THE FUTURE OF THOMISM: AN INTRODUCTION

Deal W. Hudson

Thomism usually comes in horrible wrappers.
—Flannery O'Connor

In spite of her complaint, the lady Thomist from Milledgeville, Georgia, read the *Summa* in bed every night before going to sleep. It was only *where* she read St. Thomas that was unusual. In fact, when she was reading St. Thomas and complaining about Thomism, his name was often heard and welcomed in Catholic circles. Twentieth-century disciples like Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, Josef Pieper, Mortimer J. Adler, and Yves R. Simon were much in vogue, informing what we would now call the "mainstream" of Catholic thought. All of this influence, it can be noted, in spite of the bad packaging.

These days Thomism plays a minor role in philosophy at large, though a somewhat greater one among Catholic and Christian philosophers. It is hard to say whether Thomistic exteriors are as gruff now as they once appeared to the author of *Wise Blood*, or whether its image is even the problem. We now enjoy access to a "readable" abridged *Summa Theologiae* in English with the form of the articles removed.[1] Who knows whether putting St. Thomas into modern prose will do the trick of making him popular again? There must still be readers coming to the *Summa* for the first time who find themselves anachronistically attracted to the old layout, objections, *sed contra*, response, replies, the spaces in between providing the silence for reflection and anticipation.

But for those who love St. Thomas any attempt to let him speak to the present age has to be appreciated: because something has gone amiss. A number of the papers in this volume paint a fairly dismal picture of contemporary Thomism. Comparisons are made between the present level of interest in St. Thomas and that of the 1920s and 1930s. We are constantly reminded that Thomism declined through the 1950s and deteriorated rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s. At present, St. Thomas and his interpreters receive only limited attention in Catholic philosophy

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, ed. and trans. Timothy McDermott (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, Inc., 1989).

and theology, in its colleges, universities, and seminaries, in the American Catholic Philosophical Association, and in Catholic culture at large. The fact of philosophical pluralism, all agree, now confronts us. St. Thomas, for better or for worse, "has receded into the background and become something more remote," no longer *the* teacher in the theological schools but once again simply *a* Father of the Church.[2]

For those who grew up with the memory of Thomism's ascendancy the comparisons to bygone days are apropos. They remind us of the indebtedness of Catholicism to the tradition of St. Thomas; they point out the necessity of recognizing the ways Thomistic thinking has informed the fabric of the Church's magisterium. Regardless of what one thinks about St. Thomas and Thomism, both must be understood to grasp the substance of the Church's teaching about nearly everything, from the relation of nature and grace to the sacraments, from natural law to justice in the social order.[3]

Yet for those who have come to Thomism outside of official channels, as it were, the penchant for looking back feels obtrusive. One wonders whether readers coming to this volume, who are unfamiliar with the gossip of Catholic philosophy, will be dismayed by the prospect of reading about the future of a moribund movement? Fortunately for the reader, and for Thomism, first impressions, like "horrible wrappers," can be overcome. These essays go well beyond their either lamenting or celebrating the passage of neo-Thomism. The tradition of St. Thomas lives despite its lack of relative visibility within the Catholic church and its institutions. *Aeterni Patris* (1879) undoubtedly stimulated much of the twentieth-century work on St. Thomas, but there has been, as they say, hell to pay in its aftermath, the price for making Thomism official. Yet the Thomistic revival of the nineteenth century was already under way when Leo XIII issued his encyclical. The "third Scholasticism" might well have proceeded ahead without the official sanction of St. Thomas as the "common doctor" of the Catholic church.

This is not to wish that Leo XIII had done less to promulgate the *perennial philosophy*. He, after all, is not to be held responsible for the authoritarian excesses of later pontiffs,[4] or those who ignored the charge

---

2. Karl Rahner, S.J., "On Recognizing the Importance of Thomas Aquinas," *Theological Investigations*, XIII, trans. David Bourke (New York: Crossroad Books, 1983), p. 4.

3. See Avery Dulles, S.J., "Vatican II & Scholasticism," *New Oxford Review* 57:4 (May 1990): 5-11.

4. See James Weisheipl, O.P., "The Revival of Thomism as a Christian Philosophy," *New Themes in Christian Philosophy*, ed. Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 164-85.

of his encyclical to engage modernity. At the turn of the century, Josiah Royce greeted the encyclical as a progressive moment in Catholicism, an unleashing of the potent spirit of St. Thomas against "conservative officialism" and textbook style in its schools.[5] And sixty years later, James Collins called Leo XIII the Pope of "the open tradition in philosophy."[6]

Thus, whatever happened to twentieth-century Thomism cannot be laid at the feet of Leo XIII. But Thomists should be encouraged to accept the inevitability of the encyclical's aftermath, to take a wider view, and, as a result, to stop lamenting about the glory days. Such an intellectual hegemony, often enforced with ecclesial power, was bound to crumble. If we no longer ride at the crest of Thomism, we can at least enjoy the intellectual fruits of that renascence, especially its scholarly, and sometimes saintly, example.

It can also be said that, given the long view, the news of Thomism's death has been greatly exaggerated. Many of the "old hands" around the world of Catholic philosophy and theology express surprise at the swell of interest in St. Thomas and his contemporary interpreters. Twenty years ago some assumed that interest in St. Thomas and Thomism would be completely dead by now. Not only has this not occurred, but there also are signs of a modest revival in the air. Philosophy departments are once again advertising for and hiring specialists in St. Thomas. The texts of St. Thomas are returning to the curriculum. Only ten years ago a teacher had very few texts of Aquinas from which to choose—now the choice is wide and getting wider.[7]

There is no lack of good scholarship in English about St. Thomas and Thomism. The 1970s saw the completion of the sixty-volume Blackfriars *Summa Theologiae* edited by Thomas Gilby, O.P. Previously unedited or untranslated works by Maritain, Gilson, Simon, Pieper, Lonergan, and

---

5. Josiah Royce, "Pope Leo's Philosophical Movement and Its Relations to Modern Thought" [1903], *Fugitive Essays* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1968 reprint), pp. 408, 418-19.

6. James Collins, "Leo XIII and the Philosophical Approach to Modernity," *Crossroads in Philosophy* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962), p. 301.

7. The selections by Vernon Bourke, Anton C. Pegis, Mary T. Clarke, A.M. Fairweather, Thomas Gilby and John Oesterle remain in print, to which have been added: Paul E. Sigmund, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988); William P. Baumgarth and Richard J. Regan, S.J., *On Law, Morality, and Politics* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co., 1988); Christopher Martin, *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas: Introductory Readings* (New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc., 1988); Simon Tugwell, O.P., *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1988); Mark D. Jordan, *On Faith: Summa Theologiae 2-2, QQ.1-16 of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); and Peter Kreeft, *A Summa of the Summa* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991).

Rousselot are being published.[8] Interest in reprints remains high, and a complete edition of Lonergan is underway, as is the French edition of Maritain. The highly original work of the Lublin Thomists is being translated.[9] A steady stream of books examine the thought of modern Thomists,[10] while Gerald A. McCool has begun to stimulate interest in

---

8. Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy*, trans. Cornelia N. Borgerhoff (Albany, New York: Magi Books, Inc., 1990) [a translation of *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale*, 1951]; *The Story of Two Souls: The Correspondence of Jacques Maritain and Julien Green*, trans. Bernard Doering (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988); in addition a selection of the voluminous correspondence between Maritain and Simon is being prepared for publication, and John Dunaway has edited the correspondence between Maritain, Caroline Gordon, and Allen Tate to be published by the LSU Press; mention should also be made of Judith Suther's *Raïssa Maritain: Pilgrim, Poet, and Exile* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990). Also, Yves R. Simon, *Practical Knowledge*, ed. by Robert J. Mulvaney (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991); *An Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge*, trans. Vukan Kuic and Richard J. Thompson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990); *An Introduction to Moral Virtue*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986); Etienne Gilson, *Methodical Realism*, trans. Philip Trower (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom College Press, 1990); *Thomistic Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986); *Linguistics and Philosophy*, trans. John Lyon (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*, trans. John Lyon (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); *Letters of Etienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, trans. Mary Emily Hamilton (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 1988); Josef Pieper, *No One Could Have Known, An Autobiography: The Early Years*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 1987); *Problems of Modern Faith: Essays and Addresses*, trans. Jan van Heurck (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985); *On Hope*, trans. Sister Mary Francis McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 1986); *Living the Truth*, trans. Lothar Krauth and Stella Lange (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 1989 [contains newly translated *The Truth of All Things* and previously published *Reality and the Good*]; *Josef Pieper: An Anthology* (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 1989); Bernard Lonergan, S.J. *Understanding and Being*, ed. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1980); and Pierre Rousselot, S.J., *The Eyes of Faith & Answer to Two Attacks*, trans. Joseph Donceel, S.J. and Avery Dulles, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991).

9. Mieczylaw A. Krapiec, *I-Man: An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. Marie Lescoe, Andrew Woznicki, Theresa Sandok, et al. (New Britain, Connecticut: Mariel Publications, 1983); see also Andrew Woznicki, *Being and Order: The Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas in Historical Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

10. Deal W. Hudson and Matthew J. Mancini, *Understanding Maritain: Philosopher and Friend* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1989); and Ralph McInerny, *Art and Prudence: Studies in the Thought of Jacques Maritain* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) see also the series of books published by the

charting the overall history of contemporary Thomism.[11] W. Norris Clarke continues to publish, as do Joseph Owens and Frederick Wilhelmsen.[12] In addition to his historical studies, Ralph McInerny has persuasively addressed the present generation of students with texts for the classroom.[13] Studies of Thomas's metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of God continue to appear,[14] while the study of Thomistic ethics,

---

American Maritain Association and distributed by the University of Notre Dame Press; also, Laurence K. Shook, *Etienne Gilson* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984); John M. McDermott, S.J., *Love and Understanding: The Relation of Will and Intellect in Pierre Rousselot's Christological Vision* (Rome: Universita Gregoriana, 1983); Thomas Sheehan, *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987); Vernon Gregson, ed., *The Desires of the Human Heart: An Introduction to the Theology of Bernard Lonergan* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1988).

11. Gerald A. McCool, S.J., *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), *Nineteeth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989).

12. W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *A Philosophical Approach to God: A Neo-Thomist Perspective* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Wake Forest University, 1979); *The Universe as Journey: Conversations with W. Norris Clarke* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988); Joseph Owens, C.S.s.R., *Human Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), *Towards a Christian Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1990); John R. Catan, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1980); and Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, *Being and Knowing* (Albany, New York: Preserving Christian Publications, Inc., 1991).

13. Ralph McInerny, *Being and Predication: Thomistic Interpretations* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), *Boethius and Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), *St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), *A First Glance at St. Thomas Aquinas: A Handbook for Peeping Thomists* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

14. Robert J. Henle, S.J., *The Theory of Knowledge* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983); Mortimer J. Adler, *Intellect: Mind Over Matter* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990); Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990); Jan Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988); W. J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas's Doctrine of God as Expressed in the Summa Theologiae* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); John F. X. Knasas, *The Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990); David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989).

thanks in part to Alasdair MacIntyre, appears to be a growth industry.[15] And historical, medieval, and comparative studies are published regularly.[16]

So although the giants among us may seem fewer than in previous days (and what endeavor is exempt from this), there is little reason to gnash one's teeth over the future of Thomism. Thomists will have to make extra efforts to locate one another because they may no longer be at the American Catholic Philosophical Association but at home in Crawford, Georgia. Indeed, one can say without much exaggeration that Thomism now exists in a *diaspora* and the sooner we recognize this the sooner we can take comfort in it. The dispersion of Thomism beyond Catholic universities, into secular and Protestant colleges, and beyond the Northeast corridor means that it is flourishing again without the help of official sanction and without extrinsic pressure. The tradition of Thomism, we are finding out, stands on its own two feet.

---

15. Stephen Theron, *Morals as Founded on Natural Law: The Existence of Moral Truths and What Is Required for This Existence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988); Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1990); Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990); John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Michael Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1989), and recent or forthcoming books by three of our contributors: Juha-Pekka Rentto, *Prudentia Juris: The Art of the Good and the Just* (Turku: Acta Universitatis Turkuensis, 1988); Romanus Cessario, O.P., *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991) and Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aquinas on Prudence and Human Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); as well as the paper edition of Yves R. Simon's *The Tradition of Natural Law* with a new introduction by Russell Hittinger to be released in 1992 by Fordham University Press.

16. John L. Farthing, *Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1988); Arvin Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought: A Critique of Protestant Views on the Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian University Press/ W. B. Eerdman's, 1985); Mark D. Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Scott MacDonald, ed., *Being and Goodness* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991); John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University Press, 1984); John Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982).

II

These papers also contain specific proposals for ensuring the future of Thomism through its revitalization. All of these writers agree that Thomism offers something unique and urgently needed in the throes of modernity and the dawning of postmodernity. The differences among their proposals come down to issues of thematic emphasis and fidelity to the historical St. Thomas. For some, who have been called, somewhat unfairly, "Thomists of the strict observance," the contemporary relevance of St. Thomas increases as you resist the temptation to update it. For example, Edward Synan, in a personal reflection, points out that while Maritain's "activity of refusal" toward modernism was sometimes excessive, this posture was more than offset by his commitment to truth without a "chronological criterion." Indeed, critics of the Maritain-Gilson brand of Thomism often complain of an unwillingness to accept postclassical (Kantian) presuppositions. Desmond J. FitzGerald responds to this charge, implied by McCool's ambivalence toward Gilson and Maritain, by reminding us that the Gilsonian emphasis on the hylomorphic unity of the human person and the *esse* of the human soul continue to provide vitality for Thomistic studies.

For a number of "existential" Thomists, the Kantian starting point is like a line in the sand, cross it and you are no longer doing Thomism. For this reason, Raymond Dennehy considers Thomas's epistemological realism the key to its future. It is not enough to celebrate the dynamism of the intellect underlying its affirmational judgment. For philosophy to be properly Thomistic the human intellect must be able to form necessary concepts. He rebuts McCool's claim that judgments can be immutable while the concepts through which these judgments are made can be contingent and mutable.[17] We mistakenly assume from the contingency of objects that their concepts lack all necessity. Such historical contextualism, for Dennehy, belies the materialization of the intellect in which concepts have been reduced to representations of objects. Without direct contact with the sensible world, the philosophical catbird seat is lost, the mind locked in a Cartesian cyclorama.

Marion Montgomery considers that the self must be "opened to being" if the intellect is to recover its ordinate relation to being. It is Thomism's concern for the "present moment" of the individual soul that makes it modern. But the health of the soul depends upon the ability to break from the entrapment of the self and memory. The modern reliance on *ratio* has destroyed the intuitive roots of our direct contact with the extramental real. In the work of Romantic poets like Keats and

17. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, p. 211.

Wordsworth, and the later Eliot, we encounter attempts to overcome this common dilemma. These are the "prudent Romantics" who realize the pretense to absolute creativity comes at the cost of melancholy and despair. What Montgomery calls their Romantic impulse is an unrealized Thomistic intuition which each of us must discover in our journey toward the Other.

Perhaps it was partly Maritain's own intimate relations with poets that led him to posit an "intuition of being" as the foundation of metaphysics. But John F. X. Knasas, seeking to mediate a family quarrel among modern Thomists, argues that such an intuition is impossible given that the intellect is wedded to the sensible singular. We have knowledge of *esse* only insofar as we have knowledge of an individual existent. Only God's essence is identical with existence, and this divine *esse* is beyond the intuitive power of any created mind. Since there is no sensible image of *esse* itself from which to take the intuition, the starting point of metaphysics cannot be an "intuition of being." Metaphysics begins with *habens esse*, the judgmental grasp of the *esse* of things.

In the contemporary arena of practical philosophy, Vittorio Possenti welcomes the revival of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, its emphasis on virtue and the relation of practical to theoretical reason. He argues that this revival was warranted due to the "deprecation of nature" in modern ethical theory. Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment ethics threw out the human *telos* making the task of moral science, as Possenti remarks, that of Sisyphus. But he warns against adopting a version of Aristotle and St. Thomas that severs the connection of ethics and metaphysics, as seen in MacIntyre. A thin theory of the good that omits the final end and natural law cannot do the job of restoring ethics to its proper task.

Other contributors to this volume, and not necessarily "transcendental Thomists," claim the work of St. Thomas carries within itself suggestions for its own authentic *ressourcement*.[18] They are quick to point out, just as Lonergan often does, that Aquinas's own thought beginning with the *Commentary on the Sentences* underwent development. It is both artificial and unrealistic, they argue, to deter further legitimate development. To this argument, someone like Dennehy would respond by inquiring about the limits of what can be called "Thomism."

In fact, an interesting feature of the essay by Benedict Ashley is that the ground for updating he finds in Aquinas is the same as that which Dennehy uses for his stricter observance. In calling for a move from the

---

18. On the comparison of *ressourcement* with *aggiornamento*, see J. A. DiNoia, O.P., "American Catholic Theology at Century's End: Postconciliar, Postmodern, Post-Thomistic," *The Thomist* 54: 4 (October 1990): 499-518.

classical paradigm of timeless knowledge and immutable concepts, Ashley appeals to the sense-oriented design of the Thomistic intellect. "Historical-mindedness" is required of us, he argues, because truth belongs to minds and human minds are immersed in history: "truth in its existentiality is perspectival." For Ashley, this personal, historical side of knowing was introduced into modern Thomism by Maréchal, Gilson, and Maritain, but they did not go far enough in overturning the dominance of a rationalist metaphysics in the various branches of philosophy, thereby returning to the example of St. Thomas. More must be done to free the empirical and social sciences from their subordination to metaphysics. Metaphysics itself will profit from carrying less of the burden: for example, by the proof of a first cause offered by natural science.

A return to the historical Aquinas, some think, will turn up a number of central themes undeveloped among contemporary interpreters. Gregory Froelich, like John F. X. Knasas, revives an important and unresolved Thomistic controversy and reveals its continued relevance. The communal aspect of the common good, he argues, has been mistakenly ignored by interpreters such as Veatch and Maritain. The result is that the goods of the city have come to be viewed as mere means to an individually conceived beatified state. If interpreted correctly, the idea of the common good both fortifies our notion of the imperfect happiness in this life and exposes as unnecessary the distinction often drawn between political community and individual good. The city is an intrinsic good worthy of our investment as well as a participation in and preparation for the eternal city to come.

The view that participation is a neglected idea in modern Thomism is expressed repeatedly in these papers. Joseph Koterski thinks that the lack of attention to Aquinas's metaphysics of participation creates a serious lacuna in Thomistic thought. Participation may be nothing less than the key to overcoming the recent rejection of Thomism. Participation metaphysics, as described by Koterski, is friendlier to the theological Aquinas; it requires a kind of efficient causality rooted in exemplary, not formal, causality, and one not strictly dependent upon the movement from potency to actuality. He shows how the vestiges of formal causality, the Platonic "somehow" so anathema to Aristotle, disappear in Aquinas to be replaced by a version of participation emphasizing creatureliness and the dependence of all things on God. His Christian universe allows Aquinas to develop a participation metaphysics where Aristotle cannot.

One of the surprising aspects of this collection is the number of contributors who address the need for Thomism once again to draw from its theological wells. A number of commentators on the neo-Thomist movement, including McCool, have regretted a philosophy

"separated" from theology and spirituality, and the consequent slide toward rationalism. Josef Pieper, for example, writes, "insofar as a Christian philosophizes in existential seriousness, to that extent, he is neither able nor allowed to leave the truth of revelation out of his consideration." The data of revelation claim to be a legitimate aspect of the philosopher's object—reality. Pieper quotes Whitehead's famous remark "exactness is a fake" to support his insistence that philosophy cannot be antiseptically pure; the reality it seeks to contemplate is not all of a single order. Their preoccupation with method excludes a priori the very answers that philosophers seek.

The attempt to remove all theological tracings from Thomistic philosophy has contributed to its demise in both camps. J. A. DiNoia proposes rectifying this loss of currency with a "'post-neo-Thomistic' theological appropriation of Aquinas." The mistake of the neo-Thomist movement was in giving the impression that Aquinas's philosophical system had to be accepted totally before one could engage him theologically. Philosophy plays no such role in the *Summa*, he argues, where philosophical analysis comprises "moments intrinsic to theological thinking." The result is not a closed system but an open-ended complex of "interrelated dialectical arguments," one that makes itself vulnerable to the best of opposing arguments. Philosophical reflection takes its place in the broad sweep of a theological argument; it cannot be treated independently of its theological context without skewering it, as in the case with the treatise on God is split in half between the treatment of the divine essence and the distinction of persons. The undoubted pull between the particularity of revelation and the universality of philosophy must give way toward the theological project.

The work of John Courtney Murray, as Jude P. Dougherty shows, illustrates how the intellectual tradition of the Catholic church, and particularly its natural law ethics, offers the resources for shaping a public philosophy. Such a philosophy does not have to win the field but simply keep alive the belief that the order of nature can be understood and the good for human beings delineated. To encourage the formation of a new American consensus there must be some agreed-upon common ground for discussion: the natural law view of human nature provides that intellectual platform. Dougherty, like Josef Pieper, warns against approaches that absolutize process at the cost of solutions; an insistence on ensuring a false individual freedom multiplies social pluralism to the breaking point.

One present hope in mediating some of the pluralism is the revival of virtue ethics. However, the treatment of the virtues in Aquinas, as Daniel Westberg shows, exists in tension with the treatise on law. He looks to the theological structure of the *prima pars* itself to elucidate this

relationship, explaining that law is an extrinsic rather than intrinsic guide to human action and motion, a participation in the providential purposes of God for the creation. The concept of participation brings together virtue with law, prudence with providence, the interior with the exterior: "When we know and desire the proper *fines* of human life, then we share in the light of the eternal law." Law and practical reason explain human action from different points of view—the agent's and God's.

Interest in a Thomistic ethics of virtue has also taken hold in Europe. Romanus Cessario chronicles its Augustinian mood: St. Thomas, we are told, is being read as if he were St. Bonaventure. The value of this reading for Cessario is its added dimension to virtue theory, as revealed in its interpretation as the *ordo amoris*, its relation to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the beatitudes, and an emphasis on the crucial distinction between the infused and acquired virtues. As Thomistic ethics rediscovers both its teleological and Christocentric dimensions, the active pursuit of happiness, not the fulfillment of duty, is once again being considered a reliable guide for Christian living.

Some contributors appeal less to a lost tradition in Thomism itself than to the loss of our appreciation for tradition generally. This concern underlies John Cahalan's suggestion that teachers of Thomism have not taken contemporary Thomists seriously, as philosophers in their own right, and have tended to regard their work as commentaries on the historical St. Thomas. Until contemporary Thomists are taught for their own sake, Cahalan argues, students are unlikely to treat the tradition as a viable option for themselves.

Juha-Pekka Rentto is in favor of treating St. Thomas Aquinas as a "postmodern." Aquinas's premodern "ontological rapport of ought and is" can be turned into a postmodern critique of modernity, helping to resolve its dichotomies between reason and will, theory and practice, individual and community. Thomistic ethics are holistic yet personal. Moral rightness is grounded in a metaphysics of human nature, but rather than gathering everyone under a net of universalization, the idea of virtue focuses on two natures of human beings: on what is the same, according to the species, and on what is different, according to the acquired characteristics of individual persons.

One philosopher who has respected the distinctive voices in modern Thomism is Gerald A. McCool. His history of contemporary Thomism, however, is not encouraging: he begins with the assumption that the leading players at the beginning of the Thomistic revival misunderstood their tradition. *Aeterni Patris* codified this mistake with positing a "rigidly unitary system" of theology which was passed unchanged from generation to generation, beginning with the Patristic Age and extending

into modernity. Thus, the neo-Thomist movement, McCool comments, "began with a misunderstanding and ended with disappointment." But what can be gleaned from this development, and the splintering of the Thomistic tradition itself, is a clearer understanding of the tradition and a better grasp of the themes—the dynamism of intellect, connatural knowledge, personal being, the act of existence—that are the most viable for contemporary philosophy.

McCool's longtime Fordham colleague, W. Norris Clarke, also welcomes the decline of "triumphal Thomism" and the dethroning of St. Thomas as an authority figure. Thomists can now learn new skills of "peaceful, even creative co-existence," not only with the pluralism of world philosophy but also with each other. Clarke makes concrete suggestions for Thomistic collaborations with phenomenology, hermeneutics, linguistic analysis, and neo-Kantianism. Clarke himself, however, draws the line at deconstruction.

Robert Harvanek goes farther than either McCool or Clarke in warning Thomists about their future. Thus far, Thomism has failed to respond to the advantages of philosophical pluralism. Thomism must eschew its concentration on metaphysics and move toward a greater emphasis on a social philosophy and phenomenology that will inoculate the tradition with the social and dialogical aspects of human knowledge. As it stands, neo-Thomism cannot succeed because it does not serve the needs of contemporary theology or provide the basis for an autonomous philosophy. Thomists have been obsessed with systematics, have disseminated an outmoded matter/form distinction, and have ignored the relational aspect of both substance and person.

Most of the contributors would agree that too great an emphasis on demonstrative knowledge has resulted in the rationalism of so-called textbook or manual Thomism. Vincent Colapietro contends that the Thomistic stress on the immutable character of truth and the transcendent capacity of reason can be corrected by taking tradition and self-appropriation into account. Using Maritain's idea of "fellowship" in seeking the truth, Colapietro reflects on "the ineradicably traditional character of all human knowing." Philosophizing is not like spinning out a learned catechism; it belongs to the give-and-take of a tradition in which "we must see for ourselves" before we acquire our own voice. Tradition, once secured, cannot be discarded: it exists in an ongoing dialogue that gives our propositions their philosophical force.

Many a student coming to Thomism has wondered about he lack of dialogue among certain of its major proponents. David Burrell asks just such a question: what kept Maritain and Lonergan apart? Why did they never read one another's work or draw upon them in any way? For an answer Burrell takes a look to the tangle of the Thomistic tradition,

finding his clue in the isolation of the Dominican from the Jesuit world in the seventeenth century. The issue, of course, was divine sovereignty and human freedom. Maritain was schooled in the Bañezian tradition of physical premotion, while Lonergan in his early articles on operative grace sought to move beyond the dead end of the Bañez-Molina controversy. In addition, Burrell thinks this also explains why Maritain overrated his work on evil and free will. Mislead by the Bañezian premotion, Maritain's explanation consists of "postulations tailored to the event to be explained" and violates his own distinction between created and uncreated being. The lesson to be learned from Lonergan's account is that some things, such as divine activation, can only be asserted as a theorem: "the *how* escapes us." God is more the cause of creatures' actions than they are, not by divine activation but by "intelligible dependence of the act on God is greater than it is on us." We do not need an explanation in mechanistic terms to show how it works. Burrell concludes that Thomists must learn to recognize where questioning ends because we have reached the "point of unknowing." At least on the issue of freedom, Lonergan was more respectful of the mystery than Maritain.

III

Some might expect that this introduction would seek to adjudicate these different recommendations for "The Future of Thomism." But like a good host who wants to treat all of his guests equally, I will resist that temptation. Before anyone begins such a project they should consider Pieper's warning against seeking methodological purity. They should also consider some practical matters. The different strains of Thomism are going to continue in existence, regardless of which one we might choose; to be preoccupied with the failings of other Thomists can undermine the possibilities of future philosophical cooperation. Also, the choice risks contradicting the way many of us have been schooled as Thomists—we risk turning our backs on the variety of teachers who have taught us about St. Thomas.

In regard to the last of these reasons: it is not unusual for the Thomistic neophyte to receive stern warnings from Gilsonians about reading Maritain, from Maritainians about reading Lonergan, from Lonerganians about reading Aristotle, and from medievalists about reading anyone but St. Thomas. However, even the neophyte may have felt something vaguely unsettling about these warnings: like the kind of condescending connoisseurship of a Wagnerite warning the untutored against listening to, say, Gluck. The neophyte may have already noticed that preeminent modern Thomists when they did find fault seemed to

have read their opponents closely and sought to understand them. Genuine scholarly engagement is one thing, curt dismissal quite another. Those drawn to Thomism as an alternative to modernism may be disappointed to find Thomists less concerned with the world-at-large than with trumping one another. Finally, these internecine quarrels seem to bespeak a closed mind, something less than the mind's openness to reality about which Thomists are always speaking. Maritain wrote about his disappointment in Thomists who

> use the formulas they have been taught in order to save themselves from regarding the thought of others, and to criticize it all the more peremptorily because they expect it to display only error. The universe of intelligible objects, to which first and foremost we owe our loyalty, is not that universe of verbal conclusions which serve all too often as material blinders which keep a man from gazing into the eyes of other men.[19]

That Maritain's advice on Thomistic manners from a half a century ago is still pertinent is cause for some regret. There remains to be a large patch of common ground shared by what Henri de Lubac calls "The Big Family of Thomists." Their resemblances are so obvious, one must ask what discourages their cooperation on issues like the human person, the rational soul, its unity with the body, the importance of sense experience, the primacy of *esse*, the virtues and character, justice and the social order, and the interdependence of philosophy and theology? Is it the result of political and ecclesial pressures stemming from *Aeterni Patris,* as noted earlier? Is Maritain's accusation of rationalism still germane? That diagnosis seems reinforced by MacIntyre's observation that concentration on epistemological differences threatens to multiply *Thomisms* along the lines of modern philosophies.[20] Certainly the underlying intellectualism of modern Thomism is the much-needed antidote for the deconstructionist critique of logocentrism.

The present generation of Thomists can look forward to the end of politicized posturing only if students refuse to reenact the prejudices of their teachers. MacIntyre's recommendation to overcome the present deadlock is intriguing. He suggests the adoption of "unthomistic means," such as the genealogical analysis (Nietzsche) of intellectual history, to engage contemporary philosophy.[21] If Thomists can trace back the

19. Jacques Maritain, "Philosophical Cooperation and Intellectual Justice," in *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 47.

20. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 75.

21. Alasdair MacIntyre, *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1990), p. 57. His empha-

evolution of philosophy to its rejection of Aristotelian-Thomistic teleology and offer contemporary philosophers the means for a narrative self-understanding, then those philosophers will be caught in a dilemma. Either they accept their dependence upon narrative, thereby contradicting their rejection of teleology, or they will remain in the dark. MacIntyre's optimism, based upon his own version of the drive of the mind to know, is rooted in a recognition of the human propensity for storytelling, for discovering the coherence among the beginning, middle, and end of life's journey.

Poets, philosophers, and painters at the turn of the last century found themselves drawn to the Middle Ages precisely for its capacity to help them envision the whole beyond the sum of the parts. Although the romantic project of retrieval went astray through an increasing preoccupation with the virtuosity of selfhood, expressions of its ambitions are scattered throughout this volume. The notion of participation, the emphasis on tradition and individual experience, the rejection of rationalism, the smudging of boundaries between religion and philosophy, the impatience with anything less than ultimate finality, give witness to a continuing search in this generation for Keats's "unheard melodies." It would be surprising, would it not, if the future of Thomism lay in recovering its deep affinities with "prudent" Romanticism.

---

sis on historical, narrative appraisal may be a soft version of teleology, but the analysis he recommends has not been absent from the work of modern Thomists. Gilson's *Dante and Philosophy* is a good example of a genealogical study. One also thinks of Maritain's largely unread *Moral Philosophy*, Cornelio Fabro's *God in Exile*, James Collins's *God in Modern Philosophy*, Vernon Bourke's *History of Ethics*, and Marion Montgomery's recent Thomistic critique of American culture, *The Prophetic Poet and the Spirit of the Age*, 3 vols. (LaSalle, Illinois: Sherwood, Sugden & Company, Publishers, 1981-84).