an integral sociology of the natural and supernatural. He declared that it is simply not possible “to pass from historicist sociology to Christianity as elevation and grace.”\textsuperscript{44}

Luigi was more or less receptive to Mario’s criticisms. He appreciated Mario’s distinction of the natural and the supernatural. And he said that Mario nicely “put into relief each nature” as well as their respective “characteristics” and “limits.”\textsuperscript{45} Nonetheless, Luigi indicated that Mario needed to say more about the union of the natural and the supernatural. In the concrete, he affirmed that “historical Christian society is not divided into two societies, one natural and the other supernatural.” Rather, it is “one psychological, moral and historical body (\textit{entità}),” and so is “one natural-supernatural society.” This was no small point. Luigi suggested that emphases on the distinction of the natural and the supernatural had unwittingly given way to their division in modern culture. In intellectual life, he asserted that this division had led to “rationalist naturalism” and “fideist supernaturalism.” And in

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Mario to Luigi Sturzo, April 1, 1937, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 4, 198.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 6, 1937, \textit{Carteggio}, vol. 4, 199.
social life, it had led to “the laicism of the state” and “the religion of the sacristy and the little church (chiesuola).”

In his last sketch of *Vita Soprannaturale* to Mario, Luigi offered two final qualifications. First, he made clear that he planned to challenge theories of pure nature in philosophy and sociology. Luigi said he intended “to first strike the naturalists and then those among moral philosophers, including Catholics, who construct a theory of nature in the abstract, as if it could have existed or may exist.” And second, he sought to clarify how nature is and is not “autonomous.” Mario had recently questioned Luigi’s thesis about nature’s non-autonomy in the concrete. Mario thought that Luigi’s thesis was a statement of the obvious, inasmuch as “nature by essence can never be autonomous.” Luigi replied that, by autonomous, he did not mean that nature is “independent of God” by essence. Rather, by autonomous, he meant that nature is “independent of the supernatural (revelation and grace),” by essence, but not by creation.

*Sociology of the Supernatural*

Luigi would soon more carefully parse the natural-supernatural distinction in his new work. But he did not take up this task immediately. Throughout much of 1937, he had more pressing projects to attend to. Luigi had just launched the People and Freedom Group with his longtime translator Barbara Barclay Carter in November of 1936. The organization was dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democracy among English Catholics. Luigi helped to organize meetings and coordinate press releases for the group in

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46 Ibid.
47 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 12, 1937, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 200-201.
48 Ibid., 200.
49 Mario to Luigi Sturzo, April 8, 1937, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 200.
50 Luigi to Mario Sturzo, April 12, 1937, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 200.
51 Ibid.
1937. He even wrote a book in support of the group’s mission, and finished it in late November of 1937.  

Blondel sent Luigi the second volume of his revision of *L’Action* in January of 1938, and Luigi read it shortly thereafter. Over the first half of 1938, Luigi examined Blondel’s thought at length and kept abreast of reviews of Blondel’s work. The study of Blondel’s thought was no doubt important in its own right. But Luigi undertook it with at least two other goals in mind. Specifically, he undertook it so as to further develop his integral sociology and to better understand mystical philosophy. Luigi would soon fold each goal into his new book on the supernatural life. But his initial work on it was halting. In 1938, the People and Freedom Group consumed a considerable amount of Luigi’s time and attention. And this same year, the British Committee for Civil and Religious Peace in Spain consumed even more. Nonetheless, Luigi managed to finish almost the first half of *Vita Soprannaturale* by the end of June 1938.

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54 See Maurice Blondel to Luigi Sturzo, January 3, 1938, *Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi*, 144.

55 See Luigi Sturzo to Charles Blondel, June 10, 1938, *Luigi Sturzo e gli Intellettuali Cattolici Francesi*, 146. In this letter, Luigi mentioned that he had just read F. Oligati’s review of *L’Être et êtres, “L’ontologie de Maurice Blondel,” Rivista di Filosofia neoscholastica*, vol. 30 (March 1938): 186-198. Luigi said that the review was “very respectful,” but he noted that Oligati encouraged Blondel to revise his “theory of the concept.”


58 Luigi did not provide an exact number of chapters to Mario, but it is likely that he finished the Introduction and first five chapters of *Vita Soprannaturale* by the end of summer 1938. I base my estimate on two letters that Luigi sent to Mario in 1939. See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, May 11, 1939, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 331 and Luigi to Mario Sturzo, July 18, 1939, *Carteggio*, vol. 4, 342-343.
In his book on the supernatural life, Luigi laid out his pioneering defense of what he
called “sociology of the supernatural.”\(^{59}\) His attempt certainly had an affinity with Blondel’s
own original philosophy of the supernatural.\(^{60}\) Luigi cited Blondel in the introduction to his
book. And it is somewhat apparent that he adapted aspects of Blondel’s work in the first
few chapters. Even so, Luigi developed his sociology of the supernatural in a remarkably
original way. In the first half of his book, he broke this development down into at least five
important points.

First, Luigi clarified what supernatural life is and is not. Luigi stated that
“supernatural life” is identical to “true life.”\(^{61}\) That is, it is life “complete on every side,
corresponding to all of our deepest aspirations and forming the highest synthesis of our
potentialities and activities.” And in a further elaboration, Luigi appeared to draw upon
Blondel’s account of the supernatural as the ultimate “appeasement (apaisement)” of human
thought and action.\(^{62}\) Luigi stated that supernatural life is “that of the spirit at its highest
level, where alone inner discords and contradictions may find appeasement and every want
and pain” is “overcome.”\(^{63}\)

In an apparent nod to Mario, Luigi made clear that supernatural life is not an
“exigency of nature.”\(^{64}\) That is, it is not owed to us. Rather, he insisted that is it is entirely a
gift of God’s goodness, “a gift that raises and ennobles us, calling us to fellowship with

\(^{59}\) Sometime in 1940, Luigi settled on a new title and subtitle for his book on the supernatural life. He called it
La Vera Vita: Sociologia del Soprannaturale. See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, July 18, 1940, Carteggio, vol. 4, 392. It was
Catholic University Press, 1943). And it was later published in Italian as La Vera Vita: Sociologia del
Soprannaturale (Roma: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1947). All subsequent quotes are taken from the original
English edition, though I have amended some based on the Italian edition.

\(^{60}\) Blondel never actually used the phrase “philosophy of the supernatural (philosophie du surnaturel)” in any of his
books. Nor did he ever use this phrase to summarize his philosophical work. Nonetheless, the phrase has
sometimes been applied to his work after the publication of L’Action (1893).

\(^{61}\) The True Life, 1.


\(^{63}\) The True Life, 1.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
God.” As grace then, the supernatural life remains extrinsic to our nature in terms of its originating cause. Nonetheless, Luigi insisted that it remains intrinsic to human life and destiny. He asserted that it is “not a mere accidental addition to or superimposition on our natural life.” In short, he maintained that the supernatural life is necessary for us, but is not given to us necessarily.

Second, in support of this point, Luigi parsed the natural-supernatural distinction at length. Luigi called attention to the state of integral nature, wherein the human family in Adam was created in and for the life of grace. He noted that, in this state, Adam, “and in him all mankind, was raised by grace to the supernatural state.” Luigi did not distinguish between the state of integral nature and the grace of original innocence. But he did comment on how the state of integral nature was damaged in the wake of original sin. Luigi stated that this sin did not just cause “the loss of original grace,” that is, the grace of original innocence. It even “shattered the equilibrium of human faculties,” such that the passions are no longer subject to reason. And furthermore, it spoiled our natural relation to others and to God.

But almost as important as what original sin did is what it did not do. Luigi maintained that, in the wake of original sin, the human family did not revert to some “purely natural state.” Nor did we lose our original call to and creation for the supernatural life. Luigi asserted that ever since our creation in the state of original innocence, human nature “has been assumed into a higher life with potentialities and aptitudes for a novel destiny.” Now in saying this, he did not deny that our knowledge of this destiny has been gravely

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 27
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 28.
damaged. Yet, even in “the midst of thousand deviations, confusions, and perversions,” he insisted that we still retain a dim consciousness of the supernatural life. Thus, he determined that we possess a vestigial awareness that it “has circulated in us from the day of the first divine revelation by God to man, with its summons to grace and mystical communion.”

Third, Luigi criticized the idea of the state of pure nature and its presumption in sociology. Luigi did not deny that this idea had a narrow “notional and practical” utility. But he made clear that the state of pure nature is simply a mental or methodological construct. In other words, it has no real existence. Luigi stressed that, “in concrete existence,” we “do not find a state of pure nature sufficient unto itself and developing in spontaneous process toward its own perfection.” And he accused anyone who thought otherwise of indulging in either “abstractionism” or “intellectual separatism.”

Pressing this critique further, Luigi agreed that natural life and supernatural life can certainly be distinguished. But he declared that they cannot be separated or opposed. Furthermore, inasmuch as supernatural life is “grafted onto natural life,” he added that these distinct orders of life are not merely to be “juxtaposed” either. Rather, they are to be seen and understood in terms of their real communion in society. Luigi explained that, just vegetative life is “distinct from” rational life in us, but “not autonomous,” so too can the same be said about the relation of natural life to supernatural life in us. In other words, “there is not a purely autonomous natural life in us, implying no relation to the supernatural life.”

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 26.
72 Ibid., 27.
73 Ibid., 9, 46.
74 Ibid., 26.
75 Ibid.
concluded that to study society “in the concrete” and “in its complex wholeness,” it is necessary to understand it as a “real synthesis” of natural life and supernatural life.\textsuperscript{76}

Given this conclusion, Luigi advanced his defense of what he called “sociology of the supernatural.” He readily conceded that this account would “sound strange to the general run of readers.”\textsuperscript{77} Nonetheless, Luigi pressed the issue that sociology had been held up to this point almost entirely “within the boundaries of nature.” In this light, he acknowledged that it was not surprising that “the need of carrying it into the supernatural field has not been clearly recognized.” Thus, he sought to offer a “preliminary explanation of how sociology may venture to threshold of the divine.” It was a “problem of capital importance.” But in what followed, Luigi intended not just to “present a solution,” but evoke a response. That is, he hoped to “to inspire others of riper preparation” than himself to pursue the problem in greater depth.\textsuperscript{78}

To explain sociology’s ultimate thrust and end, Luigi first attempted to delimit sociology. He defined sociology as the “study of society as it is in the concrete.”\textsuperscript{79} Its content included society’s “origins, structure, form, character, and process.” And its primary task focused on discovering society’s “inner laws.” Luigi indicated that certain branches of sociology already did this. But he asserted that none had carried “the study of society in the concrete into the fourth dimension, that of time.” And unless it did, he continued, there could be “no true sociology.” In a gesture to Blondel’s analysis of the stages of action, Luigi said that it was necessary for sociology to study “the formation of society from its most rudimentary beginnings to its most advanced present stage.”\textsuperscript{80} He noted that he already

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 18, 13.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
studied the different primary and secondary forms of socia
ty in *Essai de Sociologie*. And he further noted that that in *L’Eglise et L’État* he had studied, “from a sociological standpoint, the relations between Church and State in Christian society from its beginnings up to today.”

Based on this latter study, Luigi then proceeded to defend the necessary implication of the supernatural in sociology. Luigi reiterated that “true sociology” is “the science of society in its concrete existence and in its historical development.” Thus, he reasoned that if “the supernatural is a historical and social fact, it must fall within the field of sociological inquiry.” Luigi recognized that most would contest this point. And he even noted that some would downright “mock” it. Nonetheless, Luigi made clear, that in insisting on the necessary implication of the supernatural in sociology, he was not trying to “introduce an extraneous dogmatic element.” Rather, he was trying to take seriously the “developing novelty of action” in social life toward “a more elevated sphere.” In this examination, Luigi claimed that the supernatural does not just reveal itself as the ultimate term of society. It even reveals its internal operation in society as “divine initiative” and “transforming influx.” In this light, Luigi insisted that naturalistic studies of society do not and cannot suffice in sociology. At best, he said that they are “simply analytical.” And at worst, they are false, inasmuch as they undercut the “organic and historical reality of society.”

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81 Ibid., 13
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 4.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 11.
86 Ibid., 12.
87 Ibid., 17.
88 Ibid., 11, 16.
89 Ibid., 14.
90 Ibid.
Finally, and most significantly, Luigi argued that, in order to practice authentic sociology, it is necessary for sociologists to affirm the supernatural. Luigi recognized that this argument would likely be met with serious skepticism from almost all sociologists, including “believers.” In fact, he stated that he could think of “no sociologist” who “admits that there can be a free supernatural initiative entering into mankind through divine action.” In saying this, he did not mean to imply that “there are no Christian sociologists who believe by faith in divine revelation.” He certainly agreed that they exist. Rather, he asserted that “even their sociology remains on the purely natural plane.” That is, they conducted their analyses under the presumption that “society really exists free from any influence of the supernatural.” Yet despite this presumption, Luigi did not hesitate to affirm that, in order “to practice (per fare) integral sociology, that is to practice (per fare) sociology as the science of the concrete, yes, it is necessary to believe in the supernatural.”

At the end of his defense, Luigi closed with a plea and an invitation. Luigi insisted that sociology was untenable in its current state. He noted that sociology presented itself as “the only true science of social facts.” Yet, inasmuch as it refused to acknowledge the supernatural, it remained “divorced from the complex reality of society and history.” The need for an integral sociology of the natural and supernatural was apparent. But few if any sociologists seemed to willing to embrace it. Nonetheless, Luigi was hopeful that he would “not remain isolated” in his work. And he remained confident that he would eventually “find” some kindred spirits “to venture along this road” with him.

91 Ibid., 15.
92 Ibid., 10.
93 Ibid., 11.
94 Ibid., 15.
Part II: Furfey’s Attempt

Little did Sturzo know, but he already had a fellow traveler across the Atlantic. In 1938, Paul Hanly Furfey was busy in the U.S. developing what he called “supernatural sociology.” Furfey had first sketched the outlines of his pioneering treatment in 1935. Like Sturzo, Furfey had argued at length against the sufficiency of naturalistic presuppositions in sociology. And like Sturzo, he had even argued that sociology opened up ultimately to the supernatural. But unlike Sturzo, Furfey had not developed an integral sociology of the natural and supernatural along the lines of Blondel’s integral philosophy of the same. Furfey certainly agreed that the “light of reason” had an important role to play in such a development. But he insisted that it was best to let the “light of eternity” lead the way. Thus, he turned first and foremost to the person of Christ and then to the saints to elaborate his own integral sociology of the natural and supernatural.

Furfey Biography

Born in 1896 in Boston, Massachusetts, Furfey was educated by the Jesuits at Boston College High School and later at Boston College. Under their ratio studiorum, Furfey studied scholastic philosophy, science, math, history, and modern and classical languages. These studies made a strong impression on him. But even more lasting still was Furfey’s formation

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96 See Rademacher, 138-145.
97 See Portier, 4-5.
in Ignatian spirituality. Long after Furfey finished his studies with the Jesuits, he tended to
organize his thought around the idea of attaining heaven no matter the cost.  

In 1917, Furfey enrolled at The Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. Under the direction of Fr. Thomas Verner Moore (1877-1969), he pursued graduate studies in psychology. Moore introduced Furfey to scientific methodology and clinical practice. But even more important, Moore demonstrated to him the importance of integrating science in sanctity. In 1918, Furfey transferred to St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland. In a special agreement, he was permitted to continue his studies under Moore. In 1919, he graduated from Catholic University with master’s degree in psychology. He remained at St. Mary’s for the next three years to study philosophy and theology. In 1922, he completed his studies and was ordained a priest in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. 

Later that same year, Furfey returned to Catholic University for doctoral work. When he arrived, he was unsure about whether to pursue Semitic studies or sociology. He gave each a try. But after his first semester, he resolved to study sociology. He believed that sociology was better suited to the practical exercise of the Church’s evangelical mission. For the next three years, Furfey studied under William J. Kerby (1870-1936). Kerby had been the chair of the Department of Sociology at Catholic University since its founding in 1897. At the time, it was the only department in the world of Catholic higher education to offer doctoral studies in sociology. And until 1915, it remained that the only place in U.S. Catholic higher education to offer graduate studies in sociology. Like Moore, Kerby sought to integrate social science in sacred science. The shared task of each was not lost on

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99 See Rademacher, 8-22.
100 See Ibid, 30-53.
102 Ibid.
Furfey, and he took courses with both at the start of his doctoral work. Furfey eventually focused on studying the character formation of boys in terms of social structure and organization. And in 1926, he completed a dissertation on the subject.¹⁰³

Right after finishing his doctorate, Furfey joined the faculty of Catholic University’s sociology department. For the next five years, he taught courses in juvenile delinquency, recreational leadership theory, and the history of social thought. He lectured on social reform at the National Catholic School of Social Service just across the street from Catholic University. And he continued to research social problems specific to childhood. For the most part, he employed methods standard to the emerging field of sociology like factor analysis. Furthermore, like other sociologists at the time, Furfey used his research to influence government policy. By 1929, he sat on two federal committees dedicated to the health and protection of children. Taken all together, Furfey practiced sociology in a fairly indistinguishable way, at least at first.¹⁰⁴

But Furfey soon broke from the sociological mainstream. While on sabbatical in Germany from 1931 to 1932, Furfey began to question quantitative approaches to social reform. Like many others, Furfey initially believed that quantitative approaches could adequately address social life. But the social wreckage of the Weimar Republic now before him soon undermined such confidence. Furfey did not despair of sociology though. Rather, he sought to approach it through a new lens. During his sabbatical, Furfey spent a good deal of time in Berlin’s art museums and concert halls. His visits not only made him more conscious of the reality of beauty, but of its ability to interpret life. In turn, Furfey became

¹⁰³ Rademacher, 56-60.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 54-87.
convincing that, in order to be an adequate science of social life, sociology had to incorporate beauty into its lens.\textsuperscript{105}

Furfey returned to the U.S. with a sense of mission. In his own retelling, Furfey had just experienced “mystical beauty” in art and music.\textsuperscript{106} But more than anywhere else, he saw it most vividly in the life of Jesus and the lives of the saints. The theoretical implications of this insight were significant, and he soon attempted to develop them in his work. To explore the connections between science, ethics, and theology, Furfey turned to “the divine example.”\textsuperscript{107} And building on these sketches, he sought to develop them practically.

Beginning in 1934, Furfey started to work in close contact with the Catholic Worker movement.\textsuperscript{108}

The theoretical and practical sides of Furfey’s effort were no doubt important in their own right. But Furfey wanted to give them a more unified formulation. In 1935, he made a first attempt in his unpublished “Catholic Social Manifesto.”\textsuperscript{109} In this document, Furfey insisted on integrating revelation into social theory and social action. He called for a “maximum standard” in the development of sociology. And in response, he proposed the “law of charity” derived from the “Sermon on the Mount.”\textsuperscript{110} Later that same year, Furfey spelled out his manifesto in published form. In a two part article entitled “Catholic

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 114-118.
\textsuperscript{106} Furfey, Autobiographical Material, 3-4 in Rademacher, 118, footnote 14.
\textsuperscript{108} Rademacher, 156-164.
\textsuperscript{109} Furfey, “A Catholic Social Manifesto,” P.H. Furfey/ M.E. Walsh Papers Reference Folder General, PHF/MEW Papers, Archives of The Catholic University of America (ACUA).
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., quoted in Rademacher, 136.
Extremism,” Furfey offered a searing critique of naturalistic views of society. He argued that society could not be rightly conceived apart from theological categories. Thus, he indicated that it was necessary for sociology to inquire into sanctity and supernatural action. Furfey would soon develop this suggestion at length in what he called “supernatural sociology.”

*Supernatural Sociology*

In 1936, Furfey published *Fire on the Earth*. He wrote the book, whose title was taken from Luke 12:49, with a twofold purpose. First and foremost, Furfey sought to launch his program for the renewal of social Catholicism. He rooted his program in what he called the “new Catholic social movement,” and he pointed to organizations like The Catholic Worker in the U.S as representative of it. He intended to not only capture “the spirit of this movement,” but “to express it more or less systematically.” Second, Furfey aimed to critique naturalistic approaches to social life. He did deny that these approaches were valid. But he insisted that they were not sufficient.

Furfey addressed each of these aims in his opening chapter on “Supernatural Sociology.” To start, he framed his discussion of supernatural sociology in terms of the distinction between “moderate” and “ideal” standards in Catholicism. Furfey borrowed this distinction from his two-part article “Catholic Extremism,” where he sketched it out for the first time. And like this previous article, he made clear that the “moderate” standard was tolerable, but not commendable. In fact, he called it downright “mediocre.”

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113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., 7.
115 Ibid., 9.
Furfey proposed the ideal standard of the saints. He declared that this standard was not just more “thorough-going and generous,” but represented “the real mind of the Church.”

Furfey then explained how “moderate” and “ideal” standards corresponded to “natural” and “supernatural” approaches in sociology. Like the moderate standard, Furfey maintained that “purely natural” approaches had a rightful place in sociology. He even acknowledged they were “beneficial” in the “human understanding of social problems.” Nonetheless, he asserted that they supplied a “partial solution” at best. In abstracting from the supernatural, Furfey argued that natural approaches did not provide comprehensiveness in interpretation. Rather, they offered only “convenience” in “presentation.”

It seemed clear then that a more complete solution to social problems required another approach. Furfey put forth the “method” of the “theological conclusion” as the most adequate. To employ this “method,” he said that two premises were needed. In particular, there had to be a major premise involving “a fact known from Revelation,” and a minor premise involving “a fact known from reason.” In most cases, Furfey noted that the latter was furnished through “scientific social studies.” Regardless, he made clear that, in terms of the method above, “purely scientific investigations” were essential to the understanding of social problems. But he emphasized even more strongly that, in terms of the method above, the integration of the supernatural was likewise essential. In fact, Furfey claimed that, unless the supernatural was taken into account, problems like “race discrimination” and “economic injustice” cannot be adequately addressed.

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116 Ibid., 7.
117 Ibid., 11.
118 Ibid., 8.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., 9.
121 Ibid., 12, 13.
The burden of Furfey’s argument for “supernatural sociology” rested on this point. But unlike Sturzo, Furfey did not think that this point could be adjudicated in terms of a philosophy like Blondel’s. In fact, he argued that it could only be adjudicated in terms of the “doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.” Furfey considered this doctrine not just “sociologically important,” but “sociologically essential.” In short, he maintained that there could not be an adequate account of social life apart from divine life in Christ. Thus, the lens of sanctity was not some viewpoint superimposed on an already self-sufficient sociology. Rather, it was ingredient to its very exercise and perfection from the start.

The Technical Elaboration of Supernatural Sociology

In Fire on the Earth, Furfey presented “supernatural sociology” as a critique of strictly natural approaches in the social sciences. But for the most part, he subordinated it to his program for the renewal of social Catholicism. Nonetheless, Furfey soon developed the first goal at greater length. In 1937, Furfey published “A Criticism of Factor Analysis as a Technique of Social Research” in the American Sociological Review, the official journal of the American Sociological Society. Furfey did not directly appeal to “supernatural sociology” in this article. But he did seem to gesture toward it in his critique of strictly natural approaches in sociology. Furfey questioned the analytical utility of factor analysis, especially in the evaluation of pacifism. He argued that this analysis tended to conflate more variable attitudes like pacifism with less variable traits like height. Thus, it tended to evaluate dissimilar factors in the same way. The criticism of factor analysis was no doubt specific. But Furfey indicated that it applied to quantitative approaches in sociology more generally.

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122 Ibid., 53.
123 Ibid.
He noted that “most statistical methods” in sociology fell far short of the “reversibility” standards in the natural sciences. And he further noted that there was no reason to believe that they would ever do otherwise. Furfey did not elaborate on what an adequate approach in sociology entailed. But he would soon provide a systematic treatment of this very subject.

*Three Theories of Society*

In November of 1937, Furfey published *Three Theories of Society*. Like *Fire on the Earth*, Furfey argued that sociology could not forsake the supernatural if it aspired to be a comprehensive study of society. But unlike *Fire on the Earth*, Furfey advanced his argument through a teleological analysis of society. Furfey found prevailing approaches in sociology, especially those modeled along the lines of the natural sciences, too “impersonal.” He aimed to consider society “from the human side,” and so “from within.” And he maintained that the “classical approach” of the “teleological method” was best suited to the task. Furthermore, unlike *Fire on the Earth*, Furfey structured his argument in terms of a typology of social theories rather a program of Catholic social action. In particular, Furfey drove his argument through three distinct social theories. And he presented them in terms of an ascending order of adequacy and comprehensiveness.

Furfey first addressed the theory of “positivistic society.” And since it was first in the ascending order of his analysis, it was no surprise that he found the most inadequate. Nonetheless, Furfey sought to assess the promise and limits of positivistic society. To start, he identified the “success-ideal” as its goal. He said that it prized pleasurable goods like “comfort, security, and respectability,” and useful goods like “popular education, political

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125 Ibid., 185.
127 Ibid., 4.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 34.
democracy, and organized philanthropy." Furfey acknowledged that for many, if not most, it appeared “sane and moderate.” And he even agreed that it was “not wholly bad.”

But it was far from “wholly good.” Furfey insisted that behind the moderate guise of positivistic society was no moderate ideal in the least. In fact, he claimed that the “success-ideal” was nothing less an “apotheosis of the obvious and commonplace.” Furfey did not dispute that this ideal had a considerable purchase in modern society. But he questioned whether it corresponded to our “deepest fulfillment.” Furfey saw the “success-ideal” as the quest for the immediate and the ephemeral. It did not impel people to seek “ineffable truths” and “half-realized beauties.” In fact, it seemed to set them aside if not neglect them outright. In this light, Furfey determined that positivistic society could not be “deeply satisfying because it is not based on a deep perception of reality.” Thus, it was necessary to “strike out boldly” toward a more satisfying society.

In noetic society, Furfey saw an initial answer to this search. Building on Aristotle and St. Thomas, Furfey defined noësis as the “immediate apprehension of truths.” These truths, however, were not those implying “progress from general to particular” knowledge through “discursive reasoning.” Rather, they were those implying progress from less unified to “more unified views of reality.” And no view was “more pure and unified,”

130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 33.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., 67.
134 Ibid., 34.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., 67.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid., 104-105.
139 Ibid., 107.
140 Ibid.
Furfey asserted, than that of partaking, “to the extent possible” for us, in “the single, transcendent, and perfect act of divine knowing.”\textsuperscript{141} This was the goal of no\textit{ësis}.

In support of this point, Furfey clarified no\textit{ësis} in terms of four intertwined “objects.”\textsuperscript{142} These objects included “the essences of things, analytic immediate judgments, synthetic immediate judgments, and unanalyzed truths.”\textsuperscript{143} Furfey considered “unanalyzed truths” the most significant object, so he discussed it in the greatest detail. Unlike the other three objects, Furfey said that “unanalyzed truths” do not involve “contact with truths immediately perceived by intellect.”\textsuperscript{144} Thus, they remained at some remove from the categories of philosophy or science.\textsuperscript{145} And they likewise remained at some remove from specification in language. In fact, Furfey insisted that they were “difficult” if not “impossible” to put into words.\textsuperscript{146} The parallels between Furfey’s discussion of unanalyzed truths and Sturzo’s discussion of intuition and the non-rational were striking.

But these were not the only parallels between the two. In explaining the significance of “unanalyzed truths,” Furfey seemed to echo Sturzo’s somewhat similar defense of “mystery.” Furfey stated that the power of “unanalyzed truths” resided “in their ability to suggest something beyond language.”\textsuperscript{147} And he appealed to one artistic example to illustrate this point. Furfey called to mind a wood sculpture of “Christ and St. John” in the Deutsches Museum of Berlin.\textsuperscript{148} He said that this sculpture communicated a “truth of eminent depth” about the “divine love of Christ for men.” But he insisted that it was “too subtle to be expressed” even in the “accurate language of theology.” Yet despite this subtlety, Furfey

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 86.  
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 109.  
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 109-110.  
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 120.  
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 118.  
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 121.  
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 119.  
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 120.  
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maintained that “unanalyzed truths” united knower and known like no other. He said that they not only gave rise to “deep knowledge,” but fostered “human participation” in a “heavenly way of knowing.”\textsuperscript{149} By \textit{noësis} then, not only could “breathless, profound truths” be found, but “holy” and “unutterable realities” could be glimpsed.\textsuperscript{150}

Furfey had no doubt that a noetic society would flourish. Unlike positivistic society, noetic would not be established “in relation to the puny span of mortal life, but in relation to eternity.”\textsuperscript{151} And unlike positivistic society, it would not be based on “personal ambition,” but on “cooperation.” Every member of noetic society would recognize the common good and work towards its realization. And even more importantly, every member would be encouraged “to fulfill his destiny.” In such a society, Furfey declared that “above all and before all,” it would be “easy to be a human being.”\textsuperscript{152} The “dictates of natural law” would predominate, and a “life of rectitude” would follow.\textsuperscript{153}

But, alas, such a society remained no more than a dream. Furfey did not deny that certain “idealistic communities” had formed over the course of history. But he made clear that “no state has ever adopted noetic society as the dominant guiding principle of its public life.”\textsuperscript{154} And given this evidence, he said that there was little to no “basis for believing” that one ever would.\textsuperscript{155} Furfey chalked up the absence of noetic societies to “our imperfect human nature.”\textsuperscript{156} Furfey certainly affirmed that \textit{noësis} is “real and beautiful.”\textsuperscript{157} But he conceded that it remained arduous nonetheless. Based on his own teaching experience,

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 121, 122.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 140-141.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 143.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 145.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 153.
Furfey said that it was “not at all easy” to introduce “graduate students into the exhausting toil of habitual noësis.”158 In fact, he even questioned whether most “doctoral candidates” were up to the task. It was not surprising then that most were content to languish in “superficial knowledge.”159 Try as we may “to catch glimpses of eternal truths,” Furfey lamented that the “force of passion” and “mental laziness” all too often lowered our gaze.160 In the end, it seemed that only a society capable of redeeming our imperfect nature could truly satisfy.

Furfey proposed “pistic society” as the answer. Unlike the previous two societies, Furfey argued that pistic society was not built on the imperfection of our passions or our intellect. Rather, it was built on the sure foundation of “divine faith.”161 Furfey acknowledged that many religious traditions claimed this foundation. But he indicated that some had stronger claims to “divine revelation” than others. Furfey affirmed a “true revelation” certainly went “beyond reason.” But he insisted that it could not go “against reason.”162 Using this measure, he then dismissed any “purported” revelation that “contradicts reason or any truth of the moral or physical order.” Furfey did not identify those that were eliminated by name. But he affirmed that Christianity passed this test. In fact, he said that it stood out “an especially pure and consistent body of teaching.” Nonetheless, Furfey made clear that this test did not in any way suffice to prove the “positive truth” of Christianity.163

158 Ibid., 147.
159 Ibid., 149.
160 Ibid., 149, 154.
161 Ibid., 160.
162 Ibid., 162.
163 Ibid.
But there was at least one that could. To arrive at such a proof, Furfey said that it was necessary to examine “the motives of credibility.” Furfey first called attention to the “major motives” like “miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled in testimony of Christian revelation.” He said that their power was “striking.” But due to their rarity, their influence remained limited. The “minor motives,” however, were much more extensive in number and kind. Furfey noted that they included “the holiness of believers, the intrinsic beauty of doctrine,” and “the heroism of saints’ lives” to name a few. But unlike the major motives, they remained much more “subtle.”

Furfey emphasized that the motives of credibility did not command assent. And this was especially true of the minor motives. Furfey conceded that saintly beauty and heroism was not immediately apparent to all. And like “the positivists,” he even agreed that these realities are “non-obvious truths.” But unlike “the positivists,” he did not agree that they should be excluded from consideration in sociology. In examining the motives of credibility, perception alone did not suffice. Furfey stressed that that “all the powers of the intellect” had to be brought into play. It was necessary then to treat these motives with “delicacy of judgment” and “subtlety of insight.” And going further still, Furfey insisted that they had to be examined as a whole. Glossing St. Thomas, he said that, considered separately, the motives of credibility could only be deemed “probable.” But considered together, they could inspire “a grade of certitude.”

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164 Ibid.
165 Ibid., 167.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid., 166.
169 Ibid., 168.
170 Ibid.
To attain such “certitude” was an accomplishment indeed. But Furfey was quick to note that it was an achievement more of the will than the intellect. The intellect certainly had a role to play in the movement toward the term of faith. But it did not rest solely on the intellect’s apprehension of revealed truths. Rather, it was primarily rooted in the will’s acceptance of these truths on “the overwhelming authority of the divine witness.”\textsuperscript{171} In this light, the act of faith involved “a supernatural manner of knowing.”\textsuperscript{172} And in consequence, Furfey asserted that it supplied “insight into reality far deeper than the most inspired searching of \textit{noësis}.” The contemplation of Christ’s redemptive suffering illustrated this point. Furfey insisted that anyone who “has drunk in the austere beauty of this surprising mystery” could never be satisfied with merely human goods. And he made clear that this included “even the highest triumphs” of human genius. Given this insufficiency, Furfey concluded that a “fully satisfactory” society could not rest on the powers of the intellect, and so it was necessary to find a “foundation deeper still.”\textsuperscript{173}

At this point, Furfey reasoned that only a society built on faith, that is, a “pistic society,” could truly satisfy. And to make his case, he turned to human desire and its ultimate goal. In a brief, but important analysis, Furfey insisted that our “hungry heart” testifies that it cannot rest in “finite” goods.\textsuperscript{174} In fact, he asserted that it testifies to a “restless human longing” for “the infinite” and nothing less. And to satisfy this longing, we seek to know its cause. In other words, we seek to know God’s “very essence.”\textsuperscript{175} Like Sturzo, Furfey affirmed that this desire is not rooted in any “positive exigence” for the supernatural. He noted that it was a “contradiction” to say that our natural powers allow for

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 173.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 194.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 197.
more than what they supply. Nonetheless, he made clear that it is possible to be “raised to a level higher” than what our nature entitles us to. But unlike Sturzo, Furfey did not categorize this possibility as an aptitude for a supernatural destiny. Rather, he identified it as an “obediential power (potentia obedientialis)” to receive more than our nature gives. Yet even admitting this possibility, Furfey maintained that our supernatural destiny remains utterly gratuitous. It is “only through revelation and an act of faith” that it “becomes known.” Thus, inasmuch as faith “alone” reveals our ultimate destiny, Furfey reiterated that only a pistic society could satisfy our “true end and purpose.”

Finally, Furfey emphasized that the recognition of this point was no disembodied act. The celebration of the sacraments was necessary. Furfey affirmed that grace is “secret of success for a pistic society.” And so he urged that it was only right to participate in the “greatest source of grace,” that is, “the Mass with the Blessed Eucharist.” In no uncertain terms, Furfey declared such liturgical participation to be the “supreme social act,” for it incorporates us into the supreme society, the Mystical Body of Christ. Furfey affirmed that in this body, “mutual love” and “irresistible beauty” are encountered. And through this body, “perfect social life” is found.

Part III: Mueller’s Attempt

In the latter half of the 1930s, Furfey and Sturzo each offered innovative accounts of sociology’s opening to the supernatural. But they were not the only ones to pursue this subject over this time. In fact, they each had another counterpart in the work of German social scientist Franz Mueller. Like Furfey and Sturzo, Mueller clarified sociology in terms of

\[\text{\footnotesize 176 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 177 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 178 Ibid., 194.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 179 Ibid., 227.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 180 Ibid.}\]
the supernatural. But unlike Furfey, he did not do so in terms of a program of Catholic social action. And unlike Sturzo, he did not do so in terms of an integral sociology of the natural and the supernatural. Rather, Mueller primarily considered sociology’s scope in terms of Thomistic thought. And in this effort, he would help to clarify the promises and limits of Furfey’s “supernatural sociology” and Sturzo’s “sociology of the supernatural.”

_Mueller Biography_

Mueller was born in 1900 in Berlin, Germany. He was formally schooled throughout most of his youth. But in 1914, his schooling was cut short by Germany’s entrance into World War I. After the war ended, Mueller resumed his studies. In 1919, he enrolled at the _Handelschule_ (University of Commerce) in Berlin.\(^{181}\) But the return to school was not a return to normalcy. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Berlin was wracked by social strife. Food was scarce, inflation was rampant, and radicalism was on the rise. Mueller was not unaffected by these developments.\(^{182}\) Like many other students in Berlin, he relied on soup-kitchen lunches and scarce work to support his studies.\(^{183}\) Yet even amidst these challenges, he managed to thrive academically.

At the _Handelschule_, Mueller studied sociology and economics under the instruction of Werner Sombart (1863-1941).\(^{184}\) Sombart was an early pioneer of each of these emerging social sciences. In economics, he first attracted attention through his work on the rise of the “capitalist spirit.” And in sociology, he later rose to prominence through his defense of its classification in the human sciences (geisteswissenschaften).\(^{185}\) When Mueller joined Sombart’s seminar in 1919, debates about this classification were still very much alive. But


\(^{182}\) Mueller, “Pesch the Man from One Who Knew Him,” Box 3, Folder 58, USTA: 1.

\(^{183}\) Ibid.


\(^{185}\) Ibid., 49.
Mueller noted that these debates were not addressed all that much in seminar discussions. Instead, he said the seminar focused primarily on the “spiritual sources of the capitalist frame of mind.”

Over the next three years, Mueller studied these sources at greater length. Like many other young Catholics at the time, he was interested in Thomistic thought. And he soon attempted to interweave the two in his Diplomarbeit (master’s thesis). Specifically, he proposed to examine the “spiritual sources” of capitalism according to the “economic thought” of St. Thomas. Mueller approached Sombart about the project, and to his surprise, Sombart agreed to direct it. In 1922, Mueller defended his thesis on “The Social Teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas.” And shortly thereafter, he graduated with a master’s degree in commercial sciences.

Sombart initiated Mueller into the social sciences. But it was Fr. Heinrich Pesch, S.J. (1854-1926) who decisively shaped Mueller’s approach to them. Pesch had risen to prominence in social economics through his innovative theory of solidarism. And he remained a leading and active scholar in the field up until his death in 1926. Mueller first encountered Pesch’s work in the streets of Berlin. In the immediate wake of World War I, Pesch had authored a series of pamphlets on the rebuilding of society and on the irreconcilability of socialism and Catholic social teaching. Mueller received them by chance on his way to class one day. And after reading them, he said he was instantly transformed by them. In Pesch’s work, Mueller found a religiously informed social philosophy that he could pursue and build on. He resolved to read all that Pesch had written, including his multi-

186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid., 50.
190 Mueller, “Pesch the Man from One Who Knew Him,” 2.
191 Ibid., 3.
volume *Lehrbuch*, Pesch’s seminal textbook on economics. Unfortunately, it remained out of reach due to its cost. Undeterred, Mueller wrote to Pesch in 1919 to see if he could obtain a “gift copy.” 192 And to his delight, Pesch agreed. Pesch asked only that Mueller receive the book from him in person at the Good Shepherd Convent on the outskirts of Berlin, where he was then the chaplain in residence. Mueller made the twelve-mile round trip trek on foot. But it would not be his last. In fact, over the next three years, Mueller travelled on many more “pilgrimages” to see “Fr. Pesch.” 193

From Pesch, Mueller learned to approach economics in terms of secondary causes. According to Mueller, Pesch no doubt appreciated “the great importance of the Christian Weltanschauung for economic life.” 194 But he made clear that it did not supply an economic theory. In fact, Pesch insisted that “no economic system” could be derived from the “Gospel.” He reasoned then that it was improper to “treat economics from a theological point of view.” 195 Given this approach, Mueller said that Pesch was reluctant to discuss the idea of “Catholic economics.” 196 Furthermore, he said that Pesch was likewise reluctant to join economics and ethics. Now to be clear, Pesch did not think that economics could be separated from ethics. He maintained that economics is bound to the moral law, and so can never condone the “morally objectionable or outright evil.” 197 Nonetheless, he stressed that economics and ethics differed in “their respective formal object.” Thus, Pesch concluded that they were “to be regarded as independent sciences,” even if only “relatively” so. 198

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192 Ibid.
193 Ibid.
194 Ibid., 7.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
197 Ibid., 8.
198 Ibid.
Mueller took Pesch’s approach to heart. In fact, he would presuppose it in almost all of his work going forward. In 1923, Mueller enrolled at the University of Cologne to pursue doctoral studies in economics. There, he studied under Leopold von Wiese (1876-1969).\textsuperscript{199} Like Sombart, von Wiese was an early pioneer of the emerging social sciences. By the time of Mueller’s arrival, von Wiese had already set forth his influential network theory of social relations.\textsuperscript{200} Mueller found von Wiese’s theory intriguing, especially in its treatment of social processes. But in Cologne, he tried, for most part, to carry on his work from Sombart’s seminar. For his dissertation, he even proposed to develop a term paper from Sombart’s seminar, challenging the claim that the profit motive is the main interest of entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{201} Von Wiese was agreeable to the proposal, and soon signed on to direct it.\textsuperscript{202} In 1925, Mueller defended his dissertation on \textit{Der Kapitalistische Unternehmer} (The Capitalist Entrepreneur), and then received a doctorate in social economics.\textsuperscript{203}

In Cologne, Mueller stayed busy outside the classroom as well. In 1923, he joined the German Catholic Peace League. And later the next year, he represented this group at the Congress for International Reconciliation in London.\textsuperscript{204} Mueller devoted even more time and energy to the Catholic Youth Movement in Germany.\textsuperscript{205} Through this organization he befriended its founder and official chaplain Fr. Romano Guardini (1885-1968). Like many others, Mueller admired Guardini for his work in the liturgical movement. But he especially admired him for his even more trailblazing work on the social implications of doctrinal theology. In the years ahead, Mueller would comment at length on the latter. In the

\textsuperscript{199} Mueller, “Dr. Franz H.J. Mueller (Cologne),” 2-3.


\textsuperscript{201} Mueller, “I Remember Sombart,” 52.

\textsuperscript{202} Mueller, “Dr. Franz H.J. Mueller (Cologne),” 2-3.

\textsuperscript{203} Mueller, “My Remembrance of Friedrich von Hügel on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of his Death (Jan. 27, 1925),” Box 3, Folder 58, USTA: 2.

\textsuperscript{204} Mueller, “Six Decades Ago,” Box 3, Folder 58, USTA: 1.
meanwhile though, Guardini helped to jumpstart Mueller’s publication career. Not long after Mueller received his doctorate, Guardini approached him about writing a biography of Msgr. Franz Hitze (1851-1921), the founder of “social politics” in Germany and the first chair in Christian Social Science at the University of Hamburg. Mueller agreed to Guardini’s proposal, and later published it in 1928 under the title *Franz Hitze und sein Werk*.

By far though, the most important person that Mueller met in Cologne was Therese Geuer. The two first crossed paths in the Catholic Youth Movement. Like Mueller, Geuer was a doctoral student in the social sciences. And like Mueller, she was committed to liturgical renewal and social reconstruction in post-war Germany. It was no surprise that then these shared interests drew them together. But their budding relationship soon had to overcome the challenge of distance. In 1926, Mueller returned to Berlin to direct the welfare bureau of United Catholic Charities. He took a side job in the Institute of Political Economy at the Technische Hochschule. And while there, he assisted the eminent Catholic social theorist Goetz Briefs (1889-1974). In 1927, he moved again after accepting a position in Karlsruhe’s Institute of Political Science. There, he worked under Theodor Brauer (1880-1942), who was then “the chief theoretician of the German League of Christian Trade Unions.” Not long after his arrival, Brauer received an offer to lead the Social Science Research Institute at the University of Cologne. Brauer accepted the offer and asked

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206 “Laudatio,” 3-4.
Mueller to join him as his chief assistant. Mueller agreed, and in 1928, he moved back to Cologne.  

Back in Cologne, Mueller and Geuer rekindled their relationship. In 1929, Mueller proposed to Geuer shortly after she had completed her doctorate. And later the next year, the two were married. From 1928 to 1933 in Cologne, Mueller worked in a variety of roles. He researched social policy, industrial education, and trade union structures. He oversaw accident-insurance funds for local miners and laborers. And he lectured at the Christian Trade Union Colleges in Cologne and Koengiswinter. But his most significant role was with the Koenigswinter Study Circle, a selective round table conference for German Catholic sociologists. In 1928, he became its youngest member. Based on the circle’s mission to reorganize Germany’s social economy, Mueller had a front-row seat to innovative discussions there about solidarity and the principle of subsidiarity. Soon enough, members of this group not only helped to integrate these ideas into Quadragesimo Anno (1931), but had a direct hand in drafting it.

In 1933, Mueller submitted his habilitation thesis. And anticipating its approval, he planned to teach graduate courses in social economy in the very near future. But he would never get the chance. In the summer of 1933, the Nazi party assumed control of the University of Cologne. And later the next year, Mueller was forced out along with everyone else in the Social Science Research Institute. He received his official termination letter on
Christmas Eve of 1934. And shortly thereafter, he withdrew his habilitation thesis. Mueller figured that graduate teaching in Germany was no longer a possibility. In fact, he considered it “completely hopeless.” 217 But at the start of 1935, Mueller was even more concerned about possible imprisonment. His former boss, Theodor Brauer, had just been jailed, and Mueller worried that he might be next. In this rapidly deteriorating situation, Mueller had little personal security and no career future on the horizon. And to complicate matters even more, he and Therese now had two children to care for. With no idea of what to do next, he turned to prayer for answers.

A “God-sent” reply would soon come. 218 In the spring of 1935, Mueller received an unexpected letter from Fr. Joseph Husslein, S.J. in the U.S. The two had never met, but Husslein had heard about Mueller’s plight. Fortunately, Husslein was in an excellent position to help as the dean of the School of Social Sciences at St. Louis University. Husslein had been looking to fill a faculty position in the sociology department. And in his search, he had apparently read some of Mueller’s published work and liked what he saw. Husselin offered Mueller the job, and Mueller readily accepted. 219 But in order to carry out his new teaching duties, Mueller first had to become more proficient in English. With the help of some German Jesuit friends, he secured a “guest student” spot at the Catholic Worker’s College in Oxford, England. 220 In August of 1935, he arrived in Oxford, and spent the next two semesters learning professional terminology in English. After completing his studies, Mueller returned to Germany to collect his family. But due to visa issues, they could not travel straightaway with him to the U.S. Despite these issues, Therese pressed him to go

217 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
anyway. In August of 1936, one week after the birth of their third child, Mueller set sail for the U.S.\textsuperscript{221}

Once in St. Louis, Mueller had a hard time adjusting at first. He appreciated his new job and his modest paycheck. But language barriers and home-sickness made life difficult. Mueller spent most of his time preparing lectures and chasing down colleagues to read and review them.\textsuperscript{222} Due to these time constraints, Mueller made few friends. And an extended illness in the first semester only isolated him further. Nonetheless, he persevered with teaching and writing.\textsuperscript{223} In 1937, Virgil Michel brought Mueller to Furfey’s attention.\textsuperscript{224} And later that same year, Furfey tried to recruit Mueller to the sociology department at Catholic University. But Furfey soon dropped his effort after his rector soured on several German refugee professors that he had recently hired.\textsuperscript{225} The missed opportunity did not get Mueller down too much though. In November of 1937, his family finally arrived in St. Louis. Then “all of a sudden,” Mueller recounted that “things that had looked grey took on a rosy color.” In fact, he confessed it was right then and there that he “began to love America.”\textsuperscript{226}

The Muddle of American Sociology

But he did not exactly love the state of sociology in America. Mueller was impressed with the extent of sociology’s reach in academic literature and university classrooms in U.S.

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 2
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{224} See Virgil Michel to Paul Hanly Furfey, December 17, 1937, Michel, Rev. Virgil (1937-1938) Folder, Box 9, PHF/MEW, ACUA. Furfey had earlier asked Michel to keep an eye out in his travels for any qualified candidates in sociology. Furfey hoped to find some “competent” to “direct doctoral dissertations.” But, “at an absolute minimum,” he insisted that they were “Catholic,” held “a doctor of philosophy,” and came with “some teaching experience.” See Paul Hanly Furfey to Virgil Michel, December 10, 1937, Michel, Rev. Virgil (1937-1938) Folder, Box 9, PHF/MEW, ACUA. In the letter above, Michel replied with two names, one of whom was Mueller. He strongly recommended Mueller. Michel testified that Mueller was an “expert in the social sciences,” had an aptitude for “theology,” and had deep knowledge of the “whole liturgical movement.”
\textsuperscript{225} See Paul Hanly Furfey to Virgil Michel, February 18, 1938, Michel, Rev. Virgil (1937-1938) Folder, Box 9, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
\textsuperscript{226} Mueller, “From the Rhine to the Mississippi,” 2.
But he was notably unimpressed with its lack of systemization. In brief, he saw sociology in the U.S. as much discussed, but little theorized. In April of 1937, Mueller focused on this concern in his first presentation in the U.S., “A Critical Comparison of American and German Sociology.” He published it shortly thereafter under the same title.

In this article, Mueller lambasted the apparent lack of philosophical and methodological reflection in American sociology. He reported that very few American sociologists seemed to think it was “necessary to render to themselves and to others any account of their working methods.” But he was quick to note that their reluctance did not stem from privacy concerns. Rather, he attributed it to a “fear that the discussion of methodology and epistemology might lead them into the field of philosophy and metaphysics.” Mueller insisted that this fear was not just practically overblown, but intellectually unjustifiable. Inasmuch as sociology necessarily presupposes philosophy and metaphysics, it could avoid neither. Mueller did not deny that most American sociologists thought that they prescinded from philosophy. But he made clear that, in almost all cases, they did not actually do so. He said that most of them tended to “overlook the fact” of “their own empiricism and positivism.” And in so doing, they failed to see each as a “sort of philosophy in itself.”

In response, Mueller emphasized that it was necessary to recognize the philosophical implications of sociology from the very start. And even more to the point, he emphasized that it was necessary to recognize the philosophical anthropology” presupposed in each and

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227 See Mueller, “Dr. Franz H.J. Mueller (Cologne),” 5. Mueller presented this paper at Washington University in St. Louis at the annual meeting of the Beta Chapter of Missouri.
229 Ibid., 28.
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
every sociological inquiry. Mueller insisted that to urge this acknowledgment was not to be “presumptuous.” And nor was it to court the “confusion of sociology with social philosophy.” Rather, it was to “admit” first principles. That is, it was to admit that philosophy “must illuminate the field of sociology.” From this admission, a definite “scientific viewpoint” could be clarified. And furthermore, from this admission, a definite framework for “the classification of inter-human action” could be established.

Given this framework, Mueller said that some of sociology’s most significant substantive questions could then be pursued. These included “what “the social” is,” “in what relation the social stands to its respective end,” and “in what relation this end stands to value.” Furthermore, Mueller attested that some of sociology’s most significant methodological questions could likewise be examined. And the most prominent of them was “what methods are adequate for separating the specifically and exclusively inter-human from other manifestations of human life.” At the moment though, Mueller lamented that few American sociologists seemed interested in addressing them. Thus, a “lack of theoretical consciousness” in American sociology persisted.

In turn, Mueller claimed that a raft of problems had ensued. For example he observed that there was no clear distinction between sociology and “subsidiary” disciplines like “criminology,” “demography,” and “ethnology” to name a few. And he further noted that there was likewise no clear distinction between sociology and “auxiliary sciences” like “social psychology, social ethics, and social statistics.” But he asserted that the most glaring problem was the lack of any agreement about sociology’s “formal object.” Given these

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232 Ibid.  
233 Ibid.  
234 Ibid.  
235 Ibid.  
236 Ibid., 28-29.  
237 Ibid., 29.
deficiencies, Mueller asserted that expansive accounts of sociology had run wild. And in turn, doubts about its scientific status had proliferated. It was no surprise then that sociology had not found its “proper place” among the sciences. Mueller made clear that all of these problems deserved careful consideration. But he stressed that delimiting sociology’s “formal object” was most needful. In fact, he stated that sociological inquiry could not be “exact and precise” until this task was completed.\(^{238}\) Mueller left little doubt that sociologists had to take up this challenge. And in the immediate months and years ahead, he would make haste to do so.

Unifying Sociology and Theology

Like Sturzo and Furfey, Mueller would soon clarify sociology in terms of the supernatural. But unlike these two, he would not delimit it in terms of the supernatural. In 1937, Mueller first outlined his approach in a two-part article entitled “The Theology of Sociology.”\(^{239}\) In the first part, Mueller identified the purpose of his article. He intended to explain how theological postulates inform sociology’s matter and scope. But he bracketed the question of whether they are ingredient to sociology’s formal object. Like Furfey, Mueller adopted a teleological approach. And like Furfey, he seemed to employ something similar to the method of “the theological conclusion.” Mueller laid out two premises to start. For his major premise, he affirmed that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. And for his minor premise, he said that all human beings share the inherent property of “sociability.” Thus, he concluded that we participate in God in and through our sociability.\(^{240}\) Mueller stressed the supernatural significance of this point to his

\(^{238}\) Ibid.


fellow sociologists. He noted that each of them was tasked “to get to the bottom of the final and essential meaning of inter-human life.” But he insisted that they could “not stop at the relative autonomy of the spheres of nature and human achievement.” In fact, it was obligatory to go one step further and “look for their supernatural connection.”

In this search, Mueller said that it was necessary to confront the “most unapproachable” of all theological mysteries: the doctrine of the “Holy Trinity.” In saying this, he acknowledged that “most Christians” tended to regard this doctrine as “remote and incomprehensible.” And in turn, they tended to downplay its significance in “daily life.” Nonetheless, Mueller maintained that no doctrine was more salient to social life than that of the Holy Trinity. Building on Guardini’s work, he testified that “all human society is a “Vestigium trinitatis.” That is, it is “an image of the triune community of God.” And so it followed that society receives “its strength and nobility” in and from this “divine community.”

In support of this point, Mueller next defined the perfection of community. He noted that this perfection involves two particular acts. Quoting Guardini, he identified the first as “love,” that is, “the participation in everything even to the identity of life and being.” And he identified the second as the “perfect self-preservation of Person.” Mueller then considered the interplay of each in terms of the doctrine of the Trinity. Based on this doctrine, he noted that God’s “differentiation” and “indivisible unity” are identical. And in virtue of this identity, it stood to reason that the “union of society and personality is realized

241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid., 4-5.
244 Ibid., 5. The work in question by Guardini was his book Auf dem Wege (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1923).
245 Ibid.
on an incomparably high level by the Holy Trinity.”

The doctrine of the Trinity then supplied a supreme principle for the perfection of community.

Mueller applied this principle to questions about the “purpose” and “destiny” of human beings. Unlike the persons of the Trinity, he noted that we lacked “unity” and “completeness” on an individual level. Yet despite this lack, we nonetheless naturally desire to remedy this deficiency through “fellowship” with others. But in an important qualifier, Mueller made clear that this desire is neither of us nor from us alone. In fact, he asserted that our “longing for membership and fellowship” is most deeply rooted in our creation “in the image of God, that is, the Trinity.” And given this rooting, it followed that the “possibility of (comparatively) representing the whole fullness of the Godhead” cannot be an individual enterprise. Rather, it can be realized “only in the many sided and ever developing community life” unfolding “throughout history.” In this light, Mueller suggested that understanding of God and understanding of society mutually implied each other.

Unpacking this point further, Mueller explained that to understand society is to understand the human family as one integrally and historically united whole. He maintained that, in the “body of Adam,” the human person is originally constituted. And from the “body of Adam,” the human person always remains integrally linked to all other members of human family. Thus, the “primary” and “natural” unity of the human family is rooted in the “body of Adam.” Even so, Mueller made clear that “primary” did not mean exclusive. In the state of our “original and hereditary innocence,” the unity of the human family is rooted

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246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
248 Ibid., 6.
249 Ibid.
250 Ibid.
not just in “body of Adam,” but in the “grace of filial relationship to God.” From the very beginning then, “Adam” and all of his “descendants” are constituted according to a “supernatural principle of life.” But this was not all. Mueller argued that the human family belongs to a body even more primordial than the “body of Adam.” And to make this argument, he took a definite stand on the purpose of the Incarnation. Insofar as God foresaw our loss of sanctifying grace through original sin, Mueller affirmed that God willed to “regain and preserve” this grace through the Incarnation. Through God’s antecedent will then, we are not just reincorporated “in the Godhead” by Christ’s “historical incarnation.” Rather, from the beginning, we are “personally incorporated in the Godhead” by Christ’s “nature as the Son of God.”

Thus, our basic belonging in the “body of Adam” cannot be conceived apart from our even more basic belonging in the body of Christ.

In the second part, Mueller expounded further on this point. To start, he focused on the social effects of original sin. He declared that, insofar as we separated ourselves from “source of all grace,” we had ruptured our original unity and had occasioned its “disintegration.” To restore the “body of Adam” to its original integrity, and divine affiliation, the Son of God assumed humanity, so that all members of humanity could assume divinity. In the Incarnation, this restoration to supernatural life became possible. And in the Redemption, it became effective. In this light, Mueller clarified that the “sacrifice of Jesus Christ” not only redeemed us from the “isolation of sin,” but “brought us once more to God in one body.”

In the “Corpus mysticum,” Christ “supplies the fruits of the

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251 Ibid.
253 Ibid., 3.
redemption to all generations to the end of time.”  

In virtue of the foregoing, Mueller concluded that “a Christian cannot be satisfied with a purely natural sociology.”  

To think otherwise was not just to damage the exercise of sociology, but to undermine it from the start. Inasmuch as unity with Jesus Christ remained “the only historical concrete goal of all social institutions on earth,” Mueller insisted that sociology could not rest in any merely natural unity. From the “perspective of the Mystical Body,” it was simply impossible to “concede any totality or absoluteness to human communities.” And this was so, Mueller declared, for these communities ultimately receive their “consecration and dignity only from Jesus Christ.”

Distinguishing Sociology and Theology

The idea that sociology could be satisfied “only” in terms of Jesus Christ was bold indeed. And it most certainly shared affinities with Furfey’s work. But Mueller would not maintain this idea for long. In fact, in the immediate years ahead, he would reconsider many of his stronger claims in “The Theology of Sociology.” In particular, he would reexamine whether sociology could be delimited or defined in terms of the supernatural. Mueller would soon supply some provisional responses in the wartime debate about “supernatural sociology.” But more immediately, he would outline a clear framework for these responses in the immediate lead-up to the debate.

In the fall of 1938, Mueller drafted a probing essay on the nature and scientific status of sociology. And in November of that year, he sent it along for review to Fr. Eugene Cullinane, CSB, who was then lecturing in the Sociology Department at Catholic University.

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254 Ibid.
255 Ibid., 4.
256 Ibid.
Cullinane replied not long after and he applauded Mueller’s essay. In fact, he was
downright effusive in his praise. Cullinane called Mueller’s essay “a contribution of prime
and monumental importance.” He asserted that it would “inaugurate” nothing less than “a
new historical development in American sociology amongst Catholic scholars.” And in light
of “a definite trend towards Thomism outside the Church in this country,” he added that it
would likewise have a “profound influence on many non-Catholics.”

Yet, despite all of its very impressive qualities, Cullinane said that Mueller’s essay had
to be “polished up” a bit. He chalked up certain unclear ideas to Mueller’s “unfamiliarity”
with English. And in this vein, he suggested that Mueller had to “iron out” several
“Germanisms” scattered throughout. Furthermore, Cullinane advised that, in certain places,
Mueller should translate his Thomistic language into more accessible prose. He noted that
the “average sociologist, Catholic or non-Catholic” lacks a “Thomistic background.” Thus,
he instructed Mueller to “revise the wording somewhat” and further “clarify” some
“Thomistic concepts.”

In closing, Cullinane offered a few parting words of advice and encouragement. He
commented that Mueller’s presentation was “very logical and cohesive,” but he thought that
Mueller should extend his essay even further. Cullinane insisted that Mueller had “the
groundwork for a magnificent book.” And he remained confident that Mueller could secure
a “first-rate publisher.” Cullinane invited Mueller to think about the publicity that he could
get with such a publisher. He figured that it would be “easy to get reviews in *The New York*

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257 Eugene Cullinane to Franz Mueller, November 12, 1938, Box 3, Folder 51, UTSA.
258 Ibid.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
“Times, and leading newspapers and journals.” Thus, he stressed that “the choice of a publisher” was “extremely important.”

Mueller did not develop his essay into a book. And nor did he secure a “first-rate publisher.” Instead, Mueller had his essay published in St. Louis University’s relatively unknown journal *The Fleur de Lis*. It appeared in October of 1939. The essay’s title “What is Sociology?” was pedestrian. In fact, it was downright dull and boring.

But it was no dry and dusty essay. Mueller wrote this article in the style of a disputed question. He considered multiple views about the nature of sociology, and offered responses to each. Many of these responses were surgically precise, but not all of them were dispassionately parsed. Mueller had already reproached “American sociology” for its general indifference to philosophical reflection. And he intensified this criticism in his new essay. But he insisted that this problem was not peculiar to the U.S. In fact, he made clear that sociology was a prodigal child in academic life throughout the world. And he lamented that the status was largely self-inflicted.

Mueller pressed this point at the start of his article. He assailed sociology for studying everything and nothing about society. He clarified that its chief problem was not the range of topics it covered. Rather, it was the clear absence of any definite “sociological approach” to them. In brief, sociology lacked a “uniform viewpoint.” Given this situation, it was no surprise then that “representatives of other sciences” had legitimate concerns about sociology. Mueller even agreed that they were right to raise “grave doubts about the seriousness of sociological research.” Furthermore, he claimed that sociologists had done little to overcome these doubts. In his estimation, they had neither delimited the discipline.

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262 Ibid.
263 Mueller, “What is Sociology?” *The Fleur de Lis* (October 1939): 30-34.
264 Ibid., 30
Nor had they justified its scientific status. In consequence, Mueller said that sociological research looked less like a unique study and more like “an encyclopedia of the conclusions of all the social sciences.”265 Thus, it appeared to contribute nothing original of its own. And inasmuch as this was true, sociology seemed to live a “parasitic existence.” 266

Mueller found sociology’s muddled state alarming. But not all sociologists seemed to agree. Mueller noted that many still exhibited no “epistemological scruple” in treating “the proper problem of other sciences.” 267 And he added that this lack remained true of “Catholic” and “non-Catholic” sociologists alike. The former, he explained, tended to conflate sociology with “theology,” “moral philosophy,” and “social reform” to name a few. And the latter tended to confuse it with “ecology, ethnography,” and “psychiatry.” Yet despite these material differences, their errors remained formally the same. In brief, each group opposed the “ordinate autonomy of sociology.” Mueller traced this shared opposition to an even more fundamental failure. He claimed that each group had failed to delimit “the formal object of sociology.” And he did not mince words about this oversight. He considered it nothing less than a “deplorable neglect.” 268

Until this formal object was delimited, Mueller insisted that sociology could not find its “proper place in the array of social sciences.” 269 It was necessary then to not just identify this formal object, but bring it out in “bold relief.” Mueller contended that only in this way was it possible “to see clearly from what aspect or viewpoint sociology considers its material object.” 270 Too many made the mistake of identifying sociology simply with the material object of “social life or society.” Mueller emphasized that this object was not unique to

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265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid., 31.
sociology. In fact, it was shared by all other “social sciences” including “social psychology,” “social economics,” and even “social ethics.” In this light, it was obvious that sociology needed to distinguish itself through a “viewpoint entirely peculiar to itself.” But Mueller did not immediately clarify what this “viewpoint” is. Rather, he offered a working definition of sociology to start. In brief, he defined sociology as “the social science” par excellence “in the proper and narrower sense,” in that it treated not just “sociation,” but “sociation as such.”

Given this definition, Mueller then tackled the question of sociology’s scientific status. But this was no easy task. Mueller presupposed a pretty large taxonomy of the sciences, so he had a lot to sort through. He first attempted to settle whether sociology is a “cultural” science or a “natural” science. The question certainly had a long and contentious history in sociology. But Mueller thought the question was fairly easy to dispatch with. Unlike the natural sciences, sociology does not just study the observable regularities of material phenomena. Rather, it studies the free and purposeful “activity of rational beings.” Thus, Mueller determined that sociology is a cultural science. Now in saying this, he did not mean to imply that sociology does not bear on the “natural” or even “the supernatural” for that matter. In fact, he made clear that he did “deny the essential connection between cultural and social life on the one hand and the natural and the supernatural on the other.”

But neither did he deny the distinction between these two pairs. It was a difference that made a difference in classifying sociology’s scientific status.

Mueller did not immediately elaborate on the supernatural’s implication in sociology. Instead, he next addressed whether sociology is a “speculative” science or an “empirical”

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271 Ibid.
272 Ibid.
273 Ibid.
He argued for the latter. In support, Mueller noted that, unlike “social ontology,” sociology does not principally treat “universal essences” or “transcendental” forms. That is, it does not investigate the “universal meaning and objective purpose of social relations and structures” like “the nature of the family” or “the idea of the State.” Rather, it studies the concrete and contingent actualization of social phenomena. Unlike social ontology then, Mueller clarified that sociology does not begin “so to speak at the top” in its inquiry, and then and only then work its way “down to empirical reality.” Instead, it starts from the “opposite direction.” That is, it begins on the bottom on “the historical plane” in order to examine how “social entities are actualized” and how “they assume concreteness and particularity.” Then and only then does it work its way up toward the ideal realm.

The classification of sociology as an empirical science seemed straightforward enough. But Mueller insinuated that it was presently a tough sell in Catholic intellectual life. In a sweeping indictment, he bemoaned that “Catholics” tended to be “curiously indifferent at times to history.” Mueller found this apparent state of affairs counterintuitive. In light of their theological imagination, Mueller said that “Catholics” are certainly directed to study history as the “temporal mode” of human existence. He remarked that they are formed to see it more comprehensively as the “the return of the creature to God.” And he further mentioned that they are prepared to see it more dramatically as “the struggle between the civitas Dei and the civitas diaboli.” Thus, Catholics seemed especially fit to consider history.

Yet, circumstances appeared to militate against this disposition at the moment. In Catholic intellectual life, Mueller lamented that there was a “pronounced preference for the non-historical categories of the ancient philosophers.” Thus, all too often, each discrete

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274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
276 Ibid.
social process was treated as “an accidental or contingent representation of a universal idea.” It was no surprise then that the “creative character of cultural life” had been routinely neglected. Mueller found this situation “hardly justifiable.” But he was even more alarmed at its apparent effects. He testified that it was difficult now for many Catholic scholars “to apprehend the empirical, the individual, or the particular as such.”

But difficult did not mean improbable. Mueller was happy to report that ancient philosophy did not traffic exclusively in “non-historical categories.” In fact, it supplied at least some “access to the understanding of the historically and spatially concrete.” But before going further, Mueller paused to consider why the “recognition” of “particulars” is so important. It certainly mattered to the task of justifying sociology as an empirical science. But Mueller indicated that it likewise mattered to understanding the “religious existence” of Christian life. In support, he testified that Christian life does not just entail “giving assent to abstract principles.” In fact, more than anything else, it involves “actualizing these principles in the hic et nunc.” For purposes of science and faith then, it was imperative to acknowledge “the significance of particulars as such.”

At this point, Mueller had gone a long way toward determining sociology’s proper place in the sciences. He had already justified sociology as a cultural science and as an empirical science. But it was still an open question as to what type of empirical science it is. To delimit sociology then, it was necessary to clarify its particular “matter.” And even more specifically, it was necessary to clarify what particular matter individuates “social forms.” Mueller did not hesitate to respond. “Without doubt,” he stated, it is “the whole of humanity

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277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid.
and the temporal and spatial motives” found therein. Now to be sure, he qualified that to speak of humanity as “matter” was to speak “analogically.”

Human persons are individual substances of a rational nature, and so do not exist in any other subject. Thus, they cannot be transformed into “mere organs” of some larger “whole.” In other words, human persons do not exist in society. Rather, society exists in them.

Mueller elaborated even further on sociology’s specific matter. He affirmed that “associations” like “the family” and “the state” compose part of sociology’s necessary matter. But he made clear that they do not constitute its sufficient matter. It was necessary then to “go one step farther.”

Mueller identified “interhuman relations and connections” as sociology’s sufficient matter. But he qualified that this was so “only” inasmuch as they possess “social relevancy.” Furthermore, in order to be a fit material object of empirical science, they had to be “sensibly perceivable.” And thus, they had to find “external expression.” Mueller explained that “the reason for” their “indispensable corporality” was straightforward enough. Insofar as human existence is “bodily,” even our most “spiritual acts” need “external termini” or “points of support.” It followed that any and all “social relationships and structures” require similar external expressions. To think otherwise was to court “spiritualism.” At the very least, Mueller reasoned that if these “relationships” are “not embodied in some kind of organization,” they would “quickly evaporate.”

Thus, sociology presupposed the significance of corporality.

Mueller was quick to note that the “Church” presupposed the same. In fact, he said this point found ready “corroboration” in “the teaching of the visibility of the Church.”

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281 Ibid., 32.
282 Ibid.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
285 Ibid.
And this was no peripheral teaching. Mueller emphasized that it was indeed fundamental, inasmuch as the Church “has its deepest reason for being in the incarnation of its head, Christ.” In this light, the Church is and could only be a “visible society.” Thus, like sociology, the Church rejected any sort of “spiritualism” out of hand.  

In an additional and final classification, Mueller identified sociology as a “teleological science,” albeit “in a certain sense.” Unlike metaphysics, he made clear that sociology does not directly study “the end as such.” Rather, it studies this end insofar as it pertains to “the purposefulness of interhuman activity.” Or in more Thomistic terms, it pertains to “its adequacy (fitness) to the social purpose.” Mueller then paused briefly to ask in what this “adequacy” or “purposefulness” consists. And without hesitation, he answered that it consists precisely in “integration.” Putting this together, he construed sociology as the study of whether “a given attitude or behavior” serves to “promote or impede integration.” And in this regard, he agreed that, like metaphysics, it considers “the purpose” that particular “social process are ordered” to. But again unlike metaphysics, it does not directly treat the “finis ultimus” of individual action. Rather, it directly treats its “finis cui,” that is, its “social purpose.” In other words, it examines the intermediate end of human action, and not the ultimate end. Yet despite the distinction of the two, Mueller insisted that they are not separate. In good Thomistic fashion, he affirmed that the “finis operantis (cuins)” does not and cannot oppose the “finis operis (sui).”

After travelling all this way, Mueller had finally arrived at the “floodgates” of sociology’s definitive “idea.” And from his perch, he declared that it was now possible to

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286 Ibid.
287 Ibid., 33.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid.
“open” them and clarify what “motives, circumstances, and attitudes are adapted to actualize social forms.” And in turn, it was possible to identify what “material causes influence” the “individuation” of these forms. Based on this data, sociologists could then determine “the social end and purpose” of particular associations. And given this definite goal, Mueller insisted that they should not directly seek any other in their inquiry. He then appealed to the example of a French club to illustrate this point. In examining such a club, Mueller insisted that the sociologist is not directed to discover whether it “really promotes knowledge of French.” Rather, the sociologist is directed to assess whether “this sort of association proves to be suitable for cooperation” in pursuit of the “common activity” in question. Thus, unlike the “moral philosopher,” the sociologist does not directly consider whether “this or that action corresponds to the common good.” Instead, he or she considers whether this or that action “contributes of the integration” of people in and across associations.”

From all of this, Mueller made clear that “the formal object of sociology” is not the “particular common good.” Rather, it is the “social process of integration” underlying the realization of this or that common good. Thus, Mueller ultimately defined sociology as the “empirical and factual science” whose “formal object” is “the social process of integration” whereby particular people are “formed into social structures.” In short, it is the science that “studies the means and classification of the proximate causes of these integrating processes.”

Conclusion

By the end of the 1930s, Sturzo, Furfey, and Mueller had each laid out distinctive accounts of sociology. Each had examined sociology’s implication of the supernatural. And

290 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
to greater and lesser degrees, each had mounted defenses of its intrinsic connection to this ultimate end. Sturzo and Furfey had both gone so far as to conceive sociology as inseparable from the supernatural. Mueller had not, though he agreed that it implied the supernatural in a remote way. In the next few years, each of them would test the promises and limits of their respective accounts. And each would get the opportunity to do so through the unique U.S. debate about “supernatural sociology.”
CHAPTER IV

THE BUILDUP OF THE DEBATE ABOUT SUPERNATURAL SOCIOLOGY

This fourth chapter plans to survey the formation and development of the U.S. debate about “supernatural sociology” from late 1939 through early 1944. Specifically, it plans to survey the early and influential contributions to this debate by Paul Hanly Furfey, Franz Mueller, and Luigi Sturzo. In so doing, this chapter intends to accomplish two specific tasks. First, it aims to show how each of these figures set forth the debate’s central terms and its two most important questions. And to be clear, these questions were 1) whether and in what way the supernatural is implied in sociology, and 2) whether and in what way the supernatural delimits sociology. And second, it seeks to show how their respective and distinctive responses not only joined the debate, but propelled it forward.

In service to these two tasks, this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, this chapter aims to examine Furfey’s defense of “supernatural sociology,” and Mueller’s more circumspect consideration. In the second part, it seeks to explain Sturzo’s intervention in the debate, and his subsequent advance of “sociology of the supernatural” in the U.S. And then in third and final part, it intends to explore Furfey’s later intensified critique of sociology for being insufficiently “supernatural.”
Part I: The Debate’s Beginning

On October 20, 1938, Furfey received a letter from Fr. Ralph Gallagher, S.J., the recently elected president of the American Catholic Sociological Society (ACSS).\(^1\) Seven months earlier, the ACSS had been founded at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois.\(^2\) Gallagher, who was then the chair of Loyola University’s Department of Sociology, had organized the charter meeting. Over thirty sociologists from at least twenty-five different U.S. Catholic colleges and universities in the Midwest were in attendance.\(^3\) At the meeting, various points of order were discussed and carried out. Participants elected board members. They debated whether to establish formal ties with the American Sociological Society (ASS).\(^4\) And they even drafted a provisional constitution.\(^5\) Yet despite these important developments, Gallagher still thought the ACSS lacked a distinct guiding vision. The first annual ACSS convention was only two months away, and Gallagher wanted to clarify this vision. He figured that Furfey could help him in this task.

Furfey’s Vision for the ACSS

In preparation for this flagship event, Gallagher invited Furfey to deliver the keynote address at the first annual convention.\(^6\) Gallagher had some ideas in mind for the keynote.

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\(^1\) Ralph Gallagher to Paul Hanly Furfey, October 20, 1938, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.

\(^2\) See “Minutes of the Organization Meeting of the American Catholic Sociological Society,” American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.

\(^3\) Ibid. Due to the location and timing of the meeting, invitations were limited to representatives from the “Catholic Colleges of the Middle West.”

\(^4\) Ibid. Opinions on this matter were diverse and conflicting. Some endorsed affiliation on more practical grounds, citing the convenience of holding concurrent meetings with the ASS. Others endorsed it on more substantive grounds, stating that the “influence” of Catholic thought in sociology could be “best assured” through formal affiliation. But other counseled against it, citing previous disappointing experiences in other “secular” societies. In the end, most agree that the question of affiliation with the ASS was “premature,” and so the discussion was tabled.

\(^5\) Ibid. In Article II of the draft “Constitution of the American Catholic Sociological Society,” the purpose of the society was outlined in terms of three goals. First, “to stimulate concerted study and research among Catholics working in the field of Sociology.” Second, “to create a sense of solidarity.” And third, “to unearth and to disseminate particularly the sociological implications of the Catholic thought-pattern.”

\(^6\) Gallagher to Furfey, October 20, 1938, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
And he even recommended “Toward a Christian Sociology” as a working title. Still, Gallagher gave Furfey wide latitude to draft his own ideas. He only asked that Furfey provide him with a “precise title” somewhat soon. In response, Furfey readily accepted Gallagher’s offer. But he made clear that he preferred a more vivid and captivating title, and he ripped it directly from a previous two-part article he had written in 1935. Furfey told Gallagher that the “exact” title of his address would be “Catholic Social Extremism.”

No copy of Furfey’s address remains. Even so, it appears that his keynote was apparently well-received. At the very same conference, Furfey was later elected vice-president of the ACSS. Over the next year, the ACSS did not directly endorse Furfey’s vision of Catholic social extremism. But it did take steps to sharpen its distinctive approach to sociological inquiry. In November of 1939, the *American Journal of Sociology (AJS)*, the trade publication of the ASS, published an exceedingly curt and cutting review of a recently co-written book by two ACSS members. At two sentences in length, the reviewer trashed the book as having “no other purpose” than “to perpetuate archaic beliefs and medieval thought patterns.” ACSS members were quick to pounce on the reviewer’s lack of professionalism and barely veiled antipathy toward Catholic scholarship. At the second annual ACSS convention in December of 1939, they attempted to coordinate a critical response. Fr. James Coogan, S.J. of the University of Detroit called for a sharp rebuke of

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7 Furfey to Gallagher, October 26, 1938, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
8 Ibid.
9 Furfey did not include a copy of this presentation in his papers. And no copy exists in the records of the American Catholic Sociological Society. In fact, almost all official records of the first two and half decades of the society were destroyed in a truck fire in 1968. On this incident, see Loretta M. Morris, “Secular Transcendence: From ACSS to ASR,” *Sociological Analysis*, vol. 50, no. 4, 329.
11 Ibid.
the *AJS*.

And he even tried to rally a formal protest of the journal until “Catholic books” could “secure more favorable treatment.”

Furfey basically agreed with Coogan’s idea, but he suggested that their protest should be targeted at the editorial policies of the *AJS*, and not the journal itself. The executive board took up Furfey’s motion and it passed unanimously.

The agreement to rebuke the *AJS* was no doubt an important decision in the early life of the ACSS. But an even more important decision took place at the very same convention. Earlier in 1939, Gallagher had solicited feedback about the possibility of an ACSS-sponsored quarterly review. Members were generally receptive to the idea.

At the second annual convention, the establishment of such a review was formally proposed, and like Furfey’s earlier motion, it passed unanimously. Members even agreed to triple their annual dues to support it.

*A Vehicle for the Vision*

Gallagher made haste to make the review a reality. Less than two weeks after the second annual convention, Gallagher reached out to Furfey for advice about the review’s layout and range of contributors. Among other things, he asked for recommendations about what it should “contain,” what it should “comment upon,” and who it should be “open” to. In reply, Furfey offered a detailed list of suggestions. In terms of contributors, Furfey stated that the review “should be open to all persons who can contribute material of

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13 Ibid., 148.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 98.
16 Ibid., 99.
17 Ibid.
18 Gallagher to Furfey, January 10, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
19 Ibid.
20 Furfey to Gallagher, January 18, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
interest to Catholic sociologists.” But he quickly added that “some preference should naturally be given to members.” Next, in terms of content, he advised that the review should have a “book review department” and a “column devoted to college sociological news.” But he insisted that there “should absolutely not be an editorial page.” He said that it would “out of place” in a “scholarly” journal. Interestingly, Furfey did not find “advertising” out of place. But he made clear that it “should be very carefully selected.” Finally, he recommended that the review should emulate the “standard” of Science Magazine, the trade publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).21

By February of 1940, the journal had an official name, the American Catholic Sociological Review (ACSR). And later that same month, Furfey was asked to serve on the editorial board. The newly elected president of the ACSS, Paul J. Mundie of Marquette University, made the request. In his letter, Mundie told Furfey that he would have few editorial responsibilities at first.22 The executive committee had already agreed to publish the papers from the most recent convention in the first two issues. Thereafter, the editorial board would be tasked “to secure papers of high scholarship.” Mundie stressed the importance of finding “quality” papers. The ACSS had much to prove to more established professional societies, and Mundie did not want the new review to disappoint.23

Furfey readily accepted Mundie’s request, stating that he was “very happy indeed to serve.”24 Later that same month, the first issue of the ACSR was released. Furfey had presented a paper on “Christian Social Thought in the First and Second Centuries” at the most recent ACSS convention. And it was reproduced under the same title in the charter

21 Ibid.
22 Mundie to Furfey, February 28, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
23 Ibid.
24 Furfey to Mundie, March 6, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
issue. In this article, Furfey covered many of the same themes that he had previously treated in *Fire on the Earth*. He did not directly address “supernatural sociology” in his article, but he did gesture toward it. Furfey encouraged fellow sociologists to build their “theoretical foundations” on “Catholic social doctrine,” the “fontes revelationis,” and “the activities of the saints.” He advised them to give greater attention to the “technique” of “personalist social action.” He urged them to interpret social problems through the “principle of the Mystical Body.” And he exhorted them to renounce “worldliness.” But above all else, he called them to live “holy lives.” In short, Furfey re-proposed his vision of “Catholic Social Extremism,” and invited all ACSS members to adopt it going forward.

*What Sociology Studies*

Of all the articles in the first two issues of the *ACSR*, the most technical was Mueller’s on “The Formal Object of Sociology.” And in many ways, it was the most significant, inasmuch as it set the stage for the debate about “supernatural sociology.” To start, Mueller indicated that Catholic sociologists were well-prepared to resolve the question of sociology’s formal object. And in support, he drew attention to their philosophical and theological formation. Yet, in virtue of this very same formation, Mueller said they had to confront a prevailing problem in much their work. In particular, he asserted that far too many of them failed “to distinguish clearly between the truths of revelation, philosophical

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26 Ibid., 13.
27 Ibid., 15.
28 Ibid., 19.
29 Ibid., 16.
30 Ibid., 20.
speculation and experimental knowledge.” He even called this apparent error the “great fallacy” among Catholic sociologists.

Nonetheless, Mueller was quick to note that a ready remedy was available in Aquinas’ thought. In support, he called attention to Aquinas’ treatment of the material object of government. He noted that Aquinas considered this object in terms of the respective formal objects of the empirical, the natural, and the supernatural. Aquinas took care to distinguish each of them. But Mueller emphasized that Aquinas “never confused” them. In other words, Aquinas “did not use supernatural categories when dealing with the natural.”

Furthermore, Mueller asserted that Aquinas did not “limit himself to the study of the supernatural and the nature of things when knowledge of spatial and temporal existence was desired.” Aquinas did not deny that the supernatural order and the natural order “form a unity.” But he insisted that all “phases and modalities of being” must be kept distinct. And it was an insistence, Mueller stressed, that all Catholic sociologists should keep in mind.

Aquinas was surely an important model to emulate. But Mueller suggested that Catholic sociologists had an even closer model at hand. In particular, he commended Furfey’s work in *Three Theories of Society* to all. He noted that Furfey took care to distinguish theological knowledge from metaphysical knowledge and positive knowledge. And even more important, he noted that Furfey took even greater care to clarify the proper ordering of each type of knowledge. Comte had argued that the history of the human spirit progressed from theological knowledge to positive knowledge. But in opposition, Furfey maintained the reverse. In fact, Furfey argued that “the theological theory of society” was not just “the highest point” of social scientific knowledge. He claimed that “the consummation of social

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32 Ibid., 56.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 55.
understanding” was not possible without it. Now in saying this, Mueller clarified that Furfey did not condone the absorption of “social metaphysics and empirical sociology” into “social theology.” Rather, Furfey emphasized that the importance of properly ordering each of these sciences.

But in order to carry out this task, Mueller declared that it was important to first distinguish sociology from metaphysics and theology. And in fact, it was imperative from a methodological perspective. Mueller noted that if one was “obliged to refer every mundane thing or act to the First Cause directly,” then sociology would not only be “without any subject matter.” It would be “without any reason for existence.” Furthermore, Mueller added that the distinction of sociology from higher sciences was likewise important from a theological perspective. He made clear that “the study of social life based on inductive reasoning” was proper to sociology. But he insisted that this same study “based on faith or on speculation” was not.

Building on Aquinas, Mueller set out an important theological principle. He affirmed that God communicates his goodness not through identity, but through the production of diversity. In this light, it follows that the perfection of God’s goodness should be achieved through the cooperation of diverse orders of being. Given this point, Mueller urged his fellow sociologists not “to ascribe all the activity of the lower orders of being to the First Cause alone.” To do otherwise, he warned, would be to lose sight of the “infinite goodness of the Creator.” Thus, he concluded that it was necessary affirm “the ordered autonomy” proper to “the different spheres of nature and culture.”

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 56.
37 Ibid., 57.
In support of this goal, Mueller maintained that sociology had to be properly situated in the sciences first. Drawing on his recent article on the nature of sociology, he classified sociology as an empirical science. Mueller made clear that, unlike “social philosophy,” sociology did not directly examine “the universal supra-temporal essence of society.” In other words, it did not directly treat the “animating principle of society.” Rather, Mueller stated that sociology examined how the “individuation of the general principle of life” is occasioned through social “building materials.” And these included circumstances like time and place, and different human attitudes and interests. In this regard, Mueller determined that, at the very least, sociology’s formal object had to be empirical in “character.” Even so, he admitted that this determination alone did not suffice to delimit sociology’s formal object. That is, even if sociology was an empirical science, it was still not clear whether it was an autonomous science.

In order to answer this question, Mueller indicated that it was necessary to address whether sociology is a subordinate science or a subalternate science. Mueller had only recently considered the subject in conversation with Bernard Muller-Thym, who was a colleague of Mueller’s at St. Louis University. In response to a draft of Mueller’s earlier article on the nature of sociology, Muller-Thym said that he agreed with much of Mueller’s analysis. But he noted that Mueller’s work on delimiting sociology’s formal sociology could be further sharpened through an appeal to the distinction between subordination and

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 58.
41 Muller-Thym to Mueller, September 8, 1939, Miscellaneous Correspondence (1922-1959) Folder, Box 3, Mueller Papers, University of St. Thomas Archives (USTA). Bernard Mueller-Thym (1909-1988) studied under Étienne Gilson at the Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto. His dissertation was later published as book under the title The Establishment of the University of Being in the Doctrine of Meister Eckhart of Hochheim. Additionally, Mueller-Thym was a longtime friend and intellectual confere of Walter Ong, S.J. and Marshall McLuhan, who were each colleagues of his at St. Louis University at various points.
subalternation. In logical terms, a science was subalternate if it simply added minor premises to the major premises of another science. And inasmuch as it lacked distinct principles, it thereby lacked a distinct formality.

Mueller-Thym then explained the underlying reasons for this lack in the more technical terms of ontology. He noted that a science was subalternate if it only added differentia to a genus shared univocally with another science. Muller-Thym pointed to the example of plane geometry, and mentioned that it was subalternate to solid geometry. Each shared the same genus of the properties and relationship of points and lines. But in contrast to solid geometry, plane geometry only added the differentia of two-dimensional space.\footnote{Ibid.}

In distinction, Mueller-Thym stated that a science was subordinate if, in logical terms, it departed from its own major premises. Now in saying this, he made clear that subordinate did not mean sovereign. In fact, he stated that each and every subordinate science looked toward a higher science for greater light and explanation. Geometry, for example, looked toward arithmetic, and mathematics looked toward metaphysics.\footnote{Ibid.} Muller-Thym agreed with Meuller that sociology possessed its own distinct level of formal abstraction and its own distinct principles in evaluating social structures and processes. And he further agreed that sociology looked to philosophy for greater light and explanation of its subject-matter. But he indicated that Mueller needed to better articulate sociology’s subordinate status in the social sciences in order to secure its proper autonomy.\footnote{Ibid.} And Mueller apparently took his advice.

\footnote{Ibid. In particular, Muller-Thym agreed in outline with Mueller’s application of “the analogy of the principle of individuation” to “the individuation of the form of a society in its given matter.” In fact, he said it was “quite valid and useful to help one study social structures.” But Muller-Thym disagreed with Mueller’s application in detail. To clarify, he first noted that the “contractive movement” in “subordination” was different from that of “subalternation.” He explained that the latter movement was “reverse of what takes place in abstractio totalis.” In this light, the contractive movement in subalternation did not involve the abstraction of...}
Mueller did not explicitly advert to the distinction between subordination and
subalternation. But he did employ it in his discussion of sociology’s formal object. For
Mueller, the question of sociology’s material object was clear enough. Like other empirical
social sciences such as social psychology and social statistics, sociology studied society.\footnote{Mueller, “The Formal Object of Sociology,” 58.} But Muller was quick to note that it was open question as to whether any of these sciences had a
distinct formal object. In other words, it was an open question as to whether any social
science, including sociology, was indeed an autonomous science. In reply, Mueller first
stated that, unlike any other social science, sociology was “primarily interested” in the “most
fundamental thing” in the social process itself: “sociation.”\footnote{Ibid., 59.} In this light, sociology studied
how “social relations and social structures come into existence” and how they “pass out of
it.” And building on this point, Mueller then distinguished the formally “social” from the
formally political, the formally economic, and so on. He defined the properly “social” as the
“relation” between members of the human family arising from the relative unity or
separation among themselves “by reason of some particular end or purpose.”

Based on this definition, Mueller made clear that sociology was not just a social
science alongside other social sciences. Rather, it was “social science” in the “proper sense
of the term.” In this light, sociology’s primary concern with the “concrete reasons”
occasioning the integration and disintegration of social forms was not some mere differentia
added to the genus of another social science. Instead, it was the genus of social science
itself. Mueller claimed that sociation did not just delimit sociology’s formal object. Rather, it served to justify sociology’s subordinate and relatively autonomous status in the sciences.

The determination of sociology’s subordinate status was a very important step. But Mueller acknowledged that it still left open the question of what higher science sociology was subordinate to. In reply, Mueller turned to the teleological character of sociology. Like his previous article, he noted that sociology studied the “common movement” of particular social processes either toward or away from a “central point” or “end.” And to be clear, this “central point” was “the common good.” Inasmuch as this end was the object of sociology’s inquiry, Mueller maintained that sociology was intrinsically teleological. But unlike his previous article, he made clear that sociology was “not teleological in the sense that it makes the end or purpose the object of its investigations.” Thus, sociology did not study the end of the common good itself. Rather, it studied the “effects” of “human interaction” in the movement toward this end. In other words, it treated the finis cui of human interaction, and not the finis ultimus.

In closing, Mueller offered a parting lesson on the importance of distinction. As a general rule, he cautioned Catholic sociologists against conflating sociology and social reform. In saying this, Mueller was quick to note that, in order to “effect a cure of social ills,” sociology supplied “the cause of social reform with diagnostic information.” But he insisted that sociology was the “science of things as they are,” and “not of things as they should be.” In regard to “moral and religious conduct” then, he asserted that sociology evaluated it “exclusively from the viewpoint of its integrating and disintegrating effects.”

47 Ibid.  
48 Ibid.  
49 Ibid., 60.  
50 Ibid.
Mueller acknowledged that some sociologists did not agree with such a sharp distinction between sociology and social reform. The habit of calling social reform “applied sociology,” and sociology proper “theoretic or analytical sociology,” was common enough.\textsuperscript{51} But Mueller did not think this habit was “advisable.” And nor did he think it was justifiable, especially in light of the distinction between art and science. To illustrate this latter point, Mueller called attention to the difference between “brewing” and “chemistry.” He noted that the “brewing” certainly made use of “the findings of chemistry.” But he made clear that, despite this use, brewing did not belong to the subfield of “applied chemistry.” And he insisted that the same applied to “social reform.” Mueller affirmed that social reform made use of the findings of sociology, but he asserted that it did not belong to the subfield of “applied sociology.” Like brewing, social reform was an “art,” and not a science, and the distinction was crucial to keep in mind.\textsuperscript{52} In the end then, Mueller counseled that “methodological clarity” was best served through the work of proper distinction, for the one “who distinguishes well teaches well.”\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{The Real Work Begins}

Mundie wrote to Furfey shortly after the second issue of the \textit{ACSR} had been released.\textsuperscript{54} He noted that the journal had now completed its print run of the papers from the second annual convention. And in consequence, the responsibilities of the editorial board were about to ramp up. Mundie reminded Furfey of these responsibilities, and asked him to “give consideration to the problem of obtaining suitable material for future issues.” He especially encouraged Furfey to seek out articles “pertaining to the several aspects of our

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{54} Mundie to Furfey, May 24, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
field.” Mundie said that these articles could come from sociologists of Furfey’s “acquaintance” or even from Furfey’s “own” hand. But the timetable was narrow. Mundie asked Furfey to find “one or more articles” and then pass them along in the “next month.”55 In reply, Furfey said that he could “scare up some articles.”56 And he assured Mundie that he would soon “get something together.”

In October of 1940, the third issue of the ACSR appeared. It included five articles, and one just so happened to address the theme of “supernatural sociology.” But Furfey had not written it. Nor had he solicited it. And nor even had he apparently reviewed it prior to publication.57 But Mueller, who likewise sat on the editorial board, had almost certainly reviewed it. He had written it himself.

Setting the Terms of the Debate

In his article “The Possibility and Scope of a Supernatural Sociology,” Mueller built on his previous attempts to delimit sociology’s formal object.58 To start, Mueller made clear that he did not presume the existence of supernatural sociology. He maintained that sociology was properly an empirical science. And in turn, he asserted that it dealt with “the material and proximate causes of the integration of men into social relations and structures.”59 Thus, he emphasized that it could “go no farther than the mere surface of things.”

Nonetheless, Mueller conceded that supernatural sociology was indeed possible. He affirmed that sociology opened out to a “more profound study” of its essential subject

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55 Ibid.
56 Furfey to Mundie, June 1, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
57 See Furfey to Gallagher, November 4, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
59 Ibid., 141.
And he even said that it “urged” the study of “social metaphysics.” Now in saying this, Mueller made clear, in Thomistic terms, that sociology primarily studied “the secondary causes active in social life.” But he was quick to add that it could “go farther” and inquire into “the formal causes and final causes of social phenomena.” And in a further step still, Mueller suggested that sociology could even take up “the problem of the supernatural causes of interhuman processes and their religious implications.” In sum then, he affirmed that sociologists could “follow a path from empirical sociology to social metaphysics and on to the science of social theology or sacred sociology.”

Mueller was agnostic about whether to call the “science” in question “supernatural sociology” or “sacred sociology” or “theological sociology.” But he was quite confident that it was indeed a science. Thus, he set out to delimit the formal object of “supernatural sociology.” But before doing so, he indicated that it was necessary to first identify the distinct content of “supernatural sociology.” Unlike empirical sociology, Mueller stated that “supernatural sociology” was not based on “experience.” Rather, it was based on “revelation and on the doctrine and practice of the Church.” Then in a further distinction, Mueller contrasted “supernatural sociology” with “sociology of religion.” He noted that each examined “religious thought and practice.” But he insisted that only “supernatural sociology” could evaluate its “content.”

The contrast between the two helped Mueller to clarify the distinct formal objects of each. Mueller explained that sociology of religion examined “the influence and contribution of religious attitudes and behavior to the “individuation” of society.” In other words, it

60 Ibid., 142.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 146.
63 Ibid., 142.
64 Ibid., 146.
65 Ibid.
studied the “factual effects of certain religious teachings and practices on the structure of society” and vice versa. In distinction, Mueller said that “supernatural sociology” treated the “direct formation of social being through supernatural principles and entities.” In other words, it studied “the supernatural entities and forces” that influence “the integration and disintegration of social structures.” And Mueller made clear that this object was indeed the “formal object” of supernatural sociology.

With the formal objects of each now delimited, Mueller pivoted to the relation between “supernatural sociology” and empirical sociology. As a general rule, he maintained that, even though sciences have distinct formal objects, it did “not prohibit” them from “working together hand in hand.” In principle then, Mueller said that supernatural sociology could “complement” empirical sociology. And going even further, he asserted that it could even “supply the answer to problems in empirical sociology.” Mueller indicated that this was especially true in reference to the problem of the destiny of “interhuman relations.” And he praised Furfey for stressing this point “time and time again.” In particular, he claimed that Furfey had “rightly emphasized” the need to open sociology “to a study of the theology of interhuman relations and of the supernatural foundations of society.” In other words, Furfey had illuminated the opening of empirical sociology to supernatural sociology.

Like Furfey, Mueller agreed that supernatural sociology assisted empirical sociology in its own development. But he was quick to note that, in this relationship, assistance did not just flow in one direction. In fact, Mueller asserted that empirical sociology could “serve as a theodicy in substantiating the supernatural truths of theological sociology.” The point was intriguing, but Mueller did not elaborate on it any further. Instead, he cautioned that, in

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
order to advance “supernatural sociology,” it was necessary “to guard against any exaggerated supernaturalism.” Thus, it was imperative to “constantly keep in mind” two principles. First, that the supernatural is built on the natural.” And second, that God, the final cause, does not invalidate the natural, created, so-called secondary causes.”

Finally, Mueller circled back to the question of the nature of the “social.” He noted that this question was presupposed in each and every account of sociology. And he further noted that various answers had been proposed. Nonetheless, he stated that, from this diversity, two basic and contrasting positions had emerged in sociology. Mueller identified the first as a “classical Protestant” position. He explained that this view maintained that our “social faculty” derives from the effects of original sin. Thus, “mutual help” and “sociability” are conceived as flowing from the post-lapsarian deficiencies of human nature.

Mueller then turned to the “Catholic” position. He noted that, in opposition to the previous, the Catholic position maintained that our “social faculty” is rooted in the state of original holiness. And specifically, it affirmed that “even in the state of original innocence and grace, endowed with the praeternatural gifts of integrity and immorality, men were destined to living with each other.” Thus, “mutual help” and “sociability” are conceived as flowing from the integrity of human nature itself.

Of the two, Mueller argued that the Catholic position rested on much stronger philosophical grounds. Inasmuch as “agere sequitur esse (acting follows being),” mutual cooperation can only follow from a nature that has already made provisions for it. In other words, “only because man is a social being,” and “only” because he is so “from the

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 142.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., 143
beginning,” is he able then to “lead a social life.” Thus, Mueller determined that social life is not some “unavoidable evil,” but a “fulfillment of a natural inclination.”

The philosophical strength of the Catholic position on the “social” was no doubt important. But even more important to Mueller was the fact that each predominant position in sociology implied theological postulates. And given their apparent implication, it seemed to follow that sociology could not be truly delimited without adverting to them. Whether or not this conclusion was right, Mueller certainly appeared to invite further discussion of “supernatural sociology.” And he would get his wish.

*Furfey Responds*

Soon after the third issue of the *ACSR* appeared, Gallagher wrote to Furfey about Mueller’s article on supernatural sociology. He knew the subject was near and dear to Furfey. Thus, Gallagher asked Furfey if he could write a “follow-up” response in the next issue of the *ACSR*. And he basically gave Furfey free reign. Gallagher told Furfey that his response could be “an elaboration” on Mueller’s article. Or it could “disagree” with it. Or it could be about “anything else” pertinent to the “subject” of supernatural sociology. A few days later, Furfey replied that he was “very much interested in Dr. Mueller’s article in the October Review.” And he stated that he would “very much like to follow it up with an article” on the subject of supernatural sociology.

Furfey soon dashed off a short response to Mueller’s article. Interestingly though, Furfey did not engage Mueller’s general claims all that much. Nor did he address Mueller’s

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73 Ibid.
74 Gallagher to Furfey, October 29, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
75 Furfey to Gallagher, November 4, 1940, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
finer distinctions. In fact, he did not cite Mueller’s work at all in his response. Yet despite these omissions, Furfey did gesture toward Mueller’s work on at least one or two occasions.

For a Supernatural Sociology

In the next issue of the *ACSR*, Furfey published his follow-up to Mueller’s article. In this piece, Furfey did not just defend the plausibility of supernatural sociology. He made a case for its necessity. At the start, Furfey laid out his basic approach to sociology. He stated that, inasmuch as sociology is the comprehensive study of human society, it was only proper that sociologists should “use all available means” to do so. Furfey maintained that there were “three such means.” And he identified them as the “scientific,” the “philosophical,” and the “theological.” Each had an indispensible perspective to offer “to the understanding of society.” And each had essential contribution to make. Thus, to “neglect any” was to leave “sociological knowledge impartial and incomplete.”

The proper role of the “scientific” approach in sociology was fairly straightforward. Furfey held that “social phenomena” like “population growth, the distribution of wealth and income,” and “crime rates” were all “best studied” by “objective and quantitative methods.” Even so, he made clear that other “important social facts” like “the essential nature of man and the purpose of his existence” remained “inaccessible” to these methods. Thus, the philosophical approach had an important role to play in the comprehensive understanding of society. Furthermore, Furfey insisted that still another approach remained necessary inasmuch as “divine revelation” supplied “pertinent social data” like the “existence of the Mystical Body.” He not only claimed that the Mystical Body of Christ was a “socially

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77 Ibid., 167.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
significant fact.” He even went so far as to assert that it was “just as actual, just as real,” and “just as concrete, as the infant mortality rate of Minnesota in 1939.” Thus, to exclude this fact was to limit the means of sociology. And to limit the means of sociology was to undermine the mission of sociology. For Furfey, any comprehensive study of society had to include the social “facts” of “justice and charity, sin and hell,” and “grace and love.” To do less was simply to be “unrealistic” in the study of society.  

Furfey was incredulous that any “Catholic” sociologist would “question” these facts. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that “certain objections” had been raised about the integration of these facts in sociology. Furfey reduced these objections to three. First, he pointed to the “verbal,” but not “real” objection. In brief, this objection maintained that the word sociology had become a “consecrated term.” And it had become “consecrated” precisely through its use in “non-sectarian universities for the purely naturalistic study of society.” Thus, to “apply this term to the study of society by other than naturalistic techniques” was to invite “confusion” according to advocates of the verbal objection.  

Furfey considered this objection “weak” in two ways. First, he asserted that the “verbal” objection only demonstrated the existence of an institutional ideal in university life. It did not settle questions about sociology’s actual scope. And given this fact, Furfey counseled that it was “wise” for “Catholic colleges” to question the supposed legitimacy of “non-sectarian” conceptions of sociology. Second, Furfey claimed that these conceptions were uncritically narrow. Inasmuch as sociology entailed “three characteristic techniques” corresponding to scientific, philosophical, and theological methods, Furfey reasoned that it  

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80 Ibid.  
81 Ibid., 167-168.  
82 Ibid., 168.  
83 Ibid.  
84 Ibid.
justified three basic “subdivisions.” Thus, it was proper to subdivide sociology into “scientific sociology,” “theoretical sociology,” and “supernatural sociology.” Whether Furfey agreed with Mueller’s similar subdivision of sociology into “empirical sociology,” “social metaphysics,” and “supernatural sociology,” he did not say. But at least on the surface, there seemed to be an important convergence between the two.

Next, Furfey considered a pedagogical objection. Unlike the first, he clarified that the pedagogical objection did not deny the admission of supernatural social facts in sociology. Nonetheless, it tried to corral the examination of these facts into “religion class” alone. Furfey claimed that this restriction, even it was for convenience of presentation, was not justifiable on comparative grounds. He pointed out that sociology treated many “borderline subjects” like race and unemployment without much dispute from either anthropology or economics. He noted that “this overlap” was “taken for granted” in “actual practice.” And going further still, he said that it had produced “very little friction” in consequence. Thus, if “the problem of overlap” was resolvable in the case of anthropology and economics, it seemed reasonable to conclude that the same should apply in the case of “religion.” And inasmuch as this was true, Furfey suggested that it was then possible to open up a more expansive consideration of subjects like “the Mystical Body.” Now to be clear, he asserted that sociology was not tasked to define the content of this subject. But he nonetheless insisted that it could “point out” its “social implications.”

Finally, Furfey took up a distinct variation on the pedagogical objection above. He explained that it presented itself in terms of all or nothing proposition. In brief, this

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85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 168, 169.
88 Ibid., 169.
89 Ibid.
objection maintained that if sociology was expected to treat overlaps with religion, then the same expectation should apply to all other sciences. But this was patently not the case in physics. In fact, it was assumed that physicist should talk about “the properties of matter without saying anything about the creation of this matter by God.”\(^90\) Thus, if physics could omit “religion,” it seemed unfair to assert that sociology could not do the same.

But Furfey did not agree. In fact, he considered the inadequacy of this objection “obvious.” Inasmuch as it collapsed the distinction between natural sciences and cultural sciences, it ignored the “enormous difference between the study of inert matter and the study of human conduct.” Furfey conceded that it was possible “to think about matter without thinking about God’s creative act.” But he declared that it was “impossible to think about human conduct” without thinking about its “moral implications.” Moreover, he maintained that the “very nature” of sociology’s “material” made it “very difficult to abstract from” either “ethics” or “theology.” Thus, to “insist upon such abstraction” was to do “violence” to proper “habits of thought” in sociology.\(^91\)

In closing, Furfey gathered together his three replies, and offered some parting pedagogical advice. He declared that, in order to be a “first-class sociologist,” it was necessary to know one’s “own subject thoroughly.”\(^92\) But it was not sufficient. The discussion of social questions was not confined to sociology. Thus, it was necessary to possess some more general knowledge about “economics, psychology, anthropology, history, politics,” and “theology.” Furfey remarked that this ability to integrate knowledge from other fields was a hallmark of “the great scholastics.” And no model was more important than that of “St. Thomas.” Like Mueller before him, Furfey insisted that St.

\(^90\) Ibid., 170
\(^91\) Ibid.
\(^92\) Ibid., 171.
Thomas “distinguished sharply and cleanly between philosophy and theology.” But unlike Mueller, he emphasized that St. Thomas did not hesitate “to draw on both disciplines” in “treating a specific question.” In other words, St. Thomas was “not hampered by artificial barriers between subject and subject.” In this regard, St. Thomas provided “a good model” for sociologists “to imitate.”\textsuperscript{93} Mueller no doubt agreed with Furfey on this point. But the issue of how to further apply the model of St. Thomas was another question, and it would not go uncontested.

\textit{On the Move}

In the spring of 1940, Mueller accepted a faculty position in the Department of Economics at the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. And in June of that year, the Mueller family packed their bags and set off for their new home.\textsuperscript{94} The move to St. Paul reunited Mueller with his friend and former boss Theodor Brauer. In 1928, Brauer had recruited Mueller to the Institute for Social Scientific Research (ISSR) in Cologne. And now over a decade later, he once again recruited Mueller to the College of St. Thomas. Brauer had arrived at the College of St. Thomas in 1937.\textsuperscript{95} Like Mueller, Brauer had been fired from the ISSR by the Nazis. And like Mueller, he had later found employment in the U.S. through the help of German-American priests.\textsuperscript{96} At the College of St. Thomas, Brauer quickly endeared himself to students and colleagues alike, and he soon rose through the ranks. In 1939, Brauer was appointed chair of the Department of Economics.\textsuperscript{97} But in an unfortunate setback, he suffered a mild stroke shortly thereafter. Brauer was still able to teach, but due to health concerns, he set out to find a successor. In early 1940, Brauer

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} See Mueller, “Reminiscences of an Emeritus: On the Occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Death of T. Brauer,” Box 3, Folder 58, UTSA: 1
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 4.
approached Fr. James Moynihan, the college president, about the possibility of hiring Mueller. Moynihan agreed to the request, and reached out to Mueller with a job offer. Mueller considered the ability to work with Brauer once again “attractive” enough on its own.98 But with a “raise in salary to boot,” Mueller decided that it was off to “St. Paul or bust.”99

Mueller Responds

In October of 1941, Mueller returned to the subject of supernatural sociology. Like his first address, he did so in the pages of the _ACSR_. But unlike his first address, he did not do so head-on. Instead, he folded his comments on supernatural sociology into a larger thematic treatment of sociology of religion. But this was not the only difference from his previous article. And nor was it the most important.

Over the past year, Mueller had apparently reconsidered how the natural-supernatural distinction applied to sociology. In his prior work, Mueller had certainly emphasized that sociology principally treated the natural. But in much of this same work, he had maintained that it remained open and even called to the supernatural. In his newest article though, Mueller did not make this latter concession. In fact, he seemed to foreclose the very possibility.

At the start of his article, Mueller reiterated a claim from his previous article on supernatural sociology. He said that sociology could be “scientifically considered from three viewpoints.” And these included “the theological, the philosophical, and the empirical.”101 And like his previous article, he maintained that “the last is obviously proper to sociology.”

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98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 147.
But unlike his previous article, he did not say that sociology opened out to “a study of the theology of interhuman relations and of the supernatural foundations of society.” In fact, he appeared to deny this claim outright. Mueller asserted that sociology “proper” is “neither intended nor equipped to treat the supernatural basis of interhuman relations and structures.” And he added that the same applied to sociology of religion. To drive this point home, he declared that the “supernatural, sacramental sphere of religion” is “entirely beyond the reach of the methods and categories of sociology proper.”

Now in saying this, Mueller clarified that sociology had a role to play in examining religion as the “bond” uniting “men to God” through “knowledge, worship, devotion, and service.” And it seemed all the more imperative, inasmuch as “the social aspect of religion” still awaited “its integration into a distinct body of knowledge.” Mueller bemoaned the fact that most “Catholics” had apparently “neglected” this task. Nonetheless, he said that it was possible to “occasionally find” positive efforts among Catholics under the guise of “social theology or sacred sociology.” He even pointed to Furfey’s work and his own work as representative of these efforts. Yet despite their similarities, Mueller differed with Furfey at least in terms of phrasing. He insisted that “words like “sacred,” “theological” or “supernatural sociology” are less desirable than “social theology.” But even more importantly, Mueller seemed to differ with Furfey in terms of substance. He stressed that “the term “sociology” should be used only to signify empirical social studies.”

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104 Ibid., 148.
105 Ibid., 147.
106 Ibid., 150.
107 Ibid.
108 On this reference, see Ibid., 150, footnote 5.
109 Ibid., 150, footnote 4.
110 Ibid. Emphases in the original.
Thus, he concluded that “supernatural sociology” should “not be confused” with either sociology proper or sociology of religion.\textsuperscript{111}

Furfey apparently did not notice Mueller’s targeted criticism. In the very next issue of the \textit{ACSR}, he published an article on personalistic social action.\textsuperscript{112} But he said not a word about the subject of supernatural sociology. Still, Furfey had other opportunities to respond. In February of 1942, Gallagher wrote to Furfey to see if he had any ideas for future articles in the \textit{ACSR}.\textsuperscript{113} Furfey replied that he did. In fact, he said that he had been “thinking of offering the \textit{Review} a series of three or four articles next year on neglected names in the history of social thought.”\textsuperscript{114} He noted that he had a “special interest in a few social thinkers who do not seem to be included in the standard histories.”\textsuperscript{115} Over the next few months, Furfey wrote about the contributions of various thinkers like Confucius, Moses, Basil, Grotius, Suarez, Bellarmine, Locke, Hegel and Leo XIII to name a few. He worked with haste and soon developed his discrete studies into a monograph. At the end of 1942, he published these studies in a book entitled \textit{A History of Social Thought}.\textsuperscript{116} Unsurprisingly, Furfey had little time for other writing pursuits in 1942. Thus, he did not respond to Mueller. And apparently he had no plans to do so at any point in the near future.

\textbf{Part II: Sturzo’s American Exile}

By the summer of 1940, Sturzo had already spent sixteen years in exile.\textsuperscript{117} During this time, he had faced numerous personal and political challenges in London. But through it all,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Gallagher to Furfey, February 14, 1942, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
\textsuperscript{114} Furfey to Gallagher, March 19, 1942, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Furfey, \textit{A History of Social Thought} (New York: MacMillan, 1942).
\textsuperscript{117} Sturzo, \textit{La mia battaglia da New York} (Milano, Garzanti, 1949): xi.
\end{flushleft}
he had never questioned his safety. But with the outbreak of war in Europe, he was no longer so confident. In June of 1940, Sturzo began to fear for his security. Italy had just entered the war on the side on Germany. And in the immediate wake of this event, Sturzo reported that the British government “lost its head.” In short order, Italian citizens like him were either “labeled enemies” or “suspected of being spies.”

Sturzo was quick to recognize that he was no longer welcome. In July of 1940, Sturzo finished *La Vera Vita*, his monograph on sociology of the supernatural. Ten months earlier, he had made plans to have this work published in the case of his incapacity or death. And these plans certainly looked prescient now. Sturzo had serious heart problems, and with his visa permissions seriously limited, it was far from easy to pick up and leave.

And it was not about to become any easier. On September 7, 1940, the German Luftwaffe began its aerial-bombing of London. For the next two weeks, Sturzo stayed in street shelters at night. And during the day, he found temporary housing with the White Sisters of Labroke Square. But due deteriorating health, he knew that he needed to find a more permanent refuge. Fortunately, the British and Vatican governments cooperated quickly to help Sturzo secure expedited passage to the U.S. On September 22, 1940, Sturzo arrived in Liverpool under the care of his personal physician. And the very next day, he departed for New York aboard the steamship *Samaria*.

Less than two weeks later, Sturzo arrived in New York. The Bagnara family, who had emigrated from Sturzo’s hometown in Sicily, greeted him at the dock. They took Sturzo back to their small apartment in Brooklyn, and for the next two months, they housed him

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118 Ibid., xii.
119 See Luigi to Mario Sturzo, July 18, 1940, Carteggio, vol. 4, 392.
there free of cost. Sturzo was indeed grateful for their hospitality, but he did not want to impose on them for too long. He soon reached out to Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, the Apostolic Delegate to the U.S., to request a more permanent residence. The cold weather in London had been unkind to Sturzo. And now as it approached winter in New York, it was apparently even worse. Sturzo asked Cicognani if there were any chaplaincies or teaching positions open in Maryland or further south. And he even inquired about the possibility of teaching at Catholic University.

In reply, Cicognani said that he would look into Sturzo’s request, but he did make any promises about relocation sites. In 1940, relations between the Vatican and the Italian government were tenuous at best, and Sturzo’s requests were not likely to make them any better. The Italian consul in the U.S. soon learned about Sturzo’s relocation request. And in turn, it leaned on the Vatican to run interference. In fact, it pressured the Vatican to resettle Sturzo far from any and all intellectual and political centers in the U.S. And it made clear that if this demand was ignored, diplomatic reprisals or even worse would follow. Seeking to avert a protracted dispute, Cicognani decided to relocate Sturzo to St. Vincent’s Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. He justified the move on the pretense of medical grounds. Cicognani asked Sturzo to convalesce at St. Vincent’s Hospital for the upcoming winter. Sturzo agreed, and on December 22, 1940, he departed for Jacksonville.

Sturzo arrived there just after Christmas. He figured that his stay would last until April at longest. But by June of 1941, he realized that it would be much longer than he anticipated. Like his earlier “study leave” in London, he eventually realized that his stay in

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122 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
Jacksonville was just another pretext to exile him. And it was. For the next three years, Sturzo would remain in Jacksonville among other infirm and dying priests, in what he called his new “exile within an exile.”\textsuperscript{125} The physical isolation from friends and contacts was bad enough. But it was the intellectual isolation of the area that truly discouraged him, especially at first.

Nonetheless, Sturzo attempted to make the best of his new “exile.” He wrote regularly to friends in Europe and stayed in close contact with organizers in the movement for Christian Democracy.\textsuperscript{126} But he did not concentrate his energy on his European associates alone. Building on his exile experience in London, Sturzo soon built a new network of friends and contacts in the U.S. He reached out to editors of U.S. Catholic journals and periodicals. He made inroads with American advocates for Christian Democracy in Italy. And he continued to write articles on Italy’s political future. But due to the absence of Barbara Barclay Carter, his longtime translator, he was forced to scale back his literary output. Yet despite her absence, Sturzo still managed to publish several articles and reviews in his first year in Jacksonville. Most significantly though, he resumed his work in sociology. And in so doing, he made some initial inquiries about publishing his monograph on sociology of the supernatural.

\textit{Furfey and Sturzo: A Meeting of Similar Minds}

It was in the context of this latter effort that Sturzo first reached out to Furfey. In early October of 1942, Sturzo had just submitted his monograph to Catholic University Press. He was not given a timetable for its approval, but he did learn that it had been sent to


Furfey for review.\textsuperscript{127} Not long after, Sturzo contacted Fr. Pascal Parente, who was a colleague of Furfey’s at Catholic University, with questions about the “tradition of sociology” in the U.S.\textsuperscript{128} He was apparently curious to know more about differences between this tradition and that in Europe. He asked Parente if he could recommend any comparative studies on this topic from a Catholic perspective. Whether Sturzo was angling to get Parente to contact Furfey, he did not say. But he did bring up Furfey’s name. Shortly thereafter, Parente approached Furfey about Sturzo’s request.

Furfey apparently jumped at the opportunity and wrote to Sturzo straightaway. At the start of his letter, Furfey told Sturzo that he was “more than happy” to help him.\textsuperscript{129} In fact, he made clear that it was a “great honor” to do so. Furfey had many resources on the American tradition of sociology at his disposal. But he wanted to narrow Sturzo’s search to a “satisfactory elementary Catholic text.” Furfey mentioned that this was still no easy task, inasmuch as there were “several of about equal merit.” Nonetheless, if forced to choose, he said that he “would recommend \textit{Sociology} by Walter L. Willigan and John J. O’Connor.” He figured that it was at least “as good as any of the others” he had in mind.\textsuperscript{130}

On another note, Furfey shared that he had just read through the proofs of Sturzo’s book on sociology of the supernatural. Furfey called it “a brilliant piece of work” and said that it would do a “great deal of good.”\textsuperscript{131} But he was especially struck by the affinity between Sturzo’s work and his own. He even observed that they each seemed to “thinking along similar lines.” And just to confirm this impression, he told Sturzo that he was sending along a gift copy of his own book \textit{Three Theories of Society}.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{127} Furfey to Sturzo, October 13, 1942, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
\textsuperscript{128} On the recounting of this exchange, see Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
Two weeks later, Sturzo reported that he had nearly finished Furfey’s book. From what he had read so far, he said that he was not only “very glad to find in it the same fundamental conception,” but the “same sociological orientation.” Sturzo did not say much about the content of either idea. But in his subsequent comments, he seemed to indicate that the latter was something like the presumption of an integral natural-supernatural synthesis in the concrete study of society. Sturzo noted Catholic sociologists more or less hewed to the “fundamental conception” in question. But the same could be said about the “sociological orientation” he had in mind. In fact, Sturzo declared that it was not at all “usual” among Catholics. Sturzo found it troubling that so few Catholics seemed to share this orientation in the “sociological field.” But he found it even more troubling that many Catholics seemed to assent, unwittingly or not, to the “positivist” viewpoint. In comparison to Europe, Sturzo asserted that “the social sciences” were “positivist in a larger degree” in “America.” But to date, he had not seen a “proper effort among Catholics” to engage this “danger.” And in view of this apparent inaction, Sturzo insisted that he was not all “comfortable” with the current situation.

And nor was Furfey. Furfey agreed with Sturzo’s observation about the lack of Catholic influence in the social sciences. In fact, he contended that it was precisely in virtue of this lack in America that the social sciences had assumed a “distinctively non-Catholic tinge.” Furfey did not have any readily available solutions to this “error” at hand. But he was “very glad” to know that Sturzo aimed to tackle this in his soon-to-be

133 Sturzo to Furfey, October 27, 1942, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
134 Ibid.
135 Furfey to Sturzo, November 2, 1942, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
published book. In closing, Furfey pledged to help Sturzo advance his sociology of the supernatural in any way going forward.\textsuperscript{136}

\textit{Sturzo's Intervention}

One month later, Sturzo received his first American platform to promote this very subject. In anticipation of his forthcoming book \textit{The True Life}, Sturzo had been given permission to excerpt at least two chapters for use in academic journals. Soon enough, he had the first of these chapters published in the December 1942 issue of the \textit{ACSR}.\textsuperscript{137} Based on the opening chapter of his book, his excerpt appeared under the title “Sociology of the Supernatural.” It is not clear if Furfey had any role in the publication of this piece. But it is clear that he helped to modify at least one part of Sturzo’s excerpt. Now it is important to keep in mind that Sturzo had originally composed “Sociology of the Supernatural” in 1937. And over the next five years, there is little indication that he revised the text much at all. Moreover, there was next to no difference between the proofs of his first chapter and his excerpt of it in the \textit{ACSR}. In each, Sturzo criticized “Christian sociologists” as a whole for embracing a “purely natural” viewpoint in their work.\textsuperscript{138} And building on this point in each, he took them to task for proceeding “as if a natural society really existed free from any influence of the supernatural.”\textsuperscript{139} But only in the latter did Sturzo mention Furfey as an exception to this trend.\textsuperscript{140} In fact, he went so far as to suggest that he knew of no other sociologist who presumed society’s “real synthesis with the supernatural.”\textsuperscript{141}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[136] Ibid.
\item[139] Ibid.; \textit{The True Life}, 11.
\item[140] Ibid., footnote 2.
\item[141] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
The apparent affinity between the Sturzo’s work and Furfey’s work seemed to set them up for closer collaboration. And they would do so soon enough. But in the immediate wake of Sturzo’s excerpt in the ACSR, Furfey did not directly comment on Sturzo’s sociology of the supernatural. And nor did any other sociologist respond to it in the next few issues of the ACSR. Nonetheless, Sturzo did not seem too concerned about this initial lack of engagement. After all, his excerpt was part of his larger soon-to-be published book. In this light, it was reasonable to expect some near-term examination of his thought on sociology of the supernatural. But Sturzo was concerned about the prospect of this examination being conducted in isolation from his previous work on sociology. In particular, he worried that his sociology of the supernatural would be interpreted without regard to his previous work on integral sociology. In his ACSR excerpt, Sturzo had referenced his earlier elaboration of integral sociology in Essai de Sociologie. And he had even remarked on its intrinsic connection to his sociology of the supernatural. But his comments were very brief. In an effort then to provide deeper understanding of his thought on sociology of the supernatural, Sturzo set out to republish Essai de Sociologie in English.

The Fight for Integral Sociology

By late 1942, Sturzo had already submitted a translated draft of this book to a few publishers in the U.S.142 He had even enlisted his friend Jacques Maritain to lobby them on his behalf. But to his chagrin, each and every publisher had declined his entreaties so far. In March of 1943, Sturzo reached out to Furfey to see if could offer any advice about what to do next. He reported that appraisals of his translated book ranged from circumspect to critical to outright dismissive. One thought it was too “difficult” for “the average reader.” Another thought it belonged to “philosophy of sociology.” And still another thought in it

142 See Sturzo to Furfey, March 9, 1943, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
was “theoretical only and abstract.” Based on these comments, Sturzo questioned whether there was any “room” at all for his book in the U.S. He lamented that he was “tired” of the rejections and was skeptical that anything more could be done. But he was willing to persevere a bit longer if Furfey could assist him.143

In reply, Furfey again agreed to help “in any way” that he could.144 But in an apparent mix-up, he thought that Sturzo was asking him to help support his book on sociology of the supernatural. In light of this error, Furfey was understandably confused, since he had already prepared this book for publication. Yet, despite this confusion, he was not completely taken aback by Sturzo’s supposed “difficulties” in bringing it to press. In fact, he had a novel theory about these “difficulties,” and it is not a stretch to say that it was at once revealing and even prescient. Furfey reiterated that Sturzo’s book on sociology of the supernatural was “excellent.” But in an ironic twist, he speculated that because it was so “excellent” it was not surprising to find it being rejected time and time again. Furfey figured that Sturzo’s book was probably “over the heads of the American reading public.” And given this distinct possibility, he concluded that it then made it “more difficult to sell.”145

Sturzo did not offer any opinion on Furfey’s theory.146 But he was quick to correct Furfey’s apparent misidentification. In his letter, Sturzo clarified that he was not seeking Furfey’s assistance with “The True Life (Sociology of the Supernatural).” Rather, he was seeking his help with “New Sociology,” the newly re-titled translation of his book “Essai de Sociologie.” Sturzo explained that this latter book was an “introduction to the Sociology of the Supernatural,” and he gave a brief overview of its structure. He then re-iterated his desire to

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143 Ibid.
144 Furfey to Sturzo, March 17, 1943, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
145 Ibid.
146 Sturzo to Furfey, March 22, 1943, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
find a publisher for this book and asked Furfey if he knew if any would be “more disposed” to consider it than others. Difficulties with this book aside though, Sturzo was happy to report that *The True Life* was going “slowly, but surely” to publication.\footnote{Ibid.}

**The American Reception of Sociology of the Supernatural**

In June of 1943, *The True Life* finally appeared in print. An in consequence, Furfey was able to put his theory about the likelihood the book’s confused reception to the test. In a certain way, many Catholic reviewers seemed to agree with Furfey’s judgment that *The True Life* would be “over the heads” of most. But according to at least one reviewer, this probable misunderstanding could not be attributed to the book’s turgid prose or technical points. Rather, he said that it was due to the book’s overt challenge to the prevailing naturalistic presumptions in the social sciences. In his review, Fr. Robert Wilken, O.F. M. stated upfront that *The True Life* would not be accepted by “the highpriests of American Sociology.”\footnote{Robert Wilken, O.F.M., Review of *The True Life: Sociology of the Supernatural*, *Franciscan Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (March 1944): 103.} He predicted that they would reject it “on the ground” of betraying an “\emph{a priori} theological fixation.” But in truth, they would be doing so based on a more basic misconception. Whether through the error of idealism or materialism, each failed to study social life in “realistic” terms. And these terms were none other than those set forth in Sturzo’s integral sociology of nature and the supernatural.

Building on Sturzo, Wilken asserted that to study society in “the concrete” was to study the compenetration of the natural and the supernatural in “social relationships and processes.” And given the task of sociologist to “analyze and synthesize all elements” of social life, it was therefore necessary to acknowledge this interweaving. To do otherwise was not just to neglect the human family’s “historic struggle to regain communion with God.
And nor was it just to prescind from this “struggle” as “a social factor.” Rather, it was to fail in the duty to integrate it as “the social force” underlying the study of all other social forces.149

The integral understanding of the distinction between nature and the supernatural was no doubt essential to understanding Sturzo’s work. And even non-Catholics like Paul Ramsey agreed that this was the case.150 But unlike most Catholic reviewers of The True Life, Ramsey was much less sympathetic to the integral view. Or at least, he was not sympathetic to the integral view supposedly shared by Sturzo and Maritain. In this light, Ramsey maintained that, just as man was understood “always as man-in-relation-to-God” in Maritain’s “integral” philosophy, so too was society understood “always as society-in-relation-to-God” in Sturzo’s “integral sociology.”151 Thus, in Sturzo’s case, if any “conception of society” were to exclude “reference to the divine,” it could only be considered “an abstraction from concrete reality.”

Ramsey did not find Sturzo’s reasoning convincing. In fact, he found it riddled with problems throughout. To start, he took issue with Sturzo’s method. Ramsey thought that Sturzo relied far too much on “pointing out the faults in all other sociologies” in order to prove the soundness of his own.152 Ramsey did not dispute Sturzo’s criticisms of the “naturalistic thesis” presupposed in these “sociologies.” And nor did he dispute that these criticisms were a necessary condition to justifying Sturzo’s own “supernaturalistic thesis.”153 But in no way were they a sufficient condition. It seemed clear to Ramsey that Sturzo’s argument tended to be question-begging. Thus, it was not surprising that Sturzo turned

149 Ibid.
151 Ibid., 216.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid., 217.
again and again to “categorical statements” about what “true sociology” required in the “absence of real demonstration.”

Going straight to the heart of his critique, Ramsey criticized Sturzo’s formulation of the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Like other “Catholic works,” he asserted that there was a “studied ambiguity and vacillation” in Sturzo’s thought pertaining to “the continuity and the discontinuity of the natural in relation to the supernatural.” Moreover, he insisted that the “maintenance of this ambiguity” was “absolutely necessary” to Sturzo’s formulation. He thought the reasons for this were obvious enough. On one hand, unless the two orders were conceived as continuous, there was no reason to believe that sociology was intrinsically open to the supernatural. And on the other hand, unless they were conceived as discontinuous, there was no reason to believe that sociology was able to integrate anything other than natural data. Ramsey called this “Catholic” position an “equivocation.” And building on this point by citing several examples from Sturzo’s book, he then accused Sturzo of “working both extremes” of it. In the end, Ramsey concluded that Sturzo’s book was an “excellent statement” on the “dogmatic Catholic view of life in society,” but was no more than this.

Part III: Supernatural Sociology in the End or Nothing

Sturzo was not the only one to raise questions about the adequacy of the natural-supernatural distinction presumed in much of sociology at this time. In his new book *The Mystery of Iniquity*, published in January of 1944, Furfey devoted an entire chapter to these very same questions. Like Sturzo, Furfey maintained that much of sociology presupposed

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154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
an inadequate understanding of the natural-supernatural distinction. And like Sturzo, he believed that this inadequacy undercut sociology’s stated purpose to consider the causes of social problems in a comprehensive way. But unlike Sturzo, Furfey did not approach the intellectual shortcomings of sociology through careful and restrained analysis. Rather, he confronted them with polemical force.

In his preface, Furfey set his rhetorical approach within the context of current wartime evils. Based on the magnitude of these evils, he claimed that their proper consideration demanded an “extremely frank treatment.” Yet despite its apparent necessity, Furfey acknowledged that his approach was not without pitfalls. Due to its bluntness, he figured that his treatment was likely to be seen as overreaching and even unfair by some. Thus, he asked for “pardon” and correction if he “unintentionally wounded anyone by erroneous judgment.”

From the outset of his work, Furfey maintained that no sufficient treatment of social problems could forsake the supernatural. He argued that inquiry into the final cause of social problems was inseparable from inquiry into impediments to human destiny. He then unfolded his argument in terms of three key postulates. First, Furfey asserted that social problems derived from “social activity” that interfered with the “supreme purpose” of “common life.” Second, he indicated that this “supreme purpose” was identical to our personal destiny. And third, he affirmed that this destiny was nothing less than “to know and love God supernaturally.” Thus, it followed that the supernatural, by intrinsic necessity, was at the very least implied in the proper treatment of social problems.

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158 Ibid., 7.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid., 17.
161 Ibid.
In light of this conclusion, Furfey condemned two particular approaches to social problems. On one hand, he dismissed materialist approaches outright. Inasmuch as these approaches rejected the supernatural and even its possibility on philosophical grounds, they were judged completely deficient from the start. On the other hand, he even more forcefully denounced what he called “conformist” approaches. Unlike materialist approaches, Furfey explained that “conformist” approaches did not deny the supernatural. But they did presumptively neglect it. In this regard, Furfey accused them of acting as if the supernatural “does not exist.” Now in saying this, he made clear that he did not reject natural methods of studying society. Thus, he set himself against the opposite extreme of what he called “exaggerated supernaturalism.”

In opposition to this approach, Furfey asserted that he did not deny the good of “natural truth.” And nor did he oppose the value of “natural means.” In this light, Furfey did not criticize conformist approaches for their “emphasis on the natural.” In fact, he even insisted that these approaches were “to be praised” for their use of “sound methods based on natural reason.” But he did take issue with them for their “underemphasis on the supernatural.” And lest anyone doubt the seriousness of this neglect, Furfey considered it nothing less than a “tragic mistake.”

With this grave error in mind, Furfey then applied his critique of conformism to sociology. He even dedicated an entire chapter to the theme. Under the heading of “Conformist Sociology,” Furfey sought to expose the supposed neutrality of methodological naturalism in sociology. And in so doing, he again reiterated his support for natural methods

162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid., 43.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid., 45.
167 Ibid.
in sociology. But he insisted that inasmuch as these methods always implied a substantive
stance toward the natural-supernatural distinction, it was imperative for proponents of them
to acknowledge this point.

For Furfey, the central issue for sociologists was not whether to take a position on this
distinction. Rather, it was what position to take. But in order to address the latter, it was
necessary for sociologists to recognize that they actually had a position in the first place. In
this regard, Furfey conceded that he had a somewhat begrudging respect for materialist
sociologists. In their rejection of the supernatural, they at least acknowledged that they had
a stance toward it. But Furfey had little to no respect for “conformist” sociologists. In an
even more profound mistake, they believed that methodological and substantive positions
on the natural-supernatural distinction could be separated. And in so believing, Furfey
suggested that their sociology was even more inadequate than their materialist
counterparts.

Furfey took special exception to “conformists” because he expected more from
them. Like his earlier polemic against “moderate Catholicism,” it is important to note that
his denunciation of “conformism” was largely an internal critique of Catholic life and
thought. In advancing this critique, Furfey maintained two key holdings. First, he believed
that sociology as a whole failed to understand the deeper roots of social problems due to a
deficient account of the natural-supernatural distinction. And second, he affirmed that
Catholic intellectual life supplied a compensating remedy for this problem. That is, he
affirmed that this heritage was able to provide sociology with its proper scope inasmuch as it
attended to the supernatural implications intrinsic to all social problems. Thus, in their

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168 Ibid., 72.
169 Ibid., 72-74.
mistaken belief that these implications had to be underplayed or even bracketed as the price of entry into sociology, conformists committed a compound error. On one hand, they betrayed the long and fine-grained tradition of Catholic thought on the supernatural destiny of social life. And on the other hand, in so doing, they undermined their task to explain social problems in a comprehensive manner.

In response to the “conformist” errors above, Furfey made a few recommendations to Catholic sociologists. First, he reminded them that to speak of social acts was to speak of human acts. And to speak of human acts was at the very least to imply “questions of religion and philosophy.” Second, building on this point, he affirmed that the distinction between the sciences was indeed “real,” based as it was on “distinct subject matter and methods.” But he made clear that it was not “sacrosanct.” From a practical standpoint, Furfey noted that academics borrowed from other sciences “every day with a perfectly clear conscience.” And no less was true of sociologists. Thus, the distinction between the sciences should not be “unreasonably emphasized.”

Third, in light of this, Furfey insisted that sociology’s “relation” to “other sciences” needed to be more thoroughly understood. And he made clear that sociology’s relation to philosophy and theology was integral to this broader examination. In fact, he asserted that no “well-rounded conception of human society” could omit the “revealed truths” of theology, the speculative truths of philosophy, or the observational and experimental truths of sociology. And finally, applying this point, Furfey claimed that the prevailing reluctance to consider philosophical and theological truths in sociology was not internal to sociology

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170 Ibid., 77.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid., 78.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
itself. Rather, it was a result of the uncritical embrace of positivist presuppositions in sociological methods. Given positivism’s refusal to recognize speculative and revealed truths, it was not surprising to find this same refusal now current in much of sociology. But Furfey declared that it was neither necessary nor right.  

Conclusion

Furfey did not directly engage Mueller’s work in *The Mystery of Iniquity*. But he did seem to gesture toward it at points. Furfey would soon have an important opportunity to address any and all concerns about Mueller’s work to Mueller himself. Less than one month after *The Mystery of Iniquity* was published, Furfey was elected president of the ACSS. On February 21, 1944, Gallagher wrote to Furfey to share the news. Gallagher told Furfey that he had been elected “by an overwhelming majority of votes.” He did not say whether he or any other voting members had just read Furfey’s most recent book. Instead, he dove into some more immediate tasks that Furfey had to handle. Gallagher said that Furfey had to first settle a three-way tie for the last seat on the Executive Council. He noted that Furfey then had to name four replacements to the Editorial Board. And in a minor, but nonetheless important detail, he mentioned that Furfey had to order “new stationery” for the society. But before closing, Gallagher informed Furfey that he could expect some help from Mueller, who had just been elected vice-president.

In reply, Furfey expressed his thanks. He told Gallagher that it was a “great honor” to serve as president, and he promised “to carry on the fine work of previous incumbents.” Furfey did not mention Mueller by name, but he seemed pleased by Mueller’s election to the

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175 Ibid., 79, 80.
176 Gallagher to Furfey, February 21, 1944, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
177 Ibid.
178 Furfey to Gallagher, February 24, 1944, American Catholic Sociological Society (1938-1944) Folder, Box 4, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
Executive Council. Furfey said that the new “slate of officers” looked good to him. In fact, he asserted that, with this slate, the society had “a strong and representative board.” But he did not elaborate on what “representative” meant. Instead, he noted that he would get to the work on the immediate tasks that Gallagher had just outlined. In closing, Furfey confessed that he “very sincerely” believed in the Society’s work. Thus, he considered it a “great privilege to be able to do something for it.”179

With their board seats now arranged side-by-side, it seemed that Furfey and Mueller had a prime opportunity to further debate the subject of supernatural sociology. Or at least, it seemed that they had favorable circumstance to discuss their differences. But alas, they would pass the year without a single substantive exchange. And in the absence of any such discussion or debate, they would soon set themselves on a collision course with each other.

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179 Ibid.
CHAPTER V

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE DEBATE ABOUT SUPERNATURAL SOCIOLOGY

This fifth and final chapter plans to examine the disintegration and eventual demise
of the debate about supernatural sociology from early 1944 through 1946. Specifically, it
plans to examine how Furfey, Mueller, and Sturzo confronted each other’s work in three
separate, but intertwined disputes. In so doing, this chapter aims to accomplish two specific
tasks. First, it aims to show how the debate about supernatural sociology broke down due to
a lack of consensus on the debate’s two central questions. These questions again were 1)
whether and in what way the supernatural is implied in sociology, and 2) whether and in
what way the supernatural delimits sociology. And second, it intends to show how the
debate splintered due a lack of consensus on an even more basic question. And this was
none other than the question of whether and in what way the supernatural can be indicated
through the natural resources of reason.

In service to these two tasks, this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part,
this chapter intends to survey the American criticism of Sturzo’s integral sociology. And
most especially, it intends to focus on Mueller’s critique and Sturzo’s subsequent rejoinder.
In the second part, this chapter plans to survey the American criticism of Furfey’s
indictment of “conformist sociology.” And most especially, it plans to concentrate on
Mueller’s extensive critique and Furfey’s subsequent rejoinder. In the third and final part,
this chapter aims to explain Sturzo’s disagreement with Furfey on the subject of the
supernatural. And it then turns to the fallout that ensued.
Part I: The American Reception of Sturzo’s Integral Sociology

In late March of 1944, Sturzo wrote to Furfey to ask for further help in promoting his work in sociology.1 But before proceeding to this request, he first apologized to Furfey for not having written to him sooner. In the immediate wake of the Allied re-conquest of Italy in the summer of 1943, Sturzo noted that he had been preoccupied with questions about Italy’s political future. Thus, he had given little to no “thought” or “time” to “other things” up until now. Nonetheless, Sturzo did concede that he had given some thought to his work in sociology. Or at least, he had given some thought to its promotion. In fact, he admitted that he had even gone so far as to create an organization devoted to this very purpose. Provisionally, he had entitled it the “Sturzo Foundation for Sociological Studies.” And Sturzo was glad to report that it was currently “in the making.”

Based on this development, Sturzo then approached Furfey with a specific request. In order for his foundation to gain any traction, at a minimum, more people needed to know about Sturzo’s integral sociology. Thus, he asked Furfey if he could deliver a “course” of “lessons” on his thought at Catholic University.3 Sturzo did not spell out the details of these “lessons.” But he did envision that they would cover the “main lines” of his “theory” on “integral sociology.” Moreover, to expand his audience even further, he suggested that Furfey could convert his “lessons” into “one or two articles.” To be clear, Sturzo noted that he was not all that interested in the means of treating his “theory” on “integral sociology.” Rather, he was concerned with the end of helping him to “storey its diffusion in America.”

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1 Sturzo to Furfey, March 25, 1944, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
In service to this task, Sturzo told Furfey that he could send him a “typewritten copy” of his book *Essai de Sociologie*. He mentioned that he had hoped to release it under the more eye-catchingly title of “New Sociology.” At the moment, he had still not found a publisher for it in the U.S. Nonetheless, he remained confident that he would. In fact, he was so confident that he already prepared an English translation. Sturzo figured that it was only a week away from completion, so he could pass it along soon. However, if Furfey wanted to examine this work even sooner, Sturzo made clear that he could make this happen. So long as Furfey was content to read a “copy” of the original “proofs” in French, Sturzo could send it to him “immediately.” Furfey just needed to confirm his help. And he did.

*An American Vehicle for Sturzo’s Thought*

Shortly after this request, Sturzo achieved some modest success in advancing the diffusion of his thought. In the spring of 1944, he officially launched the Luigi Sturzo Foundation for Sociological Studies. Under the leadership of Catholic University’s former rector Francis J. Haas and Italian refugee scholar Mario Einaudi, the organization was dedicated to three goals. First and foremost, it aimed “to encourage the study of the integral and historical scholarship of Don Luigi Sturzo and other related sociological studies.” And significantly, it did so with the express intention of “promoting knowledge and understanding of the historical and supernatural element in the life and development of human society.” Second, it sought “to establish” various “centers of information, research,
and studies relating to sociological theories.” And finally, it planned “to organize” various “meetings and lectures” in order to disseminate “the ideals” articulated in Sturzo’s work.⁷

Over the next several months, Sturzo seemed to have the wind at his back. In late June of 1944, after months of rejections, Sturzo finally secured a publisher for the English translation of Essai de Sociologie.⁸ Sturzo told Furfey that the publisher did not suggest any changes to the book’s original text. But he mentioned that the publisher had suggested a revised title. Specifically, the publisher had asked Sturzo to re-entitle his book Inner Laws of Society.⁹ And Sturzo apparently did not object. In the fall of 1944, Sturzo’s newly re-titled book on integral sociology was released. Based on the fact that this book was introduction to his sociology of the supernatural, Sturzo now had a more complete range of his thought available in the U.S. And furthermore, based on the fact that The True Life had been more or less favorably reviewed, it seemed reasonable to expect the same of his new work.

The Critical Reception of Sturzo’s Integral Sociology

But as it turned out, Inner Laws was much more negatively received than anticipated. For the most part, Catholic reviewers tended to be the most critical. Some like Ernest Kilzer, O.S.B., targeted Sturzo’s apparent overuse of technical terms in Inner Laws.¹⁰ In his review, Kilzer asserted that Sturzo’s book was “frequently abstract to the point of obscurity.”¹¹ And he even went so far as to suggest that Sturzo had coined “strange terms” just “for the occasion.”¹² In contrast, others like John Oesterle, T.O.P, focused on the

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⁷ These goals can be found on the last page of the first edition of Sturzo’s Inner Laws: A New Sociology (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1944).
⁸ On this acceptance, see Sturzo to Furfey, June 27, 1944, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
⁹ Ibid.
¹¹ Ibid., 192.
¹² Ibid.
substance of Sturzo’s statements on society, the common good, and the like. And in a third kind of approach, some like Mueller channeled both types of criticism above.

Oesterle provided the most comprehensive and nuanced review of *Inner Laws*. At almost fifteen pages in length, his review was divided into three parts. In the first part, Oesterle offered an extended sketch of Sturzo’s “system of sociology.” And in the second and third parts, he in turn addressed the question of society’s relation to the individual and the question of sociology’s relation to other branches of knowledge. In each part, Oesterle interspersed his commentary with criticisms of specific points in Sturzo’s book. But in every part, he set his commentary in terms of one overarching criticism. In brief, Oesterle maintained that, in *Inner Laws*, Sturzo had suggested an erroneous “sapiential ordering of sociology.” That is, he argued that Sturzo had not presented sociology as a “subject whose most profound conclusions” derived from “the illumination given through sacred doctrine.” Rather, he claimed that Sturzo had presented sociology as a “summation of philosophy and theology.” If this was indeed the case, Sturzo had not only failed to supply an integral sociology of the natural and the supernatural. Through a flawed ordering of knowledge, he had undercut his project from the very start.

In light of this serious indictment, Oesterle first took issue with Sturzo’s treatment of “the abstract and the concrete,” and then with his use of the term “consciousness.” In regard to the former, he asserted that Sturzo had given the impression that “the abstract” was akin to the “unreal or the misleading.” Thus, to speak about society in “the abstract” was to speak about a society with no concrete existence. But as Oesterle was quick to note,

14 Ibid., 520.
15 Ibid., 535.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 529.
18 Ibid.
Sturzo could only reach this conclusion by reducing the abstract to the “wholly abstract,” that is, logical abstraction alone. But in light of abstraction admitting of “three degrees,” Oesterle stressed that this conclusion was neither necessary nor proper. To affirm that sociology “terminates in the concrete order of particular societies” was indeed true. But it was not true to say that this study does not implicate the abstract order, presupposing as it does a “sound understanding of the nature and characteristics of society.” To think otherwise was to give quarter to the problematic philosophical “assumption” that “reality is exhausted in the concrete existence of individuals” in society. And to give quarter to this assumption, Oesterle warned, was to give way to the even more problematic practical conclusion that “the individual good is higher than the common good.”

Building on this point, Oesterle then addressed three problems inherent to Sturzo’s use of the term “consciousness.” The first problem was set in logical terms. Oesterle claimed that Sturzo’s use of the term “consciousness,” a “somewhat unique abstraction in itself,” seemed to cut against Sturzo’s explicit critique of abstraction. In short, it was difficult to argue against abstraction with abstractions like “consciousness.” Thus, Oesterle indicated that, even aside from external objections, Sturzo’s own critique of abstraction was inconsistent at the very least.

Oesterle then parsed the second problem in scientific terms. In particular, Oesterle questioned whether the term “consciousness” had any special significance in sociology. Sturzo no doubt used the term “as a means to establish an identity or a unity of society.” And at first glance, Oesterle conceded that the term’s modified use in phrases like “group

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 530.
consciousness” could “appear to add a special quality” to society. But upon further inspection, it seemed to imply nothing more than the awareness of one group member of another member. In this light, Oesterle maintained that Aristotle’s discussion of sociability was a much more proper and clarifying “starting point” for sociology. That is, inasmuch as our “sociability” flows from our “rational nature,” Oesterle asserted that this “precision” contained “more than countless sentences” on consciousness. Thus, it eliminated “any vagueness or even misconception” found in this term of “dubious psychological analysis.”

Finally, Oesterle framed the third and most important problem in theological terms. Oesterle took issue with Sturzo’s implied identification of consciousness and personhood in society. That is, he was quick to note that, to propose or even suggest that “consciousness” is the “constituting note” of personhood, was to raise a “serious difficulty.” And this “difficulty” was none other than the Church’s dogma “on the unity of person in the Incarnate Word.” Oesterle concluded that, inasmuch as Christ is “one person with a human and divine consciousness,” it was impermissible to ground personhood in consciousness on principle.

Given Sturzo’s tendency to conceive “consciousness” as “the unifying element of society,” it seemed to follow that society was no more than “series of associated “consciousnesses” of individuals.” And given this determination, it seemed to follow that there was no greater good than the individual good. But, as Oesterle noted, this conclusion did not result from some internal necessity in sociology itself. Rather, it resulted from a failure to relate individuals properly to civil society. In this regard, Oesterle made clear that

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22 Ibid., 529.
23 Ibid., 530.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
not only is the “natural happiness” of “human community” found in civil society. It is likewise found in that of “individuals” as “members of such a community.” Thus, individuals are properly ordered to the common good as superior to the individual good.

In Sturzo’s work, Oesterle detected a “reluctance” to affirm this very point. In fact, like “many modern authors,” he accused Sturzo of neglecting “to see in the good of civil society a natural though not absolute end.” But unlike these other “authors,” Oesterle attributed Sturzo’s “disordering of the common good and the individual good” to a specific “analytic” error. From the standpoint of metaphysics, Oesterle agreed that Sturzo was right to say that society “cannot be given an independent, substantial existence.” But like “the personalists,” he was not right to suggest that “the good of an individual substance is higher than the good of civil well-being.” In predicamental terms, Oesterle explained that “man as a substance” is no doubt “greater in being than an accident” like “the common good.” But this affirmation did not imply that man “cannot be ordered to any accident,” even if it is “less in being.” In fact, Oesterle stated that “man as a substance is perfected through the order of accidents.” And the most notable of these accidents, because it belongs to the category of relation, is “grace.” Thus, “in order of goodness, as distinguished from the order of being,” Oesterle concluded that “man is rightly ordered to” the “higher good” of the “common good,” even though it remains an “accident” in predicamental terms. To think otherwise was to misconstrue God’s ordering of the universe. And derivatively, it was to misconstrue the “perfection of human personality.” For inasmuch as this perfection is “realized only though and in given hierarchical common goods” like the “family,” the “state,

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 531.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 532.
the “Church,” and “God,” Oesterle determined that the “individual good” is “ordained” to them.\textsuperscript{30}

In a final section, Oesterle commented further on the problem of recognizing “hierarchical” goods.\textsuperscript{31} He clarified that this problem was not just internal to Sturzo’s \textit{Inner Laws}. And nor was it just internal to sociology more generally. Rather, he claimed that it was widespread among the “present field of knowledge as a whole.”\textsuperscript{32} At the moment, Oesterle asserted that it seemed accurate to say that “anarchy in knowledge” reigned in the “modern sciences.” On one hand, these sciences were quick to claim “autonomy” for themselves. But on the other, they were almost as quick to reject “relations to other sciences.” Oesterle argued that at the root of this anarchy was a refusal to conceive knowledge in terms a “vertical or horizontal ordering.” And in virtue of this refusal, the modern sciences had indeed developed knowledge in a more “horizontally” directed manner. But the “net result” of this development was not good. In fact, Oesterle asserted it had produced a situation where academics knew “a lot about a lot of things,” but comprehended “little about their intelligibility.” Thus, they had “obtained science without wisdom.”\textsuperscript{33}

In the end, Oesterle lamented that Sturzo had the opportunity and “intellectual discipline” to help remedy this deficiency. But, alas, he concluded that Sturzo had fallen short.\textsuperscript{34} Oesterle did not dispute that Sturzo had attempted to situate sociology in terms of its ordering to philosophy and theology in the field of knowledge. And nor did he dispute that Sturzo had attempted to correct the “calculated impersonalism” of so much of sociology, seen in the reduction of human beings to “social cases.”\textsuperscript{35} But he did dispute that,

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 533.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 534.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
in his account of integral sociology, Sturzo had “fully” utilized “the illumination possible from philosophy and theology.” In making this charge, Oesterle made clear that he did not seek to confuse sociology with philosophy or theology. That is, he assumed a “clear distinction of subject matter” in these respective sciences. And nor did he seek to propose “some form of surface theologizing or philosophizing of sociology.” Rather, he aimed to see a more complete “synthesis” realized with “the Faith illuminating the subject matter of sociology and the study of sociology extending the principles of Faith.” Oesterle affirmed that Sturzo had “achieved much in his book” in service to this “real synthesis.” But he reiterated that, in the end, Sturzo had corrections to make to his “sapiental ordering of sociology.”

Drawing his remarks together, Oesterle then closed with a challenge to Sturzo and all others who sought to overcome “the modern divorce of reason from revelation.” Based on his survey of the current state of the sciences, Oesterle asserted that this challenge did not require more “specialists in this or that branch of knowledge.” Nor did it require more “masters of theology and philosophy who nevertheless remain on the level of barren principles.” Rather, it required more “accomplished students of theology and philosophy” who were able to carry out two specific tasks. First, Oesterle stated that these students needed to be able to “enter into the subject matter of any of the modern, highly specialized studies.” And second, they needed, in turn, to be able to “exhibit their full intelligibility in the light of knowledge revealed and developed through the Faith.” In his work on sociology, Sturzo had made considerable strides in developing the basic tasks of this

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36 Ibid., 535.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
challenge. But as Oesterle noted, it remained an open question whether Sturzo could more sufficiently complete them going forward.

Mueller’s Criticism of Sturzo

In his own review of *Inner Laws*, Mueller did not deny this possibility. But he did sound a somewhat more skeptical note. Like Oesterle, Mueller regarded Sturzo’s book as intellectual achievement. But unlike Oesterle, he did not regard it as an achievement in sociology. In fact, he questioned whether it could even be considered a work in sociology at all. Based on the book’s apparent focus on “problems of social philosophy” and “philosophy of history,” Mueller did not think it had much to say about sociology. Moreover, unlike Oesterle, Mueller did not pass over Sturzo’s use of technical terms. In fact, he critiqued Sturzo’s use at some length. At best, Mueller considered Sturzo’s use of “rare” and “strange” terms in some instances to be “unnecessarily complicated.” And at worst, he considered it to be “completely unintelligible” in others. In light of this, Mueller wondered whether anyone could “ever master this book without guidance.” And even with proper guidance, he questioned whether it could be deemed fit “for use in graduate classes.” At the very least, Mueller recommended a “glossary” for the book.

Like Oesterle, Mueller devoted a significant part of his review to the substance of Sturzo’s statements on society and consciousness. Given Sturzo’s rejection of any and every “individualistic conception of society,” Mueller indicated that Sturzo seemed inclined toward a metophysically realist approach. But given Sturzo insistence on treating society in concrete rather than abstract terms, he noted that Sturzo seemed disposed “at times” toward

42 Ibid., 109.
43 Ibid., 110.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
a “nominalistic slant.” In concert with Sturzo, Mueller agreed that society should not be conceived “as a substance.” But he did not agree that it should likewise not be conceived as a “quasi-hypostatic mode of being.” That is, Mueller thought that it was possible to discuss society in the abstract without reducing it to a “figment of the imagination.” Moreover, in apparent contradistinction to Sturzo, he suggested that society had real, and not just ideal, existence, but he did not elaborate on this point. And finally, in light of Sturzo’s reluctance to consider society in ideal or abstract terms, Mueller found it “puzzling” that the category of “consciousness” played such an important role in Sturzo’s “system.”

Sturzo Responds

In the next issue of the ACSR, Sturzo addressed each of Mueller’s criticisms. But, for the most part, he focused on Mueller’s final criticism. Thus, he set out to defend the substantive import of “consciousness” in his “sociological theory.” In this effort, Sturzo first clarified “a fundamental point” about the operation and end of “rationality” in social life. Given that “action is guided by reason,” he maintained that it is “impregnated with rationality even when it deviates and errs.” Moreover, given that rationality “resolves itself in human nature,” and given that our nature has an “exigency for the absolute,” he further maintained that rationality “reveals” our “natural finality.” Therefore, inasmuch as rationality “becomes conscious of itself” in individuals or in “community” through “inter-individual expression,” Sturzo determined that it was only then that “society” could “develop and organize itself.” And ultimately, it was only then that society could “answer to the deepest

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46 Ibid., 111.
47 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
exigencies of our personal and community life.’’\(^{50}\) In this light, it seemed clear that the neglect of consciousness had important substantive implications for sociology.

But as Sturzo was quick to note, this neglect had even more serious practical implications for sociology. Due to the materialist “outlook” of many sociologists, he asserted that the “physical conditioning of social activity” had been overplayed.\(^{51}\) In other words, material causality had been overemphasized in sociology. And at the same time, he indicated that formal causality had been underemphasized. In fact, he stated that the rational conditioning of social activity had basically been “suppressed” in sociology. Given this situation, Sturzo claimed that materialist “outlook” in sociology was implausible for at least two reasons. First, it ignored that “every material conditioning” of society “has come from man’s rational activity.”\(^{52}\) And second, it neglected that “every historical, geographical or psychological conditioning had already been formed by the rational activity of preceding generations.”\(^{53}\) Thus, Sturzo indicated that category of consciousness was not just legitimate in sociological theory, but was in fact indispensible to sociology itself.

Sturzo then turned his attention to Mueller’s critique of his supposed nominalist tendencies. In his defense, Sturzo suggested that his insistence on discussing society in the concrete did not imply these tendencies. And nor did they supply grounds for them. In fact, Sturzo suggested that his insistence on discussing sociology in the concrete was indeed realist in at least two ways. First, his insistence did not necessarily imply that society could not be discussed in abstract or universal terms. And second, nor did it imply that society

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) Ibid.
\(^{52}\) Ibid.
\(^{53}\) Ibid., 182-183.
only has ideal, and not real, existence. In support, Sturzo cited a number of passages from his book. But he did not press his defense much beyond these citations.

In the end, Sturzo regretted that Mueller’s review seemed to be more concerned with the “phraseology” of *Inner Laws* than its “theory.” But he even more greatly regretted that his book’s “phraseology” was a matter of concern in the first place. In opposition to Mueller, Sturzo did not think that some of the terms he used were either “rare” or “strange.” In fact, he said that they were simply taken from their “modern usage” in “lay philosophy.” Nonetheless, Sturzo did not find Mueller’s objection to his phraseology all that surprising. Like other Catholic scholars, Mueller seemed to place a premium on “scholastic terminology” in interpreting social life. Sturzo did not question the interpretive legitimacy of this terminology. But he did question its cultural fit. Given that scholastic terminology was mostly *terra incognita* to “the world of culture alien to Catholicism,” Sturzo indicated that it was neither accessible nor comprehensible to most. Thus, another idiom was needed.

**Mueller Returns Fire**

In a follow-up response, Mueller did not dispute this need. And nor did he dispute Sturzo’s “preference” for the “diction and phrasing of modern lay philosophy.” In fact, he considered it adventitious insofar as it helped to “encourage non-Catholic sociologists and philosophers to discuss Catholic social theory.” But he did dispute that Sturzo’s use of non-scholastic terminology somehow made his book more accessible. He asserted that “even those used to a non-scholastic approach” would likely find *Inner Laws* “difficult” to “read” and “grasp.”

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54 Ibid., 183.
55 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 183.
58 Ibid.
Then in a more substantive critique, Mueller turned his attention again to the philosophical implications of Sturzo’s use of “consciousness.” Based on Sturzo’s clarification, Mueller agreed that consciousness is “a necessary condition of specifically human association.” But he did not agree that it could be considered its “formal cause.” Moreover, he took issue with Sturzo’s implied equivalence between “consciousness” and “rationality.” Mueller agreed that it was “imperative to stress the rationality of social life.” And he agreed that it was especially “imperative” in light of the “vitalism and sensationalism so prevalent in modern sociology.” But he did not agree that this stress justified presupposing “consciousness” as “synonymous” with “rationality.” To do so, Mueller warned, was to court subjective idealism’s error of reducing being to the principle of “esse est percipi.” That is, it was to court the error of believing that “the reality of entities consists merely in their being apprehended by reflection.” And applied to sociological inquiry, it was to suggest that society has no independent existence apart from our perception of it. But as Mueller was quick to note, subjective idealism was “no antidote” to the errors of either “vitalism” or “sensationalism.”

In a final word, Mueller reiterated that Sturzo was right to reject the “substantiality of society.” But he questioned whether Sturzo’s subsequent commentary and clarifications really contributed to a better “understanding of the true nature of society.” At a minimum, Mueller indicated that Sturzo needed to better answer the philosophical question of how a society “acts or is acted upon.” But he was not sure that Sturzo had a ready answer. In fact, he wondered aloud whether Sturzo even thought this was a legitimate question in the first place. Inasmuch as Sturzo emphasized that “in reality” it is “only individuals” who “act”

59 Ibid., 184.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
and who “are acted upon,” then it seemed that “society” had no substantive import. In other words, it seemed to be no more than an empty signifier or a “mere nomen.”

Furfey’s Defense of Sturzo

In the midst of criticisms of Inner Laws, Furfey rallied to Sturzo’s defense. On March 15, 1945, Furfey delivered the Sturzo Foundation’s inaugural lecture at Catholic University. He divided his lecture into a two-part lesson on Sturzo’s life and work. In the first part, entitled “Society in the Concrete,” Furfey not only intertwined Sturzo’s life and work, but maintained that they were inseparable. To start, Furfey asserted that “to understand Don Sturzo, the sociologist,” it was “necessary first of all to understand something of Don Sturzo the man.” Thus, he provided a brief survey of Sturzo’s “life” and “formation” at the start. Next, building on this survey, he then commented on the “general character” of Sturzo’s “integral sociology.” In his exposition, Furfey ranged almost exclusively over the contents of Sturzo’s monograph on “New Sociology.” He singled out a couple of topics like Sturzo’s discussion of “social forms” for special consideration. But for the most part, he touched on almost all others with a broad brush. Moreover, because Furfey tended to quote Sturzo’s monograph generously throughout, he did not offer much in the way of commentary.

In the second part of his lecture, entitled “The Supernatural Factor in Human Society,” Furfey focused on Sturzo’s “sociology of the supernatural.” In this elaboration, he stated at the outset that Sturzo aimed to tackle “a problem” that “true sociology” not only

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62 Ibid.
63 Details about this lecture can be found in Furfey, “La Sociologia di Luigi Sturzo” in Sturzo, Del metodo sociologico: riposta ai critici (Bergamo: Istituto italiano Edizioni Atlas, 1950): 125-128, footnote 1.
64 Ibid., 125-152.
65 Ibid., 125.
66 Ibid., 125-130.
67 Ibid., 130-137.
68 Ibid., 153-168.
“always returns to,” but “must confront.” And this was none other than the problem of “the role (funzione) of the supernatural.” Furfey acknowledged that, for many, sociology “as such” tended to bracket philosophical and theological questions. But he asserted that, for others, and especially for believers, sociology could not set aside such questions. In this regard, sociology simply could not proceed as if the supernatural has no part in “human society.” To lack this factor was not only “to lack realism” in interpretation of society. It was to neglect society in the concrete through and through. Thus, the proper question before sociologists was not whether “the natural and the supernatural” could be “synthesized.” Rather, it was how they ought to be.

Furfey maintained that it was this very problem that Sturzo aimed to “confront” in his sociology of the supernatural. He then turned to the elaboration of this account in Sturzo’s book *The True Life*. Like the first part of his lecture, Furfey provided an exposition of the book’s contents. But unlike the first part, he did not cover these subjects in a broad sweep. Rather, he focused on two in particular. Using long, block quotations from Sturzo’s work again, Furfey detailed Sturzo’s discussion of sociology of the supernatural and the “human-divine synthesis.” And in so doing, he gave special attention to questions about the natural-supernatural distinction raised in each discussion above.

Based on Sturzo’s explanation of the “role of the supernatural in the social process,” Furfey asserted that Sturzo did not weaken “the function of natural reason.” And nor did he diminish “the importance of natural causality.” Even so, Furfey acknowledged that the question remained as to whether “the human and the divine, infinitely separated in nature,” could be “truly synthesized.” In support of this synthesis, he noted that Sturzo sought to

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69 Ibid., 153.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 160.
avoid either a reductive naturalism or an “exaggerated supernaturalism (esagerando nel soprannaturalismo).”  

That is, Sturzo did not condone an interpretation of the social process set in “purely human terms.” And nor did he condone an interpretation set in terms of the “constant and direct intervention of divine Providence.” In short, Furfey explained that the former worked “to negate the divine element.” And the latter refused “to give due importance to the activity of secondary causes.”

What was needed then was an account of the “human-divine synthesis” that avoided the pitfalls of each. And it was needed, Furfey stressed, precisely because the illumination of this synthesis is identical to the illumination of “the history of man in the world.” In other words, it is identical to the ground of our existence and our raison d’être. Insofar as “the supernatural” has been “given to us” from the beginning of human existence, Furfey explained that the divine has been “historicized” from that point onward. Yet, even as the supernatural has become “life for man and one of the essential facts of the historical process,” it has remained “divine in virtue of its supernatural nature.” That is, it has remained distinct from nature in the concrete. And on the flip side, Furfey noted that Sturzo was quick to stress that it has likewise remained inseparable. In this light, Sturzo made clear that the “human-divine synthesis” has endured throughout all historical states of human nature. And even more to the point, Sturzo made clear that this synthesis has endured even in the state of fallen human nature. In support, Furfey pointed out that “the light of the sun remains even as it illumines what is corrupt.” Thus, it was reasonable to conclude that the divine remains even as it works to free us from our fallen nature. Lastly,

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., quoting Sturzo, *The True Life*, 229.
75 Ibid., 161, quoting Sturzo, *The True Life*, 218.
76 Ibid., quoting Sturzo, *The True Life*, 228.
77 Ibid., 161.
to be clear about its operation in and for us, Furfey insisted that the divine was “not passive.” Rather, it was “active” inasmuch as it cast “light on society by means of the reflection of its splendor.”  

In a final section, Furfey evaluated the relation between empirical sociology and Sturzo’s sociology of the supernatural. Given his previous considerations, he said that there were at least three ways of conceiving this relation. First, one could subsume empirical sociology in the “new superior science” of sociology of the supernatural. In consequence, one could then “dispense” with the “methods” of the former. Second, one could compartmentalize the two. And in consequence, one could “teach” them in separate schools of “social science” and “theology.” And third, one could conceive them, together with “philosophical sociology,” in terms of a “greater synthesis” now taking shape. Tipping his hand, Furfey indicated that the third option was the best way forward. But he did not reject the first two outright.

In opposition to the first perspective, Furfey maintained that empirical sociology had a rightful place in sociology. He asserted that it offered an “entirely legitimate way to collect data” on society. Whether by use of “social investigations” or “analysis of statistical data” or any other “valid empirical method,” it made an indispensable contribution to the study of society. Thus, empirical sociology could not be diminished without damage to sociology itself. But in opposition to the second perspective, Furfey made clear that empirical sociology had a distinct, but not exhaustive place in sociology. That is, he affirmed that empirical sociology was not identical to sociology as such. In his estimation, to think

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78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 165.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
otherwise was “as imprecise and as confused” as the attempt to identify “analytic chemistry” with chemistry as such. Insofar as chemistry’s subject matter included “inorganic,” “organic,” and “physical” branches, it could not be reduced to its analytical branch alone. And likewise insofar as sociology’s subject included “philosophical” and “theological” branches, it could not be reduced to the empirical branch alone. Thus, the conflation of empirical sociology with sociology as such could not be justified on “logical” grounds.

And nor could it be justified on “historical” grounds. As Furfey was quick to note, many “important figures in the history of sociology” did not limit their research to “empirical investigations” alone. In fact, more often than not, they intertwined these investigations with “considerations from the philosophical order.” Thus, if the term “sociology” was “reserved exclusively to empirical study,” Furfey insisted that the contributions of “Spencer, Dilthey, Simmel,” and “Weber” had to be tossed out. And the same remained true even for sociology’s “inventor” Comte. In this light, Furfey made clear that the refusal to treat sociology as an “exclusively empirical science” was not just traditional among Catholics. Rather, it was “traditional even among non-Catholics.” Based on this record then, Furfey concluded that the “weight of tradition” testified against the “attempt to identify the whole of sociology with empirical sociology.”

But almost as soon as he said this, Furfey acknowledged that this argument was “not very convincing.” Like other arguments from tradition, it tended to dismiss newer definitions out of hand. Thus, Furfey stated that it was necessary to turn to “the question in its substance.” And this was none other than the question of whether “purely empirical

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83 Ibid., 166.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 167.
88 Ibid.
methods” were “sufficient” to study society. In his evaluation, Furfey affirmed that “a scientific method” was only “acceptable as an exclusive method” if it supplied “results” adequate to “the true and proper object of the science in question.” Inasmuch as sociology’s true object was society in its empirical, “moral,” and “suprasensible” dimensions, it needed methods adequate to address these aspects.\textsuperscript{89} And inasmuch as empirical methods alone were not sufficient to this task, sociology could not be reduced to empirical sociology. At best, Furfey asserted that empirical sociology could be considered sociology in a “restricted sense.”\textsuperscript{90} But it could not be considered sociology in a true and proper sense. In order for sociology to be “complete,” Furfey maintained that it had to be “integrated in a moral science that eagerly seeks (si giovi) philosophy, and in a supernatural sociology that eagerly seeks (si giovi) theology.”\textsuperscript{91}

In this light, Furfey commended Sturzo for having “clearly provided insight into” (chiaramente intuito) the “view” necessary to make sociology “complete.”\textsuperscript{92} In fact, he sang his praises for doing so. Furfey emphasized that Sturzo’s sociology of supernatural was an impressive intellectual achievement. But he insisted that it was an even more impressive testament to Sturzo’s mind and character. Thus, in a concluding flourish, Furfey hailed Sturzo’s “courage” as “very strong,” his “thought” as “very lucid,” and his “devotion to the truth” as “very profound.”\textsuperscript{93}

\section*{Part II: The American Reception of Furfey’s Critique of Sociology}

Furfey did not defend Sturzo’s integral sociology much beyond his lectures in 1945. He had other issues to worry about, most especially criticisms of his own work. After the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[89] Ibid. \\
\item[90] Ibid., 168. \\
\item[91] Ibid. \\
\item[92] Ibid. \\
\item[93] Ibid. \\
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release of *The Mystery of Iniquity*, reviews of Furfey’s book were mixed to mostly negative. No review disputed the sincerity of Furfey’s critique of “Catholic conformism.” But all, more or less, thought that Furfey’s critique was overly-broad and even reckless at times.

In one review, Vincent McQuade, O.S.A. summarized Furfey’s book as “challenging” and “frank.”⁹⁴ He complimented Furfey for reaching “beyond the obvious natural causes of evil.” And he even agreed with Furfey’s call to adopt a more “supernatural viewpoint” in sociology. But McQuade disagreed with Furfey’s damning indictment of the “naturalistic approach” in sociology. He did not think that such an approach capitulated “to the aims of a materialistic world.”⁹⁵ And nor did he think that most Catholic sociologists had unwittingly assumed such a mentality. McQuade chastised Furfey’s indictment of this group as “poorly documented” and too “broad and sweeping.”⁹⁶ And he even asserted that it sounded “something like a tirade” and “extreme in some particulars.”⁹⁷ Nonetheless, McQuade stated that, all in all, Furfey’s work was “the kind of book that needed to be written.”⁹⁸ Despite its inadequacies, he commended it as a proper “stimulus for a militant presentation of the social doctrine of Catholicism.”⁹⁹

In another even more critical review, Wilfrid Parsons, S.J. accused Furfey of battling straw-men.¹⁰⁰ Parsons did not think that Furfey’s charge of “conformism” lacked merit. But he did think that it lacked specificity. He mentioned that Furfey had packaged “a large variety of opinions” under “the general title of conformism.”¹⁰¹ To be clear, he agreed that

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⁹⁵ Ibid.
⁹⁶ Ibid., 374.
⁹⁷ Ibid., 373.
⁹⁸ Ibid.
⁹⁹ Ibid., 374.
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 49.
some of these opinions were “obviously absurd and heretical.” But he found others “defensible” nonetheless. Thus, it troubled him that Furfey had leveled his charge of “conformism” at such a large “body of Catholics.” Parsons remarked that one “would think it more charitable to mention those who are incriminated.” But he lamented that Furfey apparently “did not see fit to give chapter and verse to his accusations.” And into this breach, he decried the fact that “needless suspicion” had followed.

Parsons certainly indicated that Furfey’s indictment missed the mark due to a lack of precision and even charity. But even more significantly, he indicated that it missed the mark due to a flawed conception of the natural-supernatural distinction. Parsons acknowledged that Furfey had affirmed the “proper relationship” of the natural and the supernatural in certain places. But he asserted that, “in various places,” Furfey seemed “to make the supernatural the antithesis of the natural.” In turn, Parsons suggested that Furfey’s apparent separation of the two had led him to subsume all social considerations under the viewpoint of the supernatural. Parsons insisted that “sociology” and “social action” indeed have “different ends and techniques.” But in reading Furfey’s book, he asserted that it would be “difficult to discern” such crucial differences. In the end, Parsons did not question the “deep religious fervor and unworldly spirit” that penetrated Furfey’s book. But he seemed to question just about everything else contained therein.

And in a final review, Mueller added his voice to the critical chorus. In his appraisal, Mueller did not dispute the thrust of Furfey’s indictment of conformism. In fact, he agreed

\footnotesize{
102 Ibid., 50.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 49.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., 51.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
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with much of what Furfey said throughout his book. Like Furfey, Mueller found a “merely natural” approach to “social evil” seriously flawed. And like Furfey, he found it “alarming” that this approach was “becoming more and more common even among Christians.” But what the two shared most in common was the belief this erroneous approach had undeniable theological roots. For his own part, Mueller attributed support for the naturalistic approach to a “spreading quasi-Pelagian attitude in social matters.” That is, he maintained that more and more people seemed to believe that “social evil” could be removed “once and for all” through our own efforts. In consequence, these very same people seemed to conclude that society could be delivered from evil simply through “environmental reform” and “enlightened and progressive legislation.”

Mueller was indeed troubled by the presumption of this “quasi-Pelagian” attitude. But he was even more troubled by its practical and theological implications. Based on the apparent advance of this attitude, Mueller stated that the social import of “grace” and the “sacraments” had become less and less comprehensible. And in turn, it had become more and more neglected. Mueller asserted that this neglect was especially true in “social ethics.” In support, he said that this discipline basically proceeded as if there was “no fall of man” and “no injury to nature.” Thus, it gave the impression that theological truths were not relevant to social matters. And lest anyone think that Catholics were immune to this impression, Mueller made clear that they were not. In fact, he lamented that many were “infected” by it. Now in saying this, Mueller clarified that they did not deny theological truths like the “redemption, the Holy Eucharist, and the Mystical Body of Christ.” But he

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110 Ibid., 295.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid., 296.
contended that they did seem to deny that these very same truths had any “social significance.”

Mueller basically agreed with the outlines of Furfey’s critique. But he took exception to its tone and scope. In brief, Mueller thought that Furfey’s critique was overly-heated and overly-broad. In regard to tone, he reproached Furfey for his frequent use of disparaging terms. To criticize sociologists as “conformists” was one thing. But to call them “dastards,” “cravens,” and even “lily-livered poltroons” was another. Mueller did not dispute the need for “frankness.” But he did openly question the need for such “violent language.” And in regard to scope, Mueller bemoaned Furfey’s indiscriminate use of the term “conformist.” Time and time again, Furfey insinuated that all Catholic sociologists were “conformists.” But at no time did ever pin this charge on anyone in particular. Thus, he left them open to “boundless suspicions” on the part of the reader. Mueller made clear that he found the probable effects of Furfey’s fast-and-loose suggestions unacceptable. In fact, he considered them “most unfortunate.”

But the nub of Mueller’s criticism did not pertain to problems of scope and tone. Rather, it dealt with the substance of Furfey’s judgments on the natural-supernatural distinction. In recalling Furfey’s rebuke of “exaggerated supernaturalism,” Mueller suggested that Furfey was not a credible critic. In particular, he claimed that Furfey seemed to sail close to the very “extremist and rigorist point of view” that he purportedly rejected. And in so doing, Mueller accused Furfey of supporting a “religious isolationism” that undermined the “line of demarcation between precept and counsel.” But in his most damning

\[\text{\textsuperscript{114}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{115}}\text{Ibid., 296.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{116}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{117}}\text{Ibid.}\]
indictment, Mueller compared Furfey’s book to the “publications” of those associated with “ill-famed European “integralism.”” Like the “Catholic “integralists” of France, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, and Germany before the first world war,” Furfey seemed “to manifest a lack of historical mind” in his “wholesale condemnation of modern civilization.”

Moreover, Mueller alleged that, like these “integralists,” Furfey seemed prone to heretic-hunting. All too often, Furfey tended to support his account of the “Christian social ideal,” not by making positive arguments, but by “incessantly casting suspicion” on those who disagreed with him.118

Mueller then turned to the most substantial defect of Furfey’s formulation of the natural-supernatural distinction. Like the European integralists mentioned above, Mueller maintained that Furfey basically depreciated “the so-called causae secundae.”119 And in consequence, he noted that Furfey lapsed into a twofold error in his account of sociology. First, Furfey did not think that “strict adherence to an objectum formale” was necessary.120 Unlike Mueller, Furfey did not make it a priority to define sociology in terms of “the study of secondary causes, especially the material and efficient causes, of social integration and disintegration.” And second, basic on this neglect, Furfey seemed to insist that “his Catholic colleagues in the field accept his mixtum compositum of theology, social philosophy, ethics, and empirical sociology.” And insofar as they did not, he appeared to imply that they were “not reliable Catholics.” Mueller found this suggestion preposterous. That is, he made clear that did he not know of “any Catholic sociologist” who was “not fully aware of the limitations of an empirical sociology.” And nor did he know of “any Catholic sociologist” who rejected the “theological and philosophical postulates” of such a sociology. Thus, he denied Furfey’s

118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 296-297.
120 Ibid., 297.
tacit charge that any Catholic who conceived sociology in empirical terms did so not only “in order to “conform” to the principles of positivism.””\textsuperscript{121} And he even more vehemently denied that any did so in order to curry “favor” with his or her “secularist colleagues.” In sum, he found Furfey’s criticism “in no way justified.”\textsuperscript{122}

In closing, Mueller issued one last correction. In parsing the natural-supernatural distinction, Mueller again advised Furfey not to depreciate the role of secondary causes in sociology. But this was no mere methodological counsel. Instead, it was a call to purify one’s theological vision. As a guiding principle, Mueller maintained that to recognize the proper role of “secondary causes” was to recognize the “immensity of God’s goodness.”\textsuperscript{123} He then noted that papal letters and the first Vatican Council gave ample support to this position. But he affirmed that it was “St. Thomas” who made this position “perfectly clear.” Quoting St. Thomas then, Mueller concluded that “to detract from the creature’s perfection is to detract from the perfection of the divine power.” Thus, it was “derogatory to the divine goodness to deny things their proper operations.”\textsuperscript{124} With these words, Mueller finished his review. But he was not quite finished with his critique of Furfey. In fact, he was far from done.

\textit{The Furfey-Mueller Exchange: Letter One}

On May 15, 1945, just a week after the Allied liberation of Europe, Mueller brought his major disagreements with Furfey to a head. In an extraordinarily revealing ten-page letter to Furfey, Mueller penned a sprawling critique of the content and implications of Furfey’s work in sociology and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{125} And he did not just focus on intellectual considerations

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 298.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Mueller to Furfey, May 15, 1945, Franz Mueller (1945-1946) Folder, Box 9, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
alone. In fact, Mueller devoted much of his letter to professional concerns. Among Catholic sociologists, the controversy surrounding Furfey’s sweeping indictment of “conformist sociology” in *The Mystery of Iniquity* was still raw. Mueller was indeed troubled by the inflexibility of Furfey’s indictment. But he was even more troubled by its apparent relation to the philosophical and theological presuppositions of Furfey’s overall work. Mueller had already raised some of these concerns in previous articles and reviews. But others he had kept long-simmering in private. And long-simmering they were.

To begin, Mueller confessed that he had “contemplated” writing a letter of this sort “for years,” underlining the last two words for emphasis. Going back at least five years, Mueller had raised important objections about the plausibility of “supernatural sociology.” And more recently, he had raised even stronger objections to the “conformist” trope in *The Mystery of Iniquity*. But interestingly, Mueller did not trace the immediate cause of his letter to Furfey’s work on sociology. Rather, the last straw for him was Furfey’s public criticism of “intercreedalism.”

Mueller did not explain why this was so at first. But he did offer some reasons later in his letter.

In the meanwhile, Mueller maintained that his theoretical disputes with Furfey did not make him at all “happy.” In fact, he found them downright distressing, especially in light of their common practical commitments. In saying this, Mueller cautioned that he did not

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126 See Mueller, Review of *The Mystery of Iniquity*.


seek to set aside their theoretical disputes. He still “thoroughly” disagreed with Furfey about “the formal object of sociology.” But he did seek to emphasize that he agreed with Furfey “in many other respects,” especially “in respects much more important than the concept of sociology.” Mueller then provided a catalog of shared commitments to make his case. He noted that both were “active in the liturgical movement” and in the “fight for sound Christian art.” Moreover, both were “close to the “Catholic Workers.”” In brief, they were united in the rejection of “political opportunism,” “un-Christian warfare,” and “the nationalism of leading Catholics.” Mueller even surmised that both had a “very similar stand towards an exaggerated Molinism.” That is, he surmised that both stood firm against forms of casuistry that diminished the duty of truthfulness in language.

Yet, despite these shared commitments, Mueller suspected that Furfey nonetheless considered him a “conformist.” Based on Furfey’s suggestion that conformists subscribed to “sociology as an empirical science,” the conclusion seemed inescapable. But Mueller vehemently disagreed that this conclusion was either adequate or just. In fact, he found it downright uncharitable and even vicious. In support, he rehearsed some of the very same objections that he had raised in his review of *The Mystery of Iniquity*. But in contrast to the more sober tone of his review, Mueller pressed these objections with a much sharper rhetorical edge in his letter.

Mueller had many problems with Furfey’s category of conformism. But the problem he found “most depressing” and “heart-wounding” was the injustice of this category’s very broad application. Furfey had constructed the category of conformism so broadly that it could be applied to nearly everyone. But at the same time, he had defined it so vaguely that it could be applied to virtually anyone. Thus, Catholic sociologists were stuck in a type of limbo regarding the charge of conformism. No one could be reliably accused of this charge.
And no one could be credibly acquitted of it either. Lacking precision, the category of conformism was simply far too open to misuse and abuse.

But aside from concerns about its potential abuses, Mueller found this category wanting in terms of intellectual honesty and analytical utility. In constructing the category of conformism, Furfey had basically created a strawman, who was easy to knock down. Likewise, in describing the fundamental features of a “conformist sociologist,” Furfey had done almost exactly the same. Mueller testified that this figure was little more than a “caricature,” whose “errors and vices” were “so evident” that this figure was easy to reject outright. Building on this point, he claimed that Furfey had created a further caricature in his formulation of an “empirical concept of sociology.” That is, he claimed that, given the materialist presuppositions of this “concept,” Furfey had created a formulation “so obviously fallacious” that it was “not difficult to refute.” Mueller did not know any Catholic sociologist who adhered to this formulation. And Furfey had not identified anyone who did either. Thus, it lacked a concrete referent. In this light, it seemed that Furfey’s formulation had little to no analytic value.

But Mueller thought it had at least some value in clarifying a longstanding theoretical disagreement between the two. Even now, Furfey still thought it was most proper to classify sociology according to “supernatural,” “philosophical,” and “scientific” standpoints. In contrast, Mueller still thought it most proper to call these standpoints “social theology,” “social philosophy,” and “sociology.” Given Furfey’s classification, it was understandable that he resisted attempts to reduce sociology to the empirical approach. If sociology had multiple standpoints internal to it, then to reduce it to a single approach was to compromise it through and through. But Mueller did not buy Furfey’s classification. And nor did he agree with Furfey’s multi-leveled conception of sociology. Mueller had made this
disagreement plain in previous defenses of sociology as an empirical science. But in a notable shift, he intensified it even further in his letter. Mueller insisted that “the term sociology” should be used “only in connection with the empirical approach.” He did not think this statement was “heretical.” But “heretical” or not, it did throw his disagreement with Furfey into relief. In short, to limit sociology to the empirical approach was either an improper reduction or a proper delimitation. There was no via media. Mueller would address this problem even further, but he had other issues with Furfey to work out first.

In a final criticism of the category of “conformism,” Mueller claimed that Furfey’s use of this category was professionally irresponsible and even reckless. Based on Furfey’s apparent dismissal of “empirical sociology,” Mueller feared the rise of “muddlers” in the field. That is, he feared that Furfey had given unwitting quarter to those who “dislike distinctions.” Whether this dislike proceeded from an insufficient “epistemological and methodological background” or from a congenital lack of “exact reasoning,” the results were likely to be the same. Mueller warned these “muddlers” would “triumphantly” denounce “empirical sociology” as “diabolic.” And in turn, they would feel vindicated to offer their “hodge-podge” as “Catholic sociology.” Mueller was confident that Furfey did not wish to support “methodological confusion.” But he suggested that Furfey’s work had given at least tacit approval to this error. To stave it off, Mueller challenged Furfey to discuss questions like “relative autonomy of sociology” more openly. But he was not holding his breath. Furfey had apparently long refused to “discuss these questions” with colleagues in the ACSS. And Mueller indicated that this refusal was not just the result of benign neglect.

In the most unguarded moment of his letter, Mueller confronted Furfey about this refusal and accused him of bad faith. Getting straight to the point, Mueller asserted that Furfey seemed to approach members of the ACSS “in the manner of a judge.” To be clear,
he noted Furfey’s approach did not just bear on the arguments that they made. Rather, it extended to their “scholastic abilities” and even to their “orthodoxy.” Thus, Furfey gave the impression that most of his colleagues were “bad Catholics” and “dangerous peoples” to those under their “care.” Mueller refused to “swallow” this “serious charge.” In saying this, Mueller affirmed that if he was wrong “in faith and morals,” he would “not hesitate for a second to recant.” But this was a duty reserved to his bishop. Mueller made clear that Furfey could certainly demand better answers from him on academic questions. He openly admitted that he had “never pretended to know” the “final answer” to “the question” of sociology’s nature and purpose. Nonetheless, he had “tried to contribute to the solution of this problem.” Going forward then, he hoped that Furfey would collaborate with him in this task.

Though based on Furfey’s previous professional slights, Mueller remained somewhat skeptical. In general, Mueller lamented that Furfey tended to “ignore the works” of “Catholic colleagues.” And in particular, he lamented that Furfey had ignored his very own. In regard to the latter, Mueller called attention to his 1940 article on “The Possibility and Scope of a Supernatural Sociology” in the ACSR. And in a revealing parenthetical remark, he added that, upon further reflection, he “should not have used” the “term.” Mueller noted that in the next issue of the ACSR Furfey had written an article “on the very same subject.” Yet, despite this similarity, Furfey had not mentioned Mueller’s earlier article. Mueller took umbrage at this neglect. In fact, he considered it a matter of “scorn.” Even so, he made clear that his palpable disappointment with Furfey did not derive from “mere vanity.” Rather, it flowed from professional duties. In the “unwritten professional code of ethics,” Mueller reminded him that it was only proper to “notice” the “efforts” that others had made. And this was especially true of efforts “in the same field.” For whatever reason,
Furfey had consistently not done so. Or at least, he had not done so enough. Thus, Mueller invited to Furfey to give a more explicit “voice” to those he built on or criticized.

Mueller then peppered Furfey with a few more content-based criticisms. Specifically, he questioned the accuracy of Furfey’s interpretation of “verstehende soziologie.” And he likewise questioned the accuracy of Furfey’s translation of “disciplina socialis catholica” in recent papal encyclicals. Unlike Furfey, Mueller did not translate this latter phrase as “Catholic sociology.” Rather, he translated it as “Catholic social theory,” and noted that he had offered reasons for doing so in a previous publication. But the issue that Mueller spent a bit more time litigating was the one that had prompted in his letter in the first place. In his criticism of intercreedal cooperation, Furfey had warned against the organizational partnership of Catholics with non-Catholics. But given Furfey’s membership in the American Sociological Association (ASA), Mueller detected an apparent contradiction. In turn, he sought to hoist Furfey on his own petard. Based on Furfey’s “own reasoning,” Mueller claimed that their mutual membership in the ASA was “hardly tolerable.” Moreover, in light of the “anti-Christian” and “anti-Catholic powers” in this society, their membership seemed to be all the more objectionable.

Then sticking his critical knife even deeper, Mueller called Furfey to task for his cooperation with Henry Pratt Fairchild in the Dictionary of Sociology. Mueller had just reviewed this dictionary. He said that he had found Fairchild’s entries on “free love,” “communism,” and “Malthusian theory” tendentious to say the least. But he was not surprised by the ideological slant of these “definitions.” Aside from his reputation as a

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130 Ibid., 176.
131 Ibid.
“notorious” communist sympathizer, Mueller noted that Fairchild had held executive positions in Planned Parenthood and the American Eugenics Society. In light of these roles, he indicated that Furfey’s cooperation with Fairchild was objectionable at best. And in light of Furfey’s criticism of intercreedal cooperation, it seemed to be downright hypocritical at worst.

In a final critical note, Mueller turned to Furfey’s treatment of the “German episcopate.” Mueller recognized that German bishops were an easy target of criticism from the “viewpoint of public opinion.” But even so, he thought that Furfey’s criticism of them in *The Mystery of Iniquity* went too far. The German bishops had just “gone through terrible years.” And to add insult to injury, they had been caricatured as feckless at best. In sharp contrast, Mueller asserted that they had “opposed the Nazis courageously and fearlessly.” Thus, they deserved better consideration and treatment. Mueller asked if Furfey “would have attacked the American bishops” in the same way. Furfey was certainly right to criticize the vice of “exaggerated nationalism.” But Mueller suggested that Furfey was wrong to insinuate that the German episcopate was guilty of this vice as a whole.

Bringing his letter to a close, Mueller tried to end on a conciliatory note. After almost ten pages of critical remarks, he admitted that he was conflicted about whether to mail it or not. Nonetheless, he was confident that it had at least allowed him to release some long pent-up “steam.” In spite of his criticisms, Mueller sought to assure Furfey that he did not feel any “personal bitterness” toward him. He hoped to discuss their disagreements “face to face” sometime soon. He even wished to “cross swords” with Furfey, so long as it was done “in a spirit of mutual confidence.” Mueller did not expect Furfey to relent in his “convictions.” And nor did he desire this. But he did expect Furfey to honor at least a

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couple of ground rules for debate. First, Mueller stated that there would be no “heretic-hunting.” And second, he said that no one could “take it for granted that efforts to establish an empirical sociology” were based on “conformism.” If these rules were agreeable, then the two could enjoy a long overdue debate. Mueller anticipated that Furfey would find that they were in basic agreement on most issues. And he anticipated this because he was “convinced” that “in reality” the two were “much closer” than Furfey thought or even appreciated.

The Furfey-Mueller Exchange: Letter Two

In a reply seven months later, Furfey basically agreed with this sentiment. Furfey opened his letter by apologizing for the long delay. He even confessed that he was a “bad letter-writer.” But then he got straight down to business. In no uncertain terms, Furfey told Mueller that he had a “very strong impression” that their “disagreement” was “largely verbal.” In other words, he believed that the two did not substantively disagree on the concept of sociology. Using this premise as a starting point, he relayed his hope that an “interchange of letters” would “help to clear things up.”

In service to this task, Furfey first sought to clear up some common misconceptions about his work. He recognized that many thought he was “opposed to “empirical” sociology.” But he simply did not hold this “position.” And in light of his published work, he did not know how anyone could say otherwise. Thus, he was “constantly surprised” by contrary reports.

Furfey asserted that there was “plenty of evidence” to confirm his support for empirical sociology. He noted that he had “published a great deal of material in books” and “monographs” on “the purely material level.” And he had published even more in “articles”

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133 Furfey to Mueller, December 15, 1945, Franz Mueller (1945-1946) Folder, Box 9, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
in “technical journals on sociology and social psychology.” Moreover, Furfey remarked that in his “own department” he had “tried to orient” his “courses” in “the empirical direction.” And this was likewise true of “dissertations” he directed. Thus, he took pains to focus his “graduate students” on “concrete facts,” especially given their tendency to “gravitate” toward “nebulous theory.”

Building on these points, Furfey clarified that he opposed “positivism” in sociology, “not empirical methods.” The distinction between the two seemed clear enough. Nonetheless, he incredulously noted that “some Catholic sociologists” continued “to confuse the two.” In terms of “methodology,” Furfey asserted that “empirical methods” had a “legitimate” and even “necessary” place in sociology. But in terms of philosophy, he insisted that “positivism” did not, inasmuch as it denied “the validity of theology and metaphysics.” He asserted that “Catholic sociologists” could affirm the former, but not the latter. Going further, Furfey testified that he had “never accused” any of his colleagues of endorsing “positivism.” But he did think that “some” were “not fully aware” of its “nature.” He mentioned that some had “carelessly” made “concessions” to it. But he was quick to note that Mueller did “not belong to this class.” And he even added that Mueller’s “article on supernatural sociology” was “enough to show that.”

Furfey then turned to a “disputed issue” where there was less clear agreement between the two. Specifically, he turned to the “disputed issue of the relation of sociology to ethics.” In preparation for this discussion, he noted that he had “just reread all the articles in the ACSR on this subject,” including his own. In light of this review, Furfey stated that he had the “impression” that each of them was “trying to say the same thing.” But “groping” as they were “for words to express” themselves “with precision,” Furfey seemed to send mixed signals to Mueller and vice versa. Nonetheless, Furfey saw common agreement on at
least two fundamental points. First, they each seemed to agree that “somehow the Catholic sociologist must be concerned with ethical and theological questions.” And second, they all likewise seemed to agree that “ethics and theology are independent disciplines.” The “difficulty” then was “to reconcile” both of these points.

From one angle, Furfey had tried to resolve this “difficulty” through formal logic. In particular, he shared that he had recently constructed a syllogism with this very task in mind. He noted that the major premise of this syllogism stated that “a situation characterized by p, q, r, involves injustice.” And the minor premise stated that a specific population is in a “situation characterized by p, q, r.” Thus, it followed that the situation of this specific population “involves injustice.” Inasmuch as the major premise was only demonstrable through practical reason, and the minor through empirical verification, the conclusion depended “logically on both sociology and ethics.” In this light, Furfey affirmed that it could not “be classified exclusively under either.” He was quick to note that some may object that the conclusion belongs to “social ethics.” But he considered this objection “only a verbal solution.” That is, it did “not solve the difficulty.” In fact, it only seemed to compound it, inasmuch as it raised the “further question” of whether “social ethics” belongs “under ethics or under sociology.” Furfey then observed that his home institution had basically punted on this question. Thus, he reported that “the Department of Sociology and the School of Philosophy” at Catholic University “both” offered “courses in social ethics.”

Given these problems, Furfey claimed that the “only solution” to the difficulty at hand was “to recognize the fact that sciences overlap.” In other words, it was to acknowledge that “certain areas” are “common to two or more sciences.” In support, Furfey rehearsed his previous statement that “physical chemistry is a combination of physics, chemistry, and mathematics.” Likewise, he noted that “historical geography” is a
The combination of “history and geography.” No doubt, examples could be multiplied. Furfey even said that “would be easy to list a large number of similar cases.” But he sought to make clear that the combination of sciences was no mere modern development. In fact, he said that it was “at least as old as Aristotle who recognized that subjects such as optics belong to both physics and mathematics.” In this light, Furfey determined that “social ethics” belonged to “the area where sociology and philosophy overlap.” And even more specifically, he said that this “area” was the “Gemeingut” (common possession) of “both sciences.”

Armed with this clarification, Furfey then returned to the question of whether “social ethics” belonged to sociology or not. In response, he asserted that it was necessary to make distinctions first. But unlike Mueller, Furfey did not attempt to answer this question in terms of the more substantive distinction between subordinate and subalternate relations. Rather, he sought to answer it in terms of the more formal distinction between “broad” and “narrow” senses. Applying this latter distinction, Furfey stated that “social ethics” did not belong to sociology in a “narrow sense.” But he did affirm that it belonged to sociology in a “broad sense.” The terms of this “solution” were Furfey’s. But the concept underlying it was not his alone. In fact, he alleged that Mueller had “at least implied” this “solution” in his very own work. Furfey noted that Mueller had talked about sociology as an “empirical science” in one article, and had talked about “supernatural sociology” in another. Thus, it seemed evident that Mueller had “used the term “sociology” in narrow sense in the former,” and had “used it in a broad sense in the latter.” In each case, Furfey found Mueller’s apparent use of these two senses “entirely legitimate.” And on a personal level, he confessed that he was quite “happy” to “agree” with it.

In the end, the central problem came back to the issue that prompted their original and respective discussion of supernatural sociology in the ASCR. That is, it came back to
the issue of delimiting the formal object of sociology with specificity and certainty. Furfey then put his cards on the table. Or rather, he threw down a gauntlet. In no uncertain terms, Furfey declared that it was a “fundamental misapprehension” to think that “sociology (or any other science) can be delimited with absolute clarity and precision.” In saying this, Furfey did not seek to undercut the proper distinction of the sciences. He praised the “good scientist” as one who was “concerned primarily with a certain narrow field.” And he certainly did not seek to undercut their proper ordination and relation of the sciences to each other. He even more strongly praised the superior scientist as one who was “anxious to discover the relations of his own order of facts with the generalizations of other disciplines.” Rather, Furfey sought to raise “awareness of the light” that “other sciences” cast upon one’s own. That is, he sought to promote the clearer recognition of points of unity in and among the sciences. To recognize these points and to work at their intersection was not only important to the “progress of knowledge.” Furfey asserted that it was “essential” to it.

Furfey then appealed to history to justify this claim. He noted that some of the “most brilliant accomplishments of science have been made by men who had this breadth of view.” Furfey cited “Newton and Einstein” as prime examples. He hailed each for making “brilliant contributions” through their combination of “experimental physics” and “mathematics.” And in turn, he built on this embodied witness to shore up his central claim. Furfey affirmed that there “should be an empirical sociology.” But he likewise affirmed that there should be a “broader sociology,” encompassing “social ethics, social theology, public health, and other disciplines.” And based on the foregoing, he thought it was more than reasonable to insist upon this.

In closing, Furfey apologized to Mueller for any and all perceived slights. He assured him that they were in no way motivated by “intentional neglect.” Going forward, Furfey
promised Mueller that he would be “careful to refer to” his “work in the future when it is relevant to the subject under discussion.” In the meanwhile, he took a moment to heap some long overdue praise on Mueller. In particular, Furfey commended Mueller for being “one of the very Catholics in America who make original contributions to sociology.” He then mentioned that he had “ever so many other things” that he desired to further discuss with Mueller. But he hoped to reserve these things for a “good talk” at the next ACSS meeting. And with this, he spoke of a final hope. At the moment, Furfey indicated that there was much to lament in “the sad and hate-filled world” around them. But in the midst of this Advent season, they could each take heart in one abiding hope. That is, he professed that they could each take heart in “the consolation” of “the Christmas mystery.”

The Furfey-Mueller Exchange: Letter Three

In the final letter of their brief, but highly important correspondence, Mueller addressed the subject of supernatural sociology for the last time. In terms of content, Mueller returned to some of the same subjects in his first letter like the formal object of sociology. And he likewise responded to several claims in Furfey’s letter like the relation of sociology to ethics. But in distinction from the content of these first two letters, Mueller added some new depth and detail to many of the subjects above. For example, he more finely parsed St. Thomas’ distinction between the natural and the supernatural in his discussion of sociology’s proper scope. Each of Mueller’s considerations helped to bring the debate about supernatural sociology into clear and sufficient focus. They not only provided a very fitting summary of its central subjects and questions. But even more importantly, they provided an exemplary summation of its inherent promises and limits.

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134 Mueller to Furfey, April 26, 1946, Franz Mueller (1945-1946) Folder, Box 9, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
In the four month interval between Furfey’s letter and Mueller’s response, some important wounds had been healed. Based on Mueller’s return letter, it is apparent that Mueller had reconciled with Furfey. The two had been in some contact since December, and Furfey had even sent Mueller a “package of books.” But it was clear that Furfey’s letter had inspired this reconciliation. To start, Mueller confessed that he had been “quite relieved” by Furfey’s letter. And he added that he was even further relieved after hearing about Furfey’s paper on value-judgments in sociology at the most recent ACSS conference. He even concluded that the two were “really not so far apart” after all. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that some important differences still remained. And in light of these, he sought to expound upon at least four.

Mueller first took aim at Furfey’s broad consideration of sociology’s “postulates.” Mueller did not dispute that sociology had philosophical and theological “presuppositions.” In fact, he affirmed that sociology could not neglect “the natural moral law.” And nor could it ignore “the verities of theological and philosophical anthropology.” But he insisted that these postulates did “not form part of sociology proper.” Mueller explained that, like “theology,” sociology was required “to observe the first principles of philosophy and the rules of logic.” But even so, this requirement did not formally make either “a branch of logic or a philosophical science.”

In this light, Mueller reasserted that “sociology is an empirical science” alone. In other words, it was limited “only” to the study of the “material and efficient, secondary causes of association (and disassociation).” In saying this, Mueller did not deny that ethical and religious “factors” were “very important and effective causae secundae in social life.” But he made clear that sociology had “no authority to examine philosophical and theological data
as such.” Thus, it could “examine” the “integrating (and disintegrating) effects” of this data. But it could do no more.

Building on this clarification, Mueller next reiterated his opposition to Furfey’s division of sociology. Mueller again noted that he did not think it was proper to divide sociology into “theological, philosophical, and empirical” branches. And he again noted that he thought it best to call these divisions “social theology,” “social philosophy,” and “sociology.” But this time around, he made clear this difference between the two was not a “mere question of terminology.” Rather, it was a “question of distinction in re.” That is, it was not a verbal question, but a substantive question of “formal objects.” Now to be clear, Mueller indicated that, even though theology, philosophy, and sociology had three distinct formal objects, this did not imply “man and society” had three separate ends. Thus, it was not proper to talk about “man and society” in terms of a “concrete-natural” end, a “general-natural” end, and a “supernatural” end.

In defense of this essential point, Mueller enlisted the teaching of St. Thomas. Specifically, Mueller stated that, when St. Thomas “insisted on the distinction between nature and supernature,” he “did not imply that grace is superimposed upon nature.” And nor did he imply that “revelation” is superimposed “upon natural reason.” Rather, St. Thomas clarified that “grace presupposes nature” and even “perfects it.” In brief, St. Thomas taught that grace “does not destroy” nature. In light of this teaching, Mueller then warned against the temptation to “short-circuit” the distinction between nature and the supernatural. And in implicit pushback to Furfey, he specifically warned against the temptation to neglect the role of “secondary causes.” He even cautioned that this latter temptation was “as dangerous as” a “dualism such as positivism.” And considering the fact
that, among Catholic sociologists, Furfey was one of the most vocal critics of positivism, this was no small rebuke.

In a third criticism, Mueller addressed the relation of sociology to ethics. And he cut straight to the chase. In sharp opposition to Furfey, Mueller asserted that it was “impossible to regard social ethics as a branch of sociology.” And in saying this, he indicated to Furfey that the idea of “sociologists claiming competency in ethics” was downright laughable. But Furfey probably did not find this suggestion all that funny. In fact, he probably found it lamentable. The primary purpose of Furfey’s account of supernatural sociology was to overcome the artificial separation of ethics and inquiry and of sanctity and science. At most, Mueller thought that sociology could “demonstrate that what is ethically wrong can never be socially beneficial.” But in so doing, he insisted that it had to remain within its own standpoint. Thus, sociology could inquire into “factors that “promote union” and factors that promote “separation.” But it could not make conclusions about the ethical content of these factors.

Now in saying this, Mueller conceded that these factors could be considered in “the supernatural sphere.” In this sphere, sin promoted “separation,” and “virtue” promoted “union with God.” But again Mueller thought it was proper to “reserve the term sociology to the natural and empirical sphere,” and to this sphere alone. In light of this assertion, Mueller then intensified his opposition to supernatural sociology. Or at least, he intensified his opposition to the term. Unlike his previous letter, Mueller did not just say that he “should not have used” the term “supernatural sociology.” Rather, he lamented that he “ever used the term” in the first place. He even considered it a matter of “regret.” Yet, despite his opposition, he did consider one last objection. In putting forth the distinction between “broad” and “narrow” senses of sociology, Furfey had seemed to make a place for
supernatural sociology in the former. But Mueller quickly slammed the door on this possibility. By “using the same term for different things,” Mueller indicated that Furfey had not clarified the concept of sociology. Rather, he charged that Furfey had only fostered “confusion.”

In a final criticism, Mueller then applied this objection to Furfey’s claim about the essential role of the combined sciences in the progress of knowledge. To start, Mueller agreed with the historical basis of Furfey’s claim. That is, he agreed that “the most brilliant advances in science have been made in border fields.” But this was more than just intellectual assent. In opposition to the “pure” sociologist ideal, Mueller sought to practice sociology in a more integrated way. Thus, he confessed that he found himself “forever wandering into other people’s gardens.” In other words, he frequently ventured into “other fields, especially philosophy and theology.” Mueller did not consider this commitment a mere hobby. In fact, he considered it a personal and religious duty. In no uncertain terms, he declared that, as a “man” and as a “Christian,” he “ought to” venture into other academic fields.

Unsurprisingly, Mueller had little respect for the “nothing-but-specialist” approach in sociology. He did not think that those who favored this approach were likely to contribute to the progress of knowledge. And even more damningly, he stated that they were “likely to become sterile” even in the narrow work they did. Thus, returning to the example of Newton and Einstein, Mueller indicated it was indeed good and even advisable to emulate their “contributions.” But in order to properly understand these contributions, it was important to distinguish between the practical combination of the sciences and their methodological confusion. Mueller did not dispute that Newton and Einstein had a “brilliant” understanding of certain subjects like “physics” and “mathematics.” But he
insisted that each in no way “confused their formal objects.” Nor, Mueller implied, should Furfey or any other in the quest to develop knowledge.

After almost six pages of comments and criticisms, Mueller brought his letter to a close. He had written much to Furfey. But in his estimate, he still had not written enough. In fact, Mueller lamented that the two had “hardly scratched the surface” of their “problems.” But he was confident that they could work toward resolving them in the near future. He even recommended getting together with Catholic philosophers like Charles de Koninck\textsuperscript{135} to work out these problems “on a broad front.”

In the meanwhile, it was important and even imperative to consider these problems in terms of the immense difficulties of post-war life and reconstruction. And immense they were. Mueller shared that he had “recently received so much sad news from home.” And in the wake of this news, he admitted that he had lost “all pep for scientific work.” Even more distressingly, he questioned whether this work was at all able to address the social and spiritual challenges before them. At the very least, he was highly skeptical. Thus, he indicated that it was necessary to turn to a higher light.

In the end, Mueller stated that current social crises could “perhaps be understood only from an eschatological perspective.” In this light, he warned that “the struggle between Christ and Anti-Christ” seemed to be “coming more and more into the open.” But, alas, he bemoaned that few people appeared to be aware of it, especially in the U.S. Furfey was almost certain to agree. And Furfey was almost certain to re-propose supernatural sociology as a solution, for it included the eschatological perspective that was now apparently needed.

\textsuperscript{135} Charles de Koninck (1906-1965) was one of the pre-eminent Thomist philosophers in North America in the mid-twentieth century. He taught at Université of Laval in Quebec for three decades, and was decisive influence on Ralph McInerny (1929-2010), who later became a pre-eminent Thomist philosopher in North American in his own right.
But given Mueller’s specific criticisms, supernatural sociology was not a solution. And nor was it even an option. In final word, Mueller returned to the question of sociology’s proper scope and limits. And in so doing, he brought his disagreement with Furfey about supernatural sociology into clear and simple focus. “Sociological categories,” Mueller concluded, “are far too small to interpret the signs of the times.”

And they almost assuredly were. But in regard to the debate about supernatural sociology, this conclusion was beside the point. The central question of this debate was not whether sociology supplied interpretive categories that were ultimately adequate. Rather, it was about whether sociology opened up from within itself to those that were. In brief, it was about whether sociology opened up from within itself to the category of the supernatural in either thesis or hypothesis form. Based on their final exchange of letters in early 1946, this point did not seem to escape either Furfey or Sturzo. And nor would it pass without generating one final dispute.

**Part III: The Final Breakdown of the Debate**

After Mueller’s second critique of Sturzo’s integral sociology, Sturzo planned to draft a general response to his critics. But in the fall of 1945, he had more urgent disputes to attend to. Shortly after the Allied liberation of Italy in April of 1945, strategic divisions about the role of Christian Democracy in post-war Italy had broken out into the open. For the most part, these divisions were centered on the question of whether or not to support a referendum on the monarchy’s reestablishment in Italy. On one side, Sturzo vocally objected to the royal question. Based on his presumption that Italy still remained a constitutional republic, he argued that debates about the monarchy’s return belonged to the Constitutional Assembly alone. On the other side, Alcide de Gasperi, the de facto head of

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136 See Bernard Cook, “Luigi Sturzo’s Battle from the United States,” 273-274
Democrazia Cristiana, Italy’s Christian Democrat party, advocated neutrality on the royal question. Unlike Sturzo, De Gasperi did not presume that Italy remained a constitutional republic in the aftermath of Mussolini’s rule. Or at least, he did not think that most Italians made this presumption. Thus, in order to assure and even revive the credibility of republican government in Italy, De Gasperi did not take a hard line against the royal question.  

In the midst of debates about the royal question, Sturzo hoped to return to Italy to make his case. But De Gasperi did not think that this was a wise course of action. In fact, he thought it was deeply problematic. De Gasperi worried that Sturzo’s return would divide the Christian Democrat party on the royal question. But he was even more worried that it would damage the party’s electoral chances against leftist political parties in the near term. Thus, De Gasperi petitioned the Vatican to delay Sturzo’s return until after the question of the referendum was settled.

The Vatican apparently agreed with De Gasperi’s request and enlisted Amleto Cicognani, the Apostolate Delegate to the United States, to communicate its decision. In October of 1945, Cicognani wrote to Sturzo to encourage him to “suspend his voyage to Italy.” Furthermore, given current political circumstances in Italy, he advised Sturzo that “it would be best” to “remain for now” in the U.S. Cicognani did not say that Sturzo’s appeal had been denied based on expedient political considerations. But Sturzo seemed to understand the letter’s subtext.

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137 Ibid., 274.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Cicognani to Sturzo, October 8, 1945, quoted in Gianni La Bella, Luigi Sturzo e l'esilio negli Stati Uniti (Brescia: Morcellania, 1990): 127.
142 Ibid.
In reply, Sturzo questioned whether it was indeed best for him to remain in the U.S.\textsuperscript{143} Maybe it was exile fatigue. Or maybe it was just understandable impatience. But dispensing with his usual diplomatic finesse, Sturzo did not deny the fact that political reasons motivated his desire to return home. In this regard, he made plain that “personal reasons” did not drive this desire. In other words, he did not seek to go back to Italy just to “see relatives” or “rest from labors.” Rather, he sought to return to Italy so as “to do good” in the political realm. Furthermore, he desired to take up this task out of sense of duty and vocation. He even made clear that he was willing to undergo further “moral and physical sufferings” in answer to this responsibility and call. Based on his advocacy for Christian Democracy throughout the years, Sturzo did not intend to avoid politics upon his return to Italy. And he indicated that it was unreasonable to think otherwise. In the end, Sturzo asserted that “nobody” thought he would “refrain, either in Rome or Salerno, from taking active part in the politics of the country.”\textsuperscript{144} But even if this was true, there were powerful players in Italy’s post-war politics who thought that he should for the moment. And so his exile continued.

\textit{An Integral Account for a Divided World}

In early part of 1946, Sturzo resumed his promotion of his integral sociology. The denial of his request to return to Italy in October of 1945 had afforded him some time. Now, it is true that, from October onward, Sturzo spent most of his time on political topics.\textsuperscript{145} Sturzo defended softer peacetime terms for Italy in radio broadcasts on \textit{The Voice of America}. And he actively lobbied for these terms in the U.S. through his seat on the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Sturzo to Cicognani, October 9, 1945, quoted in Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item On Sturzo’s activities mentioned here, see Sturzo, \textit{La mia battaglia da New York} (Milano: Garzanti, 1949). For a brief account of these activities, see Bernard Cook, “Luigi Sturzo’s Battle from the United States,” 273-282.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
“Committee for a Just Peace with Italy.” Moreover, he kept close tabs on Italy’s upcoming constitutional referendum, and he even worked to influence its scope and language. Nonetheless, Sturzo still found time to prepare a book on American responses to his work in sociology. In fact, by the early part of February, he had already started to edit some of the contributions to this book, including Furfey’s two part lecture in 1945 on Sturzo’s life and work.

**A Final Exchange of Letters**

On February 10, 1946, Sturzo contacted Furfey to recommend a few edits to the text of his lecture.\(^{146}\) For the most part, Sturzo focused on cosmetic edits to help ease readers through it. In particular, he encouraged making “some divisions in the text,” and he even pinpointed a few places to insert “subtitles.” But Sturzo did suggest at least one substantive edit. Going straight to the point, he asked if he could revise one specific phrase in Furfey’s discussion of his historicist method. In particular, he asked if Furfey could refer to his method, not as “a philosophy of history,” but rather as “a philosophical interpretation of history.”\(^{147}\) The difference was subtle, but significant. In fact, it was so significant that Sturzo felt the need to explain his rationale. In brief, he maintained that “there is no philosophy of history as a specific philosophy distinct from philosophy tout court.” And furthermore, he noted that he elaborated on this very “thesis” in his work on sociology of the supernatural.

**Supernaturalized Sociology**

\(^{146}\) Sturzo to Furfey, February 10, 1946, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.

\(^{147}\) On his own liberty, Sturzo apparently revised Furfey’s statement to his liking in *Del Metodo Sociologico*. On pg. 136, the phrase “una specie di interpretazione filosofica della storia (a kind of philosophical interpretation of history)” appears.
The advance of this thesis was an essential preliminary to Sturzo’s claim about the immanent operation of the supernatural in human and historical process. Thus, Sturzo pointed Furfey to his formulation of it in *The True Life*. There Sturzo maintained that philosophy and history are “two facets of the same reality of thought and consciousness.” Philosophy worked to extract “the laws of human reality from history,” and history worked to express “the concreteness” of these laws “in its existential process.” Based on their mutually enriching operation, Sturzo affirmed a certain relative interchangeability of history with philosophy. But he was quick to note that not all philosophical accounts of this interchangeability were adequate. In fact, there was at least one that fell far short.

Specifically, Sturzo objected to the identification of history with philosophy in subjective idealism. Inasmuch as this identification was set in terms of “dialectic immanence,” he stated there was no possibility of “transcendence” whatsoever. And there was no possibility precisely because this identification worked to contract “the reality of the object into the subject” and “the real totality” into “self-consciousness.” In contrast, Sturzo said that he did not locate the identification of history with philosophy on the plane of “subjective consciousness” alone. Rather, he located it on the “threefold plane” of the “subjective consciousness,” “objective consciousness,” and “transcendental consciousness.” That is, he located it on the “threefold plane” of “the individual,” “the collectivity,” and “the totality.”

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148 The formulation of Sturzo’s thesis can be found in “Ch. IX: History” in *The True Life*. This chapter first appeared as an excerpt in the journal *Thought*. See Sturzo, “History,” *Thought*, vol. 28, no. 68 (March 1943): 51-73.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
In consequence, Sturzo indicated that his integral sociology could interpret human and historical process in a more adequate and comprehensive manner. And furthermore, he indicated that it could identify openings in this process to “supra-rational aspirations.”

Now in parsing the identification of history with philosophy, Sturzo did not deny that history could “go a step further than philosophy.” In fact, he stated that “it is history and history alone that testifies, in the reality of events, that mankind has undergone an insertion of the divine.” And thus, he determined that it testifies that “human process has been supernaturalized.”

Now, Sturzo conceded that objections to this testimony could be raised. In light of the insertion of the supernatural in human and historical process or even in light of its “hypothesis,” he noted that some were likely to doubt whether this process could be considered “truly free.” In response, Sturzo invoked the Scholastic principle that whatever is received from God is received “per modum recipientes,” that is, in a way proper to human capacities. Thus, it was not proper in principle to oppose the operation of grace and the operation of rational nature in us.

Sturzo affirmed that the supernatural’s insertion in us did not compromise the integrity of human nature. And likewise, he affirmed that its consequent historicization in human process did not compromise the gratuity of grace. In saying this, Sturzo maintained that the supernatural could operate immanently in us without originating from us. And likewise, he maintained that the “natural and supernatural order” could “meet in us” without diminishing us. In fact, he even insisted that this meeting could “give a quickening

\[153\] Ibid., 216.
\[154\] Ibid.
\[155\] Ibid., 217.
\[156\] Ibid.
\[157\] Ibid., 218.
impulse to human process.” Thus, he concluded that, through the operation of the supernatural in human and historical process, we partook in “an act that transcends us.” And because this act was able to pass beyond immanence from within immanence, Sturzo further concluded that it was able to “move” us “towards a goal” at once “absolute” and “historized.”

In the end, Sturzo remained confident that his historicist method could affirm or at least imply this conclusion. But he indicated it could not determine whether this act belonged to the order of “creation” or the order of “redemption.” To attribute this act to one or to the other was not in the competency of sociology. And nor was it even in the competency of sociology of the supernatural. Sturzo maintained that the latter could bring inquirers to the threshold of the supernatural, but not beyond it. And the distinction was essential, for it bore directly on the limits of what sociologists could or could not say about the supernatural. In brief, Sturzo maintained that the supernatural was implied in sociological inquiry. But he insisted that it did not enter into its formal lens. Thus, he stood in contrast to Furfey, who argued in his defense of supernatural sociology that the supernatural could indeed enter into sociology’s formal lens.

The difference between the two was a substantial difference, and it raised a number of important questions. But most immediately important for Sturzo and Furfey, it raised the question of who could or could not conduct sociological inquiry truly. And it was this question that would ultimately divide them.

Different Approaches to the Supernatural in Sociology

158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
On March 14, 1946, Sturzo wrote to Furfey to inform him that he had just reviewed the second part of his lecture.\textsuperscript{160} Overall, Sturzo was pleased with Furfey’s thematic treatment of the supernatural fact in human society. And he was likewise pleased with Furfey’s commentary on this theme in the context of Sturzo’s integral sociology. But he did have at least one significant concern. Based on the phrasing of several passages, Sturzo indicated that Furfey had unduly narrowed the authentic practice of sociology to Catholics alone. In light of this concern, he reminded Furfey about the intended audience of his upcoming book. He noted that it was book “for all students of sociology and not for Catholics only.”\textsuperscript{161} Thus, he suggested that this wider audience should be more explicitly included in the final text.

But this was no mere marketing ploy. In fact, Sturzo grounded his concern in a much more substantive consideration. Sturzo maintained that the recognition of sociology’s openness to the supernatural was in principle accessible to more than just Catholic sociologists. And he drew attention to this very point in his letter. To cite but one example, Sturzo noted that there were many “Protestant and Jewish sociologists” who “admit the supernatural in history and society.”\textsuperscript{162} In fact, he knew at least “four” off hand and he did not intend to neglect them. Thus, he begged Furfey to “modify some passages” in his text.\textsuperscript{163}

Sturzo then requested changes to a few passages and he even provided his desired revisions next to each. In one case, he implicitly asked Furfey to revise the statement a “problem which always returns, and which the true sociologist must confront is that which

\textsuperscript{160} Sturzo to Furfey, March 14, 1946, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
regards the function of the supernatural.” Instead, he proposed that it read a “persistent problem, which the integral sociologist must face is the role of the supernatural in his science.” And in another case, he asked Furfey to revise the statement “the true sociologist, especially if he is a believer, cannot stop at this point.” And like before, he proposed that it read instead “the student who devotes himself to integral sociology, especially if a Catholic, should not stop at this point.”

In each case, Sturzo emphasized the modifier “integral” rather than the modifier “true” in talking about sociology. And this emphasis seemed to mark an important difference between Sturzo and Furfey. In fact, it seemed to go straight to a fundamental difference between the two in treating the supernatural from the standpoint of sociology. In prioritizing the modifier “true,” Furfey seemed to be focused on treating the supernatural in epistemological terms. And in prioritizing the modifier “integral,” Sturzo seemed to be focused instead on treating it in methodological terms. In his letter, Sturzo did not explain the difference between the two in this way. Nor did he elaborate on his request for revisions to specific passages. But he did ask if Furfey would nonetheless agree to “OK” them anyway.

Furfey Responds

Furfey would not. In fact, he would explicitly refuse to do so. In his response, Furfey took strong exception to Sturzo’s primary accusation against him. Furfey did not think that he had narrowed the recognition of sociology’s openness to the supernatural to Catholics alone. And nor did he think that his text even implied this position. In fact, upon

164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
167 Furfey to Sturzo, March 20, 1946, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
rereading the statements under scrutiny, Furfey testified that they were not “in any way offensive to any” sociologist “who believes in the supernatural.” And by any sociologist, he made clear that he meant any “Catholic, Jew, or Protestant.” Moreover, Furfey charged that Sturzo had badly misinterpreted the evidence against him. In particular, he thought it was apparent that statements like “especially if he is a Catholic” were “so worded” as to apply “even to non-Catholics.” Thus, he pushed back against Sturzo’s insinuation that the term “especially” could be interpreted to mean only.

In light of this defense, Furfey took a strong line against the proposed changes to his text. In no uncertain terms, he told Sturzo that he could not “conscientiously modify it any further.” And he even went so far as to register his frustration with Sturzo for proposing these changes in the first place. Furfey testified that he had “already sacrificed a great deal for” Sturzo. And he even noted in exasperation that he had “put aside important work” of his own “to do honor” to him. Thus, he asserted that he could do no more. In closing, he drove this point home, insisting that he could not “under any circumstances consider further modifications.”

The Debate Limps to an End

Unsurprisingly, Sturzo did not anticipate such a brusque response. Nor did he know exactly how to react to it. In his reply, Sturzo admitted that, even after reading Furfey’s recent letter “three times,” he was still “a little puzzled” by it.168 Nonetheless, he was not a complete loss in understanding Furfey’s strong opposition, and he even had a theory. Based on the details of Furfey’s letter, Sturzo did not think that Furfey actually objected to his proposed changes. Rather, he thought that Furfey objected to changes that he assumed were his own. In other words, Furfey had mistakenly confused Sturzo’s revisions with own

168 Sturzo to Furfey, March 24, 1946, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
original statements. Sturzo figured that Furfey did not have the original text of his lecture before him at the time of his last letter. Thus, Furfey would have been unable “to confront the text” and compare it to Sturzo’s own “proposed changes.” If this was the case, then Sturzo could certainly “understand” the “merit” of Furfey’s opposition. In conclusion, Sturzo stated that if his “interpretation” was “correct,” then “all” was “alright.”

But this impression would soon be spoiled. In a final letter between the two, Furfey sought to disabuse Sturzo of his “interpretation.” Furfey made clear that he was “very happy” to make Sturzo’s work “more familiar to the American public.” And he was likewise “glad” to have “the privilege” to contribute to Sturzo’s forthcoming book. But he pointed out that he had already made “a great many concessions.” Thus, he insisted once again that he could not “accept” Sturzo’s “suggestions for changes.” Sturzo respected Furfey’s decision, but he nonetheless apparently went ahead and made a few changes anyway.

**Conclusion**

At the time of Furfey’s final letter, Sturzo had some even more important changes on his mind. The constitutional referendum in Italy was drawing near, and Sturzo hoped to return home before it took place. Once again, he petitioned Cicognani to authorize his return. And once again, Cicognani vetoed his request in May of 1946. One month later, the referendum was held, and the proponents of republican government emerged victorious. In the wake of this result, Cicognani no longer had any reason to block Sturzo’s return. And

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169 Ibid.
170 Furfey to Sturzo, March 26, 1946, Sturzo Foundation Folder, Box 13, PHF/MEW, ACUA.
171 Ibid.
172 For the most part, these changes were limited to the first part of Furfey’s lecture. In the second part, Sturzo retained Furfey’s original text. Or at least, he did not revise Furfey’s text to his own liking. For example, the second part opens with Furfey’s original text: “Un problema che sempre ritorna, e che il vero sociologo deve affrontare, è quello che riguarda la funzione del soprannaturale (A problem which always returns, and which the true sociologist must confront, is that which regards the role of the supernatural),” 153.
nor did De Gasperi. Thus, Cicognani relented on Sturzo’s latest request to return. On August 28, 1946, Sturzo boarded an ocean-liner in New York and set sail to Italy. Ten days later, he arrived in Sicily to great fanfare and expectations.\textsuperscript{174} The challenges ahead of him in Italy were no doubt significant. Yet, with no resolution to the debate about supernatural sociology in sight, the same could be said about the challenges he left behind.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
In December of 1947, Mueller was elected president of the ACSS. The vote was apparently unremarkable. But the significance of Mueller’s new appointment was anything but. For almost a decade, Furfey had attempted to rally ACSS members to his vision of Catholic Social Extremism. In various articles and presentations, he had defended the lens of the supernatural in sociological inquiry. He had advanced supernatural sociology as a common task. And he had consistently warned Catholic sociologists against growing slack in this endeavor. But in the wake of Furfey’s overly broad indictment of “conformist sociology,” and the criticism that had ensued, his star had begun to fade.

Mueller had driven some of this more recent criticism. And going back at least to 1940, he had directly and indirectly challenged Furfey’s account of supernatural sociology. In so doing, Mueller had not set out to undermine Furfey’s vision for the ACSS. But he had taken steps to chasten and narrow it. And if his presidential address in December of 1948 was any indication, it seems that Mueller had prevailed.

In his address, Mueller summarized some of the major claims in his work over the past decade. He classified sociology as a cultural science.¹ He distinguished its approach to society from that of philosophy and theology.² He identified its formal object as “the

² Ibid., 2.
formation and dissolution of social relations and groups.” He characterized its “main concern” as the “secondary efficient causes of society.” And most significantly, he limited sociology, “in the strict and proper sense of the word,” to empirical sociology alone.

But in contrast to his previous work, Mueller hardened some of his claims. Mueller did not deny that sociologists could “avail” themselves of the “verities” of theology. But in no uncertain terms, he insisted that they “should not entertain the notion that sociological categories can ever unfold the significance of supernatural truth.” Furthermore, Mueller did not deny that society’s “causa formalis,” its “principle of specification,” and its “finis operis,” its “objective intrinsic purpose,” were “postulates” of sociology. But he asserted that each was “beyond the scope of empirical sociology.” And finally, Mueller did not deny that sociologists inquired into the various “motives and actions” contributing to the formation of society. But he stressed that the “sociologist qua sociologist cannot and is not expected to tell us anything about the nature and being of society as a whole.”

Mueller did not re-litigate the debate about supernatural sociology. Nor did he mention it by name. But he did gesture toward it through a subtle criticism of Sturzo and a not-so-subtle criticism of Furfey. Like his previous work, Mueller distinguished three approaches to the study of society: “the theological, the philosophical, and the empirical.” And similarly, he maintained that these approaches corresponded to three distinct “sciences of society:” “social theology,” “social philosophy,” and “empirical sociology.” Given these

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3 Ibid., 3.
4 Ibid., 5.
5 Ibid., 2.
6 Ibid., 3.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 5.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 10.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 2.
three distinct sciences, Mueller suggested that not all accounts of sociology were equal. In fact, he indicated that there were certain accounts that did not deserve the name. And to clarify this point, Mueller took a direct swipe at Sturzo. He asserted that what “Father Luigi Sturzo calls sociology of the supernatural” was a good example of “social theology.” But he stressed that it was not sociology as such.

Mueller did not say the same about Furfey’s account of supernatural sociology. But he did target Furfey for criticism. And in comparison to his critique of Sturzo, it was considerably more searing. In defense of sociology’s “main concern” with secondary causes, Mueller took issue with sociologists who thought otherwise. He attested that some “zealous Catholic scholars” tended “to neglect the secondary causes,” and so referred “all becoming directly to the uncreated First Cause.” He charged them with an “exaggerated theocentrism and integralism.” And pressing his critique even further still, he asserted that they sailed “dangerously close to the basic errors of occasionalism, Calvinism, and Jansenism.” Mueller, true enough, did not directly indict Furfey. But he did implicate him. In a footnote, Mueller tied his critique of “exaggerated theocentrism” in sociology to his earlier critical review of The Mystery of Iniquity. Thus, he seemed to leave little doubt as to the identity of at least one of the “zealous Catholic scholars” in question.

Finally, after several further clarifications and warnings, Mueller outlined his vision for the ACSS going forward. He stated that all members of the ACSS had to “regard sociology as our vocation.” And he emphasized that they had to regard it as a vocation “in the most sublime sense of the word.” Mueller characterized the acceptance of this call as a

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 5.
15 Ibid.
16 See Ibid, footnote 5.
17 Ibid., 12.
“personal responsibility” and an “urgent need.”\(^{18}\) He insisted that this was no novel idea. In fact, he traced it back to the very origins of the ACSS. To awaken his fellow Catholic sociologists to their shared vocation, Mueller appealed to Cardinal Samuel Stritch’s commendation of the ACSS in 1940. And quoting Cardinal Stritch, he declared that “if we are going to be true to our apostolate and seek to win to Christ society about us,” it was necessary to use “all the authentic findings of modern scholars and add to them.”\(^{19}\)

\textit{A Chapter Closed}

Furfey did not dispute Mueller’s criticism. And nor did he contest Mueller’s account of sociology. In fact, he seemed to agree with it, more or less, at this point. In the immediate post-war period, much of Furfey’s work appeared to be drifting toward Mueller’s account. Long gone were the edgy and eye-catching titles of the decade running from 1935 to 1945. In place of these, Furfey turned out a series of more vanilla-titled articles like “The Sampling Problem” (1947),\(^{20}\) “On Defining Sociology” (1948),\(^{21}\) and “The Verbal Interpretation of Social Documents” (1948).\(^{22}\) And in concert with this trend, he had just begun work on his similarly vanilla-titled book \textit{On the Scope and Method of Sociology}.\(^{23}\) When it was published in 1953, its content seemed to owe much more to Mueller’s original vision than Furfey’s own. And so without any formal concession or even passing word, it appeared to vindicate Mueller’s position in the debate about supernatural sociology.

\textit{A Task Forever Ours}

\(^{18}\) Ibid.


Or so it seemed. At the end of the 1940s, Sturzo was likewise putting a book together on method in sociology. But unlike Furfey and Mueller, Sturzo did not have a society like the ACSS to test his ideas. Thus, his work was a lonely enterprise, and even something like a new exile. Yet, despite his relative isolation, Sturzo forged ahead like he always had. In post-war Italy, Sturzo did not have many opportunities to discuss his integral sociology or the ideas that inspired it. But he made sure to seize the few that he had.

In the summer of 1949, one such opportunity came to pass. On June 4, 1949, Maurice Blondel passed away after a short illness. One month later, in a remembrance of friends who had recently died, Sturzo honored Blondel’s life and work. In his article, Sturzo stated upfront that Blondel had “left a treasure of writings.” And based on his firsthand experience, he insisted that it was “a treasure to be discovered and rediscovered.” Sturzo summarized Blondel’s “thought” as “profound” and his “exposition” as “dense.” And he characterized the “innumerable references” in Blondel’ work “as a flow that enriches the river of his thought with a thousand small streams.” Sturzo conceded that Blondel’s “phrasing” was difficult at times to understand. But he asserted that it had nothing to do “professorial pose” or “scientific arrogance.” Rather, he attributed it to Blondel’s “strain (sfogo)” to find “a language not already fitted out for use (aderente).”

Sturzo then recalled his first encounter with Blondel’s work in 1895 and his later re-engagement of it the late 1920s. He talked about his interpretive studies of La Pensée. He discussed his exchanges with Blondel’s students and friends. And he even reminisced about

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26 Ibid., 243.
27 Ibid.
his occasional visits with the “old Blondel” in the Parisian home of his son-in-law, Charles Flory.\footnote{Ibid.}

But there was one memory that stood out from among the rest. In 1937, Sturzo had attended the International Congress of Philosophy in Paris. And while there, he had seen Blondel in action. In one remarkable session, Sturzo noted that Fr. Charles Boyer, S.J. had raised the subject of “pure nature and the supernatural.”\footnote{Ibid.} And in turn, he mentioned that Boyer had asked at what point “the exigence (esigenza) of a thought and of a created life arrives at its own limits and stretches across (tendono a varcare) the threshold of the supernatural.”\footnote{Ibid., 243-244.} Sturzo suggested that Boyer had posed the question as a sort of “orthodoxy” trap.\footnote{Ibid., 244.} But Blondel apparently did not take the bait. Sturzo said that Blondel’s “responses” were not just deft, but “clear and full of light.” He even noted that Boyer was impressed by them and “underscored them with satisfaction.” Afterwards, Sturzo walked over to Blondel to congratulate him. And with a “strong handshake,” he said that Blondel drew him near and told him that “it is always truth that conquers preconceived and systematic opposition (avversioni).”\footnote{Ibid.}

In an ironic twist, Sturzo said it was precisely this “opposition” and “fear of novelty” in thought that “isolated” Blondel from “modern culture,” in and outside of the Church.\footnote{Ibid. Yet despite this isolation, he said students and interpreters of Blondel recognized “the chiseled treasure” of his work. And they likewise understood that it had “to be readapted to currents modes of thinking and living.” In closing, Sturzo declared that “this re-adaptation” should begin again anew. And he further stated that “the re-elaboration of a new mode of
seeing creation” should follow. Sturzo suggested that “the perennial Christian currents of our relationship to the Creator” was an excellent place to start.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, he suggested that a fresh vision of thinking and living was available now in the bonds of sanctity. It was good advice then from an old Sicilian priest. And it remains especially good advice now and always.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
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