Credible Belief in *Fides et Ratio*: II The theology-psychology dialogue[1]

Peter Hampson

In the first of this pair of essays I argued that the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (*FR*) offers a set of explanatory constraints which, when taken together, can exert a unifying force in interdisciplinary debates.[2] The constraints identified were: *epistemic and methodological, ontological, meaning and truth, tradition*, and most crucially of all *Revelation* or the *Christic constraint*. The latter is the centrality of the Word embodied in Christ who reveals what is true about us, about creation and about the ultimate. In His connection with the source of all truth, as *FR* puts it, '(t)his unity of Truth, natural and revealed is embodied in a living and personal way.' (*FR* 34).

The Christic constraint, and its implications for theology's dialogue with psychology, is the primary focus of this essay. In my previous paper I claimed that this has four important consequences. For convenience I repeat these now before examining their implications in more detail:

- Once accepted, Revelation pulls together all the other constraints: ultimate being, truth, knowledge, meaning and the perfection of our humanity cohere in Christ.
- Revelation suggests that a full understanding of (ultimate) reality presupposes a full and proper understanding of (ultimate) personhood, and that understanding the unity of truth and its relation to personhood is only fully achievable with the help and acceptance of Revelation.
- By annihilating the gap between Creator and creature, Christ and the Eucharist offer a visible route into truth, and point beyond

[1] I would like to thank Gavin D'Costa and Mervyn Davies for their invaluable comments on an earlier version of this article.

[2] See my preceding article: P.J. Hampson 2006, 'Credible belief in *Fides et Ratio*: I Explanatory constraints in philosophy, science and religion', *New Blackfriars* September 2006, pp. 482–504.

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themselves to the depths of that final mystery,[3] since, 'he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and earth were created, things visible and invisible. . .' (Col. 1:15–16).

- More prosaically, but critically, the fact of a personal Revelation further suggests that any accounts of (knowing) reality which exclude or fail to acknowledge the knowing subject, or of the knowing subject without commitment to truth and reality will most likely be found to be incomplete.

After considering some general issues of the relation between anthropologies and ontologies, in the light of the Christic constraint and especially the last of its implications, I examine wider interactions between psychology and theology, relating these, where possible, to relevant sections of *FR*. I end by reviewing two recent cultural psychological approaches to the person, which I personally find helpful in dialogue with theology. As I have already introduced the key characteristics of one of these elsewhere,[4] I shall concentrate only on those dimensions especially germane to the issue of interdisciplinarity and *FR*.

Anthropology and ontology

Whereas large areas of modern psychology typically conduct their investigation of the human 'subject' without reference to wider questions of being, truth and existence, this is not an option for any Christian anthropology which seeks a fuller understanding of the person. *FR* is clear on this point. Citing *Gaudium et Spes,* it reminds us of the 'value of the human person created in the image of God (and) declares the transcendent capacity of human reason.' (*FR* 60). 'The notion of the person as spiritual being' (*FR* 76) with a capacity to know the truth and make contact with reality is emphasised. Citing the Second Vatican Council again: 'Intelligence is not confined to observable data alone. It can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable, though in consequence of sin that certitude is partially obscured and weakened.' (*FR* 82). Paragraph *8*3 then repeats

[3] See Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason and The Existence of God*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2004). Turner cogently explains that through faith in Christ we trust that a route, through reason, from natural creatures to God cannot be ruled out; therefore there are reasons why, on reason's own terms such a route is intelligible, even though what it leads to is the ultimate mystery.

[4] See for example, P.J. Hampson, 'Beyond Unity, Integration and Experience: Cultural Psychology, Theology and Mediaeval Mysticism', *New Blackfriars*, 2005, 86(1006), 622, for an initial discussion; also Peter Hampson, 'Cultural Psychology and Theology: Partners in Dialogue', *Theology and Science*, 2005, 3, 259, for a more extended treatment.

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and amplifies this crucial point; I present the relevant section in full:

> 'I want only to state that reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical, and to vindicate the human being's capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical. *In this sense metaphysics should not be seen as an alternative to anthropology, since it is metaphysics which makes it possible to ground the concepts of personal dignity in virtue of their spiritual nature. In a special way, the person constitutes a privileged locus for the encounter with being, and hence with metaphysical enquiry.*' (*FR* 83, italics added).

At the root of this grounding, of course, is the doctrine of *imago Dei*, but this, in turn invites the person to strive to become *imago Christi*, since 'the Incarnate Word of God is the perfect realisation of human existence' (*FR* 80). 'Only in the mystery of the incarnate word does the mystery of man take on light.' (*FR* 12, also *FR* 15). Thus *FR* not only links anthropology with metaphysics, but also forges a principled connection with Christology. The consequences of this for the psychology-theology debate are not inconsiderable as we shall see in due course.

Suppose we accept these claims, where do they lead us? First, somewhat obviously perhaps, they imply an enlarged vision of the person in that they suggest the need for a correspondingly expanded concept of reason and, ultimately, a sacramental account of human nature. The notion of reason as 'transcendentally open' is clearly explicit in *FR*. The sacramental quality of personhood follows implicitly from the fact that the perfect image of personhood is sacramentally revealed in Christ. In so far as we are called to imitate Christ, we too are invited to realise and explore our own sacramental nature, following Christ in obedience into the mysteries of God.[5] The question for the psychology-theology dialogue, however, is whether psychology can cope with or accommodate these claims at all, or whether the dialogue between the two disciplines is thereby strained to breaking point. Is there a general psychological position which can be used in dialogue with theology without doing injustice to its own disciplinary integrity? If so, what is it, and what are the overall implications of accepting *FR's* claims for the debate as a whole? I shall return to these issues shortly.

Second, and in line with the arguments in my previous paper, *FR's* deployment of the ontological constraint is applied consistently here to anthropology. One might then simply think that those secular

[5] *FR*, therefore, sets the scene for more extended arguments on the nature of reason such as those recently elaborated by Oliver Davies in Oliver Davies, *The Creativity of God*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), and, to some extent, by Denys Turner in *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God*, op. cit.

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anthropologies which ignore the ontological constraint, will be excluded from debate with theology while those which heed it will be granted admittance. In fact the situation is not so simple. All (or the majority) of anthropologies entail some position on ontology, the problem is that this is often implicit rather than explicit. For example, behaviourism is ultimately compatible with a realist, albeit physicalist and reductive monism, while social contructivism sits better with an anti-realist and to some extent idealist world view. Therefore, the point is not so much a matter of excluding supposed ontology free or neutral anthropologies from debate, but rather of identifying anthropologies which implicitly or explicitly embed inadequate ontologies, namely ones which stop short of allowing ultimate or metaphysical questions about being and truth their proper place. The underlying logic of *FR* is again quite clear here: inadequate anthropologies (those too unconstrained for dialogue) imply and are implied by inadequate ontologies and their associated epistemics.[6] Furthermore, inadequate anthropologies imply and are implied by inadequate theologies or accounts of religious language.

Thus, the ontological constraint effects two governing roles. First, it is implicated in two-way debates between human science and philosophy, where accounts of the subject constrain and are constrained by accounts of (ultimate) reality. Second, it arises in three-way debates between human science, philosophy and the theology of doctrine where views on the *relation between* the subject and 'reality' constrain and are constrained by views on the nature of what can be said about such religious reality.

From the perspective of *FR* and the Catholic faith, the existence of God (and Christ) is central to a properly developed anthropology, by which I mean one which has the appropriate philosophical sophistication needed to engage with theology. I can therefore only agree with Turner here that:

> 'What does constitute the centrality of the existence of God is simply that such demonstrability forms the point of convergence of our 'apophatic self-transcendence' which quite generally characterises every other form of rational activity in its widest sense.' And

[6] It is possible to discern how we might lay the foundations needed to build this argument, 'bottom up', from psychology as opposed to top down from theology. Although questions of epistemology and ontology are clearly logically separable, the one concerning how things are known, the other what there is to be known, the psychological study of perception shows that the systems and structures used for perceiving are in fact exquisitely attuned to what is to be perceived. How we perceive and know thus depend on what we (need to) perceive and know. In that reasoning can then be seen to be rely, in part, on more basic and embodied perceptual-motor mechanisms, it too will be shaped to fit and point its goal. Premature 'closure' of ontological possibilities will artificially restrict reasoning, while curbing reason will limit our account of what there is.

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> '(r)atiocination has, as music does, the shape of the sacramental, the form of the body's transparency to the mystery we call God.'[7]

On this view, all rationalities - all sciences - converge on God when the nature of the knowing subject is properly understood.

Fides et Ratio and the interaction between psychology and theology

Before proceeding to a more particular examination of theology-psychology interactions, it is helpful to consider how *FR* itself deals with anthropological issues. What precisely is the nature of the person implicit in *FR*? What implications does this have for the relation between psychology and ontology, and psychology and theology?

The first thing to clarify is that *FR* does not address this issue directly or in one place. Nevertheless a picture can be deduced by viewing *FR* through the following lenses: the extent to which the relationship between the human sciences and theology is implicated in the 'common project' of theology and philosophy and the question of whether the human sciences can make a particular contribution to theology; theology's superordinate influence over the human sciences.

Common project

The nature of truth, the common project of faith and reason, and the inner harmony and nature of the person are co-implicated in *FR* which neatly encapsulates much of this in its opening lines:

> 'Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know truth - in a word to know himself (sic.) - so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.' (*FR*, opening).

The unity of truth 'in its fullness' (*FR* 34) emerges, as we have seen, from 'the profound and indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith' (*FR* 16). When faith and reason are in harmony it is possible 'to reconcile the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel' (*FR* 43), since 'truth cannot contradict truth' (*FR* 53) and 'can only ever be one. The content of Revelation can never debase the discoveries and autonomy of reason . . . In short, Christian Revelation becomes the true point

[7] *Faith, Reason and The Existence of God*. Op. cit., pp. 18,121.

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of encounter and engagement between philosophical and theological thinking.' (*FR* 79).

As part of the created order, and therefore integrated with its source, the human person is defined as 'the one who seeks the truth' (*FR* 28). Consistent with the common project, they do this in faith and with reason, since: 'It is faith which stirs reason . . . .to run risks so that it may attain whatever is beautiful, good and true. Faith thus becomes the convinced and convincing advocate of reason.' (*FR* 56).

Now, while affirmations of any of these - faith, reason, the person, or the unity of truth - simultaneously affirm the others, threats to any also threaten the others. So, for example, the search for ultimate truth can become neglected through an overemphasis on subjectivity which can obscure where reason points (*FR* 5). Threats to truth can also come from movements away from faith and Revelation such as positivism and nihilism *(FR* 46,47) that lead to the distrust of reason (*FR* 56) and universal and absolute statements, 'especially among those who think that truth is borne of a consensus and not a consonance between intellect and objective reality.' (*FR* 56). 'The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning keeps people today from coming to an interior unity.' (*FR* 85)

Despite these threats, *FR* is clear and confident in its assertion that 'the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge.' (*FR* 85). Moreover, since this knowledge will include an account of themselves, a model of the person is needed which links truth, being, belief, and an open concept of reason. The human sciences will prove invaluable in this regard, but will not suffice on their own. In other words, psychology without philosophy is insufficient. 'The invitation addressed to theologians to engage the human sciences . . . . should not be interpreted as an implicit authorization to marginalize philosophy . . . ' (*FR* 61, also *FR* 69). Any such overclaims for psychology, I agree, easily miss the fact that it is unable, single-handedly, to offer accounts of the *meaning* and grounding of belief, even if it is able to account for the self-shaping mechanics of belief.

Given that *FR* affirms some, admittedly qualified role for the human sciences in constructing a full account of personhood, we can now proceed to ask how psychology in dialogue with theology might proceed in this endeavour. To do this entails reading of some of *FR*'s references to philosophy and secular knowledge sufficiently widely and inclusively to refer also to psychology. It is then possible to examine the scope for psychology assisting theology and of theology influencing psychology.

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Psychology assisting theology

There are three major ways (and a number of more minor ones) in which FR can be read to suggest how a suitable pychology can assist theology. First, it is able to provide important explication or additional clarification of partially examined or unexamined claims by theology regarding the person which are mutually agreed, by both disciplines, to entail a degree of 'psychological' content. This is an important 'handmaid' role which protects theology from making inadvertent, spurious truth claims regarding the functioning of the person as well as providing the details which theology alone is not equipped to furnish. Second, it suggests escape routes out of problematic anthropologies which, following the earlier discussion, will most likely be found to embed inadequate psychologies and ontologies and will be now found to be superseded by later accounts. In so doing, like philosophy, psychology in turn can again act as the ancilla of theology, by helping it reconstruct its vision of the person. Third, as a contributor to reflection on human being it can provide a source of additional theological metaphors that inter alia can be deployed to enrich and illustrate the doctrine analogia entis. I shall briefly examine these now.

There are a number of statements about the person in FR which psychology has the theoretical and empirical tools to explicate further and in some cases has begun to do so. Consider for instance the claim that '....biblical man discovered that he could only understand himself as "being in relation".' (*FR* 21). This accords well with recent secular psychological and philosophical influences on the need to understand the self as a property of 'persons in relation'.[8] Psychology is then well equipped to advise on how person-making relationships form, how they are they are sustained, how they might be fractured or decay and so on. So too, the important theological claim that '...man (sic.) is the only creature who not only is capable of knowing but who knows that he knows' (*FR* 25) is relatively uncontroversial psychologically, and receives support from any psychology or philosophy which accepts the reflexive property of consciousness.[9] But note again: the details of this reflexivity, what forms, sustains, heightens or diminishes it, are unlikely to be supplied by theology alone, even though a fuller understanding of the mechanics of self-awareness and reflexivity may prove helpful to theology in pursuing

[8] See for example: Rom Harré, *The Singular Self: An Introduction to the Psychology of Personhood*. (London: Sage, 1998); also, Susan Andersen and Serena Chen, 'The relational self: an interpersonal social-cognitive theory' *Psychological Review* 109 *(2002)*, pp. 619–645.

[9] For a classic example see: Sir F.C. Bartlett, *Remembering*. Cambridge: CUP, 1932); and for a more recent one, see: Merlin Donald, *A Mind so Rare: The Evolution of Human Consciousness*. (New York: Norton, 2001).

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its own projects. Or take the claim that 'the human being . . . is . . . the one who lives by belief'. (*FR* 31). Again, although not widely acknowledged by, say, reductionist psychologies of whatever flavour, recent examples of cultural psychology have little difficulty accepting this general idea, and, more importantly, explicate the details of how belief helps form the person.

All three of these empirical claims are, therefore, within the scope of at least some existing contemporary psychology. There are, however, at least two key sets of assertions in *FR* which make substantive claims regarding the person which have yet to be fully explored by modern psychology. One is the proposition that humans are intrinsically truth seeking, the other is the related statement that they have the capacity for meaningful metaphysical enquiry which stretches reason. So, we read, for example, that human being has '. . . the desire to reach the certitude of truth..', (*FR* 27) and is 'the one being whose 'nature (is) to seek the truth..' (*FR* 33). Also, drawing implications from Romans 1:20, *FR* states: 'This is to concede to reason a capacity which seems almost to surpass its natural limitations . . . .this important Pauline text affirms the human capacity for metaphysical enquiry.' (*FR* 22). While large parts of contemporary psychology may be currently too shackled by their implicit ontologies to entertain such possibilities, there may be reasons for optimism that selected psychologies are sufficiently open to do so as we shall see shortly.

This limitation apart, *Fides et Ratio* is clear as to ways in which work on human nature can assist theology and especially protect it from 'false philosophies' such as '. . . .nihilism (which) is a denial of humanity and the very identity of the human being..' (*FR* 90), and which 'continues to nurture the illusion that . . . man and woman may live as a demi-urge.' (*FR* 91). Of course, as I indicated earlier, *FR* tends to focus on philosophy in an undifferentiated way, as, for example, when it states: 'Moral theology requires a philosophical vision of human nature and society.' (*FR* 68). Nevertheless, it is clear that psychology must be implicated too in protecting from such philosophies when it refers to '. . . precious and seminal insights which . . . can lead to the discovery of truth's ways . . . .for instance in penetrating analyses of perception and experience, of the imaginary and the unconscious, of personhood and intersubjectivity, of freedom and values..' (*FR* 48). Such 'penetrating analyses' are widely recognised to no longer be the product of a pure philosophy, since '..from different quarters . . . modes of philosophical speculation have continued to emerge..' (*FR* 59), some of which are now heavily influenced by work in the human sciences. Thus while *FR* implicitly creates space for psychology to make its unique contribution, within its portmanteau account of 'human nature', it can be criticised for insufficiently differentiating the complementary roles of philosophy and psychology.

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This elision of disciplinary perspectives in *FR* is a pity since, as it makes clear, a sound understanding of human nature, being and the world is essential:

> 'It is necessary, therefore, that the mind of the believer acquire a natural, consistent and true knowledge of created realities - the world and man himself - which are also the object of Divine Revelation . . . Speculative dogmatic philosophy then presupposes and implies a philosophy of the human being, the world, and more radically, of being, which has objective truth as its foundation.' (*FR* 66).

Such a sound understanding, I suggest, will not emerge from the efforts of one discipline alone.

Yet without such a philosophy, *FR* claims, 'it would be impossible to discuss theological issues, such as, for example, the personal relations within the Trinity, God's creative activity in the world, the relation between God and man, or Christ's identity as true God and true man . .' (*FR* 66).

To which I would add that psychology can again contribute not least by offering a rich and developing source of analogies through which the personal qualities of God can be partially grasped. A good example of this would be the way in which modern psychological and philosophical accounts of 'persons-in-relation' have been appropriately used to develop relational models of the Trinity.[10] Another, as yet untapped example, is the continual dialogue and dependence between the general truths and meanings of human semantic memory, and the existential particularities of episodic memory, resembling, perhaps, the relation between the universal Word and its particular incarnation. Psychology thus offers a rich treasure trove of sources for the further development of the *analogia entis*.

Theology influencing psychology

As we have seen, *FR* extensively discusses the stance of theology with respect to philosophy, and, to a lesser extent, secular knowledge in general such as that derived from the human sciences. Three major themes can be discerned, together with a further implication. First, theology sets an architectonic context for secular knowledge through its overarching claims with regard to the nature of humans as truth and God-seeking in the context of Revelation. By thus providing a broader setting for human endeavour, theology can be seen to bring to complete and extend many of the concerns of philosophy and psychology. Second, openness to experience and Revelation is commended in all

[10] For example Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology.* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

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those who pursue knowledge, and reassurance provided that their trust will bear fruit. These themes, therefore, represent a complementary contextualisation of secular knowledge in which God effects moves to mankind and mankind is invited to respond. To operate within this wider framework, however, secular enquiry will need to recover its concern with being and metaphysics, a third theme which is strongly emphasised in *FR*. This not only allows reason its full scope, but also guards against its becoming sidetracked by limited philosophies such as scientism. The liberation of reason, combined with protection of the deposit of faith, then provide an implied challenge and an invitation to those involved in the pursuit of secular knowledge. The challenge, as we saw earlier, is to explicate further a number of additional strong claims regarding personhood; the invitation is to extend the frame of reference, methods and topics of secular enquiry to do so. As before I shall examine these in turn.

The claim that people are intrinsically truth seeking, as we have just seen, is open to psychological investigation, and *FR* is clear that Revelation is the theologically non-negotiable setting in which this truth seeking occurs and which guarantees its meaning. 'Revelation has set within history a point of reference which cannot be ignored if the mystery of human life is to be known.' (*FR* 14). Revelation permits human reason to attain its full goal: 'The results of reasoning may in fact be true, but these results acquire their true meaning only if they are set within the larger horizon of faith . . . In brief, human beings attain truth by way of reason because, enlightened by faith, they discover the deeper meanings of things.' (*FR* 20). Hence, the human person may well be 'the one who seeks the truth' (*FR* 28), but can only do so successfully as 'a spiritual being . . . another of faith's specific contributions..' (*FR* 76), since '..in the far reaches of the human heart there is a seed of desire and nostalgia for God.' (*FR* 24). Neither are Truth and God-seeking abstract or solipsistic pursuits. Consistent with the notion that '. . . only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light' (*FR* 12), we read that human perception '. . . consists not simply of acquiring abstract knowledge of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of self-giving with others.' (*FR* 32). Finally, the model, of reason-under-Revelation, is safeguarded by the teaching authority of the Church. Carefully avoiding the language of conflict such as 'reject', 'attack' or 'condemn' *FR* indicates that '. . . .the Church's Magisterium can and must exercise a critical discernment of opinions and philosophies which contradict Christian doctrine.' (*FR* 50).

It follows from all this that openness to the wider claims of Revelation becomes a pressing imperative on those involved in philosophical and wider secular enquiry in a Christian context. A response from humans to God is required which is, in fact, occasioned by Revelation. Those so responding must note that '. . . the truth made known

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to us through Revelation is neither the product nor the consummation of human reason. It appears instead as something gratuitous, which itself stirs thought and seeks acceptance as an expression of love.' (*FR* 15). 'Trusting acquiescence' (*FR* 33) is therefore part of this response as 'leaning on God, they continue to reach out, always and everywhere, for all that is beautiful, good and true.' (*FR* 22). Such reaching out is 'not for the proud who think that everything is the fruit of personal conquest' (*FR* 18), nor for 'the fool who thinks he knows many things but is incapable of fixing his gaze on things that really matter..' (*FR* 18), but must be conducted in humility, and 'sustained by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship.' (*FR* 33). Discernment, courage and intellectual honesty are needed in this process too, and St Thomas, who 'possessed supremely the courage of truth' (*FR* 43), offers us an excellent role model. He neither uncritically accepted the results of secular knowledge nor prejudicially rejected them (*FR* 43). Those with similar courage to progress in the path to truth will be rewarded: 'Happy the man who meditates on reason and wisdom intelligently..', since '(f)aith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence.' (*FR* 16). And, while philosophy 'must remain faithful to its own principles and methods . . . ' (*FR* 49), in theology it will find 'the wealth of a communal reflection. For by its very nature theology is sustained in the search for truth by its ecclesial context and by the tradition of the People of God, with its harmony of many different fields of learning and culture in the unity of faith.' (*FR* 101).

The third way in which theology can come to influence secularity is by encouraging philosophy, and through it the sciences and the culture at large, to renew their awareness of and, where, appropriate, their concern and engagement with metaphysics and being. *FR* 'insists strongly on the metaphysical element' on the grounds 'that it is the path to be taken to move beyond the crisis pervading large sectors of philosophy at the moment and thus to correct certain mistaken modes of behaviour now widespread in our society.' (*FR* 83). Moreover, as we saw earlier, metaphysics should not be seen as an alternative to anthropology, since it is metaphysics which makes it possible to ground the concepts of personal dignity in virtue of their spiritual nature. In a special way, the person constitutes a privileged locus for the encounter with being, and hence with metaphysical enquiry.' (*FR* 83). Thus, a major way in which theology can influences psychology, albeit indirectly, is by raising the question as to how humans are capable of such an 'encounter with being' in the first place, and 'hence of metaphysical enquiry'. As we saw earlier as well this encourages psychology to examine its own ontological assumptions more closely, and thereby helps to curtail overenthusiastic scientism (or psychologism in this case), (*FR* 88-90).

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The turn to questions of being and the spiritual nature of the person then raises a number of topics for philosophical and psychological investigation, many of which have been ignored or neglected up until now by psychology. These include: the nature of intellect and will (*FR*13); the possibility of going beyond '. . . an immanentist habit of mind' (*FR* 15); the psychology of states of assent needed to arrive at '. . . the certitude of truth and the certitude of its absolute value..' (*FR* 27); '..the reality of sin, as it appears in the light of faith' (*FR* 76); '. . . a philosophical anthropology and metaphysics of the good.' (*FR* 98). In general these topics require secular reason and science to 'explore more comprehensively the dimensions of the true, the good and the beautiful to which the Word of God gives access' (*FR* 103), in order to 'recover the range of authentic wisdom and truth'. (*FR* 106).

Fides et Ratio and the adequacy of contemporary psychology

Given the high standards set by *FR* for interdisciplinary interactions, is there in fact any productive role for contemporary psychology in debate with theology? After all, it may be that psychology is equipped in general and in principle possesses the means to contribute to discussion, but that no particular psychology is yet sufficiently well articulated to do so. To answer this we need to review the general characteristics such a psychology will need to enter dialogue, before examining putative psychologies for their eligibility. First, as we have seen, it will need to be open enough to meet the general epistemic possibilities required by *FR*, as well as the constraints of meaning, truth and tradition, while remaining true to its own methods and principles. That is to say it must be sophisticated enough to assimilate, without special pleading or intellectual fudging, the mutual interpenetration of faith and reason. Accordingly, accounts which ignore the belief based nature of much of human life will be inadequate, but so too will those that accept but then sideline the possibility of faith based understanding. Second, any theory of human nature which psychology offers must at least be not incompatible with, and therefore be open to wider ontological claims. In other words, if we take seriously the intelligibility of ultimate questions regarding being and truth, the implication that humans may be 'designed' to ask such ultimate questions and seek truth should not be ruled *out ab initio*, and from a theist perspective must be decidedly ruled in. A psychology suitable for such dialogic positioning is thus inevitably sympathetic to what we might call a 'truth-seeking teleology'. Third, and following from this, a psychology which acknowledges the possibility of such 'ultimate questions' is equally committed to a notion of reason which goes beyond closed inference and ratiocination. This follows since

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its ultimate 'object', God, the goal of reason and faith, is a mystery beyond knowing. Any system able to allow reason its transcendent open-ness will likewise require high levels of *meta*-cognitive, or self monitoring ability which go beyond ratiocination with the information given, and indeed beyond language itself. Such abilities are needed to recognise that reason, while straining at its limits, is all the while still pointing to its goal. In other words, powers of intellect are required, in which reason (and language) are grounded, which can also show up reason's trajectory and limits. At this point the appetitive qualities of will and belief also become apparent, when, at the end of reason's running its course, we say: 'As the hart panteth after water, so my soul yearneth for the Lord.' (Ps 42:1).

All this may prove to be a tall order for modern psychology to deliver, but it is not an impossible one. I have elsewhere introduced the general area of cultural psychology as suitable and sophisticated enough to deploy in general debates between psychology and theology. Using Ciarán Benson's approach, outlined in *The Cultural Psychology of the Self*, as a particularly good example, I argued that just such a cultural psychology has a number of useful features which provide this area of psychology with the flexibility and open-ness needed for such debate. Among these we can identify the following. First, cultural psychology is broad enough in general to accommodate our biological dependence on the one hand and the socially influenced nature of much of our thought on the other. Benson's approach, in particular, avoids retreating into one or other of twin, but competing reductions of modernist, individualism or postmodernist, relativist, social constructivism. These dimensions, that of the autonomous individual contrasted with the socially fragmented and the meaningless, are the source of many of the tensions that have been seen to afflict theological models as well as society as a whole. Any approach then which avoids both pitfalls has much to recommend it, and shows a possible way to reject the stark choice between models of the self which encourage either the modernist 'destructive will to power' or the postmodern 'horizon of total absence of meaning' (*FR* 91). The enculturated person is ultimately grounded in their embodiment and physical reality, socially influenced in their interpretation of reality, but free enough to transcend it (cf. *FR* 60). Second, and following from this, personhood is seen as shaped by belief, and therefore also tradition and culture constituted, dimensions which, as we have seen, are both of obvious relevance to theology. Certainly, given the major emphasis of *FR*, any psychology which allows scope in principle for the mutual interpenetration of faith (belief) and reason and their development through time has much to offer (cf. *FR* 31, 32 et seq.). Non-dualist (or at least not committed to substance dualism), the cultural approach also provides support to any theology which stresses the psychosomatic unity of the person, and does not

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rest content with phenomenology or subjectivism. The latter would be 'ill adapted to help in the deeper exploration of riches found in the word of God' (*FR* 82). Non-deterministic, it can also cope with concepts of freedom and choice. Finally, in emphasising the locative self, used to navigate intellectual and social as well as physical worlds, the approach acknowledges the possibility of purpose and meaning in human action, and, with suitable positioning with respect to theology, can accommodate ideas of religious and spiritual change on the 'unstoppable journey' development (*FR*33). Overall, then, a cultural psychology such as this is open and flexible enough to generate an account of the person capable of satisfying at least the constraints of epistemics, the search for meaning, and truth and tradition. The picture emerges of an embodied being with continuity of personhood, situated in place-time, in their social, historical and cultural milieu, constituted by their cognitive ability and beliefs, yet freely guiding their actions. This is surely one which fits better in principle with the implicit model of the person in *FR* than, say, crude behavioural, functionalist, social constructivist or psychodynamic accounts.

Merlin Donald who published *A Mind so Rare* at the same time *as A Cultural Psychology of the Self*, has been working in isolation from Benson yet has arrived independently at a broadly similar position. Indeed Benson himself has drawn attention to the pleasing convergence between their accounts.[11] But whereas Benson emphasises the self, Donald is more interested in the layers of consciousness needed to construct, profit from and contribute to culture in a way which allows him to move beyond the reductive functionalism of a Dennett or the dispersed self of constructivist accounts.

Instead, Donald offers an integrated model, securely grounded in data from neuroscience, cognitive psychology and cultural and physical anthropology. Donald's concern is to do justice to the wider functions of consciousness as well as its biological roots and evolutionary emergence. So, like Benson, he sees the necessity to bridge the gap between our embodiment and our enculturation, or as we could say more theologically, between the flesh and the spirit. As he puts it: 'Humans thus bridge two worlds. We are hybrids, half analogisers, with direct experience of the world, and half symbolisers, embedded in a cultural web.'[12]

The novel and innovative feature of Donald's account then is his identification of those levels or layers of human awareness which have emerged through the course of our phylogeny, are recapitulated in our ontogeny, and which characterise our current adult integrated consciousness. Starting with but moving beyond a simple embodied or sense of awareness, which he assumes we share with higher mammals

[11] Personal communication, 2004.
[12] *A Mind so Rare*, op. cit., p. 157.

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(our animal soul?), Donald identifies the episodic, mimetic, mythic-narrative and symbolic levels of consciousness. The episodic relates to our immediate, perceptual awareness of events and of being in the world. The mimetic corresponds to our understanding of mime, gesture, imitation. The mythic-narrative, which makes its appearance with the emergence of language, corresponds to the powerful way in which we interpret and become aware of the world in our story-telling and narrative. The crown of consciousness, however, and that which liberates it from many limitations of memory and personal experience, is our immersion in and enculturation by an external world of cultural meaning and symbolic products, and our ability to think beyond the confines of language.

Indeed, critical to understanding the symbolic level, the distal cause and proximal effect of our enculturation, is to grasp that for Donald, our symbolic power is not reducible to our linguistic abilities alone, nor is it a style lightly worn. (In this he goes well beyond any simple cultural-linguistic position.) For Donald, the open, creative, striving powers of consciousness are what are primary, and which allow us to reach to undiscovered meanings beyond ourselves.[13]

Donald's 'cognitive-cultural' account allows us to further the debate between psychology and theology in several ways. It supports and explores the claim that humans are equipped with metacognitive skills needed for self-knowledge (cf. *FR* 25, and earlier comment). Donald acknowledges that the key to such reflexivity is our ability to engage in what he and others call 'representational redescription', the facility with which we reflect on and reconstruct our ideas and concepts about the world and ourselves. Human knowledge is not static and its dynamism is partially rooted in the reflexive and reflective qualities of the mind. Next, our dependence on and the shaping effects of culture are also fully recognised and explored by Donald. The very fact that we are formed as *conscious* persons in and by cultures provides independent support for similar claims in *FR*, (e.g. *FR* 71). There are however two facets of Donald's account which, in my opinion are of crucial importance for the future success of such debates.

The first of these strongly challenges the idea that human rationality is closed in on itself and is restricted by the limits of language. The contrary view, that the limits of language determine the limits of our world, which we might dub the 'primacy of language' hypothesis has, of course, taken deep root in our post-Wittgensteinian intellectual and theological culture. Donald takes issue with this. Bringing a variety of evidence and arguments to bear, he succinctly summarises his position

[13] 'The engine of the symbolic mind, the one that ultimately generates language to serve its own representational agenda is much larger and more powerful than language which is after all its own (generally inadequate) invention.' Ibid., p. 75

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as follows in his discussion of what conscious, human rationality is really about:

> 'It is much deeper than the sensory stream. It is about building and sustaining, mental models of reality, constructing meaning, and exerting autonomous intermediate-term control over one's thought process., even without the extra clarity afforded by the explicit consensual systems of language. *The engine of the symbolic mind, the one that ultimately generates language to serve its own representational agenda is much larger and more powerful than language which is after all its own (generally inadequate) invention*.' (italics added).[14]

Interestingly, Terry Eagleton has converged on a similar position from the direction of cultural theory rather than psychology.

> Our physical senses are themselves organs of interpretation . . . we are able in turn to interpret these interpretations. In that sense all human language is meta-language. It is a second order reflection on the language of our bodies - of our sensory apparatus . . . .Even when I have language, however, my sensory experience still represents a kind of surplus over it. The body is not reducible to signification, as linguistic reductionists tend to imagine.[15]

All this helps to support the view expressed by *FR*: 'Human language may be conditioned by history and constricted in other ways, but the human being can still express truths which surpass the phenomenon of language. Truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history.' (*FR* 95). Consciousness, which helps us access such truths, is not the slave of language after all, but its co-creator.

To see this is to glimpse the solution of another problem mentioned in *FR*: 'the problem of the enduring validity of the language used in Conciliar definitions.' (*FR* 96). The notion that there are indeed universals beyond language, a view which Donald's approach supports,

[14] Ibid., p. 75. It is fascinating to note the close similarities here between Donald's claim from psychology and Denys Turner's recent corresponding assertion from a theological perspective that '. . . although language . . . is simply how bodies are significant, how they possess and exchange meaning . . . .(Yet) it is important to understand verbal communication as a specific case of the *wider* human activity of transacting meanings.' (italics added). Symbolic consciousness and the reason it supports, Turner suggests, thus have the power to go beyond closed, language-based ratiocination. Following this argument through to its philosophical conclusion, he then highlights the point at issue for theology namely '. . . all that power to point beyond itself can be supposed to point beyond a nihilistic vacuousness, only if reason can justify the name of God to that which it points', see *Faith, Reason and The Existence of God*.. op. cit., pp. 93, 119.

[15] Terry Eagleton, *After Theory.* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 60–61, (first published by Allen Lane 2003). He continues, humorously: 'Some of this overestimating of the role of language in human affairs may spring from the fact that philosophers were traditionally bachelor dons who had no experience of small children. English aristocrats who on the whole prefer hounds and horses to human beings have never bulked large in the ranks of linguistic inflationists.' Ibid.p. 61.

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allows us to begin to understand how ' . . . the history of thought shows that across the range of cultures and their development certain basic concepts retain their universal epistemological value and thus retain the truth of the propositions in which they are expressed.' (*FR* 96).

The very structures of our mind and the processes of thought have the ability to mirror structures of reality, which, for the Christian, who considers person, being and meaning together, are grounded in truth itself.

This brings us to the second crucial aspect of Donald's account: the multi-layered consciousness which he claims humans possess. These different facets of consciousness, I suggest, are essential for people to be able, in principle, to conform to the complex reality that is Christ. Recall that, for Donald, consciousness has mimetic, mythic-narrative and symbolic levels. Also, culture is not merely a surface style or gloss, since '(s)ymbolising cultures own a direct path into our brains and affect the way major parts of the executive brain become wired up during development . . . '[16] Donald has in mind that there is a common, but initially extremely plastic human nature awaiting the shaping effects of culture. However, and this is important, we are not *brought into* being by culture (we are not totally socially constructed), but we are *cultured in* our being by it. In this sense then there is a human (embodied) nature there to be encultured *ab initio*; this much is certainly true. Yet, as Christians, we can make a further moral point which further challenges cultural relativism. Different enculturations are simply not of equal worth. Some lead us well and truly off course, even, in the case of nihilism, toward rejecting 'the meaningfulness of being' (*FR* 90). But Christ, our symbol, the one true beacon, not only shows us the Way to the Truth, as a symbol He also effects what He signifies. By taking on the form of Christ, we do not in psychological terms merely put on the (symbolic) garments of Christian style over our sensual nature, rather we are changed at all levels in our neural, behavioural, narrative and symbolic nature. We become literally as well as metaphorically, '*new* creations'.[17]

[16] *A Mind so Rare*, op. cit., p. 213.

[17] We can discern a parallel between all three levels of consciousness discussed by Donald, and patterns for following Christ found in the New Testament. Briefly we can distinguish between forms of address in terms of rules (e.g, Rom. 14:1, 15:7), principles (e.g. Rom.14: 4), paradigmatic example in Christ (e.g. Rom. 15:3) and working within an ultimately cosmic symbolic world (Rom. 14: 8–12), which presuppose episodic, imitative, narrative and symbolic skills. Now, while it would be mistaken to argue in any simple-minded sense for a perfect one-to-one-correspondence between these discourse modes and levels of consciousness or for a simple linear progression from one to the other, there is a development in psychological terms from imitation to full symbolic understanding. In this shift, from imitating Christ and following him, to becoming Christ-like or conforming to him, we can see how this process of enculturation or enclothing works. Clothing ourselves in Christ, changes our very substance. We do not merely take on the appearance or style of Christ, adopt a role or entertain a new narrative. Here, surely, is an example of what Donald would call 'deep enculturation'.

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In this way we begin to see how Christian 'deep enculturation' works and points in turn to God. In becoming Christ-like, we embrace His life, death and resurrection, and become ethical, *Christ*ian beings in the process. Once again the same developmental shift occurs from episodic to mimetic through narrative to symbolic possibilities of our human being. And these symbolic possibilities lead us to where reason overflows (as it does too in wholesome love making, humour, music and experiences of the numinous) to point beyond itself to God.[18] As I suggested earlier, the overall shape of the Christian life is sacramental; as Christ reveals God sacramentally, if we are in same image, so we too can aspire to do the same.

Conclusions

In this and the preceding article I have attempted to show that the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* has important general and specific contributions to make to the science, philosophy and religion debate. In my first essay, I examined the broad implications of adherence to a set of 'explanatory constraints' which I suggested could be discerned in FR. These constraints, I argued, can be used in an integrative way in science and religion debates allowing some sets of explanations to be brought closer together and others to be rejected. In the present essay I have examined some specific implications of this general position for the more particular debates between theology and psychology. Three themes stand out. Anthropology must be constructed in the context of ontology, since accounts of the person which do not at least acknowledge issues of being and truth will prove incomplete. From close reading of *FR*, theology and psychology can gain from their interaction, theology chiefly through further explication of its claims regarding the person, psychology through extension and completion of its project. Contemporary cultural psychology is in a position to furnish suitably sophisticated and complex models of the person for debate with theology.

Finally, *FR* brings additional unexpected benefits, which derive from its healing the rift between an unnecessarily subjective faith and a falsely objective reason. First, the artificial separation of spirituality from theology, or of prayer from theological method, are challenged.[19] Within this framework, spirituality cannot be deemed a matter of private faith and theology one of public discourse. Both require the believer to assert *credo ut intelligam*, and *intelligo ut*

[18] See *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God*, op. cit., for an extended discussion.

[19] See Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998); also, Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Education: The Virtue of Theology in a Secular Society.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

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credam. And so, and related to this, the apparent chasm between first and third person account of consciousness and personhood appears less unbridgeable than hitherto. Trusting both the 'inner' and 'outer' aspects of the person to be grounded in a unified and coherent framework of truth promotes confidence in the possibility of ultimately moving back and forth from one to the other. There is, however, still a present and pressing need for a suitable language to negotiate these discourses, and here the spiritual-theologian or religious writer may need to seek additional help as much from the literary theorist as from the philosopher or psychologist.[20]

FR has great potential for apologetics too, but Christian apologetics often needs to adjust its language without compromising its views. We already have an adequate term for the overall *confessional* perspective which *FR* expresses and which many of us share: Catholicism. Perhaps, however, those of us in sympathy with these views who are also involved in debates with Athens as well as Jerusalem need in addition a handy *cultural* label to help summarise and promulgate our position on interdisciplinarity more widely. With this we can ' proclaim the certitudes arrived at' (*FR*2) which characterise the wisdom of our 'recta-rationalism' with fewer, initial, sectarian overtones, while displacing in the process the tired tags of modernism and postmodernism.[21]

Overall, the integrative, cultural potential of *FR* is inestimable. It provides the foundations for a new rationalism and a new belief in the trustworthiness and comprehendible nature of our world, assured by its Creator - a new wisdom and foundation able to move us out of and beyond the narrow and misleading *cul-de-sacs* of modernism and postmodernism. New, indeed, but old too of course; 'oft thought', maybe, 'but ne'er so well expressed'.

[20] David Lodge discusses the difficulty of bridging first and third person accounts of consciousness in his intriguing essay, 'Consciousness and the Novel', see David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002). Lodge points out that novelists over the last hundred years or so have managed to negotiate this boundary successfully, especially with the use of 'free indirect speech' rendering accurate accounts of private experience more publicly accessible, and open to more objective evaluation. Thus avoiding, in turn, any tension between the so-called 'realism of assessment', which favours the narrator, and the 'realism of presentation' which favours the subject.

[21] *Credal rationalism (credibilism), universalism, the New Wisdom* or even *Postaevalism*, spring readily to mind as possible cultural labels. And the following may also prove useful in more philosophical contexts: following *FR*'s usage we have: *recta-rationalism or ortho-logical;* or perhaps*: sapientalism; epistemic-mutualism; convergent rationalism,* but none has quite the punch or popular appeal of, say, 'positivism' or 'postmodernism'. Each captures some aspects of the message, and any could be adopted as common currency, but there are undoubtedly other, probably better, culturally pithier possibilities. Suggestions warmly welcomed!

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As Eamon Duffy wisely puts it '. . . at the heart of the Catholic faith is a confidence that meaning and value are not arbitrary constructs'.[22] *Fides et Ratio* strengthens our confidence in this, in the wisdom our past, and indicates the way forward with hope for the future.

Prof. Peter Hampson
School of Psychology
University of the West of England, Bristol
Frenchay Campus
BRISTOL
BS16 1QY UK
Email: peter.hampson@uwe.ac.uk

[22] Eamon Duffy, *Faith of our Fathers: Reflections on Catholic Tradition*. (London: Continuum, 2004) p. 18.

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