Foundational Methodology of Religious Studies

"How, from the viewpoint of the lecturer, does philosophy view the religious phenomenon, in terms of the validity or viability of that phenomenon?"

Etymologically, philosophy is the love of wisdom. Zźzżs

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İRXXFILE CONFACTOR CONFERNMENT CONF As love of wisdom, philosophic literature is the successor in some sense to the wisdom literature of the ancient high civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamiaxxtmxthmir ERERTERPRITY INXERTXXNEXEXIXIES CONTRACTOR CONT somewhat similar writings and to itsxparalizets in the Hebrew scriptures. It holds a singular position in Christianity: A Feuillet has written a large tome on Christ, the Wisdom of God, in the Paris: Gabalda, 1966]; Pauline Epistles; more recently, Jack Suggs has contrasted the use of the hypothetical document, Q, in Matthew and Luke, where in Matthew repeatedly the turn of the phrase associates Christ with the Wisdom God sent to men [Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 1970]. Justin Martyr became a Christian because he found the other

philosophers inaequate in comparison with Christ. Clement of Alexandria speaks of Christianity as the philosophy of barbarians, holds it superior to the philosophies of the Greeks, yet considers these philosophies so many quarries from which useful ideas can be drawn. In his early philosophic period Augustine has a dialogue, <u>De amgistro</u>, in which the supreme teacher is Christ who teaches us, not by words from without, but by his lifght bestowed on us within.

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It was to this very ancient idea that Aquinas turned in his Contra Gentiles. In terms of the functions and duties of the wise man he conceived his task in that work, and whether one turns to his overall plan or to its execution, one discovers that he operated at not as a philosopher and yet not simply as a theologian. His purpose was to expound Christian truth. but Christian truths fell in three classes. Some, such as the existence and attributes of God, could be established from reason. Otherss were truths of faith, but for them at least probable xmm argumets from reason were available; and such were the end of man, divine providence, divine law, and the grace of Ap God. Others finally depended solely on revelation and on their behalf reason could do no more than show that they did not involve contradiction; and such were the topic treated in the fourth and final book, the Trinity, the Incarnation, Original Sin, and the Sacraments.

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Now I have gone back to this primordial notion of philosophy as love of wisdom, to its **mREMENT** associations with Christianity and the Fathers, to its use by Aquinas, because I find it very relevant to my present task. For philosophy as love of wisdom is open-ended. It can operate under a moving viewpoint. It can begin within one systems of thought and move through a succession of other systems to end with many more questions to be asked and many further answers to be discovered. It can distinguish the natural and the supernatural, \mathbf{x} philosophy and theology, and still not insist on separating the two, but rather include both in a single view that relates without confusing and unites in a single consideration what is the

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I have said that an open-ended approach is particularly relevant to my present task. For it has long been accepted in Catholic circles that philosophy dealt with naturally **kmw** known truths while theology dealt with supernaturally known truths. From this position it followed that philosophy could have nothing to say about supernatural religion, such as Catholics traditionally conceived their religion to be. Further, it followed that a philosophy of religion could treat of religion, mnot as it exists in this actual world order, in which the true religion revealed by God is supernatural, but

3

only of the natural religions that theoretically wax could exist in quite a different world order named the order of pure nature. At the very outset then I feel myself confronted with a min dilemma or rather a trilemma. Is philosophy limited

to naturally known truth? Is the Catholic religion grounded on supernaturally known# truths? Or is that there can be no Catholic philosophy of religion?

An answer to these questions calls for no little explanation. I shall grant the cogency of the objection they raise against a Catholic philosophy of religion when philomsophy is concerived understim in accord with logical ideals. I shall whittle away the cogency of the objection when it is granted that philosopghy may be conceived under an ideal that is not static and closed, as logic by itself would impose, but under an ideal that is is my dynamic and open, such as arises when logic is given a place subordinate to the place and role of method. Finally, if I began from speaking of philosophy mx as love of wisdom, it was precisely to argue from the outset for a basic viewpoint that is dynamic, ongoing, open.

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