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Intellectualism contra Conceptualism: Understanding the Church in History with the Jesuit Schools of Leuven

ANDREW BARRETTE

The present paper speaks to the emergence of an intellectualist interpretation of the church in history in the twentieth century. It does so by turning to thinkers in the Jesuit colleges around Leuven, Belgium, whose work influenced discussions about the Catholic Church during that century. Indeed, the thought coming out of Leuven was so influential that Yves Congar, the eminent Dominican theologian and chronicler of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), sometimes called that gathering the “Primum Concilium Lovaniense, Romae habitum” (The first Council of Leuven, held in Rome).¹

Through two main sections and a brief concluding section, the paper traces some basic points of this philosophical movement and suggests some points of its relation to a renewed interpretation of the church. In the first section, after some brief historical notes about the Jesuit colleges in relation to Leuven, I outline the meaning of intellectualism, following especially Joseph Maréchal, S.J., and, to some extent, Pierre Scheuer, S.J. With them, we find a way of understanding intelligence that includes the historicity of human being. This is contrary to the conceptualist schema, wherein the standard for interpretation was based on concepts abstracted from the context in which they emerged. To elucidate this difference and its importance, the paper turns, in its second section, to the need to overcome what the Jesuit Bernard Lonergan later identified as conceptualist “classicism.” Such a position takes cultural achievements as a ready-made standard according to which other sociocultural people are judged, occluding the ability to meet ways of being intelligent that differ from that presupposed standard. The intellectualist response would show instead how intelligence operates through and within history but is nevertheless a trans-cultural and trans-historical feature of human being. In the concluding section, I make a few remarks about the ensuing thought regarding the church in history, especially as set out in the Second Vatican Council and the encyclical *Lumen gentium*. A key point here is that human understanding is both in development and in solidarity—a point that intellectualist philosophy prepares us to understand.

1. Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, trans. Mary John Ronayne, O.P., and Mary Cecily Boulding, O.P., ed. Denis Minns, O.P. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 508; this occurs again, at 128, in Yves Congar, *Report from Rome on the First Session of the Vatican Council* (Liverpool: Chapman, 1962) “Report from Rome,” though here he calls it the “Council of Malines held in Rome,” where the name “Malines” is the French name for the Flemish town of Mechelen, the bishopric of the province that includes Leuven and Egenhoven.

The Jesuit Colleges and the “Leuven School”: Intellectualism contra Conceptualism

In intellectual histories, Jesuits are often grouped together with other intellectuals under the title of the “Leuven School.”² This is understandable and not entirely incorrect. But it is a bit misleading. Let me briefly explain.

Leuven is a ring city, a two-hour train ride east from Paris and west from Cologne. This ring, imperfectly circular but surrounding the city, is made up of Roman walls, which are still evident today. The early Jesuits, who would have seen the remnants of these walls, had a storied relationship with the city.³ It is a place the Jesuits seemed to feel simultaneously welcomed and shunned. In letters to his younger companions, for example, Saint Peter Faber himself recognizes that it is a good place to gather alms but also that one might not find it easy to stay for too long, especially since there was some suspicion of the newly formed Society there and general tensions with Catholics.⁴ Still, its location and its university meant that it was able to play a significant role for the Society, and the hospitality of at least some of its residents was welcome at the time when the mission was taking root.

We must take some steps here to differentiate different components to the “Leuven School,” however. It includes figures from the university inside the ring—now KU Leuven, which was for a long time the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, or the Studium Generale Lovaniense, as well as having various other names from its Latin, French, and Dutch iterations—as well as the small Jesuit colleges that have been both inside and outside the ring. To be sure, the former had notable Jesuits among its faculty quite early, like Roberto Bellarmino and Leonardus Lessius (Lenaert Leys), in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but there are figures among the latter group, like Maréchal and Scheuer, who did not work or teach at the university; in fact, significant portions of their work did not take place inside Leuven at all.

Now, besides geographical precision, why does it matter? The main reason, for present purposes, is that the movements that began with the Jesuit colleges were distinctive, though not divorced, from those that came from the university. An important aspect of this was that, while the specialization in fields of research that became increasingly common in the twentieth-century university led to some magisterial scholarly works, it also pushed a separation of disciplines and departments where Jesuits tended to keep in mind their unity. This was especially true with regard to the relation

2. See, for example, the recent book by Edward Baring, *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

3. For a collection of accounts of this history, see, e.g., Leo Kenis and Marc Lindeijer, S.J., eds., *The Survival of the Jesuits in the Low Countries, 1773–1850* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019). Also see Jan Roegiers, “Awkward Neighbours: The Leuven Faculty of Theology and the Jesuits College (1542–1773),” in *The Jesuits of the Low Countries: Identity and Impact (1540–1773); Proceedings of the International Congress at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven (3–5 December 2009)*, ed. Leo Kenis and Rob Faesen (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 153–76. Cristiano Casalini’s edited volume *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) contains essential readings on Jesuit philosophy from modern to contemporary times.

4. For a nineteenth-century account of the life of Peter Faber, see Giuseppe Boero, S.J., *The Life of the Blessed Peter Favre of the Society of Jesus, First Companion of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (London: Burns & Oates, 1873); for a rich account of his relation to students, see esp. 103–9; for his own letters, see *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*, trans. Edmond C. Murphy, S.J., and Martin E. Palmer, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

between philosophy and theology but also insofar as these provide a foundation for non-academic pursuits, as, for example, in pastoral and missionary work. This meant the teachers at these colleges had a bent toward cultivating talents and gifts in light of doctrine and dogma such that the student could take these skills anywhere and employ them at any time—a veritable *cura personalis*.

The philosophy being taught by the Jesuits was geared toward preparing students to live and work in the world. That does not mean that it did not produce great scholars—it did, in fact—but these scholars often also became great teachers. It is important to remember that theirs was a *vocational* formation, not in the sense of a craft or “profession” but in a personal, religious sense. This is important because how they carried out their intellectual apostolate meant that their careful research also had the formation of persons in mind, preparing them, once again, to live a life under what would fall under the now familiar tag “contemplation in action.” An example of this spirit appeared when the relatively new building in Egenhoven, just outside the ring of Leuven, suffered from a fire in the early 1940s: at that time, Scheuer said to his students, upon losing a great number of personal documents and much of the library holdings: “Let us be satisfied with the bare necessities. Poverty gives a frankness to life, a renewal, a new vision.”⁵ For Fr. Scheuer, nothing necessary had been lost, because they—he and his students—were the bearers of what was necessary, themselves and their mission, and so could continue the work with what they had, wherever that took them. If this captures the spirit of the Jesuit colleges around Leuven, we still need to get into the foundational philosophical matter of this spirit, which we find in the dynamism of their *intellectualism*.

The term “intellectualism” can have derogatory connotations: it can mean a sort of extreme “rationalism,” that is, a position that totalizes reason to the detriment of feelings, of the heart, even of subconscious and unconscious tendencies. But this was not the sense of the term in the Jesuit colleges like Egenhoven. Not only were the Jesuits there sensitive to developments in psychology, including the emergent field of psychoanalysis, but they were also biologists and scholars of religion; most importantly, perhaps, they were deeply committed to the religious life and their community. We might glean, in fact, a provisional understanding of “intelligence” from this unity, this identity of the whole of a concrete person and community. To unpack this, let us move to a more direct account of intelligence, following especially Joseph Maréchal.

It is worth mentioning, at the outset, the impact of the 1879 papal encyclical *Aeterni Patris* on Catholic intellectuals. This encyclical sent many in the church back to reading the sources in the intellectual tradition, and, in philosophy and theology, this especially meant a return to Thomas Aquinas. Early in his career, Maréchal felt the need to return to sources, and it is clear from his earlier writing that he considered

5. This was accessed from KADOC Archives, in folder 4662/5; translation my own.

himself within the Aristotelian–Thomist tradition.⁶ But it was not until his *Cahiers* (Notebooks)—a set of lessons that came from his teaching of the history of philosophy, in which he sought to relate the genius of Aquinas to modern philosophy, especially the philosophy of Immanuel Kant—that he gave an extended public statement of how he thought returning to the sources could meet present problems.⁷ We should also note, however, that this work came about somewhat by chance and somewhat late in his development, as it was conceived during his exile to England after the invasion of Belgium in 1914.⁸ Thus a significant source of the movement of the Jesuit school of Leuven was not written in Leuven at all.

It is also important to stress that Maréchal’s distinctive contributions to the history of philosophy came in the form of a document meant for *teaching*. This makes sense of the statement of Jacques Dupuis, S.J., himself formed by the Belgian Jesuits, who says that “the Louvain Jesuits had developed under the guidance of Joseph Maréchal what was called the Louvain Jesuit school of philosophy.”⁹ In fact, we can see a careful qualification in his statement, where he says that Maréchal was a *guide* and where he refers to the “Louvain Jesuit school”: there was something particular to the movement that came from these Jesuit teachers. Nor is the emphasis on Maréchal’s influence an idiosyncratic opinion, as we also find Lonergan, who would have been studying in Rome at the end of Belgian Jesuit’s career, later recognizing that “at that time Marechal was teaching psychology, according to his ideas, and the professors of all the other subjects were also teaching their subjects in accord with Marechal’s ideas.”¹⁰ To understand how these ideas took hold, let us turn to a few of them.

In the first place, Fr. Maréchal, at the beginning of his *Cahier V*, teaches us that it is one thing to doubt and quite another to question, to proceed *ad modum quaestionis solvendae* (in the mode of a question to be solved).¹¹ This way of proceeding should be seen as a foundational idea—indeed, a *guiding* idea—for the intellectualism of this school of Jesuits. The idea, as Maréchal notes, is a Thomist one: just as we find the *Summa* asking and answering questions by seeking out others that have seriously asked and sought answers, so too will we find Maréchal suggesting we take seriously the mind at work in all situations. In so doing, we meet not mere doubters, denying

6. Maréchal himself notes the importance of the 1908 essay “À propos du sentiment de présence chez les profanes et chez les mystiques,” first published in *Revue des questions scientifiques* 64 (1908): 527–63 and 65 (1909): 212–49, 376–426; subsequently published in Joseph Maréchal, *Études sur la psychologie des mystiques: Tome I* (Bruges: Charles Beyaert, 1924); translated and published in Maréchal, *The Psychology of the Mystics*, trans. Algar Thorold (London: Burns & Oates, 1927), 55–156.

7. For an expression of this, see, e.g., Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique, cahier V: Le thomisme devant la philosophie critique* (Louvain: Museum Lessianum, 1926). Translation of the *Cahiers* are my own, all forthcoming from the Institute of Jesuit Sources.

8. For essays on the genesis of the text, see *Au point de départ: Joseph Maréchal entre la critique Kantienne et l'ontologie Thomiste*, ed. Paul Gilbert (Brussels: Editions Lessius, 2000).

9. For more, see Gerard O’Connell, *Do Not Stifle the Spirit: Conversations with Jacques Dupuis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), in “Chapter 1: The Antecedents.” Fr. Dupuis came to Belgium in the mid-1940s, at the end of Maréchal’s life.

10. Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Understanding and Being*, ed. Elizabeth Murray and Mark Morelli (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1980), 349.

11. See Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique, cahier V*, 40.

true propositions, but seekers of solutions. The spirit of inquiry becomes the motor of the movement, as that which they would seek to cultivate in order to meet all new problems.

The intellectualist focus upon inquiry must be understood differently from the conceptualist procedure. For, as Maréchal puts it, “conceptualists admit concepts, that is, intelligible sets of notes. Ex: Man for them as for us is defined. Being. Living, feeling, intelligible substance,”¹² but, he continues, they take no heed of “intentional relations,” which leads them to overlook the dynamism of intelligence.¹³ To understand this point—and some of its consequences—we must turn to his understanding of *intentionality* and *objectivity*.

There is a broader and stricter meaning of the term intentionality in Maréchal’s work. Strictly, it is a matter of *immanence*, of being in consciousness, whereas the positing of a *transcendent* object has real extra-mental being.¹⁴ Put otherwise, the relation between knower and known does not mean that the object appears *as constituted* prior to the relation; that is to say, there is not a confrontation to the ready-made object by a ready-made subject. For Maréchal, there is a process of coming to know the object *by* the subject that is constitutive of both the subject and object *without reducing the object to subjective immanence*. To grasp the operations of the subject as it constitutes the transcendent object, one must inquire, Maréchal says, into the “point of departure” for metaphysics, as the subtitle of the *Cahiers* says.

For this point of departure, Maréchal immediately rejects any “question of the bridge” between subject and object.¹⁵ He views the position that takes the object as set over-against subject to be an erroneous presupposition of modernity. So, the critical move of Kant, which, at least to a degree, wants to inquire back into how to give an account of transcendence, of the process of objectivation, is not completely mistaken—it is not a mistake to ask about *how* the object is known by the subject. Nevertheless, Kant’s project, which impacted so many after, still labored under the attempt to find a “bridge” to the object from the subject such that he posited an unknowable in itself “noumenal” realm, beyond the “phenomenal” that appeared to human being. He presupposed—ever so subtly, to be sure—a *confrontation* of subject with object. Maréchal instead transposes ancient metaphysical realism into the critical viewpoint such that their respective points of departure can complement one another. In so doing, he finds that an analysis of the subject discovers how the object is constituted *as transcendent*. He does so especially by discovering an *a priori* intention of being.

Before exploring this point, it is important to note first that the *Cahiers* departed somewhat from the old manual style. Where the manuals tended to present positions

12. From KADOC, folder 4648/17. This contains a document, to which I refer, that is a direct statement in opposition to conceptualism. Although similar positions can be found in his published writing, this document, from class notes, is both the most direct summary of the issue and clearest expression of its importance in teaching.

13. From KADOC, folder 4648/17.

14. See Maréchal’s “Preface” to André Hayen, *L’intentionnel selon Saint Thomas*, 2nd ed. (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954), 9–12; also Maréchal, *Cahier V*, xvi–xvii.

15. See Maréchal, *Cahier V*, vii.

to be memorized, the *Cahiers* invited students to understand the operation of their own hearts and minds by inquiring into them. Many, though not all, of these operations are “pre-conceptual,” in the sense that conceptual formation follows from other, more basic operations, especially from intelligent affirmation. Students were thus meant to understand what knowing is by grasping its very process at work in themselves, *not* from mere memorization of concepts. This led students through how various positions do or do not come into accord with the *exigencies of their own knowing*.

For this, it is important that one must not imagine knowledge as an encounter with already constituted objects. Instead, one must understand that *sense* data is given to a human being for whom *understanding* and *judgment* is possible. This emphatically does not mean knowledge is reducible to sense experience, but rather that it provides the conditions for understanding and judgment. Thus, the *objectivity* known in judgment differs in kind from the sort of objectivity that arises in *sense* experience, though these occur in the very same human being.¹⁶ And so, to understand oneself as a knower, one must objectify one’s own experience, that is, bring it to experiential attention, then bring this to understanding and, finally, to affirmation, both of which go beyond mere sense experience. One does not objectify oneself in the sense of “looking at oneself” but comes to understand and to affirm oneself as the one sensing, understanding, judging.

In this process of human knowing, Maréchal finds what he names a *finality* to intelligence.¹⁷ This is manifest in the exigency of the human spirit toward knowing something as *being so*, toward judgment or what he more often calls *affirmation*. This finality appears when presentations of sense data are raised to a higher level by intelligent inquiry and when the intelligent grasp that follows inquiry comes to a term in judgment. A key to this intelligent grasp, this understanding, emerges *from conversion to phantasm*, as Maréchal notes again and again.¹⁸ From the raising of the potentially intelligible to the actually intelligible in understanding, intelligence then goes further to affirmation, that is, to determine whether what is understood is really true or not. But intelligence is not satisfied with any particular affirmation. Indeed, in this respect, intelligent finality relates to the broader sense of *intentional*: the subject intends *being*, that is, tends toward knowing all answers to all questions. In other words, what intelligence *intends* is not reducible to some particular object but rather extends to any intelligible object whatsoever.

Indeed, for Maréchal, the appropriation of this tendency of the human spirit is a foundational task of philosophy. While the human being experiences this tendency as *spontaneous*, it can also be *reflectively* understood in its operations. An insight into the operations of human knowing would yield an essential structure *from insight into the data* of the subject itself. In other words, we might say that there is an intentional relation to intelligible being that is *itself* intelligible; to understand it, one must reflect upon the operation of intelligence itself; once one understands it, one gets the idea that one

16. Cf. Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 55, 116.

17. See, for example, Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 275–328.

18. See, e.g., Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 116, 150, 156, 251 etc.

must live out the exigency of intelligence toward affirmation. As such, Maréchal's goal as a teacher was to bring students to a *self-understanding* such that they could take that understanding with them wherever they were.

We are never fully transparent to ourselves, however. Not only are our intelligences situated in our historical conditions but we are *essentially* tending toward our final end. So, Maréchal finds that insight into our own intelligent finality is not so much some abstract concept of intelligence but rather a discovery of one's own tendency to understand all that is understandable. We must thus decide to act upon this discovery, to set ourselves to promoting the development of oneself and one's world. If we decide to stop acting upon this "idea" of ourselves as tending toward the Absolute, we actually fail to realize who we essentially are.

Furthermore, he finds that there is a differentiation of operations that sets the conditions for the emergence of a new "stage" of development.¹⁹ Again, such a new stage neither negates nor merely adds to the previous but is "embedded" or "nests" (*emboîtement*) in the previous. With this approach, he understands how a previous determination sets the conditions for the next possible determination *without fully determining this development*. There is thus a degree of openness to this development of a being. In this respect, one could, as Maréchal in fact did, understand the development of an embryo between stages, as well as how intelligence operates in human development.²⁰ About the former, he found, following upon the work of Hans Driesch, that the embryo has a certain finality such that its higher integrations may be impacted by the way lower levels operate, and the lower is influenced by the operations of the higher. For example, in the case of a sea urchin embryo, as Driesch's experiments show, the development of cells can be disrupted at an early stage, without completely destroying its tendency toward a more complex, higher stage. Once the higher stage emerges, as for example complex organs begin development out of simple collections of cells, the lower collections of cells still function but now in relation to the needs of the higher. Such development is not according to some abstract concept but within intelligible sets of relations in the entity, and the development of these relations shows some flexibility in accord with what entity is being realized. Too much disruption of the lower stage would preclude the higher stage and, likewise, too much disruption of the function of the higher stage would stress the lower to the point of rupture. It is important to em-

19. Cf. Maréchal, *Cahier V*, xviii.

20. His early account of this is in Joseph Maréchal, "L'individualité dans le règne organique," *Revue des questions scientifiques* 54 (1903): 378–439, where his brief but illuminating formulation of determination occurs, esp. 426. It is worth quoting in full: "What would be the necessary condition for an explanation of development by mechanical, physical, or chemical antecedents? This condition is evident: it would be necessary that the form acquired at any moment of development be the result of a progressive action of external causalities on the molecular structure of the fertilized egg and of the first cells of the embryo. This supposes that the egg itself possesses an internal architecture of mechanical, physical, and chemical determinations that respond virtually to the subsequent differentiations of the embryo; moreover, these determinations, in order to bring about by the simple play of inorganic forces the formation of the various systems, limbs, and organs, should be localized in the egg-cell in such a way as to be distributed unequally by the successive segmentations [...]. But if these determinations are not localized in different parts of the egg, if they are not of the same order as the exterior causalities, what are they then? More than that, we are going to touch upon finality." My translation.

phasize the point that the intelligibility of this development is within the development of *this* urchin, not some abstract concept of “urchin,” though, to be sure, there is still that which it is striving to become, some “idea” of an urchin (if we understand this, again, not as an abstract concept but as an *intelligible* set of relations).

Likewise, *intelligence* emerges in history, without being completely determined by historical conditions. The *a priori* of intelligence, namely the very tendency to know everything, is an intelligibility to be grasped by intelligence. This is not, once again, an abstract concept “by itself,” but an insight from within concrete data. By asking and answering questions, then, the subject comes into accord with this *a priori* in their own life and can thereby live according to it. And doing so raises intelligence to a higher stage, as it were, insofar as it realizes a higher possible function.

A conceptualist point of departure would be insufficient for such a view. For concepts, as Maréchal notes, “being one in themselves, lead to the knowledge of something else different from themselves.”²¹ Thus, for the conceptualist, the unity of the subject is not a matter of perfection with its self, but rather fixing concepts and sorting them out. It leads to a sort of “relativism,” as Maréchal points out, insofar as the concepts relate to each other in such a way that a “system” forms, and the justification of the order goes no further than the relation of those concepts. Thus, correcting mistakes, for the conceptualist, means either getting back to the correct concept or getting back to their correct order within the system. For Maréchal and Scheuer, as well as those following them, correction and development, for human beings, are a matter of *intelligence*.

With the foregoing, we can understand the broad outlines of intellectualism as it appears in the Jesuit colleges in the early twentieth century. Still more, we can glimpse how conceptualism is not only unable to appreciate the historical situatedness of inquiry but also works against this matter of fact, substituting the potentially known with that which is already known as a standard. To clarify further, in the next section, I turn to some consequences of conceptualism, especially with regard to its views on culture.

Some Consequences of Conceptualism

This section sketches a conceptualist treatment of socio-historicity and shows how it is overcome via an appropriate intellectualism. I borrow a term from Lonergan here, again, in order to capture a specific outcome of conceptualism, namely *classicism*. With it, I identify not something that Fr. Maréchal himself focused upon but rather something to which his own work was open and toward which it pointed.²² For this, of course, I rely on what has been said earlier about the dynamic finality of intelligence. Once again, our foundations are in inquiring intelligence, as it seeks answers in its striving to determine true being in an increasingly complex world.

I begin by again noting Scheuer, who writes: “If there is a world for me [...] I make it by communicating to it what I am [...]. In short, in all the domains of knowledge, the soul, by an immanent activity, communicates something of itself, expresses itself in a

21. From KADOC, folder 4648/17.

22. A fuller study on the point would need to incorporate his work in comparative mysticism, since there we find operative an overcoming of classicism, but this is beyond the scope of the current work.

given medium.”²³ If the immanent activity is the intentional discussed above, the *medium* is the socio-historical world in which we are, in which our meaningful and valuable world takes shape, especially by way of the languages we speak. And the intellectualist understands that the world gives data for our understanding, even as it changes from place to place and time to time. The conceptualist, on the other hand, even while recognizing history, seeks static, firm concepts by which to assess it; this follows from the fact that, again, as Maréchal says, concepts are “one in themselves” and so bring us to the knowledge of something else different from them. Let me explain this point by giving an example.

In philosophy, there is a tendency that manifests itself in the deductive model that seeks its basis in fundamental logical axioms, for example of non-contradiction. From this basic position, it is said, all else follows: other positions can be deduced from it, and on it we have solid ground. But Maréchal shows how this solid ground first appears in the very operation of the mind. After all, we do not immediately have the concept of non-contradiction formulated, ready-made; rather, we experience, we ask and answer questions, we weigh evidence, and we make judgments. The law of non-contradiction may be true—and these Jesuits thought so, to be sure—but human beings do not begin with the concept, nor does human science. Science begins instead with questions, with the tendencies of knowing. Just as concepts emerge from acts of intelligence, so relations of concepts are *understood*, not by another concept but by further acts of intelligence. The result is that science does not seek an absolute, static “system” but a dynamic foundation upon which truths can be understood as relating to each other.

The conceptualist position in metaphysics also leads to problematic positions on sociocultural matters. It is here that Lonergan’s term “classicism” may help us name a phenomenon: classicism takes a certain culture as a static standard and so also tends to set this over-against and, not infrequently, over-above other cultures. Here there is not so much a *question* of culture, of seeking to understand the intelligibilities of another culture, where even a question of degree would have to weigh whether there is any development and differentiation in order to find an answer to the higher and lower; instead, in classicism, there is a presupposed *concept of culture* that is brought to bear as a “world-picture,” as it were, in order to juxtapose one to the other. This approach finds that one concept differs *per se* from the other and so reads off those differences, marking carefully those differences. In this respect, the conceptualist would take, say, Athens, as the standard according to which all other cultures should be judged, naming any that did not meet that standard as “barbarian.” Indeed, the conceptualist’s dismissal of another culture as “without reason” fails to promote the foundational unity of human being.

The intellectualist would, on the other hand, inquire into that which constitutes cultural achievements, discover the intelligibility in the cultural achievements, and so find intelligence at work and discern to what degree it was successful or not. In this respect, Maréchal’s intellectualism is of utmost importance for the Jesuits coming out of Leuven, as they left to fill their roles as teachers, missionaries, and pastors: upon

23. From KADOC, folder 4648/17.

going into areas to serve, they had the sort of formation needed for meeting people where they are, rather than imposing concepts that come from where they are not. They were ready to encounter persons and their world, without confronting them with an unfamiliar conceptual system.

Although much more needs to be said about the above, let me make a few concluding remarks about the impact of such intellectualism, especially in how it applies to our understanding of the church in history.

Conclusion

The previous sections presented the Jesuit colleges around Leuven as a place where the renewal of intelligence came to the forefront, especially in one of its principal representatives, Joseph Maréchal. I do not wish to suggest that any one of these thinkers was an isolated figure, nor should we pretend that the Jesuit colleges were completely divorced from the greater intellectual community, even if they were distinct from university life, especially in Leuven. As we can see in the correspondences of Maréchal himself, a benefit of his conversations with confrères around the city and beyond was that he was able to participate in the unity that this Jesuit school sought to express. I also do not want it to seem that these thinkers and the movement coming from them were the sole proprietors of an intellectualist approach within the Jesuit colleges. In this respect, we might mention Pierre Rousselot, S.J., who was killed during the Great War, too young to begin and to sustain a movement, as well as Joseph de Guibert, S.J., who spent most of his career at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

Nevertheless, there was a distinctive movement associated with this school in the early twentieth century. Future generations coming in its wake would produce philosophical works more directly bearing on socio-historical problematics, while these earlier thinkers set the conditions for such developments. Thus intelligence is not the sole provenance of one individual but rather a shared source of development; the intelligent achievement of one individual provides the data for another to develop it. It should be no surprise, then, that even such a remarkably original thinker as Lonergan recognizes “from Fr. Marechal is, not a set of fixed opinions, but a movement.”²⁴ Neither of these thinkers are conceptualists, after all, and so neither set out to fix opinions but rather aimed to move intelligent people to be intelligent, in order to develop and even to correct mistakes as a community.

So, let me conclude with a few brief remarks about how some of these points relate to the understanding of the church. Although my main focus so far has been in the understanding of intelligence at work here-below, in our world, these Jesuits around Leuven were well-aware that this relates to our supernatural end. In fact, it is with this in mind that they meant to form philosophical intelligence, especially in preparation for theological studies and future service. It also led, in other words, to an understanding of the church in the world.

To make this clearer, we may point to the encyclical *Lumen gentium*. Rather than

24. Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 4; Collection*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993), 204.

spending time listing the historical relations between personalities influential in the drafting of this document, both direct and indirect, which has already been done, to some degree, and is not my current aim,²⁵ I instead wish to suggest how the “pilgrim church” *understands* itself through history, through the people of God.²⁶ I suggest that the above sense of intelligence is necessary for understanding such a matter. Why?

As we saw earlier, both human beings and their world develop, just as the encyclical suggests.²⁷ The work of the Jesuit philosophers brought to the fore foundations for a way of understanding this development.²⁸ Indeed, the intellectualist position is able to find intelligence not only where it correctly affirms true being but even where it is mistaken, even where it is falling short, even where its concepts are not yet sufficiently formulated. But we now wish to indicate that to cultivate intelligence means to promote progress on the pilgrimage to a supernatural end. It does so precisely insofar as there is a communication of human being in their tendency toward knowing being, not only natural but supernatural being. Of course, as Maréchal recognizes, along with Aquinas, this exceeds natural capacities but is nevertheless that to which the finality of intelligence tends.²⁹

With this, the intellectualist approach finds a foundation for understanding the unity of human being here-below and here-after. In this respect, we might point to Maréchal’s works in the comparative study of religion or those he influenced, such as Dupuis.³⁰ There is not only something to understand *about* the other religious practices and experience but what is *intelligent* about them. Moreover, there is the possibility of asking about the intelligibility of the *relations* between religions, without conflating or collapsing them into each other, hence their use of “comparative.” The comparison is not between conceptual systems, but of a unity of human being, at root intending the universe of being. When Maréchal “compared” religions, he sought to understand how they understood and expressed themselves from this basic tendency. Even if they do not formulate a “supernatural end,” it is still possible to find their tendency toward understanding, to listen to how they express this tendency.

25. Henri de Lubac, S.J., comes to mind straightaway, of course; for further information on this, see Karl H. Neufeld, “In the Service of the Council: Bishops and Theologians at the Second Vatican Council (for Cardinal Henri De Lubac on His 90th Birthday),” in *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty-Five Years After (1962–1987)*, ed. René Latourelle (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 94; there is also Karl Rahner, S.J., under indirect influence, likewise Leo Joseph Suenens, S.J., Joseph Cardijn, S.J., all of which require further investigation in this respect.

26. For a history of this, see Ward De Pril and Karim Schelkens, “De lange weg naar Lumen Gentium: Een nieuwe blik op de ecclesiologie in de aanloop naar het Tweede Vaticaans Concilie,” *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 52 (2012): 312–29.

27. See lines 243–44: “The pilgrim church in her sacraments and institutions, which pertain to this present time, has the appearance of this world which is passing and she herself dwells among creatures who groan and travail in pain until now and await the revelation of the sons of God.”

28. For more on this, see Paul Lakeland, “Lumen Gentium: The Unfinished Business,” *New Blackfriars* 90 (2009): 146–62.

29. Once again, see Maréchal, *Cahier V*, 275–328, which is on the finality of intelligence and its supernatural end.

30. On some points about how understanding cultures as minds and hearts at work contributes to interreligious dialogue, see Cirilio Boloron, *The Concept of Inclusive Pluralism: Jacques Dupuis’s Theology of Religious Pluralism and Its Implication for Interreligious Dialogue Today* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022).

Some time before the encyclical, Emile Mersch, S.J., a student of the Jesuits around Leuven, aimed to return to the Thomist idea of the “whole church” as the mystical body with Christ as its head, only now in the midst of twentieth-century concerns.³¹ Mersch thought that the advancement of modernism, with its Enlightenment ideals and anti-religious tendencies, could be addressed by bringing intelligence back into relation with faith. The key to this is forming persons to have some fidelity to their intelligence insofar as it seeks the true and the good—in Maréchal’s terms, the *Absolute*—and does so in *communication*. To hear how others express the pilgrimage is key to participating in the unity of human being.

As Maréchal already notes: “In the contemplative, no more than in the ordinary Christian, an increase of supernatural life, a more intimate participation in the life of Christ, cannot break the solidarity between the individual aspect and the social aspect of salvation. Neither grace nor ‘glory’ dismember the ‘mystical body’ of the Savior.”³² Of course, one cannot reduce such a relation to philosophical formation. The discussion of the supernatural end moves from philosophical questions into the theological. I leave these issues for another time, stressing here once again that the unity of the matter distinguishes these Jesuit thinkers. For them, there was no “theological turn” as seems to emerge in the university in the twentieth century but rather a relation of questions unified in the questioning spirit.

31. For much on the council, including the work of Mersch in relation to it, see Jeanmarie Gribaud, *A Holy Yet Sinful Church: Three Twentieth-Century Moments in a Developing Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015). Mersch most probably did not have Maréchal but Scheuer directly for philosophical studies; further archival research is necessary to verify this, however.

32. Joseph Maréchal, *Etudes sur la psychologie des mystiques*, tome 2 (Brussels: Museum Lessianum, 1937), 209; translation my own.