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St Thomas Aquinas

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St Thomas Aquinas

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Series Editor: Richard Bailey

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Series Editor's Preface

Education is sometimes presented as an essentially practical activity. It is, it seems, about teaching and learning, curriculum and what goes on in schools. It is about achieving certain ends, using certain methods; and these ends and methods are often prescribed for teachers, whose duty it is to deliver them with vigour and fidelity. With such a clear purpose, what is the value of theory?

Recent years have seen politicians and policy makers in different countries explicitly denying *any* value or need for educational theory. A clue to why this might be is offered by a remarkable comment by a British Secretary of State for Education in the 1990s: 'Having any ideas about how children learn, or develop, or feel, should be seen as subversive activity.' This pithy phrase captures the 'problem' with theory: it subverts, challenges, and undermines the very assumptions on which the practice of education is based.

Educational theorists, then, are trouble-makers in the realm of ideas. They pose a threat to the status quo and lead us to question the common sense presumptions of educational practices. But this is precisely what they should do because the seemingly simple language of schools and schooling hides numerous contestable concepts that in their different usages reflect fundamental disagreements about the aims, values, and activities of education.

Implicit within the *Bloomsbury Library of Educational Thought* is an assertion that theories and theorizing are vitally important for education. By gathering together the ideas of some of the most influential, important, and interesting educational thinkers, from the Ancient Greeks to contemporary scholars, the series has the ambitious task of providing an accessible yet authoritative resource for a generation of students and practitioners. Volumes within the series are written by acknowledged leaders in the field, selected both for their scholarship

and their ability to make often complex ideas accessible to a diverse audience.

It will always be possible to debate the list of key thinkers that are represented in this series. Some may question the inclusion of certain thinkers; some may disagree with the exclusion of others. That is inevitably going to be the case. There is no suggestion that the list of thinkers represented within the *Bloomsbury Library of Educational Thought* is in any way definitive. What is incontestable, however, is that these thinkers have fascinating ideas about education, and that taken together, the *Library* can act as a powerful source of information and inspiration for those committed to the study of education.

Richard Bailey
Roehampton University, London

Foreword

As Vivian Boland points out in his Introduction, a recent companion to educational philosophy deals with no medieval thinkers between St Augustine and the Renaissance. Indeed, Nel Noddings, in her textbook *Philosophy of Education* (Westview Press, 2005, second edition) jumps from Aristotle to Rousseau, and then devotes a whole chapter to John Dewey (no one else getting that honour), as though nothing of significance had been written for 2000 years. The importance of Vivian Boland's book, therefore, lies not only in its detailed and scholarly exposition of Thomas Aquinas as a philosopher of education, but also in its demonstration of the foolishness of this historical gap. Aquinas's philosophical exploration was systematic and included much about the aims of education, the nature of teaching, and the structure and content of the curriculum, from which we might learn. Indeed, Aquinas achieved this with a thoroughness and an analytic clarity which few, before or after, could equal. The recent and growing interest in Aquinas as a philosopher has not been paralleled by a specific interest in him as a philosopher of education. Thanks to Vivian Boland, that can no longer be the case.

Aquinas saw himself as a teacher first and foremost. Therefore, throughout his many philosophical and theological works, as Boland shows, he constantly returned to questions of teaching – to pedagogy, to what should be taught, and to the overall aims of teaching this knowledge and these virtues in this particular way.

First, with regard to pedagogy, Boland points to the importance attached to method and to the care which medieval philosophers gave to thinking about the most suitable approach to teaching: the *lectio* (careful reading of a significant text), followed by the *disputatio* (identification of issues about which there is not common agreement and which need to be systematically analysed and argued over),

followed finally by the *repetitio* (articulation of the conclusion reached). This approach required a detailed and unambiguous statement of one's 'thesis' or position, the clarification of key terms, the balanced assessment of opposing views, the logical development of the argument through major and minor premises, the clear statement of conclusion, and, finally, the setting out of the corollaries or the consequences of the conclusion reached. It is characteristic of much educational thinking, and indeed of the philosophical reflections upon it, that it lacks precisely this clarity of exposition, this balanced account of competing positions, and this ruthlessly logical deduction of consequences.

Second, with regard to what should be taught, Boland points to the intrinsic connection, developed in Aquinas, between educating someone and introducing him or her not only to the different kinds of knowledge, but also to the virtues or dispositions which constitute the good life and human flourishing. It is by no means rare for philosophers of education to see the aims of education to lie in the initiation into different forms of knowledge, but without a subtle analysis of these different forms or of their logical hierarchy. Nor is it rare for such philosophers to posit the acquisition of knowledge as the aim of education to the exclusion of the pursuit of virtue. For Aquinas, the acquisition of knowledge or the pursuit of virtue must be understood within a deeper ethical framework which analyses what is distinctively human development and flourishing. Even if the readers do not accept all the theological background to such an ethical framework, they should be persuaded of the importance of the questions themselves and of the need to see how the pursuit of knowledge and the formation of virtue are to be integrated in the education of all young people. As Boland so aptly shows, Aquinas demonstrates that you cannot get very far in teaching without raising the most fundamental questions in philosophy – concerning the ultimate values worth pursuing, the nature of knowledge and truth, the basis in experience of one's thinking and in the natural inclinations to make sense of that experience, and the relation of individual learning both to the traditions inherited and to future societal well-being.

Professor Richard Pring
University of Oxford

Introduction

Blackwell's *Companion to the Philosophy of Education* (Curren, 2003) jumps from Augustine of Hippo to the Renaissance and discusses no thinker of the medieval period. This particular thousand-year leap, from Augustine's death in 428 to the first decades of the fifteenth century, is encountered in other areas of thought too. Until recently in many places, this was a standard leap to make in the history of philosophy, as if no wisdom of enduring importance is to be found in those thousand years. Lately, however, there has been a revival of interest in medieval philosophy, even in places where one would not have expected it (McGrade, 2003: 1–9).

It is true that Augustine remained the great teacher of the West all through the Middle Ages. Yet it seems odd that Blackwell's *Companion* should omit treatment of Thomas Aquinas at least, as well as of developments in the contexts and methods of learning and teaching which characterized the monastic culture, and then the scholastic culture, of the centuries between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance. There is no doubt, for example, that the Middle Ages made important and enduring contributions to pedagogical method. The 'disputed question' that emerged in the late twelfth century as a key teaching method was used in the universities of Europe, across many disciplines, for hundreds of years (Lawn, 1993). The work of translating familiar and unknown texts from the ancient world gathered speed from the end of the eleventh century to become a major factor in stimulating scholarship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Most importantly for contemporary debates about education, the university is a medieval institution, growing out of the monastic and other religious communities that flourished, in the Carolingian Empire in particular, but in all parts of Europe wherever the civilizing effects of the Rule of St Benedict were experienced (Dales,

1995a; Drijvers and MacDonald, 1995; Leclercq, 1978). Nor should the Islamic contribution to the origins of Western education be overlooked (Nakosteen, 1964). Medieval Islamic thinkers, as we shall see, were alongside their Christian and Jewish counterparts in the questions about teaching and learning that they faced and in the solutions that they proposed.

To judge from the number of books and articles being published about his thought, Thomas Aquinas remains a significant voice in contemporary discussions of a wide range of philosophical, psychological, ethical, and theological issues. Anthony Kenny comments as follows about philosophy after Wittgenstein:

One side effect of Wittgenstein's liberation of philosophy from Cartesian prejudices is that it enables those who accept it to give a more sympathetic welcome to the writings of pre-Cartesian philosophers, and in particular to medieval scholastics.

(Kenny, 1984: xi)

Besides Aquinas, the work of, for example, Anselm of Canterbury and Peter Abelard continues to engage philosophers directly in thinking about language, for instance, or faith and reason, or intention in moral reasoning. Thinkers such as William of Conches in the twelfth century and Robert Grosseteste in the thirteenth century are early practitioners of methods of research and analysis that were to develop into modern scientific practice.

Discontent with some aspects of what is called 'modernity' has opened the door for fresh appropriations of the work of thinkers from cultures and periods that until recently would have been considered 'of purely historical interest'. Although self-doubt is not universal in modernity, and post-modernity is notoriously difficult to define, a lot of work is currently underway on the premise that non-modern or pre-modern ways of thinking need to be revisited. Fundamentally, the need is for fresh illumination about knowledge, truth, and meaning, and the relevance of this trend to thinking about education is immediately obvious. So, for example, the 'Thomism' of Alasdair MacIntyre is a recognized participant in contemporary discussions of education, particularly in North America.

There are good reasons, then, for looking again at Thomas Aquinas from the perspective of his understanding of learning and teaching. He spent his life as a student and teacher, and he explicitly raised the question of what is involved in teaching. In fact, with a characteristic penchant for asking the most radical question immediately, he wonders whether it is even right to say that one person can teach another. He is interested not only in the psychological and epistemological considerations that might be offered in response to this question, but also, and primarily, in the metaphysical and theological depth that an adequate answer ought to contain.

The argument of this book is in four parts. Part 1 tells the story of Aquinas's life and work by discussing where he learned and where he taught, how he learned, and how he taught. The most significant choices he made were to join the Dominicans and to collaborate with Albert the Great in rethinking Christian theology using the philosophy of Aristotle, and these choices are evaluated.

Part 2 presents a critical exposition of Aquinas's thought about teaching and learning. It begins by noting the contexts in which he talks about teaching and then examines the texts in which he does so. (Recent accounts of the texts on teaching tend to ignore their context: see for example Davies, 2002a and Quinn, 2001.) A number of key issues arise from this examination that need to be explored in greater detail. So, his understanding of knowledge and truth, and of reason and faith, are considered. A further way in which we learn about his approach to education is from the pedagogical concern that persists through the course of his writing career. The roots of this concern are identified in his scholasticism, his Aristotelianism, and his Christianity. He learns about education from the academic and scholastic world to which he belongs, from newly available texts of Aristotle, and from what the Christian tradition, in particular the Bible, has to say about teaching. Not surprisingly, he regards Jesus of Nazareth as 'the most excellent of teachers'.

In exploring what Aquinas has to say about the theory and practice of learning and teaching, we will begin to appreciate the theological and philosophical foundations of that theory and practice. Before attending to those foundations at greater length (in Part 4), Part 3 considers the reception and influence of his work. This is a vast topic

and all that can be offered here is a sketch of the history of Thomism. Because his works have been received and his doctrine interpreted and applied according to the needs and concerns of many times and places, this sketch is inevitably brisk and superficial. Emphasis is given to the importance of his thought for twentieth-century theology and to the work of two Thomists, Sertillanges and Maritain, who sought to apply his ideas about education to modern conditions. Before proceeding to the final part, some difficulties associated with contemporary interpretations and uses of Aquinas's thought are discussed.

Part 4 returns to his thought about education, this time examining more radically the philosophical and theological bases for what has already been presented and reviewed in Part 2. Central to the argument here is that Aquinas's approach is rooted in theological convictions and is philosophically coherent. Three themes in his thought are considered in view of their importance for grounding his understanding of teaching and learning as well as their prominence in contemporary engagement with his thought, whether among philosophers or theologians. His account of teaching cannot be understood without some appreciation of what he says about creation, and specifically of what he says about the human creature.

His preference for a virtue-centered approach in moral philosophy and moral theology will be seen to follow from what he says about creation and anthropology, and this is the third theme considered in Part 4. The notion of virtue itself, as he understands it, is pedagogical and educational, implying a developmental and social understanding of the human being. All virtue is relevant in some way to learning and teaching, and there are particular virtues specifically concerned with those activities. Aquinas believes natural virtue is given a new finality by the Christian reality, the search for fulfillment being directed towards the goal of knowing and loving God. This faith illuminates everything he says about learning and teaching. His deepest thought about these activities can then be summarized in a statement of which the significance will hopefully become clear as the argument unfolds: if creation means teaching, redemption means learning.

I wish to thank the School of Theology, Philosophy and History at St Mary's University College, Twickenham, for granting me a

sabbatical semester in which to work on this book. My confrères at Blackfriars, Oxford also helped by rearranging my teaching responsibilities there. Irim Sarwar, teacher and librarian, made many constructive observations on the text, in its overall structure and in its details. Her incisive comments obliged me to sharpen the argument and to tell the story more clearly. Cecilia Hatt identified other ambiguities, posed further pertinent questions, and relieved me of the task of preparing the index. I am grateful also to other friends, family members, colleagues, and confrères whose interest and encouragement helped in the completion of this work.

Part 1

An Intellectual Biography of Thomas Aquinas

Knowledge of the life and writings of Aquinas is available in a number of standard works. For much of the latter part of the twentieth century, students approaching his thought for the first time could rely on a book by the French Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu (Chenu, 1950). Since then, the Cambridge medievalist and Renaissance scholar Kenelm Foster edited a translation of early biographies and other contemporary sources (Foster, 1959). James A. Weisheipl produced a major biography to mark the seventh centenary of Aquinas's death in 1974 (Weisheipl, 1974 and 1983). In a translation of some works by Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, Simon Tugwell gave a full account of the chronology of Aquinas's life and writings (Tugwell, 1988: 199–351).

A new point of departure is noticeable lately, clearly indebted to those already mentioned, but likely to remain the best place to begin for the foreseeable future. This is the work of Jean-Pierre Torrell (Torrell, 2002; Royal, 2005), which sets the chronology and content of Aquinas's writings within their historical and cultural background, recovering a stronger sense of Aquinas as, first and foremost, a Christian theologian, and highlighting the distinctive options that gave shape to his thought. Torrell also corrects a tendency to focus on Aquinas's best-known work, the *Summa theologiae*, to the neglect of other parts of his corpus, particularly his commentaries on scripture and on Neoplatonist texts.

Thomas Aquinas was born in 1224 or 1225 and died in 1274. He had become renowned in his lifetime as one of Europe's leading scholars and died on his way to the Council of Lyons to which Pope Gregory X had summoned him. Three biographies of Aquinas appeared soon after his death, by Peter Calo, Bernard Gui, and William of Tocco. The canonization process at Naples gathered first-hand testimonies about his life and character from many friends and acquaintances. According to Simon Tugwell, the most important sources for Aquinas's life are the biography by William of Tocco and the records of the canonization process at Naples (Tugwell, 1988: 291, note 1). Tugwell is not as negative about the reliability of the other two early lives as Torrell seems to be. The strength of William's life is that his two main sources of information were Thomas of San Severino, a nephew of Thomas Aquinas, and Catherine of Morra, a niece who knew her grandmother Theodora, Thomas's mother. The summary chronology followed here is drawn from Torrell (2002: 479–82) and Weisheipl (1974: 351–53), while keeping an eye on Tugwell (1988).

Chapter 1

Learning: Monte Cassino, Naples, Paris, and Cologne

Aquinas was a pupil and student at four different institutions. The first was Monte Cassino, the great Benedictine abbey near where he was born. The Aquino family lands of Roccasecca and Montesangiovanni belonged to the abbey, a fact that is still recorded on the walls of the cloister. Thomas was born in the family castle at Roccasecca, just north of Naples, in 1224 or 1225 (although Tugwell argues for 1226 [1988: 291–92, note 3]). His father was Landulf of Aquino, head of a minor branch of an important land-owning family, and his mother was Theodora Rossi of the Neapolitan Caracciolo family. The ruins of the Aquino castle in which Thomas was born can still be visited at Roccasecca.

From the age of six or so, Thomas went to school at Monte Cassino. As well as being taught how to read and write, he would have followed the established medieval curriculum of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric (the *trivium*), followed by arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (the *quadrivium*). This gave him direct contact with the Benedictine monastic tradition which had been a major force in preserving the learning of the ancient world and consolidating the teaching of the seven liberal arts that together made up the ‘threefold way’ and the ‘fourfold way’ that prepared the mind for philosophy and theology. The story that Thomas was an oblate at the monastery seems sufficiently well supported, intended by his family to become a monk there and even, some day perhaps, the Abbot.

This plan was frustrated by developments in politics and in Thomas’s sense of where his vocation lay. The strategic position of Monte Cassino means it has always been a very desirable location to secure in military campaigns. An ongoing struggle between

the papacy and Emperor Frederick II affected this part of Italy in Thomas's lifetime and his family became caught between the opposing forces. In the spring or summer of 1239, when Thomas was about fourteen, he was removed from the Abbey school and kept at home for some time.

When his schooling began again some months later, it was in Naples, in the 'secularizing' *studium generale* established there by Frederick II. At Monte Cassino, Thomas had been taught by a man called Erasmus who had moved to Naples before him (Torrell, 2002: 22, note 76). There was a lively intellectual atmosphere in Frederick's kingdom in southern Italy of which the budding university in Naples was the centerpiece (Torrell, 2002: 8–9, 10–11; Tugwell, 1988: 203). Here Thomas continued his studies of natural philosophy and was introduced for the first time to the serious study of Aristotle's philosophical writings at the hands of teachers like Master Martin who taught him grammar and logic, and Peter of Ireland who taught him natural philosophy and logic.¹

In Naples, Thomas came to know more about Aristotle, and he also encountered the Dominicans there. Founded by Dominic Guzman, they were one of the new orders of friars and were approved by the Pope in 1216, the same year in which Francis of Assisi received confirmation for his friars. The Dominicans were known as the 'friars preachers' because their work was to preach and teach, while the Franciscans became known as the 'friars minor' because of their emphasis on poverty and humility.

Thomas's family was not impressed with his desire to join the Dominicans – this band of peripatetic, mendicant friars who wandered from town to town, earning their living by questing for alms in return for preaching and teaching. Rather than living off the cultivated lands and other revenues of the great monastery, Thomas wanted to throw in his lot with what was, effectively, a group of intellectual beggars whose position in the Church was still controversial. In April 1244 (although Tugwell, 1988, argues for a year or two earlier), at the age of nineteen or twenty, Thomas joined them. Shortly afterwards, Thomas's family kidnapped him and subjected him to a year of virtual house arrest in the family castles of Montesangiovanni and Roccasecca. We are told that Thomas spent this time praying,

reading the whole of the Bible, and studying the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (Torrell, 2002: 15).

For reasons that remain unclear, but which must have involved more than mere persistence on Thomas's part, the family relented and he was allowed to return to the Dominicans. Perhaps fearing further changes of mind, the Dominicans acted quickly, and immediately sent him to Paris to continue his studies. It may be that changes in the political fortunes of the Aquino family also encouraged the Dominicans to get Thomas away sooner rather than later.

The Council of Lyons had excommunicated and deposed Frederick II on 17 July 1245 and it appears that the Aquino family may have then switched allegiance to the Pope. Certainly Reginald, the second son of Landulf, and Thomas's older brother, not only changed allegiance, but conspired against Frederick. Reginald was arrested by Frederick's forces, sentenced to death for his betrayal, and executed on Frederick's orders in 1246 (Tugwell, 1988: 208, 303, note 101).

Torrell describes Thomas's decision to join the Dominicans rather than the Benedictines as his most significant involvement in the politics of his time. His choice was not just against his parents' wishes but was also anti-Frederick (Torrell, 2002: 11–15, 21–23; Tugwell, 1988: 298, note 60, 299, note 65).

Thomas was born into a Lombard family that had moved south some decades earlier and whose land lay across the borders of papal- and imperial-controlled Italy. Part of the wider dispute between the papacy and Frederick II – 'Antichrist' as far as Pope Innocent IV was concerned – was the tussle for control of Monte Cassino. Thomas's father was initially an ally of Frederick II so that the family's fortunes were linked with the shifting fortunes of the Emperor. Thomas's time at Monte Cassino was cut short in 1239 because of such a shift in fortune (Torrell, 2002: vii, 2–5). More significantly, this background might help to explain the initial reaction of Thomas's family to his decision to join the Dominicans, who were solidly supportive of the papacy in its struggle with the Emperor. The irony in this is that Frederick's humanism led to the establishment of the *studium generale* in Naples, in which Thomas was introduced to the study of the humanities and philosophy. Perhaps it was a more general shift of allegiance within the family along with Frederick's excommunication

that opened the way for Thomas to return to the Dominicans. (For Thomas as a young Dominican, see Torrell, 2002: 45–51.)

Leaving behind the chaotic, even explosive, situation engulfing his family, Thomas arrived in Paris, probably in the autumn of 1245, at the third and most important center of learning in which he was a student. Although the controversies in which he became involved in Paris were not political in the ordinary sense, they were no less heated and occasionally threatened to erupt into violence.

Throughout the previous century, the monastic and other schools located in and around Paris had begun to cohere as a loose association of colleges of different nations and interests. Peter Abelard, in his *Historia Calamitatum*, gives us a good account of how things were a century or so before Thomas arrived. By the mid-1240s, the schools of Paris had moved decisively in the direction of constituting a single institution, made up of colleges and faculties, well on the way to becoming a university. Similar developments were taking place in Oxford, Bologna, Padua, and other centers of scholarship across Europe. Thomas came to Paris to live and work at the *studium generale* of the Dominicans in Saint Jacques, deliberately established in proximity to the other colleges and faculties of the university to allow the friars to get involved in the city's intellectual life.

Already there were Dominican and Franciscan professors at Paris, older men who had decided to become friars and who brought their chairs with them, much to the consternation of the secular clergy. Thomas was fortunate to have as his teacher in Paris one of the greatest intellectuals of the Middle Ages, Albertus (Albert) Magnus (c.1200–1280), a German with encyclopedic interests. Most significantly, Albert was collaborating with the then Master General of the Dominicans, Humbert of Romans, in promoting the study of Aristotle's philosophy. Albert was writing commentaries on all Aristotle's philosophical works, and Humbert was making the institutional changes necessary to ensure that natural philosophy would become a standard part of the friars' training. Just as Albert finished his commentaries, Humbert established the first *studium* of natural philosophy (Mulchahey, 1998: 145, 262).

It is thought that Thomas may have begun his career at Paris as a member of the faculty of arts, completing his philosophical studies

under Alexander and Arnoul of Provence. Others believe he went straight into the theology faculty (Torrell, 2002: 28–36). In any case, we can say that he studied philosophy and theology at Paris from 1245 and that he quickly became Albert's collaborator and colleague. In 1248, Albert was asked to go to Cologne to set up a house of studies for the Dominicans there. He took Thomas with him as his student and assistant. This time spent within the Dominican educational system completed Thomas's formal education. When he returned to Paris in 1252, it was to begin his career as a lecturer in theology.

Chapter 2

Teaching: Paris, Naples, Orvieto, and Rome

Having been a student in various institutions, Thomas went on to teach in different kinds of institutions. Between 1252 and 1259, he was lecturer (*sententiarius*, commentator on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard) and then professor at Paris, holding a chair in the faculty of theology, but maintaining close relations with the faculty of arts whose members were as interested in the reception of Aristotle's thought as Thomas and his colleagues in the theology faculty were. Arguments about Aristotle were to come later. The main controversy in which Thomas became involved during his first professorship at Paris concerned the status, even the right to exist, of the new orders of friars.

In choosing the Dominicans, Thomas knew he was choosing mendicancy, study, and preaching. Controversy about the first of these drew him into one of the most heated debates of the thirteenth century, between the friars and the secular masters at Paris. The debate was sparked off by William of Saint-Amour in the mid-1250s and revived by William's disciple, Gerard d'Abbeville, in 1269–70, and was basically about money. The two accepted ways in which clerics and monks were supported were through the ownership of land by the monasteries and through the acceptance of pastoral benefices. The friars, with their begging ways, intended to live at the expense of others, and this brought the theological justification for this new form of religious community into dispute. Thomas wrote a number of treatises at this time in defense of the friars, as did Albert and their great Franciscan contemporary, Bonaventure. The controversy found its way eventually to the papal court, where the friars received unwavering support.

In the midst of this controversy, in the late spring or early summer of 1256, Thomas gave his inaugural lecture, apparently guarded by soldiers in case of disturbance in the crowd.² Thomas's reputation was quickly established, for he was asked during these years to attend a

meeting in Valenciennes with a group of renowned Dominican scholars to review the organization of studies within the Order.³ Thomas had also begun his writing career, producing his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, composing treatises on the life of the friars, and, towards the end of his first sojourn in Paris, beginning his first major systematic work, the *Summa contra gentiles*.

Thomas returned to Italy towards the end of 1259. He lived and worked in a variety of settings over the next nine years; in Naples where he continued to work on the *Summa contra gentiles* (1259–61), in Orvieto where he was conventual lector at a time when the court of Pope Urban IV was based there (1261–65), and finally in Rome, at Santa Sabina on the Aventine, the headquarters of the Dominicans, where he was given scope to establish what has been called a *studium personale* or ‘personal academy’ (1265–68).⁴ Here, Thomas was given carte blanche to devise a new course in theology, in the way he thought best to initiate beginners into the subject, and to present the moral and pastoral theology of the friars within a full theological setting (Boyle, 1982). From this time at Santa Sabina emerged his most famous work, the *Summa theologiae*, one of the most influential theological writings of all time.

In 1268, Thomas was asked to return to Paris where trouble had flared again, this time concerning the reception of Aristotle. Conservative ‘Augustinian’ theologians, especially among the Franciscans, were not at all happy with the implications of some Aristotelian teachings. On the other side, some masters in the arts faculty were pushing an Averroistic reading of Aristotle that seemed to confirm the worst fears of the conservative theologians. Thomas came as a moderate to defend the use of Aristotle in Christian theology and to argue against the radical, Averroistic interpretations championed by the faculty of arts; views which were in danger of provoking renewed condemnations from Church authorities. The meaning and implications of this controversy between Augustinian and Averroistic views will be explained and explored in Part 4.

On 10 December 1270, the Bishop of Paris issued a first condemnation of radical Aristotelian views. Thomas Aquinas was not a target of this condemnation and remained unaffected by it. He continued to work on a series of commentaries on Aristotle’s writings including

Physics, Politics, Ethics and Metaphysics. There is a sense of urgency in this vast labor of commentary as he seeks to interpret Aristotle favorably and secure an acceptable reading of his thought. Thomas seems to have retained the esteem of most of those involved in this controversy, at least at the personal level. Nevertheless, some of his teachings were regarded with suspicion and included on a list condemned by the Bishop of Paris in 1277, three years after Thomas's death.

In 1272, Thomas left Paris for the last time and returned to Italy, to his own province of the Order, and to Naples, where he was asked to help in the work of the provincial *studium* there. As well as teaching and preaching, he was working on the third part of his *Summa theologiae*. Although he was not yet fifty, Thomas's life quickly came to its end. On 6 December 1273, he had an experience – psychological or spiritual or both – which brought his writing to a stop. In early 1274, he was asked by Pope Gregory X to attend the second Council of Lyons. On his way there in late February he hit his head against a tree, was taken to the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova, and died on 7 March.

Stephen Tempier, Bishop of Paris, and Robert Kilwardby, Archbishop of Canterbury, condemned some of Aquinas's teachings in 1277. Robert Pecham, Kilwardby's successor at Canterbury, confirmed this condemnation in 1284. Criticisms of Thomas's approach also began to appear in the academic world. Fellow Dominicans and others responded by defending his teachings against these critics, and the Order threw its weight behind his reputation at its general chapter in 1279. Forty years later, a process for the canonization of Thomas Aquinas began in Naples and in Fossanova. Pope John XXII canonized Thomas at Avignon on 18 July 1323, although it was not until 14 February 1325 that the Paris condemnation of 1277, insofar as it affected his teaching, was revoked. Finally, on 15 April 1567, another Dominican, Pope Pius V, proclaimed Thomas a 'doctor of the Church'.

Politics and economics are always factors in the provision and management of education, and the different institutions in which Thomas studied and taught – a Benedictine school, budding universities in Naples and Paris, local, provincial, and international Dominican schools – were financed and overseen in different ways. They were

at one in seeking to establish and protect leisure, the Greek *skolé*, from which the terms ‘scholar’, ‘scholarship’, ‘school’, and ‘scholastic’ all come. In this sense, ‘leisure’ means a protected time and space for study, and is, according to Joseph Pieper, the basis of culture. Thomas was fortunate to have been allowed so much of that leisure and to have had the gifts of intelligence and dedication to make such extraordinary use of it (Pieper, 1952: 23–81).

One of the strengths of Jean-Pierre Torrell’s work has been to challenge the idea that the life of Thomas Aquinas was simply a sheltered, peaceful, and uninterrupted time of scholastic leisure; a round of teaching, reading, and writing from which he rarely took a break. Thomas’s writings, by any standards extraordinary both in quantity and quality, are often just listed as if he could have written any of them at any time in his life, as if the historical context of these texts does not require careful explanation if they are to be properly evaluated and understood. Thomas was heavily involved in the affairs and controversies of his time – responding to requests for advice from many parts of Europe, defending the mendicants, defending the use of Aristotle, attending provincial and general chapters of the Order, helping to shape the Order’s life of study, and so on (Torrell, 2002: 171). Contemporary scholarship seeks to understand his work in its historical and cultural contexts, and to keep his thought alive for the many philosophical, psychological, political, ethical, and theological discussions to which it still has something to contribute.

Chapter 3

Reading, Disputing, Repeating

The monastic schools continued and developed the teaching methods that had been used in the ancient world and transmitted these to the scholastic culture that emerged from the twelfth century (Leclercq, 1978). There were three parts to the teaching method of scholasticism: *lectio*, *disputatio*, and *repetitio*, developed from the *trivium* of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. *Lectio*, the reading of texts, was fundamental. The great text was the Bible, but other classical texts – of the Fathers of the Church, of philosophers, of poets – were read carefully. Much of the student's time was spent reading these great texts with the teacher commenting and explaining as they went along. The first part of scholastic education, then, was to introduce students to classical texts, and the practice of *lectio* still gives us much of our pedagogical terminology: 'lecture', 'lecturer', 'lector', 'lectern', and 'lesson'.

A teacher's comments could be written up in a number of ways, from full-blown commentaries to short notes with a range of other styles in between. Among the works of Aquinas are commentaries on scripture, Aristotle, Boethius, and other authors, presented in a variety of forms. The *lectura* or *reportatio* referred to a report of a live lecture taken down by a student or scribe. The *expositio* or *ordinatio* was a finished product, written or dictated by the master himself. The *glossa continua* and the *postilla* consisted of brief comments or notes. The *sententia* was a sentence-by-sentence commentary. The *scriptum* and *commentarium* were book-length considerations of a text.⁵ The *collationes* refer to collections of homilies on a text. We even find a *tabula* composed by Aquinas (a list of the themes in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*), a traditional teaching aid for giving students an overview of a work to be studied (see Mansfeld, 1994).

The second part of scholastic education was the *quaestio disputata*, the disputed question. Although some see it taking form from Boethius onwards, more usually it is regarded as originating in the work of Peter Abelard, particularly in his book *Sic et non*, or *Yes and no*. In it he gathered what seem like contradictory statements from the Fathers of the Church, and invited his readers to think about them and to resolve the contradictions if they could. Abelard was keen to push the place of logic or dialectic as a criterion of truth even in theology. Where Anselm spoke of believing in order to understand, Abelard pleaded the needs of his students who claimed, he said, 'that nothing could be believed unless it was first understood'.⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux and others were unsettled by Abelard's enthusiasm for dialectic, an enthusiasm that seemed to threaten the authority of tradition, and likewise the importance of faith, as a criterion of truth.

By Thomas's time, the disputed question had a secure place among the ways of teaching and learning and it continued to be a standard way of teaching in the universities of Europe until the eighteenth century (Lawn, 1993). The master had to be prepared to speak about questions, not simply as they arose from the authoritative texts he might be reading, but free of those texts in a more systematic way, or, even more occasionally, as the concerns and interests of his audience dictated (the *quaestiones quodlibetales*).

Although the structure of the disputed question may seem strange to people for whom the essay has become the standard way of presenting thought, it does continue the Socratic tradition of teaching through dialog. This is true of a disputed question orally presented, but it is also true of written texts. Each article of the *Summa theologiae*, for example, is a mini disputed question. Aquinas not only gives his own views on a subject, but canvasses the views of others, calls in a range of voices in the opening arguments, summons an authoritative witness in defense of his position, then expounds his own views, and finally responds to the other speakers whose arguments have been heard and to which reaction must be given. The disputed question, then, is sometimes a formal dialog. When written up it can be thought of as a formalized dialog. This point, that the truth is to be sought together, in conversation and exchange between human beings, is an

important one when considering Aquinas's understanding of learning and teaching.

The third part of scholastic pedagogical method was the *repetitio*: students were expected to repeat what they had learned. One official within the Dominican system was the master of students, with overall responsibility for their development and progress. Students were required to repeat to the master what they had learned that day. The master was then to help them to understand better things that might be difficult or obscure. This repetition of what had been learned was not just to ensure that it stayed in the students' memories, but because the culture to which they belonged was basically an oral one. If they were to be preachers and teachers in their turn, or if they were to be involved in the affairs of church or state, then they had to be articulate, capable of putting forward in speech what they had come to know and understand.⁷

The threefold pedagogy of *lectio*, *disputatio* and *repetitio* corresponds with the three tasks of the thirteenth-century professor of theology at Paris: *legere*, *disputare* and *praedicare*: to read, to dispute and to preach (Torrell, 2002: 79–108; Weisheipl, 1974: 116). Although the latter, *praedicare*, has overtones of specifically ecclesiastical responsibility – and all professors and lecturers at this point are, in any case, clerics – it can also be understood in its more literal sense of 'putting one's voice forward' or 'speaking forth' one's understanding. These three tasks of the teacher were regarded as having been identified already in the Bible. The Letter to Titus states that the bishop (*episkopos*) must 'hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it' (Titus 1:9). Holding firm requires reading; giving instruction requires repetition; and confuting those who contradict requires disputing. Aquinas refers to this text in his inaugural lecture (Tugwell, 1988: 358) and again in the opening question of his *Summa theologiae* (I 1, 8).

The corpus of Thomas's writings may be organized in terms of these scholastic teaching methods and the three tasks of the master.⁸ Many of his works are commentaries on authoritative texts. In the first place are his commentaries on books of the Bible. In the chronological order of their composition, he wrote commentaries on Isaiah,

on Jeremiah and Lamentations, on Matthew, on Job, a *glossa continua* on the Gospels, a *lectura* on the Gospel of John, a commentary on the letters of Paul, and *postilla*, or notes, on the Psalms. He wrote commentaries on two of the theological treatises of Boethius, *De Trinitate* and *De Ebdomadibus*, as well as a commentary on the *Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius.⁹ Towards the end of his career, probably in 1272, Thomas wrote a commentary on the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis*. And he devoted much of his time, through the whole of his career, to commenting and interpreting the works of Aristotle. He composed a *sentencia* on *De anima*; commentaries on *Sense and Sensation*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Politics*, *Perihermeneias*, and *Posterior Analytics*; a *sentencia* as well as a *tabula* on *Nicomachean Ethics*; and commentaries on *Heaven and Earth*, *Generation and Corruption*, and *Meteorology*.¹⁰ Thus Thomas fulfilled his responsibilities as a lector – a reader and interpreter of texts.

As regards disputed questions, Thomas's great systematic works may be regarded as adaptations of this method. The *Commentary on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard (along with a second, unfinished redaction of that commentary), the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae* are all organized as a series of short disputed questions in which opposing arguments are presented, authorities quoted, a resolving argument developed, and initial arguments considered. There are also collections of disputed questions, properly so called, on truth, the power of God, the soul, spiritual creatures, evil, virtue, charity, fraternal correction, hope, the cardinal virtues, and the union of the Incarnate Word, as well as two sets of 'quodlibetal' or occasional questions, one from each of his two periods as master of theology at Paris.

We also have texts that give an insight into Thomas the preacher. Best known is the liturgical office he composed for the feast of Corpus Christi, but there are also sermons on the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Hail Mary, as well as some university sermons (Torrell, 2002: 522–23, 630).

The bulk of Thomas's writings may be gathered around the rubric *legere, disputare, praedicare*, but there are quite a few that do not fit neatly into these categories. There are three polemical works written in defense of the mendicant friars. There are two other polemical

writings concerned with the reception of Aristotle's philosophy and its use in Christian theology, one on the eternity of the world, and the other on the unity of the intellect. There are shorter but important treatises on being and essence (his first published work), on governing, on separated substances, on fallacies, and on natural principles, as well as an unfinished catechetical work called *Compendium theologiae*. There are also responses to letters of enquiry, dealing with a wide range of topics: buying and selling, the errors in Greek theology, the reasonableness of faith, canon law, the creed and the sacraments, the form of absolution, the mixture of elements, the movement of the heart, the hidden operations of nature, astrology, casting lots, secrets, and government. Eminent people in church and civil society consulted him frequently, sending him lists of questions to answer, and we have his responses to 108 questions, to 43 questions, to 30 (or perhaps 36) questions, and to 6 questions. Finally, from the year of his death, we have a letter to the Abbot of Monte Cassino (although some raise doubts about whether Thomas was actually its author).

It can seem, then, that Thomas Aquinas simply fitted in with the traditional approaches to learning, teaching, and writing, and was a particularly exceptional exponent of these traditional approaches. At the same time, there is evidence that he was not completely happy with them and was trying to do something new. In the prologue to the *Summa theologiae*, for example, he refers to the three scholastic tasks of reading texts, disputing questions, and repeating what has been learned, but suggests that their current practice is confusing rather than enlightening for students. He sets himself the task of presenting Christian theology according to a 'sound educational method', *secundum ordinem disciplinae*. The implication seems to be that a 'sounder' educational method is needed, one more appropriate to *sacra doctrina*, to the Christian reality itself. We shall consider this matter at length in Part 2.

Chapter 4

Sources and Resources

As a Christian theologian, Thomas's principal source was always the Bible. This is obvious once stated, but precisely because it is so obvious it can easily be forgotten (Chenu, 1974). However, Thomas had very little knowledge of the biblical languages. He knew what the *tetragrammaton* was – the sacred Hebrew name for God (*Summa theologiae* I 13, 11 ad 1) – and he showed some rudimentary knowledge of Greek.¹¹ His Bible was the Latin Vulgate translation. For the most part, this is not a difficulty when compared with the original texts or modern translations, but on occasion, a biblical allusion, or an argument based on a text he knew, makes no sense in terms of the original texts or modern translations.

Another major source was the writings of the Fathers of the Church. In view of what has already been said, it is clear that Thomas had direct access to the works of the Latin Fathers, in particular to the writings of Augustine of Hippo. There is no doubt that Augustine is the greatest teacher of the West, not only in medieval times and at the time of the Reformation, but on into modern times, through his importance for René Descartes, for example. Thomas also uses works of Gregory the Great (Torrell, 2002: 21–22) and Jerome. He makes significant use too of the Greek Fathers in Latin translation and we find him quoting frequently from Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, John Damascene, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, and Athanasius. One of the most important of the Greek Fathers for him was the late fifth- or early sixth-century Syrian monk, writing in Greek, known as Pseudo-Dionysius. His writings were translated into Latin in the ninth century by John Scottus Eriugena, among others, and were highly valued by Thomas. Undoubtedly their authority in the Middle Ages depended on the conceit that they were written by Dionysius the Areopagite, the convert of Saint Paul mentioned in Acts

of the Apostles 17. The writings' arrival in the West meant a significant injection of Greek Christian Neoplatonism into the mainstream of Latin theology, and Thomas depends on Pseudo-Dionysius for some of the most important aspects of his metaphysics (O'Rourke, 1992; Boland, 1996: 93–146, 297–306).

Much of the teaching of the Fathers would have been available to Thomas in collections of *sentences* and *glossa* on the Scriptures. He contributed significantly to this kind of scholarly aid with his *Catena aurea*, a 'golden chain' of comments on the Gospels that he gathered and edited from the writings of the Fathers. This work shows how much he knew not only of Latin patristic writings, as one would expect, but of earlier Greek patristic and later Byzantine exegesis and theology.¹² Thomas used the *Collectio Casinensis*, which consisted of the texts of the early councils of the Church, on his return to Italy in late 1259 or early 1260: it is clear that he did not have access to this source when he was working on his *Sentences* commentary in Paris (Torrell, 2002: 150–51). His knowledge of Greek patristic writing is crucial for his explicit engagement with Greek theology in *Contra Errores Graecorum* (on which see Torrell, 2002: 179–81).

Regarding philosophy, there was very little of the text of Plato available in the Middle Ages. An early translation of and commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* by the fourth-century Latin author Chalcidius provided medieval scholars with most of what they knew directly about Plato. This work is particularly important for twelfth-century cosmologists for whom *Timaeus* and the Book of Genesis provide contrasting accounts of the formation of the universe, which they sought to reconcile within the terms of a Christian theology of creation. Parts of Plato's *Republic* were preserved in works of Cicero and Macrobius, but it was not until the twelfth century that anything further became available, namely translations of *Meno* and *Phaedo* by Henricus Aristippus. It is important to remember that Thomas knew very little of the text of Plato, even in translation.

He did, however, have much second-hand knowledge of Plato and his philosophy, mainly through Augustine and Aristotle. Patristic theology, both Latin and Greek, is heavily indebted to the various forms of Platonist philosophy, which the Fathers of the Church encountered in different places and at different times. Augustine's praise of the

philosophy of the Platonists in *Confessions*, as well as his reservations about it in *On the City of God*, would have been well known to all medieval thinkers. Thomas was also aware of various strands of Neoplatonist philosophy: ideas from earlier thinkers such as Plotinus and Porphyry that came through Augustine, Boethius, and Arab authors, as well as ideas from later Neoplatonists such as Proclus that came through Pseudo-Dionysius and *Liber de causis*. Much of the material being translated in the last years of Thomas's career is from later Neoplatonist philosophers, notably commentaries by Simplicius on various texts of Aristotle and Proclus's *Elements of Theology*. It is possible to identify the impact of these translations on Thomas's writing and thinking. Unfortunately, Thomas did not live to read Proclus's *Commentary on the Parmenides of Plato*, which would have unsettled and possibly amazed him, increasing his knowledge of Plato significantly and obliging him to revise his understanding of the history of philosophy. Thomas used the translations of the Flemish Dominican William of Moerbeke, one of the greatest of the thirteenth-century translators, and it has sometimes been suggested that William worked at the request of Thomas (although Torrell disputes this: 2002: 255–58). What is true is that the translations of Proclus made by William after Thomas's death were accepted and used by Thomas's disciples.¹³

Much of Thomas's knowledge of Plato came from his reading of Aristotle. In his commentary on *Politics*, Thomas hints at his awareness that Aristotle's was a biased account:

... the opinion of Plato about the corruption of a republic is not well known to us, not only because it has not come down to us in his own writings or in those of his expositors, but because what Aristotle here says about it is quite obscure on account of its brevity.

(*In Politicorum* V, *lectio* 13, Marietti §933)

One of the aspirations of all forms of Neoplatonism was to show that the philosophies of the two great Greeks were not incompatible. Porphyry assures us that, in the school of Plotinus, the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle was discussed as much as the dialogs of Plato (*Life of Plotinus* 14). Key Neoplatonist ideas were worked out stimulated by efforts to respond to Aristotelian criticisms of Plato's thought. The aspiration

to show the compatibility of Plato and Aristotle was even more urgent for Islamic and Christian scholars who sought to defend the use of philosophy in theology and who had to counter arguments from anti-philosophical theologians that appealed to the irreconcilable differences between Plato and Aristotle, supposedly the greatest of philosophers. Albertus Magnus remains closer to Arabic attempts to reconcile the two philosophies. Thomas Aquinas studied Aristotle also in the faculty of arts at Paris, or at least was in close contact with scholars in that faculty, and this, combined with his earlier studies in Italy, seems to have led him to a more straightforward use of Aristotle in preference to Plato rather than alongside him. Simon Tugwell believes that Thomas's introduction to Aristotle's philosophy at Monte Cassino and Naples, before he met Albert, led to his having 'a much sharper awareness than Albert did of the differences between Aristotelianism and Platonism' (Tugwell, 1988: 203).

It was Aristotle's own philosophy that was to be hugely significant for Thomas, and that provided the key theme of his academic career and intellectual achievement. Boethius had already translated some of the logical works of Aristotle, and a second wave of translation of his logical works took place in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. But it was the translations made in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries that were of greatest significance. Robert Grosseteste was the first to do a complete translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, while William of Moerbeke produced the first full translation of *Metaphysics* (Torrell, 2002: 150–51, 253–58). Add to these translations of *De anima* and *On Generation and Corruption*, and *Physics* and *Politics*, and it is clear that the work of Aristotle, even as we know it now, was substantially available to Thomas while he had almost no direct knowledge of Plato. He also had second-hand knowledge of the Aristotelian school through the Arabs and through commentators on Aristotle, whether peripatetics such as Themistius, or Neoplatonists such as Simplicius.

Of the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, Stoicism is the one of which Aquinas had greatest knowledge and of whose work he made most extensive use. He knew Stoicism through Augustine and Boethius – the early books of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, for example, first canvas the arguments in favor of a Stoic view of

human happiness before going on to prefer a Platonic one. But Thomas was well able to read Cicero and Seneca for himself and these two renowned moralists were important sources for Thomas in his treatment of certain virtues in *Summa theologiae*. The late ancient pagan writer Macrobius, more a Neoplatonist than a Stoic it seems, was another important source for Thomas and actually gave him fairly direct access to Plotinus's account of the virtues (Plotinus, like Boethius, preferring a Platonic to a Stoic account of human happiness).

We must finally note the importance for Thomas of some Islamic and Jewish thinkers.¹⁴ Although he hints that for some of his knowledge of Islam he is indebted to John of Damascus (*Summa contra gentiles* I 6), he has ready access to many Islamic works translated into Latin. The ideas of the Persian philosopher Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980–1037) are very important for Thomas's early works. Avicenna's influence has been identified in Thomas's first published work, *De ente et essentia*, in his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, and in *Summa contra gentiles*. The ideas of the Spanish Moor Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198) become more important in Thomas's middle and later works. For Thomas, Averroes is 'the commentator', the greatest exponent of the thought of Aristotle, and his influence is clear in Thomas's early work *De principiis naturae*, in his commentaries on *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and *De anima*, and for his thought on some central theological questions such as analogy (Torrell, 2002: 71, note 51).

Thomas's second professorship at Paris (1268–72) was dominated by concerns about what has been called variously Latin Averroism or Radical Aristotelianism. Scholars in the faculty of arts were embracing Averroistic interpretations of Aristotle that led to views that seemed to be incompatible with the Christian faith: we shall consider these at a number of points in Part 4. One of his final works, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, was written to defend what Thomas regarded as the most reasonable interpretation of Aristotle, in support of the integrity of the individual human person as a being that is capable, in its own right, of intellectual knowledge, moral agency, and creative engagement with the world. As we shall also see later, this argument about the unity of the intellect and the integrity of the person is crucial for Thomas's understanding of teaching. Thomas returned to Paris to

defend what he considered not just an acceptable but also a faithful interpretation of Aristotle. In the longer term, he was successful; in the shorter term, some of his own views were condemned along with those of the Latin Averroists.

Most important of the Jewish sources used by Thomas is Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), particularly for his treatment of analogy and of the need for revelation if we are to know anything of God (Torrell, 2002: 165–66).¹⁵

Chapter 5

Openness and Criticism

This account of his sources indicates the universality of Aquinas's approach. He was open to reading whatever was available that was relevant to his work. Whether it was the Bible or the writings of the Fathers, whether it was of Platonist or Aristotelian progeny, whether it was in the writings of an Islamic or a Jewish scholar, whether it came from an eminent pagan like Cicero or Seneca: it did not matter what the origin of an idea, argument, or illustration; if it was true then it was to be accepted and used. This breadth of reading was supported by the view handed down, apparently, from Ambrosiaster, that any truth, no matter by whom it is said, is from the Holy Spirit, *omne verum a quocumque dicatur, a Spiritu Sancto est*.¹⁶ This is a key point always for Thomas: not by whom a thing is said but what is said is the important thing. In the letter on study attributed to Thomas, the author warns Brother John, a novice who has written asking advice, not to put store by who says something but rather to remember what is well said, *quod sane dicatur*. Even if the letter is not authentic, the sentiment coincides with what we know of Thomas's approach from the authentic works.

Not only is Thomas open to the truth wherever it is to be found, but when he does disagree, he treats his interlocutors with respect and charity and almost always with moderation. He prefers to accept rather than reject the views of others, interprets ambiguities kindly, and refutes clearly but respectfully where this must be done. There are a few places where he rejects an idea passionately and critically because he believes it to be either 'very stupid' or else likely to do great damage to common sense, to what is reasonable, or to what he believes the Christian faith requires (Torrell, 2002: 132–39).

This openness is seen also in the fact that so much of Thomas's work is commentary, seeking to understand the thought of others,

and to share, as far as possible, the vision of others. So, in *Contra errores Graecorum*, for example, he speaks about the principles of good translation that ought to respect truth and be adapted to the style of the language to which one is translating. This is part of the ‘reverent exposition’ of texts to which Thomas believes himself obliged (for texts, see Torrell, 2002: 181, notes 25 and 26).

Nor should we forget the ‘disputed question’ style of argumentation in which Thomas excelled and which required that one consider not only the arguments in favor of one’s preferred position, but the best possible arguments against it too. The famous article that includes the five ways for demonstrating that there is a God – *Summa theologiae* I 2, 3 – also includes two arguments that tell in the opposite direction. These arguments are included not as a matter of form but because they are serious arguments, aspects of the world and of human experience that will lead a reasonable person to wonder whether there is in fact a God. The arguments are that evil in the world seems to tell against the likelihood of there being a God who is infinitely good, and that those aspects of experience which are explained by the view that there is a God can be adequately explained otherwise, without recourse to the idea of God. Although Thomas clearly believed that the arguments he proposed in favor of there being a God outweighed those against that view, they are nevertheless serious arguments.

Thomas has a rule, perhaps drawn from the medieval etiquette of jousting, that one should only use grounds for argument that are acceptable to one’s adversaries. This is not only about allowing the other to ‘choose his weapons’, as it were, but is also a recognition that the search for truth is a shared one, as well as the practical realization that there is no point in arguing from authorities that are not accepted by the interlocutor. Thomas explains the principle in *Quaestiones quodlibetales* IV 9, 3 (cited in Torrell, 2002: 181, note 24) and it is one to which he appeals frequently.¹⁷ However, the generally eirenic character of Aquinas’s approach did not prevent strong feelings breaking out in opposition to some of his ideas.

To be noted also is Thomas’s frequent appeal to the criterion of ‘appropriateness’, or *convenientia*. This refers to a conclusion whose necessity has not been demonstrated absolutely, including matters of

faith that by definition never can be demonstrated. Thomas always seeks to find an appropriateness in the way things are believed to be, to argue for a kind of probability or appositeness which, although it is not a full demonstrative proof, persuades by its intellectual fittingness.¹⁸

The style of Thomas, then, is anything but dogmatic in the pejorative sense of the term. In fact there is a transparency and simplicity in his way of writing that gives us further insight into the way his mind worked. Martin Grabmann commented on this as follows:

In St Thomas's style, Lacordaire [the nineteenth-century restorer of the Dominicans in France] sees the true appearance of the inner nature of his science and wisdom. This is a style which permits the truth to be seen in all its profundity, as a man sees the fish on the bottom of a placid sea, or sees the stars shine through a clear sky. It is a style peaceful and transparent, at once without fancy and emotion, delighting and fascinating the intellect.

(Grabmann, 1951: 34)

Thomas's use of his sources was also a critical one by the standards of his time. He followed Albert in seeking direct access to primary sources where this was possible (Torrell, 2002: 205). He sought always better and more reliable translations of ancient works. We have already mentioned Thomas's use of the translations of William of Moerbeke who traveled regularly from France to southern Italy, to Greece and to centers further east, looking for better manuscripts with which to work. With the help of these translations, it was possible to identify inauthentic works that had long circulated under the name of Aristotle. Most famously, Thomas was the first to see that *Liber de causis* was substantially dependent on Proclus's *Elements of theology*, a fact that was obvious to anybody who read William's translation of *Elements*, completed in May 1268.

A further sign of Thomas's critical approach is his insistence on the fundamental importance of the 'literal' or 'historical' sense of the Scriptures. He believes that this literal sense is what he called a *sensus plenior*, meaning that it is pregnant with other senses and so susceptible to being understood in a number of ways, but he is clear that these further senses must all be based upon the literal

sense (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 10). There is much evidence of Thomas's critical instincts, and just a few are noted here.

In his commentary on John 16:23, relying on Augustine, Thomas knows the text uses two Greek terms for 'ask' and this helps him to interpret the passage (*Super Ioannem* XVI, lectio 6, Marietti §2136). He suggests that the rule against boiling a kid in its mother's milk (Exodus 23:19) may have been there because the practice was associated with some cult, precisely the kind of suggestion one would expect from modern historical-critical exegesis (*Summa theologiae* I.II 102, 6 ad 4 and ad 8). Thomas's critical instinct stands out when one compares his suggestion with the fanciful allegorical interpretations of this prohibition which some of the Fathers of the Church felt obliged to offer. He evaluates the claim that the Letter to the Hebrews was written by St Paul. There had always been questions about its Pauline authorship and Thomas offers a critical judgment on this attribution (*Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos, prologus*, Marietti §5, and see §51 for his mode of exegesis). In his commentary on Ephesians 3:10, which suggests that the angels learned from the preaching of the apostles, he says that different interpretations are possible depending on whether the adverb *ut*, 'that', is taken causally or conjunctively (*Super Epistolam ad Ephesios* III, lectio 3, Marietti §§160–62).

Thomas shows a critical sense also in the *Catena aurea* with regard to authentic and inauthentic works attributed to John Chrysostom (Torrell, 2002: 202–3). He remains independent, even of valued patristic sources, making it clear that reverent exposition did not preclude attentive critique (Torrell, 2002: 203, note 75 for references). Mark D. Jordan writes as follows about Thomas's work on the *Catena aurea* (referring to it as 'the *Chain*'):

The *Chain* is justly famous for its ample use of Greek material, but Thomas's contribution is not just the importation of unfamiliar authorities. The whole of the *Chain* is remarkable for its clarity of organization, its precision of citation, and even its revision of confused or corrupted texts. The *Chain* is more than a comprehensive patristic anthology neatly arranged. It is a continuous clarification of patristic passages, that is, a commentary on salient texts of patristic exegesis.

(Jordan, 2006: 30)

Thomas was for extending the resources and knowledge available to the scholar. He was the first in the West to use some of the chosen Greek sources, just as he was the first Latin theologian to cite literally the acts of the early ecumenical councils from the *Collectio Casinensis* (Torrell, 2002: 203–4, note 79).

It is impossible to read Thomas at any length and not be impressed by the calm fearlessness with which he undertakes his intellectual research. Joseph Pieper said of him that he feared logic as little as he feared mystery and this absence of fear allowed him to go about his philosophical and theological work with extraordinary freedom and courage (Pieper, 1963: 75–88, 117–22). He was as confident of the truth attainable by unaided human reason, so to speak, as he was of the truth attainable by human reason healed and strengthened by the grace of faith. If ‘perfect love casts out fear’ (1 John 4:18), it must also be that perfect truth casts out fear. For Thomas, this lack of fear was not due to arrogance, nor a blind conviction that he was in possession of the truth whereas everybody who did not think like him was not. His fearlessness follows his confidence that the truth can, as it were, look after itself. Truth is not the private possession of anybody, but is objective, outside us and above us, and available for all to find and to savor.

As a Christian, Thomas believed that it is ultimately God who is *veritas prima*, the first truth. Unqualified assent is given to no human teacher, but to God alone. It is only to the first truth that we must give the humble obedience of faith. If what is said is true, it is a reflection of the first truth, even if discovered by a sinful pagan. If what is said is false, it is not made true by being uttered by a pious believer. Nor is the act of faith a denial of intellectual gifts or a decision not to think any more, as it has sometimes been caricatured in modern times that tend to oppose faith and reason in ways that Thomas would find puzzling. On the contrary: for him the intellectual greatness of human reason is only fully operative in the humility with which it recognizes and accepts the infinite greatness of God.¹⁹

Fearing neither the demands of logic nor the depths of mystery, Thomas set out to get to the root, *radix*, of things, not necessarily to pluck them up, but certainly to test them and see how well founded various opinions and beliefs were. Even if other aspects of his philosophy or theology are not shared, people can admire his way of

working and seek to follow it even in disagreeing with him. Some contemporary interpreters of Aquinas regard this as his most important enduring contribution: to show how best to engage in the work of study and teaching. John Paul II recommended Thomas's method as a model for any dialog between philosophies, cultures, and religions (John Paul II, 1990: §§7–8, and 1998: §§43–44). Alasdair MacIntyre has come to value the thought of Aquinas precisely for this, that it shows how earlier traditions – in Thomas's case Augustinian and Aristotelian – are to be received in a way that is critically faithful to the best in them and that goes decisively beyond them (MacIntyre, 1990; see also Morris, 1991: 525–29 and Jordan, 2006). One of our tasks here will be to show how that method presupposes certain philosophical and theological convictions.

Chapter 6

Thomas Opts for the Dominicans and for Aristotle

We have seen that the young Thomas Aquinas opted for the Dominicans in preference to the Benedictines. We need to consider whether there was a doctrinal reason for this. His decision can be interpreted as a political one in favor of the Pope and against the Emperor. It might also be understood as originating in youthful rebellion, rejecting a respectable and well-established Order in favor of a not very reputable, recently established group. But we may also wonder whether Thomas's attraction to the Dominicans was linked with their doctrinal mission and concerns.

The Dominican Order was founded to preach the orthodox Christian faith in those parts of southern France and northern Italy where the Albigensian or Cathar heresy was most influential. This was a form of Manichean dualism, for which there were two divine principles, a good one responsible for the creation of spirit, and an evil one responsible for the creation of matter. According to this way of thinking, human beings are really spirits trapped in bodies who do best to free themselves of all the needs of the body as effectively as possible: hence the extreme asceticism in regard to eating, drinking, and sexual activity manifested at least by the *perfecti*, who not only despised marriage but, it seems, recommended suicide. Their teaching reduced Christ to an angel inhabiting a phantom body, and they were consistent in rejecting the sacraments and the resurrection of the body.

Dominic Guzman, a priest from the Spanish city of Osma, was shocked when he came across this distortion of Christian teaching and resolved to do something about it. So he founded the Order of Preachers, which was to be as poor and as democratic as the

Albigensians while preaching orthodox Catholic doctrine in response to their dualism. While there is no hard evidence to confirm that this concern of the Order was a reason for Thomas joining it, there is no doubt that his theological work effectively contributed to strengthening the response of the Order and of the Church to Manicheism. That heresy was one of his constant preoccupations as he developed his thought about a range of questions.

Thomas's espousal of the philosophy of Aristotle, in contrast to the various forms of Platonism that had been handed down, might be taken as a further indication of the anti-Albigensian orientation of his thought: he asserted and supported the reality of the physical world, its coherence and intelligibility at its own level, its capacity for supporting scientific understanding, artistic production, and technological development. His option for Aristotle is to be understood within his option for the Dominicans. In other words, it is an option in support of his anti-Albigensianism that enables him to develop a stronger-than-ever appreciation of the reality of created things, a unique understanding of the unity and integrity of the human person, and a moderate realism in his account of knowledge and truth. The understanding of specifically theological concerns such as the Incarnation and the sacraments is also greatly helped, Thomas believed, through the application of Aristotelian ideas. The point is well summarized by a twentieth-century Master of the Dominicans, Damian Byrne, who in a letter to the Order put it as follows:

It was the genius of Thomas Aquinas to carry forward Dominic's fundamental orientation and to broaden the basis of theological education in the Order through his study of Aristotelian philosophy, which enabled him to give an intellectual foundation to the theology of the goodness of creation and the rejection of dualism.

(Byrne, 2004: 268)

Thomas's account of creation is developed with the danger of Manicheism clearly in mind. Even the physical creation, not only in its glory and wonder, but in its limitations and complex frailties, is the good work of a good God, he argues. Towards the beginning of his commentary on Hebrews he shows how the errors of the Manichees

are removed by its teaching: God is author also of the Old Testament and not just of the ‘more spiritual’ New Testament, he says (*Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos* I, *lectio* 1: §11), just as God is creator also of temporal realities and not just of eternal ones (§23).

If we seek an account of what moved Thomas more personally to follow Jesus Christ in the way of Saint Dominic, the best information we have is in those questions of the *Summa theologiae* where he speaks about a form of religious life that is devoted to contemplation and teaching, and where, in speaking about the lifestyle of Jesus, he presents him as the model of the friar preacher. Just as it is better, Thomas says, to illuminate and not just to shine, so it is better to pass on to others what one has contemplated and not just to contemplate (*Summa theologiae* II.II 188, 6 in c). The lifestyle of Jesus was that of a poor preacher and teacher who lived openly and simply among the people in order to bear witness to the truth, his teaching supported by a lifestyle that gave it credibility (*Summa theologiae* III 40). Jesus lived like this, Thomas says, in order to give an example to preachers, *ut daret exemplum praedicatoribus* (*Summa theologiae* III 40, 1 ad 1). In joining the Dominicans, Thomas was choosing to follow this way of life, a way of life that was all about teaching.

Notes

1. The extant works of Peter of Ireland – comments and questions on Aristotle’s *On Interpretation* and *On Length and Shortness of Life* – have been edited by Michael Dunne and published by Peeters, Louvain, and Paris, in 1993 and 1996: see Dunne, 1991–92 and 1997–98.
2. See Tugwell, 1988: 355–60 for an English translation of this lecture.
3. For Thomas’s involvement in the organization of studies within the Dominicans see Torrell, 2002: 141–46 and Mulchahey, 1998: 168–69, 223–24.
4. At one time it was believed that Thomas lived also at Viterbo, in the court of Pope Clement IV, but there is no evidence to support this: Tugwell, 1988: 310, note 166; 311, note 185, and Torrell, 2002: 171–75.

5. On the difficulty of translating the term *scriptum* see Jordan, 2006: 21, note 7.
6. *Historia Calamitatum*, in Radice, 1974: 78.
7. Much work has been done on the question of memory in the Middle Ages – see especially Carruthers, 1990 and Candler, 2006.
8. For a full listing of Thomas's writings, their various editions, and modern translations, see Torrell, 2002: 483–525, 611–31 or, as adapted for the English edition, Royal, 2005: 330–61, 424–38.
9. Some notes of Albert's commentaries on *Celestial Hierarchy* and *Divine Names*, taken by Thomas as a student, survive: see Boyle, 1991 and Torrell, 2002: 32–33.
10. We also have some notes that Thomas made of Albert's commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics*: Torrell, 2002: 38.
11. For example in *In III Sentences* 25, 1, 1, qa. 1, *solutio*; *Summa theologiae* I 83, 4 arg. 1; I.II 58, 1; II.II 1, 6 in c and ad 3.
12. See Conticello, 1990; Bataillon, 1993; and Torrell, 2002: 200–206.
13. *Bulletin thomiste* XI.1903 (1960–62): 869–70.
14. The importance of 'the Arab factor' in understanding Aquinas has not been forgotten in modern scholarship, from the work of D.H. Salman (see *Bulletin thomiste* III (1930–33): 1014–20; IV (1935): 603–10 to that of G.C. Anawati (for references see Booth, 1983: 289).
15. Thomas also drew on works of Avicbron (Ibn Gabirol) and Abraham ben David: see Booth, 1983: 95–155.
16. *Summa theologiae* I.II 109, 1 ad 1; *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis* I, *lectio* 3: §§103–4. John Paul II refers to it also: 1998: §42.
17. In *Boethii de Trinitate* 2, 3; *Summa contra gentiles* I 9; *Summa theologiae* I 1, 8.
18. Turner, 2004, argues that Julian of Norwich's use of the phrase 'sin is behovely' is completely dependent on Aquinas's use of *convenientia*.
19. John Paul II, 1990: §3.

Part 2

Critical Exposition of Aquinas's Work

In a number of places in his writings, Thomas Aquinas considers the process of teaching and learning. The texts in which he does this are in unexpected contexts, or at least contexts that will at first seem strange to modern readers. In considering teaching and learning, he discusses how the divine mind, and then created minds, can communicate truth with a view to goodness. When a human being teaches another, he or she aims to assist the natural process of gaining knowledge and enjoying truth with a view to exercising the various kinds of good appropriate to human nature. Our examination of Aquinas's texts on teaching will oblige us to say something about his understanding of knowledge and truth, and of reason and faith. We will see how these texts open on to the most fundamental questions, of creation and being human, matters that will be considered fully in Part 4.

There are two other ways in which Aquinas reveals what he thought about teaching. One is in the way he does it himself, his application of established scholastic educational methods, looked at in Part 1. The other is seen in the way he seems unhappy with established methods even while using them. He is constantly seeking what he calls 'a sound educational method' for the teaching of his subject, theology. There is a clear pedagogical concern in his major works, a concern about teaching methods, about student-centered teaching, and about structuring his writings so as to explain clearly and persuade effectively.

Aquinas's pedagogical concern is not surprising considering he is a scholastic, an Aristotelian, and a Christian. He develops scholastic understandings of teaching methods, is one of the first to do so from a strongly Aristotelian point of view, and studies the issues involved from within the Christian theological enterprise, which is the focus of his intellectual work. His overriding concern is to present a vision of human life set within the Christian story of creation and redemption. Humanity is within creation, seeking fulfillment, and such fulfillment is only possible, Thomas believed, through the work of Jesus Christ who teaches the way of truth that leads to life (*Summa theologiae* III, prologue). This is the deepest inspiration and the culmination of what Aquinas says about teaching, which, at its heart, is a service of the human search for wisdom.

2.A: Can One Human Being Teach Another?

Chapter 7

Thomas on Teaching: Contexts

When we come to examine the texts in which Aquinas explicitly asks whether one human being can teach another, the first thing to note are the contexts in which the question is raised. His first explicit consideration of human teaching arises where he is discussing the capacities of angels to enlighten one another (*In II Sentences* 9, 1, 2 ad 4), which is a bit surprising. In his two substantial treatments of teaching, in *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 11 and *Summa theologiae* I 117, he deals with it as part of his ‘metaphysics of creation’. What kind of causality can there be between creatures? More specifically, what kind of causality can there be between creatures in relation to knowledge and truth?

An overview of *De veritate* makes this context clear. Its opening question is concerned with truth, *veritas*. Thomas continues by asking, in relation to three kinds of mind, how they know truth, how they communicate truth, and how their concern with truth leads to their promotion of the good. The first mind of which he speaks is the divine mind, and so we find questions on God’s knowledge (*De veritate* 2), ideas (*De veritate* 3), and Word (*De veritate* 4), followed by questions on God’s providence (*De veritate* 5–7). Next comes the angelic mind, treated according to the same pattern: he speaks first of the kind of knowledge angels may have (*De veritate* 8) and then about the ways in which angels may share their knowledge with a view to extending truth and promoting goodness (*De veritate* 9).

Aquinas’s first thought about the human mind is that, although it comes last in his hierarchy of minds, it is nevertheless an image of the Trinity, the God of Christian faith (*De veritate* 10). He learned this particularly from Augustine’s authoritative treatment of mind in his *De Trinitate*, and Aquinas proceeds immediately to another Augustinian concern, asking whether one person can be said to teach

another (*De veritate* 11). Augustine's *De magistro* even lends its title to Aquinas's *De veritate* 11.

De veritate continues with considerations of other avenues to knowledge for human beings, such as prophecy (*De veritate* 12), rapture (*De veritate* 13), and faith (*De veritate* 14), as well as of various aspects and capacities of the human mind, such as superior and inferior reason (*De veritate* 15), *synderesis* or the innate knowledge of fundamental moral principles (*De veritate* 16), and conscience (*De veritate* 17). His account of the human mind concludes with reflections on Adam's knowledge before he sinned (*De veritate* 18), the knowledge of souls after death (*De veritate* 19), and the knowledge of the soul of Christ (*De veritate* 20).

For Aquinas, truth and goodness (fact and value) are never separable in practice although they may be distinguished theoretically. The consideration of truth naturally leads to the promotion of good, he believes, and so the concluding questions of *De veritate* are about human activities in relation to what is good, on good itself (*De veritate* 21), on will, God's will, and free judgment (*De veritate* 22–24), on sensuality and the passions which are concerned with the pursuit of good at their own level (*De veritate* 25–26), and it ends with an account of the strengthening and transforming of the will by grace (*De veritate* 27–29). As it is considered in *De veritate*, knowing is not just intellectual but is also, following Augustine, always moral and theological: the human mind functions at its best in seeking to respond to good and to know God.

The hierarchy of minds of which Aquinas treats was taken for granted in the ancient and medieval worlds. Aristotle, in his *De anima*, lays the foundation for thinking about levels of knowing and intelligence (Book III, chapters 3–8), and Boethius distinguishes levels of intelligence in just this way (*On the consolation of philosophy* Book V, chapters 4–5). In modern times, we might be tempted to add another kind of mind to those the ancient and medieval worlds knew, that of artificial intelligence, the minds of robots and computers. 'Can a computer be said to teach a human being?' is a question one can easily imagine Aquinas asking.

Chapter 8

Thomas on Teaching: *In II Sentences* 9 and 28

In his earliest account of what is involved in teaching, Aquinas brings forward an argument based on Matthew 23:8, 10, ‘you have one teacher, Christ, so call nobody on earth your teacher’.¹ Only God teaches interiorly, he says, and so only God may properly be said to teach (referring to Augustine, *Homilies on the First Letter of St John*, 3). In his reply to this argument, Aquinas gives a first outline of his understanding of teaching (*In II Sentences* 9, 1, 2 ad 4).

One important distinction, Thomas says, is that between principal and instrumental causes. An instrumental cause is efficacious in producing the effect it does only because it is within the power of the principal cause. A pen may be said to write only because it is in the hand of a writer. It is always to the principal cause that the effect is attributed even when an instrument is used. In this sense, God alone as principal cause can be said to teach. But the instrumental cause may also be said to teach while acknowledging that its contribution to the effect is completely within the power of the principal cause.

A second approach is to note that two things are required for intellectual understanding – the presentation of what is understood and the light in which it comes to be understood. Teaching therefore involves two things, presenting the object to be understood and providing the light in which it is understood. The light in turn may be understood as twofold – first, as intrinsic and connatural to the intellect, in which sense it comes only from God, and second, as a supplementary help to the natural light, given to strengthen it. In this second sense, an angel may be said to illuminate another angel, and even a human being, by strengthening the light in which he comes to understand things. But a human being cannot teach in this way.

The presentation of the object to be understood, however, can also happen in two ways. One is equivalent to placing a visible object

before someone's eyes in order to help him see it. Some matters are immediately intelligible to human beings and all they need is someone to present those matters to them. Other things are more difficult and can only be understood by the learner if he is led by something already known. The teacher is the one who proposes this known thing and points out how it might help a person to understand what is not yet known. A human being can teach in these two ways, then: by presenting something immediately intelligible and so leading, *ducens*, a person to knowledge; and by bringing the learner, *intellectus manuducatur*, from what he knows already to what he then comes to know. Such teaching among human beings, Aquinas concludes, is not by way of illumination but by way of speaking, *per modum locutionis*. This last point may seem obvious, but it is crucial to Aquinas's understanding of human nature, human community, and even human destiny.

In another early consideration of teaching (*In II Sentences* 28, 1, 5 ad 3), Thomas quotes Augustine's comment that the one who teaches is like someone who uses his finger to point out something (*De doctrina Christiana* prologue, §3). He says that, as a person can move his finger externally to point something out but cannot provide the seeing power by which the learner refers to the visible teaching, so a person can offer words externally which are the signs of truth, *signa veritatis*, but cannot provide the understanding of the truth, *veri intelligendi virtutem*, which comes from God alone. Only God can teach in the sense of causing and containing the power of understanding in us.

In these early texts, the influence of Augustine is clear and seems more important for the moment than that of Aristotle. Aquinas speaks about things being pointed out by human teachers, and about the need for signs – not only, but especially, words – as the means by which a learner is led by the hand to realize things he did not know before. As he becomes more familiar with the work of Aristotle, especially with *Posterior Analytics* and *De anima*, Aquinas comes to judge Aristotle's ideas to be more useful than Augustine's for thinking about teaching, and he begins to talk about teaching in terms of potency and act, nature and art, exterior and interior causality. Some might regret what is lost when Augustine moves into the background like this, but it is a consequence of Aquinas's option for Aristotle.

Chapter 9

Thomas on Teaching: *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 11

Quaestiones disputatae de veritate was composed between 1256 and 1259, the three years of Thomas's first professorship at Paris (Torrell, 2002: 488–89; Weisheipl, 1974: 362–63) and so belongs to the same part of his career as his commentary on the *Sentences*. The particular genre of the disputed question gave a master scope to deal at length with the topics considered. It is in *De veritate* 11 that Aquinas presents his fullest treatment of the question of teaching. We shall look first at his own argument in the body of *De veritate* 11, 1 and then consider his responses to the initial arguments presented.

There is a difference of opinion, he says, about three things: the education (*eductio*) of forms into being, the acquisition of virtue, and the acquisition of the sciences. One view (which he finds in Avicenna) is that all sensible forms come from outside, from a higher substance variously called 'giver of forms' or 'agent intelligence'. The role of lower natural agents is simply to prepare matter for the reception of forms. A contrasting view is that all such forms – the forms of natural things, of virtues, of knowledge – are innate. All that needs to be done is that they be made manifest (natural forms), that obstacles be removed (virtues), and that remembering be facilitated (knowledge). Although Thomas does not mention any names, it seems clear that Plato and the Platonists generally are regarded as proponents of this contrasting view.

Aquinas says that both views are irrational, *absque ratione*. The first excludes secondary causes from having real, effective power. Aquinas's objection to this is that it derogates from the order of the universe, which he believes is structured, *contexitur*, by the order and connection of causes. The first cause, because eminent in goodness,

confers on other things not only that they *are*, but also that they are causes. Another way of putting this is to say that the 'first cause' (which for Aquinas is of course God) is of such transcendent power that it can make creatures that are themselves effective causes. But the view attributed to Avicenna implies that some other power does our thinking, knowing, and virtuous action in and through us. The second, Platonist, view, though coming from another direction, entails the same failure to appreciate the real effective power of 'inferior agents' or secondary causes. It is clear already, and made explicit in *Summa theologiae* I 117, that Aquinas considers teaching as one example of effective causality and real change within creation.

Between the two unacceptable views, Aristotle offers a middle way in regard to all the matters under discussion. In the first book of his *Physics*, he says that natural forms pre-exist in matter potentially and not actually, and that they are made actual, or 'educated', by secondary extrinsic agents and not merely by a primary agent. Similarly, the dispositions of virtue pre-exist in us in the sense of natural inclinations, but these do not become virtues in the proper sense except through practice.

As regards knowledge, there are seeds, *semina*, of the sciences pre-existing in us, the first conceptions of the mind that are immediately known through species abstracted from sensible things. Note both that they are 'immediately known' and that this immediate knowledge is on the basis of 'species abstracted from sensible things'. Such first conceptions are kind of 'seminal reasons' (*rationes seminales*, an Augustinian idea: *De veritate* 11, 1 ad 5), from which knowledge of particular things is built up as the mind is led, *educitur*, from what it knows potentially and in a universal way to what its actual knowledge is on the basis of experience and study. This knowledge of first principles, or the light of natural reason, is what we might call the system software of human intelligence, certain basic rules or criteria of thinking, which Aquinas believes we understand immediately: as soon as we apply ourselves to knowing and understanding anything we know that these principles must apply. He is thinking of the principle of non-contradiction (that something cannot both be and not be in the same respect at the same time), the principle that the whole is greater than its parts, and, in practical thinking, the principle that good is to

be sought and evil avoided. For a human being to be intelligent is for her simply to know the truth of these principles.

The next step in the argument is established on the basis of a distinction between two kinds of potential pre-existence, one of which is active, and the other passive. Active potency refers to the situation where the intrinsic principle is sufficient to produce the perfected act. The human body is potentially healthy in this sense: it contains the power to restore itself from sickness to health. Passive potency refers to the situation where the intrinsic principle is *not* sufficient to produce the perfected act. Aquinas offers the example of air ‘becoming’ fire: air does not contain this power within itself but does have this power under the stimulation of an extrinsic cause.

In the case of active potency, an extrinsic agent can assist the intrinsic principle. So the medical doctor assists the processes of nature in restoring the body from sickness to health. In healing, the doctor is ‘the servant of nature’, *minister naturae*, strengthening nature and providing medicines which nature can use. In the case of passive potency, it is the extrinsic agent that principally brings about the move from potency to act. Although air is potentially fire, it cannot become fire except through the agency of fire acting on it from outside.

If knowledge pre-exists potentially in the learner, is this potency to be understood as active or passive in the way Aquinas has explained? It has to be an active potency, otherwise it would not be possible for a human being to acquire knowledge by herself. She would always need a teacher if she were to grow in knowledge, and experience shows that this is not true.

Just as a person may be healed in two ways, by nature alone or by nature assisted by medicine, so a person may acquire knowledge in two ways, by discovery, *inventio*, or by learning, *disciplina*. In the first case, natural reason of itself comes to know what it did not know before. In the second case, natural reason is helped by something exterior. The second case here, whether in medicine or in education, is an example of something being done by both nature and art. In such cases, art will imitate the way in which nature does things. So the process by which a teacher leads another to know something he did not know before is doing the same thing as a person who by discovering something ‘leads himself’ to the knowledge of what he

did not know before. The 'discourse of reason' is the way in which this happens, the mind moving from principles already known to more specific conclusions in view of particular experiences or research. The new knowledge then strengthens and supplements the principles of a person's knowledge, they can move on to a further stage of enquiry, and so the discourse of reason continues.

One person is said to teach another when the discourse of reason which the mind can naturally do for itself is expressed for the learner through signs, *per signa*, so that the natural reason of the student comes to know something it did not know before through the aids, *instrumenta*, that are thus proposed to it. The influence of Augustine remains even as Aquinas appeals to Aristotle in developing a fresh understanding of teaching. Thus the building up of knowledge is expressed in Aristotelian terms while the appeal to 'signs' evokes Augustine's *De magistro* (see also *De veritate* 11, 1 ad 2, ad 3, ad 4).

The analogy with the medical doctor is Aquinas's favorite way of explaining what is involved in teaching. One can imagine Socrates nodding in approval, and one might also think of Wittgensteinian understandings of philosophy as therapeutic. A human being may properly be said to teach another, Aquinas says, and even to be his master, *magister*, in the same way as a doctor may be said to heal a sick person, by assisting natural processes. We know first principles by the light of reason and by the same light we can see how conclusions follow from those principles. In a wonderful drawing together of earlier wisdom, Aquinas says that Plato compared human intellectual power with the sun, Aristotle says it is more like light, and the Bible teaches that it is from God (*Summa theologiae* I 79, 4 in c). Here Aquinas says that because the light of reason is placed in us by God, and is a likeness of the uncreated truth, and because no human teaching can be efficacious without the power of that light, it follows that it is only God who teaches interiorly and principally, just as it is only nature that heals interiorly and principally. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the medical doctor heals and that the teacher teaches in the way described. Thus Aquinas spells out more fully the arguments sketched in *In II Sentences* 9, 1, 2 ad 4.

In response to the objection that Jesus says we are to call nobody on earth our teacher, Thomas explains that this means we are not to

attribute our understanding and wisdom to any human teacher (*De veritate* 11, 1 ad 1). God alone teaches us in the sense of giving us the light of reason by which we understand anything, in the sense of being the truth on which all other truth depends, and in the sense of placing in us the desire for a fulfillment that is found only in God. Human teachers can help us in all this, of course, to use the gifts that we owe ultimately to God. A human being can even be said to teach the truth, *docere veritatem*, announcing it exteriorly while God teaches the truth interiorly (*De veritate* 11, 1 ad 7, ad 8, ad 9). So too, although the certainty of our knowledge is from the light of reason placed in us by God and through which God speaks in us, *quo in nobis loquitur Deus* (*De veritate* 11, 1 ad 13), the teacher contributes to the certainty of our knowledge by showing how conclusions are ‘resolved’ into their principles (also *De veritate* 11, 1 ad 17).

Although Aquinas says that he is proposing a middle way between the two views he described as ‘irrational’, some might see him as siding more with the Platonist-Augustinian side of the contrast. So his statement in *De veritate* 11, 1 ad 10 that the intelligible forms in the knowledge of which wisdom consists are both the likenesses of things and forms perfecting the mind, has a distinctly Platonist feel to it. It would not be true, however, to say that he believes that human knowledge is innate and only needs ‘drawing out’. Remember, he has already said that the first conceptions of the mind are immediately known, but on the basis of species abstracted from sensible things. We can say, perhaps, that for him our knowledge of first principles is quasi-innate, present as soon as we need it in order for any thinking or knowing to take place, but not known apart from experience.

How does the human teacher’s action relate to the student’s own capacity for intellectual understanding? Aquinas’s answer is to say that what the student understands is ‘described’, *describuntur*, immediately by the agent intellect (the student’s own capacity) and in a mediated way by the teacher. The teacher proposes signs of intelligible things from which the student receives intelligible intentions. While anything outside the mind can also stimulate this, the words of the teacher are closer to the causing of knowledge than is anything else outside the mind because those words are already signs

of intelligible intentions, *signa intelligibilium intentionum* (*De veritate* 11, 1 ad 11; see also ad 14).

In an earlier account, Aquinas had compared teaching to a person pointing something out to another, drawing his attention to it, and so placing it before him. Here he says that there are significant differences between intellectual understanding and physical sight. It is as if he feels the earlier comparison might be misleading. The key differences are that intellect is a 'collative' power and sight is not. Physically we see things immediately they are placed in front of us and we see one thing after another. But the ability to relate things to each other, and to work with different kinds of relation between things, is properly intellectual. The intellect's ability to do this is a potentiality needing actualization, whereas sight is able to do what sight does without any further stimulation. What is more, the person presenting something to physical vision is 'an accidental mover' whereas the teacher exciting the mind to know the things he is teaching is 'an essential mover' causing, *educens*, a movement from potency to act (*De veritate* 11, 1 ad 12).

The final argument here seems to be drawn from the exercise in which Aquinas and his students are actually engaged in having a *quaestio disputata* at all. It is suggested that a student, having presented the arguments, might respond without listening to what the master has to say, in which case he does not need to be taught by the master. Aquinas replies that the student would be able to respond on the basis of the principles that make it possible for him to learn anything (and presumably also on the basis of his own knowledge and thinking). But he cannot respond on the basis of the conclusions the master is set to draw from these principles because they have not yet been drawn. It is these conclusions that the student learns from the master (*De veritate* 11, 1 ad 18).

Chapter 10

Thomas on Teaching: *Summa theologiae* I 117

The second text in which Aquinas gives a lengthy explanation of his understanding of teaching is *Summa theologiae* I 117. It was written about 1268, some ten years after *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, while he was working at Santa Sabina in Rome, developing the curriculum of his *studium personale*, or personal academy (Boyle, 1982).

Once again, Thomas's consideration of teaching is found in what, *prima facie*, seems like a strange location. In this part of his work, he is considering the question of causality among creatures: to put it crudely, in what ways creatures might interfere with each other. Once it has 'left God's hand', what kind of change can there be within creation? Can creatures move or change each other in significant ways, that is, in ways relevant to the working out of God's providential plan? If such change is possible, what creatures can do it and how does it come about?

It is clear to Aquinas that God, the creator of all things, constantly sustains things in their being and activities. God is not only creator, but also provider for all things. Not only setting things up in the way a deist watchmaker might do, God governs and guides their development and progress, not just in a general sense, but specifically (*Summa theologiae* I 103–4). One effect of God's government of things is their conservation in being; a second effect is change brought about in them by God. Because of what Aquinas understands creation to mean, God is active wherever creatures are active (*Summa theologiae* I 105). God governs the created world and can change creatures as and when he wishes. This is not to do violence to them or to infringe their rights because, as creatures, all they have, are, and do is from God anyway.²

What about creatures though? Can they introduce change into the creation and contribute to the working out of God's providence?

Following the descending hierarchy in *De veritate*, Aquinas asks first about angels, creatures that are purely spiritual and purely intellectual. Earlier in the *prima pars* he considered the nature, movement, and knowledge of good and bad angels (*Summa theologiae* I 50–64). Here he considers whether and how they affect other creatures; in the first place other angels (I 106–9), secondly, purely corporeal creatures (I 110), and finally, human beings who are composite creatures, both spiritual like the angels and corporeal like purely physical things (I 111). He believes the angels can enlighten humans (111, 1), can change the human imagination (111, 3), and can interfere with human sensing (111, 4). But they cannot change the human will (111, 2), such change being God's prerogative and not something a creature can bring about (see also *De veritate* 11, 1 ad 16). He goes on to spell out in greater detail how good and bad angels can be involved in human affairs (*Summa theologiae* I 112–14).³

After the angels, Aquinas considers purely corporeal creatures (*Summa theologiae* I 115). These can affect other bodily beings, and their influence belongs within what is called 'fate', *fatum*, an influence that is determined, cannot be other than it is, and does not involve free judgment (I 116). But the human creature, because it is intelligent and has free judgment, is involved in the working out of God's providence, not in terms of fate, which is blind, determined, and fixed, but with understanding and freedom. The human being is *providentiae particeps*, Aquinas says in *Summa theologiae* I.II 91, 2, a 'participant in providence'. The human being is a partner with God in the working out of God's plan for the world.

This then sets the broader metaphysical and theological context in which Aquinas turns again to the question of whether or not one human being can teach another (I 117, 1). It is a question about creaturely action to bring about change within the creation, within the overall context of God's government of things. So the other articles in *Summa theologiae* I 117 consider other aspects of interaction among creatures: whether a human being can teach an angel (117, 2), whether a human being by virtue of his soul (in what marks him off from corporeal nature) can change corporeal nature (which he can obviously do by virtue of his bodiliness – 117, 3), and whether the separated human soul can move bodies physically (117, 4). Our

interest is in Aquinas's argument about whether one human being can teach another, to see whether and how it develops the arguments already presented.

Three of the initial arguments are familiar: that Matthew 23 means no human being should be regarded as a teacher (argument 1), that the capacity for and process of intellectual understanding are such that another human being cannot intervene in them (argument 3), and that it is difficult to see how proposing signs to someone can teach them, since they either understand the signs from what they know already or the signs are incomprehensible to them, in which case how can they learn anything from them (argument 4)?

The second argument is new: if it happens that one person causes knowledge, *scientia*, in another, this can only be because knowledge is a kind of active quality like heat. In other words it has no choice but to cause knowledge in another, just as heat has no choice but to warm whatever comes within its range. But this does not sound like teaching in the sense in which it is normally understood.

In presenting his case in favor of the possibility of teaching, Aquinas again positions his view between two contrasting ones. This time he associates the first with Averroes who, in his commentary on a notoriously difficult passage of Aristotle's *De anima* (III 5 430a 10–26), postulated one 'possible intellect' for all human beings, from which it would follow that the same 'understandings' are found in all human beings. The process of teaching would not then be to cause in another person a different understanding from that which the teacher himself has, but to communicate to another the same knowledge as the teacher has even if it is on the basis of different empirical experiences. This view is true, Aquinas says, from the point of view of what is known. As regards 'the truth of the matter', *rei veritas*, the knowledge is identical. For a teacher and a pupil to understand Pythagoras's theorem, for example, is for them to understand the same thing even though it cannot be said that the teacher's knowledge of it and the pupil's knowledge of it are identical.

But Aquinas is not happy that this should be explained in terms of one possible intellect for all humans, a shared or common mind. He is certain that this prejudices the integrity of the individual human being who could not then be said to know, judge, decide, and act for

himself, to be the conscious and free source of human acts in the full and proper sense. He does not enter further into this debate here, but refers his reader to his earlier consideration, and rejection, of the proposal of one possible intellect for all human beings (*Summa contra gentiles* II.75; *Summa theologiae* I 76, 2). His final consideration of it, and passionate defense of the conviction that 'this individual human being understands', *hic homo singularis intelligit*, is in *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*. See especially chapter V (lines 243–68 Leonine edition) for his explanation of how one person's knowledge of something is not identical with another person's knowledge of the same thing.

The contrasting view about teaching is now explicitly attributed to the Platonists who postulate that knowledge is innate and present in our souls from the beginning through participation in the separated forms (see *Summa theologiae* 84, 3–4 for a fuller evaluation of the understanding of knowledge presupposed here). On this view, the pupil does not receive knowledge from the teacher 'from scratch', *de novo*, but is stimulated by the teacher to consider things she already somehow knows. Learning is nothing other than remembering. This understanding of teaching and learning parallels the Platonist account of causality in relation to natural events, Aquinas says. Natural agents merely dispose corporeal matter towards the reception of the forms it acquires, but it acquires them not from those natural agents but through participation in separated 'species' (*Summa theologiae* I 84, 4). Against this he places an earlier passage of Aristotle's *De anima* which says that the possible intellect, far from being filled with innate knowledge, however hidden, is in pure potency towards intelligible things: in the famous image it is a wax tablet, *tabula rasa*, on which nothing has yet been written (*De anima* III 4 429b 30)⁴.

Aquinas still believes that his middle way, developed on the basis of texts in Aristotle's *Physics*, is a better way of understanding teaching. Act and potency are central to Aristotle's way of explaining change not only in the physical world. Teaching is an example of actualizing what is potential as the one teaching causes knowledge in the one learning by drawing the learner, *reducendo eum*, from a state of potentiality to one of actuality. Aquinas points out that Aristotle already applied the distinction to various ways in which a person knows a science

(*Physics* VIII.4 255a 33; see Aquinas *In VIII Physicorum* VIII, *lectio* 8: §1031).

His next step is to say that some effects are brought about exclusively by exterior principles. Bricks and wood, for example, have nothing intrinsic that would lead them to constitute a house without the intervention of the art of house building. That art, in the mind of the architect and builders, explains how the house comes about, and is the extrinsic cause making the pile of bricks and wood that is a potential house into an actual house.

Other effects are sometimes from an exterior principle and sometimes from an interior one. The example is familiar: health may be restored through the art of medicine, an extrinsic cause, or naturally, through intrinsic causes, or by both working together. Once again, Aquinas says that art imitates nature in this kind of causality, the medical doctor doing what nature itself does in order to achieve the goal of health. The second thing to be noted is that the extrinsic principle is not a principal agent here but an assistant, *adiuvans*, to a principal agent, strengthening, *confortando*, and serving it by ministering to it with instruments and aids that help to produce the effect. The task of the medical doctor, who is the exterior principle assisting nature in the healing of a patient, is to strengthen nature and to provide foods and medicines which nature can use towards its intended goal.⁵

Aquinas again applies this analogy to the teacher. Knowledge, *scientia*, is acquired by human beings both from an interior principle, when a person acquires knowledge through his own research and discovery, and from an exterior principle, in the case of one who is taught. Within every human being is a principle of knowledge, what Aquinas called the 'light of the agent intellect', *lumen intellectus agentis*.

When he says that the agent intellect allows us to know 'immediately and from the beginning' certain universal principles of all the sciences, we may once again feel that Aquinas leans towards the Platonist side of the opposing views he has put forward. However, he does not mean by this that the human being can deduce all knowledge from a few primary principles in an idealistic kind of way. Experience, experiment, research, and sensation are all essential to the human way of knowing and understanding. Applying the innate, universal principles to the data of experience and in the work of research

allows the human being to discover new things, to grow in his knowledge, to move from what he knows to what he does not know, to become less ignorant and more knowledgeable. Something happens that is more than the manifestation of what is hidden, more than the remembering of what has been forgotten.

Like the body's tendency to restore itself to health when it is sick, the human being is naturally inclined to expand his knowledge and deepen his understanding. The natural processes that make this possible are active in us anyway. But the teacher can help these natural processes, just as the doctor can help the natural processes of recovery. The one who teaches leads the pupil from the things she already knows to a knowledge and understanding of things of which she was ignorant. Aquinas quotes the statement with which Aristotle begins his *Posterior Analytics*: 'All teaching and all intellectual learning come about from already existing knowledge' (I.1 71a 1; see Aquinas, *In Posteriorum Analyticorum I, lectio 1: §9*).

There are two ways in which the teacher can lead the pupil from his already existing knowledge to the knowledge of things previously unknown to him. One way is by proposing to him certain aids and instruments that his mind, *intellectus*, may use in acquiring knowledge. For example, the teacher may put to the pupil certain less-universal propositions, which the pupil can evaluate on the basis of more-universal propositions already known. Or the teacher may put to the pupil certain sensible examples or likenesses, things of that kind (images and stories, or illustrations) through which the mind of the learner is led to the knowledge of a truth previously unknown.

The second way is by reinforcing the mind of the learner. A human being cannot do this by some active power as if there were superior and inferior intellects among human beings as there are among angels (*Summa theologiae* I 106 1, 111 1). All human minds, Aquinas believes, are of the same value in the order of nature, *unius gradus in ordine naturae* (*Summa theologiae* I 117 1). At the same time, he believes that the teacher can show the pupil how to use his mind, by pointing out the order of principles to conclusions (the connections that can legitimately be made) which the pupil left to himself might not have sufficient 'collating power' to see. Once again, Aquinas turns to the opening pages of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* where he states that 'by demonstration I mean a scientific deduction' which Aquinas's

Latin translation gave him as *demonstratio est syllogismus faciens scire*, ‘demonstration means the syllogism causes knowledge’ (*Posterior analytics* I.2 71b 17, with Aquinas, *In Posteriorum Analyticorum* I, *lectio* 4). The teacher helps the pupil to see how the syllogism fits together.

In replying to the argument that Matthew 23 means we can call no human being a teacher, Aquinas says that as nature is the principal cause of healing, so the interior intellectual light is the principal cause of knowledge. Both nature and that light are from God who heals us of our ills (Psalm 102.3) and teaches us knowledge (Psalm 93.10) insofar as he has allowed the light of his face to shine upon us (Psalm 4.7). It is by that light that all things are shown to us. Aquinas simply accepts that there is a light of intelligence in the human being enabling, in particular, the function he assigns to the agent intellect (*Summa theologiae* I 117, 1 ad 1). Because this light is from God, God alone is said to teach.

In responding to the second argument – that knowledge is an active quality like heat – he says that the teacher, *doctor*, does not work as a natural agent does and that knowledge is a principle comparable to art. As art directs a person in practical action and production so knowledge directs a person in teaching others (*Summa theologiae* I 117, 1 ad 2).

To the third argument, that teaching seems to imply doing another person’s knowing and/or understanding for them, Aquinas replies that it is not so. As the teacher, *magister*, does not cause the intelligible light in the pupil, neither does he directly cause the pupil’s understanding. What the teacher can do, through the techniques of teaching, is move the pupil to the point where, by the strength of his own mind, he forms intelligible conceptions, the signs of which the teacher proposes externally. The reference to ‘signs’ echoes Augustine’s *De magistro*, but it is striking that this is the first reference to Augustine in this article and it is only an implicit one (*Summa theologiae* I 117, 1 ad 3). Gabriel Moran has argued that Augustine’s Platonism, combined with his faith in God as the only teacher, led him to disparage the role of human teachers and teaching. Aquinas, on the other hand, influenced by Aristotle but also by Greek patristic traditions about teaching and learning (*paideia*) offers a different account of teaching, one that remains fundamentally theological, but which establishes more clearly the value of human teaching (Moran, 2000).

To the argument that what teachers can propose to pupils are either things already known and so there is no change brought about, or things that remain unknown so how can any change be brought about?, Aquinas replies that the techniques used in teaching help to make specific and distinct things that the student already knows in a general and confused way (*Summa theologiae* I 117, 1 ad 4). He then repeats his view, already presented at length in *De veritate* 11, 2, that a person cannot be properly said to teach himself even if he can acquire new knowledge by himself. This is because complete knowledge of the matter did not pre-exist in him before he came to know whereas complete knowledge of the matter pre-exists in the teacher who helps another to know and understand it.

Aquinas's understanding is that human knowledge originates in the perceptions of sense experience, but requires also the phantasmata of the imagination from which the 'intelligible species' are abstracted by the agent intellect. In the way our knowledge comes about, therefore, the intellect depends on sensation and imagination and such dependence continues to characterize human knowledge even when it reaches to what is in itself beyond sensation and imagination. There is no human intellectual understanding that does not include reference to sensation and imagination (*Summa theologiae* I 84, 7). This has obvious implications for teaching, since one of the teacher's tasks is to come up with illustrations to assist the student in the processes of understanding. We can say, then, that for Aquinas, the good teacher is one who succeeds in placing imagination at the service of understanding.

Our survey of the texts in which Aquinas speaks about teaching has led us to the point where we must say something more about his understanding of knowledge and truth, since these are the things that engage the interest of both teacher and learner, the reason why this relationship of teacher and learner comes into existence at all. So we turn to consider questions that arise immediately from this examination of Aquinas's texts on teaching: how does he understand knowledge and truth, and how does he relate the kind of knowing involved in faith to the kind of knowing available to 'natural reason'?

2.B: Knowledge, Truth, Faith, Reason

Chapter 11

Knowledge

The human being as Aquinas understands her – the ‘spirit in the world’, in Karl Rahner’s phrase – is, like all animals, stimulated and attracted by her environment. She is equipped to take in her world and to respond to it according to the capacities and interests of a range of faculties or ‘powers of the soul’ (see *Summa theologiae* I 77–78).

Through what came to be called external senses, the human being is touched by the world in a number of ways, especially through seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting. Through what came to be called internal senses – a common or coordinating sense that enables us to judge, for example, the speed or size of something, as well as intuition, memory, and imagination – the human being is equipped to process the data received through sensation and to respond to it in more complex ways.

This is all enriched and strengthened by the rational or intellectual powers of the human being, her capacity for knowing and willing in a universal way. Although such universal knowing and willing means standing back from immediate stimulations and attractions, it can still be understood in terms of the basic pattern of stimulation and attraction. The human being is engaged by the world and comes to know and understand it. The human being is also capable of reshaping the world, manipulating and exploiting it according to her own interests. Thus, in the human world, we find science and technology alongside art, morality, and politics.

The human being, Aristotle’s rational animal, is, in Herbert McCabe’s contemporary reading of Aristotle and Aquinas, the linguistic animal that, because it uses language, lives within structures that provide meaning (see McCabe, 2002: 199–211; 2005: 58–78). For McCabe, it is this capacity for language that definitively separates the

human from other animals. It is crucial to remember what human beings do share with the other animals, and many disastrous turns in philosophy and spirituality follow from forgetting it. But it is also crucial to see how humans stand out from the other animals. In our capacities for language and technology human beings are qualitatively beyond what even the highest of the other animals can achieve. These activities are what Aquinas is talking about when he considers the rational powers of the human soul.

For Aquinas, the activities of learning what is true and seeking what is good are what it means to be capable of understanding, decision, and initiative. We will see that this is also what he intends when he speaks of the human being as created in the image and likeness of God. Something of these is found in other animals too, but not with the specifically rational quality that the human being brings to them. We can also say that it is our capacity for knowledge and truth that enables human beings to engage in teaching and learning in a specifically human way, just as it is what enables them to seek wisdom.

Aquinas was the only thirteenth-century scholastic to comment on Boethius's short theological treatise on the Trinity, *De Trinitate*. This unfinished commentary, an autograph of which survives, was probably written between 1257 and 1259, around the same time as he was working on *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* and before he began work on *Summa contra gentiles* (Weisheipl, 1974: 381–82; 1983: 483). The six questions of the commentary are concerned with how humans know God, but it is here that Aquinas gives his most developed account of the epistemology of the sciences, the structure and process of human knowledge (Torrell, 2002: 97–101, 503–4; Maurer, 1986 and 1987). In the opening two questions, Aquinas's main focus is a distinction between what the human mind by itself can know of God and what needs to be revealed if humans are to know it. In order to consider this distinction, he is obliged to begin by saying something about human knowledge as such.

He is confident that the human being is equipped by nature to know truth (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 1, 1). A passive power needs to be moved by a corresponding active power if it is to exercise its specific activity. The view of Avicenna that the agent intellect – intellect in its creative, intelligible-making activity – is a separated substance would

mean that the human soul was incapable of exercising its specific activity unless illumined by a light external to itself. Aristotle's comments in *De anima* III.5, however, imply that the agent intellect is a power of the soul, and this agrees with what we find in scripture, that we are marked with an intelligible light (Aquinas refers to Psalm 4.6: 'Let the light of your face shine on us O Lord'). In its intellectual activity of knowing the truth, then, both an active and a passive power are ascribed to the soul, which thus has all it needs to carry out that activity (*Summa theologiae* I 79, 2–4).

This basic confidence in a natural human capacity to know the truth is qualified in two ways. One is that the truth to which the capacity of the human intellect naturally extends is restricted to the principles we naturally know and the conclusions we deduce from them. Other truths – the truths of faith for example, or future contingencies – do not come within the range of these principles and in order to know such things the natural light of intelligence needs to be supplemented by a new light. The second qualification is that even the knowledge of truth naturally attainable is dependent on God's general governance of the world. Thus we can say that divine activity is required even for natural knowing. This means that, although God does not need to supplement his created work with a new light in order for it to carry out its ordinary activities, those activities are always contained within God's creative and provident care (see also *In II Sentences* 28, 1, 5 argument 3; *De veritate* 11, 1; and *Summa theologiae* 109, 1).

Developing the first qualification, Aquinas argues that in its present state the human intellect has a definite relationship to forms abstracted from the senses (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 1, 2). The realities we are best equipped to know are the realities of this world that are susceptible to empirical investigation and are capable of being rendered intelligible. In other words, human beings are equipped for scientific knowledge of the natural world. This means we will have great difficulty in knowing purely spiritual realities, so our knowledge of God is seriously limited, a knowledge restricted to knowing that there is a God and what God is not (see also *In Boethii de Trinitate* 1, 4; 2, 1; 6, 2–4; and *Summa contra gentiles* I.3). Such knowledge is gleaned not from any direct acquaintance with God but through reflection on the realities of our world when we recognize them as the effects

of some cause. But the sense in which God may be described as an intelligible object at all needs radical qualification, Aquinas says (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 1, 2 ad 4).

What our minds know first is what is perceptible to the senses, here called the singular or sensible intelligible, *singulare vel sensibile intelligibile* (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 1, 3). What the intellect itself first knows are forms abstracted from images. It is only in a subsequent moment that the intellect knows itself. In fact, a lengthy enquiry is required before we know the nature of the intellect, Aquinas thinks – an enquiry that can begin only when we find ourselves knowing something. The order of knowing is, then, firstly to know things, secondly to know that we are knowing, and only then to know that we have a faculty for knowing. The first objects of our intellectual knowledge are things like ‘being’ and ‘one’, the primary objects the intellect abstracts from sense experience (1, 3 ad 3). It is by reflecting on the fact that we come to know such things that we understand something of the process of knowledge and it is in such reflection that the meaning of the term ‘true’ is understood.

Chapter 12

Truth

Aquinas is a realist in that he believes there is a truth about the world and that the human being is equipped to discover it. The truth, he says, ‘is strong in itself and is not overcome by any assault’, *veritas in seipsa fortis est, et nulla impugnatione convellitur* (*Summa contra gentiles* IV.10). This kind of confidence in what we might call its public, objective character, means the truth can be pursued along with others, without fear, and as something to which human beings must be obedient. Aquinas comments, for example, that the ancient philosophers were ‘as it were forced by the truth itself’ into certain convictions, *quasi ab ipsa veritate coacti* (*Summa contra gentiles* I.43). As noted in Part 1, Thomas quotes with approval the statement of Ambrosiaster that anything true, no matter by whom it is said, is from the Holy Spirit (Part 1, note 16).

If Aquinas is a realist in the sense just outlined, he is not a naive realist. He recognizes that there are areas of life that fall decisively under human creativity, activities, and institutions that receive their meaning from us, and that the knowing subject shapes her own apprehension and appropriation of the world. Whatever is received, Thomas frequently recalls, is received according to the mode of the receiver. As a person is, he says just as often, so does her goal seem to her.

In his commentary on the second book of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, Aquinas explains how he links truth and being (*In XII Metaphysicorum* II.1.2: §§290–98). Of all the sciences concerned with truth, ‘first philosophy’, or metaphysics, is concerned with it most of all. To know truth is to ‘know through causes’, and the concern of metaphysics is with the first causes of things (§292). For this reason, Aquinas calls metaphysics ‘the science of truth’ (§297). Truth is as extensive as being and, applying a general proposition about the relationship between the first in a series and the subsequent members of that series, he

follows Aristotle in saying that what is most true must be the cause of the truth of other things that are true (§294). But that which is the cause of being is also most true, from which it follows, Aquinas believes, that as a thing is to the fact that it is, so is it also to the fact that it has truth (§298). Thus being and truth are convertible. It is a thing's being that is the cause of the true estimation of it that the mind can have, *esse rei est causa verae existimationis quam mens habet de re* (§298).

If truth cannot be defined without reference to being, neither can it be defined without reference to mind. For Aquinas, truth is the good of the mind. In one sense a thing is true if it fulfills the designs of the divine intellect that created it. In another sense, truth is found in the judgments that created intellects make about the way things are when those judgments are accurate to how things actually are. If, *per impossibile*, there were things but no intellect, either divine or created, then there would be no truth: in no way would the sense of truth remain, *nullo modo ratio veritatis remaneret* (*De veritate* 1, 2 in c).

For Aquinas, 'the true' is one of the transcendental properties of being (*De veritate* 1, 1). Some of these properties (*res*, to be a thing, and *unum*, to be one thing) belong to being in itself, while others (*aliquid*, to be something, *bonum*, to be good, and *verum*, to be true) follow on relational modes of being. To be 'something' is defined negatively, and means one being is not other beings. To be 'good' and to be 'true' are defined positively and in terms of soul, *anima*. There is something that can coincide, *convenire*, with all being; namely the soul that, as Aristotle says, is in a way all things, *quodammodo omnia*. This 'coinciding with all being' has two aspects, corresponding to the soul's powers of apprehension and desire. The good refers to the soul's coinciding with all being through its power to desire. The true refers to the soul's coinciding with all being through its power to apprehend.

The first comparison of being with the intellect is its correspondence, *correspondentia*, to the intellect, what is called the 'adequation of the thing and the intellect', *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. It is in this adequation or correspondence that the meaning of 'the true' is formally to be located.⁶ What the term 'true' adds to the term 'being' is this conformity or adequation of the thing and the intellect on which

the knowledge of the thing follows (*Summa theologiae* I 16, 3). The being of something is thus prior to its truth, but the knowledge of something is an effect of its truth, *entitas rei praecedat rationem veritatis, sed cognitio est quidam veritatis effectus* (*De veritate* 1, 1 in c). Aquinas is thus a realist – the being of something is prior to its truth – but not a naive realist – the knowledge of something is an effect not simply of its being but of its truth, and truth includes always a reference to mind. We might say that Aquinas is a ‘theological realist’.

Aquinas notes that three ways of defining truth and the true are found in various authors. In one way, the term is used to refer to what actually precedes and grounds the notion of truth formally speaking, so that a thing’s truth refers simply to the fact that it is and is what it is. A second use of the term is according to the formal definition of truth as the adequation or right alignment, *rectitudo*, of thing and mind. A third use is from a consequent effect of the true, namely that it makes manifest, declares, shows forth, and supports judgment (*De veritate* 1,1). Aquinas believes that the various understandings of truth offered by earlier thinkers can all be related to the second use, what he calls its formal definition.

When he considers the matter again, in *Summa theologiae* I 16, he says that truth is primarily in mind and secondarily in things as related to mind (I 16, 1). In this it contrasts with ‘the good’, which is primarily in the thing desired and secondarily in the desire for it. In considering the sense in which ‘truth’ can be applied to God, he distinguishes a thing’s relation to the mind to which it owes its being and its relation to a mind by which it is knowable. A thing is true absolutely speaking in relation to the mind on which it depends. Man-made things have this kind of relation to our minds, whereas natural things have it in dependence on the mind of God the Creator. For human beings, truth figures in the judgment we make that something is in conformity with its form as we apprehend it, since knowing the truth means knowing the conformity of intellect and thing (*Summa theologiae* I 16, 2).

An indispensable element in the human way of reaching truth is the conversation of teacher and student. There is no human teaching or learning without imagination and without signs, particularly the systems of signs we call language. This means that there is no human appreciation of truth that is not shared. To an objection that it is

better to find things out for oneself than to be taught by someone else, Aquinas makes this distinction: from one point of view, that of the student's grasp of what he has discovered, it is better to gain knowledge through personal discovery, but from another, that of the speedy and comprehensive communication of what is known, it is better to gain knowledge through being taught, *in quadam communitate* (*De veritate* 11, 2 ad 4).

Aquinas discusses this in the earlier part of his commentary on the second book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (*In XII Metaphysicorum* II, *lectio* 1: §§275–88). Nobody has all the truth, as Aristotle says, though everybody has some of it (§275) and there is a communitarian aspect essential to our getting at truth (§276). In one sense, truth is easy because 'everybody knows the door to it' (*Metaphysics* II.1 993b 5–6). Aquinas takes this to be referring to the first principles that are quasi-innate. In another sense, truth is difficult. We cannot know perfectly either a whole or a part (*In XII Metaphysicorum* II, *lectio* 1: §278), things that lack being are harder to know to the extent that they lack being (§280), but things that have fuller being are also unknown to us (§282). This latter is the main difficulty in knowing truth and it arises from the deficiency of the human intellect. In the face of what truly is, we are like bats in sunlight, as Aristotle puts it. The human soul is last in the order of intellectual substances and participates least in intellectual power (§285). The human intellect has a natural aptitude for knowing the truth about bodies and sensible things generally. Such things are naturally less knowable because of their materiality, and yet these are the things we are best equipped to know.

Aristotle goes on to explain how human beings can help each other to consider truth (*In XII Metaphysicorum* II, *lectio* 1: §287). We are helped directly by those who have discovered truths. We are helped indirectly by those who have erred about truth and so given their successors work to do so that by study and discussion the truth may be more clearly seen. We ought to be grateful to people who have helped us in either way, Aquinas says, for they have taught us something about the search for truth (§288). So, from our teachers we accept some opinions about truth and leave others to one side. They in turn had predecessors from whom they received, and so on.

We may draw two conclusions from this. One is that for Aquinas, human beings see truth only when they see it in some kind of community. Everybody needs to be taught and teaching is through language, conversation, and communication. For God, it is otherwise, since he encompasses all. The angels (apparently) see things in a flash of insight, but human beings have to put them together more slowly and in piecemeal fashion. Although our knowledge is our own, our appreciation of the truth of our knowledge can only be along with others. We may add that only a truth shared is truth properly speaking because all that is good is self-diffusive, and truth is a good. What Aquinas says about what happens in teaching can be applied to all human communication (*Summa contra gentiles* III.81).

A second conclusion is that although human beings are gleaners, obliged to collect up and construct their knowledge through sensation, nevertheless the knowledge they do attain, and its transmission to others through teaching, is part of wisdom (*Summa contra gentiles* I.3; I.8). Truth is the final end of the entire universe, he says, and wisdom in its principal meaning is concerned with this truth (*Summa contra gentiles* I.1). Human beings are equipped to know at least some truth and so are equipped to experience something of wisdom.

We have seen how Aquinas was taught and how he taught, and we have considered the texts in which he explicitly considers what teaching means. It is clear that questions of method or pedagogy cannot be separated from doctrinal positions, convictions about truth and knowledge, human rationality and our capacity for understanding, experience and authority. In his case, as in that of all his contemporaries, the question of knowing by faith and knowing through reason was unavoidable, and it is to his consideration of that question that we turn next. The question is central to Aquinas's method of work and to his self-understanding, but is also potentially an obstacle to current reception of his ideas.

Chapter 13

Faith and Reason, Theology and Philosophy

Aquinas is at once open and critical because of his confidence in the objectivity of truth and the capacity of human beings to attain it. For him, the reliability or objectivity of scientific enquiry is established theologically. What this means is that because of its origin in God's wisdom, the world is an intelligible, ordered, and wise place. Aquinas's understanding of truth is part of his account of being, *esse*. This is the fundamental gift, which only God can bestow. The characteristic effect of the activity that is called creation, it carries to individual things not only their being – as if that were simply another quality or predicate, which it is not – but all the perfections and activities that characterize them.⁷

Human beings, Thomas believed, are equipped to engage with the world through sense perception and intellectual appropriation, and to share in wisdom by coming to understand the world's intelligibility and appreciating its truth. Objectivity therefore depends not only on the capacities of our faculties – an epistemology – but also on the relationship of things to God for their being and therefore for their truth – a theology. The universe is the 'first book' in which God is revealed and Aquinas simply accepts that human intelligence is equipped to understand this universe, to articulate and communicate the truth about it. We are adapted to discover the world, to 'invent' it as he would say, by which he does not mean that we create the world out of ourselves but that, in coming to realize its meaning, we become in turn agents in, and in certain ways makers of, our world.

The question of faith and reason is likely to be understood today as a question about philosophy and theology, but in Aquinas's time, matters were not so simple. When one begins to consider medieval thought, and specifically the question of philosophy in the Middle Ages, a number of issues immediately arise. Because of what

philosophy is now thought to be about, the themes with which it deals, and the way in which it deals with them, it can sometimes be concluded that there is little or no philosophy worth speaking about in the medieval period. The following statement, written by a French historian of philosophy in 1897, summarizes well a view that is still accepted in some quarters:

If philosophy is, as we have defined it, a free search, we may say that from the edict of Justinian (529) to the Renaissance in the fifteenth century there is a sort of interval during which there is, properly speaking, no philosophy. For, during all that period, western humanity was subject, in the region of speculation, to the dogmas that constitute the Christian teaching, and, in the region of morals, to the ecclesiastical discipline founded on those dogmas. We should, therefore, in a history of philosophy, simply skip that interval of eight or nine centuries and pass directly to study the researches that prepared the way for modern philosophy.⁸

In many places, until quite recently, philosophy was taken to begin again with Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode*, written in 1637, after a gap, to all intents and purposes, of nearly a thousand years. As noted in the introduction to this work, the situation is changing and 'the study of medieval philosophy is flourishing'.⁹

While accepting that philosophical thinking is embedded in medieval thought, and is rarely if ever undertaken independently of theology, one may argue that this does not rule out philosophical work on philosophical issues. If philosophy is concerned with the theory of meaning, epistemology, the philosophy of mind, ethics, and metaphysics, it is clear that medieval thinkers contributed in significant ways to philosophical reflection about these issues even when doing so in theological contexts. In other words, one can argue that medieval thinkers did attend to philosophical concerns philosophically (Marenbon, 1988: vii–xiv).

In 1907, Maurice de Wulf made the point that, in any case, theological controversies themselves raised philosophical questions (de Wulf, 1907: 57). Anthony Kenny concurs, arguing that Christian doctrines not only raised philosophical issues, but that theological

consideration of those doctrines contributed to the development of philosophy in this period. Questions about death and immortality, body and soul, the nature and efficacy of signs, free will and determinism, and personal identity, were necessarily raised by Christian theology, but their consideration led to important developments in philosophy, not least in the development of philosophical terminology. Kenny's view is that the agenda of Christian theology necessitated philosophical work and that the progress of Christian theology led to developments that are nevertheless properly philosophical (Kenny, 1998: 101–4; also Aertsen, 1999).

Nor were medieval thinkers themselves naive in their understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology, or rather between natural reason and faith (let us accept for the moment that it is the same question). How theology relates to, and uses, philosophy is a central concern for the Middle Ages. Nor is it an exclusively Christian concern for it is as controversial in Muslim and Jewish intellectual circles as it is in Christian ones. Some modern thinkers might regard philosophy as so overwhelmed by theology in the medieval period that it was not allowed space for its own specific activity. People like Al Ghazzali and Bernard of Clairvaux seem to encourage the view that philosophy should be completely subordinate to the requirements and teachings of Islamic or Christian theology. 'Medieval philosophy' would then become a contradiction in terms.

Others though, notably Al Farabi, Albert, and Aquinas, sought to distinguish areas of concern, or perspectives and approaches, which characterize philosophy (natural reason) on the one hand and theology (faith) on the other. Although as believers they assigned theological truth a final arbitration in situations of conflict, misunderstandings might require not just better philosophy, but better theology too. At the same time, they accepted that philosophy had a branch called 'theology', and that Islamic and Christian theology were not 'irrational' but a strengthening of reason's quest for wisdom, which is why the relationship cannot be set up as it often is in modern times, where faith and reason are thought to be opposed.

Another view was in terms of alternative approaches to truth, or even of two kinds of truth, with the survival of an idea from the ancient world that religious faith focuses on myth and satisfies the

masses where philosophical thought focuses on truth and is attained only by the few. This is the view proposed by Averroes and affects the views of the 'Averroising' masters in the Paris faculty of arts.

Mark D. Jordan sees Aquinas going about things in the way Anthony Kenny sees Christian theologians generally going about them. Aquinas is, first and foremost, a theologian who makes use of philosophy. The people he identified as philosophers were pagans, they were not Jews, Christians, or Muslims, but the water of their wisdom is turned into wine when it is put at the service of theology (Jordan, 1993; Torrell, 2002: 158, note 52). The way in which Aquinas uses philosophy is not simply to subjugate it to theology, but to strengthen philosophical reflection itself and to improve philosophical discoveries. In the hands of a thinker like him, theology does not simply highlight the incompleteness of philosophy, but helps to strengthen properly philosophical thinking and argumentation. This is why many people think of Aquinas as a philosopher as well as a theologian.

Nor should the political consequences of his option in regard to the relationship of faith and reason, theology and philosophy, be forgotten. The issue had been controversial for more than a century, from the time of Abelard onwards. In Aquinas's day it took the more specific form of how one received and used the philosophy of Aristotle. Aquinas would have realized very quickly that the approach he and Albert took to these issues did not please everyone (Torrell, 2002: 56). Opposition emerged in the Church, in the faculty of theology, and within the university of Paris generally. He found himself positioned between the traditional 'Augustinian' masters, who preferred a clearer subordination of philosophy to theology, and the 'radical Aristotelians', who tended in the direction of different perspectives or 'double truth'. Aquinas saw clearly the important issues at stake in these controversies. In all his major works, he is obliged to address the distinction and relationship between what is known by faith and what can be understood by reason. He devotes particular attention to it in his commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, in his *De rationibus fidei*, and in the two great systematic works *Summa contra gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*.

Theology, or what Aquinas calls the 'science of faith' (*scientia fidei*), uses philosophical reasoning in three ways, he says (*In Boethii de*

Trinitate 2, 3): first, to demonstrate the preambles of faith, truths about God that Aquinas believed could be demonstrated by natural reason; second, to throw light on the contents of faith by analogies; third, to refute assertions contrary to the faith either by showing that they are false or by showing that they must lack necessity. He appeals to one of his fundamental principles: just as grace does not destroy nature but perfects it (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 8 ad 2), so faith does not destroy reason but extends its reach. Aquinas believed that what is divinely taught by faith cannot contradict what we know by reason to be true. Both faith and nature come from God who, in the case of such contradictions, would be the source of error in human beings. Although the reach of philosophy is not such that it can include all that is revealed to faith, it cannot be contrary to faith. Where it seems that such is the case, there is some misunderstanding, Aquinas says. His defense of philosophy as a way of attaining truth is clear:

If anything is found in the sayings of the philosophers contrary to faith, this is not philosophy but rather an abuse of philosophy arising from faulty reasoning. Therefore it is possible to refute an error of this sort by philosophical principles, either by showing that it is entirely impossible or that it is not necessary. For, as matters of faith cannot be demonstratively proved, so some assertions contrary to them cannot be demonstratively shown to be false; it can, however, be shown that they lack necessity.

(*In Boethii de Trinitate* 2, 3 in c [Maurer, 1987, 48–49])

In other words, situations of conflict are most effectively resolved through better philosophy. To the accusation that Christian theologians who use philosophy in the work of theology are diluting the faith by mixing the water of secular learning with the wine of Christian teaching, Thomas replies that, on the contrary, they are turning water into wine (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 2, 3 ad 5). To the argument that the authority of philosophers is undermined by the fact that they have been wrong on so many points, he replies that philosophical teachings are used by theology not because of the authority of their authors but on account of the reasonableness of what they say (2, 3 ad 8).

Aquinas is likewise clear about the limits of faith as a form of knowledge. In *De rationibus fidei*, for example, as in *Summa contra gentiles* I, 1–9, he says there is no point in trying to prove the faith by necessary reasons, *rationes necessariae*. All the believer can do is defend the faith from arguments against it and show rationally that it is not false (Torrell, 2002: 157–63, 182–83). He is in favor of the best possible philosophy because arguments in support of the faith that are philosophically weak may confirm people in error (*Summa theologiae* I 32, 1; 46, 2).

In introducing the *Summa contra gentiles* he says that there is a twofold truth in divine things, for one of which reason suffices, but the other of which surpasses the capacity of reason (I, 1).¹⁰ If Aquinas is a champion of the strength and rights of reason, he is just as clear that it too has its limits. So he speaks about what cannot be expected of reason in theological matters while expressing confidence about the use of reason not only for our (scientific) knowledge of the world but even in theology (*Summa contra gentiles* I, 1). Books I to III of *Summa contra gentiles* consider truths about God, the world, and human nature that Aquinas believes are accessible to reason, while Book IV deals with those truths that are beyond the capacity of reason: these can be argued for only with probable and not with necessary reasons. What in faith is beyond human reason we believe on the revelation of God, but it is not irrational to do so (*Summa theologiae* III 1, 3).

Two modalities of argumentation may be identified, Aquinas says. The first kind uses demonstrative proofs that must convince an adversary because he is obliged to accept the truth of what is thus established. Faith cannot be defended in these terms because there would then be no need for faith. What theology can bring forward are arguments that are probable but not demonstrative and that are concerned with responding to arguments brought against the faith (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 8). So, ‘reason in faith’ can concern itself with refuting errors (showing that arguments against the faith cannot hold) and with making faith intelligible (otherwise people remain empty: *Quaestiones quodlibetales* IV 9, 3 [18]).¹¹

Even though the faith cannot be demonstratively established by reason, Aquinas is sure that the discoveries of natural reason cannot be against the truth of faith. Where contradictions appear, something

is not being understood correctly or some methodological infringement has occurred, either theological or philosophical. Let us turn, then, to what Aquinas has to say about methodology and pedagogy, since his reflections on these topics shed further light on his understanding of knowledge and truth, faith and reason, and so help to broaden our appreciation of how he understands learning and teaching.

2.C: Pedagogy

Chapter 14

Towards a ‘Sound Educational Method’: *In Boethii de Trinitate* 5–6

Aquinas gives his fullest account of the epistemology of the sciences and of the structure and process of human knowledge in his commentary on Boethius’s *De Trinitate*. In the final two questions of that work (questions 5 and 6), he considers methodological questions: the specification, distinction, and interrelationship of the sciences, and the degree of certainty that different subject matters can support. Although the starting point and main concern is the theology of the Trinity, Aquinas is obliged to speak more generally about scientific method, degrees of certainty, and pedagogical technique.

Boethius says that he wants to consider his subject matter insofar as it can be understood and grasped, *intelligi atque capi* (*De Trinitate*, *caput* 2). Aquinas takes this distinction to refer to the fact that the method of investigating anything must conform both to the subject matter and to the one studying it. The subject matter in question here – the theology of the Trinity – cannot be investigated by the imagination because such matters are not intelligible in that way. We must accept also, he says, that human beings, because of the weakness of their minds, cannot gain the same certitude about the Trinity as they can in their knowledge of this world or in mathematics.

Boethius quotes a wise saying to the effect that the scholar ought to try to formulate his opinion about each thing as it actually is. Although it is more likely to be from Cicero (Maurer, 1986: 3, note 1, 5, note 5), Aquinas thinks it comes from Aristotle’s *Ethics*. He applauds Boethius for quoting it and complements it with Aristotle’s genuine comment that it is the mark of an educated mind to look only for as much certitude in each class of things as the nature of the subject admits (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.1 1094b 23–25). Elsewhere, Aquinas applauds

Aristotle for pointing out that the way of manifesting truth varies with the objects of knowledge and the capacity of different minds (*Summa contra gentiles* I.3, referring to *Nicomachean Ethics* I.I 1094b 11–14).

Boethius then proceeds to distinguish natural philosophy, mathematics, and theology, firstly on the basis of their different objects of study (question 5), and secondly on the basis of the methods appropriate to each of them (question 6). In his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aquinas considers an alternative division of the sciences into natural philosophy, rational philosophy, moral philosophy, and mechanical arts (*In Ethicorum* I, *lectio* 1, Leonine XLVII.1: 1–54). But here he follows Boethius in distinguishing three kinds of speculative science, a distinction that, as it happens, also originates with Aristotle (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 1). Aquinas is content to follow both these earlier thinkers in saying that the objective of speculative science is the contemplation of truth for itself, whereas practical sciences seek knowledge with a view to what we can make or do with it. A distinction among speculative sciences must therefore be based on differences between objects of speculation (rather than what one might make or do with the knowledge gained). Immateriality and necessity (or immobility) characterize the objects of speculation, so ‘the degree of separation from matter and motion’ is the proper criterion for distinguishing speculative sciences.

Some objects of speculation depend on matter for their being and for their being understood, *secundum esse et intellectum*. This is the case with anything whose definition contains sensible matter – a human being, for example, cannot be defined without reference to flesh and blood. Physics or natural science studies these things. Some things depend on matter for their being but not for their being understood, because sensible matter is not included in their definition. This is the case with lines and numbers, which are dealt with by mathematics. Finally, there are objects of speculation that depend on matter neither for their being nor for their being understood, because they can exist without matter. Aquinas says there are two different kinds of ‘object’ that fall under this last kind of speculation, God and angels who never exist in matter, and things like substance, quality, potency, and act, which may exist in matter in some instances but not in others.

The science that deals with these is theology or divine science or metaphysics or first philosophy.

Aquinas explains later (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 4) that the theology he has just identified is not identical with *sacra doctrina* or Christian theology in the sense in which he deals with it in *Summa theologiae* and elsewhere. At the very beginning of *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas distinguishes two meanings of the term 'theology', one referring to a consideration of God that belongs within *sacra doctrina*, and the other referring to a consideration of God that is part of philosophy (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 1 ad 2). This is another reason why we cannot dissect his work using a simple 'philosophy versus theology' scalpel: there is a theology that is part of philosophy, while *sacra doctrina* or Christian theology is dialectical and so uses philosophy (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 8).

In his commentary on Boethius, Aquinas brings together the different names used for the kind of material found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Here he simply follows Aristotle's ways of referring to its concerns – *theologia*, *scientia divina*, *metaphysica*, *philosophia prima* – and notes what he considers to be the reasons for these different names (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 1; Maurer, 1986: 14–15). When he comes to introduce his commentary on *Metaphysics*, he says a bit more about this. The *Metaphysics*, he says, is concerned with the knowledge of causes, the knowledge of being and its related properties, and the knowledge of God and the intelligences (*In XII Metaphysicorum expositio, prooemium*). This science is thus given three names from the different objects it considers: divine things, being, and causes. So, it is called divine science or theology, metaphysics, and first philosophy; but it is actually one science because the divine substances are the first causes of being.

Giovanni Reale identifies a fourth major preoccupation in *Metaphysics*. It contains not only theological, ontological, and aetiological material, he says, but ousiological material also, because alongside its treatment of divine things, being, and causes is a sustained treatment of substance and substances (Reale, 1967).

In replying to the initial arguments in *In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 1, Aquinas follows Boethius in saying that logic is not so much a science as an instrument of science. It is not to be considered among the

speculative sciences because it is undertaken to help in the pursuit of other sciences and not for its own sake (5, 1 ad 2). To study logic is to study the method of all the sciences, he says (5, 1 ad 3). When he comes to comment on Aristotle's *Perihermeneias*, *Posterior Analytics*, and *Metaphysics*, however, Aquinas says that either logic is in fact a science because it proceeds by demonstration, or it is an art, even 'the art of arts', because it is the art by which reason directs itself so that it will reach its due end, which is truth (*In Posteriorum Analyticorum* I, 1.1–3).

In responding to the third, fourth, and ninth arguments here, Aquinas shows how he understands the medieval curriculum, in particular the relationships between earlier and later studies, between theoretical and practical disciplines, and between the sciences and the arts (see O'Brien, 1977: 480–91).

He speaks here also of subalternated sciences (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 1 ad 5), a notion that remained important for him. One science may be part of another either because its subject is part of the 'bigger' science, or because the higher science gives the reason for what a lower science knows only as a fact: thus the higher science establishes the principles on which the lower science is based. Here he gives the examples of medicine and agriculture dependent on physics in this way; elsewhere he speaks of perspective dependent on geometry and music on arithmetic (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 2).

Chapter 15

Kinds of Speculative Science

The remaining articles of *In Boethii de Trinitate* 5 consider in turn the three levels of speculative science that Aquinas has identified: natural philosophy (5, 2), mathematics (5, 3), and divine science (5, 4). Explaining what natural philosophy is obliges us to consider Plato's mistake in understanding the ideas as separately existing substances. Aquinas tries to understand what it was that led Plato, a wise person, to such an error, and says it is the difficulty of explaining how a scientific knowledge of the changeable realities of our experience is possible (5, 2 in c). Aquinas thinks that Aristotle offers a better solution, with helpful distinctions like that between indeterminate matter and determinate matter (a house must be made of some building materials but not necessarily of these or those particular building materials). Scientific knowledge is more a matter of abstracting the universal from the particular than of abstracting form from matter, he says (5, 2 in c, ad 1, ad 2). Since scientific knowledge is primarily concerned with what is necessary and immutable, we can only know individual things (in the strict sense of knowledge) indirectly and secondarily (5, 2 ad 4).

In discussing mathematics, Aquinas clarifies that the human intellect can perform two kinds of abstraction that correspond to two modes of union: the union of part and whole, and the union of form and matter. We can abstract form from matter and we can abstract a whole from its parts; but not all kinds of matter are susceptible to the same kind of abstraction. The accident of quantity has particular features that support a particular kind of abstraction, namely that undertaken in mathematics (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 3 in c). Similarly parts and wholes are related in different ways and support different kinds of abstraction of wholes from parts (loc. cit.). Along with these kinds of abstraction, the intellect is also capable of separating,

joining, and dividing in the process of arriving at judgments about things. Aquinas concludes:

There are three kinds of distinction in the operation of the intellect. There is one through the operation of the intellect joining and dividing which is properly called separation, and this belongs to divine science or metaphysics. There is another through the operation by which the quiddities of things are conceived which is the abstraction of form from sensible matter; and this belongs to mathematics. And there is a third through the same operation which is the abstraction of a universal from a particular, and this belongs to physics and to all the sciences in general, because science disregards accidental features and treats of necessary matters.

(*In Boethii de Trinitate* 5,3 in c; Maurer, 1986: 41)

So much for physics and mathematics. Divine science is concerned with 'divine beings' that, as well as being the principles of all things, are complete natures in themselves. Aquinas remains close to Aristotle, believing that what he taught could be easily combined with what the Christian tradition believed about angelic beings and God (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 4). These realities are most intelligible in themselves, but by the light of natural reason they can only be known through their effects. That means they are known as the principles of things, and so become the object of a science that investigates what is common to all beings. Aquinas says that the philosophers call this divine science, although in the history of philosophy this discipline has more frequently been called metaphysics. But these divine beings are also complete natures in themselves. As such, we may know them only as they reveal themselves – hence, the two kinds of theology already mentioned. One treats of divine things as the principles of divine science and is the kind of theology found in philosophy. It is also called metaphysics or, as he calls it here, philosophical theology, *theologia philosophica*. The second investigates divine things for their own sakes, and this is the theology taught in sacred scripture, *theologia sacrae scripturae* (5, 4 in c; Maurer, 1986: 49–53).

This is an issue that is very much alive in philosophy and theology today, with debates about 'onto-theology' and the charge that

Western metaphysics has reduced God to an object (see note 7 to this part). Here Aquinas speaks of different kinds of transcendence and reserves for God (and the angels) a transcendence or separateness that is beyond not only the transcendence or separateness that characterizes the objects of mathematics but also that which characterizes the abstract principles of metaphysics. He works out the details of this in his responses to the initial arguments presented in *In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 4. His reply to the fourth argument is particularly worthy of note, where he says that potency and act are more common than matter and form. So, the angels, although not composed of matter and form, are not therefore absolutely simple. They are composed of potency and act because they do not exist of themselves, but receive being from God. He continues:

This is what is meant by saying that angels are composed of what they are (*quod est*) and that by which they are (*quo est*); being (*esse*) is understood as that by which they are and the angelic nature as what they are (5, 4 ad 4).

That the distinction in question is a real and not just a notional distinction came to be regarded as one of the key ideas of Aquinas's metaphysics. Here we find it already, possibly as early as 1252, clearly presented and being applied.

Chapter 16

Method in the Speculative Sciences

In the sixth question of his commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, Aquinas discusses the methods proper to the speculative sciences. The first article (6, 1) considers Boethius's view that natural science proceeds by the mode of reason (*rationabiliter*), mathematics by the mode of learning (*disciplinabiliter*), and theology by the mode of understanding (*intellectualiter*).¹²

One reason for calling science 'rational' is that it is guided by the principles and rules of logic in arriving at conclusions. Where the process arrives at its natural conclusion, one can speak of understanding, and the resolution of judgments. This, for Aquinas, is demonstration properly so called. But sometimes such a conclusion is not reached, and the investigator must be content with a number of possible solutions. This is a second reason for saying that the method of science is rational, because it supports various opinions and beliefs on the basis of probable arguments. Third, and most importantly for Aquinas, the methodology of natural science is rational because it reflects the rational power of the human soul. Just as the rational soul receives knowledge of intelligible things (more knowable in themselves) from sensible things (more knowable for us), so science proceeds from what is better known by us and less knowable in itself. It is particularly in natural science that demonstration by means of a sign or an effect is used so that science, like reason itself, moves from the knowledge of one thing to the knowledge of another. In mathematics we demonstrate on the basis of definitions and essences, but in natural science we demonstrate things through extrinsic causes: from seeing the effects of an agent, for example, we can draw conclusions about the agent.

Aquinas is not saying that mathematics and metaphysics are not rational, but that the methodology he identifies as rational is

especially characteristic of natural science. This also means that natural science, using the method of reason, is most in conformity with the human intellect (6, 1, first question, in c). Working at that level is most comfortable for us, the kind of work for which our minds are naturally equipped. While it might be tempting to assign the different speculative sciences to different powers of the soul, Aquinas thinks things are not quite so simple. Instead he assigns them to the ways in which the soul's powers operate, natural science to 'reason as related to sensation', divine science to 'intellect', and mathematics to 'reason as related to imagination' (6, 1, second question, ad 4; Maurer, 1986: 70, note 35).

Aquinas also assigns the three reasons he gives here for the rationality of scientific method to the classical division of philosophy into logic, ethics, and natural philosophy. From what has been said, he concludes, we can gather that the first mode of rationality is most characteristic of rational science (logic), the second (being content with probable arguments in favor of various opinions and beliefs) of moral science, and the third (mirroring the workings of the human intellect itself) of natural science (6,1, first question, ad 4; Maurer, 1986: 67). Although he does not develop these insights to the extent to which one might have hoped, they clearly contain the potential for a more elaborated account of scientific method.

If mathematics is said to proceed according to the mode of learning, *disciplinabiliter*, once again this is not because it is alone in doing so, but because it is especially characteristic of it. To learn, *discere*, means to receive knowledge from another. To proceed according to the mode of learning means to arrive at certain knowledge, *scientia*. Descartes was not the first to notice that mathematics offers clarity and certainty beyond what is available in any other science. It is more certain than natural science, Aquinas says, because it is detached and separated from the many factors that confuse and prevent certainty there. It is also more certain than divine science because the objects with which divine science is concerned are completely removed from sensible things from which our knowledge takes its origin. Mathematics stands between, sufficiently abstracted from the physical world to offer a certainty beyond its variability and unpredictability, but sufficiently in contact with the physical world for the objects of

mathematics – figures, lines, numbers, and so on – to fall under the senses and to be objects of our imagination.

So, Aquinas concludes, the human intellect, which takes its knowledge from images, knows mathematical things with greater ease and certainty than it can know a separated intelligence, or even the nature of substance, act, potency, and the like. Ptolemy had already asserted the superiority of mathematics over both theology and physics ‘for the certainty and stability of the knowledge it offers’, which is also why mathematics is said to proceed according to the mode of learning (6, 1, second question, in c; Maurer, 1986: 68–69).

Once again logic makes an appearance, this time as a candidate to be the science that proceeds according to the mode of learning. As the subject that must be studied first, is it not entitled to this description? Aquinas agrees that sometimes we must begin not with what is easier but with that on which subsequent knowledge depends. This is logic, which, although it involves great difficulty, teaches methodology for all the sciences (6, 1, second question, ad 3).

As regards ‘divine science’, it can be said to proceed according to the mode of intellect (*intellectus*, understanding) as natural science proceeds according to the mode of reason (*ratio*). So how are reason and intellect related? The first is about multiplicity, the second about unity, Aquinas says. Boethius contrasted reasoning and understanding in terms of time and eternity, or of a circle and its center. Reasoning is about considering many things, while understanding is about drawing them into a unity. Pseudo-Dionysius had spoken in similar terms, saying that the power of reasoning enables us to approach things from various angles, while the power of understanding enables us to gather that multiplicity into a unity (*Divine Names* VII.2). These are not two distinct powers but two activities of the same power. Understanding terminates reasoning, and Aquinas calls their relationship in this direction *via resolutionis*, reason moving from many to one. Understanding also initiates reasoning, and their relationship in this direction he calls *via compositionis* or *via inventionis*, intellect comprehending many things in one. Interpreters call the first relationship ‘analysis’ and the second ‘synthesis’ (6, 1, third question, in c; Maurer, 1986: 71–72, note 40). Aquinas returns to this point in his commentary on *Metaphysics*. There are two ways to truth, he says: by analysis

we know parts and can move from what is complex to what is simple and from wholes to parts; by synthesis we know wholes and can move from what is simple to what is complex: *In XII Metaphysicorum* II 1.1: §278.

A further distinction between the order of things in reality and the order of concepts in the mind allows Aquinas to strengthen the distinction he has already made between two kinds of theology, one of them terminating in the consideration of separate substances, the other terminating in the consideration of being and the properties of being. Divine science is called 'first philosophy' because it gives principles to all the other sciences and because intellectual thinking is the starting point of rational thinking. At the same time, it comes 'after physics' and is called 'metaphysics' because intellectual thinking (or understanding) is also the terminus of rational thinking (6, 1, third question, in c; Maurer, 1986: 72–73; see also *In Boethii de Trinitate* 5, 1 in c).

Chapter 17

From Sensation and Imagination to Understanding and Wisdom

Following these methodological clarifications, Aquinas returns to the specific concern of his commentary on Boethius's work, the human knowledge of God, and once again his comments shed light on his understanding of knowledge as such. Knowledge begins with apprehension, he says, and ends in judgment (6, 2 in c). It begins in the senses, in direct experience of the world, and it tends to intellectual apprehension; but the apprehension of the imagination comes between sense perception and intellectual apprehension. In fact, Aquinas thinks, knowledge can terminate at any of these three points – sensation, imagination, or understanding – depending on the nature of the objects of our knowledge. Again he applies the criterion of how involved with matter things are for their existence and for their being understood (5, 1 in c). We evaluate natural things as the senses manifest them. We evaluate mathematical things as the imagination apprehends them. And our knowledge of divine things, which depend on matter neither for their being nor for their being understood, terminates neither in the senses nor in the imagination, but in the understanding, *intellectus*, alone.

Our minds are not naturally equipped to know such divine realities and we are obliged to reach whatever knowledge we can have of them through the senses and the imagination. Aquinas refers to Pseudo-Dionysius (*Divine Names* VII.3) speaking about a threefold way of knowing divine things, by way of causality (from effects to their cause), by way of transcendence (realizing that the cause is far beyond what can be known from its effects), and by way of negation (stripping away the sensual and imaginative modality of our knowledge). This threefold way was well established in pagan thought before being

taken up by Christian thinkers. Aquinas regularly uses it, not only here in *In Boethii de Trinitate* 6, 3 in c; 6, 4 ad 2 but also, for example, in *In Epistolam ad Romanos* I, *lectio* 6: §115; *Summa contra gentiles* I.30 and III.49, and it provides the basis for his account of the analogical use of language in *Summa theologiae* I 13. So, he concludes, our senses and imagination are starting points in our knowledge of divine things, but we should not regard them as the termini of that knowledge (6, 2 in c).

In *Summa theologiae* I 84, 7, Aquinas argues that there is no human knowledge that does not involve a reference back to imagination, *conversio ad phantasmata*. He adds here that, although our knowledge always depends on imagination, we know the difference between the objects of our intellect and the objects of our imagination (*In Boethii de Trinitate* 6, 2 ad 2). He believes this is true even in our knowledge of God. We are not condemned to confuse ideas and images, even though in our present state of life the imagination is necessary in all our knowledge, even our knowledge of God. Imagination is not just a starting point for knowledge, it remains the foundation of intellectual activity, and images are the place in which the intellect sees objects, *in quibus inspicit omne quod inspicit*. But neither fact means that our judgment about divine things is made according to the imagination (6, 2 ad 5).

These limitations on human knowledge also characterize any knowledge we might be given by divine revelation (6, 3). Such knowledge too must come adapted to our condition, Aquinas says, again quoting Pseudo-Dionysius (*Celestial Hierarchy* I.2). Although it gives us a knowledge we could not otherwise have, it does not enable us to know in any way other than through sensible things, that is, as involving sensation and imagination. For this reason, our knowledge of immaterial substances can extend only to knowing that they are and not what they are. The confused knowledge we may have of what they are comes about negatively, by knowing what they are not, but, in the absence of anything better, such knowledge is not to be scorned.

In his discussion of contemplation in *Summa theologiae* II.II, Aquinas returns to this point. He says that human contemplation cannot take place without 'phantasms', since it is connatural for us to see intelligible species in phantasms. Intellectual knowledge does not consist

simply in having such images, however, but in contemplating in such images 'the purity of intelligible truth'. He says that this is true also of what we know through divine revelation and he again cites the same text of Pseudo-Dionysius in support (II.II 180, 5 ad 2).

What catches the eye towards the end of the *De Trinitate* commentary is Aquinas's remark that the knowledge of divine things is connected with human happiness (6, 4, argument 3). Aquinas's main source for this is Aristotle, but the point is also found in Avicenna and Averroes (Maurer, 1986: 88, note 4). They all agree that happiness comes from wisdom, and that wisdom is the most perfect virtue of the most perfect power, the intellect, when it understands divine things. Aquinas explains that Aristotle is talking about the kind of imperfect happiness possible in this life, where contemplation of divine things does not include knowing what they are (6, 2–3). The perfect happiness of heaven, however, in which human beings will see God, comes about not through a speculative science but through a gift of grace that Aquinas calls the light of glory, *lumen gloriae* (6, 3 ad 3).¹³

Such 'knowledge that brings happiness' is what Aquinas too means by wisdom. He stands in the classical tradition in believing that the final goal of all learning and teaching is to grow into wisdom – an appreciation of what is true not just because it is true but because it is also good and beautiful, an appreciation of the truth that is 'salvific' or 'beatifying'. As on so many matters, he believed that his philosophical and Christian sources were at one on this, that the final purpose of pedagogy, no matter how humble its initial concerns or how technical the issues along the way, is wisdom, *sapientia*, a 'tasted knowledge'.

Chapter 18

The Roots of Aquinas's Pedagogical Concern: Scholastic, Aristotelian, Christian

Aquinas spent his life in education, as a student and as a teacher. In addition to the places in his writings where he explicitly addresses the questions of teaching and learning, there is much to be learned otherwise about his understanding of education and his approach to teaching. Our considerations in Part 1 showed how those who 'go to school with Aquinas' learn much about how teaching and learning are done effectively. Mark D. Jordan has argued recently that failure to understand the pedagogical concerns of Aquinas has led to serious misunderstandings about the nature of his thought (Jordan, 2006). These pedagogical concerns are clear from two things: the introductions and prologues in which Aquinas presents his works, and the structures, at times traditional and at times experimental, by which he constructs his works.

An examination of the prologues and structures is the quickest way to appreciate that pedagogical concerns are central throughout Aquinas's work. The prologue of the *Summa theologiae*, for example, confirms this:

Since the teacher (*doctor*) of Catholic truth has not only to build up those who are advanced but also to shape those who are beginning (*incipientes*), according to St Paul, 'as babes in Christ I fed you with milk, not solid food' (1 Corinthians 3.1–2), the purpose we have set before us in this work is to convey the things which belong to the Christian religion in a style serviceable for the training of beginners (*ad eruditionem incipientium*). We have considered how newcomers (*novitios*) to this teaching are greatly hindered by various writings on the subject, partly because of the swarm of pointless questions, articles, and arguments, partly because essential information is given

according to the requirements of textual commentary (*librorum expositio*) or the occasions of academic debate (*occasio disputandi*), not to a sound educational method (*secundum ordinem disciplinae*), partly because repetitiousness (*frequens repetitio*) has bred boredom and muddle in their thinking. Eager, therefore, to avoid these and other like drawbacks, and trusting in God's help, we shall try to pursue the things held by Christian theology, and to be concise and clear, so far as the subject matter allows.

This has something of the feel of an author justifying his decision to add yet another book to the pile already available. The *raison d'être* of the book, Aquinas says, is to challenge and improve the established teaching methods. It will be recalled that the threefold pedagogy of scholasticism involved *lectio*, *disputatio*, and *repetitio*: the guided reading of texts, the occasional formal disputes and the repetition of what had been learned. Here Aquinas seems to find all three wanting and blames them for getting in the way of a concise and clear introduction to theology for beginners. Instead of forcing students to pursue the subject according to established methods, he proposes to follow what he calls 'a sound educational method', a method 'determined by the subject matter itself'.

Leonard Boyle argued that what was novel about Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* was that it proposed a radically new setting for a moral theology and that therefore its novelty was as at least as much in its structure as in the content of its teaching (Boyle, 1982). Earlier suggestions about the structure of the work – the movement from God and to God, *exitus-reditus* – have not been completely replaced by Boyle's suggestion, since understanding the work as a moral theology set between the considerations of creation and redemption fits with the idea of things coming from God and returning to God.

One can consider the other major works of Aquinas from the same point of view, examining their prologues and structures in order to see the pedagogical purpose he espouses in each. Of particular importance are the commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, examined above, and the opening chapters of *Summa contra gentiles* (Book I, chapters 1–9). The latter uses quite different terms from those in the later *Summa theologiae*, and what is said in *Summa contra gentiles*

about wisdom is of great importance for understanding Aquinas on pedagogy. To be wise means to be capable of ordering things, and if a teacher is required to do anything, she is required to order things to the best advantage of her students. Pedagogy is at the heart of Aquinas's writing projects, he always has his readers and students in mind, and his intention is to persuade them to certain convictions about the truth and about the best ways to search for and find it.

It is not surprising that Aquinas should have these pedagogical concerns when we recall that he was a scholastic, an Aristotelian, and a Christian. As a scholastic, he lived within an intellectual culture that was explicitly concerned about pedagogy. Scholasticism was about the reception of new knowledge, within new institutions of learning, in accordance with new methods of study (Boland, 2005). In the century before Aquinas, Hugh of Saint Victor had already made significant contributions on this question and his *Didascalicon* repays comparison with the prologue of *Summa theologiae* (O'Brien, 1977: 480–81, note 19).

When a Latin translation of *Nicomachean Ethics* became available, the medieval scholastics learned more about pedagogy. Aristotle says that certain subjects are better studied at particular ages (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI.8 1142 a 12–21), a view with which Aquinas agrees, as is clear from his commentary on the text (*In Ethicorum* VI, *lectio* 7, Leonine XLVII.2: 358–59; Marietti §§1209–11). Students should first be instructed in things pertaining to logic, because logic teaches the method of the whole of philosophy. Then they should be instructed in mathematics, which does not need experience and, because it falls under imagination, can be grasped easily by the young. Next should come the natural sciences, which, although not exceeding sense and imagination nevertheless require experience. Fourth comes instruction in the moral sciences, which require experience and a soul free from passions (Aristotle refers to *Nicomachean Ethics* I.3 1095 a 4–9 where this point has already been made). Fifth comes instruction in wisdom or divine science, which exceed imagination and require a sharp mind, *validum intellectum*.

The pedagogical needs are not just about intellectual ability, then, but also about moral maturity and the capacity gained from experience to understand the questions considered in the later disciplines.

The less mature cannot grasp so easily what goes beyond sense and imagination. Lack of experience is one reason for this. Another is the extent of the natural changes they are undergoing, changes that tie them into the world of sense and imagination. Even when they speak accurately about matters of metaphysics or wisdom, young people do not really believe these, Aristotle says, because their minds are not yet capable of attaining to such things. Only when they are mature in the ways indicated should people be taught wisdom or divine science.¹⁴

Aquinas uses some of these arguments elsewhere in support of the need for teachers at all (*Summa contra gentiles* III.122). In arguing for the necessity of marriage as a context for the good rearing of children, Aquinas says that other animals are fully equipped by nature to provide for themselves whereas human beings live also by reason. This means they must learn prudence, which requires long experience. So, it is right that parents and other people of experience should instruct children about life. This requires much time, though, and 'a large space of life' if children are to be educated well.

Chapter 19

From Socrates to Jesus

Through the writings of Aristotle particularly, but from other sources too, Aquinas knew that Socrates was a great teacher of the ancient world interested in moral philosophy and the quest for universal definition (Deman, 1940). When Aquinas says that the best teachers did not write, but imprinted their teaching directly on the hearts of their disciples, he thinks firstly of Jesus, 'the most excellent of all teachers', but mentions too Pythagoras and Socrates, the greatest teachers among the pagans (*Summa theologiae* III 42, 4). None of these wrote, which seems to indicate that the greatest teachers do not. For Aquinas, writing is simply a means to the end of teaching, which is to impress one's understanding on the hearts of one's listeners. The best teachers do this directly.

For the Platonic tradition, originating with Socrates, the teacher's task is to awaken *eros* so that the student will set out on the philosophical quest that is a search not only for truth, but also for what is good and beautiful. The teacher aims to arouse the student's susceptibility to, even weakness for, the good.¹⁵ For this tradition, education is understood as teacher and student searching together to know what is true and to appreciate what is good. As we have just seen, it is a concern also of Aristotle and his school, for which instruction in certain subjects requires both experience and moral maturity. It also offers a point of contact with contemporary debate about higher education, in which the question of desire or 'metaphysical longing' continues to figure. Is the Platonist approach irredeemably elitist, or does it preserve something essential for any 'liberal' education worthy of the name? Does the Aristotelian tradition, with its concern for the education of desire through virtue, offer a more democratic, and so more acceptable, version of the same? (Neiman, 1997). This is to anticipate

issues to which we turn in Part 4, when we consider the relevance of Aquinas's thought for today.

The most significant source of Aquinas's convictions about pedagogy, however, is the Bible. We have seen how the hierarchy of minds in medieval cosmology allowed him to discuss the limitations and capacities of the human mind compared with the angelic and even the divine mind. The human mind is adapted to know the intelligibility in material reality. Whenever it seeks to know more, it comes under strain, for a scientific knowledge of this world is what our minds are at home with. We cannot cope naturally with spiritual realities, and such 'higher things' can only be known through lower ones. So, in our knowledge of God, we must move from what we know to what we do not know, from the material to the spiritual. The divine pedagogy respects this limitation of our nature. Aquinas says, for example, of the sacramental signs through which grace is made available to us:

Human beings can only arrive at intelligible and spiritual realities through physical and sensible ones. God's providence cares for each thing in accordance with its particular condition. So it is appropriate that the means whereby divine wisdom helps human beings towards salvation are the physical and sensible signs which we call 'sacraments'.

(Summa theologiae III 61, 1 in c)

This is the pedagogy of revelation, the way in which human beings may grow in the knowledge of God. We have minds equipped to know the material and we must move from there to the spiritual, understanding the spiritual always in terms of the material.

The wise teacher also knows that teaching must take place over time because learning can only take place over time. This is why pedagogy is required, a strategy or approach on the part of the teacher that is adapted to the situation of the learner, that will facilitate the presentation of what is to be taught, and that will be effective in convincing the learner of the truth of what is being taught. For Aquinas, this connection between wisdom and pedagogy, what wise teaching requires, is seen in the history of revelation, the way in which God

taught Israel and Jesus taught his disciples (*Summa theologiae* I.II, 106, 3–4; 107, 1–3; II.II 1, 7 ad 2; and *In symbolum apostolorum*, where each article of the creed or mystery of Christ is shown to have pedagogical implications).

We learn from things and we learn from God, Aquinas says, but we also learn from teachers. To be a pupil, *discipulus*, means to enter into the way of a particular discipline, *disciplina*, taught by a master, *magister*. We still use the term ‘discipline’ in these two ways: to refer to the kind of apprenticeship of the disciples learning from the words and works of Jesus, the set of practices that go to make up a spiritual or religious way (*Summa theologiae* II.II 186, 5); or to refer to a demonstrative science in which we grow in knowledge from the demonstrations given by a teacher (*In Boethii de ebdomadibus*, *lectio* 1: §13).

Aquinas once again compares the human being with other animals when he speaks of our need for ‘discipline’. Nature gives other animals all that they need for the purposes of finding shelter and food. Nature gets human beings started, as it were, by giving them hands and reason but they only complete the task of finding shelter and food ‘by a certain industry’ (*Summa theologiae* I.II 95, 1). We need others to teach us about these things just as we need others to establish a discipline that will help us to arrive at the perfection of virtue. In his comments here, Aquinas adds a further sense of discipline to those already noted: discipline, in the sense of the coercive force of law, if there is to be peace and virtue in human communities (*loc. cit.*).

To be wise, then, is to order things well, and the wise teacher orders things appropriately for his students. At the beginning of his commentary on Aristotle’s ethics, Aquinas says that there are two kinds of ordering – of parts to wholes and of things to their ends – and the second is primary (*In Ethicorum* I, *lectio* 1: §1). It indicates a deeper wisdom, we might say, which is not about facts, but about destiny, the end or goal with which the *Ethics* is primarily concerned. As a Christian, Aquinas believed that the destiny of human life is revealed in Jesus Christ, who is humanity’s way of tending to God (*Summa theologiae* I 2 prologue) and who shows us ‘the way of truth’ that enables us to reach that destiny (*Summa theologiae* III prologue).

Clearly these are matters of faith and theology, but it is necessary to speak of them in concluding this part because it is in thinking about Jesus and his relationship with his disciples that Aquinas articulates some of his finest thoughts about what it means to be a teacher and what it means to be taught.

Chapter 20

The Most Excellent of Teachers

A recent, and welcome, development in the study of Aquinas is a fresh interest in his biblical commentaries. These have tended to be neglected as if they had nothing to add to what he says in his systematic works, particularly in the *Summa theologiae*. With renewed interest both in pre-modern approaches to biblical exegesis and in Aquinas's methods of learning and teaching, these biblical commentaries are receiving attention again. Relevant to our theme here is a recent book on Aquinas's commentary on the Gospel of John, in particular a chapter on Christ as teacher (Sherwin, 2005).

Christ is master (*magister*) and teacher (*doctor*) and his disciples are apprentices in the trade of right living (Sherwin, 2005: 174). They learn by spending time with him; listening to what he says and experiencing how he lives. All learning begins in faith: the pupil or student must trust, at least initially, that the teacher is reliable and knowledgeable. Aristotle had said this explicitly: *oportet addiscentem credere*, 'the disciple must believe' (*Sophistical Refutations* 2, 165b 3, as quoted in *Summa theologiae* II.II 2, 3 in c, for example). This is not just about religious teaching, for, as Aquinas reminds us, all human knowing begins with faith and most of it, for most people, remains a matter of faith. It is a timely warning against the presumption that faith becomes unnecessary in a world where there is science. Aquinas writes about this in introducing his explanation of the creed:

If a person were willing to believe only the things that he could know, he would certainly not be able to live in this world. How would anyone be able to live unless he believed someone? How would he even know that this man was his father? It is therefore necessary that one believe someone about the things he cannot know perfectly by himself.

(*In symbolum apostolorum* prologue: §866)

If one wishes to be wise, one must begin by accepting the words of some teacher (*Super Ioannem* V, *lectio* 4: §771); in the first place, one's parents. Teaching then involves leading the pupil from faith to clear sight, and from understanding things implicitly by knowing certain principles to understanding them explicitly by seeing their implications (*Super Ioannem* XV, *lectio* 3: §2018; Sherwin, 2005: 179, 182). The student learns by asking questions and the teacher teaches by the same method. So, Jesus is a Socratic-style teacher, asking questions of the disciples so that they come to understand better (*Super Ioannem* VI, *lectio* 1: §850; XI, *lectio* 4: §1518; XIII, *lectio* 2: §§1752–54; XIII, *lectio* 3: §1773; XXI, *lectio* 3: §2617).

Faith requires both the intellect's hearing and love's learning and is effective only when it appeals to love as well as to understanding (Sherwin, 2005: 176). The teacher's desire to teach must meet the student's zeal to learn, *studium addiscendi*, something Aquinas sees in Mary's question to the angel at the annunciation (*Super Ioannem* III, *lectio* 2: §458). Although one might be tempted to see Platonic *eros* as the background to this, in fact it is linked with Aquinas's understanding of the Trinity and its reflection in human beings. Love proceeds from the truth, because the Spirit is sent by the Son, but love also leads to knowledge of the truth, because the Spirit teaches the truth about the Son.¹⁶

Many teachers and students are aware of this – that learning is helped beyond measure by love for the subject and by affection and respect between teacher and student. The inequality between teacher and student might have prevented Aristotle thinking of the possibility of friendship between them, but Jesus speaks of his disciples as his friends on the basis that he has made known to them all that the Father had revealed to him. It is on this basis of knowledge shared in friendship that they become 'teachers of the world' (*Super Ioannem* VI, *lectio* 1: §864).

In John's Gospel, Jesus teaches particularly in the discourses at the last supper that are gathered in chapters 13 to 17. In the opening chapter of that section, Jesus is dramatically presented as a teacher at the service of his students. His clothing and posture in washing the feet of his disciples make this abundantly clear (Sherwin, 2005: 187–88). Jesus acts and then interprets his action. He becomes a slave

by removing his garments and washing others' feet. He becomes a teacher by dressing appropriately and sitting like a master on his chair to explain the meaning of what he has done (John 13:12–15). Why did he wait to sit down before teaching them? Aquinas asks. Because *doctrina debet esse in tranquillitate*, teaching ought to be done in tranquility (*Super Ioannem*, XIII, *lectio* 3: §1770). It is by sitting and being quiet that the soul becomes wise and prudent. For Aristotle, 'we are said to know and to understand when our intellect has reached a state of rest and come to a standstill' (*Physics* VII.3 247b 10–12; see also Aquinas, *In de anima* 1, *lectio* 8: §125). This is why youth is not the time for moral philosophy, or for theology, because the soul is then agitated by passions so that the quiet in which wisdom and prudence are learned is not yet available (*Summa contra gentiles* I.4).

Jesus is a teacher beyond even Socrates because he can teach interiorly as well (Sherwin, 2005: 183). We have seen that Aquinas accepts Augustine's point that only God may truly be called a teacher because only God can reach within the human soul. No one learns without the Holy Spirit teaching, he says in his commentary on John 14:25–26 (*Super Ioannem* XIV, *lectio* 6: §§1958–60). Within the Trinity, the name 'love' is appropriated to the Holy Spirit (*Summa theologiae* I 37), and because God's teaching is spiritual or interior, all that has been said about love and friendship in the process of teaching and learning is assigned to the Holy Spirit. The human desire for wisdom, which means to taste truth (*sapientia* equals *sapida scientia*, tasted knowledge), is also assigned to the Holy Spirit (*Summa theologiae* II.II 45, 1–2; Sherwin, 2005: 188–92).

In John's Gospel, the climax of Jesus's life is also the climax of his work as a teacher. His 'glory' is that of the only son from the Father, the only one who can teach humanity about God (John 1:18). For Aquinas, the glorification of Jesus in the Gospel of John is equivalent to the teaching about God revealed in him: the glory is the revelatory teaching (Sherwin, 2005: 185). The cross of Jesus more than anything else may then be understood as a teaching, bringing together many of the aspects of his work as a teacher which Aquinas has picked out in his commentary on this Gospel: the place of love in the process of teaching and learning, the need for a teacher to point things out by giving signs to his pupils, the effectiveness of teaching by posing

questions to disciples. We can say that the teaching of Jesus Christ comes to its climax in the love shown, the sign given, and the questions posed by his passion and death. In the discourses of the Last Supper he had interpreted these events beforehand for the disciples, and on the cross he is still teaching them. Aquinas uses Augustine's striking image: Jesus hanging on the cross is like a teacher on his chair, *sicut magister in cathedra* (*Super Ioannem* XIX, *lectio* 4: §2441). He teaches through what he says from the cross, but he teaches also by the fact that he is there and what that means.

Jesus provides a model for all teaching in the way he is a teacher. Above all, he respects how humans learn and does his teaching taking account of 'the developmental, affective, and social facets of human learning' (Sherwin, 2005: 193). It is appropriate that we conclude this account of Aquinas's thought, in which we have looked particularly at how the human creature is a learner and a teacher of knowledge and truth, by acknowledging the deepest source of his inspiration, Jesus of Nazareth, whose primary task was to serve truth (*Summa theologiae* III 40, 1 in c).

We can conclude by saying that, for Thomas Aquinas, creation is about teaching and redemption is about learning. In *Summa contra gentiles* I.1, he says that the end of the universe is truth because the origin of the universe is mind. Truth is 'the good of the intellect', what the mind wants and enjoys. If the first author and mover of the universe is intellect (*Summa contra gentiles* I.44; II.24), and the ultimate end of something is the one intended for it by its first author and mover, then God's 'interest' is truth and the good that follows on it. So, the universe in which we find ourselves is, in its deepest meaning, about the communication of truth and goodness. Because a rational creature touches the ultimate end of the universe in his action – for Aquinas, as for the Christian tradition generally, this means being made capable of knowing and loving God – a rational creature is subject to God's providence in a way that differs from non-rational creatures (*Summa contra gentiles* III.111). The rational creature is an end in itself, a principal agent and not just an instrument, a free and knowing subject that, in a way, is all things, *quodammodo omnia* (*Summa contra gentiles* III.112). For Aquinas, this is what it means to call human beings 'persons'; creatures for whom the inclination of the species

is frequently not sufficient, who can see how things are good or bad according to diverse individuals, times, and places, and who, through their personal acts, can provide for others. Such rational creatures are participants in providence, not just its subjects (*Summa contra gentiles* III.113; *Summa theologiae* I.II 91, 2 in c). Such rational creatures learn and teach, with the full philosophical and theological depth which Aquinas sees in these routine human activities.

Notes

1. Aquinas's Latin translation has *magister* although two terms are used in Greek, διδασκαλος (Matthew 23.8) and καθηγητης (Matthew 23.10).
2. The question of how God can change a free creature while respecting that creature's freedom is a particularly interesting one for philosophers of religion and theologians of grace: it is not necessary to enter into discussion of it here although it ought to be noted in passing. See McCabe, 1987: 10–24 for a contemporary 'Thomistic' account of it.
3. Other treatments of this question are to be found in *Quaestiones quodlibetales* 9, 4, 5 and *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* 16.
4. See Aquinas's commentary on this passage, *In de anima* III, *lectio* 9: §722 and *Summa theologiae* I 79, 2 and 84, 3.
5. The argument is familiar from *II Sentences* 9, 1, 2 ad 4 and *De veritate* 11, 1, and is discussed again in *Summa contra gentiles* II.75 (in terms of natural and artificial effects) and *De unitate intellectus, caput* 5, Leonine lines 243–68.
6. The term 'correspondence' features significantly in contemporary epistemology. Milbank and Pickstock distinguish an epistemological correspondence theory, which they say is not found in Aquinas, from an ontological correspondence theory, which is found in his thought: Milbank and Pickstock, 2001, chapter 1.
7. Strictly speaking, creation is not an activity. See Burrell, 2003 and Part 4.A, below. 'What I mean by *esse*', Aquinas says in *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 7, 2 ad 9, 'is the actuality of all acts and so the perfection of all perfections'. It can be argued that Aquinas thus

escapes Heidegger's criticisms of 'onto-theological metaphysics': in any case Heidegger knows scholasticism initially through Duns Scotus rather than Aquinas.

8. M. Penjon, *Précis d'histoire de la Philosophie* (Paris, 1897: p165), as quoted in de Wulf, 1907: 6.
9. McGrade, 2003: 1. As well as volumes devoted to individual medieval thinkers (Abelard, Aquinas, Augustine, Duns Scotus, Ockham) in the Cambridge *Companions* series, note, for example, those on Medieval Jewish philosophy, Arabic philosophy and Islamic theology.
10. On the pedagogical task Aquinas sets himself in *Summa contra gentiles* I.1–9, another important consideration of the question of faith and reason, see Jordan, 2006: 89–115.
11. See Torrell, 2002: 162, note 57. Readers need to be warned against a tendentious translation given in Blake et al., 2003: 179, note 5 (the only reference to Aquinas in the entire book). Putting 'evidence' in quotation marks, adding the word 'truth' where it is not in the original, and translating *solubilia* as 'can be dismissed' distorts what Aquinas says in *Summa theologiae* I I, 8, that arguments against the faith may seem probative but cannot be demonstrative, and so can be 'resolved', by which he means understood, and seen not to have demonstrative force. It may be, as he says elsewhere, that this resolution will be achieved philosophically.
12. *Rationabiliter*, *disciplinabiliter*, and *intellectualiter* have also been translated as 'ratiocinative', 'learning', and 'intellection'; or 'ratiocinatively', 'axiomatically', and 'intellectually': see Maurer, 1986: 58, note 2.
13. See also *In Boethii de Trinitate* 6, 3 ad 5; *Summa theologiae* I.II 5, 5 ad 1; II.II 3, 7; I 64, 1 ad 1; *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 22, 7; *Summa contra gentiles* III.44; and Part 4.D, below.
14. This pedagogical order of teaching is outlined again in the introduction to Aquinas's commentary on the *Liber de causis*: first logic which teaches the method of the sciences, then mathematics which even young people can learn, next natural philosophy which requires time in which people can gain experience, only then moral philosophy which is a subject to which younger people cannot be properly receptive, *conueniens auditor non potest*, and

finally divine science which considers the first causes of things (*Super librum de causis, prooemium*).

15. See Dunne, 2000, which discusses a modern use of the Socratic method of teaching. Of Fergal O'Connor, the less famous teacher mentioned in the article's title, Dunne comments that 'he saw actual dialog, live and unscripted with face-to-face others, as the very best medium in which thinking is learned' (art. cit.: 26).
16. John 14:17, 26; 16:7, 13, 14; *Super Ioannem* XIV, *lectio* 4: §1916; XIV, *lectio* 6: §§1958–59; XVI, *lectio* 2: §2090; XVI, *lectio* 3: §2102; XVI, *lectio* 4: §2106–07.

Part 3

The Reception and Influence of Aquinas's Work

There are few writers whose thought has been received, adapted, and developed in as many different historical and cultural settings as Thomas Aquinas; in accordance with the needs and interests of those settings, and for over seven centuries.¹ While Thomas O'Meara speaks straightforwardly about 'a history of interpretation corresponding to epochs and cultures', Mark D. Jordan criticizes the 'fantasy of progressive unanimity among commentators . . . the fantasy of concord among Thomists' (O'Meara, 1997: 153; Jordan, 2006: 5–6). Where Jordan argues that any attempt to rewrite Aquinas erases a decisive feature of his texts, namely their pedagogical structure (Jordan, 2006: 6), O'Meara is more sanguine, convinced that the history of Thomism is not a series of unrelated systems distorting his thought, but a story in which his theology 'retains its characteristics and its depth even as it encounters and responds to new questions and cultural paradigms' (O'Meara, 1997: 153). The nature of his own method, however, makes many students of Aquinas uneasy at the use of the term 'Thomism' at all. Nonetheless, although the establishment of any such '-ism' seems to be the last thing his methodology supports, history shows that at certain moments this is exactly what some of his followers have attempted to create.

Aquinas lived at a time when it was still possible for a single, gifted individual to master many areas of philosophical and theological thought and to develop some of these in original ways. This

means that his influence may be traced through historical periods and geographical areas and in different modalities. He is a thinker, says O'Meara, for example, whose work can be read historically, transcendently, sacramentally, or metaphysically (O'Meara, 1997: 155). Aquinas's ideas seem particularly susceptible to being taken up and used by subsequent thinkers for their own purposes. The clarity of his thought is seductive, and his subsequent authority has led people to want Aquinas on their side. Although, compared with how they have used other parts of his work, his thinking about teaching has not been a particularly significant part of the use made of him by later thinkers, his motivation, methodology, and success in studying and teaching are things his students have learned from him just by attaching themselves to his 'school'.

Following the promised 'brisk and superficial' sketch of the history of Thomism, we shall look at three particular questions: his importance for philosophers and especially theologians in the twentieth century, the use made of his educational thought by Antonin Serpillanges and Jacques Maritain, and some difficulties that attend contemporary interpretations and use of his thought.

Chapter 21

From Controversial Theologian to Doctor of the Church

In his lifetime, Aquinas's work had already met with opposition, and, for a short period after his death in 1274, his memory generated a certain amount of controversy. In 1277, Stephen Tempier, the Bishop of Paris, condemned a series of propositions taken from the writings of radical Aristotelians in the faculty of arts at Paris. Opponents of Aquinas, notably the Franciscans John Pecham and William de la Mare, argued that his views on the soul were implicitly included in this condemnation. The doctrine that seemed particularly to trouble the Franciscan scholars was Aquinas's view that the rational soul is the unique form of the human body. His Aristotelian-inspired account of the soul was regarded as too materialist to serve Christian theological purposes.

Robert Kilwardby, the Dominican Archbishop of Canterbury, made the condemnation explicit and it was endorsed by his successor, John Pecham. Soon after the condemnations of 1277, William de la Mare wrote a detailed critique of Aquinas's views. He called it the *Correctorium*, but Dominican supporters of Aquinas quickly renamed it the *Corruptorium*. By 1284, four responses to William's work had been published. In 1279, the Dominican general chapter defended him, saying that his writings were a great honor to the Order, and that the friars should study his work even if they did not agree with everything in it. Struggles between Pecham and the Dominicans continued through the 1280s and may even be regarded as the crucible in which a self-conscious 'Thomism' was born. In 1309, the Dominican general chapter decreed that all lectors throughout the Order were to follow Aquinas's teaching.²

Almost immediately, expositions of Aquinas's thought began to appear. Already in the fourteenth century there are translations of some of his work, into German, Greek, and Armenian (O'Meara, 1997: 158). Although his works soon became standard texts in the Dominican schools, there is a certain irony in this, since the Dominicans themselves seem to have misunderstood the aim of his most original work, the *Summa theologiae*. In this, Aquinas set out to devise a new approach to moral theology in which practical considerations about morality would remain within a full theology of creation and redemption, but evidence from the surviving manuscripts shows that his fellow Dominicans did not get the point. They wanted to get straight to the practical sections – they were busy men with many pastoral and preaching responsibilities – but their use of it truncated and effectively distorted Aquinas's work (Boyle, 1982).

The following century sees the beginning of what O'Meara calls 'the age of commentaries' (mid-fifteenth to early sixteenth century). Two of the most important Thomists of this period were John Capreolus (died 1444), who wrote an exposition of Aquinas's theology within a commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*, and Antoninus of Florence (died 1459), who used Aquinas's theology in composing works on law, politics, and morality.

'The age of controversies, encyclopedia, and compendia' covers the mid-sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries. In the decades leading up to the Reformation and the Council of Trent, there were flourishing schools of Thomism in Italy, Spain, and elsewhere. Theologians from these schools were important figures in the Church's response to Luther and at the Council. Aquinas's strengthening authority was sealed in 1567, when Pope Pius V declared him a doctor of the Church. How well prepared Thomism was to face the challenges of the Renaissance and the Reformation is, however, a moot point.

Chapter 22

The Second Scholasticism

The most important Thomist of this period is Thomas de Vio, also known as Cajetan, who wrote a renowned commentary on the *Summa theologiae* between 1507 and 1520. At Salamanca, the professors of theology lectured directly on the text of the *Summa theologiae*. These included Francisco Vitoria (died 1546), Domingo de Soto (died 1560), Domingo Bañez (died 1604), and Melchior Cano (died 1604). There was also extensive use of Aquinas's work in the spiritualities of the Spanish baroque age, particularly among the Carmelites. Bañez was adviser and confidant to Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross had lectured in Thomistic philosophy and theology before turning his energies to religious reform and mystical poetry.

The founding of the Jesuits in 1540 opened a new chapter in Thomism. In Paris the Dominicans had long since replaced Lombard's *Sentences* with Aquinas's *Summa* and it was with them that Ignatius Loyola and his first companions appear to have studied. In the constitutions of his order, Ignatius enshrined his intention that Aquinas should play a central role in the education of Jesuits. Many of the first generations studied at Salamanca, and this further strengthened their attachment to his thought. Considering the contribution of the Jesuits to education worldwide, one can say that Aquinas and his approach to learning and teaching found substantial fresh pastures in which to bear fruit.

Soon the Jesuits too were providing professors of theology for the universities. With Dominicans, Carmelites, and Jesuits all studying Aquinas in Spain, France, Italy, and elsewhere, stimulated by controversies with Protestantism and by the questions raised by the discovery of new worlds in America and Asia, one can see why some refer to this period as 'the second scholasticism'. The new Jesuit scholasticism

tended to be more eclectic, drawing not just on Aquinas, but on Scotus and other medieval authorities. The most renowned of the Jesuit scholastics was Francisco Suarez (1548–1617), who sought to adapt Thomist and other medieval approaches so as to engage with new questions and modern ideas.

In the later seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century, Catholic thought focused more on moral theology and spirituality and less on doctrine or philosophy as the importance of speculative systems of theology faded. The work of René Descartes is regarded by many as a radical, even revolutionary, moment in the history of philosophy, but it is important for understanding Descartes to know something of the scholasticism that provides the backdrop to his work.

The most important representative of what O'Meara calls 'baroque neo-Thomism' is Jean Poinset (John of St Thomas, died 1644). Educated at Louvain and professor at Alcalá, he produced *Cursus philosophicus Thomisticus* (1631) and *Cursus theologicus* (1637–43) (O'Meara, 1997: 165). By now, secondary Thomistic resources were available, particularly the commentaries of Cajetan and of the Salamancan school. With Poinset, the focus continues to be on moral theology and spirituality, and on questions about free will and grace. He shows some originality in his account of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

According to Gerald Vann, the evaluation of the health of Thomism just before the Enlightenment is universally negative, for its failure to do what Aquinas had achieved so remarkably – meet the intellectual needs of the times (O'Meara, 1997: 166). This may be a bit unfair in both directions. We can assume that scholars did try within the limits of their ability and understanding to respond to the intellectual needs of their time. And there is something romantic about the idea of a great synthesis devised by Aquinas himself in response to the questions of his age. If there ever was such a thing (and a Thomist synthesis is not simply a fantasy, as Jordan believes), it never gained universal acclaim, nor was it ever translated into political or institutional forms that would structure the lives of civil or ecclesiastical communities (with the possible exception of the Dominican Order itself). O'Meara says that the freedom, realism, and humanism of the Enlightenment

might have found some positive philosophical relationship to the thought of Aquinas, but that hostility to faith and to the Church made dialog difficult. At the same time, Catholic theology, and Thomism within it, did not seem to share the preoccupations of the Enlightenment thinkers.

Chapter 23

The Third Scholasticism

With the emergence of Romanticism in the late eighteenth century, new possibilities opened up and Catholic theologians in Tübingen and Munich developed approaches that drew on the work of philosophers such as Schelling (O'Meara, 1997: 168). At the same time, and in response to Enlightenment rationalism, neo-scholasticism emerged to engage with rationalist philosophies on their own ground. This 'third scholasticism' received authoritative endorsement and institutional encouragement from Pope Leo XIII's 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. As Maurice de Wulf pointed out, although the nineteenth-century revival of scholasticism was about more than the revival of Thomism, the thought of Aquinas was so dominant that the movement is also called neo-Thomism although he was not completely happy with this (de Wulf, 1907: 157–58).

It can be dated to the period 1860 to 1960 and may be understood as a response to a series of philosophical developments in the 'outside world'. Aquinas was regarded as the Catholic philosopher whose work would best counter the threats posed to the Gospel by these philosophical systems. Martin Grabmann described neo-scholasticism as:

that direction which has emerged since the mid-nineteenth century and is usually found in Catholic theology and philosophy; it takes up again the traditional links with ecclesiastical scholasticism which were broken by the Enlightenment; it searches to make fruitful for contemporary problems the thought-world of medieval scholasticism, particularly that of Thomas Aquinas.

(*Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 1935, as translated
and cited in O'Meara, 1997: 169)

According to Wilder, 1984, the contribution of neo-scholastic philosophers was most importantly to apologetics, setting forth the

praeambula fidei, the prolegomena to faith and theology, seeking to establish the existence and nature of God, the spirituality and immortality of the soul, the objective nature of the good and of human acts, and defending the intellectual character of human knowledge against modernism in theology and relativism and skepticism in philosophy. The relationship of faith and reason remained a concern within neo-Thomism, and in the first half of the twentieth century there was a sustained debate within neo-scholasticism about whether there was such a thing as a 'Christian philosophy'.

O'Meara lists five key deficiencies in neo-Thomism compared with Aquinas himself: it viewed him primarily as a philosopher to the neglect of Christian revelation and theology, it was interested in syllogisms and proofs to the detriment of a dialectical and synthetic contemplation of theological ideas and sources, it worked with an outdated physics and a shallow metaphysics, it lacked knowledge of the historical context of Aquinas's career, and it focused on Aristotelianism in Aquinas to the neglect of Platonic influences (O'Meara, 1997: 172–73).

Before the end of the nineteenth century, the last two problems began to be addressed. A number of scholars produced work that filled out the medieval context and historical development of Aquinas's thought. In 1911, an article appeared that discussed Platonic elements in his thought (Huit, 1911), and Chenu showed how a series of historical studies published between 1890 and 1940 produced a progressive reassessment of scholastic thought (Chenu, 1940).

The first three deficiencies mentioned by O'Meara presented neo-Thomism with more challenging questions about the ways in which Aquinas's philosophy might be made to engage with modern movements in philosophy and theology. The history of twentieth-century neo-Thomism is the history of various attempts to respond to these challenges.

Chapter 24

The Twentieth Century

O'Meara identifies three groups of twentieth-century neo-Thomists on the basis of whether they were predominantly expositors, historians, or seekers of dialog (O'Meara, 1997: 173–200). The distinction is not watertight because the first expositors include Ambroise Gardeil (1859–1931), Antonin Sertillanges (1863–1948), and other French Dominicans who expounded the ideas and texts of Aquinas in dialog, and in controversy, with French intellectual and cultural life at the time of the First World War. They concerned themselves particularly with the thought of Bergson and Blondel, and although their evaluation of these modernist philosophies was largely negative, they began an approach to the study of Aquinas that flourished among the Dominicans of Paris, and then elsewhere, throughout the twentieth century.

When Marie-Dominique Chenu speaks of things flourishing in Paris he implies a contrast with things not flourishing, in his view, in Rome. This was because of the dominant influence there of the century's most renowned neo-Thomist, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877–1964), who had directed Chenu's doctoral research, and whom Francois Mauriac called 'the monster of Thomism' (Peddicord, 2005).

Garrigou attended the lectures of Durkheim and Bergson at the Sorbonne (where he met Jacques Maritain) but was not happy with the arguments of Bergson and Blondel for the primacy of becoming over being. He could not see how, on the basis of such an approach, there could be any truth. Instead, Garrigou embraced the philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas and regarded the classic commentators of the second scholasticism – Cajetan, John of St Thomas, and Bañez – as the best interpreters of Aquinas. For decades, Garrigou taught metaphysics, fundamental theology, and spirituality in Rome. O'Meara's

view of him as 'suspicious', 'defensive', and 'incapable of appreciating any non-scholastic approach to Christianity' (O'Meara, 1997: 176–77) became standard in Catholic circles after the Second Vatican Council (1962–65, 'Vatican II'), and it is only very recently that some effort at re-evaluation is under way.

It seems unfair also to Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) to regard him as simply an expositor of Aquinas. He was helped by Bergson to turn from the materialistic positivism that attracted him in his youth and to think in more dynamic terms, and in terms of spirit. He converted to Catholicism in 1906, and later taught at Paris, Toronto, Chicago, and Princeton. He advocated an 'open Thomism' that would be critical but would also address issues in art, society, and science. For some, he was too liberal and eclectic to be a proper neo-Thomist – not sufficiently historical, and too open to contemporary cultural trends. He believed that Thomism was a living tradition, alive in great disciples such as Cajetan and John of St Thomas, and he was not interested in the 'quest for the historical Aquinas'.

At the same time, he interpreted Aquinas, and Aristotle too, in humanist, and even existentialist, terms. His championing of human rights allied him with John XXIII. The future pope was papal nuncio in Paris from 1945 to 1952, and Maritain was France's ambassador to the Vatican from 1945 to 1948. Maritain's 'integral humanism' seems to have inspired another pope, Paul VI, in his writings about development and peace. He is one of the few neo-Thomists to address explicitly the topic of education.³

The historical study already under way by the end of the nineteenth century gathered pace through the first half of the twentieth century. This was in spite of the tensions and anxieties of the 'modernist' crisis in Catholicism, a crisis associated with the use of critical historical methods in the examination of religious truth. Applying such methods to medieval sources was much less controversial than their application in the study of the Bible or to the development of Church doctrines, and medieval studies flourished.

Etienne Gilson (1884–1978) taught in Paris and founded the Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto in 1929. Like Garrigou and Maritain, he attended Bergson's courses but, again like them, he was not satisfied with what he received there, turned to medieval philosophy

and, eventually, to Thomism. He wrote extensively on the personalities and themes of medieval thought including Augustine, Bernard, Bonaventure, and Aquinas. He developed an existentialist reading of Aquinas, centered on his understanding of the act of being, *esse*, which he took to be Aquinas's key contribution to the history of thought. This interpretation gained considerable authority especially in English-speaking centers of neo-Thomism. A historian in the first place, Gilson argued that no one neo-Thomism could be identified with its original source (O'Meara, 1997: 277, notes 35 and 36).

As mentioned already, Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895–1990) did his doctoral work at the Angelicum under the supervision of Garrigou-Lagrange. He declined to stay on as Garrigou's assistant because he was unhappy with his 'Wolffian scholasticism' (a rationalist form of scholasticism) and 'ingenuous ignorance of history' (Pedicord, 2005: 103). Chenu's important contributions were on the historical setting of Aquinas and his work, on the understanding of theology in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and on questions about the contemporary study of Aquinas. In 1924, he founded the *Bulletin Thomiste* (later called *Rassegna di Letteratura Tomistica*), an extensive Thomistic bibliography that appeared regularly for over seventy years. His hope was that historical research would bring vitality to Thomism and give it some bite in contemporary intellectual debates.

Chenu's research was supported by a theology of revelation and incarnation for which the truth is available within history and culture rather than above and beyond them. Garrigou assigned a more precise, perhaps humbler, task to theology, to support and defend the truths of faith (Pedicord, 2005: 103–4). Genuine intellectual loyalty to Aquinas, Chenu argued, must involve honest engagement with the legitimate problems posed by the philosophy of religion, biblical exegesis, and the history of dogma. He felt that Garrigou and his disciples preferred summary condemnation to such honest engagement (O'Meara, 1997: 181–83; Pedicord, 2005: 100–12).

When Chenu became regent of studies at Le Saulchoir, the French Dominican school of theology, he sought to replace the non-historical exposition of the Thomist system with a reading of Aquinas in his historical context. In 1937, he published an account of what they were doing, but the book was condemned in Rome by a commission

chaired by Garrigou (Chenu, 1985). Garrigou in Rome (and Michel Labourdette, for example, in Toulouse) believed they were the heirs of a living tradition that carried a system of thought from Aquinas through his commentators. Chenu and other medieval historians wanted to get to the historical Aquinas. But their work seemed to imply that something had gone wrong at some point along the way, or at least that it was more historical to bypass the history of Thomism and to seek contact with the original source. One might wonder whether such a thing is even possible, or at least whether it has any stronger claim to be a historical way of working than is the approach that says we must receive Aquinas through earlier receptions of him. Serge-Thomas Bonino comments (with regard to Labourdette):

For him, the history of theology is that of real progress, in the first place a maturation up to the thirteenth century, then an efflorescence. As a result, to claim that Western theology had, at a given moment, taken the wrong path and that consequently we must return to an understanding of the faith anterior to this error, appeared to him as an inadmissible regression, a betrayal of the very essence of Christian theology and the meaning of its history.

(Bonino, 1992: 97)

Garrigou also has much to say about history and its importance for theology. But in philosophy, he believed, we must employ the analytic and synthetic method proportionate to it. Neo-Thomists will be quick to point out that the historical pedigree of particular propositions does not reveal anything about their truth or falsehood – a view that will be shared, of course, by many analytical philosophers.⁴

The third group of neo-Thomists identified by O'Meara is made up of what he calls 'the seekers of dialogue', those who tried to establish a conversation between Aquinas and modern philosophers. It seems that Dominican neo-scholastics tended to prefer a historical and expository reception of Aquinas and that Jesuit scholars were more open to the dialog with modern philosophy, particularly with Kant and the consequences of his 'Copernican revolution', his 'turn to the subject' (O'Meara, 1997: 185). But they did not believe the traffic would all be one way and shared the conviction of the Dominicans

that contemporary philosophy still had things to learn from Aristotle and from Aquinas.

Pioneers in this work of dialog with modern philosophy were Erich Przywara (1889–1972) and Joseph Marechal (1878–1944). Przywara tried to show how philosophies of the human subject in history might be brought into dialog with medieval thought on being and grace. For him, the stimulus to dialog came not just from philosophers, but also from theologians like Karl Barth and Paul Tillich who were friends of Przywara. Thomists had another front besides philosophy to keep in mind – dialog with Protestant theologians who were exercised by similar questions and who, especially in the case of Barth, would be scathing of any accommodation with philosophy on terms other than those set by Christian theology itself.

Marechal wrote on the natural drive of the intellect toward being and truth, and argued that in Aquinas one will find much on personality, intuition, and judgment that speaks to the concerns of modern philosophers. Thomist epistemology has lasting value, he argued, because it has consistently refused to separate life and consciousness, activity and speculation, act and form.

Marechal was inspired by the work of Pierre Rousselot (1878–1915), a young Jesuit killed in the First World War, who had used ideas from Bergson and Blondel to develop a ‘vital and intellectualist understanding of Aquinas’ (O’Meara, 1997: 187). Marechal and Rousselot believed a Kantian and transcendental method could vindicate a Thomistic metaphysics of the human, and of being, because in its every act the human intellect grasps implicitly the mystery of divine being. They believed they were not imposing later ideas on Aquinas because his thought, and that of other scholastics, already allowed for an active transcendental subjectivity and freedom (O’Meara, 1997: 188; Hill, 1974).

Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) pondered the relationship of modern philosophy and the thought of Aquinas with ‘courageous originality’ (O’Meara, 1997: 188). His earlier works are critical reappropriations of what Aquinas wrote on themes such as grace, freedom, and the operations of the intellect. His major philosophical work, *Insight*, was an original contribution to the questions of knowledge, judgment,

and understanding. The transcendental approach he developed is both modern and indebted to Aquinas. Lonergan later applied his transcendental structure of knowing – experience, understanding, judgment, and decision, bringing together the empirical, the intellectual, the rational, and the responsible (or ethical) – to the question of method in theology.

Karl Rahner (1904–1984) studied first with Marechal and then with Martin Heidegger, whose own early studies were in medieval philosophy. His doctoral work with Heidegger was a philosophical anthropology, an account of the human being in the world based on *Summa theologiae* I 84, 7 (an article whose importance has been noted more than once in Part 2). Rahner believed that Aquinas's thought should now be used simply on the same basis as that of any other classical theologian and he was critical of the neo-Thomist way of doing things (O'Meara, 1997: 189). With Lonergan, he believed that modern theology required a transcendental, anthropological method and his work too is both modern and significantly indebted to Aquinas.

The thinkers mentioned above represent many other teachers and students of philosophy and theology who sought to bring Aquinas's work into dialog with contemporary thought. In England, Victor White collaborated with Carl Jung in discussions about psychology and theology. Herbert McCabe worked to show how the thought of Aquinas illuminated the work of Marx and Wittgenstein and is in turn illuminated by them. Representatives of what Fergus Kerr has named 'Wittgensteinian Thomism' are philosophers such as Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach in England and Victor Preller in the United States. W. Norris Clarke of Fordham has developed a personalist reading of Aquinas's ontology, while William Hill in Washington brought Rahner's insights to bear on Catholic theology in the way Cornelius Ernst did in England.⁵

Chapter 25

Thomists on Education in the Twentieth Century

Any interest in Aquinas and his thought can be regarded as relevant to learning and teaching: it is all about knowledge and truth, the ways by which we know, the value of what we know, what we can claim to know, and how knowledge of the truth is to be shared. Lonergan's treatment of epistemological questions, for example, develops naturally into questions of pedagogy and method (Lonergan, 1957: chapter 6 and 1972). In fact, some of today's writers regard Lonergan as the best hope for a philosophy of education today. They look to his thought to provide the common language, the 'science of cognitive methods' (Liddy, 1996), the 'interdisciplinary discipline' (McInerny, 1999: 13) that might restore to the university some sense of a common task and show how each academic discipline also contributes to an overall quest for wisdom (Elias, 1999).

Wherever Aquinas was studied, people learned from him about how to study and how to teach. From time to time, and from place to place, attempts were made to develop an explicitly Thomistic philosophy of education – examples representative of similar works undertaken by many others are those of Felix Bednarski in Poland (Bednarski, 1958 and 1970), John Donohue, Mary Helen Mayer, and Mary Michael Spangler in the United States (Donohue, 1968; Mayer, 1929; Spangler, 1983), and Mary Bede Kearns in Ireland (Kearns, 1984).

Such efforts, identifying the principles and proposing practical applications of a Thomistic philosophy of education, were undertaken in every part of the world, especially, but not only, where the Dominican influence was felt. Only in the United States, though, was the Catholic community in a position to establish institutions inspired by such a philosophy at all levels of education. The success

of this project up to the 1950s is only eclipsed by its dramatic collapse after Vatican II (Gleason, 1995; Elias, 1999; Morey and Piderit, 2006). The current 'campus wars' that are part of what some call the 'culture wars' of the early twenty-first century are stimulating a revival of interest in Aquinas's overall vision and its implications for education, a matter to which we shall return in Part 4. For now, we shall examine the contributions to educational thought of two twentieth-century Thomists already mentioned, Sertillanges and Maritain.

First published in 1920, Sertillanges' book *The Intellectual Life* has been translated and reprinted many times (Sertillanges, 1998; O'Meara, 1997: 176; Peddicord, 2005: 115–19). Although based on the sixteen principles to guide study found in a probably spurious letter attributed to Aquinas, the book is nevertheless 'entirely thomistic' (Sertillanges, 1998: xxix), its substance taken from Aquinas's authentic works but refashioned and presented so as to appeal to Sertillanges' contemporaries involved in intellectual work.

One characteristically Thomistic feature of the work is its reach: from reflections on the student's appreciation and service of truth to practical advice about physical exercise, sleep, and how best to read. For Sertillanges, the spirit of the intellectual life means it is to be understood as a vocation. A person must dedicate herself to it as someone called to serve knowledge, humanity, and God, all from the perspective of the search for truth. Sertillanges is thinking not just of the academic intellectual, but of anybody who decides to get seriously involved in study or research.

Aquinas identifies a virtue, *studiositas*, that is needed by the intellectual worker if her work is to remain effective and joyful in itself and if it is not to prevent her living an otherwise balanced and moral life. Sertillanges' book is a practical handbook for the acquisition and practice of this virtue whose opposing vices are negligence and vain curiosity. The intellectual worker needs to be humble before the truth and this means neither overestimating nor underestimating his abilities and contribution. Everyone has something to give and it is best given when a person has a sense of proportion about it. This is not just in relation to the store of human knowledge universally, but also in relation to the effect on the person's other commitments to work, family, and God.

Another entirely Thomistic aspect is the link between study and prayer and the implications of this. Like Aquinas, Sertillanges believes that God is truth and so the desire to know the truth is a desire to know God. The student or researcher needs to begin, he says, by creating within himself 'a zone of silence' (1998: xviii) and needs also to cultivate a spirit of prayer within the work of study itself (1998: 29).

The doctrine of the composite nature of man, body, and soul, has very practical consequences here because we cannot 'dissociate spiritual functions from even those corporal functions that are apparently least connected with pure thought' (1998: 33). Within a few pages, he moves from talking about the search for truth to the need for hygiene, rest, exercise, and proper diet. The latter need to be thought about because it is a human creature that is engaged in this search. Which time of day is best for study, how to ensure 'moments of plenitude' (short, intense periods of productive work), how to manage academic contacts and friendships so as to serve best the tasks one has taken on, what kind of note-taking is helpful, how to write, and when to publish – all these practical issues are considered as Sertillanges moves easily between the philosophical and theological foundations of study and the concrete practice of it.

He does not hide his preference for Aquinas and for his 'system' or 'synthesis', believing that its structure corresponds to the constitution of reality and of the intelligence and so can offer the intellectual worker the best possible intellectual framework within which to position his own contribution. 'Here I expect protests', Sertillanges writes, noting that such protests have been made since the first edition of the book (1998: 114). But he holds his ground and continues to argue for the strength, flexibility, and modernity of Thomism: not that it is a complete system of knowledge, he says, but that 'a complete system of knowledge can find in it an almost miraculous power to coordinate and uplift' (1998: 115). Although there have been other studies of the virtue of *studiositas* and the other virtues that support learning and teaching, nothing as comprehensive has been produced since. The book's continuous republication over the course of ninety years testifies to the wisdom it contains about the life of study.

Jacques Maritain delivered the Terry Lectures at Yale University in 1943 and these were published in the same year under the title

Education at the Crossroads (Maritain, 1943). They were inspired as much by John Henry Newman's lectures on university education as they were by comments of Aquinas on teaching. Maritain argues that the aims of education need to be related to the end of the human being. This is a familiar Aristotelian and Thomist approach to any moral question: the end is the first cause in such questions, and disagreement about practical matters of action or policy will often be found to originate in differences about 'the end of man', either about the need to think about it at all or about where it is actually to be found. Alasdair MacIntyre makes the same point at the beginning of *After Virtue*: disagreement about particular moral issues will be found to originate in disagreement about more fundamental questions concerning human nature and destiny, what Maritain calls 'ends' (MacIntyre, 1981: 6–21; Maritain, 1943: 2–4).

Maritain argues that from someone's account of the end of the human being much follows in relation to how that person understands personality and individuality. He argues for what he describes as a 'Greek, Jewish and Christian' understanding of the human person, as an animal endowed with reason whose supreme dignity is in the intellect, a free individual in personal relation with God whose supreme righteousness consists in voluntarily obeying the law of God, and a sinful and wounded creature called to divine life and to the freedom of grace whose supreme perfection consists of love (Maritain, 1943: 7). Such an understanding of what the human creature is, and is for, has implications for a philosophy of education that must, then, be not only about knowledge and skills, but also about morality, freedom, and love; Maritain's 'integral fulfilment'. He develops his views by opposing them to misconceptions about the person and about education arising from a number of '-isms': scientism, pragmatism, sociologism, intellectualism, and voluntarism (Maritain, 1943: 4–22).

Though following Newman and Aquinas, Maritain gives this his own slant and makes much of the distinction between 'personality' and 'individuality', the former indicating the spiritual aspect of the human being and the latter the bodily aspect. Some Thomists will be hesitant about a distinction that seems to owe something to post-Cartesian dualism, but it is important for Maritain and informs his subsequent account of the dynamics of education. The distinction has

been used again recently by A.J. Conyers. He argues that a community established on the basis of 'love' allows for persons and their differences, whereas a community established on the basis of 'equality' will tend to value individuals who are, then, interchangeable. Education ought to be about establishing the first kind of community, he believes (Conyers, 2003: 129).

In speaking about teaching, Maritain stays close to Aquinas's texts (Maritain, 1943: 29–36), and he follows Sertillanges in identifying the virtues or fundamental dispositions to be fostered through education as love of truth, love of goodness, simplicity and openness, faithfulness and responsibility towards the work to be done, and a sense of cooperation. The teacher's job is to foster these dispositions in the student, to stress the inwardness and encourage the internalization of the educational influence, to help the student unify her knowledge, to liberate and not burden the mind. The end hoped for is 'that teaching result in the freeing of the mind through the mastery of reason over the things learned' (op. cit.: 49).

In the second part of his work, Maritain seeks to adapt the medieval, scholastic curriculum to modern conditions and to assign its different parts to primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The pedagogical sequence outlined by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* and by Boethius in *De Trinitate*, assigning the study of different disciplines to different stages of human development in terms of sense, imagination, moral capacity, and intellectual maturity, is adapted by Maritain to the needs of modern education. He follows Newman (and, once again, the scholastics) in regarding philosophy and theology as the culmination of a liberal education and discusses the difficulties this poses for educational institutions that wish to be free of theological influence (op. cit.: 55–87).

He concludes by discussing 'the trials of present-day education' which in 1943 were substantially threats to civilization itself, political and ideological forces that threatened to enslave and dehumanize, and post-war needs that might well distort the meaning of education (op. cit.: 88–118). He believed that, although it might take education away from its primary concerns, the urgency of the need for reconstruction that would follow on the end of the war was something to which educationalists too ought to respond. The greatest needs, he

believed, would be at the level of moral and political education, and, in changed political circumstances, there would be fresh questions also about the provision of education. He is anxious that these questions be resolved without endangering the freedom inherent in the kind of education valued in his Christian humanist vision.

In a 1960 preface to *Education at the Crossroads*, Maritain acknowledged that it was in some ways already dated. But his philosophy of education remained substantially unchanged and the work has been influential particularly in American Catholic circles. A 1999 symposium inspired by Maritain's work shows that this influence is ongoing (McInerny, 1999).

Chapter 26

Interpreting Aquinas Today

The main argument of neo-Thomism through the twentieth century, something that seems to have been agreed across the different approaches (expository, historical, and dialogical), was that Aquinas's purpose was to provide philosophical resources in support and defense of theology. His fall from favor after Vatican II freed him from the burden of his institutional (and often imposed) authority. The academic celebrations of the seventh centenary of his death in 1974 showed that there was still considerable life in the Thomistic body. Aquinas emerged from under the weight of official endorsement, was neglected among Catholics and even Dominicans, only to be gradually rediscovered, often by thinkers far from what one would regard as his natural home.

There are some for whom Aquinas continues to contribute best as a philosopher of religion, offering thoughts on what Leszek Kolakowski calls the 'worries' of that discipline (Kolakowski, 1982).⁶ By the year 2000, however, interest in Aquinas's work was growing quickly across a range of philosophical disciplines – in ethics, philosophical psychology, the philosophy of mind, legal and political philosophy, epistemology, and so on. More recently, there is renewed interest in Aquinas as primarily a Christian theologian whose work on the Trinity, Christology, grace, and the sacraments is informing fresh treatments of these and other themes. Thomas Merton seems to have anticipated what would happen when he wrote in 1966, that:

the current popular reaction against St Thomas is not due to anything in Thomas himself . . . No one who takes the trouble to read St Thomas and understand him will be surprised to find that the values people now seek elsewhere have been present in him and can always be made accessible without too much difficulty . . . The

spirit and perspectives of St Thomas are 'modern' in the soundest sense of the word.

(quoted in O'Meara, 1997: 279–80, note 67)

Some of the credit for the recovery of Aquinas as a theologian must be assigned to a group of Catholic theologians who were freer in relation to Thomism than any of the people mentioned up to now. Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Joseph Ratzinger belong in this group. While the *nouvelle théologie* of de Lubac and the others might be judged to have lost an initial battle with neo-Thomism in the early 1950s, it went on to win the war a short time later at Vatican II. This even seemed to place Thomism outside the main current of contemporary Catholic theology (Nichols, 2000). At the same time, those who departed most decisively from neo-scholasticism continued to be admirers of Aquinas and, such was his authority before Vatican II, sought to justify their departure in terms of greater loyalty not only to his spirit but also to his texts.

In discussing the genesis of his own thought, Joseph Ratzinger speaks about his interest in personalist philosophy (Heidegger, Jaspers, Steinbüchel) and his need for Augustine 'precisely also insofar as he was, so to speak, a counterweight to Thomas Aquinas' (Ratzinger, 1997: 60). Preferring the Augustinian to the Thomistic school, he did his doctoral work on Bonaventure, the Franciscan contemporary of Aquinas, also a student of Aristotle, but one who was more suspicious of the new philosophy and stayed closer to the theology of Augustine. In his autobiography, Ratzinger wrote:

I had difficulties in penetrating the thought of Thomas Aquinas, whose crystal-clear logic seemed to me to be too closed in on itself, too impersonal and ready-made. This may also have had something to do with the fact that . . . the philosopher who taught us Thomas presented us with a rigid, neo-scholastic Thomism that was simply too far afield from my own questions . . . His enthusiasm and deep convictions were impressive, but now it seemed that he himself no longer asked questions but limited himself to defending passionately, against all questions, what he had found. But we, being young, were questioners above all.

(Ratzinger, 1998: 44)

For this group of theologians, the separation of theology and spirituality was a major difficulty with neo-scholasticism as they encountered it, and they preferred the theologians of the patristic period, in whose writings and thought this separation is not to be found. The importance of this group for contemporary theology has obliged students of Aquinas to think again about how he should be received, in ways more suited to what a contemporary sensibility requires.

At the same time, there is a danger that in reacting to earlier, rationalist interpretations of Aquinas there will be a move to another extreme, to a kind of fideism or 'supernaturalism' in which the rational and the natural will not be accorded due weight. If Aquinas is being presented again as primarily a theologian, then this ought to be as a theologian who not only values and uses philosophy, but whose theological work contributed to the development of specifically philosophical questions. Aidan Nichols argues that 'the classical ontological theology' of Aquinas and his school is irreplaceable precisely because it provides the metaphysical presuppositions of the catholicity of other theological approaches. The differing theological functions of these other approaches should be honored, he says, 'as long as they define their functions in a way that leaves the irreplaceable role of the classical ontological theology intact' (Nichols, 2000: 18–19).⁷

The bibliography on Aquinas increases considerably each year, with many articles and books being published, in philosophy and theology. It is sufficient to consult a number of recent works to confirm not only the extent of current interest in the thought of Aquinas but also to see the areas in which that interest is focused. Thus Kretzmann and Stump, 1993, has some initial chapters on his life and sources and then deals with metaphysics, philosophy of mind, theory of knowledge, ethics, law and politics, theology and philosophy, and biblical commentary and philosophy. Kerr, 2002, shows how Aquinas and students of Aquinas are contributing to current philosophical discussions of epistemology, philosophy of religion, metaphysics, and ethics, as well as to theological discussions of grace, Christology, and the question of God. Kerr, 2003, shows the international flavor of Thomistic studies, offers perspectives on how his thought is being received in Europe and North America, and then deals with specific

themes such as pedagogy, reason and faith, creation, truth, natural law, language, and Platonism.⁸

There is considerable and ongoing discussion now about the question of an appropriate hermeneutic for approaching the writings of Aquinas today, in support of the belief that we can understand and develop his thought for our purposes. Contemporary debate about the reception of the thought of historical figures is as relevant to our use of Aquinas as it is to our reception of any other thinker from the past. On this, four points can be made.

First, we need a better way to describe and understand the intellectual inheritance of a great thinker than simply talking in terms of 'sources' and 'influence'. The kind of hermeneutic criticized here is one in which the discovery of a particular term, phrase, or illustration is taken to be enough to establish a link between an earlier and a later thinker. The process is much more complex than the kind of 'cutting and pasting' which such language seems to imply. An adequate hermeneutic must leave space for the creative work of a great thinker, for what creative genius adds to the process of appropriating earlier thinking (Boland, 1996: 322–23).

Second, the tendency to speak in terms of '-isms' is a modern one and not appropriate to a thinker of Aquinas's time. He did not use terms like 'Aristotelianism', 'Platonism', or 'Neoplatonism', whose usefulness is, in any case, quite limited. The ancient and medieval worlds thought, not in terms of packages of doctrines, still less of 'ideologies', but in terms of communities and traditions of thought, communities, even if spread over time, of teachers and students. Thoughts and ideas are never abstracted from human beings as if they had a life of their own or could themselves be agents within historical processes.

Third, the historical approaches of Chenu, Torrell, and the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies at Toronto are all efforts to place Aquinas's thought and work in its historical and cultural context. This was in reaction to any form of Thomism that would lift his ideas out of any context and treat them as purely abstract ideas and arguments, a kind of eternal (or at least perennial) truth whose development within historical individuals and schools had somehow ceased to be relevant. For Chenu, Torrell, and the Institute, study of the work of

Aquinas was undertaken always with reference to, and even as part of, medieval studies. Only thus, they thought, could one have confidence that one was coming to understand Aquinas himself.

This approach assumes that the meaning of the thought of a past thinker surrenders itself relatively easily to our understanding once we have given an account of its historical genesis and cultural context. But contemporary epistemology will not automatically accept this. Kolakowski, for example, points out that to talk of 'history' is to presuppose access to a point beyond history (Kolakowski, 1982: 152–60). Wittgensteinian or analytical Thomism, particularly where Frege's project figures strongly, will also be less interested in the historical and cultural context and more in the thoughts themselves and whether or not they are true (see note 4 to this part).

Fourth is the need to appreciate the writings of Aquinas as forms of literature. Sometimes his work is approached as a kind of quarry from which important elements are to be extracted: ideas, arguments, illustrations, and connections. But it is necessary also to see the way in which he worked, how his written works are constructed, what he was seeking to achieve through them. It means rediscovering the writings of Aquinas as books, literary creations of various types, rather than treating them merely as collections of data.

We have tried to take account of these considerations in this work. The most urgent question for us now is this: if Aquinas is back in favor as a Christian theologian, and his thought on education, for example, is firmly embedded within such a world view, how might he be approached and presented so that he becomes accessible beyond his natural constituency and yet in a way that is faithful to the intention of his work in view of the contexts, narrower and broader, within which it gets its meaning? For some, the best that might be hoped for is to extract from these theological contexts ideas and arguments that might be judged to stand in some kind of philosophical autonomy. There is growing dissatisfaction with this, however, by those who know Aquinas best, and for whom such extraction – the 'five ways and natural law' use of Aquinas as it has been called – must distort his thought overall.

Part 4 returns to the deeper vision within which Aquinas's understanding of teaching and learning is to be understood. We will explore

three themes – creation, the unity and integrity of the human being, and the notion of virtue – which are central to that vision and are also prominent in contemporary appropriations of his thought. This, it is hoped, will confirm that our study of what Aquinas says about learning and teaching, of his practice of these things, and of the contexts within which he understands them, turns out to be a very good way of undertaking the kind of re-evaluation of his work for which contemporary scholarship seems to have an appetite.

Notes

1. For an overview of the history of Thomism prior to the twentieth century see Weisheipl, 1967 and O'Meara, 1997: 152–73, 294–96. Of the many studies of the history of Thomism, note Leonard A. Kennedy (1987), *A Catalogue of Thomists 1270–1900* (Center for Thomistic Studies and University of St Thomas, Houston); Gerard A. McCool (1989), *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (Fordham University Press, New York); Géry Prouvost (1996), *Thomas d'Aquin et les thomismes: Essai sur l'histoire des thomismes* (Les Editions du Cerf, Paris).
2. On the opponents and defenders of Aquinas and his views in the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century, see Callus, 1946; Torrell, 2002: 436–63; and Tugwell, 1988: 236–43. Note that the 'Thomist' was not the only school even in the Dominican order: a number of important writers of the 'German Dominican school' remained closer to Albert than to Thomas.
3. Maritain, 1943. For Maritain's relationship with Garrigou see O'Meara, 1997: 178–79 and Peddicord, 2005: 81–100.
4. Peddicord, 2005: 111. See the comments of Scruton, 1995, 1–13 about truth and history in regard to philosophy. On the same question, but from a 'continental' perspective (drawing on Hegel, Gadamer, Heidegger), see Carl Page (1995), *Philosophical Historicism and the Betrayal of First Philosophy* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania).
5. Apart from the contribution of French medievalists to the historical study of Aquinas, one should mention scholars associated

- with Blackfriars, Oxford, particularly Daniel Callus, Kenelm Foster, Thomas Gilby, and Leonard Boyle. For an overview of neo-Thomism in North America, see O'Meara, 1997: 192–95. For recent and current trends in interpretation, see Kerr, 2003: 27–40.
6. For this use of Aquinas in the philosophy of religion see Davies, 1992, 2002b, 2003; Shanley, 2002.
 7. Behind de Lubac, and the *nouvelle théologie* generally, Peddicord sees the influence of Bergson and Blondel, so that Thomism's twentieth-century story ends where it began: Peddicord, 2005: 55–60 (Bergson), 61–66 (Blondel), 74–78 (Garrigou's engagement with them). Fergus Kerr shows how the most important Catholic theologians of the last century were initiated into one or other form of neo-scholasticism but then developed their thought in a range of directions under the influence of historical, philosophical, or pastoral concerns: Kerr, 2006.
 8. See also O'Meara, 1997: 201–43. Shanley believes Aquinas has much to offer in debates about religion and science (2002: 67–91). John Haldane has initiated a debate about an approach called 'analytical Thomism' (Haldane, 1999; Paterson and Pugh, 2006). Nor is it simply a matter of Catholic scholars sustaining the interest in Aquinas: Fodor and Bauerschmidt, 2004, demonstrates how Aquinas's thought illuminates dialog not only among Christians but also between Christians and non-Christians.

Part 4

The Relevance of Aquinas's Work Today

We saw in Part 2 that whenever Aquinas treats explicitly of teaching, he does so as part of his 'metaphysics of creation'. Where one human being teaches another it is a participation by the human creature in the working out of God's purpose for the creation: the communication of truth with a view to goodness. The deepest roots of his account of teaching are found therefore in how he understands creation and in his account of the nature and peculiar status of the human being. Creation and anthropology are two of the areas that continue to attract significant interest in his thought.

A third theme that meets both criteria – essential for a fuller understanding of what Aquinas takes teaching to be, as well as receiving a lot of attention in contemporary discussions – is that of virtue. One of the most important ways in which many contemporary thinkers have discovered or rediscovered his work is through the general revival of interest in virtue theory. He is recognized as an authoritative voice in both the Aristotelian and the Christian traditions about virtue. Virtue theory is of its nature pedagogical and educational. Dispositions, what Aquinas calls *habitus*, presuppose a developmental understanding of human experience, and the virtues are good dispositions. The virtues are also about the human person learning how to live within communities and traditions in which he finds himself or with which he chooses to identify himself. For Aquinas, the virtues are a kind of acquired 'second nature' and his understanding of them reveals a lot

about the way he understands education: that it is about the internalizing of knowledge and understanding, shaping the person who thereby becomes more than they were before, not just the acquisition of skills that remain extrinsic to the person's flourishing. We shall consider what Aquinas says about creation and the human being before turning finally to his accounts of virtue and the virtues.

4.A: Creation

Chapter 27

The Meaning of Creation

Joseph Pieper writes that if Thomas Aquinas were to be assigned a name of the kind taken by some religious people in order to place their lives under the rubric of a particular doctrine or theme in Christian theology, the most fitting name would be ‘Thomas of God the Creator’ (Pieper, 1975). The question of creation is not so much a question about the making of things – although this is the most popular image for what is involved – as it is a question about the relationship in which all things stand towards God. In his consideration of this question, Aquinas brings together a set of theological concerns and convictions about wisdom, goodness, love, and self-sharing *beatitudo* or happiness, and a set of philosophical concerns and convictions about being, participation, and causality. We have seen that by insisting on joining the Dominicans Aquinas opted for a biblical and evangelical theology. By preferring the philosophy of Aristotle he opted for a philosophy that was pagan and earthy. The contradiction is only apparent since the two options were to one end: to give its proper value to creation, beginning from the material and physical world from which Aristotle drew his wisdom, and in which, for Christians, the Word became incarnate.

It may plausibly be argued that the Christian belief in creation – that God is the source, sustainer, and end of everything down to the last and least traces – enabled Aquinas to resolve some of the philosophical difficulties that Aristotle had to leave unsolved. The reality and value of each unique and individual thing, and the particularity and variety of the created world, are clearly established in the Christian theology of creation in a way that Aristotle could not achieve (Booth, 1983; Madigan, 1988).

By the term *creatio* Aquinas refers to a relationship rather than a moment or an event. Creation is the total, enduring dependence on

God of everything that is. Creation is not a change from an earlier state of affairs to a subsequent state of affairs: there is no earlier state of affairs waiting to be transformed into a subsequent one. Nor is creation a movement from one point to another: there are not two *termini* between which the relevant movement could be called creation. There is only the end point: things have come to be not from anywhere else or from any other condition, but out of nothing and solely through God's power (*Summa theologiae* I 45 1; 45 2 ad 2). Creation may be described as a kind of causing that requires infinite power, Aquinas says, not because its effects are infinite but because the 'transition' involved – which is not a transition in any real sense – is from nothing to being, and so involves the traversal of an infinite gap (*Summa theologiae* I 45).

Aquinas places the ideas about being, received from Aristotle and Boethius, Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine, at the service of a theology of creation. As a Christian thinker he identifies the energy that sustains the world with God, who is wise, good, and loving, and who causes each created thing to participate in God's perfection. God does this so that the glory of God might be made manifest in an endless variety of ways, and ultimately so that created persons might come to understand and enjoy the happiness of God's own fertile life. God cannot act for a purpose outside God, which is why Aquinas speaks of the purpose of creation in the way he does: it is simply for the glory of God, a free act of God's love. The variety of creation, its various levels, species, and types, even its inequalities, are the work of God's wisdom which makes a whole panoply of creatures to share in and to represent the glory and goodness of God (*Summa theologiae* I 47, 1; 47, 2; I.II 112, 4).

We can, therefore, speak of creation as a teaching. If, as Aquinas says, the end of the universe is truth because its origin is mind (*Summa contra gentiles* I.1), then creation itself may be understood as a revelation of the glory of God for no purpose other than to manifest that glory. It is an illustration and an example. The gift of creation, from the point of view of the creature, means being given the possibility of coming to know God, to learn about God.

For Aquinas, things are true and real only if they are creatively thought and loved. Created reality, the world and its history, are true

and real because they have been creatively thought and loved by God. To speak of God making the world is also to use an image, which, like all images applied to God, is not to be understood literally. Aquinas is clear that creation involves neither movement nor change. It is not the manipulation or ordering of pre-existing material. Nevertheless the classical image of the Creator as an *artifex* or craftsman is an attractive one, beautifully illustrated in some of the great manuscript illuminations of the Middle Ages.

Aquinas's response to the question of the world's eternity serves to make clear what creation means for him. He thought that although it has been revealed in fact that the creation had a beginning in time, Aristotle's view that the world is eternal is, without the clarification that revelation brings, a reasonable one to hold. If 'to be created' and 'to exist always' are not incompatible for Aquinas, and if 'to be created' and 'to be necessary' are not mutually exclusive either, then it is clear that this is a unique level of discourse about a unique relationship (*Summa theologiae* I 44, 1 ad 2).

Nor is the question of the world's eternity an exclusively Aristotelian one. The Manichees also believed in eternal matter because they believed in eternal evil, and the earlier Christian theology of creation and providence was decidedly anti-Manichean. This meant that Aquinas, while using Aristotle's arguments about the eternity of the world to clarify the sense in which creation itself was to be understood, had to be careful to negotiate a way that would be faithful to the anti-Manichean concerns of his Christian predecessors. He did this not by denying the possibility of an eternal creation but by denying that matter was evil.

Chapter 28

The Goodness of Creation

The two anti-Albigensian preoccupations of Aquinas concerned the relation of material things with God and the unity of body and soul. We will see below how his understanding of the unity of body and soul belongs within a broader, theological anthropology the founding principle of which is the human being's creation in the image and likeness of God. What he has to say about the goodness and integrity of creation is another of the most important parts of Aquinas's work. His theology of creation assigns created reality coherence and integrity while at the same time recognizing its radical dependence on God the Creator for everything it is and has.

According to Genesis 1:31, 'God saw everything he had made and behold it was very good'. Aquinas says that created goodness has two aspects. On the one hand, the created reality is good through the one uncreated goodness that God is. It is good as sharing or participating in God's goodness. This allows Aquinas to accept Augustine's comment that God's goodness is the good of everything that is good, *bonum omnis boni*. On the other hand – his Aristotelian hand, we might call it – the created reality is inherently good. It is good in itself, not because it has its goodness from itself, but because creation is such that God gives to things their existence and their perfections *as theirs*. God sets things up with their own integrity and quasi-independence of God (*Summa theologiae* I 6, 4).

This means that things bear witness to the goodness of God in two ways. They point *beyond themselves* to the uncreated goodness that is their origin, exemplar, and goal; and they point *to themselves*, to that likeness of God's goodness that each creature contains in itself. So, creatures are not just windows through which we look to see the only real goodness, the goodness of God. Creatures *do* direct us beyond themselves to the uncreated goodness of God, but they also direct

us to themselves in order to illustrate even more emphatically how good the Creator is. God is so good that he has established in being creatures that are good with a goodness they can call their own. The goodness of all things is one, Aquinas concludes, and yet there are many goodnesses (*Summa theologiae* I 6, 4). The wonder, says Marie-Dominique Chenu, of what is involved in the unique causality of creation is that the creature as a creature is no longer nothing, but has a consistency, truth, and goodness which it can call its own (Chenu, 1970: 12).

The classical understanding of the Creator as an artist or craftsman included the idea that he leaves traces and resemblances of himself in whatever is created. This resemblance is strongest in the case of spiritual and personal beings and is especially true of the human being who is created, according to Genesis 1:26–28, in God's image and likeness. Aquinas follows Augustine in referring to the general trace or resemblance of God in all creatures as a *vestigium*, literally a 'footprint', indicating *that* something has been involved in their coming to be, but not *what* that something might be. In the case of the creature that bears the *imago Dei*, however, there is a stronger trace or resemblance indicating not only *that* something has been involved in their coming to be, but also, albeit still in a faint way, *what* that something might be (*Summa theologiae* I 45, 7). Rational creatures that have capacities for thinking and willing bear this image of God and so may be thought of as co-creators with God (*Summa theologiae* I 45, 8) and as participants in God's providential care for the world (*Summa theologiae* I.II 91, 2). It is part of God's plan, Aquinas says elsewhere, to create beings that are creative, that participate in and represent God's nature as self-sharing goodness and love. This is true in particular of the human creature whose imaging of God must be understood also in Trinitarian terms (*Summa theologiae* I 43; I 45, 8; I 93).

Aquinas develops his thought about creation in such a way that the transcendence and immanence of God are both respected. Although it is somewhat anachronistic to do so, we might also describe the balance he seeks to achieve as his charting a passage between the Scylla of deism and the Charybdis of pantheism.

Creation is the total, enduring dependence on God of everything that is. Total dependence means that God provides absolutely

everything that creatures are and have. God is source, sustainer, and end of everything. We can compare creation to the way in which a table depends on a carpenter for being what it is, but creation is something more. Because it is out of nothing, God provides not just the finished table but also the wood to begin with and even the very idea of the table. God may thus be described (with the qualifications that apply to all theological language) as the efficient cause of creation. Aquinas discusses this in *Summa theologiae* I 44 1–2, where it is clear that he wishes to establish God's *transcendence* of creation, that God is completely above and beyond it.¹

We can also compare creation to the way in which a painting depends on an artist's creativity, but once again it is something more. The only place where God can get the idea for what he wants to create is within God. This means that each of God's works bears some resemblance, however faint, to God, who conceives and produces it (see *Summa theologiae* I 44, 3). Elsewhere, Aquinas says that the forms in things are 'a kind of sealing of the divine knowledge in things', *quaedam sigillatio divinae scientiae in rebus* (*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 1, 2 ad 6).² God may thus be described (again with the qualifications that apply to all theological language) as the exemplary cause of things.

We may speak also of God the Creator as the end or purpose of creation, standing not just at its beginning as its source and origin, but also at its end as its goal or destiny, drawing creation on, out of nothing, towards God (*Summa theologiae* I 44, 4). Aquinas speaks of the vocation of creation, the most fundamental vocation of all, when creation is called from nothing into being (*In I Sentences* 41, 1, 2 ad 3, referring to Romans 4:17). It happens not because God needs anything, but simply in order to communicate God's perfection and goodness.

That God may be said to be exemplar cause and final cause of creation (*Summa theologiae* I 44, 3–4) may be understood as Aquinas seeking to establish the *immanence* of God: as their Creator, God is everywhere and always intimately present at the heart of all created things; as exemplar of creation, all things are somehow like God (*Summa theologiae* I 4, 3); as end or destiny of creation, all things seek God in all that they seek, love God in all that they love, and are

inclined towards God in all their inclinations towards good (*Summa theologiae* I 60, 5 ad 1; I.II 109, 3). Aquinas summarizes his account of God's creating causality as follows:

Since God is the efficient, exemplar, and final cause of all things, and prime matter, *materia prima*, is also from God, it follows that the first principle of all things is itself one.

(*Summa theologiae* I 44, 4 ad 4)

Aquinas's view is not, then, *deistic*. God is not alongside the world or against the world. God is not the world's most important bit; nor is God, in David Burrell's words, 'the biggest thing around' (Burrell, 2003: 77). God does not kick-start the world and stand back to see what happens, and God is not the world's watchmaker, fitter, or engineer. Aquinas believed that the fundamental gift, perfection, or act of *esse* – the 'to be' of things which is the distinctive effect of creation and which therefore only God can give – ties creation totally, immediately, and intimately to God, who is most intimately present in all things as their Creator (*Summa theologiae* I 105).

Neither is Aquinas's view *pantheistic*, in spite of the radical immanence it establishes. Creation is not God spread around. God is not a part or an aspect of creation. God is not a thing among things. Nature is not God, and neither is God some element 'deep down things'. But it is only because God is absolutely transcendent that God can be as intimately present in things as God is, that is, without becoming mixed with them as a part, an element or an aspect of them. Creation is God allowing it to be that there really are things other than God – this is what a transcendent Creator can do. But these things that are other than God only are so by sharing in God's being and perfections in the ways that creatures may so share. If one speaks of God's efficient causality in relation to creation, thus protecting God's transcendence, it is necessary to speak also of God's exemplar and final causality in relation to creation, thus protecting God's immanence.

Chapter 29

God's Complete Freedom

Aquinas thus negotiates a course between pantheism, which would identify God and creation, and deism, which would regard God and creation as having practically nothing to do with each other. What, though, does Aquinas mean when he says that the relationship of creation is real in the creature but is not real in God (*Summa theologiae* I 13, 7; I 45, 3 ad 1; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 3, 3; 7, 8–11)? How can we speak seriously of God loving the world if it makes no difference to God? The gain in the way Aquinas speaks about this may be understood as: God is free of need and dependence and so can love freely. He addresses the issue directly in *Summa theologiae* I 44, 4 ad 1:

To act out of need indicates that an agent is imperfect, that its nature is to act but also to undergo. This is not fitting for God. And so God alone is completely free, *maxime liberalis*, because God acts not for his own gain but solely from his own goodness.

The Creator does not act to attain some purpose. God's intention in creating is simply to communicate the perfection that is his goodness (*Summa theologiae* I 44, 4 in c). God's transcendence of creation ensures not only God's complete freedom in relation to creation, it also implies God's immanence in creation and establishes the autonomy of creatures (Chenu, 1970: 13).

God and creation are not rivals in any sense. In fact, the more God is God, so to speak, the more the creature is itself. Aquinas says that to take away from the perfection of creatures is to take away from the perfection of God's power, *detrahere perfectioni creaturarum est detrahere perfectioni divinae virtutis* (*Summa contra gentiles* III.69). God is not threatened by the giftedness of God's creatures. Neither ought

creatures to be threatened by God being God: their lives, activities, and being depend upon it.

God's love is completely free of those dynamics of need and dependence that so often complicate and subvert human attempts at loving. The antinomy of transcendence and immanence, Chenu says, is resolved in the power of love, here carried to its extreme point where the lover confers on the other who is totally from him the consistency that allows the other to be truly an other (Chenu, 1970: 14). Aquinas often quotes the Neoplatonist saying that the good is self-sharing, *bonum est diffusivum sui*. It is of the nature of good to communicate itself to others, he says. He appeals to this principle at two key points in his work, in relation to creation itself (*Summa theologiae* I 44, 4) and in relation to the Incarnation of the Word (*Summa theologiae* III 1, 1). In his commentary on the *Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas says that the good is self-sharing and that love is naturally ecstatic, *amor extasim facit* (*In de divinis nominibus* IV, *lectio* 10: §430). Love simply goes out of itself: *amor simpliciter exit extra se* (*Summa theologiae* I.II 28, 3). But when we speak like this of God, it is not to say that what comes from God is necessary or automatic, since it would not truly be coming from God if it did not originate in a free decision of God's love (*Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 15, 3).

Although God is free of the dynamics of need and dependence that complicate our experiences of love, this does not mean that God does not love the world. In fact, it makes possible the kind of love Christians see in Christ – the Word become flesh, and so the revelation in human form of the depth and passion of God's love. Paradoxical though it may seem, it is precisely because God is not really related to creation that God can love it 'with an everlasting love' (Jeremiah 31:3; *Summa theologiae* I 44, 4; I 45, 3; and see McCabe, 1987: 39–51, on 'the involvement of God').

Creation and the relationship it involves cannot be understood without reference to God's freedom, and it is that freedom that establishes and secures the space of human freedom. Once again, it is essential to remember that God and creation are not in any sense rivals as if the causality of things that happen in the world could be divided between God and created agents. Aquinas writes:

An effect that results from a natural cause and from the divine power is not attributed partly to God and partly to the natural agent but it is completely from both according to different modes, *totus ab utroque secundum alium modum*, just as the effect is entirely attributable to an instrument and also entirely to the principal agent.

(*Summa contra gentiles* III.70)

4.B: The Human Being

Chapter 30

Aquinas Opts for a ‘Holistic Anthropology’

If Aquinas’s distinctive understanding of teaching and learning cannot be appreciated apart from his theology of creation, neither can it be understood without reference to his anthropology, his account of human nature and destiny, of the human being in the world, and of how the human being receives and manipulates that world (see also Chapter 11, ‘Knowledge’, above).

As used here, the term ‘anthropology’ refers to the kind of treatment of the human being that is found in *Summa theologiae* I, 75–89, a reflection on human nature as such. Questions might be raised from a variety of perspectives about the possibility of such a reflection. If we bracket the term ‘nature’ for the moment, lest that be the aspect of the question that causes concern, there are many areas of study and research for which some account of being human is necessary. It engages the attention not only of the anthropologist in the modern sense but also of the theologian, the philosopher, the psychologist, the political philosopher, the educationalist, and so on. At the same time there is no agreed ‘map’ of the human person shared across these disciplines. Many maps are proposed – structural, developmental, contextual, and also interpersonal, intrapersonal, transpersonal – not only in philosophy, but in psychology, in the various theoretical bases put forward in support of the practice of psychotherapy, for example, as well as in religious and quasi-religious contexts.

Many contemporary commentators are keen to stress the ‘holistic’ character of Aquinas’s anthropology. While it would be anachronistic to describe his work as anti-Cartesian, some students of Aquinas believe his work can easily be re-read in the light of Wittgenstein’s anti-Cartesianism (see for example Davies, 1992: 207–26). It was developed

in the context of thirteenth-century responses to Albigensianism, but new forms of dualism are constantly emerging, distinctions that tend to be hardened into separations that then threaten the integrity of the human being (Tugwell, 1988: 288).

By the time Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa theologiae*, comes to deal with the human being, he has considered not only God but also spiritual creatures or angels, and the physical world. For him, the distinction between material and spiritual, so central for pagan Neoplatonism, for example, turns out not to be the most radical distinction. The most radical distinction (the 'infinite qualitative gap') is that between creator and creature, a point that is clarified in his angelology. For Aquinas, the angels are pure spirits with no admixture of material or corporeal reality, but they are not thereby divine. Neoplatonism tended to equate the spiritual and the divine, and some Christian thinkers seem to have done the same. The general tendency among Aquinas's contemporaries was to say, following Augustine, that there must be some kind of materiality in the angels, if they are not to be identified with God. Aquinas's metaphysics allowed him to take a different approach to this, an approach that served to strengthen his account of what creation means, enabled him to show that there can be creatures who are pure spirits, and prepared the ground for his account of the kind of creature the human being is.

To some, any talk of the human being as a composite of body and soul involves a dualism that is unacceptable. The contemporary (and controversial) German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, for example, rejects all dualisms on the grounds that they inevitably produce hybrid realities, whether in the way we think about ourselves or about the technologies that are developed on the basis of such dualisms. At the same time, philosophers and theologians of all ages – as well as poets and other artists – have thought and spoken in terms of body and soul, a distinction that need not become a dualism in the feared sense. If what was said above about the doctrinal reasons for Aquinas joining the Dominicans is correct – that part of his attraction to them was their anti-Albigensian (and thus, anti-dualistic) theology and mission – then it would be very surprising if he were to allow the traditional distinction of body and soul to harden into a dualistic

separation. Timothy Suttor points out how talk of 'body' and 'soul', which strongly suggest two things to us, colors a treatise (*Summa theologiae* I 75–89) that, from beginning to end, insists they are not two things but two sides of *one* thing, a human being (Suttor, 1970: xvi).

Chapter 31

The Unity and Integrity of the Human Being

In his account of the unity of body and soul, Aquinas once again presents his position in relation to two contrasting but equally unsatisfactory alternatives. On one side he develops a more Aristotelian account in contrast to what he takes to be the Platonist one. As far as Aquinas understood him, Plato held that the soul was in the body, *sicut nauta in nave*, like a sailor in a ship, and that the soul was the engine of the body, *anima ut motor corporis*. Aquinas knew the Platonist position not only from Augustine, and from Aristotle's critical accounts of it, but also from a work of Nemesius of Emesa, a late-fourth-century Syrian Christian author. In his *De natura hominis*, which Aquinas and his contemporaries believed to be a work of Gregory of Nyssa, Nemesius criticized Plato for threatening the unity of the human being and criticized Aristotle for making the soul too material (Verbeke, 1974: 289, 313).

Using the facilities provided by Aristotle's philosophy, Aquinas developed an alternative understanding of the unity of body and soul in the human being: the soul, as well as being an intellectual substance in its own right, is also essentially the substantial form of the human body (*Summa theologiae* I 75, 2).³ Body and soul are not two separate bits accidentally joined to each other; the human being is a unified creature, *compositum*, of body and soul together. The soul is not occupying and using the body as some kind of alien presence. It is rather, and precisely, animating the body as its form. Just as the body needs a soul, Aquinas – and this is daring for the thirteenth century – adds that the soul needs a body. It is natural for the soul to be united to the body and it has a natural aptitude and inclination towards such union (*Summa theologiae* I 79, 1 ad 6). It is not correct to say that the intellectual soul is united to the body for the sake of the body, he says, but the body is necessary for the intellectual soul

if it (the soul) is to carry out its distinctive activity of understanding (*Summa theologiae* I 84, 4). Elsewhere he says that, while it is possible to say 'the soul understands' just as one might say 'the eye sees', it is more proper to say that a human being understands by means of her soul (*Summa theologiae* I 75, 2 ad 2).

The radical nature of Aquinas's view of the union of body and soul is clear also from the fact that he stresses again and again that human knowledge not only originates in sensation, but also remains dependent on sensation. This is true for all human knowledge. Even the highest mystical knowledge depends on the store of images and memories gathered along the way. The awareness and understanding of the highest knowledge (including whatever knowledge of God we might attain) remains tied to the simplest and most basic knowledge, that which we have through sight, hearing, smell, and the other senses (*Summa theologiae* I 84, 7). In teaching that the highest human knowledge remains always dependent on the lowest, Aquinas departed from the views of Bonaventure and from those of Albert who, in this as in other matters, remained closer to Platonist views (Weisheipl, 1980: 14–16). The implications for Aquinas's appreciation of teaching and learning are immediately obvious.

It was believed by some of his contemporaries that a number of theological doctrines were threatened by Aquinas's new account of the unity of body and soul. It was believed by some to threaten the dignity of the human person as a rational creature because it seemed to tie the soul more closely to the physical and the animal. We have seen that Nemesius criticized Aristotle's account of the soul as too materialistic. Aquinas's account left him with great difficulties in explaining the kind of existence possible for the separated soul after death. Whereas philosophers before Plato, and many in the Platonist tradition, regarded the soul after death as liberated from its place of alienation, Aquinas believed that the condition of the separated soul was unnatural, *praeter naturam*. Separated from its body, the soul is in an unnatural situation. It would take us too far from our present purpose to follow up the texts in which Aquinas discusses this, the reasons why he says what he does, and the implications of his doing so. It is enough for our purposes to note Aquinas's concern to recognize that the full human reality is essentially material and physical

as well as intellectual and spiritual. He was convinced that because this was philosophically true it could not therefore threaten the faith in the ways that some of his contemporaries feared. Not only was he convinced that it did not so threaten the faith, he was convinced that it coincided perfectly with what faith required.

Aquinas's account remains one of the most impressive attempts to counteract what is a recurring misunderstanding of the nature of the human being. G.K. Chesterton says that Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas together 'saved us from Spirituality, a dreadful doom' (Chesterton, 1943: 21). What Chesterton means is that Francis, in his poetic love of nature, and Aquinas, in his philosophical theology, reaffirmed the Incarnation by bringing God back to earth, they insisted on 'the immense importance of the human being in the theological scheme of things', and celebrated 'the wedding of God with Man and therefore with Matter' (op. cit.: 26, 30). Frederick Copleston, summarizing, says that:

Aquinas's argument in favour of the human soul's spiritual character is based . . . on the contention that man exercises psychical activities which are not intrinsically dependent on a corporeal organ (while being powers of the soul which is the form of the body).

(Copleston, 1955: 170)

In saying that the soul is at once the form of the body and an intellectual substance, is Aquinas not, however, wanting it both ways, once again threatening the unity he seeks to establish and reopening the door to dualism? In order to respond to this question we need to consider the alternative but equally unsatisfactory view in relation to which Aquinas sets his account. If on one hand he was obliged to engage with Platonist views and the threat they posed to the *unity* of the human being, on the other he was obliged to engage with Latin Averroists whose interpretation of Aristotle's *De anima* threatened the *integrity* of the individual human being.

In *De anima* III.5, Aristotle distinguished two aspects to human intellectual activity, one of which is passive or receptive, the other active or initiating. In the thirteenth century, these aspects were known as 'passive intellect', *intellectus passivus* or *intellectus possibilis*, and 'agent

intellect', *intellectus agens* or *intellectus factivus*. Aristotle also refers to one aspect as separable and the other as not separable. Aquinas believed there were two serious mistakes in the Averroist interpretation of this. One was the idea that the possible intellect is a substance that is separate in its being from the body even though united to it as its form, a kind of Platonist view that would destroy the unity of body and soul that Aquinas was so keen to defend. The other was the view, apparently held by Averroes himself (and he was the most reputable commentator on Aristotle), that there is just one possible intellect for all human beings, a view that would destroy the integrity of the individual human being as having all that is required to be a knower and a moral agent, in other words, to be a person. John of Baconthorpe, a fourteenth-century Carmelite, refers in his *Quodlibeta* to a 'Siger' who thought that the intellect is united with the human being only by means of phantasms (the images retained in the imagination as a result of sense experience), and that, according to Aristotle, only one part of intellect is the form of the human being while the other part is not. Siger is, undoubtedly, Siger of Brabant, leader of the radical group in the faculty of arts at Paris. Aquinas returned there in 1268 in order to defend the use of Aristotle in theology against the threat to that project posed by Siger's radical interpretation.

Aquinas often defended his position against this interpretation, most importantly in his late work *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*. The use of the term 'separable' by Aristotle in *De anima* III.5, he says, may be understood to mean 'separate substance', or to mean 'not acting through a corporeal organ' (*Summa theologiae* I 79, 5 ad 1). Aquinas is clear that the second of these is the correct interpretation and that the reference to separation 'must be understood of the whole intellectual part, which indeed is called separate because it has no organ, as is clear from the words of Aristotle' (*De unitate intellectus, caput 1*, lines 654–80. See also *In de anima* III, *lectio* 10, Marietti §742).

On this point, Aquinas agreed that, in what the Averroists were saying, there were implications for many central Christian beliefs. Their way of undoing the integrity of the individual human person threatened the belief in personal immortality, the appreciation of the human person as a moral agent or rational animal, the theological meaning of the human being's creation in the image of God

(a theological anthropology that is required also for Christology), and the human being's capacity for beatitude or fulfillment. Aquinas believed that the Christian faith effectively unravels if the Averroist interpretation is allowed. But the Averroists were basing their arguments on Aristotle's text and this made some theologians suspicious of any use of Aristotle. So Aquinas argued for an interpretation of Aristotle that would be acceptable both philosophically and theologically, seeking to show, of the Averroist interpretation, 'that it is as contrary to the principles of philosophy as it is to the documents of the faith' (*De unitate intellectus*, *caput* 1, lines 20–38 and *caput* 5, lines 432–41; see *Quaestiones disputatae de spiritualibus creaturis* 9).

Aquinas's argument, then, is that the most reasonable interpretation of Aristotle is also what the Christian faith requires: the integrity of the individual human person as a being that is capable, in its own right, of intellectual knowledge, moral agency, and creative engagement with the world.

In the first two books of *De unitate intellectus*, Aquinas subjects Aristotle's *De anima* to a close examination and then summarizes how peripatetics other than Averroes interpret it. In the remaining three books, he presents his own arguments, beginning with the common-sense, intuitive belief that 'this individual person understands', *hic homo singularis intelligit*. He writes:

It is clear that this individual human being understands; for we would never raise a question about the intellect unless we understood; and when we do raise a question about the intellect we do not ask about any other principle than that by which we understand.

(*caput* 3, Leonine §61, lines 24–40)

Whether Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle's obscure text is correct or not is one question. What is clear is what he thought was at stake in this controversy. For him the intellect is a power of the soul, which is the act of the body (see *De unitate intellectus caput* 2, lines 145–56; *caput* 3, lines 320–35; *caput* 4, lines 22–47). He agrees that the intellect acts without a bodily organ, and that this is what Aristotle means when he describes it as separate. But the intellect is a power of the human soul which is nothing other than the form or act of a body

and so the intellectual activities of the human being, what we might even term its spiritual activities, are always the activities of a human being, body and soul combined. Not only that, they are always the activities of this individual human being.

The Averroist problem was: how can the human soul be so intimately united with the body as to be its substantial form, and yet have one of its powers so separate from the body that that power can have intellectual knowledge? Aquinas believed the answer lay in acknowledging another kind of form. Although some forms of matter neither act nor exist by themselves, but exist only through the composite, there are other forms of matter that do act by themselves and hence are subsistent. They do not exist through the composite; the composite exists through them. Not being immersed in matter, they can have acts that are not acts of a corporeal organ (*De unitate intellectus caput 1*, lines 488–99, 622–849). The human soul, it seems, is the only example of this other kind of ‘form of matter’.

The Averroist controversy reached its height in Paris in 1270. Aquinas had returned in 1268 to get involved in the debates, and the issues of this controversy were very much on his mind as he wrote the moral parts of the *Summa theologiae*. In fact, one of his strongest arguments against the Averroist position is an argument from moral philosophy:

If . . . the intellect does not belong to this man in such a way that it is truly one with him, but is united to him only through phantasms or as a mover, the will will not be in this man, but in the separate intellect. And so this man will not be the master of his act, nor will any act of his be praiseworthy or blameworthy. This is to destroy the principles of moral philosophy.

(*De unitate intellectus caput 3*, lines 336–63)

A debate that may seem not just technical but also distant from contemporary concerns turns out to be of profound significance for them, because what Aquinas is defending is the notion of the individual human being as a person. In doing so, he bridges the ancient and modern understandings of that term. Boethius had given the Middle Ages its standard definition of what a person is, ‘the individual

substance of a rational nature', *persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia* (*Contra Eutichen et Nestorium*, caput 4). Aquinas always uses this definition even where he adds to what Boethius says. 'Person', Aquinas says elsewhere, 'signifies that which is most perfect in all of nature, namely substance in a rational nature', *persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet substantia in natura rationali* (*Summa theologiae* I 29, 3).

Timothy Suttor emphasizes the importance of theological debate in the early Church for the development of Christian thinking about persons. Originally a term refined in debates about Christ and the Trinity, *persona* is then used for thinking about the individual human being. The Christological debates required the construction of a theological anthropology, Suttor says, and while Aristotle was a useful catalyst, 'St Thomas's authentic genealogy as a psychologist is found in the first six Councils' (Suttor, 1970: xv). At the same time, as we have seen, Aquinas was well able to distinguish forms of argumentation that were indebted to faith from those that were based on the principles of philosophy.

In defending the integrity of the human individual against the Averroists, Aquinas may be regarded as having laid some foundations for what many regard as a modern idea, that the human person is an individual, rational being with inherent dignity, responsibilities, and rights. For our purposes here we can say that the human person is capable of knowledge and understanding and has a natural tendency towards the goods inherent in education.

Chapter 32

Praise of the Body

In facing the Platonist front, Aquinas worked hard to defend the essential unity of the human being as a composite of body and soul, and was prepared to accept certain difficulties about the disembodied soul for the sake of defending that unity. In facing the Averroist front, however, and defending the integrity of the individual human being as a creature capable of intellectual activities proper to himself and yet free of the body, it may seem that he is in danger of compounding his difficulties. He notes the criticisms the Averroists make of his position: that it is materialistic, that it fails to free knowledge of sense experience, that human knowledge could never be truly universal where the intellect remains dependent on sense experience in the way Aquinas believes it does, and that the intellect would not therefore be able to know itself. He believes he can respond to these criticisms, but the important point for now is that he is prepared to risk them because he believes something crucial is at stake: a proper appreciation of the human body.

In a remarkable article, Bernardo Carlos Bazan argues that the human body had never been as highly valued by any thinker as it was by Aquinas. He identifies in Aquinas's teachings a number of *encomia*, eulogies or praises, of the human body and spells out their implications (Bazan, 1991).

The *first encomium* of human body is that the body becomes a co-principle without which the soul does not reach its own reality of substantial form. Although it is through the soul rather than the composite that the human being exists, the body is an integral and essential part of a human person (Bazan, 1991: 102–3).

The *second encomium* of human body is that it has more dignity than any other body, not because it is inhabited by a rational soul, as Plato thought, nor because it is the instrument of such a soul, as Augustine

put it, but 'because its corporeity is the rational soul itself' (art. cit.: 105). Our body is such as the soul has organized it: 'matter exists for the sake of the soul' (art. cit.: 107).

The *third encomium* is that Aquinas's theory of intellectual knowledge by abstraction conditions and limits very seriously the operational capacity of the separated soul. By leaving the body, the soul loses ontologically and enters a stage that is outside the condition of its nature, *praeter naturam* (art. cit.: 108–9). The separated soul cannot be called a 'person' and so the immortality of the soul alone does not imply personal immortality (art. cit.: 110). Bazan says that 'the paradoxes in Thomas's anthropology', of an immortal subsistent soul that is essentially and operationally incomplete, actually open the space for a theological thesis: the resurrection of bodies. Resurrection is not a special complementary bonus for a soul that is already complete and independent, but a grace necessary to re-establish the very nature of the human being (art. cit.: 111).

Clearly, for Aquinas, the body is necessary to attain the imperfect happiness of this life. What about the perfect happiness of the next life? What could we still want once we have reached God and 'enjoy of his essence' through a special grace that associates us with the life of God himself? (art. cit.: 112–13). We cannot want anything where we are enjoying God. But is it really 'we' who are enjoying God when the separated soul enjoys God? For Aquinas, the body is required for the perfect existence of beatitude, subjectively considered. The separated soul does not possess the supreme good in all the ways possible for a complete human being because the separated soul is not a complete human being (art. cit.: 114). Here is the *highest encomium* of human body: there is no complete beatitude before we have regained our status as human persons, as embodied spirits (art. cit.: 115).

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 15, Aquinas says that 'the soul is not the person', *anima non est ego*:

The human being naturally desires his well-being, but the soul, since it is part of the human body [sic], is not the whole human being and I am not my soul, *homo naturaliter desiderat salutem sui ipsius, anima autem, cum sit pars corporis hominis, non est totus homo, et anima mea non est ego*.

(*Super I ad Corinthios XV lectio 2 §924*)

Beatitude cannot be fully achieved without body because there can be no perfect happiness where there is a lack of natural perfection. It is not, says Bazan, that philosophy can prove the necessity of the resurrection of bodies but:

the dogma of faith is rendered more intelligible by philosophy, because it is philosophy that has shown that the state of separation is unquestionably an ontological deprivation for the soul.

(Bazan, 1991: 115).⁴

Recovering our embodied reality we recover all the dimensions attached to it – the society of our friends, for example, which contributes to the ‘well-being of beatitude’ (art. cit.: 116). Never before had the body been recognized as having so high a value, a value capable of determining the fulfillment of beatitude.

As well as showing the high place given to the body by Aquinas, Bazan’s account also illustrates how theological and philosophical issues are considered together, one informing and illuminating the other, while the distinct concerns and methodologies of each are respected. If, as Bazan says, the dogma of faith in the resurrection is not proved by philosophy but rendered more intelligible by it, things seem to work in the other direction as regards Aquinas’s evaluation of the human being as a ‘moral agent’. We conclude this discussion of Aquinas’s anthropology by looking at his consideration of the human being as the ‘image of God’. Where philosophy rendered belief in the resurrection more intelligible, theology says who the human person is in a way that confirms and deepens what moral philosophy wants to say about the same subject.

Chapter 33

The Image of God

For Aquinas, the dignity, rights, and responsibilities of the human person follow straightforwardly from his belief that the human being is created ‘in the image and likeness of God’ (Genesis 1:26–28). Human beings, like all creatures, are the work of God’s hands (*Summa theologiae* I 75), but within creation they are accorded a special dignity. This idea of a unique, even absolute, dignity to be accorded the individual human being has survived up to now in moral and political philosophy, even at times and in places where its theological origins have been forgotten or even rejected. Only in recent times, in the work of Peter Singer for example, has appeal to ‘the sanctity of life’ and ‘human dignity’ as absolute criteria in moral debate, been challenged. Some believe that Aquinas, for his original work in defense of the unity and integrity of the individual human animal, and the fact that he cannot be affected by Cartesian dualism or Kantian rationalism, has something to contribute to contemporary debates in moral philosophy. He certainly believed that the human being has a unique dignity among creatures. He also appreciated very clearly what we would call the ecology of the human animal, our belonging to a natural world in relation to which we have responsibilities.

Aquinas shares the cosmological vision of nature’s interdependence and ‘love’ towards its source that is found in all the medieval thinkers from Boethius to Dante. By nature, all creatures tend towards their source, Aquinas says, a tendency that in the case of the human being means an ever-greater resemblance to God (*Summa theologiae* I 93). God knows, loves, and creates, and the human being, created in God’s image, knows, loves, and initiates things. This is how Aquinas introduces the moral part of the *Summa*:

Since, as John Damascene puts it, to say that the human being is made in the image of God is to signify that the human being has intelligence, free judgement, and agency, *intellectuale et arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum*, having spoken about God as exemplar, and of what proceeds from the divine power according to God's will, it remains that we should treat of the image, the human being, insofar as she is the source of her own activities as one having free judgement and the power to act, *suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem*.

(*Summa theologiae* I.II, prologue)

It is not always noticed that this text invites us to think of the human being as a 'little creator', creative at his own level in initiating and freely causing things that need not have been. The human being not only discovers meaning, he creates meaning. The whole realm of moral choice, involving human relationships, the establishment and maintenance of human communities, the worlds of art, literature, music, education, and politics, all that is attributable to human agency, responsibility, and creativity – all this that comes about through human responsibility and inventiveness shows what it means to be the image of God who is Creator in a unique sense.

In speaking about creation, Aquinas says that the variety of creatures is attributable to God's wisdom, ensuring that the infinite glory and goodness of God are participated in and represented by many and varied things. Aquinas believes there must also be creatures that participate in and represent this aspect of God's goodness, namely that God is One who shares goodness with creatures. So there must be creatures who, at their own level and in imitation of God, are not only good but are good precisely as God is good, namely as initiators and sharers of goodness. A light that not only shines but also illuminates is more like the sun than is a light that simply shines, says Aquinas (*Summa contra gentiles* II.45: §1222). The creatures that imitate God in this way share goodness with other beings in the way that God does, not automatically, as the sun must shine, but freely, consciously, and responsibly. There are creatures, then, for whom God cares by making them to be carers (*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 5, 8 in c). God communicates his goodness to creatures in such a way

that creatures can transfer to others what they receive (*Summa contra gentiles* III 69).

This means that the image of God in humanity is not static but dynamic, seen in distinctively human action, which is conscious and free. That the human being is the image of God is related also to the notions of vocation and destiny. As the image of God, humans have a tendency, even a responsibility, to appropriate this reality more fully and to live towards the destiny it implies. A.J. Conyers has shown how these ideas are directly relevant to teaching and to current debates about higher education (Conyers, 2003).

4.C: On Virtue

Chapter 34

Virtue Theory

The beginning of a revival of interest in virtue theory among philosophers is usually now dated to 1958 when G.E.M. Anscombe published her essay 'Modern moral philosophy'.⁵ Arguing that, without faith in a divine legislator, the notion of moral obligation is meaningless, and tired of the empty formalities of analytical moral philosophy, she pointed back to Aristotle and in particular to his work on virtue, as the best, and perhaps the only, way forward. Her paper marked a turning point in the history of Anglophone moral philosophy, and the ideas proposed in it were taken up in the 1960s, in the work of Philippa Foot, for example.⁶ Among theologians, Stanley Hauerwas emerged in the 1970s as a champion of virtue theory in moral theology.⁷ The publication of Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981) finally saw moral philosophy, and, in its wake, moral theology, taking fully seriously again the idea that virtue theory was the best starting point for a satisfactory account of the moral life.

For MacIntyre, the way back is the way forward. In *After Virtue*, he says that the only alternative to Nietzsche is Aristotle. By the time of his Gifford Lectures in 1988, published as *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990), it was Aquinas who had moved to center stage. Already acknowledged by him as a significant figure in the history of virtue ethics,⁸ Aquinas came decisively to the fore for MacIntyre because it was he who seemed able to show a way beyond the relativism of traditions, an issue left over from *After Virtue* that was considered, but not resolved, in the middle work of the trilogy, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988). We can say that in his Gifford Lectures, MacIntyre had become an Aristotelian Thomist, believing that Aquinas has shown, in the way he handles what he inherits from Aristotle and Augustine, how traditions are to be received, evaluated, and renewed.

Rosalind Hursthouse lists the philosophers who have 'put virtue ethics on the map' as 'Anscombe, Foot, Murdoch, Williams, MacIntyre, McDowell, Nussbaum and Slote'. Their work has not only been to propose and discuss a virtue theory of ethics, but to challenge Kantian and utilitarian moral philosophers, in their turn and from their point of view, to give an account of virtue (Hursthouse, 1999: 3; O'Connor, 2006).

Virtue theory presupposes a developmental view of the human person. It is premised on the fact that in the human being there are many kinds of potential awaiting actualization. The human being does not come complete in his or her moral character. It is through the choices and commitments in which this potential is realized that the moral character of the human person is given shape. Moral development is always within communities and traditions whose narratives teach the virtues and hold up those characters that are to be admired, while also warning about behavior and choices that are considered bad. We shall look first at what Aquinas has to say about the notion of disposition and then consider his account of the virtues using the work of some contemporary virtue theorists who are more or less indebted to him. The relevance of this to our concern is that teaching and learning are seen not just as one thing that human beings get up to in the course of a human life: living humanly at all is a matter of learning and teaching, the practice and exercise of a range of learned dispositions.

Chapter 35

Dispositions

The questions in which Aquinas considers the nature of dispositions, *habitus*, provide the philosophical underpinning for his account of virtue. Anscombe introduced her 1958 essay by proposing that the doing of moral philosophy be laid aside ‘at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology’ (Anscombe, 1981: 26). One of the strengths of Aquinas’s approach is that he too recognizes this need and tries to develop such a philosophy. An important element of it is put in place in the questions about dispositions that introduce his treatment of the virtues. In these questions, *Summa theologiae* I.II 49–54, he is engaged in fresh work, developing his thought about a matter that he does not consider elsewhere in his writings. Although the *Summa theologiae* as a whole is original and creative in ways discussed earlier, most of its content is also considered in at least one other place in his writings. But because Simplicius’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories* had just come to hand, Aquinas takes the opportunity to use it in developing his understanding of dispositions (Boland, 2001).

He begins with a definition: a disposition is a quality by which a nature or a capacity is in a good or a bad state either absolutely or relatively. The Latin term *habitus* is from the verb ‘to have’ and refers to self-possession, *se habere*, as a way of being on the part of a nature or capacity (*Summa theologiae* I.II 49, 1). A good disposition means self-possession, *nos habemus*, literally ‘we possess ourselves’, in a way that is appropriate to the nature of something and a bad disposition means self-possession in a way that is not appropriate to the nature of something (I.II 49, 2).

All dispositions are ordered to action, Aquinas argues, whether they are dispositions of a nature or of a capacity. The meaning of a capacity or power is to be a principle of action. So the disposition of any capacity – a strengthening of that capacity which means it is

in possession of itself in some new way – will be ordered primarily to action. A nature is the goal or purpose of the generation of a thing. He follows Aristotle closely here, saying that the purpose of a thing's generation is that it attain its *telos* – its maturity, fulfillment, or flourishing – and then be occupied with further goals and purposes to which it attains by activity. This means the disposition of a nature is also ordered to action (I.II 49, 3).

Dispositions are necessary if three conditions are met. Firstly, when the nature or capacity is other than that to which it is disposed. In other words there is a potentiality/actuality gap to be bridged. Secondly, there is more than one way of bridging this gap. What is in potency can be determined in a variety of ways and to different things. Thirdly, many factors combine to dispose the subject to one of the things to which it is in potency rather than to another. Aquinas concludes:

Because, therefore, there are many beings whose natures and actions cannot be brought to completion without the presence of many elements that can be combined in various proportions, it follows that it is necessary that there should be such things as dispositions.

(I.II 49, 4)

A little later, in I.II 55 1, he says that dispositions belong to the rational powers of the human being, which are not determined to one thing but hold themselves indeterminately disposed towards many things, *se habent indeterminate ad multa*. It is by means of dispositions that such powers, poised before a variety of determinations, are actually determined to one thing rather than another. In I.II 50, 4 ad 1, he says that in order to be the subject of a disposition, a capacity or nature must be potentially many things, *in potentia ad multa*. A disposition, *habitus*, is in the middle, *medius*, between pure potency and perfect act (I.II 50, 4 ad 2). While our desire is concerned with, or possesses itself in relation to, many and various things, *se habent ad multa et diversa*, human life is not possible unless our desire fixes itself on actual goals and purposes. Hence the need, in our will, and in other desiring powers, for certain guiding qualities, *qualitates inclinantes*, or

dispositions (I.II 50, 5 ad 1). So, who we become is partly shaped by the decisions we make about which talents, skills, and interests to develop.

It is above all in the human being's rational powers that dispositions will be found. The body's activities are either natural, and therefore do not involve dispositions because they are determined to just one object, or they are activities of the body moved by the soul, and so are primarily the soul's activities and only secondarily the body's. Bodily states like health or beauty are termed habitual states, *habituales dispositiones*, but because they change easily they do not meet the full definition of a disposition, *habitus* (I.II 50, 1). All the activities of human beings originate in the powers or capacities of the soul, which is, Aquinas says, ordered to many things. The soul is a principle of operations according to its powers, and so dispositions will be found in human beings according to these powers of the soul, *habitus sunt in anima secundum suas potentias* (I.II 50, 2).

We have argued above that one of Aquinas's most distinctive contributions is his account of the unity of body and soul in the human being. Some of the implications of that doctrine are clear in what he says about dispositions. So his next step is to consider the different powers of the soul, following Aristotle's identification and treatment of them in *De anima* and his own earlier considerations in *Summa theologiae* I 77–78.

The sensitive powers of the human being may operate by natural instinct, in which case they are ordered to one thing and there is no room for dispositions. Or they may operate under the command of reason, being applied to diverse things and in this way capable of having, or being strengthened by, dispositions (*Summa theologiae* I.II 50, 3). When a power, even a sense power, is ordered to a series of objects which it could never have perfectly actual in itself – such as the power of vision to see all colors – then dispositions are needed. But it is only when under the command of rational powers that beings can be said, properly speaking, to have dispositions. Aquinas agreed that trained animals show habitual modes of behavior, but believed that, strictly speaking, these are not dispositions because the will of the animal is not involved (50, 3 ad 2). The reference to 'will' is crucial because dispositions belong more to the appetitive than to the

apprehending powers. This means they belong more to our response to the world and our seeking of things within the world than they do to our reception of the world and our knowledge and understanding of it. The more under rational control powers can be, the more they can support dispositions – which is another way of saying that what comes out of us is more ours than what we take in (50, 3 ad 3; see Mark 7:14–23).

Although Aquinas has just made the point that dispositions belong more to the appetitive than to the apprehending powers of the soul, he nevertheless believes that there are dispositions of the intellect. Aristotle speaks of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding as intellectual virtues. Consistent with his view that human nature means the composite of body and soul, and that therefore the body is always involved even in our intellectual knowledge (*Summa theologiae* I 84, 7),⁹ nevertheless the dispositions involved in knowing and understanding belong principally in the intellect (I.II 50, 4). The will also, as a rational power, can be variously ordered in its activity and so it too requires a disposition for operating well. In fact, disposition has a special relationship to the will since another definition of a disposition is that it is something one can use as one wishes, *quo quis utitur cum voluerit* (I.II 50, 5).

Chapter 36

Shaping Character, Strengthening Dispositions

In *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 20, 2, Aquinas speaks about the way in which dispositions shape character. They are ways in which we have or determine ourselves, he says. Where a capacity receives in a way that is purely passive, *per modum passionis*, what is received is not immanent to the receiver nor does it become a quality of the receiver. This is how sense powers receive: if the eye looks at a red wall, it sees, receives, red. But where a capacity receives dispositively, *per modum habitus*, then what is received is, as it were, connatural with the receiver, *illud receptum efficitur quasi connaturale recipienti*. It becomes a way in which the receiver is disposed towards the world because the receiver has entered into a new kind of self-possession. In this case the disposition is not easily lost and the capacity operates promptly, easily, and with delight, since the effects proceeding from dispositions are second nature to it. In this way the intellectual powers are added to, and the rational creature becomes ‘mistress of her own activity’, *domina sui actus*, capable of a promptness in acting because she can operate when and as she wishes.

So too dispositions are needed when the activity required of a capacity is beyond its natural condition, when a new potentiality is given to a capacity. This becomes important where Aquinas speaks about grace and the supernatural end for which he believes God has destined the human being. For human nature to be joined to God in friendship, for example, means that our capacity for love must be strengthened by a new disposition or *habitus*, that of charity. The call to share a higher nature, of which 2 Peter 1:4 speaks, requires a disposition in the essence of the soul, and this, Aquinas says, is grace, which elevates human nature and makes it capable of disposing itself

towards its new goal or destiny (*Summa theologiae* I.II 50, 2). So, his account of dispositions, which is in the first place a contribution to the philosophy of psychology, not only reveals the sense in which he understands the human being to be self-determining, but also prepares for his treatment of theological virtue and of grace. Some have argued that his need to speak about theological virtue and grace guides his thinking about dispositions from the beginning (Boland, 2001: 475–76).

Aquinas turns next to the question of how dispositions are generated, and here the link with teaching and learning is even clearer. Dispositions to activity are not innate, he says. Some dispositions seem to be incipiently natural, such as our capacity to understand first principles of speculative reasoning, for example ‘a whole is greater than its parts’, but the actuation of such quasi-innate dispositions requires stimulation from without. Aquinas believed that some individuals are more naturally gifted towards certain dispositions and some individuals are temperamentally more disposed to some virtues. The first seeds of common morality seem to be innate also, although this is not disposition in the strict sense (*Summa theologiae* I.II 51, 1).

The first argument in I.II 51, 1 depends, Aquinas says, on the term ‘nature’ being understood over against reason and will. He continues:

But reason and will pertain to the nature of the human being so that for a disposition to come about partly from nature, *a natura*, and partly as added to nature, *ab exteriori principio*, may still be natural for the human being.

At other times and in other places it might be assumed that nature and reason are opposed. Aquinas does not belong to such a time or to such a place and it is important for our understanding of him that this be remembered. In order to say what a virtue is as a particular kind of disposition, he needs to call on both nature and reason (see below on *Summa theologiae* I.II 54, 4).

If it is true that dispositions are ordered to action (*Summa theologiae* I.II 49, 3), it is also true that dispositions are brought about by actions. Actions done *to me* will not bring about a disposition properly so

called, only actions done *by me*. As noted already, the trained animal may manifest habitual behavior, but it is not exercising a disposition because its will is not involved in the acquisition of such behavior. (That a pet might refuse to be trained is a question Thomas seems not to have considered!)

When the rational agent acquires a disposition, we are talking about self-determination, even a kind of self-creation. The human being is both receptive and initiating in relation to the world. His desiring powers are set in motion by his apprehension of a desirable object, and his work of reasoning goes ahead under the influence of principles already known. There is some passivity in this, just as there is some innate capacity being activated. But the human being is also an agent, not only moved but a mover: he is an agent that 'in being moved, moves'. Such an agent can perform actions that bring about dispositions. Everything that is moved by another is being disposed by the act of the agent. When it is the agent himself that moves himself, then he is disposing himself. From repeated actions a certain quality is generated in this passive and moved power, and this is a disposition, *habitus*. So moral virtues are caused in the desiring powers under the moving power of reason, and intellectual virtues are caused in the intellect insofar as it is moved by already established propositions (I.II 51, 2).

Although bodily states can sometimes be brought about by one powerful action, as when a strong medicine immediately restores health, dispositions are not usually generated by one action alone. As Aquinas puts it, 'one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one fine day'. Fire needs time to consume what it is burning, and reason needs many opportunities to bring desire under its control. Sometimes the mind will understand something straight away, but sometimes the probability of a point of view requires a series of arguments. Lower knowing powers, for example memory, require repeated actions. Although there might be something to be said for the argument that one intense action may be equivalent to a series of repeated actions (I.II 51, 3 argument 2), experience seems to confirm that the acquisition of dispositions, whether intellectual or moral, normally requires practice. Hence the need for discipline and repetition in education.

At the level of grace, God may infuse dispositions. If the destiny of the human being is beyond her ability to appropriate, the dispositions required to regulate behavior appropriate to such a destiny are also beyond human ability. God must infuse such dispositions and this is the case for all the gratuitous virtues (I.II 51, 4). To the extent that such virtues are infused – in us without us, as Aquinas says in *Summa theologiae* I.II 62 of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity – Aristotle's terminology is being adapted for capacities and activities beyond anything he considered. At the same time, both Aristotle and Plotinus spoke of higher levels or intensifications of virtue in ways that might be understood as anticipating what Christian thinkers needed to say about theological virtue and gifts of the Spirit (I.II 61, 5; see Boland, 1998).

Simplicius helps Aquinas also in thinking about the question of how dispositions grow and diminish (*Summa theologiae* I.II 52–53). The prayer of the apostles, 'Lord, increase our faith' (Luke 17:5), seems to imply that dispositions can grow. People talk about having more patience, greater courage, and deeper understanding. While expansion, addition, and so on, are terms which belong properly to physical quantity, Aquinas says they can be used in a transferred sense of intelligible, spiritual things; 'great' meaning 'perfect', 'greatness' meaning 'goodness', and 'greater' meaning 'better' (I.II 52, 1). Elsewhere he comments that the generation of a disposition is not 'part after part' but because a subject does not immediately attain a firm and not easily moved state. Like other qualities, the move is from less to more perfect (I.II 54, 4 ad 1). Because it is not a physical thing, the growth of a disposition is not by addition but by the subject participating more or less perfectly in the form. So, it is more correct to speak of something becoming greater, *maius*, than of it becoming more, *magis*.

Dispositions can be greater or less in themselves – we can speak of more or less health, and of more or less knowledge – or they can be greater or less in the way in which a particular subject participates in them – knowledge or health can be more in one person than in another according to diverse aptitudes for the disposition. A disposition such as knowledge can grow in 'extension' – a person comes to know more things – or in 'intension' – a person comes to understand

more clearly or more quickly. Bodily states like health or beauty do not involve additions but a more perfect balance of simple qualities augmented in intensity according to the participation of the subject (I.II 52, 2).

The use of dispositions is within a human being's control and so she can act either against a disposition or in a way not consistent with its intensity in her. Not every act of courage necessarily augments the virtue of courage in us, only one that is proportionate to the intensity with which we already have the disposition or is beyond that intensity. Nevertheless, the sheer repetition of acts of courage causes that virtue to grow: multiply its acts and the disposition grows, *multiplicatis actibus, crescit habitus*. An act of courage less intense than the disposition itself disposes to its diminution (I.II 52, 3).

Aquinas uses the same criteria to explain how a disposition declines or diminishes. A state like health can be destroyed by the appearance of illness (its opposite) or by a subject ceasing to be as fit as before. A disposition like knowledge of first principles is in no way corruptible, whereas our gained knowledge can be corrupted by a false starting point or by false reasoning along the way. As regards moral virtues and vices, where desire is guided by reason, a judgment against the direction of a disposition is possible through ignorance, passion, or choice. If dispositions can be corrupted in these ways, then it makes sense to talk of them declining or diminishing. Justice remains justice, of course, even when a particular person becomes less just than she was before (I.II 53, 1–2).

A disposition will also diminish through neglect. If a person's dispositions are not growing or being maintained by practice, then they will become less in that person, and if neglected over a sufficiently long period of time, a particular skill or disposition will disappear altogether (I.II 53, 3). Again, educational experience confirms this: where now is the mathematics one understood and could apply at school? Is it a disposition that could be reactivated if necessary?

Aquinas concludes his account of dispositions by considering the bases on which they are to be distinguished. A single capacity can be the subject of many dispositions, because capacities can be specified to different objects and are thus capable of different acts and perfections (*Summa theologiae* I.II 54, 1). So, a person may speak many

languages, or be able to play a number of string instruments, Aquinas thus anticipating contemporary educational interest in the 'transferable skill'. Dispositions are distinguished according to a number of criteria, he says, namely their active principles, the natures they constitute, and the objects with which they deal (I.II 54, 2). A disposition is multiple because it extends to many situations, and simple because it extends to these many situations insofar as they have some one thing in common (I.II 54, 4).

Whether they are good or bad is another basis on which dispositions are distinguished. This is where Aquinas begins to speak about virtues and vices, dispositions that have moral significance. G.E.M. Anscombe argues that the pressure placed on the term 'moral' in modern moral philosophy has rendered it practically meaningless. Aquinas, as we would expect, introduces the term in a less anxious way, and has many things to say about good and bad that do not require the adjective 'moral'. A good disposition, he says, is appropriate to the nature of its agent, while a bad disposition is inappropriate to the nature of its agent. Virtues are dispositions appropriate to human nature because they are in accordance with reason. Vices are dispositions discordant with human nature because they are against reason, *contra rationem*. Note once again that it is necessary to appeal to both nature and reason in identifying human dispositions as good or bad. Aquinas says that what is in question is the good appropriate to a determinate nature, in this case human nature (I.II 54, 4). He adds – immediately thinking of the level of grace – that human virtue disposes to behavior appropriate to a lower nature, whereas what Aristotle, Plotinus, and others called divine or heroic virtues dispose to behavior appropriate to a higher nature (I.II 54, 4).

4.D: On Virtues

Chapter 37

Intellectual and Moral Virtues

We have given some space to expounding what Aquinas says about the notion of disposition, *habitus*, because it is the foundation for what he says about virtues, which are good human dispositions, and because it makes clear the educational and pedagogical concerns inherent in his account of virtue. In *Summa theologiae* I.II, questions 55–67, he introduces the virtues. Having considered other fundamental concepts in moral theology and philosophy, such as gifts, beatitudes, fruits (of the Spirit), sin, law, and grace, *Summa theologiae* II.II then consists for the most part in a detailed treatment of individual virtues.¹⁰

The virtues, good operational dispositions (I.II 55), are located or ‘seated’ in different powers or capacities of the soul, specifically in the rational powers of intellect and will (I.II 56, 3; 56, 6) and in the emotional powers, both desiring and assertive (I.II 56, 4).¹¹ There are a number of distinctions and classifications of the virtues inherited from pagan antiquity, from the Bible, and from the Fathers of the Church, that Aquinas accepts and makes the basis for his consideration of human activities, in particular the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance (I.II 61) and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (I.II 62).

Of significance for our concern is the distinction between intellectual and moral virtues. Medieval authors who did not have the *Nicomachean Ethics* could not consider this question, but Aquinas follows Aristotle in speaking of three speculative intellectual dispositions, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (*sapientia*, *scientia*, *intellectus*: I.II 57, 2), as well as two practical intellectual dispositions, art and prudence (*ars*, *prudentia*). For Aristotle, art is a virtue ‘from a particular point of view’ and prudence depends on, but also presides over, the moral virtues (I.II 57 3–4). In keeping with Aristotle, Aquinas states that prudence is the lynchpin in the structure of virtue

and is an intellectual rather than a moral virtue (I.II 57 5–6; II.II 47–56).

The tendency in modern times, where the matter has been considered, is to understand virtue in an exclusively moral sense. Not that the intellectual virtues do not concern morality in Aquinas's sense: it is precisely because they *do* that his approach is seen by some to be of greater interest 'after modernity'. Let us consider a number of things that underline the importance of this recognition of intellectual virtue.

Anscombe pointed out in her essay that Aristotle's teaching about the intellectual virtues means that a person might fail in them and be blameworthy in what modern philosophy (but not Aristotle himself) would call a 'moral' sense. What would it mean to say that a person was responsible for certain intellectual mistakes he might make? She uses the question to highlight not just how different the two approaches are, but the difficulties of using the term 'moral' at all in modern philosophy (Anscombe, 1981: 26).

Richard Feynman, the renowned American physicist, in an essay about the development of the atomic bomb, tells about the evening after the first test bomb had been exploded. The scientists involved were, almost to a man, celebrating:

After the thing went off, there was tremendous excitement at Los Alamos. Everybody had parties, we all ran around. I sat on the end of a jeep and beat drums and so on. But one man, I remember, Bob Wilson, was just sitting there moping. I said, 'What are you moping about?' He said, 'It's a terrible thing that we made.' I said, 'But you started it. You got us into it.' You see, what happened to me – what happened to the rest of us – is we *started* for a good reason, then you're working very hard to accomplish something and it's a pleasure, it's excitement. And you stop thinking, you know; you just *stop*. Bob Wilson was the only one who was still thinking about it at that moment.

(Feynman, 1992: 135–36)

Feynman is using the term 'thinking' in a particular way. In one sense, everybody was still thinking about the project because it was the

reason for the parties. The sense in which Wilson was the only one still thinking is the sense of the virtue of prudence: he was still thinking about it in relation to the good of a human life overall, and even to the good of all human life overall. Feynman and his colleagues had given themselves for months to the intellectual work of understanding what needed to be done to achieve the nuclear breakthrough. Much thinking was involved in that, and Wilson had made his contribution at that level too. But he was the only one still thinking in this other sense, the kind of thinking about ends that is necessary for a moral evaluation of human actions. The scientists had shown they could manage the means. Wilson was thinking about ends.

A contemporary trend in philosophy, called 'virtue epistemology', applies to the processes of knowing, ideas that have been recovered for moral philosophy by the renewed interest in virtue. Linda Zagzebski, for example, says it is knowing agents rather than acts of knowledge that need to be thought about; precisely the same shift that virtue theory brings about, focusing on the moral agent before the moral act (Zagzebski, 1996). Anna Williams has argued that the intellectual virtues provide an interpretative key for the whole of the *Summa theologiae* (Williams, 2004). Matthew Morgan argues that Aquinas makes more of the distinction between 'art' and 'prudence' than Aristotle himself did and that this has important implications for Aquinas's accounts of moral development and of teaching (Morgan, 2003). If education is about the ends of prudence rather than the ends of art, then it is not a technical craft concerned with production, but a matter of human development; not the manipulation of some external world but a changing of the agent (Morgan, 2003). When we examined Aquinas's texts on teaching, we saw that this is exactly how he understood it, as a change in a learner brought about through natural capacities assisted by the one teaching.

More generally, there is renewed interest in the idea that philosophy is about the living of the good human life, not only that life should be reflective if it is to be worth living, but that the study of philosophy itself is a practice aimed at the attainment of such a good human life. Pierre Hadot has worked on this theme in ancient philosophy and Jacques Leclercq has done it for medieval monastic culture (Hadot, 1995; Leclercq, 1978). Alasdair MacIntyre has now raised the question

in relation to Edith Stein ('the lives of philosophers are of philosophical interest'), and John Cottingham has moved in this direction from within the analytical tradition (MacIntyre, 2006; Cottingham, 2005). If such matters are again of interest to philosophers, *a fortiori* they will be central for theological accounts of human flourishing. It is clear that Aquinas is already working in this way, locating human fulfillment in the exercise not of what he calls the moral virtues – which are, of course, presupposed – but in the exercise of the intellectual virtues.

We shall return to this question presently. For now, let us complete our survey of Aquinas's questions on the virtues in *Summa theologiae* I.II. He bases the distinction between intellectual and moral virtues on the distinction between the true and the good. The life of the intellect is the consideration of what is true, *verum*, and the dispositions of the intellect perfect it for this consideration. But the true is the good, *bonum*, of the intellect, and this is why these dispositions are called 'virtues', because virtues are concerned with some good. A short discourse on the difference between the Greek terms *ηθος* (natural inclination) and *εθος* (custom), and the fact that this difference does not come across in the Latin terms *mos* and *ethos*, leads him to conclude that those virtues are properly called moral that are in the appetitive power, *in vi appetitiva*, and so indicate natural or quasi-natural inclinations to action of various kinds (I.II 58, 1).

If, as Socrates believed, knowledge and virtue are identical, then there would be no place for the distinction between intellectual and moral virtues. To know what is true would be enough to determine behavior and the only cause of sin would be ignorance. The problem, though, is that the appetitive part of the human being does not follow reason absolutely and without question. Reason has a political rather than a despotic power over appetite, and appetite can on occasion overrule reason. On this, Aquinas follows Aristotle closely. So, for a human being to act well it is not enough that her reason be well disposed through intellectual virtue; her appetitive powers must also be well disposed through moral virtue. Just as the appetite is a principle of human action through sharing in the power of reason, so moral dispositions have the character of virtues through being conformed to reason (I.II 58, 2).

This discussion exhausts the kind of virtues there are: all the principles of human action are accounted for by intellectual and moral dispositions, Aquinas says (I.II 58, 3). The relationships between them are not straightforward, however. There can be moral virtue, he believed, without wisdom, knowledge, or art, but not without prudence or understanding (I.II 58, 4). Likewise, there can be intellectual virtues without moral virtue, with the exception of prudence, which thus emerges as a key, integrating disposition for all of human behavior, the lynchpin as we have called it (I.II 58, 5). With this last comment, Aquinas recognizes the two kinds of thinking indicated by Richard Feynman: a thinking that is technically effective and a thinking that is humanly responsible. If the concern of education is the flourishing of the human creature, it cannot be about only the first kind of thinking; it must concern itself also with the second.

Chapter 38

Cardinal Virtues: Pieper and Geach

From one point of view, each of the cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance – describes the whole of virtue; but from another, each is a specific virtue seated in a different power of the soul and concerned with a specific aspect of human experience. Aquinas's teaching about these virtues has been well presented in modern times by Joseph Pieper (1904–1997) and Peter Geach (1916–).

Pieper spends little time on what he calls the fourfold structure of virtue, simply asserting that this doctrine, 'one of the great discoveries in the history of man's self-understanding', already known and accepted at the time of Socrates, has continued to be 'part and parcel of the European mind' (Pieper, 1966: xi). He warns against expecting new insights on such a subject and is content simply to re-present the thought of Plato, Aristotle, and especially Aquinas, while bringing their ideas into conversation with modern moral philosophy, in particular with Kant.

Geach considers faith, hope, and charity, as well as the cardinal virtues, since these are, he says, the seven virtues to which tradition gives pre-eminence (Geach, 1977: 1). He argues that there ought to be sufficient consensus between people for cooperation on major social tasks even though they may not agree about values or about 'what men are for'. On the basis of this consensus, we can see the need of the four cardinal virtues for any great and worthy end: prudence or practical wisdom for any large-scale planning, justice to secure cooperation and mutual trust, temperance in order not to be deflected from our long-term goals by short-term satisfactions, courage in order to persevere in the face of setbacks, weariness, difficulties, and dangers (Geach, 1977: 16, 45).

Prudence is the ability to make right decisions and to perform swiftly a considered act, Pieper says. All the other virtues are founded on it and it is the 'intelligent prow' of human nature, steering a person through the complexity of situations, keeping them on course towards the basic, unchanging goals of human action. Only the human being in a particular situation can make a concrete ethical choice, and no matter how much moral theology goes into details, such wisdom alone does not make a person prudent (Pieper, 1966: 28). As the perfected ability to make decisions in accordance with reality, prudence is 'the quintessence of ethical maturity' (Pieper, 1966: 31).

While he also warns against expecting clear-cut answers to every situation, Geach nevertheless defends the doctrine that there are some moral precepts that are never to be broken (Geach, 1977: 88–89). Much teaching about 'moral decision making' tends to be consequentialist in its structure and presuppositions, but Geach rejects consequentialism, the idea that we ought to try to reckon the consequences of our actions as far ahead as we can, and on that basis choose what seems likely to turn out best. Doing the best possible thing is not a coherent guide for human action, Geach says, and the prudent person will apply a cut-off procedure after which he will cease to consider further descriptions of the action in terms of its effects. If we reach certain descriptions of a proposed action – that it is an act of blasphemy, for example, or involves killing the innocent – then we need consider no further (Geach, 1977: 106–7).

Right must precede *justice*, Pieper says. Rendering to someone what is their due presupposes that it is in fact their due, that they are entitled to it and have a right to it. But a concept of human nature is presupposed here and to deny that there is, absolutely speaking, no human nature is 'the formal justification for every exercise of totalitarian power' (Pieper, 1966: 49–50). An act of justice can be judged from outside by an impartial third party, whereas an act of temperance or fortitude cannot, since some knowledge of a person's disposition is required in these latter cases. (Pieper is using the term 'disposition' in a lighter sense than we have above.) The highest forms of justice are, in a sense, not strict justice at all: religion, piety, gratitude, liberality, affability, and kindness. But, 'since injustice is the prevailing condition in our world' (op. cit.: 112), it is particularly

important that the just person give to another what is *not* due to him. For Aquinas, Pieper recalls, mercy without justice is 'the mother of dissolution', but justice without mercy is cruel.

Pieper says that the virtue of courage or *fortitude* presupposes vulnerability, being in fact the willingness to die. It must also be prudent, in touch with reality, and just, serving an objectively good cause. It means accepting insecurity, taking risks, and surrendering confidently to the governance of higher powers, whether on the psychological, the moral, or what he calls the 'mystical', level of experience.

He describes *temperance* as a selfless preservation of the self (op. cit.: 147–52). In practicing this virtue, the human being is concerned with herself to an extent that is not true of any of the other virtues. Temperance decides a person's attitude towards creation and Pieper is more optimistic than Geach about sexuality (Pieper, 1966: 153–54, 183; Geach, 1977: 137–42, 145–49). Pieper believes there is a close link between chastity and prudence, having learned from Aquinas that unchastity splits the power of decision and makes a person unable to confront reality with the selfless detachment that genuine knowledge requires (Pieper, 1966: 161). At the same time, the healthy human being is the emotional human being, the virtues controlling emotion and directing its energy wisely rather than eliminating emotions as if they were Stoic diseases (op. cit.: 195–96).

Aquinas speaks of the Aristotelian 'mean' of virtue (*Summa theologiae* I.II 64), the idea that a virtue will normally be found between two opposing vices (courage is between cowardice and foolhardiness, for example). The mean of temperance is relative to the case, Geach says in discussing the use of food, alcohol, and cannabis: he judges the latter to be less dangerous than alcohol, though the consumption of any drug simply to blow one's mind is a form of temporary insanity (Geach, 1977: 134–35). On sexual desire, Geach argues that Christians cannot regard it as the Greeks did, as just another bodily appetite. At the same time, he calls for care in how people appeal to natural law in matters of sexual morality and is certain that to argue 'from the nature of the act itself' is logically unsound (op. cit.: 138). Nevertheless, he accepts traditional teaching about sexual morality and says that such teaching is the only reliable guide in an area in which human nature is so corrupted. He thus takes what many would

regard as a pessimistic, even 'Augustinian', view of human sexuality (op. cit.: 145–49).

In discussing *fortitude*, Geach argues that the thesis of the unity of the virtues, if we leave out of account the theological virtues, must be rejected as false. This is another traditional idea, defended by Aquinas in *Summa theologiae* I.II 65, that a person either has none or all of the cardinal virtues. One of the reasons for this is ambivalence in the traditions about them as to whether they are general aspects of all virtue or specific virtues in their own right: Aquinas says they are both, which is why he thinks one cannot have one without the others and if a person lacks one then he cannot, strictly speaking, have the others either. Geach regards this idea as 'odious and preposterous'. The flaw in the reasoning, he says, is human inconsistency, something Aquinas was aware of but did not apply to this point (Geach, 1977: 165). Geach thinks such human inconsistency is providential, laziness for example being a blessing considering all that human beings might get up to! When one brings in the theological virtues, however, these virtues are then connected via charity, which, he says is incompatible with any gross defect in the cardinal virtues (op. cit.: 169).

Chapter 39

Contemporary Receptions of Aquinas on Virtue: Hauerwas and MacIntyre

Two important figures in the recent reappraisal and development of Aquinas are the American theologian Stanley Hauerwas and the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. The point of entry for each was Aquinas's virtue theory, but their interest in his work has not been restricted to moral philosophy. Aquinas is an important presence in Hauerwas's 2001 Gifford lectures on natural theology (Hauerwas, 2002), and MacIntyre uses him in discussing issues such as truth and epistemology (MacIntyre, 1990).

Hauerwas's interest in Aquinas originated in his concern at the absence from contemporary Protestant theological ethics of a view of the human person that would account for character (Hauerwas, 1983: xix–xxv). An ethics shaped around the metaphor of command seemed to involve 'an individualistic and occasionalistic (sic) understanding of the self' that was quite inadequate (Hauerwas, 1975: 4). He turned to the Aristotelian and Thomistic accounts of virtue, as well as to contemporary philosophies of the self as agent, in an effort to overcome this occasionalism and to show how a person's beliefs, intentions, and actions bring about a moral history which, in giving continuity to the self, befits the human being's nature as a self-determining being. He believed that an approach to ethics based on quandaries fails to take account of the fact that a human being never comes cold to cases and situations. The kind of situations we confront, he says, and how we understand them are:

... a function of the kind of people we are. Thus 'training in virtue' often requires that we struggle with the moral situations which we have 'got ourselves into' in the hope that such a struggle will help

us develop a character sufficient to avoid, or understand differently, such situations in the future.

(Hauerwas, 1981: 114–15)

Hauerwas is criticizing the practice of casuistry, which continues to have a place in moral education, and rejecting the philosophical basis of much of the theology he encountered, informed by philosophies of Kantian inspiration which sought to discover one principle or norm of morality on the basis of which every moral situation could be determined. But such a universal abstract principle of rationality and morality does not suffice, he believes, to explain moral action. Furthermore, the moral self would become merely a product of discrete decisions since such views offered no explanation for the unity and continuity of the self through a history of moral actions. He believes it is necessary to speak of human nature, but that a mistake of much contemporary philosophy is to reduce human nature to rationality when it is in fact a rich and complex arrangement of powers and qualities.¹²

Neither a Kantian universal abstract principle, nor an Aristotelian or Thomist final end, can contain the self and its history in the way Hauerwas wants. What is needed, he believes, can be provided only by a narrative or story that ‘charts a way for us to live coherently amid the diversity and conflicts that circumscribe and shape our moral existence’ (Hauerwas, 1981: 144). Seeking a view that would be more true to life, since life means the growth and development of character and the continuity of the self in time and through varying situations, he developed a moral theology centered on the notion of virtue but rethought and developed in terms of vision, character, and narrative.

Under the influence of both Simone Weil, with the place she gives to *attention* in the moral life, and Iris Murdoch, with her understanding of the good, Hauerwas argued that freedom is more in *vision* than in will, and that ethics is more a matter of *coming to see* than it is of deciding (Hauerwas, 1974: 40–41, 167, note 2). He follows Murdoch in stating that what is needed in many human situations is not will but a reorientation of the vision to a more compelling object. Herbert McCabe interprets Aquinas in precisely this way, pointing out that his

term for what is often mistakenly translated as 'free will' is *liberum arbitrium*, free judgment, which has more to do with finding meaning in situations than it has with the exercise of will power (McCabe, 2002: 187–98).

To be a person of character means to have, and to exercise, the virtues. To have the virtues means to have and exercise them as a person of character does. Hauerwas is not the first to point out this circularity in virtue theory: Aristotle himself notes it when he speaks about prudence in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI. Which comes first, the character capable of virtue or the practice of virtue that forms character? The question clarifies for us that, as far as morality is concerned, we have been doing it long before we begin to reflect on what we are doing. So, as Aristotle says, how people have been educated makes all the difference. It is necessary, then, to talk about the communities and traditions within which people are living, for these also contribute to the formation of the self.

Hauerwas admits – and this is one of the main philosophical criticisms of virtue ethics – that the emphasis on virtue rather than duty or obligation has the effect of making decisions secondary:

... from the perspective of virtue ... decisions are morally secondary. Of course the virtuous person makes decisions but they are viewed as dependent on a more profound moral reality. Thus persons of character or virtue may, from the perspective of others, make what appear to have been momentous and even heroic decisions, but feel that in their own lives they 'had no choice' if they were to continue to be faithful to their characters.

(1981: 114)

For Hauerwas, character is prior to virtues but needs to be supported by a narrative that will give consistency and continuity to the self, enabling the self to develop by providing the skills needed to appropriate conflicting loyalties and roles. 'An ethic of virtue', he writes, 'always gains its intelligibility from narratives that place our lives within an adventure' (1981: 115). Hauerwas follows Aristotle in believing that moral education and development require the establishment of communities of a certain character. The human being's

capacity to be virtuous depends on the existence of communities 'which have been formed by narratives faithful to the character of reality', while such communities 'depend on the development of, and trust in, persons of virtue' (1981: 116–17, 120). Here is another virtuous circle: no persons of virtue without formed communities, no formed communities without persons of virtue.

What we need, Hauerwas says, is not 'no story' (indifference to any particular story), or freedom from the rival world views and ways of life which the world offers (neutrality before differing views), but *a true story*, one that is faithful to the character of reality. Here his account takes a decisive, theological turn because, he says, Christians believe that scripture offers such a story, one that gives coherence to the self, allowing room for conversion, discontinuity, and freedom since even our blunders become part of the story. 'The unity of the self', he says, 'is not gained by attaining a universal point of view, but by living faithful to a narrative that does not betray the diversity of our existence' (1981: 149).

We have already noted an objection that is frequently raised, that a moral theology of the kind Hauerwas proposes is of no real help when it comes to deciding what ought or ought not to be done in a particular situation. He deals explicitly in places with the question of 'casuistry' (for example, 1983: chapter 7). It is better to think of casuistry, he says, not just as 'the attempt to adjudicate difficult cases of conscience within a system of moral principles' but rather as the process whereby '*a tradition tests* whether its practices are consistent (that is, truthful)' (1983: 120). Certain things are assumed in the way moral decisions are presented, but often not the fact that the community or individual might be asked to change their lives. Some of the necessities generated by moral quandaries, Hauerwas argues, are generated by our unwillingness to change our lives to any significant degree so that an alternative might be contemplated. The description under which the decision is proposed is as important as the decision itself (1983: 124). He writes:

Those committed to living faithfully do not have to decide constantly whether to be faithful or not. They simply are faithful. That does not mean that they will not be tempted, but even such

temptation does not so much require a decision as it denotes an alternative that, although present, is not a real possibility. It is not a real possibility because it would change their lives, which is but another way of saying it would change how they have to tell their story.

(op. cit.: 129)

Alasdair MacIntyre also speaks about character, tradition, and story, and shares Hauerwas's concern that contemporary moral philosophy has been too preoccupied with trying to elaborate a universal, abstract, rational foundation for morality, what he calls 'the Enlightenment project'. The argument of *After Virtue* (1981) begins with the experience of moral argument in our culture. It is for the most part shrill and unfruitful, he says, because there is a 'conceptual incommensurability' between the different viewpoints on which different moral positions are based and nobody seems qualified to adjudicate between these differing premises. We are like survivors after an intellectual holocaust, he says, left with fragments from the past, concepts disengaged from their theoretical and cultural contexts (developing a thought already expressed by Anscombe). In reality and in practice, what holds sway is 'emotivism', which asserts 'that there is and can be *no* valid rational justification for any claims that objective and impersonal moral standards exist and hence that there are no such standards' (1981: 18).

MacIntyre argues that the attempts of Hume, Kant, and Kierkegaard to find a rational justification of morality have all failed and that remaining options are few, in fact 'either Nietzsche or Aristotle' (op. cit.: 103). Nietzsche is *the* moral philosopher of the modern world since he understood more clearly than any other 'not only that what purported to be appeals to objectivity were in fact expressions of subjective will, but also the nature of the problems that this posed for moral philosophy' (op. cit.: 107).

The alternative is Aristotle, who offers an alternative account of reason, one that can speak of ends as well as means (op. cit.: 52). What MacIntyre calls 'the classical tradition in its integrity' involved three elements: human nature *as it is*; human nature *as it could be* with the realization of the human *telos* (goal or end); and the *moral*

precepts that enable a person to pass from one state to the other. If reason is no longer capable of judging about ends, *telos*, all that is left of the classical scheme is human nature *as it is*, and the set of *precepts*, *ethos*. The precepts do not emerge simply from human nature as it is because their purpose is to guide a person from human nature as it is to human nature as it could be. If reason no longer judges about ends, if there is no vision of the good human being, and all we have to go on is human nature as it is, then the precepts become increasingly problematic (op. cit.: 52–53).

In the second part of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre argues that an exploration of virtue and virtues in classical societies shows firstly that:

all morality is always to some degree tied to the socially local and particular and that the aspirations of the morality of modernity to a universality freed from all particularity is an illusion; and secondly that there is no way to possess the virtues except as part of a tradition in which we inherit them and our understanding of them from a series of predecessors in which series heroic societies hold first place.

(op. cit.: 119).

While there are significant differences between the societies he examines, he believes there is a common core of meaning running through their varying notions of virtue and their lists of virtues. He defines virtue as:

an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.

(op. cit.: 178)

We have seen that Aquinas, in *Summa theologiae* I.II 49–54, establishes his understanding of virtue on the basis of an understanding of dispositions. While he does not refer explicitly to these questions, MacIntyre's account in terms of 'practices' and 'goods internal to practices' can be regarded as an appropriate development of what Aquinas says. For MacIntyre a *practice* is:

any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended.

(op. cit.: 175).

The concepts of 'narrative unity' and 'tradition' are as essential to MacIntyre's account of virtues as they are to Hauerwas's. Aristotle and the medievals believed that living a good life means seeking the good of life, a good that is given content by the virtues. This search or quest gives narrative unity to the self, but, says MacIntyre, 'to think of a human life as a narrative unity, is to think in a way alien to the dominant individualist and bureaucratic modes of modern culture' (op. cit.: 211). The return to virtue implies a radical criticism of modernity, which has no place for it:

... the tradition of the virtues is at variance with central features of the modern economic order and more especially its individualism, its acquisitiveness and its elevation of the values of the market to a central social place ... it also involves a rejection of the modern political order.

(op. cit.: 237)

Where Hauerwas moves at this point in a decisively theological direction, MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, believes the way forward is a restatement of the Aristotelian tradition. There is a 'crucial moral opposition', he says, between liberal individualism and Aristotelianism, but the latter can be restated 'in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments' (op. cit.: 241). But the required restatement of Aristotelianism can only be done in new forms of community:

What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already

upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope . . . We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another – doubtless very different – St Benedict.

(op. cit.: 245)

For some, this diagnosis is pessimistic; for others, it is realistic and hopeful. John Rawls, Jurgen Habermas, and others have attempted to do what MacIntyre believes to be impossible, namely to present coherent and defensible statements of liberal individualist points of view, and Martha Nussbaum has tried it from an Aristotelian perspective. And, while sharing much common ground with MacIntyre, Charles Taylor is not as pessimistic about modernity (Taylor, 1991; Kerr, 1997: 136–58).

Debates about these matters are ongoing and touch fundamental questions about human nature, community, the good human life, education, ethics, and politics (see Fergusson, 1998, for a fuller discussion of the issues). It is clear that Aquinas is a significant voice in these debates, and that part of the reason for this is his understanding of the moral life as education in virtue. It is not only as following Aristotle that Aquinas's ideas are still fruitful, however, as MacIntyre's own intellectual journey illustrates (MacIntyre, 1981, 1988, 1990).

Chapter 40

Criticisms of Virtue Theory

Neo-scholastic moral theology tended to be rationalistic and legalistic, and many felt that its concern with cases of conscience led to a neglect of fundamental issues (although, once again, there is now a renewed interest in casuistry as a way of teaching morality). In the Roman Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council encouraged moral theology to rediscover itself as a properly theological discipline, founded on the Scriptures, nourished through close contact with the central theological mysteries of creation and redemption, and equipped to address the pastoral and spiritual needs of people. It is as if the Council asked theologians to do again for moral theology what Aquinas set out to do in the *Summa theologiae*.

The revival of interest in virtue theory seemed to many theologians to fit very well with this task of renewal, as well as offering a way beyond the seemingly irresolvable debate about moral norms that had found its way also into Catholic moral theology. A moral theology developed in terms of virtue theory is positive in its orientation, concerned with what human beings must do in order to become what they can, and ought, to be. The vision of the human being presupposed by such a theology has already been described: a creature that grows, disposing itself in a variety of ways over time and through practice, coming to exercise dispositions spontaneously, easily, and with delight, doing what is good in the way the good person does it. Virtue, like education, requires a community or tradition that teaches a vision of human life, gives an answer to the question 'What is the human being for?', and teaches the skills needed to live out that vision so as to achieve its goals. Virtue theory recognizes that the human being is a self-determined and, in some sense, a self-created being, while acknowledging that the passions of the soul provide the raw material of the moral virtues. In deciding to devote the longest single treatise

of his *Summa theologiae* to the passions, Aquinas seems wiser than many moral theologians who tend to focus almost exclusively on law as the objective norm of human behavior in tension with conscience as its subjective norm, and on moral acts rather than on the moral agent.

There are, of course, criticisms of virtue theory, on both philosophical and theological grounds. For philosophers, three interconnected weaknesses characterize virtue theory: its perceived difficulty in giving an adequate account of obligation or duty (Why ought one to live the good life?), its need to be supplemented by an understanding of binding norms expressed in a moral law, and its apparent weakness in addressing particular decisions and concrete cases. Various strategies are proposed for responding to these criticisms (Hursthouse, 1999; O'Connor, 2006) and recent work on Aquinas seeks to respond particularly by integrating his account of law within his account of virtue (Porter, 1999, 2005). MacIntyre acknowledges this criticism of his position in *After Virtue*, although he states there that 'knowing how to apply the law is itself possible only for someone who possesses the virtue of justice' (1985: 152). A central preoccupation of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, the book that followed, is the nature of the connection between justice and laws (1988: ix).

Theologians add further criticisms. One common concern is that a virtue-centered approach, working with the idea of the human person as self-determining and even self-creating, is pagan and unscriptural in its origins and risks becoming a form of Pelagianism. That means failing to take account of the need for grace if humanity is to flourish and attain its health, *salus*, and happiness, *beatitudo*. The New Testament rarely uses the Greek term for virtue – ἀρετή. Twice it refers to God's excellence or wonderful deeds (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3), once it refers to excellence in general (Philippians 4:8), and only once does it refer to human virtue (2 Peter 1:5). Ceslaus Spicq comments:

Rarely employed in the Septuagint [the term ἀρετή] was undoubtedly judged to be too anthropocentric . . . It is thus paradoxical but true to say that according to biblical language the word 'virtue' is not Christian.

(Spicq, 1982: 174, note 76)

In response to this, it is important to remember that Aquinas's treatment of concrete moral questions in *Summa theologiae* II.II begins with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (1 Corinthians 13:13 and elsewhere in the New Testament). His treatment of the cardinal virtues comes after and is presided over by these more fundamental attitudes which bind a person directly to God, which are ours by grace, and by which all the other activities and involvements of the human being are oriented to the new finality, participation in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), which he believes grace establishes. Chenu, for example, has argued that Aquinas's doctrine is 'thoroughly evangelical':

How often, in the interpretation of the IIa Pars in particular, I was shocked by the rigid and systematic way in which the Aristotelian structures present in the text were commented upon in detail, while the sap of evangelical and patristic spirituality supplying life to these otherwise dead branches was ignored or glossed over... Yet, the effort of systematizing theology must, at any cost, respect the strange logic of the Kingdom of God.

(Chenu, 1964: 309)

Aquinas seeks to integrate the wisdom of pagan moral philosophy within a vision of human destiny that is essentially theological. Our consideration of virtue theory in general, however, has given us an opportunity to see how Aquinas's ideas about human nature and destiny bear fruit in how he understands the development of the human person within human communities and traditions. His understanding of teaching and learning is 'dispositional'. Whole bodies of learning are gradually negotiated into becoming the person who learns, rather than add-ons bestowed by a teacher who is separate (Carruthers, 1990; Candler, 2006). We turn now to consider some specific virtues associated with learning and teaching before considering how Aquinas's understanding of human development and fulfillment is at once theologically grounded and rationally intelligible.

Chapter 41

Virtues for Learning and Teaching

One might have thought that a consideration of teaching would be found in the moral part of the *Summa theologiae* that deals with human actions, virtues, relationships, and professions. Instead, as we have seen, Aquinas speaks of it within his account of the metaphysics of creation. The fact that he does so has obliged us to say something of his theology of creation and his understanding of human nature. There is also much of relevance to education in what he says about particular virtues, just as we have seen that there is much of relevance to education in his treatment of virtue as such. Because the acquisition of knowledge is a significant part of human experience, and the communication of knowledge is a significant activity of human society, all the main virtues will be relevant to it in some way.

In *Summa theologiae* II.II Aquinas attempts a comprehensive account of the moral life, an account that is at once philosophical and theological. He shows how the search for human fulfillment is pursued along myriad paths if our decisions, commitments, relationships, and communal lives are to be informed by goodness and by grace. In view of his understanding of the character and connection of the cardinal virtues, it is not surprising that each of them, either by itself or in one of its ancillary virtues, is relevant to teaching and learning. There is, for example, a virtue of truthfulness that is a form of justice (II.II 109–10), and the virtue of piety acknowledges our indebtedness to those who have taught us (II.II 101, 104). That docility is an integral part of prudence is an idea Aquinas gets from Plotinus via Macrobius. Docility disposes a person to learn from others, particularly those who are older and more experienced (II.II 48, 1; 49, 3). Patience and perseverance are sub-virtues of courage, and anybody who engages in study or research knows the need for these (II.II 136–37).

We have already mentioned the intellectual virtues. Just as there are dispositions for managing and guiding human passions and relationships in relation to the particular and overall development and flourishing of a human life, so there are virtues proper to the intellectual sphere: the speculative dispositions of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, and the practical dispositions of art and prudence.

The special virtue of *studiositas*, a form of temperance, manages the human desire for knowledge and keeps it within wise boundaries (*Summa theologiae* II.II 166–67). Just like other desires, the desire to know is good, but it can become unbalanced. Study, Aquinas says, is the energetic application of the mind to something. What the mind is primarily concerned with is knowledge and so the virtue of *studiositas* is primarily concerned with managing our passion to know (I.II 166, 1). It must be accompanied by prudence because our interest in knowledge must be proportionate to the requirements of other virtues, as well as to the requirements of other commitments and relationships in our lives: it has to find its place within the overall living of a human life. So this virtue helps people avoid various pathological forms of knowledge seeking, either for things that are wrong, or for things that are right but sought in a way or to an extent that is inappropriate (I.II 166, 2). When a person seeks knowledge out of pride or with a view to perpetrating some immorality, then the desire for knowledge is externally vitiated (I.II 167, 1). Curiosity is the vice directly and internally opposed to ‘good study’. It manifests itself where a person neglects what he ought to be studying, uses dubious means to gain knowledge, neglects the theological horizon when studying natural things, or applies himself to matters beyond his abilities (I.II 167, 1). The questions immediately preceding his consideration of *studiositas* and *curiositas* are about the sin of Adam and Eve (*Summa theologiae* II.II 162–65). Although specifically a sin of pride, Aquinas believes that the desire for knowledge plays a significant part in that original fall.

As with all virtues, there is also an opposing vice from the other side, the tendency to neglect our desire to know, perhaps because of the effort involved in learning, *labor addiscendi*. The virtue of *studiositas* counters this, but only accidentally because its main concern is the

desire itself (II.II 166, 2 ad 3). Virtues associated with courage, such as magnanimity and perseverance, address directly the difficulties that arise from an underdeveloped or tepid desire for knowledge (II.II 129 and 137). For Aquinas, the search for knowledge cannot be detached from the living of a human life as a whole and it always has a moral dimension. Only in the abstract can human acts be morally neutral: concretely they are either good or bad (*Summa theologiae* I.II 18, 9). There are other parts of temperance relevant to study, such as modesty or diffidence, and honesty (*Summa theologiae* II.II 144–45). There is even a virtue called *eutrapelia*, which helps us to know when and how we ought to relax. That all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy is a fact of life honored in the ancient world in its conception of this virtue that we might call ‘recreation’ (II.II 168; see also I.II 60, 5 and II.II 72, 2 ad 1).

Without necessarily using Aquinas’s terminology about *studiositas*, later thinkers share his concerns and understanding. The ideal of education described by John Henry Newman is one example. The goal of education, he says, is ‘a habit of mind . . . which lasts through life, of which the attributes are freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation and wisdom’ (Newman, 1960: 76). Sertillanges, 1998, represents a more obvious reappropriation of *studiositas* and its attendant virtues for a later age. Liam Walsh and Gregory Reichberg have written directly on Aquinas’s text (Walsh, 1994; Reichberg, 1999). From a different starting point, A.J. Conyers arrived at a similar virtue-centered vision of education whose outcome is described as refinement, discrimination, generosity of spirit, discerning pathos, and heightened expectation (Conyers, 2003: 129). The virtue-centered approach implies an understanding of the person growing into freedom through self-determination. Freedom is directly connected with the search for truth and the two values of freedom and truth complement each other (Neiman, 1997).

The scholars mentioned, from different periods and denominational persuasions, agree that study is also to be understood theologically, a contextualization that secures rather than threatens the integrity of the human desires and activities involved. As Roger Scruton puts it, ‘the question of the possibility of theology has been, and

to some extent still is, the principal philosophical question' (Scruton, 1995: 5). So, we turn finally to address a question that has accompanied us throughout this work: to consider how Aquinas's understanding of human development and flourishing – the goal of education – is at once theologically grounded and rationally intelligible.

Chapter 42

Human Flourishing: Theological Virtues and Gifts of the Spirit

Mark Jordan says that the teacher has the task of creating structures for handing down the discipline with which she is concerned, and that creating such structures for theology is like creating regimes for teaching virtue (2006: 193). One might argue that creating such structures for any discipline is like creating regimes for teaching virtue. We have seen that many virtues, intellectual and moral, are connected with learning and teaching generally. One temptation is to hive off the natural from the supernatural (or vice versa) and to think in terms of distinct but related realms or levels of life. But there is growing dissatisfaction with this as a strategy in relation to a thinker like Aquinas because the meaning of such realms or levels is inevitably distorted by such hiving off. The final challenge of this work is to find a way of completing our account of Aquinas's understanding of human life and activities that will be reasonable and intelligible to those who, while not sharing his faith, are, like him, teachers and learners, and that will also be true to his deepest convictions about teaching and learning, which are theological.

We have argued that Aquinas's theology cannot be understood apart from the evangelical concerns of St Dominic and his order. While the domains of experience and theoretical elaboration, *praxis* and *theoria*, may be distinguished, they must not be allowed to fall apart. Chenu says that:

... understanding of the *Summa theologiae* atrophies if we fail to discern, it may be in subterranean currents, the presence of that evangelical irruption which decided the vocation of Thomas Aquinas, a unique vocation at once religious and intellectual.

(Chenu, 1974: 392)

Chenu identifies five such 'subterranean currents'. One is that the theological virtues, which introduce a person to communion with God, are not reducible to the moral virtues. The Gospel, although it contains morality, is more than a moral teaching. A second concerns Aquinas's decision to include the virtue of religion within his treatment of justice, the concern of which is the homage owed to God. In speaking of religion in this way Aquinas follows Cicero and other pagan authors. But, as a Christian, he believes that true 'religion' is not in cultic rituals or sacrifices, but in faith, hope, and love. Insofar as the acts of the virtue of religion (prayer, sacrifices, devotion, and so on) serve the theological virtues, it is also a Christian virtue. But it is not itself a theological virtue, not something that puts people directly in communion with God.

A third current that runs beneath Aquinas's account of the virtues is this: if prudence is the lynchpin of the moral virtues, charity is the form of all the virtues (*Summa theologiae* II.II 23, 8). This is his way of stating, in the language of medieval moral theology, the primacy of love in Christian teaching. Love is most directly concerned with the supreme and final goal of human living, conceives all the other virtues as and when appropriate, and orders their activities and achievements towards their own particular purposes (which they retain) and towards the final goal and purpose of human life as the Christian believer sees it: to live in love.

The thirteenth century was a time of evangelical and spiritual ferment, with strong expectations of a 'new age'; a time of spiritual renewal in the Church and in society. In his doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Aquinas gives theological and philosophical expression to this spiritualist awakening, and his understanding of what Chenu calls 'evangelical spontaneity' is one of the cardinal points of his spirituality:

His analysis guarantees at the same time the non-rational spontaneity of the regime of the gifts and the decisive value of the virtues, since these spontaneities constitute, even in their perfection, an interiority in the regime of the virtues.

(Chenu, 1974: 398)

This is another way of saying that grace does not replace or destroy nature but brings it to perfection. The gifts of the Spirit not only

strengthen the virtues in the direction of the virtues themselves, but also give them a new depth of meaning by orienting them towards this new goal, the love made possible by the Spirit. Aristotle and Plotinus spoke of higher levels of divine or heroic virtue, and modern studies of spirituality and philosophy identify in Buddhism, in Meister Eckhart, even in Martin Heidegger, analogous notions of higher moral spontaneity and spiritual responsiveness (Kelly, 1974; Boland, 1998). Not surprisingly, then, the fourth and fifth of Chenu's currents are Aquinas's treatment of the gifts of the Spirit (*Summa theologiae* I.II 68) and his understanding of the beatitudes and fruits of the Spirit (*Summa theologiae* I.II 69–70).

Thus, concludes Chenu, Aquinas seeks to show how faith restores reason to itself, and to its permanent questioning. Aquinas's way of integrating classical virtue traditions with New Testament teachings is thus a radical restatement of the Gospel message in the philosophical terminology of a later age. It is a restatement that remains alive, Chenu says, because it remains in contact with 'the living sources of faith', namely the scriptures and evangelical *praxis* or the 'lived experience' of people.

We have noted in passing that three of Aristotle's intellectual virtues coincide with three gifts of the Holy Spirit: knowledge, *scientia*, understanding, *intellectus*, and wisdom, *sapientia*. Aquinas associates these gifts with the virtues of faith and charity (*Summa theologiae* II.II 8–9; 45). Much could be said, though there is no space for it here, of the levels of knowledge and understanding thereby recognized. The gift of fear, in which, for the Bible, wisdom begins (Proverbs 1:7), Aquinas associates with the theological virtue of hope (*Summa theologiae* II.II 19). If some prefer now to translate the Bible's 'fear of the Lord' as 'awe' or 'wonder' this is still helpful, since a link can more clearly be made with that wonder in which, Aristotle says, philosophy begins (*Metaphysics* I.2 982b 12).

For Aquinas, though, the *salus*, flourishing, or *beatitudo*, happiness, intended for humans by God is one that is appropriated, not on the level of Aristotle's moral and intellectual virtues, but on the level of what Aquinas calls 'the new law', the grace of the Holy Spirit given to those who believe in Christ (*Summa theologiae* I.II 106, 1).

The goal of learning for Aquinas is not just knowledge, not even truth, but *sapientia*, wisdom. Metaphysics, the highest branch of

philosophy, and theology, is ultimately about wisdom and not just about science, *scientia*. He has to argue more for the scientific character of theology than for its sapiential character, but this ought not to blind us to the importance of wisdom in his understanding of both philosophy and theology (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 4; 1, 6; II.II 9, 3; 45, 3). As a Christian, Aquinas saw the human quest for knowledge, truth, and goodness coming to fulfillment in the Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom, which brings to its fullest expression the virtue of charity or love. In fact, this is not only the highest but the most delightful experience possible for human beings, as he says in the prologue to his commentary on Boethius' treatise *De ebdomadibus* (see also *Summa theologiae* II.II 180, 7). A life dedicated to wisdom is delightful, Aquinas says, because it is a life dedicated to a kind of play. He means that through their own growth in wisdom, human beings share in the play of wisdom before the face of God (Proverbs 8:30, Vulgate version). The highest knowledge human beings can have is when charity is perfected by the Spirit's gift of wisdom. It is also the highest pleasure stimulated not by any extraneous cause but intrinsic to the experience itself of wisdom (*In de ebdomadibus, prologus; Summa theologiae* II.II 45; and see Torrell, 2002: 100–101).

Platonic *eros* finds an unsuspected fulfillment, then, in the gift of love that makes human beings the friends of God. Yet even in describing the highest form of wisdom that love brings, Aquinas remains unrelentingly empiricist. We have seen this in his accounts of creation and of human nature, of causality and of teaching, of virtue and now of grace. He presents what we might term a 'super-holistic' vision of human development and flourishing: contemplation depending on moral virtue, speculative knowledge depending on practical knowledge, theology itself depending on experience and practice (Morris, 1991: 530–32). As a Christian, a Dominican, and an Aristotelian, Aquinas spoke out of that experience and the practices – pedagogical, educational – in which it was prepared for and expressed.

Chapter 43

Human Flourishing: Action, Contemplation, and Teaching

Peter Geach considers the cardinal virtues in abstraction from the theological ‘end of the human being’, as fundamental to the good functioning of any human community, and there is some support for this in Aquinas. At the same time, a full account of what needs to be said about knowledge and truth cannot be given without considering the theological virtues.

In his account of faith, Aquinas has much to say about truth, its greatness and importance, and the poverty of our hold on it. He assigns the Holy Spirit’s gifts of knowledge, *scientia*, and understanding, *intellectus*, to faith. Hope is concerned with future goods difficult but not impossible to attain and the theological virtue called hope is also relevant for the work of teaching and learning. Its contribution is closely linked with that of courage, and with ancillary virtues of courage that fit us for major undertakings (magnanimity) and for long-term work (perseverance). The gift accompanying hope is fear, a kind of awe or wonder, something that clearly stimulates and sustains study and teaching. Charity obliges us to fraternal correction, a specific kind of teaching in the service of truth and love (*Summa theologiae* II.II 33), and is itself, as we have seen, perfected by the Holy Spirit’s gift of wisdom (II.II 45). If the acquisition of the cardinal virtues, and the developmental understanding of the human being that it presupposes, is directly connected with teaching and learning, so the level of grace and the theological virtues must also be related to teaching and learning. For Aquinas, it becomes a question of a lifestyle that will support the acquisition and living out of this vision.

The distinction of active and contemplative lives was traditional and well established in Christian spirituality by Aquinas’s time. He

combines it with what Aristotle says about practical and speculative knowledge, the one a pursuit of truth for the sake of putting it to some use, and the other a pursuit of truth for its own sake. If it is in pursuing truth that humans are really happy, is this the truth of practical knowledge that is found in the active life, the truth of speculative knowledge that is found in the contemplative life, or some combination of the two?

His commentary on the tenth chapter of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* gives us an insight into how Aquinas understands the issue (X.8 1178a 9 – 1178b 32; with Aquinas's commentary, *In Ethicorum* X, *lectio* 12, Leonine XLVII.2: 1–180). There seem to be two kinds of happiness, Aristotle says, one speculative and equivalent to wisdom, the other practical and equivalent to prudence. Prudence and the moral virtues are concerned with human affairs, and since the human being is a composite being, the active happiness of prudence and the moral virtues is found in the composite. Wisdom and speculative happiness are proper to the intellect and are, according to Aristotle, separate and divine.¹³

In his commentary, Aquinas points out that the happiness promised by the active life is more complex than that promised by the speculative life. Those who pursue the latter kind of life need less than others and, in needing less, are free from anxieties the others experience. At the same time, they need something if they are to live humanly with others, *ad hoc quod humaniter conversetur* (edit. cit. lines 119–20). Aristotle's 'divine beings' are above and beyond the actions involved in the practice of moral virtue, and they enjoy perfect happiness in some speculative activity. The action of God, who is supremely happy, can only be speculative: God makes all things through the speculation of his wisdom, *per speculationem sapientiae suae*. It follows that the human activity that will be happiest is that most like the 'divine speculation' (edit. cit. lines 155–59). In fact, Aquinas concludes, a simple identification can be made: speculation and happiness are coextensive. It is interesting to note how Aquinas slips, without warning or disturbance, from Aristotle's 'gods', *diis*, to his own 'God', *Deus*, as well as from Aristotle's 'speculation' or 'theory', to his own 'contemplation'.

At the same time, he resists assigning teaching simply to either the active or the contemplative life. In his commentary on the *Sentences*

he considers the objection that the active life cannot be defined as 'being for another' because teaching is part of the contemplative life and teaching involves being for another (*In III Sentences* 35, 1, 3, qc. 1, argument 3). His response appeals to two distinctions. The first is between knowledge of the truth for its own sake, which belongs to the contemplative life, and knowledge of the truth for the purpose of persuading to good morals, which belongs to the active life. The second is between teaching ordered to the exercise of knowledge and the perfection of the one teaching, and teaching intended for the good of another.

In one of the polemical works written in defense of the mendicant friars, Aquinas says that the work of teaching belongs to the active life because it is a spiritual work of charity to provide for others and to correct them (*Contra doctrinam retrahentium a religione* 7 ad 7, Leonine C51–52). Using texts on contemplation and action from Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Aristotle, he says it seems clear that if a person has not purified his soul from passions through the exercise of the moral virtues in the active life, then he is not ready for the contemplation of divine truth in the contemplative life. He quotes Matthew 5:8: 'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God', and says that even the vowed religious must exercise the active life, developing the virtues to restrain their passions, carrying out works of mercy especially through teaching, and sharing what they have with the poor.

What it amounts to is that it is very difficult to imagine any pure form of either the active or the contemplative life, and Aquinas, through the course of his career, develops the idea of the mixed life where contemplation issues in action on behalf of others, but the action in which it issues requires contemplation.

There are other distinctions that shed light here. Aquinas is aware that the verb 'to teach', *docere*, can have two direct objects. One may teach a subject or one may teach a person. Also the concern of teaching is sometimes knowledge, *cognitio*, and sometimes truth, *veritas*. Can these distinctions be related to each other, so that the teaching of a subject is about knowledge and the teaching of a person is about truth? Can a human being teach the truth to another? In view of Aquinas's conviction that God is the only real teacher because only

God enables people to appreciate truth, it is not surprising when he says that the human teacher causes not truth but a knowledge of the truth to come about in the learner, *ille qui docet, non causat veritatem, sed causat cognitionem veritatis in discente* (*De veritate* 11, 3 ad 6).

In the final section of *Summa theologiae* II.II, we find further reference to teachers. He talks about bishops and vowed religious, and about the distinction of active and contemplative religious orders. His own order, the Dominicans, was established as a mixed form of religious life, contemplative because they were to be people of prayer as well as students of Christian theology, active because they were to be preachers and teachers. But teaching itself, as we have seen, is not easily assignable to either the contemplative or the active life: it seems to belong to both (*Summa theologiae* II.II 181, 3).

Aquinas says that the distinction of active and contemplative lives is specific to the human animal (II.II 179, 1). Human living is diversified in terms of the things humans are concerned about, literally the things they 'study', *student* (II.II 179, 2 ad 3). Concern focused on the legitimate needs of this present life pertains to the active life, whereas human studies ordered to the consideration of truth pertain to the contemplative life. Essentially, contemplation is in the intellect because it is concerned with truth, but that a person should be moved to contemplation pertains to the will. He is giving the term an explicitly theological meaning now: love of God so 'enflames' a person that he is moved to gaze upon God's beauty. Coming to possess what one loves brings pleasure and delight (II.II 180, 1; 180, 7). Dispositively, but not essentially, the moral virtues pertain to the contemplative life. They impede the vehemence of passion and settle the tumult of external occupations and so prepare a person for the contemplative life (II.II 180, 2).

Here Aquinas draws on the spiritual theology of earlier Christian thinkers. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite had spoken of a spiritual pedagogy that involved the three moments of purgation, illumination, and perfection (*Summa theologiae* II.II 181, 4 ad 2; 183, 4). Members of the twelfth-century 'school of Saint Victor', Richard and Hugh, wrote much about learning to contemplate truth, and Aquinas draws on their work in explaining how he understands terms such as

cogitatio, *meditatio*, *consideratio*, *speculatio*, *contemplatio*, and *admiratio* (*Summa theologiae* II.II 180, 3 ad 1, ad 2, ad 3).

Of particular interest is what he says about *cogitatio*, or ‘thinking’, an activity that involves sense perceptions, imaginations, and rational discourse about signs and other things that lead to the knowledge of the truth (art. cit., ad 1). Hugh of St Victor says that we learn from God through prayer, *oratio*, from our own study, *meditatio*, and from other human beings by listening, *auditus*, and reading, *lectio* (art. cit., ad 4). Richard of St Victor identified six steps by which a creature ascends to the contemplation of God: imagination, imagination in reason, reason in imagination, reason in reason, beyond reason, and beyond and beside reason. For Aquinas, the pedagogy involved here is an ascent from sensible things to intelligible things, to the evaluation of the sensible in the light of the intelligible, to the consideration of intelligible things that come through sensation, to the consideration of intelligible things accessible by reason alone, to the contemplation of intelligible things which reason can neither discover nor handle (II.II 180, 4 ad 3).

In *Summa theologiae* II.II 181, 3, Aquinas asks again whether teaching belongs to the active or contemplative life. He bases his response on the distinction mentioned already, between the two direct objects of teaching. Teaching is done through speaking, and speech is an audible sign of an internal concept. So one object of teaching is the matter or object of the internal conception. As regards this object, teaching can pertain to either form of life. When a person internally conceives some truth with a view to directing his external action by it, then it pertains to the active life. When a person internally conceives some truth in the consideration and love of which he simply takes delight, then it pertains to the contemplative life. The other object of teaching is the audible discourse, and the object of teaching is then the one who is hearing, the student. As regards this object, all teaching belongs to the active life to which external actions belong. This seems straightforward and reasonable, and ability to teach is then recognized in someone who is wise and knowledgeable in the sense of being able to express verbally the interior concept, such that he can guide another person to the understanding of truth (II.II 181, 3 ad 2).

Traditionally, in the story of Jesus's visit to the two sisters in Luke 10, Mary is taken to represent the contemplative life and Martha the active life. But when it comes to comparing active and contemplative lives, Aquinas speaks first of Aristotle, who, he says, gave eight reasons why the contemplative life is, simply speaking, better, reasons that are crowned by Jesus's comment in Luke 10:42 that 'Mary has chosen the better part' (II.II 182, 1).

When it comes to living these things out according to particular lifestyles, Aquinas finally shows his hand and reveals why he chose the lifestyle he did. From many points of view, the contemplative life is superior to the active life, he says, and yet salvation and fulfillment for human beings are found primarily in the love of God and neighbor. Whatever might be required to serve that twofold love in this life must take precedence above all else, even the enjoyment of contemplation. So it is appropriate that there be forms of life concerned with works of charity (II.II 188, 2) and with preaching (II.II 188, 4), even with study so long as this is serving the needs of human salvation (II.II 188, 5). The way of life that is best of all, though, and superior even to the purely contemplative life, is that of the teacher. Just as it is better to illuminate than simply to shine, so it is better to share with others the things one has contemplated than simply to contemplate those things, *maius est contemplata aliis tradere quam solum contemplari* (II.II 188, 6 in c).

Aquinas is thinking in the first place of the teacher of doctrine, the preacher of the Gospel. It brings us back to the place at which each part of this book has ended, with an encomium of teaching and the teacher. Aquinas opted for the Dominicans (Part 1) for reasons that we have just been exploring (Part 4). For him, Jesus of Nazareth is 'the most excellent of teachers', who, in his teaching and practice, shows us how it ought to be done (Part 2). If we seek to interpret and use the work of Thomas Aquinas today, then we must do so attentive to the pedagogical concerns that structure his work (Part 3).

Aquinas's understanding of teaching is sometimes summarized by saying that teaching has not taken place if there has been no learning. If, within the deeper, theological context in which he speaks of it, creation may be understood as teaching, then redemption may be understood as learning. Writing of how the *Summa theologiae* is to be read, Mark D. Jordan writes:

The *Summa* is read whole when it is enacted as a single theological teaching, with morals at its centre and the Passion of Christ as its driving force, before a community committed to sanctification through mission, with the consolations of sacraments and liturgy, in the illumination of contemplative prayer.

(Jordan, 2003: 53)

Is this, then, what a post-modernist reception of Aquinas might look like? Many of the points made by Jordan are found already in Sertillanges' introduction to the theology and practice of study (Sertillanges, 1998). And in the study circles organized by Jacques Maritain something similar was recognized: the text of Aquinas was read in a setting that included prayer and a community life as well as study and conversation (McInerny, 1999: 139–43).

It seems that the teaching offered in the *Summa theologiae*, and throughout Aquinas's works, is only truly learned within a particular form of life, which that teaching also brings about. Aquinas's pedagogical experiment, Jordan says, challenges both the academic and the pastoral, and if we learn nothing else from it at least let us learn that Christian theology must continue to engage with this twofold challenge. The temptation is to let one go for the sake of the other, to rationalize Aquinas in order to gain him a hearing among the philosophers (who may want to bracket God, or worse), or to 'supernaturalize' him in order to strengthen his position within the household of the faith. The concern of Aquinas's subject, *sacra doctrina*, Christian theology, is the human *salus*, salvation, or *beatitudo*, flourishing and fulfillment (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 1). This is also, always and everywhere, the goal of education. It is not something to which human beings can be indifferent, and what might seem like the same subject considered indifferently is not the same subject at all. In contemporary debates, particularly about the meaning and function of 'the university', Aquinas's twofold challenge stands.

Notes

1. On the question of divine transcendence in modern thought see Martin Henry (1997), *On Not Understanding God*, Columba Press, Dublin.

2. For a full treatment of Aquinas's understanding of 'ideas in God' see Boland, 1996.
3. It seems Aquinas was working on *Summa theologiae* I 75–89 between 1266 and 1268, when he was also composing his commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*: Suttor, 1970: xv; Torrell, 2002: 249–53. Question 79 is the key question for his consideration of the unity of body and soul. Other important texts are *Summa theologiae* I 84,3; *Summa contra gentiles* II.56; *Quaestiones disputae de spiritualibus creaturis* 2 ad 5; *Quaestiones disputae de anima* 1. In the secondary literature see especially Pegis, 1963 and Dales, 1995b.
4. Pegis, 1974, concurs with Bazan in seeing here not a philosophical proof that bodies must be resurrected, but philosophical support for the intelligibility of such a belief.
5. The paper was first published in *Philosophy* 35 (1958) and is republished in Anscombe, 1981, 26–42.
6. Foot, 1978.
7. Hauerwas, 1974, 1975, 1981, 1983.
8. In 1966, MacIntyre found Aquinas's Aristotelianism 'far more interesting' than Augustine's Platonism because it took a less pessimistic view of human nature as it is, which Aquinas regarded as 'a tolerably reliable guide to human nature as it ought to be': MacIntyre, 1966: 117–18.
9. Not only that, but in one text Aquinas says that growth in knowledge is a physical change: *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 26, 3 ad 12.
10. Thomas also considered various aspects of the virtues in a series of disputed questions on the virtues in general, on the cardinal virtues, on hope, on charity, and on fraternal correction: for translation and commentary see E.M. Atkins (2005) *Thomas Aquinas, Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
11. It is not possible to examine in detail what Aquinas says about human emotions, the passions of the soul, *passiones animae*, as he calls them. Suffice to note that he is unusual among Christian moralists in giving so much attention to the passions and his treatment of them is the largest single treatise in the *Summa theologiae* (I.II 22–48). He follows Aristotle in distinguishing two

kinds of passion, the concupiscible or desiring, and the irascible or assertive, and then in identifying eleven basic kinds of passion across those two categories.

12. Hauerwas, 1981: 123. For John Henry Newman ‘man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal’: *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1979), University of Notre Dame Press, chapter 4, section 3.
13. We have seen that Aristotle spoke of the intellect having two aspects, one of which is separate and eternal. He seems also to give two answers to the question of where human happiness is ultimately to be found. The difficulties this raises are considered in: Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (1992), Clarendon Press, Oxford; Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986), Cambridge University Press, chapter 11 and appendix to Part III; and Amélie Ockensburg-Rorty, editor, *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics* (1980), University of California Press, chapters 1, 2, 18–20.

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A full listing of Aquinas's works, of editions in Latin, and of modern language translations, is given in Torrell, 2002: 483–525, 611–31 and Royal, 2005: 330–61, 424–38. Here I list only the works cited or referred to in the course of this book, giving details of the Leonine and Marietti editions, and of English translations (ET). The 'Leonine', taking its name from Pope Leo XIII, is the critical edition of Aquinas's works, begun in 1882 and ongoing, the most recent volume having been published in 2000. The 'Marietti', taking its name from the publisher, is a useful Latin edition published during the course of the twentieth century. Marietti divides each work into numbered paragraphs which makes it easier to refer to specific passages. I follow the arrangement of his works given by Torrell (who adapts it from Weisheipl, 1974: 355–405; 1983, 478–87).

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