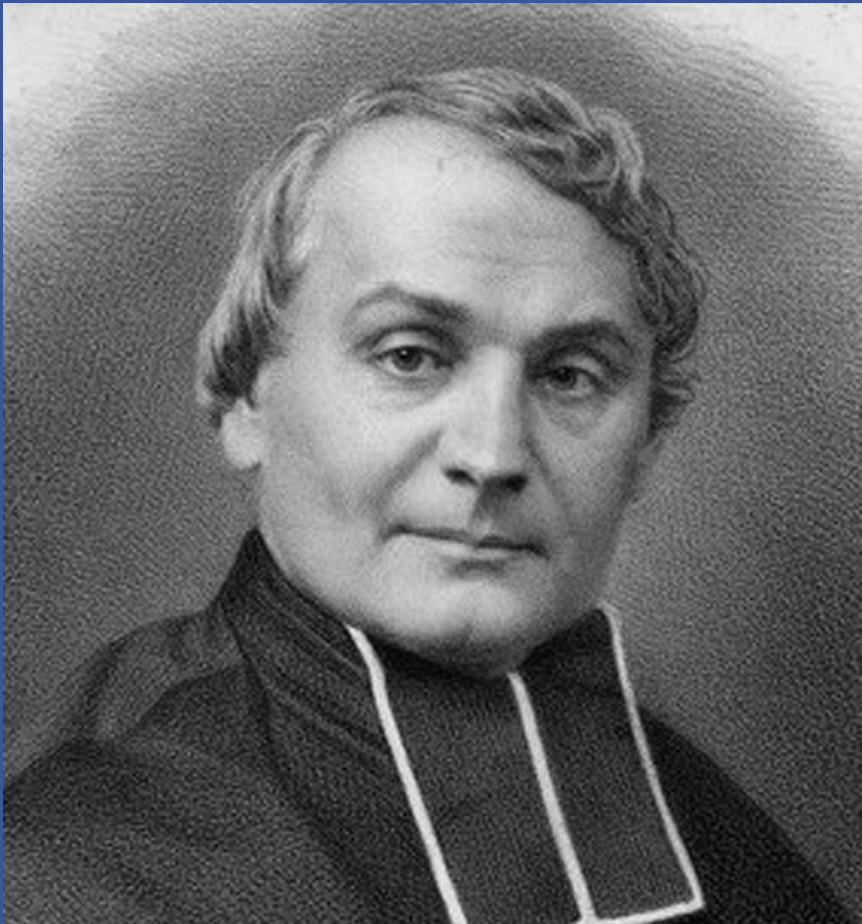


Gratry's Philosophy
A Translation of
Julián Marías' La Filosofía del
Padre Gratry



Translated from the Fifth Spanish Edition by

Mary L O'Hara, CSJ, PhD

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Translated from the fifth Spanish edition by

Mary L O'Hara, CSJ

with the assistance of

Catherine T McNamee, CSJ



Adelaide
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Gratry's Philosophy

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Making a lasting impact

In the middle of winter,
season of storms and tempests,
the winds cease to blow and it becomes calm.
These are the days in which, according to the old myth,
the halcyon calmly builds its nest
so that life will continue.

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Translator's Preface

A translation of a work by a Spanish author about a nineteenth-century philosopher may raise a few questions: Why Gratry? Why now? Because 'whatever in the past happens to have been of significance or value ought to be held in memory, insofar as this is possible, so that it can give us guidance' (Marilynne Robinson, Introduction to *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought*, 1998).

The particular work here presented has been long in coming, having been conceived when the translator first read it as a graduate student. At the time of its appearance in Spanish, its author, Julián Marías, who saw in Gratry an early phenomenologist, intended to show its relevance to the phenomenology current at the time. For us today, Gratry continues to hold the place Marías pointed out, but his advanced thinking on social matters and his perennially useful ideas in theology and philosophy and on the person make him of particular interest.

Alphonse-Joseph-Auguste Gratry (1805–1872) was born into the world of Napoleonic France and lived his entire life in a time of endless revolution. Recipient of an excellent classical education, he decided to pursue a degree in engineering, and was admitted to the outstanding École Polytechnique in France. Despite the cynical view of his parents and teachers toward religion, he experienced as a young man a religious conversion that determined the course of his future life.

Deeply immersed in the Parisian religious scene of the time, he became well known as a distinguished logician, theologian and social thinker, as an outstanding educator and preacher, and also as a spiritual director, especially of young men. He was one of the co-founders

of the Congregation of the Oratory in France after the Revolution. His English fellow Oratorian, Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, suggested Gratry's name as his possible successor as editor of the outstanding English Catholic periodical of the time. He was also a prolific writer on a broad range of subjects. Gratry's concern for the need to eliminate world hunger, for example, does not accidentally coincide with the feelings of many people today: his influence upon practical politics through the Christian Democratic parties of Europe and upon groups of socially concerned persons like Peter Maurin of the Catholic Worker movement was the result of devoted works by his many young disciples. Gratry's aim was to return to the origins of Western thought, but in doing this, he in fact inspired in his followers an appreciation of the ancient sources and a sense of the need for critically addressing the problems of his day.

Marías points out that, whereas Franz Brentano had numerous followers to carry on his work and to keep his ideas and works current, Gratry for various reasons lacked such a following; therefore, from the time of his death, he ceased to be considered an important philosopher. According to Marías the time is ripe for bringing Gratry into the contemporary philosophical conversation. In numerous ways Gratry's ideas can resonate more with people today than they did in his own time. It is with that in mind that I have undertaken to make the present translation.

The book on Gratry by Julián Marías presented here has enjoyed great success in Spain, having gone through five editions since 1941. When I first read it as a graduate student, it was Gratry's theory of the person, in particular his emphasis upon the idea of a special sense underlying one's intellectual and volitional powers, that attracted my interest because of its originality and power—although Gratry himself claimed to be original principally in going back to the sources of Western thought, especially to Plato and Aristotle. Marías' realisation of the need to understand philosophers' presuppositions exerted a powerful formative influence upon my own thought over the years.

Gratry's recognition of the need to cultivate the body as well as the spirit in the spiritual life sets him apart from many spiritual writers of his day and of ours. His interest in the person as a whole, body and soul, is evident in his little book *Les Sources*, translated into English as *The Well-Springs*. This very influential work, often given as a prize book or a present to young students, offers for someone aspiring to

a life of learning an introduction to all phases of the intellectual life, including the spiritual life. It became the inspiration for Sertillange's influential *The Intellectual Life*. The first part of *The Well-Springs*, a portion of Gratry's *Logic*, was brilliantly translated into English by Helen and Milton Singer. The second part, with practical directions and general observations, is not so readily available. It is therefore appended to this book, along with some selections from Gratry's book on social thought and a quotation from Peter Maurin.

The present work of translation has been a labor of love. In carrying it out I have received generous assistance from a number of persons, in particular from Agatha Grossman, CSJ, who read a preliminary version and corrected a number of errors; from the late Mary Henry Nachtsheim, CSJ, who checked translations from the French; from Agnes Ward, CSJ, who checked translations from the Latin; from the late Bernard J Portz, SJ, who corrected the translation of several pages of mathematical text; from the late John H Nota, SJ, who corrected translations from the German; and finally from Catherine McNamee, CSJ, to whom I am most indebted for a meticulous reading of the entire text and for numerous corrections of infelicities as well as of some incorrect renderings of certain Spanish phrases. I am particularly grateful to the following persons for preparing the final manuscript: Benedict C Skemp, Lynn Alcorn Frame, Cyndy Krey, Jeanette Jungbauer, Madonna Clare Adams and, most importantly, Dolores Steinberg. To all of them as well as to the Sisters of Saint Joseph who have enabled me to spend time on this work, I am most grateful.

Mary L O'Hara, CSJ
12 August 2011

Prologue

This fifth edition of the present book coincides with the centenary of the death of Gratry (1805–1872). Written in 1941, it appeared in Spanish bookstores—after not a few vicissitudes, which I shall one day recount at leisure—thirty years ago, in the first months of 1942. It was my second book, a little posterior to my *Historia de la Filosofía*. The present edition includes additions made in 1951 and collected in *Obras*, IV.

The situation of philosophy has changed considerably in the space of two generations. When it was first published, the book encountered the official vigilance of a closed scholasticism that rebuffed the innovative attitude of Gratry, which itself anticipated in so many ways the philosophy that was actually being created—and of a great part of that which has subsequently been done. Now, at the end of three decades, the manifest horizon of philosophy appears to have changed to attitudes very like the positivism that dominated European thought when Gratry wrote his books, something that interfered with his work being understood and assimilated in his own time.

This gives to this study an unexpected currency. When it was written, some thirty years ago, it faced an imposed archaism at the same time as it made manifest the beginnings of what is [now] most current and creative. Now however, the philosophy which is set forth here affirms itself before another archaism: the repetition—without too much change—of the dominant mental form in the presence of which Gratry was able to innovate with genius.

In correcting the proofs of this book I felt its pages agitated by a new drama, inasmuch as it crosses three levels of history, precisely when we commemorate the centenary of the death of the philosopher Gratry.

Julián Marías
1 July 1972

Introduction

I propose in this book to study the most profound nucleus of the philosophy of Father Gratry. With this it remains to be said that the theme of this investigation has a strictly philosophical sense and range, and that I do not have to occupy myself with the personality of Gratry, with his religious activity or his theological ideas, save only in the measure in which these cannot be prescindcd from in understanding his philosophy. But this explanation does not suffice. It is necessary, further, to indicate in just what sense I intend to study this philosophical thought of Gratry.

Father Gratry is an almost unknown philosopher in our time. To most of our contemporaries he is altogether unknown, even to his name. In most of the current books that deal with the history of philosophical thought he is scarcely mentioned. In some of them one finds a few lines alluding to Gratry, which usually come down to an indication of his dates, the titles of two or three of his works, and little or nothing more; often, some disoriented and so misleading commentary. No more? Yes, some books and shorter studies, which will be mentioned later, have been written on Gratry. But the interesting point is that they have not succeeded in making him known and putting him into intellectual circulation. Some examples will turn out to be particularly instructive. If we examine the more current books on the history of philosophy, we find that there appears to be no mention of Gratry either in such well-known works as those of Messer,¹ or of

1. *Historia de la Filosofía*, Spanish translation, *Revista de Occidente*.

Vorlander,² or in the French of Janet-Seailles,³ or in that of Russell,⁴ or in the Dictionary of Runes.⁵

No allusion, either, in the extensive bibliographies of Gilson's historical studies, nor in Goblot,⁶ nor in Roustan,⁷ despite their being French books and despite Gratry's having treated extensively the problems of logic and psychology; for the same reason, his absence from Cuvillier's Manual⁸ is strange. Nor is he apparently cited in Sigwurt⁹ nor in Erdmann,¹⁰ who are so well informed about studies of logic. In Windelband¹¹ one finds a simple mention in a note; in Brehier¹² one page of his 1700 is dedicated to Gratry; in the enormous heap of Uberweg,¹³ mere references. Still more interesting is the fact that in the book of Benrubi,¹⁴ dedicated precisely to setting forth 'the founts and currents of contemporary philosophy in France', which studies more than one hundred fifty French authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he does not appear among them, and his name appears only twice, cited in passing without elaboration. These examples, which could be multiplied, show superabundantly that the significance of Gratry—his very existence—is not available in any way in our time.

After other works, above all that of B Pointud-Guillemot,¹⁵ a learned German, Emil J Scheller,¹⁶ set out to gather, with Teutonic patience, a bibliography of Gratry, which includes the articles, editions, and simple mentions or citations of him in all kinds of books and review articles; the very fact that this could be attempted and realised in an approximately sufficient manner is especially signifi-

2. *Historia de la Filosofía*, translated by JV Viqueira.

3. *Histoire de la philosophie*. 'Les problèmes et les écoles'.

4. *A History of Western Philosophy* (1946).

5. *The Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: 1944).

6. *Lógica* (Spanish translation).

7. *Psicología* (Spanish translation).

8. *Manuel de philosophie* (2 volumes).

9. *Logik*.

10. *Logik*.

11. *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1935), 559.

12. *Historia de la Filosofía* (Spanish translation), II, 697.

13. *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*.

14. *Les sources et les courants de la philosophie contemporaine en France*.

15. *Essai sur la philosophie de Gratry* (Paris: 1917).

16. *Grundlagen der Erkenntnislehre bei Gratry* (Halle: 1929).

cant, and a glance at that bibliography shows, furthermore, that for the most part it comes from the time of Gratry or from the years following his death.

All these facts would lead one to suppose that the interest in Gratry would be very slight; this book claims to give a response to this supposition. But something more important must be kept in mind; the allusions to Gratry that the most representative books of those that mention him contain reveal not only a minimal appreciation but a concrete ignorance of his thought. Well now, the fact that a philosopher who had considerable renown and approval in his own time should be unknown indicates something abnormal; in the majority of cases it signifies, simply, an absence of a true philosophy. On the other hand, one can hardly make of them those 'hidden geniuses' without influence in the history of philosophy, without roots or consequences. Those unknown and almost uncultivated thinkers who then turn out to have anticipated all cartesianism or kantianism excite the mistrust of every philosophical mind and end by showing their complete inanity. The discoveries of great philosophers inspire, then, a limitless mistrust, and one need not fear that I intend here to present one more instance of the type to which a certain sort of historical investigation has accustomed us.

The case of Gratry is quite distinct. In the first place, he is not a spontaneous thinker without known roots, but rather the contrary, the most explicitly rooted and founded of his time, to the point that this rootedness is essential to his philosophy and constitutes one of its capital traits and the source of his interest for us. Father Gratry belongs to the line that originates in the Greek philosophers and ends in the great modern systems of cartesian filiation. And further, he gathers and sums up insistently all of this tradition, of which he feels himself the heir and repository. And not in just any way whatever, but rather he presents his own philosophy as an explication of the most substantive and common content of the entire history of philosophy. This question will occupy us at length in the following pages.

In the second place, even given the connection of Gratry to the continuity of philosophical thought, there remains the abnormality of his having been lost sight of and forgotten. Why is Father Gratry not known today? We must of necessity find it anomalous; but this need not be in the philosopher, but could be found in the other element that intervenes in his influence and his reputation: the time in

which he lived. And so it is, in fact. The importance and the philosophical interest of Gratry have made it fall into oblivion, although that appears paradoxical. It is the fate of the most profound and original thinkers of the nineteenth century: Maine de Biran, Brentano, Dilthey; *today* those names are very well known, but for many the names alone; and, furthermore, this repute dates only from the last few years and has been achieved through the work of disciples who have the task of bringing into relief the meaning of the philosophy of these thinkers. Besides, we could say something similar about the best-known philosophers of the past century, Comte or Nietzsche: their fame has been immense, but it has been usual to overlook the most authentic meaning of their philosophy, and today it would be necessary to call it into question in a radical way, rejecting three-fourths of the image their contemporaries had of them. The second half of the nineteenth century was a time blind to metaphysics, and, for that reason, it could not see it; where there was something else, even though very secondary, as in the last two mentioned philosophers, this was paid attention to, omitting what was most substantive; where scarcely anything but metaphysics was to be found, everything was left in silence and obscurity. Even Maine de Biran remained relegated to the penumbra, to say no more;¹⁷ Brentano alone has been studied and known sufficiently since 1900, that is to say, through his disciples: Kastil, Kraus, Meinong, above all Husserl and the other phenomenologists; with reference to Dilthey, only now is there beginning to be clarity about him, and for the first time in these last years his extraordinary philosophical importance is being discovered. (See the chapters in the book of Ortega, *Guillermo Dilthey y la idea de la vida* [Wilhelm Dilthey and the idea of life], published in the *Revista de Occidente* of November, 1933 to January 1934).¹⁸ Well then; with Father Gratry the same thing occurs in even greater measure. The point of view in which he is located in relation to religion contributed

17. Gouhier is still working on the publication of his works and on his study. See J Marías: 'El hombre y Dios en la filosofía de Maine de Biran', in *San Anselmo y el insensato*, 1944.

18. OC [Obras completas] VI, 165–213. See also J Marías: Introduction to the *Teoría de las concepciones del mundo*, by Dilthey. [Cf *Biografía de la Filosofía*, Obras, II.] In the last decade much progress has been made in the knowledge of Dilthey, and it has been translated in Spain, Mexico, and Argentina, and, to a lesser extent, into other European languages.

to making him harder for his own time to assimilate; and, above all, the fact that Gratry centered all his philosophy on the problem of God, a question for this reason, that metaphysics lost all its meaning for more than a century, so that it is only barely beginning to recover it nowadays.

Gratry, as we shall see throughout this study, speaks a language which in its most profound dimension is unintelligible for his contemporaries; for this reason, when the first vogue which the strong personality of its author afforded to his work had passed, his epoch slid over his philosophy and generally passed certain decisive findings that are to be met with in his pages. Since no external reason caused later generations to fix upon his books, and he lacked the following of disciples as devoted as those of Brentano, Gratry remained at the margin of the history of philosophy, and his essential contribution to today's philosophy has not been utilized nor even known until the present. One might think that his influence, in virtue of those hazards or of an historic destiny, had been frustrated, and that the philosophy of our time has done without him; so that the thought of Gratry has been something lost by the living history of metaphysics, regardless of its intellectual qualities. But that is not so, and this is the reason for the present investigation. I believe that even now it is not too late; a series of aspects of the philosophy of our century has been constituted without reference to Gratry's contribution; but in this moment contemporary thought comes to confront some decisive questions, about which we do not find enough light in the contemporary philosophical traditions: the questions of the person and of God. It is precisely the moment in which the thought of Gratry can insert itself into the real movement of philosophy. In such a way now, and only now, it will be able to produce the fullness of its yield, be able to be understood sufficiently and fruitfully. From the present situation, Gratry acquires an extraordinary relief: everything his contemporaries could not see acquires for us an immediate and profound sense that gives us light on these central problems and on the whole of philosophy. Gratry, then, is no longer lost, but can reappear on the philosophic horizon to acquire his greater efficacy. Let us see how.

The study of the thought of Gratry presents a difficult problem. When the history of philosophy encounters any system, it always holds before itself a double element: on the one hand, the work itself that it tries to interpret; on the other, the later resonance of that work in philosophy, and therefore the variable image it has been acquiring over time. The history of philosophy tries then, from the given knowledge of the original work, to interpret it in a way that reveals its authentic sense and bestows light on the philosophy that proceeds from it. For example, if it is a question of studying the thought of Descartes, we must seek the most profound strata of cartesianism, to explicate them from their roots and make clear how from the philosophy of Descartes are born all the systems of rationalism. Here we cannot do this. In the first place, the thought of Father Gratry is not known; in the second, there is no philosophical continuation, at least visible, that comes from him.

We find ourselves, then, in a situation like that at the time when Gratry published his works: at that time there was an unknown philosophy and, naturally, the result of it. It appears, then, that what is to be done today is simply to expound the content of Gratry's philosophy and thus to make contact with him; thus to renew his philosophy, in such a way that this time, it may achieve in comprehensibility and influence what it did not at the time it first appeared. This is obvious; in fact, the first thing needed is to know the work of Gratry; and with this object I have recently published in Spanish translation his major work, *La connaissance de Dieu*.¹⁹

But this is not enough. The belief that a reading of this book, for example, is equivalent to what could have been done when it was first written, is a pure illusion. Gratry wrote his principal works from 1850–1870; seventy, eighty, ninety years have passed since then. We read in Gratry what his contemporary could not; each sentence has for us a distinct sense. We read Gratry *from* the present situation; the perspective has changed profoundly: much that remained almost unintelligible in 1860, in our time holds a great wealth of meaning; but this shows that it is illusory to claim simply *to read* Gratry; it is not possible to acquire mere *information* about him unless the reading of his books is an *historical interpretation*.

19. A. Gratry, *El conocimiento de Dios* (Madrid: Pegaso, 1941).

It is important to take account of this fact, in order not to seek a presumed 'objectivity' that would consist in the mere reproduction of his doctrine. For, what are Gratry's doctrines? This is precisely the problem. We need to underline in the pages of this philosopher something that seems to us to constitute more properly the basis of his thought; put in other terms, something that *interests* us, that seems living in his philosophy, and for that reason, that we can understand. And here we have to ask ourselves a new question: this *interesting* content today, capable of being up to date, *why* does it interest us? What do we claim to do today with Gratry? Why do we need him?

The adequate answer to these questions will be found only in the whole of this study; but already it is clear from this that the mere reading of Gratry is not possible without further qualification, unless it must necessarily be a reading *from* our philosophical situation and *in view of* our concrete problem, to resolve what we have flowing from him. For this reason, simple *exposition* is scarcely possible; rather the whole intent of his philosophy obliges us to articulate and dispose the ideas of Gratry according to a determinate point of view; determined by three elements, which are: 1) the reality of his philosophy in 1941; 2) the problem we intend to clarify (therefore, the direction in which we seek to advance philosophy in the immediate future); 3) the idea we hold of the history of philosophy as an integral element of philosophy itself. Therefore, the past and the future of philosophy, in the unity of the present in which they are given, intervene in every intention to set forth and interpret the thought of Gratry: that is to say, the philosophic problem in its integrity.

I shall not attempt, then, to give a complete exposition of the work of Father Gratry, following the plan of his books; I shall simply refer to them and to the personality of their author briefly to supply for their lack of familiarity. But, above all, I shall fix my attention on some points that interest us today, that can be fertile and cast light upon some grave questions preceding those that the philosophy of our day debates. The image of Gratry that will be obtained will be very distinct from that which his contemporaries, including in a certain sense the philosopher himself, could see of him; but it should be—this at least is my intention and my hope—the *true* image, in a very concrete philosophic sense; that is to say, the image of that which was truly *philosophic* in Gratry, and which for this reason can be incorporated in the living history of philosophy, carrying it further, and perdure in it and in that metaphysical movement.

And at the same time, the inclusion of Gratry in the history of philosophy will illuminate for us the meaning of this history and will enable us to understand better the origins and the meaning of the philosophy of our time.

This, then, is what I propose at the beginning of this study. It does not in any way treat of an archeological curiosity, of an interesting find of past thought as such; no more of the joy one experiences in reliving a past historical era; nor even of the usefulness of using a series of valuable ideas. Nothing of this; my intention is to include a necessary element in the history of philosophy of our time, and make it yield its efficacy from the point of view of truth.

Chapter One

Gratry's Place in the History of Philosophy

Gratry's Personality

Alphonse Gratry—Auguste Joseph Alphonse—was born in Lille in 1805 and died in 1872. He received a rigorous scientific training in the Polytechnic School of Paris. Later he was ordained priest and was professor in Strasbourg and in the capital. In 1852, Gratry and the Abbé Pététot, curé of Saint Roque in Paris, thought of organizing a center for promoting the Catholic movement which had been reborn in France. Gratry wanted to found a 'workshop for apologetics' in which various priests animated by a common belief could collaborate freely. In this way the so-called Oratory of the Immaculate Conception was founded, reviving the name and spirit of the old Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus, or Oratory of France founded in 1611 by Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, to which such prominent intellectual figures as Condren, Thomassin, and above all, Malebranche, had belonged. This French Oratory of the seventeenth century in turn went back to the foundations of Saint Philip Neri in Italy in the sixteenth century. These groups of priests preferred to dedicate themselves to the ecclesiastical ministry and to study, with great freedom, without vows or rigorous rule, without forming an Order, and solely in a spirit of collaboration. The spiritual and intellectual fecundity of the Oratory was very high in its various periods.

Beginning in 1863 Gratry was professor of moral theology at the Sorbonne; he also belonged to the French Academy. He was, then, an outstanding public figure, who achieved great prominence during the polemics of 1870, on the occasion of the [First] Vatican Council, about the infallibility of the Pope. Gratry was not an obscure, unknown figure in his time; on the contrary he was a well-known and

esteemed thinker and writer. His works appeared in various editions during his lifetime; *La connaissance de Dieu* [the knowledge of God] had already had seven editions by 1864.¹ This makes more interesting and puzzling the obscurity into which Father Gratry fell later. What superficial dimensions of his thought did his contemporaries perceive? We shall have to touch upon this point in speaking of the reaction to his philosophy by Émile Saisset and Ravaisson. In 1872, after a fruitful life of religious fervor and intellectual power, Gratry died, leaving a few books of uneven scope and value. What are these books?

The Writings of Gratry—The principal writings of Father Gratry make up a *Course of Philosophy*: theodicy, logic, psychology, and ethics. But in no way is it a question of a philosophical classroom manual nor a series of systematic treatises on these disciplines. They are rather the developments of his original points of view, in each of these disciplines, about the central question of philosophy, which is for him the problem of God. I shall give here a brief summary of the content of these important books:

La connaissance de Dieu is the most important work of Gratry. In a certain sense, the whole of his philosophy is included in it; the rest fill out and develop special points, which are nevertheless found already treated in the great book about God. His two volumes include an Introduction and two parts. The introduction is a splendid and surprising analysis of the contemporary spiritual condition, understood as an essential weakness of reason, from which proceed the personal crisis and that of religion. In the first part Gratry sets forth the problem of theodicy, that of the knowledge of God and his attributes, as the central question of philosophy; he goes on to outline the history of theodicy—and thus, at least in its essential nucleus, the history of philosophy—in the philosophers ‘of first rank,’ from Plato to Leibniz; we shall soon see who they are and what are the reasons for his choice; finally, in the last two chapters, he studies the attributes of God and the *infinitesimal procedure* for proving the existence of God; with this, Gratry summarises the essentials of his theory on the two procedures of reason that he was expounding at length in

1. Later I shall emphasize his editions in detail. [Translator's note: English translation by Abby Langdon Alger, *Guide to the Knowledge of God: A Study of the Chief Theodicies* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1892)].