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THE ESSENTIAL CONNECTION BETWEEN COMMON SENSE PHILOSOPHY AND LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

I take as my point of departure for this paper two claims I made in my opening talk at the 2014 July international congress on “Renewing the West by Renewing Common Sense” in Huntington, Long Island, NY, USA:

1) “An art or science grows out of a human habit to which a subject known relates, that the subject known helps generate and activate within a natural human knowing faculty.”

2) “Every art, science, or philosophical activity grows out of the experiential relationship between the specific habit of an artist, scientist, or philosopher and a known material or subject that activates the habit.”

“Eliminate one of the essential parts of this relationship,” I said, “and the activity can no longer exist. No such subject (such as somewhat sickly bodies) known, or no habit of medicine in a physician, no art of medicine. The relation between the artist or scientist and the artistic or scientific subject known generates the habit and act of art and science. The two are essentially connected. Eliminate one or the other extreme of the relationship and the artistic, scientific, or philosophical activity becomes

This paper somewhat amends and expands slightly on the talk entitled “The Essential Connection between Common Sense Philosophy and Leadership Excellence,” which I presented at the *Inaugural International Congress, Renewing the West by Renewing Common Sense*, 17 to 20 July 2014, at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, Long Island, NY, USA. My talk was given in Plenary Session 7 on 18 July 2014.

destroyed.”¹ We take the nature, divisions, and methods, of all experience, art, philosophy/science, and leadership, from an essential relationship between human habits existing within human faculties and a known material, or known subject, that activates these human abilities.

As I think most people familiar with any of the human qualities of experience, art, science/philosophy, or leadership implicitly, if not explicitly, realize (at least in our sane, common sense, moments), all these human principles chiefly grow out of an essential relationship among the human intellect, will, and emotions and an organizationally and operationally deprived body (an incompletely developed organizational and operational whole, one that can be receptive to or resist further organizational and operational development, or improvement) and a chief action that parts of that deprived body naturally and cooperatively incline to produce, or aim (end) they incline to realize.

The first beginnings of my explicit realization of this reality came to me decades ago while I was reading Book 1 of Plato’s *Republic*, in which Socrates gives Polemarchos examples of people ancient Athenians reasonably considered to be artists: cooks, physicians, pilots of ships, money makers, traders, and so on. In each case, Socrates made evident to Polemarchos that, to be an artist, a person has to work with some kind of essentially improvable body; that an artistic subject, body, or organization that the artist, in some way, improves has to be essentially deprived, impoverished, but improvable.²

Subsequent reading of different works of Armand A. Maurer showing that St. Thomas understood (1) the genus, or subject, of the philosopher to be essentially different from the genus of the logician; (2) philosophy to be chiefly an intellectual habit, not a body of knowledge;³ and (3) analogy

¹ Peter A. Redpath, Plenary Session 3 Address (17 July 2014), “The Nature of Common Sense and How We use Common Sense to Renew the West,” *Inaugural International Congress, Renewing the West by Renewing Common Sense*, 17 to 20 July 2014.

² Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 1, 331D–334B.

³ Armand A. Maurer, “The Unity of a Science: St. Thomas and the Nominalists,” in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274–1974, Commemorative Studies*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 269–291. See, also, Maurer, “Introduction,” in *St. Thomas Aquinas, The Divisions and Methods of the Sciences, Questions V and VI of his Commentary on the de Trinitate of Boethius*, trans. with an intro. and notes Armand A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 3rd rev. ed., 1963), 75, fn. 15. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1; *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, lect. 12, nn. 2142–2144; and *Summa theologiae*, I: 66, 2, ad 2 and 88, 2, ad 4.

to be “above all . . . a doctrine of a *judgment* of analogy or proportion rather than an analogous *concept*” caused me to start to realize that none of the leading twentieth-century students of St. Thomas, including Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson, had adequately understood his teaching about many of his most fundamental principles, including his understanding of philosophy and science.⁴ At that point, I decided that I had better start to investigate these issues on my own.

Spending many years studying these matters, among other things, this is what I discovered. For St. Thomas Aquinas, philosophy, science, is, just as for Aristotle before him, chiefly an intellectually-virtuous, habitual knowledge born of sense wonder. This philosophical, scientific, wonder is essentially about a multitude of beings already known to be one or a whole and the memory of the way an individual has been able to acquire much memory of this multitude as one or a whole.

Just as a human being cannot become morally virtuous without practice, habitually choosing what is right in the right way, no human being can become intellectually virtuous (scientific, philosophical) without much practice, habitually judging about what he or she has already rightly conceived and judged, habitually engaging in right reasoning about already existing orders of truths, things known.

More precisely, according to St. Thomas, all philosophy, science, starts in sense wonder essentially involving a complicated psychological state of *fear*, intellectual confidence about the unity of truth and the essential reliability of our sense and intellectual faculties, personal *hope* to achieve intellectual, volitional, and emotional satisfaction though resolving the wonder and putting the fear to rest.

As St. Thomas recognized even before the historical birth of some later, mistaken notions of philosophy’s first principle of generation, philosophy does not start in faith seeking understanding, absolute skepticism, universal method doubt, impossible dreams of pure reason, Absolute Spirit’s urge to emerge, veils of ignorance, or any of the other starting points that Western intellectuals, mistaking themselves to be doing philosophy, have proposed over the centuries. It starts in an opposition between fear and hope in which the act of philosophizing, pursuing science, essentially constitutes an act of hope of success based upon an essential

⁴ Armand A. Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in Light of its Principles* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), 278.

conviction about the unity of truth and the essential reliability of our human sense and intellectual faculties.

St. Thomas maintained that wonder is a species of fear that results from ignorance of a cause.⁵ Because the formal object of fear calls to mind a difficulty of some magnitude and a sense of dissatisfying personal weakness (an immediate sense of opposition, dependency, and privation), the desire to philosophize, engage in science, can only arise within a person who can experience a complicated psychological state involving a natural desire to escape from the fear we experience of the real difficulty, danger, and damage ignorance can cause us; *personal self-confidence* that our sense and intellectual faculties are reliable enough to help us put this fear to rest by knowing about the truth of things as expressed in the truth of our intellectual and sensory judgments, and some *hope* in our personal ability to use our intellectual and sense faculties to put this fear to rest by rationally resolving an apparently irreconcilable contradiction; and, by so doing, achieving a state of intellectual, volitional, and emotional satisfaction that we have done so.

St. Thomas explained that this initial sense of fear grips us in two stages: (1) recognition of our intellectual weakness and fear of failure causes us to refrain immediately from passing judgment; and (2) *hope* of possibility of understanding an effect's cause prompts us intellectually to seek the cause.⁶

Actually, this fear appears to include an intervening third stage between fear and hope in which we experience intellectual, volitional, and emotional dissatisfaction with being in a state of fear and a determination to eliminate it. Thomas added that, since philosophical investigation starts with wonder, it must end in the contrary of wonder (a species of fear), in some sort of satisfaction that puts fear to rest.

St. Thomas recognized that we do not, and cannot, wonder about the answer to questions we already know, about what is evident, or about what

⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, 44, 4, ad 5.

⁶ Id. And St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, Bk. 1, lect. 3 and *Summa theologiae*, qq. 40 and 41 dealing with hope and fear. My analysis of St. Thomas's teaching about the nature of philosophy and the relation of sense wonder to philosophy/science is based upon St. Thomas's explicit teaching about wonder and the emotions of fear and hope as contrary opposites. I have pieced it together from the teachings St. Thomas gives about the emotions of fear and hope and the nature of sense wonder.

we consider *impossible* to know; and, strictly speaking, when working as philosophers, scientists, we do not seek to remain in a state of wonder.⁷

We seek to put wonder to rest by discovering the causes that have generated the wonder. Since wonder is the first principle of all theoretical, practical, or productive philosophy, science, for everyone and all time, initially all philosophical first principles arise from our common sense pre-philosophical, pre-scientific knowledge, human senses, emotions, intellect, will, personal self-confidence about the reliability of our sense and intellectual faculties and the unity of truth as expressed in things and in the human intellect, and something that causes in us the awareness of real opposition, possession and privation (not simply difference).

Consequently, since, in its nature and origin philosophy, science, presupposes knowledge of the existence of several things and complicated psychological states, including something we fear can hurt us, and the hope of overcoming this fear, the mental attitude of complete skepticism is a contradictory opposite, and cannot simultaneously co-exist with the mental state of philosophy.

No matter what modern confidence men like René Descartes and his historical descendants, posing as philosophers and scientists, tell us, philosophy, science, cannot pre-exist knowledge. Philosophy, science, presupposes knowledge, including common sense knowledge of evident truths, and is born of sense wonder. People who cannot wonder cannot become philosophers, scientists. And people who think they have the one philosophical method finally to put all wonder to rest are delusional. Only God has the one method to put all wonder to rest.

Since only people who fear ignorance wonder about how to escape from it, strictly speaking, none of us is born a philosopher or scientist; seeking to become a philosopher, scientist, is not something that all human beings explicitly desire to do; and engaging in philosophical, scientific, reasoning is not something all human beings do, can do, or even want to do.

People who are content to be in a state of ignorance cannot become philosophers, scientists. As Plato and Socrates emphasized, people cannot pour philosophy, science, into us like inserting vision into blind eyes.⁸ Only those who have some knowledge and experience of this initial sort of

⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, Bk. 1, lect. 3.

⁸ Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 7, 518B–518D.

fear, accompanied by the appropriate desire to put it to rest, can become philosophers, scientists.

For this reason, absolute skeptics cannot become philosophers, cannot even start the journey to become philosophers. Hence, when Socrates confronted people who were content to be ignorant, he attempted to jolt them out of their blissful ignorance by publicly shaming them, by driving them through Socratic irony into an *aporia* (an intellectual dead end), into becoming aware of the dangers of their ignorance.

Aside from the first principle of sense wonder, then, philosophy's, science's, specific, or *proximate*, common sense first principles include: (1) habits of knowing faculties; (2) existing things, real natures; (3) prior knowledge of these existing things; (4) the existence and knowledge of fear, hope; (5) desire to escape from fear and possess hope; (6) convictions of certainty about the: (a) unity of truth; (b) reliability of human sense and intellectual faculties; (c) and the existence and knowledge of real opposites.

Since philosophy's, science's, first principles include human knowing faculties, since sense wonder must exist in sense wonderers, the existence of philosophy, science (at least a common sense philosophy and science), essentially depends upon an understanding of human nature that involves human beings possessed of a human soul (or some identical, if differently named, psychological principle) that can generate human knowing faculties that can possess human habits.

Since denial of the existence of a faculty psychology involves essential denial of one of philosophy's essential principles of wonder (the wonderer), no human being can rationally, or with common sense, affirm the existence of philosophy/science and simultaneously deny the existence of the only human knowing principle capable of essentially producing philosophical/scientific activity: human knowing faculties.

Leading ancient Greek philosophers considered (1) philosophy and science to be identical and (2) the generic subject that all philosophy, science (not just physics) studies to be the problem of the one and the many.⁹ Aristotle, especially, considered the subject of a science to consist of two main parts: (1) one genus (many hierarchically-ordered species related to one nature: *an operational organization* [an organization equipped with all

⁹ I have extensively and rigorously defended this claim in my book *Wisdom's Odyssey from Philosophy to Transcendental Sophistry* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi B.V.: 1997).

the parts needed to operate organizationally]); unequal possession of one nature by a multitude of species (parts) united to each other as parts by means of a common, and unequal, relationship of each to some whole nature (the organization) through the relationship of a topmost part to a chief aim, or universal act (similar to the way a commanding general unites all of the parts of one army together to each other and to the whole army through a chief aim of military victory); (2) an intellectual habit, or virtue, that consists of ordering many acts of imagining, conceiving, judging, and reasoning to arrive at some evident, concluding judgment: a scientific conclusion arrived at through deductive reasoning, or demonstration.¹⁰

For Aristotle science is not chiefly a system, and it does not solely consist in a scientific demonstration. Scientific demonstration culminates scientific understanding like a crescendo culminates a symphonic musical performance. Science is chiefly a generic habit of knowing (of right judging about definitions, concepts, images, and sensible and non-sensible natures [operational organizations]). Science chiefly exists in the scientist's distinctive and comprehensive (that is, *generic*) habit of sensing, abstracting, imagining, conceiving, and judging; but chiefly in judging: in relation to the way a scientist is inclined by habit to abstract and relate concepts and images in a unique act of judging, reasoning, and drawing conclusions (species of the scientist's generic habit).

This is a *comprehensive understanding* (a scientific explanation) *that*, as history of philosophical experience has taught us, to be completely sure of being scientific, *culminates in a demonstration and a process of verification that demonstrative knowledge is possessed through testing what a scientist considers to be demonstrative knowledge in the form of a confirmed hypothesis* (somewhat like editing the final draft of a book for typographical errors).

Strictly speaking, considered in and of itself, a demonstrative syllogism or system of demonstrative syllogisms is no philosophical, no scientific, explanation.

Precisely speaking, *a philosophical or scientific explanation is communication of a knowledge of necessary whole/part relations through single act of understanding* given by one person to himself or herself, or to another person, of how parts essentially unite to form a whole or how

¹⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, Bk. 1, nn. 18–35; Bk. 3, l. 1 through l. 12; *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, Bk. 2, l. 1, n. 246; Bk. 6, l. 3; *Posterior Analytics*, Bk 1, l. 10 through 21.

a whole is divided into parts. I call this a “comprehensive understanding:” a single, or generic, act of understanding that ties together all the parts of an investigation into a whole in a Eureka moment that culminates in a demonstrative conclusion that is verified by final testing of the prior reasoning process!

Strictly speaking, *all explanations, including all scientific, philosophical, ones, are personally-caused acts of recollected knowing unified into a single, whole (one generic act of understanding) communicated to oneself or another.* Science is chiefly a psychological act, an act of the human soul, or, better, the human person: a personally-caused act of comprehensive understanding.

Like Aristotle says, art and science, philosophy, presuppose experience, or much memory *habitually related to judging* that some multitude is essentially related as 1: as parts to a whole (that is, as species [organizational parts] to a genus, or organizational whole).

The reason for this is that art and science (the latter being, strictly speaking, identical with philosophy for Aristotle and St. Thomas) are reflections upon experience, upon prior knowledge that produces a memory—indeed, much memory that helps, through practice, to produce experience and a universal judgment about cause/effect relations. For example, medical experience grows out of much memory (much knowledge) that when given a specific medicine in specific dosages at specific times a person recovers from an illness.

Because it studies much memory related as a one, or whole, to parts of a scientific subject, the philosophical, scientific, habit can *analogously* be called a “system,” or “body of knowledge;” but such way of talking is imprecise, and if used as a starting point for developing philosophical, scientific, understanding of St. Thomas’s teaching, can lead to major mistakes down the road. Better to say it is chiefly an intellectual habit that studies systems or a single genus divided by extremes, or contrary opposites.

Every science studies many things, but only a limited number of them. The unity of a science comes from the unity of the multitude a scientist studies (a genus or operational organization) as related to a chief (or one main, generic) habit possessed by the mind of the scientist related to a chief scientific interest or aim.

The limited multitude (genus: hierarchically-ordered species) that a science studies is established by extremes of privation and possession within the relationship of one whole (a nature) to many parts. For example,

the science of medicine studies extremes of one generic nature, health, as health is most—and least—fully possessed by a multitude of bodily organs, and anything essentially related to achieving or maintaining health (like exercise, diet, books, medical instruments, and so on).¹¹

Hence, the one science (generic habit of mind) of medicine studies extremes of health, opposites: health and disease (extreme species). The science, in turn, consists in the single, comprehensive, relationship between the knower and the things known established through this single, comprehensive, or generic habit of mind, ordering essential relationships among a multitude of specific habits of the respective science one to another in relation to the chief aim of the science considered as a generic habit.

Within each science, in turn, a most difficult set of chief questions, or problems, exists that a few persons can, through the excellence of their mental habit, solve better than anyone else. We rightly call such people “wise” in that science.

Today, the unity of philosophy, science, and wisdom as St. Thomas understood it, can be re-established by recovering a proper understanding of science as chiefly an act of a scientific habit of a human soul. More than anything else, through distinctive habits of mind essentially related to known natures (organizational wholes made up of parts), human beings (not logical systems, premises, or ideas divorced from knowing habits) generate, cause, science. This is chiefly what makes the act of science praiseworthy; not the fact that a person has memorized a multitude of facts or can deduce factual conclusions from factual premises.

No human beings with comprehensive knowing habits, no science. No science, no happiness. The human soul is a chief, essential, and proximate cause of science. The soul produces the intellectual virtue of science. The intellectual virtue of science causes wisdom. And wisdom causes happiness.

Hence, being wrong about the nature of human science, condemns a person, culture, or civilization to human misery. This is precisely what is happening within Western civilization today.

Turning now to the issue of leadership, just as, according to St. Thomas, and Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle before him, the knower and the thing known constitute essential parts of the same genus, or organizational whole, so do leadership and the thing led. Because leadership is a kind of directing activity, and in human beings, in its highest form, is not a chance

¹¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, Bk. 10.

event, because human reason is its chief directing faculty, human leadership is a kind of knowing. Moreover, in its highest form, human leadership consists in a kind of philosophical/scientific way of knowing.

As a kind of knowing, leadership is chiefly a specific organizational habit existing within the highest part of organizational knowers, through which a leader is able, better than any other organizational part, to communicate a chief organizational aim to the other parts of an organization. Leadership, in short, is chiefly communications activity: an ability to communicate (in a way that need not be verbal or totally rational) specific superiority, exceeding other organizational parts in organizational strength, through which a leader is able to convey to, and elicit from, those led (other parts of an organization) receptivity to taking directions essentially related to the chief aim of an organization as an organization.

Obviously, the leader and the beings led belong to the same organization, or genus. Leadership is not an abstraction. It is an essential part of a real relation. As a knowing activity, the leader belongs to the same organizational whole, or genus, that the leader leads. Fire chiefs belong to fire departments, police chiefs to police departments, and so on. Abstractly considered, leaders as leaders do not exist.

Nor does an art or science of anything as a generic whole exist apart from its species. Arts and sciences exist in and through their species. Hence, the art of medicine as a genus did not come into existence and then the art of curing this or that disease. The art of curing this or that disease first came into existence, imperfectly encompassing the entire genus of medicine.

Strictly considered, experience, art, philosophy, science are not bodies of generically new knowledge added to something a leader already knows. They are more or less perfect, or maturely developed, habits, ways of possessing knowledge a leader already has about some operational, organizational whole a leader leads.

Experienced leaders grow out of knowledgeable leaders familiar with the organizational composition of essentially different, necessary, part/whole relationships. The art of leadership essentially grows out of the experienced leadership of different organizational parts (leaders) knowing the essential and necessary operational relationships that, to operate harmoniously, these or those parts must have to each other and to a chief organizational aim. The philosophy or science of leadership essentially grows out of the art of leadership of different organizational parts knowing

the organizational principles that guide organizational operational principles in relation to a chief organizational aim.

Put more simply, in contemporary business and military terms, experienced leaders know that this or that needs to be done at this or that time, under this or that circumstance or condition, and can overcome resistance and induce receptivity when necessary to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. Beyond experiential knowledge, someone who possesses knowledge through an artistic quality of soul resembles a person with the habit of mathematics who has memorized formulas and knows when they can reasonably be applied to solve this or that problem. Similarly, people with the art of leadership know the operational principles at work that cause doing this or that at this or that time, under this or that condition or circumstance, reasonable in relation to a tactical plan of operation. People possessed of the philosophy or science of leadership, however, more perfectly possess what they already know by apprehending it in relation to the strategic, or generic, plan and aim articulated in an organizational mission statement that generates the operational principles behind tactical operations in the here and now.

Such people know how to build and preserve organizations, have the qualities of great discoverers, pioneers, and great teachers. Because such people must constantly instill hope, drive out fear, build and restore confidence, energize and calm emotions, communicate a superior ability to know and unify potentially opposing convictions among free and intelligent agents about the right direction to take within an organizational operation to satisfy the chief organizational aim, such people must, best of all, know the first reason why this or that action needs to be done, how to do it, and, through emotional and volitional strength and resolve, be able to communicate this to themselves and others. As a result, such people can never be absolute skeptics, egalitarians, totalitarians, or anarchists.

In the process of gaining this philosophical, scientific, more perfect and complete, possession of their own leadership knowledge, along the way of being liberated from their prior intellectual weakness, knowingly or not, the best leaders have to become aided by the traditional seven liberal arts (the operational leadership qualities of human communication like grammar, rhetoric, logic; and arts that facilitate ways imagining the harmonic constitution of the physical universe, like arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) as well as the moral virtue of prudence and its handmaiden "history," which renaissance humanists added to a new Western educational canon we now call the "humanities."

Despite claims to the contrary, none of these skills, any more than philosophy, consists in some esoteric teaching or body of knowledge that poets, rhetoricians, and, in modern times, mathematicians have claimed them to be. While, because it is no book, Galileo Galilei was wrong when he maintained that the book of nature is written in the language of mathematics, the physical universe is no body of facts or philosophy;¹² nor is it written in the language of mathematics, music, grammar, rhetoric, logic, poetry, the liberal arts as a whole, the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, the Marxist dialectic, egalitarianism, or libertarianism. If it were a book, it would be written in the language of organizational wholes, which is the way the ancient Greeks philosophers understood it. Mathematics would be one of its chapters. And those capable of reading this book would be anyone with knowing habits capable of grasping the composite being of sensible things and wondering about it as an organizational whole.

If we wish to renew the West, it is precisely to this understanding of common sense philosophy and leadership excellence that we need to return. I hope I have made evident to why this is so and that you will join me in this long-overdue, but essential, project.

THE ESSENTIAL CONNECTION BETWEEN COMMON SENSE PHILOSOPHY AND LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

SUMMARY

This article argues that, *strictly speaking*, from its inception with the ancient Greeks and for all time, philosophy and science are identical and consist in an essential relationship between a specific type of understanding of the human person as possessed of an intellectual soul capable of being habituated and a psychologically-independent composite whole, or organization. It maintains, further, that absence of either one of the extremes of this essential relationship cannot be philosophy/science and, if mistaken for such and applied to the workings of cultural institutions, will generate anarchy within human culture and make leadership excellence impossible to achieve. Finally, it argues that only a return to this “common sense” understanding of philosophy can generate the leadership excellence that can save the West from its current state of cultural and civilizational anarchy.

KEYWORDS: aim, analogy, anarchy, art, body of knowledge, cause, common sense, communication, comprehensive understanding, concept, contrary, contrariety, culture, demon-

¹² Galileo Galilei, “The Assayer,” in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, ed. and trans. Stillman Drake (New York, Doubleday and Company, 1957), 237–238.

stration, demonstrative, equality, emotion, end, excellence, existence, explanation, fear, genus, habit, happiness, harmony, hierarchically ordered, history, hope, human, humanist, inequality, judgment, knowledge, language, leadership, logic, mathematics, memory, metaphysics, multitude, nature, operational, opposite, order, part, person, philosophy, physical, poetry, principle, quality, reason, receptivity, relationship, renaissance, resistance, rhetoric, science, soul, species, strength, syllogism, system, truth, West, Western civilization, unity, universe, virtue, whole, wonder