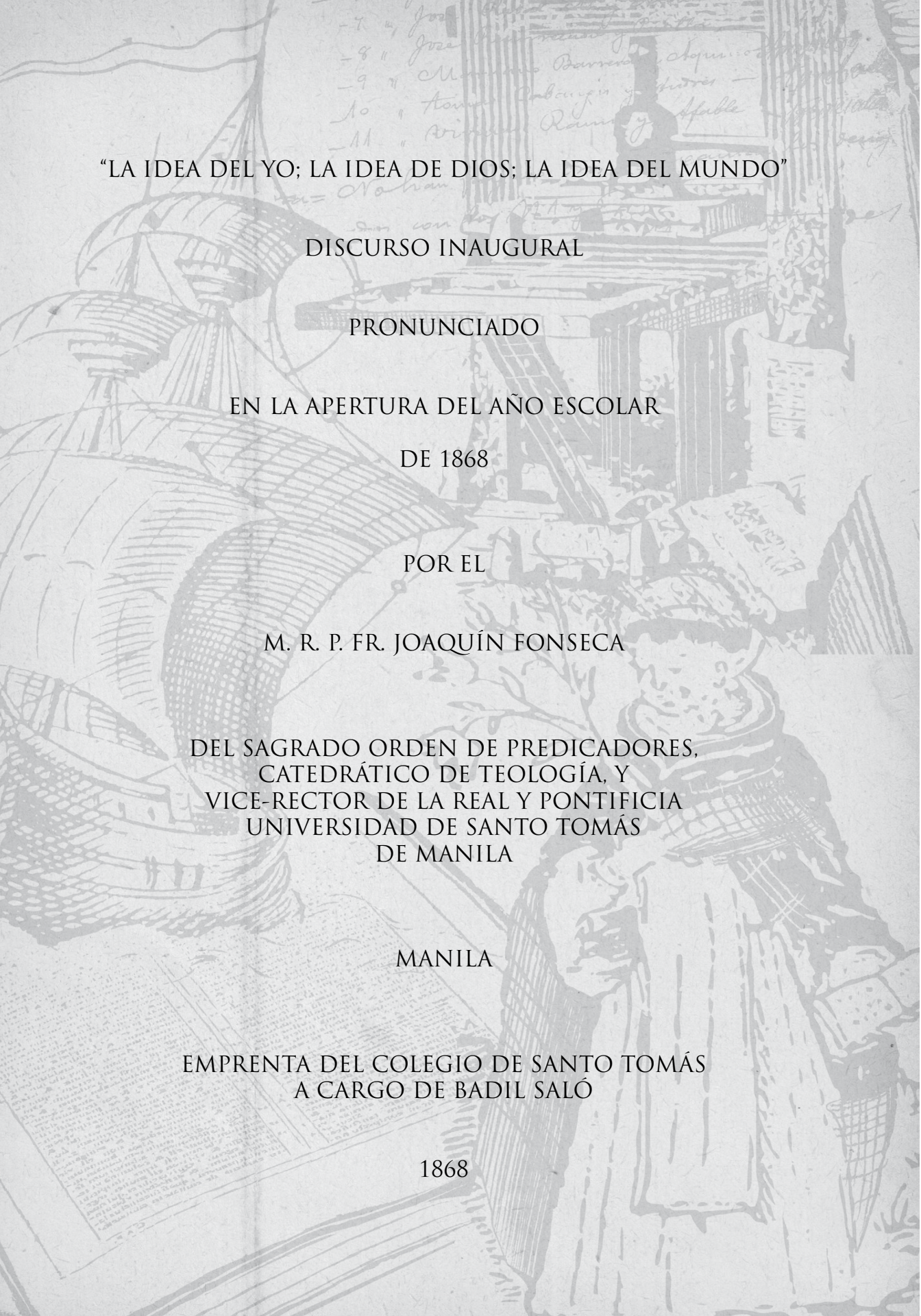




“LA IDEA DEL YO; LA IDEA DE DIOS; LA IDEA DEL MUNDO”

DISCURSO INAUGURAL

PRONUNCIADO

EN LA APERTURA DEL AÑO ESCOLAR

DE 1868

POR EL

M. R. P. FR. JOAQUÍN FONSECA

DEL SAGRADO ORDEN DE PREDICADORES,
CATEDRÁTICO DE TEOLOGÍA, Y
VICE-RECTOR DE LA REAL Y PONTIFICIA
UNIVERSIDAD DE SANTO TOMÁS
DE MANILA

MANILA

EMPRENTA DEL COLEGIO DE SANTO TOMÁS
A CARGO DE BADIL SALÓ

1868

FOREWORD

Belen Tangco, O.P. (Laity)

THE IDEA OF I; THE IDEA OF GOD; THE IDEA OF THE WORLD

The inaugural lecture of M.R.P. Fr. Joaquin Fonseca of the Holy Order of Preachers, Professor of Theology and Vice-Rector of the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas (UST), Manila, was delivered on the commencement of Academic Year 1868. The lecture was published and printed at the UST Printing Press, care of Badil Salo.

With a reminiscing approach, Fr. Fonseca invites the participants to recall the difficult road towards the completion of the preceding academic tasks. Argumentations abound in class discussions between the professors and the students. This type of pedagogy allows students to embellish their critical thinking with a skillful display of remarkable arguments which could further enrich learning to both faculty and students. As they dispute constantly, they have the laurel of victory in sight, thus making the arena a more interesting venue of intellectual skirmish.

A tribute to the scholarship and the merit of professors and students who had the hunger and thirst for truth, the opening academic salvo served as „a guarantee of a true intellectual progress in the country.“ The highest aspiration that leads everyone happily to wisdom is a primary element in moral life. A wisdom that unfolds the necessity of revealing the greatness of man in his destiny. Born to contemplate the sovereign beauty of the eternal Primary Truth, man experiments in his soul a mysterious emptiness which nothing on earth can fill, but would pretend in vain to satisfy in this world. Only the intelligence of man can open the wings of fire to fly over the regions that surround him. His immortality forms the heat that fixes his sight on the resplendent disc of the sun; raises his daring flights over the areas of light, and only rests his sight on the seat of God Himself. The lecturer feels triumphant when professors and students reflect on respective consciences and review the past. It would be a victorious revelation to see in the deepest recesses of the spirit certain primitive ideas precisely studied profoundly during the course of their life's development.

As the lecturer bares the fecundity of his intelligence, he directs his sight to the surrounding world, touching on three fundamental works that form the bases of certain philosophies and of all rational criteria: the idea of I; the idea of God; the idea of the world. These ideas, if unwrapped and understood, are principles which a man

should know in this world. The supporters of the youth should walk on this course, journeying and discovering the worries and errors in the literary realm that unfold before their very eyes.

It is necessary to discern the three ideas (of I, of God, and of the world) and separate these in the interior end of conscience, separating these from the grand totality which has been invented by the pantheon for evil and by the religion of science. It is necessary to see three distinct existences, enjoying each one in a manner of being, and measuring the distances that mutually separate them. Who else could penetrate the same Divine sanctuary that neither embarks his vision on the immensity of his works to enable him to appreciate these in number, in weight, and in measurement? Soon we cannot contemplate the essences of things in the Primary Truth; while we are pilgrims in the valley of tears and we cannot see God without veils nor figures, we are resigned to study Him and know Him by His works, in a manner that would reflect us in this world. This is, and it should be, the first take-off point of our rational studies: know the sovereign Creator of heaven and earth; render Him worship and tribute; love Him, serve Him, and adore Him. This is the first duty of man from the first moment of his intellectual life. This is the reason why the study of Religion and of Christian morality forms the primary base of the literary program then being undertaken in the academic year.

Once our soul is empowered with the idea of God and of His love, what immediately rises to one's conscience is the rational idea of I, and the principle for man to study and understand to explore the riches of all faculties with which he pleads to his good Lord to ennoble him. The intelligence, the imagination, and the sentiment all necessitate to be educated in his way; he has to cultivate his studies that can contribute to his perfection and development. The soul itself and its destination, or well considered in its harmony and business with the body, has to be the special object of study. Nothing interests man so much like the knowledge of himself. The celebrated Philosopher says, „nosce te ipsum: conocete a ti mismo“ (know thyself). The philosophical studies, Logic, Psychology, Metaphysics, Ideology, Physiology, Aesthetics: all are studies which are ordained by their nature and instinct to know man's existence and intellectual constitution. We shall know what mysterious manner can our soul, enclosed in the solitude of thought, get in touch with the exterior world and receive impressions and be fecund with this for a secret incubation of the spirit and to finally engender ideas to reflect on the vast surrounding creation. A prodigy of nature, man is an incomprehensible being who has material and spiritual attributes and who needs to study the secret lace that binds him to appreciate that part of action that corresponds to everyone regarding all phenomena of sensibility and of life.

This is a serious reminder that man has not been called by God to existence to live alone in this world. His studies, therefore, should not be concretized in the philosophical knowledge of his individuality. He is ordained in society where

the necessities in living are to commence with relations among men. Here, a borderless horizon opens up to the eyes of science. How much do science, morality, politics, history, law, diplomacy and the immutable principles of social order direct the relations of man with other men?

A profound knowledge of a social man shall preserve us from the dangerous theories which the revolutionary ideologies lay on the roads of science. The study of languages thus is necessary to understand and maintain social, commercial, and political relations among men. It is necessary that we know how to animate our word and give life to expression, putting into play the recourses of the heart and sentiment to be able to persuade and inspire others with our ideas. With this, the lecturer brings to the fore the grand monuments of Greece, her history, poetry, arts, grace, and beauty which God has bestowed on that bounteous ground. The greenfields of Arcadia, the images of Athena, and the opulence of Corinth move us to reflect on the grandeur and power of Rome.

With language and literary skill, man affords to contemplate the humanity beneath all the phases of his life, in a better way. He contemplates the admirable cosmos, and the crown of God's creation- man to whose lordship God has subjected everything. It would be right for man to recognize his abode and know the extension and limits of his dominion.

Ciceron, citing Aristotle, says that if at the center of the deepest part of the earth dwell living beings guided in gloom and ignorance; if such beings heard in unsuccessful way of the existence of God; and with eyes in amazement look upon the half-open earth, suddenly looking on the facade of the world, the immensity of the sea, the resplendent arch of the skies, the vaporous extension of the clouds, and the powerful winds...if they could contemplate for a moment the greatness, the beauty and the clarity of the sun bathing the universe with its light; and after, would tender the world with the mantle of night; and the shining stars that trim the firmament would appear, as well as the wonderful variations of the moon, the birth and the death of the stars, with all the evolutions and harmony of those world's flashes and sparks moving in space with the speed of thought; if this immense panorama would be revealed finally and the laws that rule over beings from the primitive constitution of their beings, then yes, they would exclaim „now we do not doubt affirming that in reality an omnipotent God exists and His works are grand.“ Theodicy demonstrates to us effectively the necessity of that sovereign existence that wisely presides over the general harmony and order of the universe, and in which the existing beings participate very imperfectly. His omnipotence, His wisdom, His goodwill, His providence with all the attributes and divine perfections according to what can be demonstrated by philosophical reason, all are resplendent in existence. Therefore, the idea of God, of I, and of the world, if well placed distinctly as actually discerned in themselves, are related, nevertheless, coexisting and interconnected such that the

development of one naturally gears towards the intellectual unfolding of the rest.

It would be incumbent upon a father not to imprison the intelligence of his children in a career or profession which they refuse to embrace; while giving other direction to their thoughts, the children could capture for themselves a name most important to them, to humanity, and to the world.

In his final statement, the distinguished lecturer invites everyone to give a humble look upon the God of truth and of the sciences, beseeching that their passage in this life of gloom be illumined, and that the wisdom of the saints be shared without which all sciences and rational development in this world would be futile. Possession of truth is a deep necessity for man's existence; it would be compelling for man to bathe his sublime thoughts in the splendor of light of the Primary Truth, the only sovereign One who can satisfy in the other life all the needs of man's soul and all the aspirations of his being.

