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THE CHARACTER AND DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN PHILOSOPHY FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY UNTIL OUR TIME: INAUGURAL ADDRESS FOR LECTURES ON THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA, 1860

Gentlemen, the topic of my lectures for this year is the development of Italian philosophy from the sixteenth century until our time.

To pick up again the sacred thread of our philosophical tradition; to revive the consciousness of our free thought by studying our leading philosophers; to search in philosophies of other nations for seeds received from the forefathers of our philosophy and then given back to us in new and better organized form; to understand this circulation of Italian thought whose meaning we have mostly lost; to recognize this return of our thought to itself in the great theoretical insight of our most recent philosopher; to know, in short, what we were, what we are and what we ought to be in the movement of modern philosophy, not limbs isolated and cut off, as it were, from the life of the world's peoples, nor captives bound to the triumphal chariot of a particular people, but a nation free and equal in the community of nations – this, gentlemen, has always been my life's desire and pursuit.

And now that Italy has already accomplished a great part of its renewal and, wholly united in a single purpose, awaits only the time and the occasion to complete it, I have decided that to declare this plan openly, though not to carry it out entirely, would be the best way to inaugurate this chair in a university as ancient and as rich in so many Italian memories as your own.

If it is true that nations, like people, also have their own spirits, and, if the more capable those nations are, the livelier is their consciousness of this spirit in all its manifestations, then, if this consciousness is what makes up the true nationhood of a people, I think it not useless to ask you to hear from me the history of our thought, the feats of our heroes – oftentimes martyrs, in fact – of the mind. The philosophy of a people is not a sterile and abstract business for a few individuals but the most perfect expression of the power of national genius.

I will not tell a precise and detailed story of all the systems that arose in Italy after the middle ages. Let us leave this long, novel and difficult task for more peaceful times. Here, the main thing is to describe the major moments of our philosophy by paying a call, as I would put it, at the most glorious wayposts on the journey that our thought has taken over the space of nearly four centuries, choosing only those principles and ideas that left an enduring mark on the events of history and thus became the heritage of European philosophy and determined the final form of Italian philosophy.

For this purpose a few systems and a few names are enough: Bruno in the sixteenth century, Campanella at the start of the seventeenth century, Vico in the first half of the eighteenth century, Galluppi, Rosmini and Gioberti in our century. In so choosing, let us not set aside other systems entirely and break the golden chain of national tradition, for

these other systems are imperfect and transient forms that have meaning only in the greater systems that complete them. By giving an account of the latter, we may also account implicitly for the former insofar as they are true.

This is the case especially for those philosophical systems or endeavors in the sixteenth century through which the Italian spirit strives to overcome the middle ages. The whole period is the time of a new creation of the spirit. But the original labor of thinking is somehow concealed in the guise of old forms and movements in conflict. It still lacks the common consciousness of unity in which different manifestations of the understanding come together – consciousness, in other words, of the new principle which, having brought the middle ages to an end, must reveal itself as an organic whole in modern times.

Finally, after long exertions through so many different routes, all the power of Italian theorizing seems almost exhausted and comes down to two systems that are already knocking at the door of the new world. Their inner motives are those that somehow form the two poles of modern consciousness: namely, the real infinity of God and the spontaneity of human thought. Italy, for a whole century after Bruno and Campanella, envying the many triumphs of the special sciences, produced no other original philosophical mind except Vico. At last, following the many more or less ingenious imitations of foreign systems in the latter half of the previous century and the beginning of our own, she arose again in a form worthy of her only with Galluppi, Rosmini and Gioberti.

These systems I will not describe at equal length because my main purpose is to understand the highest level to which theory has risen in Italy. Only at this level do we see all our past in its true light, and all our future as if in embryo. In my judgment, such is that lively, vast and deep intuition of the universe which – with all the contradictions that are more apparent than real, perhaps, or, if they are real, are necessary and not accidental – even Gioberti's opponents admire so much in all his works. Thus, all that I shall say of the other systems you should consider only a broad introduction to my account of this last one.

A common belief is that Gioberti is only Rosmini's antithesis and thus that the only undertaking worthy of our philosophical activity is to reconcile them, to find a third system that accepts what truth there is in both and rejects what is false – close to what has long been said about Plato and Aristotle. This view is in some sense correct. However, taken as a general criterion of the character of the two Italian systems and as a rule for the future of our philosophy, it is no less false than the view that treats Platonic idealism and ontologism (so-called) and Aristotelian empiricism and psychologism as two equally imperfect and opposed developments of the great Socratic tradition.

Just as the Aristotelian idea – since by now it is obvious to everyone that Aristotle, like Plato, Rosmini and Gioberti, also has his idea – is the development and necessary perfection of the Platonic (the latter immobile and transcendent substantiality, the former absolute activity immanent in things), so Gioberti's intuition and idea contains in itself,

as its first moment, Rosmini's intuition and idea. By this comparison, however, note that I do not mean to affirm that our two thinkers relate to one another in Italian philosophy as Plato and Aristotle relate in Greek philosophy: that Rosmini is our Plato and Gioberti our Aristotle. Comparisons like this, often taken literally, explain nothing; on the contrary, they frequently breed confusion. Others might say with equal justice that Plato is the Greek Rosmini and Aristotle the Gioberti, and still one would not really know anything about any of the four as they were.

What I want to say is this: just as Aristotle is the more complete Socratic and thus includes Socrates and Plato in himself, so the reconciliation of Rosmini and Gioberti is not something that remains to be done but was already done or at least undertaken by Gioberti himself; it is simply a question of understanding this reconciliation well and making it bear fruit. I do not deny that there is a side of Gioberti that appears to be just the opposite of Rosmini; understood in this way, abstractly and apart from his other aspects, this side of him for many represents all of Gioberti. And then they say: 'Rosmini's principle is possible Being; Gioberti's is real Being; their common principle, therefore, is Being, which they view from the two opposed and hence partial perspectives of possibility and reality. Let us combine the one with the other and thus ascend to a higher concept, to the unity of the possible and the real, to true Being, in other words.'

To put it differently, the main point is to avoid identifying God with the world. Now this identification is of two kinds, cosmological and ontological. The former makes a single reality of God's reality and the world's; the latter makes a single idea of their ideas. By following Gioberti, the principle of real Being, one avoids the former, and one avoids the latter by following Rosmini, the principle of possible or purely ideal Being. The conclusion is that God and the world are not just really but also ideally distinct and different.

The argument is correct, but the flaw is in the basis or common principle of reconciliation, which is Being – pure object, in other words, immobile and indifferent substance, nature or existence, certainly not activity, thinking, understanding and willing, personality or spirit. Accordingly, once it is granted that reconciliation of the two opposites has been achieved, the unity that results from them is itself an opposite just because it is the Being that keeps outside of it the other Being that is true principle and true unity together – *conscious knowledge*. In this way, the flaw in Greek philosophy repeats itself: *pure ontologism*, Being insofar as it is simple Being, sensible or intelligible, as the absolute principle of existence and knowledge. It is not understood that this philosophy succumbs to the blows of skepticism and falls apart, rather than reviving, in Neoplatonism precisely because the spirit no longer found its final satisfaction in the pure *object*, material or ideal, but searched for something else of a more human kind as the absolute – namely, the Spirit. The search for God as spirit, this is the meaning of the fall of ancient philosophy and the rise of modern philosophy.

Now, if the relationship between Rosmini and Gioberti were really as described above, all the difference between them would be a question only of *more* or *less*. Their common character would be an ideal objectivism, like that of the Socratics, because Being, for

both of them, is not the sensible but the intelligible, and its reality is ideality itself; except that for Rosmini the ideal side of Being would have the advantage, and for Gioberti the real, and thus reconciliation would be found by balancing the two sides. On this view, Gioberti's importance in the history of Italian philosophy would be small or none. His whole worth would amount to being the same, more or less, as Rosmini or, to use a phrase made famous by the great philosopher of Rovereto, he would be Rosmini by excess or defect. And settling the great conflict between Rosminians and Giobertians would be a matter of arithmetic.

But fortunately Gioberti is entirely different. His true excellence is precisely the new and deeper concept of the real and therefore of the ideal, the permanent elimination of the pure ontologism that his friends and enemies – standing more on the letter of his teaching than on its foundations and internal relations – believed he had resurrected. For him true being is not pure being, pure immediate being, but absolute *Relation*. It is not the *One* pure and simple but, to use his own language, the *Triune*; not the point but the circle; not absolute rest but absolute motion which, as absolute and infinite relation toward itself, is also absolute rest. Thus he says: 'Being is thinking; thinking is creating; creating is revealing oneself.' Where others say *is*, then, Gioberti says *creates*. Here, if I may say so, is the whole revolution in theory that Gioberti achieved: *Being is Creating*.

In this way, the idea is no longer the pure Platonic Intelligible, object and absolute substance, absolutely separate from the world and the human intellect that contemplates it. It is not the Aristotelian God which, as pure and abstract thought, thinks only itself and not the world. It is not the unconscious universal force that disperses and exhausts itself in the multitude of its manifestations. But it is that for which to be is to think; which does not think inasmuch as it *is* but is inasmuch as it *thinks*; which thinks all that can be thought and therefore is all that is; which thinks itself and the other, and itself in the other; which creates by thinking, reveals itself by creating and, by revealing itself, does not vanish but maintains and remakes itself eternally the same as itself; which in this absolute sameness does not cancel its own manifestation, which it has posited or opposed to itself, the natural world and the human, but only **cares for, considers and conceives those worlds eternally and in advance**, and only in this infinite preconception is it love, not blind force – absolute personality, not pure individual; spirit, not substance or simple nature.

The spirit: this is the true unity of the real and the ideal – the idea or the universal, in other words; inasmuch as it is consciousness and personality, it is and subsists, it is real and individual as universal. For the idea, any other way of subsisting, whether as pure universal in itself (Plato's poetic intelligible) or as universal immanent and subsistent only in the particular (the Aristotelian nature), is always either a fantastic reality or a reality inadequate to ideality, a contracted and not actual ideality, in other words. This perfect sameness of real and ideal, or absolute transparency of the real, is found only in that whose being is its **self-knowing** and whose **self-knowing** is the root and foundation of all being.

Thus, what Gioberti in his early works calls his ontologism is basically nothing more than the true spiritualism. What he says to be present to human intuition is not Being as simple object or as pure existence or as unconscious totality of the universal determinations of existence but is God himself as absolute personality in the fullness of his power, intelligence and love, as Creator in the true sense of the word, as creative and re-creative activity, in other words. He is not external, then, but is within us, and this intimacy is our true intimacy with ourselves precisely because he is a personality conscious of itself. Without such intimacy, we, as personality and as consciousness of ourselves, would not grasp him as personality but only as existence.

They say that the ancient world, the Greek world, was beautiful but lacked love. The cause of this defect is in the very essence of love, which is two consciousnesses or personalities in one, without the one canceling the other but with the one preserved and nourished in the other. The ancient world did not know love because it did not know how to conceive of this being present of two in and, I would say, their near identity without eliminating the difference. This is possible only by means of the spirit and in the intimacy of the spirit. Antiquity did not know love because it did not know the spirit.

Gioberti's excellence is in understanding not only Rosmini, and therefore Galluppi, in his own terms and summing him up, but also Vico, likewise Campanella and even Bruno. My bringing these names together will seem strange to you, especially when I say that our philosophy begins with Bruno and ends with Gioberti. What connection can there possibly be between these two philosophers? I have no wish to stir up old hatreds here. You all know of Bruno's unhappy death. In that other era I do not know what might have been the fate of the author of the *Protology*, the *Philosophy of Revelation* and the *Reform of the Catholic Church*. But, whether it is true or false that there may be a certain resemblance between the two philosophers in some aspect of life, between their teachings there *appears* to be no analogy.

Bruno was judged a godless and irreligious man and was burned alive as such at Rome. Gioberti is celebrated in the public mind, if not by the *Index*, as the most forceful defender in modern times of the free alliance between faith and reason. And so he is, beyond doubt. Granted all that, I openly affirm that what is great and immortal in the philosopher of Nola – the concept of God's real infinity and of divine revelation as nature – lives again and *s'invera* only in Gioberti. To put this another way, the usual judgment of Bruno needs to be revised and corrected. Luckily we can now reconsider this judgment by freely studying the works of our philosophers, all the more in that there is no question here of inventing theories but only of making history speak. And the history of human thought lies more in the writings of victims than in the verdicts of persecutors.

To disclose my full intention to you, I must make known, as if by anticipation, the conclusion of my lectures by telling you about the concept that I formed for myself of the character and the development of our philosophy.

Gentlemen, modern European civilization was born in great part from that obscure and confused unity of different nations that bears the name of the middle ages. This unity

was the very idea of humanity, unknown to the ancients and revealed by Christianity, even though at the time it was not realized in its true form. The essence of this idea was the free community of interests, opinions, feelings and purposes of all peoples, a community not possible in Greek and Latin culture because the basis of that culture was the purely national state and so excluded any different civilization. And this other culture, even though it aspired to embrace the whole world of nations, could not really achieve unity except by negating and absorbing every particular nationality in the abstract formalism of the Roman city. Humanity for the Greeks was nothing but Hellenic nationality, and for the Romans only the universality of justice and law. Rome may have been right since the nationalities that it denied had in them nothing truly human – or Christian, we should say – but were only natural. Without the Christian idea true humanity is not possible.

The system of the middle ages was a different matter: justice, dignity, human and social existence did not consist of a given nationality as in Greece nor of the universal city as in Rome. They were based on the very nature of man as man, on the infinite value of his immortal soul, on his inward affinity and communion with God, in whose image and likeness he was created and then re-created by redemption. Man's law was God's law applied to the human race.

But this unity was still abstract, confused and somehow chaotic; only time and the perennial action of the spirit could cause the moral cosmos of nations to be born of it. It was the idea of Christianity only in its crude, spontaneous and primitive form, and it had no basis in concrete and living interests. The reason, gentlemen, is that the true unity of peoples – the true existence of humanity, in other words – can be based only on the existence, value and free expression of the various lives of the nations, just as the perfect community of a people consists only of the free and rational development of the individuals who make it up.

Now the defect of this unity lay in being something entirely otherworldly and outside of what had to be united: the world, life, civil and political institutions, the state in general, science and art, commerce and industry – these were thought of as things without truth. As such, even though they were the work of reasonable creatures, they could not become a serious field of human action since they had no part of the eternal and divine in them. The only serious matter for humanity was religion as representation of the other life. So much did people believe in the truth of the world that **surely** they all expected to see it end with their own eyes. Hence it happened that all human interests generally, not yet permeated and moved within by the idea that had to be the essence of those interests, were left to their own devices, producing that state of moral disorder and brutality that differs little from barbarism.

To achieve a true and concrete unity of peoples by forming them into nations upon a common basis, which is the same Christian idea, it was necessary therefore to negate the spontaneous unity of the middle ages and thus the very principle that assured the value of the idea. This principle was the externality of the eternal and the divine – their existence beyond worldly things, in other words, beyond the nationality of peoples itself and, in

general, beyond the present and concrete life of mankind. I am certainly not saying that Christian humanity was considered something godless at that time; on the contrary, it was held to be sacred. But this property belonged to it as to an abstract existence, as to a simple genus unrealized in its species – which are the nations, precisely. Just as they did not see that a person is not a true and real person without the concrete and harmonious satisfaction of all his interests, so it was not understood that humanity exists and achieves perfection only through the nations.

Dante himself did not have a correct concept of mankind nor of the nation. His perfect person was the believer; true philosophy was theology; and Italy was the seat of the Holy Roman Empire. Thus the whole law of humanity appeared to be concentrated in one hand alone; the idea of Roman universalism flourished again; and the only novelty was the split between the two powers who claimed this universal monarchy and the struggle between them.

The system of the middle ages had its root in an ideal principle, and therefore it could not be vanquished except ideally. This victory was the result of a resurgence of science and letters, of philologists and free philosophers, and in this resurgence the first and greatest laurels go to Italy.

Yes, gentlemen, without this victory the new world would have been impossible – it would have been impossible to recognize human dignity in all spheres of life, impossible to shape the peoples of Europe into national states. And Italy, still in combat for its right to be a nation, is the very one to whom her sister nations most owe their status.

The truth contained in the system that gave way, especially through the work of Italian thinkers, was an indomitable aspiration for heaven, the eternal, the divine. The false part was to treat the phenomenon – or rather all the goods that we prefer to call corporeal, worldly or earthly – only as a means or a ladder to climb and surely not also as the seat of that infinite for which they searched so ardently. It was necessary, then, to make people understand that these goods also contain something of the ideal and thus of the eternal.

Now for this purpose the new establishment of the State was not enough, with its emerging independence from church authority. In ordinary awareness the State always appears as a temporal power that governs only people's external lives; the intention that is turned back toward the eternal is thought to be beyond the State's sphere. In our time too, the same line of thought usually sees nothing more in the State than a purely external arrangement for protecting the interests of people in a community, or **at most** a physical force for enforcing the rule of justice and equity among them. True, even on this view of the State, the effort that we make to submit the instincts and natural inclinations to the law of reason does not fail to leave its traces on the course of time, both on the inner thoughts of individuals and on the history of peoples. This gives rise to a great work, a moral world, of which we are just small parts. And unless one can deny this world an infinite value, it is clear that our continuing activity in the life of politics – our participation in this work – also has something of the eternal in it.

But on its own, gentlemen, philosophy is barely capable of grasping this thought. Bringing it to public consciousness is quite difficult, if not impossible. Still, beyond the State is a sphere of human activity where even ordinary opinion can sense something above temporal events. Science, literature and the arts are purely spiritual activities which, serving effectively for the education of the soul, are likewise routes by which the soul returns to God and reunites with him. Thus they form a kind of third power on which from now on men will also make their purpose depend.

This conviction was the true cause of the collapse of the middle ages. It was understood that man and nature in general are not sin and nothing more, a being altogether abandoned by God, who can be reached only in special and extraordinary ways. God exists not only in external nature but in human consciousness itself, and man has the power to raise himself to God and realize the divine ideal not only by representation and variable external worship but also by religious feeling, by aesthetic intention, by the practice of social life and by knowledge.

This faith in human ability and in nature's living and divine reality was the deepest motive for the theories of all our philosophers: Telesio, Pomponazzi, Cesalpino, your great townsman Achillini, Cremonini, Zabarella. But in this glorious phalanx of free thought the two greatest are Bruno and Campanella, who surely mark two special directions in the development of Italian thought from that time onward. The determination of these different directions is the key to the history of our thought.

In Campanella it is as if there are two persons: the medieval man, the Dominican, the disciple of St. Thomas; and the new man with new aims and instincts, who always hesitates to contradict the other person, meaning only to reconcile this opposition between the new science – especially the understanding of nature – and the beliefs of the Church. As a young man, then, he defended Telesio's physics against the Aristotelians of the day. But on the other hand, drawing on the religious piety that he drank in with his mother's milk, he seeks to inquire more accurately into the relation between natural life and the supernatural.

He wants to reform philosophy and society as well, but by preserving – always promoting, in fact – respect for the Catholic Church and religion. For peoples he allows progress, but this progress must be aimed at a universal monarchy with the Pope at its head, at the extirpation of heresy, at community of goods and women. He attributes some importance to worldly affairs and to the State especially, and he does not treat them as a mere nullity. On the other hand, the world and the State for him contain nothing authentically divine and absolute, and they have no real value except insofar as they serve the purposes of the Church. The divine for Campanella is always the religious element alone, and the true state is a church-lay State.

He acknowledges the value of sense and experience; indeed, he bases all of human and natural science on the latter. As the foundation of all cognition he posits *consciousness of the self* and the spontaneous activity of the spirit, so that we must admire him as the precursor of modern empiricism and rationalism both, of Bacon and Locke and of

Descartes. Despite all that, natural science for him is not something divine and is based mainly on the material soul more than on the immortal, whose sole object is the religious idea and the world beyond. From this comes the dualism which divides the natural from the supernatural throughout Campanella's system and which he does not know how to reconcile.

Likewise, he affirms that nature should be studied because it is the great book or volume of God, and he actually says philosophy consists of this reflection. This puts him in open opposition to the middle ages which sought God outside of nature and outside human consciousness itself. But at the same time he adds that creatures are no more than images and vestiges of God; the world in general is a sort of *statue* of God and nothing more; it is not an aspect of God's life, and God in his truth is absolutely outside of the world and exists without it. Therefore, what makes us know the true God is religion alone and definitely not philosophy, which for this reason is queen only of the natural sciences and always the handmaid of theology.

But if philosophy and, in general, all sciences based on the contemplation of nature and man do not make us know the truth which is God himself, of what use are they? How can we justify the need for their existence, and, in general, why must we pass through this mutable and material earthly life? Campanella replies that he knows nothing about it; on the contrary, he says, on this topic even guesswork is risky. Thus, in general, Campanella does not understand the necessity of the finite; he does not know how to grasp the *humanity* and, if I may say so, the *worldliness* of God. The finite for him is a pure fact that cannot be explained.

From this, one sees that Campanella's philosophy has both a theological and a skeptical character. His skepticism lies in the conviction that human knowledge is not enough for everything because it is always limited and imperfect. His theologism comes from the need for extraordinary measures to come to the aid of reason. This second trait also belongs to the scholastics in the middle ages, but the difference between them and Campanella is precisely his skepticism because scholasticism was dogmatic and theological without first having been skeptical. In the latter, theologism is a principle; in the former, a result.

This skepticism, which must be distinguished from the ancient variety, is the new element in philosophy. Joined with the study of nature – produced by it, in fact – it takes various forms in various philosophies and leads to various results. Thus in Cusanus it had already taken the name of *learned ignorance* and served to prove the need for God's word and for faith. In Pomponazzi it becomes an opposition between sense and intellect, experience and reason, the one limited but *certain*, the other limited and *uncertain*, so that one must believe more in the former than in the latter. The same opposition exists between natural knowledge and supernatural: as philosophers we must follow the first, even when it contradicts the second; as believers and children of the Church we must stand on supernatural knowledge. Thus, the same skeptical tendency that results in theological dogmatism for Campanella, for Pomponazzi produces a separation, if not an opposition, between philosophy and theology and the division of the human person into

two, the thinker and the believer. This separation becomes deeper in Telesio and others who came later.

Anyone who thinks about modern philosophy recognizes this skeptical element in all its systems, more or less. Even in absolute idealism, which claims to know all truth, it manifests itself as consciousness of the inability of finite understanding to grasp the essence of things, which is then granted not to simple faith but to the same human thinking as reason or dialectical and theoretical understanding.

Campanella's significance in the history of our philosophy is as follows, then. He is a free philosopher who trusts the senses, experience and self-consciousness, but he does not have the philosophical independence – not to speak of Bruno – even of Pomponazzi, Achillini, Cesalpino and philosophers of the Paduan school: he is the least free of our free philosophers. He is not a scholastic, and he is greater than Bruno insofar as he seeks to base philosophy on the principle of self-consciousness, as his master Telesio had based knowledge of nature on the senses. But in his conclusions he agrees, more than one would think, with the content of the hierarchical doctrines of the middle ages. He removes the shackles from science only to let it make new ones of its own and submit itself freely to faith. In short, he is the philosopher of the Catholic restoration after the Reformation. His goal was to reconcile the old world with the new, scholasticism with free thought – an impossible mission, at least then. Gioberti undertakes the same mission two centuries later, but with a much different attitude.

Bruno was a different person: a different heart, a different mind. Campanella, buried alive in the cause of liberty for twenty-seven years in those pits they call prisons in Naples, bears up heroically to cruel torment many times, writes the greater part of his many and voluminous works threatened by torture, and at last by a Pope's favor sees the light of day again to die old and at ease in Paris. Bruno, also a Dominican, leaves the cloister as a young man, throws away his monk's habit, goes wandering through Europe, visits France, England and Germany, preaching his free ideas at every stop, seeking peace **everywhere** but never finding it, always unhappy with everything and everyone except one thing alone – the truth. He cries out: 'the university I dislike, the mob I despise, many things leave me dissatisfied, and only one inspires my love; to that one I freely subject myself, happy to suffer, rich in need, and alive in death.' 'My toil, torment and agony is for love of this one' alone.¹ At last, driven by fate, he returns to Italy to be imprisoned by the Inquisition of Venice, turned over to the Roman office, interrogated, tortured and burned.

They often say that truth is the greatest suffering in philosophy as well as its greatest consolation. If this is so, I believe there is no one for whom truth produced more suffering or more consolation than poor Bruno. Was this the source of his enormous enthusiasm and that restless spirit that seemed calm and quiet only when facing death? 'In Bruno,' writes an historian of philosophy, 'there is the elation of a great soul that

¹Bruno, prefatory letter to *De l'Infinito, universo e mondi*, in *Dialoghi Italiani*, I: *Dialoghi metafisici*, ed. G. Gentile and G. Aquilecchia (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), pp. 346-7.

senses in itself the immanence of the spirit and knows that the whole life of thought consists in the unity of its being and of all beings. In the depth of this awareness there is something resembling the sacred frenzy of a bacchante, something that overflows itself in becoming its own object and expressing so much richness.² And here is the whole difference between Bruno and Campanella. For Campanella the universe is certainly not a dead thing. All things live; they sense, in fact; and the universal soul moves and nourishes them. But this life is only a shadow of the true life; the source of all life is beyond it. One does not reach this source with the intellect, which is always condemned to feed on water and mud. We taste only some semblance of it by means of faith.

Bruno also allows this incomprehensible source to exist, or at least he does not absolutely deny it. But in confirming it he reduces it to the tiniest little point that causes no torment for the human mind because in nature, in the universe and in the world— in other words, as Bruno puts it, in that heaven Amphitrite which is infinite begetting, a perfect image and likeness of the divine begetter – the mind contemplates, living, real and unfolded, all the treasures that the point can conceal.³ Thus, the universe for Bruno is not only the *statue* of God but his infinite revelation; not the tomb of dead divinity but the throne of living divinity; it is the true and only life of God, in fact, because to live is to be revealed, and one who begets, contemplates and mirrors himself in his begetting is revealed. Without the universe, God would be abstract infinity, not real infinity. Bruno concedes the first to the affairs of the theologians. The second he assigns to philosophers as their only and true God.

Here is the point where one sees what truth there is in Bruno and what is false. The skepticism which we usually see **crucified** as the enemy of everything good is, **when one reckons it up**, often one of the most powerful allies of faith and religion. The reason is that unless there were something to show us the limits and weaknesses of human understanding, we would have no need to believe: everything would be as clear as the light of day. Now skepticism, which begins after the middle ages with Cusanus and continues with all philosophers after him, reduces to mere appearance in Bruno. Like Spinoza after him, whose true predecessor he was, Bruno does not believe because he is not skeptical enough.

He is satisfied with the God in nature. Indeed, for him nature is God himself in things, as their substance or identity and as absolute lack of distinction between thought and extension, ideal and real, form and matter. The supersubstantial and incomprehensible God of the theologians does not so much set a limit on understanding as show no regard for it. Thus, if there is a defect or imperfection here, it lies more with God himself, as

²Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, III: *Werke* 20 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), p. 24.

³Amphitrite, the hesitant bride and jealous wife of Poseidon, is an obscure character in mythology whose name is sometimes just a synonym for ‘ocean.’ Describing the primeval chaos, Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 1.14) names her in this way as not yet distinct from other things. Bruno calls her ‘the source of all numbers, of all kinds, of all reasons which is the monad, true essence of the being of all.... From the monad which is divinity proceeds this monad which is nature, the universe, the world: *De gli eroici furori*, in *Dialoghi Italiani*, II, 1125.

absolute and otherworldly principle, than with the understanding, which cannot know God because as completely simple – as pure unity without begetting, or, as Bruno also says, without making one thing different from another – he is in no way knowable, not even for himself.⁴

The truth in Bruno's teaching, therefore, is to have confirmed that God cannot be known unless within him there is real distinction– unless he manifests himself, in other words – and that nature is the revealing of God. The false part is to have taken nature as a unique revelation, judging knowledge of God as nature to be the final and most perfect grade of knowledge. Since Bruno did not doubt the truth of this knowledge and did not use skepticism to see the flaw in it, he fell into the following contradiction. God (the Substance) does not know himself, and inasmuch as man (the mode of the Substance) knows God, man is superior to God, the mode to the substance, because the knower is superior to the known that does not know itself. To resolve this contradiction, one would need to say either that knowledge has no importance and hence that conscience, freedom and personality are mere appearance or that, if knowledge has value, God is not simple substance and nature.

God as manifest is surely more real than God as a closed unity. But is there no other? Is there not a God that knows himself, whose essence, in fact, is **being known** and, just because **he is known to himself**, man knows him, knows himself and knows the world? Briefly, what Bruno lacks is conscious knowledge of true divine revelation, of God as Spirit, in other words. This is because he has no *faith*, nor indeed any religion, since where the spirit is lacking, so are both of these. But it is a different matter to say that Bruno was a man without God. On the contrary, God is everything for him and in everything, and if there is a defect here, it is in annihilating everything in God, including the human personality itself. The error is only an incomplete idea of God, recognizing only one side of his real essence. Speaking philosophically, at any rate, this side is worth more than the abstract and empty God of the scholastics.

To be fair to Bruno, one must also note that it would not take much for him to rise to the true concept of God and man. Speaking of God, he calls him highest individuality, absolute monad, and in the monad he locates true being.⁵

But the essence of his monad is not conscious knowledge, not the *representation of multiplicity in unity*, not the one that returns and possesses in its differences, but the one, the Minimum, that dissolves and exhausts itself by multiplying, by becoming Maximum, in other words. He cannot grasp the unity of Minimum and Maximum that would be the true and perfect Individual.

After Bruno and Campanella, the route that modern philosophy must follow is already set: in one direction, the autonomy of the spirit as knowledge of the self and of things, as understanding and sense; in the other, God, not as an empty name but as a real infinity

⁴Bruno, *De la causa, principio e uno*, in *Dialoghi Italiani*, I, 319-22.

⁵Ibid., pp. 304-5, 332-3.

living in the world. The spirit has come so far that it no longer wants to know about a God – about a truth, in other words – of which one can say only that there is nothing to say. It wants a truth that can not only be thought but also sensed as an object of experience.

Campanella's principle – *the most certain first principle is to be and to know; conscious knowledge is being; knowledge of oneself is one's being* – becomes *I think, therefore I am* in Descartes. His *sensing is knowing* becomes the *perception* of Bacon and Locke, the sole source of all knowledge.⁶ Bruno's God-as-nature becomes Spinoza's God-as-Substance-and-Cause. The consequences that followed from Cartesian intellectualism and Locke's empiricism are well known. The first led directly to Spinoza's pantheism, the second to the French materialism of the last century.

Leibniz rose up to combat empiricism and Spinozism. Reproducing and perfecting the intellectualism of Campanella and Descartes and the monadism of Bruno, he opposes the innate intellect to the *tabula rasa*; to Substance without will and intelligence, he opposes the monad as absolute representation of the whole manifold in the unity of thought; to the necessary and fated chain of causes and effects, the pre-established harmony; to existence as a simple modification of universal being – as a pure *particular thing* – the ideal universality contained in the individuality of consciousness; to extension as a divine attribute equal and parallel to thought, space as mere phenomenon of the idea. This polemic, if it succeeded against pantheism, still lacked the strength to block the development of empiricism and its degeneration into materialism. On the other hand, with his incomplete concept of the monad or, to put it more precisely, of the spirit, Leibniz helped replace Bruno's and Spinoza's God-as-Substance-and-Nature with something that differed little from the abstract God of the scholastics, thus contributing to the stubborn disregard for the true and living side of Spinozism.

Leibniz foresaw the true problem of modern philosophy, the mystery in which all the mysteries are summed up. For him this mystery was not nature but the spirit; if the spirit were understood, everything would be understood. But he himself conceived the spirit as a natural entity, as being, since, even while restoring its essence to ideality, he still treated this ideality as merely immediate and definitely not as its own product from itself, as development or energy that overcomes and idealizes the real. The Leibnizian monad became a pure *thing* in the hands of Wolff, and then people were heard to speak not only of *material things* but of *spiritual things* and of the *first and highest thing*, which is God himself. The soul became a *simple* thing opposed to and different from another *composite* thing which is the body, and God became a *completely simple* thing above, beyond and absolutely different from all things.⁷

Once Spinozism came to be abhorred as contrary to divine and human personhood, and Leibniz's monadism was transformed into the atomism of pure being, which was no match for the strength that empiricism drew from the life of nature, how could one think

⁶Campanella ???

⁷Wolff ???

about the world, man and God? The world was thought of mechanically and explained by purely mechanical laws. It was the age of natural science and mathematics; everything was calculated, weighed and measured. Man was thought to be either pure power, pure being for himself, unbound by any connection with other beings, or a purely natural being and force operating naturally. In the human world, then, in the world that is man's proper business, either there seemed to be no law, because there is no law where power rules alone, or the law was just the law of nature, and the life of nations and humanity – history – was a mechanism like the law of nature. Accordingly, the State emerged on its own from the power of individuals by means of contracts, and language arose in the same way from a kind of convention. On the other hand, there were those who said that the will also wills by a natural law, as water falls, fire burns and so on.

In short, it appeared that the world, natural and human, had really been abandoned by God. God had made the world, but God was not at all visible in the world. And in truth they had reduced God – when they did not say that he was the same as matter – to what they could do without. The world looked to itself and went on its way like a watch wound up for eternity.

Plainly, to escape from so much scandal it was necessary to deny both the abstract monotheism that opposed a materialism no less abstract, as well as the naturalism of Bruno and Spinoza, and to take from this a theoretical concept of God that would be neither pure Being nor simple Nature. This could not be done without denying empiricism and intellectualism at the same time, and making philosophy's problem not unconscious reality – the pure object, Being, whether God, soul or nature – but conscious reality, conscious knowledge, the spirit. This problem is the real significance of all German philosophy – psychological apparently, metaphysical fundamentally, as in fact it shows itself to be in its most recent phase.

In the first half of the last century, when the damage was not so grave, the only God that everyone was looking for in the universe and in mankind was still only nature since man himself was considered a natural being. Then one person turned up and claimed to have discovered a *new science*, as if he foresaw where things were headed. Was it empty boasting, or rather an insight anticipating what we in our current century know to be **the only** real problem of philosophy?

'Philosophers until now,' he said, 'have contemplated God only in the order of natural things. Raising myself higher, I contemplate in God the world of human minds, which is the *metaphysical world*, in order to demonstrate Providence in the world of human souls, which is the civil world or the world of nations. Contemplating God only through the natural order – inasmuch as he has given existence *naturally* to things and people, in other words, and *naturally* preserves it – philosophers have demonstrated only *one part* or *attribute* of his providence. I shall contemplate it through the *part that most belongs to human beings*, whose nature has this primary property of being *social*, as providing for *political morality* in their affairs or in the civil *customs* by which nations have come into the world and are preserved.'

‘And this new and higher contemplation is possible because this *civil world was certainly made by humans*; hence they can rediscover the *principles behind the modifications of our same human mind* because these principles **are owing to them**. It must amaze us that *all philosophers* strive to pursue the science of *this natural world, whose science*, because the Deity *made it, he alone knows*. But they neglect to think about this world of nations, whose *science*, because *humans have made it, humans* can pursue. This fantastic effect has arisen from the weakness of the human mind, which, remaining immersed and entombed in the body, is inclined naturally to sense bodily things, while *to understand itself* too much strength and effort is needed.’

‘And yet, inasmuch as man is almost like God, and this science is of a kind truly divine, to that extent man himself has made the world that he wants to contemplate with this science, since *knowing and making* are one and the same in God, and man alone participates in this divine nature. The difference between man and God is that from the beginning man has made this world of his without knowing what he has made – believing, in fact, that he has done just the opposite.’

‘And, in a way, this is a generous cunning on the part of Providence, which, without *force of laws*, but by making use of man’s own customs – whose *conventions* are as *free* of all force as man is to *celebrate their nature* – as a mind *different* from and at times *contrary* and always *superior* to the *particular and limited ends* that people have proposed for themselves, makes them the *means to serve larger ends* and uses them always to preserve the human race. Thus, men want to act on their *animal lust* and scatter their portions, and from this they make the chaste state of matrimony from which families arise; the *Fathers* want to exercise *unrestrained paternal power over their clients*, and *cities* arise; the nobles want to abuse lordly liberty over the common people, and they become *servants of the laws* that make *popular liberty*, and so on.’

‘All this that they did was *Mind*, however, because people did it with *intelligence*; it was not *Fate*, because they did it by *choice*; not *Chance*, because the same results come perpetually from the same actions. The Mind or Providence is the *unity of the spirit that informs* and gives life to *this world of nations*.’⁸

With these words, which I have collected faithfully from all of the *New Science*, Vico posed a new problem, a new view of man, the world and God. Until that time, man had been viewed as a natural being, as a pure individual, studied only in those abstract, common and general qualities that he had brought with him from birth. Nature was viewed as a whole unto itself and as having its real meaning only in itself; some made it derive from God, but no one recognized it as a means to a higher end. God was viewed only as the author of nature. The human world appeared either as part of the natural world or as the pure product of man’s will.

⁸Spaventa takes this Hegelianized précis of Vico’s theory from several different sections of the *New Science*, as he says below: *La Scienza nuova*, ed. Paolo Rossi (Milan: Rizzoli, 1977), pp. 86-7, 96-7, 425.

Vico wants to find a new metaphysics, a *metaphysics of the human mind* that proceeds according to the *history of human ideas*, not of those ideas that result from contemplating the abstract human psyche – from abstract intellect and abstract sense, in other words, as when philosophers search for the origin of the ideas of space, time, substance, cause and such things – but of those ideas contemplated in God as Providence or Mind or Spirit that informs and gives life to the world of nations. The ideas that philosophers studied up to that time were the general determinations of Being, of the natural and the spiritual. They were *human* only inasmuch as they could be thought by a human, but they were neither *human* nor even *natural* as properly representing and defining humanity and nature, either in their abstract existence or in their concrete life.

When this Being – the person, the plant, the stone, for example – is said to be substance, cause, space, time and so on, nothing is said that tells what the person, the plant, the stone is in itself, but only what all Beings have in common as Beings, not as real, concrete, determinate Beings, that is, but as Beings in general, as an absolutely neutral average of all Beings. Human ideas, by contrast, are for Vico those which not only can be thought by man, like any other idea, but also express the human essence, which are this essence, in fact. They are not the abstract essence, as when one says that man is sense, imagination, intellect, appetite and will, and then these faculties are described in detail, but the human essence as real, living, developing and becoming a true person, family, society, nation, people, State or, in general, history and humanity.

In truth, what acts in the world and makes the world human is not that abstract psyche and mere skeleton of the spiritual individual taken on its own and studied by the psychologists, but man as belonging to his own family, nation or State at a given time and period of history – that psyche, in other words, that could be called national and, since it is a unity that informs all nations, universal as well.

One example will do. Psychologists study the process of cognition from sense to intellect, and they call this process the life of the spirit. Their rule is that the mind does not conceive anything for which it has no basis in the senses. Vico studies the sense and the intellect of the human race, of the spirit as history, and the process from one to the other is the life of humanity. In this way he shows that the *poets* at first had *sensed* as much about common wisdom as the *philosophers* later *understood* about arcane wisdom, so that the former group could be called the *sense*, the latter the *understanding* of the human race.

Sense is the first life of the people, that level at which the whole people is a poet who sees and does everything in a practical way. Understanding comes when people are reflective enough that every people knows what it is and what it wants. And philosophy is the highest level of this reflection or the most perfect consciousness of the being of a people. This process from sense to intellect is a genuine process, an internal development, and certainly not a simple addition of one thing to another. The intellect is already in the sense, but only implicitly, and yet what moves the sense and gives it life and consciousness is the intellect itself because in the activity of the sense the intellect makes itself available as its own material.

Vico's real achievement, then, is to have grasped this concept of the spirit as free development of itself and to have applied it to explain the human world. Just as the intellect arises from the sense in appearance, while in reality it is the intellect that has posited – or, to put it better, has presupposed for itself – the sense by positing itself as true and real intellect, so also in the human world, in the true life of the spirit, in history, the universal intellect prepares its own materials in the spontaneous and animal life of the various peoples, causing the common end to arise from particular ends, public life from private interests, marriage and the family from lust, the city from the excesses of the Fathers, the laws from abuse of lordly authority, and so on. This intellect is not an external mover, and man is not a machine that realizes an end that is not its own. But the universal end that man fulfills by satisfying his particular ends is his own end, and he fulfills it freely because in doing so he celebrates, as Vico solemnly says, his own nature.⁹

The result of this new view of man and the human world is a new view of the natural world and God himself. Just as sense has no meaning of its own, but only as the material and the implication of the intellect, so nature is nothing more than the cradle of the spirit. It is a world from which another world must arise and develop. Likewise, God's real infinity – his Providence – consists not merely of his revelation as a natural system of things but mainly of his revelation as a human world. In the former, things are simply *posited*; in the latter, man on his own makes himself what he truly is. The former corresponds to God as Being, the latter to God as Spirit. Of the former, God is the only author; of the latter, God and man are the authors, God as creator and man as co-creator, as Gioberti would say, so that this highest creative activity of God as human Providence is in itself divine and human at once, and for that reason it is love. Thus, God's infinity, purely natural in Bruno, became spiritual infinity in Vico. One was the negation, the other the affirmation of the personhood of God and man.

After Vico, what should our philosophers have done? What they should have done, in my opinion, was not to stop studying the human psyche, which was really the right path. But they should have studied it not just by understanding its abstract existence with the specific purpose of confirming the old metaphysics of Being, but by discovering the metaphysics that Vico described as belonging to the *human mind*, and by grasping *human ideas* instead of ideas merely thought by man. The problem was to find a new metaphysics to serve as the foundation of the new science – of the science of the spirit, that is. This problem formed the deepest impulse of German philosophy: to grasp the spirit not as a simple soul but in the full reality of its manifestation, this is the meaning of that philosophy.

Thus Kant studies the psyche as *cognition* and destroys the whole edifice of the old metaphysics, which treated the soul, the world and God as simple objects. Fichte studies the psyche as pure consciousness of itself, and clearly he remakes the natural and human universe as an infinite production of the I. Schelling studies the psyche as substantial reason and as equivalent in its two equal and parallel manifestations of the ideal and the real, reproducing and transfiguring the pantheism of Bruno and Spinoza. Hegel studies

⁹Vico, *Scienza nuova*, p. 87.

the psyche as absolute spirit which, inasmuch as it is infinite mediation or relation of itself to itself, is presupposed to itself as pure ideal, as pure real, through being posited as actual unity of the ideal and the real. Hence Hegel's claim to have put a new metaphysics in place of the one that Kant destroyed, a metaphysics identical to logic, whose first principle is not Being but thinking as absolute – the *human idea*, in other words, as Vico calls it, in its greatest abstraction and as its own absolute beginning.¹⁰

Our philosophers, by contrast, saw nothing in the new philosophy but a problem of psychology, not only the minor figures but also Galluppi, Mamiani and even Rosmini. Rather than using their psychological studies to move on to the new metaphysics, they employed them either to prop up the old one or negate it entirely without putting anything else in its place. On the whole they did not notice that the new psychological research was not only incompatible with the old metaphysics but that this research led necessarily to a new metaphysics, and they tore down only to build anew. Therefore they fought the critical philosophy because they thought it was the absolute negation of all metaphysics, when it was only the negation of the metaphysics which had **run its course and planted the seed of a new one.**

Galluppi knows nothing of God but his existence and declares that the claim to understand him is unworthy of his infinite essence. Rosmini allows us only negative cognition of God, for which faith then makes up the loss, so that the God of his philosophy does not much differ from the supreme Being of the previous century, which is recognized neither in nature nor in the spirit. In all this where is the great idea that Vico had brought to the world and left as a national heritage to Italian philosophers? The services that Galluppi and Rosmini rendered to philosophy are great, and I am not the last to acknowledge them. As psychologists they have few equals, but this is their whole value. The negative is that they grasp only the bare bones of what there is – man, the world and God.

Of man they say only that he has one faculty or another, from which comes one idea or another; of the world that it has one determination or another of the most general kind, which is contingent, temporary, finite, and so on; of God that he *is*, is supreme being, the

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 243-5, a key passage for Spaventa's interpretation of Vico: 'Setting out to find the nature of human affairs, this Science proceeds by a rigorous analysis of human thoughts about the human necessities or utilities of social life, which are the two enduring sources of the natural law of the tribes.... Hence, ... this Science is a history of human ideas, which seems to be the basis on which the metaphysics of the human mind must proceed. This queen of the sciences, following the rule that "sciences must start where their material starts," began from the point when the first people began to think as humans, certainly not when philosophers began to reflect on human ideas.... This Science ... comes to describe an ideal eternal history by which the histories of all nations run their course as they rise, progress, stabilize, decline and fall. In fact, we go on to claim that anyone who meditates on this Science gives himself the narrative of this ideal eternal history inasmuch as he makes it for himself, following the maxim "it had to be, has to be, will have to be," since this world of nations was definitely made by humans (which is the first indubitable principle posited above in this work) and hence one must search for its mode within the modifications of our own human mind.'

most real being; they cannot even say that he has *created* the world since their philosophy comprehends being but not creating. This is all they say about anything. But as for the *life* of man, the world and God, as for their history – since not only man but also nature and God have a history, and history in general is just the divine thinking of creation – they have nothing to say nor can they say anything.

So it turns out that neither Rosmini nor Galluppi has a philosophy of the real, a philosophy of nature and the spirit. They have logics, theories of ideas and psychologies. Rosmini also has a philosophy of law, but, as parts of the philosophy of spirit, law and psychology are a paltry business without a philosophy of art, language, history and religion as well. These parts are not found in their systems not because they lacked the time to fashion them but because there was no place for them. Where the principle is pure being, there can scarcely be an experimental psychology; were it otherwise, the inconsistency would be egregious.

In our philosophy, then, Galluppi, Mamiani and Rosmini somehow continue and complete that skeptical religious approach that we saw in Campanella. For them the chief aim of philosophy is to prove that reason cannot know everything because they admit the need for another source of cognition.

Gioberti's achievement is to have understood the complete vacuity of this situation. When he utters the word *nullism*, it is not an expression of his angry and emotional heart but of his shrewd and thoughtful mind, of the deep feeling that he had for the reality of things. Nullism is the absolute unknowability of God. What corresponds to the absolute unknowability of God is philosophy's exclusion of the whole real life of the world and man, of the whole positive element of nature and history and generally of the whole life of creation. What remains is only pure idea without fact, pure being without manifestation, pure essence without activity. Everything *positive* is left to those who are not philosophers, to their observation and experience. And since these people do not find the idea at the bottom of their stills or in their microscopes, there is reason to conclude that the *living* God, the God of nature and the human race, is the God of faith, not of science.

In Gioberti too there is a skeptical element. Although the idea manifests itself to the spirit in full and absolute reality – as Creator, that is – there is still a side of it that intuition cannot apprehend, the superintelligible. Nonetheless, when it is seen that this side is reduced to something quite small, as in Bruno, this real essence of the idea, which is distinct from the rational, is certainly not a totality of determinations different from those that reason knows, but only the unity and nexus of these same determinations.

And if reason were able to understand this nexus? If it could see how one determination produces another? This is what other philosophers claim, and Gioberti certainly has not shown that it is impossible. Thus he reduces the mystery to its least expression, to a single point that for some is perfectly clear. On the other hand, the superintelligible that appears as a fixed and unbreachable limit in the first form of Gioberti's system shows itself to be something that keeps fading away as the system develops. Intuition is no

longer a limited potency, capable of knowing only one side of the idea, but is an infinite potency to know, and in itself all that is knowable, except that the act is always in time and in continuous progress. Thus the difference between divine knowing and human is only that between act and potency, but the content of knowing is the same. God is just the idea of the world in its absolute state, and the world is the idea divided and multiplied.

Gioberti thus reproduces Bruno's realism, but by completing and resolving it in a higher principle, and on the other hand he establishes the new metaphysics that Vico asked for. At the same time, he meets the religious needs of Campanella, Galluppi and Rosmini, not by separating faith and knowledge but by reconciling them in the unity of the ideal science. This science is based on the principle of creation, on the infinite idea as development of itself or as absolute relation to itself.

The Idea as pure Being posits the existent, and as existent it returns to Being. To put it differently, the Idea is threefold activity: pure and indifferent activity; activity as pure manifestation and difference **from** itself; activity as representation of the manifold and of real difference in the unity of the spirit, conscious of itself. Actually, then, there are three creative cycles: the ontological cycle, the cosmological cycle and the human or spiritual cycle; in other words, the pre-natural, natural and supernatural. God as true God is not any of these cycles but their complete unity, absolute and indivisible. And therefore he is not pure Being, as the old metaphysics supposed; not pure nature, as Bruno and Spinoza affirmed; not pure abstract spirit, as ordinary monotheism affirms. But he is Being, nature and spirit, not as they are in their difference and distinction, but as transfigured and identified in a unique subject. As such, God is in everything and penetrates everything. Nothing is without God, but nothing is God because he is the unique God, not as the One opposed to the Many, but as beginning and end of the many such that none of the many is God because the many are not their own final end. This immanence of God together with transcendence is what makes up Gioberti's monotheism.

Gioberti reconciles experience to science, history to theory, erudition to knowledge, philology to philosophy by adapting the principle of creation to philosophy and making creative activity consist not only of the creation of the existent – of the positing of nature, that is – but also of the return of the existent to Being – of the development of the spirit, that is – and thereby also including the human as co-creative in this second divine activity. But in so doing he imposes a serious obligation on philosophy, whose very existence depends on fulfilling it. As the most perfect form of the activity of the spirit, as the final step in the return of the existent to Being, philosophy is the supreme science and truly divine. But it is above everything and rules everything not as something isolated and placed beyond all other activities and products of the spirit, but as embracing them all and using them as matter and sustenance for its life.

Philosophy is not only the beginning but the final and general result of all the special sciences. And if it is true that its object is the divine Idea of creation and that this idea is manifest in all reality, both in nature and in the spiritual world, philosophy must take the idea wherever it is found, contemplate it and reassemble the golden chain that connects

and sustains all creation. Forget a single link, and philosophy is no longer a real and positive science but an empty abstraction. The disrepute into which it has fallen in recent times, especially in those regions where it had found its most ardent and impassioned practitioners, has no other cause than this inclination to transcend the real and to be persuaded that theoretical insight into the universe can be had only by bare concepts. To study the real and all the real, to know all the manifestations of nature and history: this is the absolute condition of all true philosophy.

Gentlemen, such is the concept that I have formed for myself of the *character* and the *development* of our philosophy. Let me summarize my thoughts.

The character of our philosophy is just the same as that of all modern philosophy, essentially different from the character of ancient philosophy: it is the search for the first principle of everything not in absolute objectivity, material or ideal, but in absolute mind. Its development is the unfolding, the opposing and ultimately the uniting of the two moments of the absolute mind, objectivity and infinite subjectivity, the living reality of nature and the autonomy of human consciousness.

Informed by this deepest motive, our philosophy overcame that abstract and immediate unity of the Christian spirit which, separated from its two real moments of nature and humanity, appeared in the middle ages as empty and transcendent Being. From one side, then, came Bruno's naturalism, from the other Campanella's psychologism; from one side, in other words, immediate intuition of God as simple Substance and Cause, from the other, consciousness as immediate perception only of the finite I and finite things. And given the conviction that knowing is imperfect, given that skeptical approach by which truth – God himself – was known only by way of reasoning and superficially, the true objects of knowledge were only the world as mechanical aggregate of entities and man either as pure will or as himself a mechanical entity. The final consequence of this approach was, on the one hand, the absolute thing, on the other hand, absolute matter as God.

Vico was the first to reconcile the necessity of nature with the freedom of the spirit, but it was only prophecy, not science. He conceived God not just as natural order but as the moral order of the world, and certainly not as two parallel and equally spontaneous systems, so that the moral order was nothing but the same natural order in a different form (as in Spinozism). Instead, he conceived God as *intellect* that disposes the natural order as matter and means for the moral order. Thus, the absolute Prime was no longer substance but subject, not Being but Mind. Along with this concept, Vico needed a new metaphysics that would move on to human ideas, and therefore it was based on the study of human thinking. Hence the need for psychological research or, to put it better, for treating humans as *knowing*. But this treatment could not be philosophy's final goal nor a means of propping up the old metaphysics; the only course for this approach was to build a new metaphysics on the ruins of the old.

This task of destruction explains the skeptical character of the new philosophy. Galluppi, Rosmini and Mamiani represent this direction in our philosophy after Vico: they are

philosophers of *knowledge*. Superb psychologists, they study the act of knowing in all its aspects. To this achievement Mamiani adds the noble enterprise of recovering the philosophical tradition of our ancestors in the *Renovation* and the *Dialogues*.¹¹ Wanting real results from his research, he strives to reconcile his philosophical notions with the dictates of ordinary common sense. But the defect of these thinkers is not to have seen that the whole meaning of psychology lay in the need for a new metaphysics, to replace the metaphysics of Being with that of the Spirit.

Only Gioberti realized that psychology was a means, not an end, a means of putting a new principle in place, certainly not of reinforcing the old one. This new principle he expresses in the *ideal formula*, which is nothing other than a new concept of the spirit.¹² From now on, the essence of the spirit is no longer the contemplation of Being but the knowledge of the spirit that creates the spirit. Its privilege is to be able to know its own creation. Thus, the spirit alone is no longer a natural Being because, as intuition of the creative act, it assists, as I shall put it, in its own origin. Its being is the very act by which it sees itself being produced. This is the meaning of Gioberti's intuition: certainly not that the newborn person knows God the Creator, but that the human intellect is in itself the potency of this cognition, infinite potency that embraces everything knowable and must be actualized infinitely.

To know itself absolutely: this is the goal of the spirit; this knowledge is its absolute freedom. And this must also be the goal of our philosophy, the problem for our future. So that this knowledge does not decay into pure abstraction, however, it must presuppose the whole of reality, not only natural but human as well, all the aspects in which the activity of the spirit is manifest. If the spirit is the final end and true meaning of everything, one can say that the spirit is in everything, and hence the spirit alone knows itself absolutely and is free when it knows everything and knows itself in everything. This is the knowledge of the creative act, of the spirit as immanent and at the same time transcendent in all things.

In my judgment, then, gentlemen, the highest state of our thinking is the philosophy of Gioberti. It alone corresponds to the spirit of the age. It alone sums up and digests in itself all the most glorious moments of Italian philosophy. It alone puts our philosophy back into the general life of European philosophy. It alone can restore to Italian thought that freedom and that glory which **it completes** by becoming a national philosophy. Italy abounds in genius for theorizing; what is missing is agreement of theory with experience. The first principle of this agreement is in the system that will be the subject of these lectures.

You, young scholars, now have excellent support for succeeding in this enterprise. In this University, risen to a new day, you can now freely learn all those disciplines that are the basis of philosophy, not only the natural disciplines but history in all its branches,

¹¹Count Terenzio Mamiani del Rovere (1799-1885) published *Del rinnovamento della filosofia antica italiana* in 1834, *Dialoghi di nuova dottrina* in 1846.

¹²Cross-reference to Gioberti text.

scholarship and philology. 'Freely,' I said: and you must apply the first act of freedom to this same system. There is no question of accepting it blindly in all its forms and propositions, but of understanding, developing and bringing to fruition all the good that it contains. This system is more a first principle than a system. You must shape the principle into a new and complete system. The principle is divine creative activity – freedom, or the absolute law of the spirit. This freedom and this law you must grasp in its essence so that with full consciousness you can make it effective in life as human beings, as citizens and as Italians.