

Reviews & Notices

Co, Alfredo P. ed. *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: The Thomasian Collection*. Volume 1. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2020. pp 493. ISBN 978-971-506-857-4. Volume 2. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2022. pp. 272. ISBN 978-971-506-904-5.

LAUNCHED during the sixth world congress of the Conférence Mondiale des Institutions Universitaires Catholiques de Philosophie (COMIUCAP), which was hosted by the University of Santo Tomas in Manila on November 16-18, 2022, the two volumes so far of “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: The Thomasian Collection” represent the most representative and the most extensive compendium of classic philosophical thinking in the 20th century in the Philippines.

Edited by UST Professor Emeritus Alfredo Pimentel Co, COMIUCAP vice-president for Asia and the convenor of its sixth world congress, and published by the UST Publishing House, “Doing Philosophy” is an anthology of philosophical articles culled from the pages of the *Unitas* since the UST journal’s first edition in July 1922. The COMIUCAP launch in fact celebrated the 100th anniversary of the journal, probably Asia’s oldest university journal.

Volume 1 had been earlier published in 2020 and contains articles in the *Unitas* published between 1924 and 1949. The foreword by Fr. Herminio Dagohoy, OP., rector of UST from 2012 to 2020, calls the publication “a priceless volume ... an anthology that traces through the articles the growth and development of philosophy in the University.”

Co’s introduction to the first volume is both an intellectual autobiography and a veritable history of Philippine philosophical education and practice by a witness and a main player. He clearly establishes the role that UST has played in the Philippine philosophical training and thinking, as shown by the fact that the first and oldest school in the oldest university in Asia is the Faculty of Philosophy of the UST Ecclesiastical Faculties.

While Thomism in the Renaissance and the modern period languished in the Old World, it was thriving in the New because of the work of the missionary orders, particularly the Dominicans. Co points to two prominent Dominican friar-teachers-turned-prelates separated by two centuries who both taught at UST and carried on with the task of making

Thomism respond to the pressing issues of their day: Domingo Fernández Navarrete (1630-1689), who did missionary work in China before becoming archbishop of Santo Domingo in Hispaniola (now the Dominican Republic); and Cardinal Zeferino González (1831-1894), who completed his studies in UST and taught there for several years before returning to Spain where he was made bishop of the important sees of Malaga, Cordoba, and Sevilla, before finally being made by Pope Leo XIII as cardinal-archbishop of Toledo and primate of Spain. His voluminous works on Thomism, some of them originally published by the UST Press, led to the Thomistic revival and influenced Leo XIII to issue the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, which restored the teachings of the Angelic Doctor seminary training and Catholic education as a whole.

“The Thomistic revival led by (Z)eferino Gonzalez, OP went on until the early 20th century in the University of Santo Tomas,” writes Co. “That time the torch was handed to a Spanish Dominican Thomist in the person of Angel de Blas, OP.” In fact, of the 27 articles in the first volume, seven are by Father De Blas, who is now considered the father of psychology education in the Philippines, having established in UST in 1938 the country’s first experimental psychological laboratory. “When I came to the University in 1968,” writes Co, “this man’s influence was still very palpable,” his students would always allude to this great man with profound reverence.” His students included the Piñon brothers Manuel and Antonio, who entered the Order of Preachers; Jose Espinosa, Pedro Gabriel, Juanito Ongansoy, Ariston Estrada, Emerita Quito, and Magdalena Villaba-Cue. In short, under Father De Blas were trained the country’s most seasoned philosophy teachers: in fact, Quito and Villaba, arguably the two foremost women-philosophy teachers in the country, were Co’s teachers at the UST Faculty of Arts and Letters.

Of De Blas’s seven articles in the collection, perhaps the most striking is “The Modern and Thomistic Views Regarding the Constitution of Psychological Personality,” which is actually the text of the traditional *discurso de apertura* address opening the new schoolyear in 1939. The address is notable because it revived the tradition of the academic-year opening lecture after a period of dormancy during much of the American colonial period. The address too is notable because Father De Blas confessed his feelings of unworthiness since the past *discursos* were delivered by big names of the Dominican Order in the country such as “(Evaristo) Arias, (Norberto) del Prado, (Casto) de Elera,” so on and so forth. The names are a veritable who’s-who in philosophy and the sciences. The paper is likewise notable for balancing the claims of modern psychology with those of Thomistic science. “Saint Thomas Aquinas, whose psychological mentality ranks among the illustrious in the history of human thought, understood that the experimental study of psychological functions did not afford a thorough explanation of all the human conscious processes,” De Blas declares. “Consequently, he constructed a whole system of doctrines based on the conclusions afforded by experimental psychology. The system came to be known centuries later as Rational Psychology.”

Thomism likewise penetrated the first essay in the first volume which is surprisingly about beauty: “*Concepto de la Belleza Segun de Santo Tomas*,” whose author is identified merely by his initials, “F.J.” Other Thomistic essays include those about the Angelic Doctor’s apologetic works (foremost of which of course is the *Summa Contra Gentiles*) by Father G. Alvarez, OP; the saint’s teachings of good government written by UST rector Fr. Silvestre Sancho, OP; and his philosophy of law by the lay man Antonio Estrada.

Father De Blas ends his *discurso* with the Angelic Doctor's views on women's temperament and how it relates to their "physical and mental weakness." Citing "the Philosopher," the saint is quoted by De Blas as declaring, "We say that women do not control themselves, for they are not guided by firm reason, but easily follow their passions." I cite these remarks not to second their rather condescending view of women but to pit them against other articles in Volume I that admirably establish that women were coming to their own at least in the years before the war. Included in the first volume are the first and second parts "A Study of the Social Status of Women as Influenced by Religion" by Holy Ghost Sister Edelwina Hesse; "Filipino Women and their Influence in the Future," by Fr. C. Martin, OP; and "*Ideas Politicas de Sor Maria de Ágreda*" by Fr. Antonio Gonzalez, OP. The latter is particularly notable for establishing a philosophy of politics and good government out of the Spanish Franciscan mystic's correspondence with Charles IV. The essay by Father Gonzalez (co-author with Fr. Manuel Pinon, OP of the milestone handbook, *Fundamental Logic*, still the best instructional on classical logic written by Filipinos) should build her reputation as being in the league of politically active women mystics—nay, protofeminists much ahead of the rest—such as the Dominican tertiary St. Catherine of Siena and the Carmelite reformer St. Teresa of Avila.

But a more thoroughly political study published initially in the pages of *Unitas* is the essay in two parts by the Spanish Dominican Fr. Angel R. Bachiller, OP — "*Critica Filosofica del Evangelio Comunista (Parte Negativa de la Cuestion Social)*." The work analyzes Marx's *Das Kapital* and provides a critique of its claims based on the social teachings of the Church while not denying its influence on social life and the social sciences. Although Father Bachiller, a Spanish Dominican from Valladolid, got his theology doctorate from UST, he had prior theological studies at Le Saulchoir in Kain, Belgium; this is very significant since the Dominican *studium generale* in the former Cistercian abbey was the origin of *nouvelle theologie*, *ressourcement*, and even the French worker-priest movement. Marie Dominique Chenu and Yves Congar studied there and Congar himself was one of the moving spirits of the French worker priest movement that got Fray Buenaventura Garcia Paredes, OP into trouble with Pope Pius XI, who wanted the former, no less than the master general, to stop the French Dominicans from organizing the movement. Of course, we know what happened: citing poor health due to the pressures of office, Fray Garcia resigned and went back to Spain and was martyred by Republican forces in the anti-Christian persecutions that sparked the Spanish civil war in 1936. In 2007, he was beatified along with other UST alumni Dominicans by Pope Benedict XVI. They're now known as Blessed Buenaventura García Paredes and Companion Thomasian Martyrs. I cite these rather lengthy background in order to establish Father Bachiller's paper on social and political philosophy as having been animated, perhaps, by the spirit of Le Saulchoir. (Michel Foucault would later do his research in Le Saulchoir when the institution went back to France. But that's another story.)

Published in 2022, Volume II covers the 1950s. With much of the manuscript preparation and the pre-press spadework having been done in the period leading to the 2021 Quincentenary of the European Arrival in the Philippines, Fr. Richard Ang, OP, current rector of UST, notes that Volume II "illustrates our (UST's) solidarity with the Filipino people," since, quoting the Philippine bishops conference's pastoral letter on the historic milestone, the book is a way "of looking back in history so that we can understand who we are in the present." Taking note that the book was being released as the rest of the world was coming out of the terrifying shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic ("The pandemic has forced

us to live a new normal, a clear indication of our mere situatedness, or “thrownness,” in the Heideggerian sense ... ”), Father Ang further writes in his foreword that the authors of the philosophical essays from the *Unitas* in the 1950s were similarly situated more or less: “They were writing at a time (when) they were overcoming the post-war intellectual trauma, the rising influence of communism, and the advancement of science, to name a few.”

Father De Blas’s two essays opening Volume II — “Essentials of Logic” and “The Need of Catholic Philosophy as a Foundation for Human Life—establish yet again the important contributions of this Dominican philosopher in rational psychology while pointing to the critical developments in post-war philosophical thinking in UST in particular and in the Philippines over all. So it is not surprising that while the Spanish Dominican has the most number of essays in the first volume, it is his Philippine confrere, Fr. Ciriaco Pedrosa, OP, who has the most number of essays in the second. Father Pedrosa’s prolific pen since the 1950s had produced what we should now admire as a sure-footed and very sound Philippine philosophy of science. The titles of his essays in the second volume should impress all of us with his achievement: “The Philosophical Function of Experimental Science: The Metaphysical Approach,” “... The Empirical Approach,” and “... The Mathematical Approach;” and “On the Ethical Implications of Scientific Research.”

As Father Pedrosa’s essays show, Father Ang is correct in saying that “the advancement of science” had led Thomists and other philosophers to attempt to establish ethically grounded teachings that would check science’s excesses and possible abuses. Since UST is the cradle of scientific education in the country, especially education in the life sciences (its Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, and Faculty of Pharmacy were opened both in 1871), the 1950s saw the publication of philosophical investigations that would establish the by-now thriving field of bioethics. This could be clearly seen from the articles of Fr. Jesus Diaz, OP (who would later become rector of UST and receive an honorary doctorate from the Ateneo de Manila University): “The Principle of Lesser Evil in Medical Practice with Special Emphasis on Obstetrics and Gynaecology” and “The Morality of Organic Transplantation.”

Like Father De Blas, Father Gonzalez too would remain relevant in the 1950s as shown by his essays: “The Concept of Man in the Philosophy of Existentialism” and “Philosophical and Scientific Psychology.” The former should underscore again Father Ang’s point that UST philosophers in the 1950s sought to deal with the “post-war intellectual trauma,” existentialism having become the philosophical and cultural fashion in the post-war era, especially since the late 19th century nihilism reached its apogee—or is it nadir?—in the Second World War. With the loss of the old values and especially with the decline of religion as providing meaning and significance to life, existentialism declared that a person must take responsibility for his existence and resist becoming a mere shock absorber of events and crises. In short, the person must freely establish his own existence and through that, fashion his own essence, if there was one. The challenge posed by existentialism to classic philosophy is tackled in such *Unitas* essays as, aside from Father Gonzalez’s, “Freedom of Inquiry and the Catholic Mind” and “The Use of Freedom” by Pedro Gabriel. On the other hand, the atheistic existentialism of Sartre and Camus was checked by the Christian existentialism of Gabriel Marcel, as explained in “On the Life and Thought of Gabriel Marcel” by Daughters of St. Paul Sister Corazon Ampon.

Thomism as the quintessential Christian philosophy is discussed in “*Filosofia Cristiana*” by Fr. Jesus Gayo Aragon, OP. Father Gayo of course is best known for his

Ideas Juridico-Teologicas de los Religiosos de Filipinas Sobre La Conquista de Las Islas, or “The Theology of the Conquest,” in which he retrieved and analyzed the very important statutes defending the native Filipinos that were passed by the first Manila Synod of 1852. His is a very important work on philosophy, theology, history, international law and human rights, and should by now probably be considered a foundational work on postcolonialism. Father Gayo likewise did the learned introduction to Fr. Juan Cobo’s 1593 work— *Doctrina Christiana en letra y lengua China compuesta por los padres ministros de los Sangleyes, de la Orden de Sancto Domingo*-- one of the first books printed in the Philippines along with the *Doctrina Christiana*: the Chinese catechism was lost after its printing in the sixteenth century and recovered only in 1948.

Other general introductions to the Christian philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas are “St Thomas: An Idle Boast” by Prof. Jose Espinosa, “The Doctrinal Authority of St. Thomas Aquinas” by Jesus Varela (later to become bishop of Sorsogon), and “St Thomas: On the Teacher” by Prof. Ariston Estrada. Thomistic aesthetics is explained by Fr. Alfredo Panizo, OP in “The Aesthetic Order and the Moral Order,” while Thomist theosophy is discussed in Professor Quito’s “The Will and its Relation to Divine Causality and Knowledge.”

Father Ang points as well to “the rise of communism” in the post-war era and this and the increasingly strident political climate of those times are discussed in Prof. Salvador Roxas Gonzalez’s “What is Communism?” and “Democracy or ‘Mobocracy?’” and Prof. Antonio Molina’s “Freedom of Conscience.”

Professor Emeritus Alfredo Pimentel Co’s editing and selection of what papers to comprise Volumes I and II is judicious, wise, and authoritative, whetting the reader’s appetite for further volumes of “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: The Thomasian Collection.” Truly this intellectual and publishing enterprise heightens the reader’s appreciation of the civilizational achievements of the University of Santo Tomas across the centuries.

Joselito B. Zulueta

Weigle, George. *To Sanctify the World The Vital Legacy of Vatican II*. New York: Basic Books, 2022. pp. 353. ISBN: 978-046-509-431-8.

Many books were already published concerning the Second Vatican Council and its legacy. Reputable authors and excellent thinkers in the field of theology and religion commented and offered substantial studies about Vatican II in almost all imaginable angle: historical, theological, spiritual, liturgical, moral among others. It seems that nothing more can be said in a topic much discussed by experts and non-experts alike in the past six decades.

Accomplished Catholic author George Weigle added another book to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Vatican II’s opening by Pope St. John XXIII. It may sound like “another book,” a mere repetition to a huge pile already in market. But the reader is invited to take another (serious!) look, and not presume that he/she has got to the bottom of Vatican II. For, if Vatican II is primarily borne out of the Holy Spirit, it is as inexhaustible font. For as Weigle has shown, the past six decades witnessed how differing camps fought for or against Vatican II, often with bitterness and animosities. It is in this sense that it is not easy to see clearly what Vatican II is all about. Weigle’s book tries to fill in a lacuna and