

**Preface to the Thought
of St.**

Thomas Aquinas

*Together with a Glossary of
Thomistic Terminology*



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Historical Background

In order to appreciate the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, one should study them against the historical background of theological development. Most of his ideas, individually considered, had already evolved over many centuries through the contribution of the sources of revelation, the writings of the Church Fathers, theologians, and philosophers both Christian and non-Christian. It was the particular genius of St. Thomas to collate these contributions and to unite them with his own very original ideas into a single integral system which was clear and economical and which revolutionized theology and even philosophy.

Previous to the 13th century the development of Christian thought is a highly complex process. It does not concern us here to go into it in great detail. Rather, it should suffice to sketch a general outline that will trace the outstanding trends which eventually led to different schools of thought, whether theological or purely philosophical, by the time of St. Thomas.

Christianity and Philosophy

Christianity is a religion founded upon faith in divine revelation, not upon human thought. It made its appearance, however, at a time of very rich philosophical traditions among the peoples who were the particular objects of early evangelization. Many of these took offense at the "absurdity" of the Christian gospel (witness St. Paul's experience at Athens). In order to show that these doctrines of divine revelation were not repugnant to human reason, there arose a group of early Christian writers, most of them converts, whom history calls apologists. Most of these apologists were very learned men and steeped in current philo-

sophical traditions. They attempted, some of them quite successfully, to demonstrate the reasonableness of the Christian catechism, or at least to show that it was not unreasonable. We might mention among them St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian. So, for the first time, Christianity encountered the ancient Greek philosophies and Roman humanities and began to make use of them in its own defense, without, however, ever allowing itself to become just another philosophical system.

The Traditions

There was at the time of the apologists a number of schools of thought which often compenetrated one another, some synthetically, others eclectically. In either case they developed into advanced structures of philosophy. Without going into each of them in particular, I must mention the two schools that proved most influential in the later development of Scholasticism. These were the systems of Plato and Aristotle.

Plato (427 B.C.-347 B.C.)

Plato was a student of Socrates. He composed his marvellous Dialogues, making it sometimes difficult to distinguish his original thought from that of his master. He is the first pure philosopher, i.e. he purged reason from the images and language of myth and imagination. He did not want any interference from poets and their symbolic language. Yet Plato himself was a natural poet and the dream of subsequent Christian mystics. This is because he starts his thought, not from the experience of the material, but with the intuition of the divine and proceeds from there—downwards! His ideas will have a profound effect on subsequent thinkers, especially at Alexandria in Egypt and in NorthAfrica.

The Neo-Platonists

In Alexandria there arose under the pagans **Plotinus**, **Proclus**, and **Porphry**, a development of Platonic thought called **Neo-Platonism**. Their central ideas will build on Plato's "exaggerated realism" (also called "idealism," depending upon the point of view), i.e. the objective reality of Ideas which give rise, through divine illumination, to the ideas that we formulate in our minds; the doctrine of the Logos, or Word of God and the emanation of the universe by hierarchical rings. Some of these thinkers were monoists (i.e. pantheists), believing that all things were one, and others pluralists, maintaining that things are distinct from God and one another. Needless to say, the God of the pagan Neo-Platonists was not a personal God in our Christian sense. Neo-Platonism, rather than pure Platonism, would come to dominate throught for centuries to come.

Among the Christian Neo-Platonists we might mention **Clement of Alexandria**, **Pseudo-Dionysius** (known to the medievals simply as Dionysius), and **Origen** (although this last was quite original in his thought). The Neo-Platonists will have a profound influence on St. Augustine and, through Augustine, on St. Anselm.

Aristotle (384 B.C.-322 B.C.)

A student of Plato's and possibly the greatest original thinker of all time, Aristotle represented the culmination of the philosophical genius of the ancient Greeks. From the 13th century on, medieval thinkers will refer to him as The Philosopher. His method of approach was the opposite of Plato's. Instead of descending from the most abstract to the most concrete, Aristotle proceeded from the ground up. The material singular is the first known, then one proceeds upwards, by way of abstraction, to the First Cause. Thereby we have a true grasp of reality. Aristotle

was a “moderate realist.” His great metaphysical contribution was hylomorphism, the composition and real distinction of matter and form as applied to all contingent beings. Because of his preoccupation with the sensible, material world, Aristotle was often called, unfairly, the philosopher of atheism. For this reason early Christian thinkers looked upon him with suspicion.

Except for his dialectics (logic) Aristotle was ignored by Christians until **Boethius** (480-524—”The last of the great Romans and the first of the medievals”) made such use of him, especially in his treatises on music, on the Trinity, and in his classic, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, yet the suspicion, nourished by his Arab commentators, would continue right through the 12th century and, among many Christian thinkers, even beyond. The followers of Aristotle were called peripatetics after the custom of his original pupils to walk about while thinking. Aristotle himself is often called the Stagirite after his place of origin in Thrace.

St. Augustine (354-430)

The third line of influence, of extreme importance, was that of the bishop of Hippo. So great was his authority to the Scholastic development that to contradict St. Augustine was considered tantamount to heresy. No single individual, save St. Thomas, has had more influence on Catholic theology even to our present day. A very original thinker with a prodigious, if unsystematic, output, Augustine was to Plato and Neo-Platonism what Thomas would be to Aristotle. Both directed the thought of their mentors toward Christian orthodoxy.

Even though Augustine knew very little of Aristotle, he would at any rate take more readily to Plato, for the latter’s mystical tendencies would appeal to his highly spiritual nature. Like Plato and the Neo-Platonists, his thought centered first on God and then descended to His creatures. Likewise, he adopted their

teachings about the objective reality of Ideas (centered in God) which occasion our knowledge by divine illumination, adding a number of original ideas of his own.

St. Augustine was not fond of philosophy for its own sake. But because of the doctrine that truth is truth and truth is one, Augustine denied the distinction of theology and philosophy, arguing that the latter was not an independent science but a servile part of theology. “*Credo ut intelligam*,” was his phrase: “I believe that I might understand.” Believing came first, reasoning followed as a psychological bolster to faith and an instrument in its defense. The question of the philosophy’s independence of theology would later become a subject of much controversy.

Scholasticism

The great body of theological and philosophical learning that developed in the schools of the 12th and 13th centuries, and that came to be known as the *Via Antiqua* (the Old Way) of Catholic thinking, is called Scholasticism. By that time the schools, later to be consolidated into universities, were well established throughout Europe, particularly in France. The most productive of these schools were attached to the abbeys of St. Victor, Chartres, and Paris. The universities that would arise were at Paris, the great center of speculative thought; Bologna, famous for law; Padua, for medicine; and Oxford, with its penchant for empirical sciences. Likewise, a great center of the Three Rings (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) arose at Toledo, soon afterwards at Salamanca.

It is difficult to pinpoint the actual founder of Scholasticism. There certainly were forerunners, such as **St. Isidore of Seville** (+639), the **Venerable Bede** (673-735), **Alcuin** (730-804), and **John Scotus Erigena** (810-c. 877), to mention only a few of the more original thinkers, all of them more-or-less of the Neo-

Platonic persuasion. Another great contributing figure of the time was pope **St. Gregory the Great** (540-604). Perhaps the most influential of these to later scholars was the aforementioned Boethius, who attempted to combine Plato with Aristotelian thought. But historians of the movement usually credit **St. Anselm of Canterbury** (1033-1109) with being the founder as a systematic movement. Anselm's teachings were likewise in the Augustinian-Neo-Platonic line and stimulated the great development of the following two centuries.

The 12th century represented the great build-up of Scholasticism and continued to be dominated by Augustinianism as the "orthodox" line of thought in theology. Each of the masters of Paris added his own genius to its development, and tended to look upon Aristotle as the "heretic" philosopher whose metaphysics was totally alien to Christian revelation, even though the genius of the Stagirite's dialectics (logic) was appreciated and utilized.

It was the tradition of these masters to compose books compiling the thoughts of the past and contemporary masters as well as their own inferences in *sentences*, which served as medieval textbooks; *summae*, which represented a systematized collection of their particular teachings, *quodlibets*, where they treated of particular questions posed to them, and *disputed questions*, whereby they treated of the controversies of their time. Most of them also composed commentaries on the Scriptures and ancient thinkers.

Among the many *sentences* was a particularly useful contribution by Master **Peter Lombard** (1100-1160), because it was a veritable encyclopedia of the teachings of previous and contemporary masters, while its own author kept his own ideas in the background. This *Sentences* of Peter Lombard was to become the universal textbook in the universities for the next several cen-

turies. Subsequent masters, including St. Thomas, would use it as their basic text, adding to it their own commentaries.

During the latter part of the century the Scholastics began to be more stimulated by Aristotle, as many of his hitherto unknown writings were coming to their attention via Spain and the Arab philosophers. Before this time Aristotle's works were usually fragmented and were translations of translations—from Greek into Syriac into Arabic into Latin (the Scholastics were usually ignorant of Greek). It was also at this time that philosophy began to separate itself from theology as an independent science in its own right, and, much to the dismay of the more conservative theologians, some of the philosophical faculties were becoming Aristotelian, thus driving a wedge between theology and philosophy. The Arabs Avicenna, and later Averroes, were looked upon as hopelessly at odds with Christianity (as indeed they were in many of their own non-Aristotelian diversions). But purged of Arabian peculiarities, Aristotle came to look much more conformable. The most influential of the masters inspired by The Philosopher was **Peter Abelard** (1079-1142), himself more a philosopher than theologian, who would get into hot water with the Church authorities and prove the bane of St. Bernard. Still, it was Abelard who would exercise in philosophy such a profound influence in the next (13th) century.

Something occurred in the first half of the 13th century that was to give Aristotle his great boost in the schools. This was the appearance of the newly-founded mendicant orders at the universities, particularly the Dominicans (1217) and Franciscans (1219). The arrival of these lowly "beggars" occasioned a great controversy with the secular and monastic masters. At first the mendicants were dyed-in-the-wool Augustinians, but with the arrival of **St. Albert the Great** (ca. 1199-1280) the Dominicans in particular began to base their thought on Aristotelian rather than Augustinian or Platonic foundations. The Franciscans for

the most part remained true to Augustine, especially **St. Bonaventure** (1121-1274), even though they too became swayed by The Philosopher. This, incidentally, has established a tradition on the outlook of two orders that comes down to us even to this day. Much of the rebirth of Aristotle was due to the prestige of St. Albert the Great, the most widely learned man of the age, who would recognize in Aristotle a genius worth plumbing. Albert was the true “Renaissance man” before his time. He sought to bring to bear all knowledge, speculative and empirical, to the service of theology. His great tribute to philosophy was fearlessly to demonstrate that all true philosophy is conformable to sacred doctrine and is its noble and indispensable instrument.

The Arab and Jewish Thinkers

During the so-called Dark Ages of the Latin West, a very remarkable civilization was prevailing among the children of Mohammed. Having little by little eaten away the old Hellenic empire, these Arabs proceeded to absorb the rich intellectual heritage of the Greeks, much in the same way that the ancient Romans had done centuries before. Syria was first to yield to their conquests, followed by Egypt, North Africa, and finally Spain itself, their foothold in the West. Baghdad and Cordova became vibrant centers of thought. The Muslim Arab scholars had much the same problem as the Christians—to conform thought to their inspired “revelation” in the Koran. They had access to the writings of Aristotle, most of which were lacking to the West. Their great thinkers began to arise in the 9th century in present day Iraq, and were influenced both by Neo-Platonism and Aristotle. The outstanding ones to be mentioned for our purposes are **Alfarabi** (+950), **Avicenna** (Ibn Sina, 980-1037), and **Averroes** of Cordova (Ibn Rochd, 1126-1198).

Avicenna, the first of these known to the West, added a great deal of Aristotelian philosophy to a Neo-Platonic background.

Alfarabi, who was more a theologian, was also more mystical and orthodox in Islamic teachings and reactive to the pagan elements. He was the first to recognize the real distinction between existence and essence, a distinction which St. Thomas will also teach. The most influential, however, was Averroes, a philosopher who reacted against the stringencies of Islamic orthodoxy and attempted to present a “true” interpretation of Aristotelian thought. He considered philosophy superior to theology and simple faith. He added a great deal of his own, basically Neo-Platonic, notions about the celestial bodies and their intelligences not found in The Philosopher which were repugnant to Christians, and devised what would be a subtle, anti-Thomistic theory of human knowledge that would influence St. Albert. Many of the Scholastics mistook Averroes’s ideas for that of the Stagirite, and thus the resistance. He became known as The Commentator, but St. Thomas will also refer to him as the “Corrupter.” Nevertheless, Averroes would have great authority with the Scholastic philosophers.

Contemporary with Averroes at Cordova was the great Jewish theologian, **Moses Maimonides** (Moses ben Maimon, 1135-1204), whom St. Thomas will hold in esteem. Rabbi Moses, like St. Thomas, will teach the distinction of philosophy from theology, and that the latter only will yield the higher truths of faith, although the conclusions of the former are legitimate within their boundaries. Maimonides, like his Arab compatriots, synthesized Aristotle with Neo-Platonic thought, although he held Aristotle to be the greater authority.

Theology vs. Philosophy

A controversy which raged during the high Scholastic era of the 13th century, as indeed it continues into our own day, is the relationship of theology and philosophy. Theology is the science

of divine revelation. It argues from premises of divine revelation found in the Bible, apostolic Tradition, and the formularies of the Church councils. Philosophy, on the other hand, argues from premises of human experience unaided by revelation. Following St. Augustine, as we have seen, the early and certain later Scholastics tended to combine the two into a single wisdom, with philosophy considered but a vestibule, or useful department, of theology. Being Neo-Platonistic, after all, their thought processes began with God as revealed and only then proceeded to His creation. However, beginning with Abelard, the two disciplines began to separate and were taught as separate sciences in different faculties of the universities. The philosophers would not go so far as Abelard in a two-truths theory (i.e. philosophy can legitimately arrive by reason at a truth contrary to theology), but philosophy, albeit subordinate to theology in ultimates, was considered independent and, after St. Albert, quite useful to its big sister.

St. Thomas will see philosophy as an independent discipline (even though he did not consider himself *ex professo* a philosopher and believed a priest and religious had no business being “just” a philosopher). For Thomas both disciplines sought Wisdom, each from a different point of view (formal object). However, the Wisdom of the believer was higher and infinitely more seekable, and it absorbed into itself the goal of the philosopher and his method for achieving it as belonging also to itself. Hence, Aristotle, purely as a philosopher and never looked upon as a theologian in the Christian sense, would come into his own in the 13th century as The Philosopher. St. Thomas would use his philosophy, indeed would correct it, expand it, and bring it to perfection as a theologian who is privileged with a broader and higher knowledge of truth. In the words of Gilson, Thomas would “change the water of philosophy into the wine of theology.” In its turn, philosophy would enable theology to become a legitimate science according to the former’s own laws of reasoning.

St. Augustine, as we have said, had little use for philosophy as such. Having been delivered from the futile errors of the sensual world into the realm of Christian truth, the “dear Eternity” in his own phrase, he reacted against the empty speculations of non-believers. Neither had St. Anselm much use for simple speculating. **St. Bernard** (1091-1153) had even less. But even they had to use the dialectics of (Aristotelian) philosophy to express their theologizing. As in the case of Aristotle, St. Thomas, although very much indebted to Augustine and the Neo-Platonists (especially pseudo-Dionysius, Boethius, and St. Gregory), would not hesitate to “correct” their reasoning, when necessary, by respectfully giving it an interpretation in conformity with truth, or by simply declaring it wrong.

On the other hand, Plato and the prominent Neo-Platonists were considered authentic theologians, in excusable error, of course, but theologians nonetheless. But to the Augustinian theological faculties Aristotle, the “philosopher of atheism,” could never be so considered. Thus the controversies began. They will later account for the condemnations hurled at Thomas and other Aristotelian theologians by the bishop of Paris and the (Dominican!) archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Kilwardby, in 1277, three years after Thomas’s death.

The Schools of Thought

We can now identify, briefly, the four prominent schools of thought that involved the Scholastics at the time of St. Thomas:

1. The **Neo-Platonists**. These were the masters who subscribed to a basic Neo-Platonic structure, but altered in a way to conform to Christian dogma. In general terms, their thought started from God and descended to His creatures. The observation of singular, material things had no part to play. Hylomorphism, the doctrine that all contingent beings were composed of matter and form, was especially excluded from their structure.

2. **The Augustinians.** These represented the traditional, conservative, and "orthodox" school of thought that based its ideas on St. Augustine, but allowed themselves to be influenced by a number of ideas from other sources, including Aristotle, Avicenna, and other Arab and Jewish thinkers. Their thought centered on the close union between philosophy and theology, a mistrust of Aristotelian metaphysics, the identity of the soul with its faculties, the primacy of the will over the intellect ("Voluntarism"), a theory about the identity of being with light, a positive actuality to prime matter (i.e. that it was not pure potency), denial of a personal agent intellect, the need for direct divine illumination in knowledge, universal hylomorphism, and the rational demonstrability of temporal creation. Among their prominent spokesmen were the Franciscan masters **Robert Grosseteste** (1170-1253), **Alexander of Hales** (1175-1245), and, profoundly, St. Bonaventure. These Augustinians would prove the most stalwart opponents of St. Thomas. (This academic opposition, however, would not effect the warm friendship between Bonaventure and Thomas.)

3. **The Averroists.** These masters were philosophers rather than theologians. They intended to follow "pure" Aristotelianism, but many ideas of Averroes crept into their thought, such as the unity of the intellect, which led to a denial of personal immortality. A spokesman for this school would be **Siger of Brabant** (1235-c.1281), a particularly spirited individual and bitter opponent of St. Thomas in interpreting Aristotle.

4. **The Thomists.** St. Thomas was a popular and respected master and attracted a number of pupils during his lifetime, especially among his Dominican confreres and among the students of philosophy. He was influential enough in his lifetime to be cited by other masters from Paris to Oxford to Rome. He esteemed and used the philosophy of Aristotle but did not swallow the Stagirite whole. Rather, he showed that the Stagirite's

thought could be made compatible with Christianity, and he certainly gave an appreciation of Aristotle to the growing number of his disciples. He also made academic enemies among the masters of the theological schools mentioned above.

Biographical Sketch of St. Thomas

Thomas was born in 1225 at the castle of Roccasecca, between Rome and Naples. His father was the count of Aquino, his mother, of German blood, a cousin of the notorious Emperor Frederick I ("Barbarossa") and his grandson, the formidable Frederick II. Apparently Thomas's precocity was recognized early, for while still a young teenager he was sent off to the new University of Naples to study under Peter of Ireland. Here he was trained in the usual "elementary" disciplines and was said to have excelled in music (which perhaps will account for his poetic abilities later on). And it was here that he first came into contact with the Order of Preachers, whose ranks he joined without parental permission. For their blue-blooded cadet son to associate with those strange and socially unacceptable "beggars" was too much for his family. Accordingly, they waylaid and kidnapped the teenaged friar while he was on his way to Paris and imprisoned him for several months in their castle, using every means to dissuade him from his chosen vocation. Finally they gave in and released him, and he made his way to Paris, where he began his philosophical studies. It was here that he met and befriended St. Albert, who occupied there one of the two Dominican chairs of theology.

The young Thomas accompanied St. Albert to Cologne in 1248, where at the command of the master of the Order Albert established a general studium of the order and where Thomas would win his baccalaureate in theology. A story is told, whether true or apocryphal, that, because of his taciturnity, Thomas was thought stupid by his fellow students, and they nicknamed him

“the dumb Sicilian ox.” When this came to the ears of St. Albert, the old master is reputed to have said, “You call him a dumb ox, but I tell you, one day his braying will be heard throughout the world.”

In 1252 the master of the order recalled Thomas to Paris, where he prepared for his master’s degree in theology, which he achieved in 1256, when he was given one of the two Dominican chairs. This was the time when the great controversy was raging with the secular masters over the rights of the mendicants to teach and during which Thomas and St. Bonaventure, in their defense of the orders, became close friends. Here Thomas lectured from the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and produced the first of his *Commentaries*. It was here also that, probably at the request of St. Raymond of Peñafort, he began work on his great treatise *On the Truth of the Catholic faith against the Muslims*, the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

Thomas was called to Naples in 1259 and to the papal curia at Orvieto three years later to teach young “common” friars (i.e. those not meant for the universities) at the studium there. In 1265, probably at his own request, he set up a special studium at Santa Sabina in Rome, where he was the single professor and could experiment with his teaching methods. This was a time of prodigious literary creativity, and when he met the great Greek scholar friar William of Moerbeke, whom he convinced to translate the remaining untranslated works of Aristotle into good scholastic Latin. Probably by popular demand, Thomas returned to Paris in 1269 to resume a chair of theology there.

The theological training of young Dominicans did not please Thomas. Only two teachable students, those with high IQs, could be sent per year to the universities by each province (three to Paris). The rest, the “*fratres communes*” (common, or simple, brethren) would receive only an education in practical theology

to prepare them to preach and hear confessions. At Orvieto, where Thomas taught these “common” youths, he felt they were being cheated out of the rich heritage of the science. It was there that he conceived the idea for his great masterpiece, the *Summa Theologiae* as a primer, or introduction, for their training. No doubt it was at Santa Sabina in Rome that he experimented with his method. Recalled to Paris, however, he could not spend the desired time on the work because of his lectoral duties. But in 1272 he was authorized by the chapter of his province to erect a new general studium at Naples. This also became a period of monumental output, with commentaries on Scripture, on Aristotle and other works, besides continuance on the *Summa*. Summoned to the Council of Lyons in 1274 as a *peritus*, Thomas took ill on the road and was taken to the nearby Cistercian abbey of Fossanova near his home town of Aquino, where he died on March 7, the last part of his *Summa* incomplete.

Thomas was canonized by Pope John XXII in 1319, declared a doctor of the Church by Pius V in 1567 and named the official teacher of the Church and patron of all Catholic schools by Leo XIII in 1880.

The Subsequent History of Scholasticism

Looking back from a perspective of many centuries, it is now common opinion to see in St. Thomas Aquinas the high point of Scholasticism. But this was certainly not recognized at the time. Although Thomas was universally respected for his humility and obvious sanctity and his teachings were specially appreciated by the philosophical faculty at Paris, there were rumblings against many of his novel and dangerous ideas on the part of the masters of theology, even prior to his death. Three years following his death, in 1277, a number of his theses were formally con

demned at Paris and Oxford. Theoretically, they could not be taught there. But the censure did not apply elsewhere, and, eventually, was ignored even in those two places. Nevertheless, save for certain masters, and even though his own order declared Thomism its official theology a few years later, Thomas's writings would not come into their own for over a century. It took the Council of Trent in the 16th century to raise them to full authority and Leo XIII in the 19th to declare him the official teacher of Catholicism.

Apparently even Thomas's experiments in teaching made little impression. We find the Dominicans officially demanding continuance of the text of Peter Lombard and the urgency of other theologians' works before those of Thomas for the next two centuries. Even the unity of the great *Summa* was broken down, only the IIa-IIae (on virtues and vices) being utilized as a practical handbook for the preaching apostolate. Thomas's idea of training the young Dominicans in speculation had not seemed to catch on.

As for the other schools of Scholasticism, they would plod along, reaching a high point in Thomas's contemporary at Oxford, **Roger Bacon** (c.1210-1292) and a final high point in the system of **Bl. Duns Scotus** (1274-1308). This subtle Franciscan master has often been acclaimed as the nemesis of Thomism. But this is both untrue and unfair. Scotus's system, it is true, will be quite different from St. Thomas's as his whole approach is different, but Scotus was admittedly influenced by Thomas's teachings and agrees with him on many points.

Nevertheless, Scholasticism in general declined after St. Thomas. There were many reasons for this. Among them, internal to the movement, was the tendency of the thinkers to become in their controversies too obsessed with irrelevancies (later popu-

larly parodied by the "How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?" controversy). Too many original, sometimes bizarre, thoughts intruding into the background of the various traditions led to confusion and frustration. But the greatest death knell from within the movement was sounded by the English Franciscan, **William of Ockham** (1299-1350). His is a case of dialectics run wild. Teaching that the only realities are singular, Ockham concluded that universals have no objective value, that universals are only words. He also finally split philosophy off from theology by teaching the double truth theory, thereby achieving a kind of academic schizophrenia. His teachings led to a new school called **Nominalism**, a sceptical movement that would have a profound effect on subsequent European thought and would lead to a subjectivism that the old Scholastics had never even thought of, but which would be taken up by Descartes, the "father" of modern philosophy. Ockham was the initiator of the *Via Moderna* ("the New Way") as opposed to his predecessors *Via Antiqua* ("the Old Way"). (One of Ockham's and Nominalism's most ardent disciples, incidentally, would be Gabriel Biel, the teacher and mentor of a friar named Martin Luther!)

Reacting against the confusion of thought and the pride and vanity he saw in the disputing masters, **John Gerson** (+1492), himself chancellor of the University of Paris, would passionately preach a reaction to all "idle" speculation and demand a return to the simple piety of a St. Bernard and St. Francis. This would feed into an anti-speculative movement called *Devotio Moderna* ("the Modern Devotion"), so famously represented by Thomas a Kempis and his *Imitation of Christ* which, in turn, would have its effect on the Protestant Reformers. On the other hand, the brilliant **Nicholas of Cues** (+1464) would react in another way: he would attempt to create a whole new system of theology that would synthesize all previous schools by "rising above" them and going so far as to deny the value of dialectics. Foreshades of Hegel in the 15th century!

But there were external reasons as well for the decline of Scholasticism. Beginning already in the 15th century, the old political unity of Europe was beginning to break up. The role of the pope as a super-prince having universal political authority in Christendom was challenged, resulting in the breakdown even of the spiritual authority of the Church. This latter was aggravated by the great bubonic plague with the resulting environment of moral corruption among churchmen, from the papacy to the parish. Likewise, the universities were becoming progressively nationalized and vernacular languages were replacing the old universal Latin of the scholars and effecting the consecrated meaning of the old common vocabulary. The renaissance of classical learning was producing scholars enamored with the humanism and arts of the ancients rather than their intellectualism, who became scoffing enemies of the “crudities” of Scholasticism, like Petrarch and Erasmus. Put these phenomena all together and you end up with the Reformation, which carried off a third of Catholic Europe and was the death stroke of the old tuition.

Scepticism (the daughter of Nominalism) and disregard for the old religion led to the rise of philosophies of a completely different nature, most of them inimical to the Catholic faith and Scholasticism. The inevitable rise of the empirical sciences, absorption with the phenomena of things in space and time rather than with their essence or whatness, would lead men into observing and measuring and distract them even further from speculating. The Galileo case would further sour the dwindling relations between Scholasticism and the advancing empirical sciences. So that today we find systems of thought based upon a subjectivism that was totally foreign to the Scholastics and others based upon the measurement of phenomena rather than the reading of essences, systems that have nothing to do with the old teachings that began with Scriptures and the ancient Greeks and continued like an unbroken line through the centuries. True, these new philosophies no doubt speak with relevance to the modern world,

but, for all their brilliance, they have the character of being pre-Greek. Even many of the same consecrated words they have adopted, ultimately from the Schools, have acquired totally different meanings.

Some Basic Teachings of St. Thomas

It would be both presumptuous and absurd to pretend in this sketch to present the plentitude, or even the basic core, of the theology of St. Thomas. But as an aid to introducing it, I believe it would be helpful to summarize certain of his most characteristic teachings. Since Thomas was foremost (perhaps exclusively) a theologian rather than a philosopher, the schema of his system is theological rather than, like Aristotle's, philosophical inquiries which begin with material things. Having integrated the truths derived from divine revelation and certified through faith and the already-thought-out processes of Aristotelian philosophy, Thomas endeavors to present the whole picture of reality, beginning with the highest Being and then proceeding to His creation. So in his two *Summae* his schema is: God → Creation → Man → Man's return to God. Hence, some basics:

God:

1. Being (esse) is reality at its most ultimate, both in itself and in our mind. Looked at from different points of view, being is: unity (oneness), truth (relative to knowledge), and the good (relative to appetite or will). These last are called *transcendentals*, because they transcend all limitations.

2. Reflecting on Exodus 3:14, I AM WHO AM, God is He-who-Is, i.e. infinite existing, absolute “Is-ing.” This is an original insight, for all Thomas's predecessors saw God as an essence

that has infinite being, whether “eternal immobility” (Augustine), an “infinite ocean of entity” (Dionysius), or “one whose nature is being” (Anselm). But for Thomas being (*esse*) is the ultimate: God is being in its infinite sense. God’s essence, as it were, is To Be. (For obvious reasons, language is difficult here because it is so much above any experience.) God is what creatures only have by participation. So from the very onset St. Thomas inaugurates a whole new metaphysics based on Being-as-such. Thomas is the quintessential “existentialist.”

3. Since God is Being itself, we have no direct concept of Him. Our way of knowing Him is negative, but at the same time, in a way, positive. Negative, because we must deny of Him whatever is evil (non-being) or limited in created things; positive, because those universal qualities which in creatures are limited, in God are infinite. But even here, God’s being and those perfections are only analogous rather than univocal to our understanding of the terms. Short of the beatific vision we cannot know God as He is. So God is ineffable.

4. Only in God are existence (*esse*) and essence (whatness) identical. In creatures they are really distinct. [Alfarabi, as against the Neo-Platonists and Augustinians: but the Arab considered existence as an accident, whereas St. Thomas sees it as the very act conferring being.] God is simple, creatures are complex.

5. God’s existence can be demonstrated in five ways. All these lead to existence (*esse*) rather than to highest essence [against St. Anselm’s famous “ontological” argument].

6. The Persons of the Trinity are eternal subsisting relations in the “Is-ing” (*esse*) of one infinite Being (*Esse*).

Creation:

7. It cannot be demonstrated that God created the universe in time [against the Augustinians] or that it is eternal [with St. Albert and against the Averroists and, probably, Aristotle]. That it has a beginning is known only through revelation.

8. There is no real relationship between God and His creatures. But there is a real relationship between creatures and God. That is, God is totally free and independent of creation, but creation depends totally upon God for existence and sustenance.

9. Creatures have being by participation in Being (God). But this in no way implies pantheism.

10. Evil is non-being in the sense of the privation of what should be.

11. The law of creation demands a hierarchical structure, from highest angel to the lowest material things.

12. Angels are subsisting intelligences composed, not of matter and form [against all previous thinkers] but of essence (potency) and existence (act). Thus Thomas limits the old hylomorphic doctrine to material creatures only [with St. Albert against the Augustinians].

13. (*Prime*) matter, which is pure potency [Aristotle] is the principle of individuation. So each angel, being without matter, is his own species [against all previous thought]. Angels know by illumination from the next superior angel, and they diffuse knowledge to the next inferior angel.

14. *Substantial forms* are simple, not an amalgam of other forms united into one, because the single form itself confers the proper existence [An original teaching.]

15. All corporeal beings are composed of matter and form as the potential and active principle, respectively [hylomorphism, but limited to corporeal things].

Man:

16. Because of his soul man is in the hierarchy of intelligent beings, but he is the lowest therein. But his soul is not an intelligence like the angels, but essentially the form of his body [against the Arabs and the Neo-Platonists].

17. In man there is a twofold composition: as an intelligent being, he is composed of intellect (potency) and existence (act); as a corporeal being he is composed further of matter (potency—the body) and form (act—the soul). But there is no plurality of forms in him because his form (soul) simply confers the final act (existence). [This is original, against all previous thinkers, including Aristotle.]

18. Because the soul is act it subsists separated from the body. Because it is an act of *this* body, it retains a “transcendental” relation with its body even after separation.

19. The Creator has endowed man with certain virtual elementary spiritual knowledge which takes the form of innate principles: the first principle of knowledge, called the principle of contradiction (“a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time”) and the first principle of willing, called *synderesis* (“good is to be sought, evil avoided”).

20. Every man is endowed with an agent intellect (like the angels) [against the Neo-Platonists, St. Augustine and the Arabs] and a possible intellect; a possible intellect because as the faculty of the form of the body it must depend upon encounter with material things through the senses. The senses imprint the

“species” of material thing encountered upon possible intellect and the agent intellect provides illumination so that the intelligible substantial form of the thing is apprehended together with the accidental forms of individual properties.

21. There are three acts whereby the agent intellect informs the possible intellect and activates it: 1) *apprehension* of the material thing (ens) through the senses by means of the “intelligible species” (all the forms, the substantial and otherwise, that pertain to the thing.); 2) *judgment*, which provides the *isness*, the existence (esse) of the thing (“A is B”), both transcendental and with its categories, and therein is truth because truth is being; and 3) *reasoning*, where judgments combine into bodies of truth, which will serve as principles of demonstration [Aristotle’s logic, but extended by the theologian].

Man’s Return to God:

22. All form is activity inclined toward the full concrete realization of its being. Non-intelligent forms incline naturally to the single good written into their nature. (The good is being-as-desired.) But in man, as an intelligent being, this inclination can tend toward anything perceived as good. This tendency in man is his *will*. Thus man has a free will and can choose among many goods.

23. The intellect informs man’s will concerning possible choices, but the will is free to lead the intellect into misjudgment.

24. The ultimate realization of man’s being is God; by his nature man tends to the goodness which is God Himself. Nothing short of God can perfect and satisfy man (God is man’s end.) When man truly apprehends God, he will choose Him and do so freely.

25. Even though there is complex interaction between the intellect and will, the intellect is the superior faculty [against all the Augustinians and Scotists]. The essence of man's ultimate end will consist in beatific vision. Thus St. Thomas is an "intellectualist" rather than a "voluntarist."

26. Whatever is truly reasonable for man is good for man. The intellectual knowledge directing the will to the good object is conscience. Even when conscience is mistaken, granted that alternatives have been weighed by reason, it must be obeyed, since it is judged reasonable.

27. One and the same intention involves the end and the means, and is to be judged accordingly.

28. Those actions that tend toward the true good, whether objectively so or reasonably considered so, are good actions. Those that do not are deprivations and evil: sins. Moral goodness and evil are judged according to: 1) the object of the action; 2) the intention; and 3) the circumstances.

29. Habits modify man's faculties and incline him to good or evil actions. If to good, they are virtues; if to evil, they are vices.

30. The "moral" virtues, i.e. those that incline the will to the truly good, are all pre-contained in the four great cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Together with divine grace, these help determine man's actions.

These, then, are some basic teachings of St. Thomas, most of them philosophical. He goes on to apply them and others in interpreting the great mysteries of our faith—the Trinity, the Incarnation of Our Lord, Grace, the Church and the Sacraments

(especially the Holy Eucharist), and Last Things, as well as his great tracts on law and the governance of men.

What particularly characterizes the system of St. Thomas is its economic construction, its pre-eminence of abstract reasoning, its logical synthesis of previous thought, including the new developments of his day, its simplification and suppression of the confusion within Scholasticism, and its absolute coherence to divine revelation and Church teachings.

Is St. Thomas Relevant Today?

Our world is not the world of the medieval Scholastics, any more than their world was that of Plato or Aristotle. Indeed, our world seems in many ways almost infinitely removed from the Scholastics. They shared the same faith, which most people today do not share. They shared the same physical cosmology, which obviously no one today can accept. They shared the same view of man as God's creature tending back to God, which few today will embrace. They saw the dignity and value of intellectual speculation, which today has mostly been given over to empirical experimentation and technology. They struggled with a philosophy that was universal in its scope, while today the tendency is toward narrow specialization in thought. They were accustomed to a step-by-step discipline of dialectic that is foreign to the methodologies of our day, which tend to downplay the role of the mind and stress the interplay of the imagination and emotions ("St. Thomas is so dry!"). There is a myriad of reasons for these changes that nothing short of volumes of the history of Western civilization could satisfactorily account for. So the question is quite legitimate: Is the thought of St. Thomas truly relevant for us today?

My response to this question is, yes, it is relevant. First of

all, it is relevant to us Catholics, because, for all the changes, the Church has not changed in proclaiming her truths, nor have her truths themselves changed, because they were once and for all revealed by God, who does not change. One might respond by saying that when St. Thomas simply repeats these revealed truths, he is indeed relevant as any true evangelist is relevant, but his theological conclusions and their corollaries do not necessarily hold today, since they are tied up in a kind of world view that no longer prevails. Such a position, however, would seem to argue, not against the truth of Thomas's philosophy, but against the truth of the modern world view that is necessarily incompatible with the truths of revelation. Truth, after all, is truth, unless we wish to get bogged down in the absurdity that every science proclaims its own truth incompatible with the truth of other sciences, a clear violation of the principle of contradiction. If anyone denies this principle, arguments are hopeless. St. Thomas has been held as the official teacher of the Church precisely because his thought is in such inner harmony and essential compatibility with her teachings. The changes since St. Thomas--some of which have led to outstanding achievements and material improvements, others to great evils and disasters--have, almost all of them-- been quite irrelevant to the truths of his essential thought. As he himself puts it in the Introduction to his *Summae contra Gentiles*, "We cannot demonstrate that many of the things that [unbelievers] hold are wrong, but we can demonstrate that they are not necessarily true."

This does not mean that we Catholics should become parrots. This was the great mistake of so many Neo-Thomists who taught in our colleges and seminaries until the theological "revolution" following Vatican II. Parroting would make us irrelevant, not St. Thomas. It would mean that we study him to reel off pat answers in situations which require a creative application of his ideas. He himself would have none of this. Let's face it. Our mindset today is not the mindset of St. Thomas or his contempo-

raries. There are quandaries that face us Catholics that St. Thomas never even thought of, dilemmas that erupt from the condition in which these very changes have deposited society and our own personal selves. St. Thomas was not omniscient. But with creative thought, encouraged and supported by our study of Thomas, or at least by being exposed to it and becoming even superficially acquainted, we are in a position to solving them by his very principles. After all, if he could teach the "simple" brethren, he can teach us.

As one modern author has observed:

"I believe that a philosopher's significance appears most fully when he is placed in his own time, considered as representative of his period. His greatness consists in his ability to encompass the spiritual temper of his age, and to carry it forward, through his personal cultural consciousness, both to maturity and to the threshold of further and deeper developments. And what we can learn from him is above all the lesson of his humanity, which is also a lesson in method in a somewhat wider and deeper sense of that term than is usual, ¹

I concede this to be quite true, when it comes to philosophy. But one must be much more careful in theology, whose principles have been revealed once at for all by God. For this reason I believe Aquinas can show us today much more than a "simple lesson of his humanity." Rather, he can show us how the truths of our own culture are adaptable to the truths of faith.

As we have already noted, our religion does not need philosophy, but it certainly helps to have it. Of course, the teach

¹ Eco, Umberto, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 1988, p. viii.

ings of St. Thomas are not the only school today for Catholics struggling with the big questions. In fact, since the Vatican Council (which itself had nothing to do with the phenomenon) Thomism is probably in the minority even among Catholic thinkers. There are other competing systems around, like Neo-Augustinianism and its offshoots, and certain baptized and improved versions of Kant and Hegel. Some prefer among others a catholicized Heidegger or a Catholic Phenomenology. As in olden times, these interact, lend to and borrow from one another, and even synthesize. But none of them holds up or answers more effectively than the system of St. Thomas. Pope John Paul II in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* refers often to St. Thomas and expresses regrets that he is so ignored today.

Ever since his own day, St. Thomas's thought had for centuries been interpreted, more or less faithfully, and built upon and used to solve contemporary problems by commentators. There is no reason why we should not do the same today. Despite his profundity and a style that contemporaries find difficult to read, I personally find him much less convoluted than a would-be modern commentator like Bernard Lonergan, infinitely less confusingly subtle than modern "original" theologians like Barth or Rahner or von Balthasar, yet much more reliable for moral guidance than a Hans Küng or a Charles Curran. He surely would provide light for those unfortunate Catholics who are struggling with the certainty of their faith and are so led astray in their ideas of God, His Church, and His moral laws.

Secondly, we can make use of Thomas's philosophy in dealing with non-believers who are so enmeshed in error and confusion and who lack the guidance of the Church's teachings. Very few of their teachers, saving such as the remarkable Mortimer Adler, are even the slightest bit familiar with St. Thomas, were they even aware that he had existed. Much of this is due to sheer prejudice against anything "medieval," much to a repugnance to

anything Roman Catholic. Little do they realize how many of the great institutions of our civilization and how much of the present reaction against the forces trying to tear them down depend, directly or indirectly, on his genius. One of my priest confreres, himself a psychiatrist, once introduced St. Thomas's psychology of the interaction of the intellect and will to an assemblage of his psychiatrist colleagues, without revealing the source. They were utterly amazed, thought it most ingenious and insightful and very useful--and original!

The Scholastics, St. Thomas among them, have been accused of treating of a universe that is static. This is true. But with all the changes that have shown the universe to be "dynamic," not one of them is not but incidental to the essential truths that Thomas proclaimed. God is, after all, still God; man is still man; revelation is revelation; truth is truth.

A Glossary of Terms in St. Thomas Aquinas

(References are in *italics*)

Abstraction. The *operation* of intelligence that recognizes the *species* of a thing and universalizes. For instance, you see an object and your mind immediately, by abstraction, is able to recognize it as tree and to define it as such.

Accident. Not to be understood in our everyday sense of the term, a. in S.T. is something that befalls (“accidere”) a substance, such as *operation quantity*, extension in space, *motion*, *quality*, *habit*, etc.. Accidents come and go, substances remain.

Act. The actuality of something as distinct from its possibility or potentiality. The term is also sometimes used to mean *operation*.

Agent. The *efficient* cause. See *Cause*.

Analogy (of terms). The understanding of a word in a way that is halfway between univocal and equivocal, i.e. the word is applied to two or more things in a way that is, at the same time, similar and different. There are 2 kinds of analogy—a. of attribution and a. of proportionality. **A. of attribution** is the application of a term to something in the most proper sense but to others in a referential or less proper sense. For instance, S.T. takes the term “healthy.” This is applied most properly to an animal (called the prime analogate) but in another, less proper sense to a food, or climate, or urine. All these have reference to the animal, whether making it healthy, sustaining its health, or signifying its health. **A. of proportionality** is the application of a term to two or more things in a proper but proportional sense. For instance, the being of God, the being of Socrates, the being of the dog Fido, the being of an orange tree. Obviously, each of these has being in a proper sense, but it is proportional: God’s being is to God what Socrates’s being is to Socrates what Fido’s being is to Fido what the orange tree’s being is to the orange tree—in one sense the same, in another quite different. Analogy is very important in understanding St. Thomas.

Appetite. A general term referring to a being’s tendency to its natural *good* or perfection. In intelligent beings a. is called *will*.

Art. The right way of making something. It is a *habit* which disposes the proper production of a (external) thing, as opposed to prudence which disposes one to proper (internal) action [the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs].

Beatitude, or Blessedness. Also called **Fulfillment**. The state of perfection that every intelligent being seeks; the possession of the

ultimate end, which is achieved by grace and operation.

Being. In this most abstract of all terms, b. means the act of existence (called in Latin “esse”), or the thing that has being (called “ens”). Unfortunately, our English has only the one term for both: being. Latin distinguishes:

— being (“esse”): the act of existing, as in “he is.”

— being (“ens”): the existing person or thing; in our example the existing man (“he”). Being is to be distinguished from *essence* and *form*. In S.T. being is the very act that confers existence to the *substance* as a simple form (i.e. being is not an accident). In relation to the concept of non-being, being might also be applied to *becoming* inasmuch as the latter is an imperfect kind of being that is yet to be realized—halfway between *being* and non-being (cf. *potency*).

Cause. That which accounts for the *being* of something. There are 4 kinds of causes—2 external and 2 internal. The external causes are the *efficient c.* and *final c.*

1. The *efficient cause* is what in ordinary language we mean by the word cause: the external agent that brings something about. It is also called, simply, the *cause*. Thus God is the efficient cause of creation, Michelangelo of the Sistine murals, parents of their child, etc. The efficient c. is proximate when no other cause intervenes between it and its effect, or remote when other (secondary) causes intervene.

2. The *final cause*, also called the *end*, is the purpose or motive that moves the efficient c. to act. Thus, to satisfy hunger is the final c. of a snack, revenge the final c. of a murder, etc. This c. is called final because it is the last effect achieved, but as a cause it is the first: I wouldn’t eat if I were not hungry, a murderer wouldn’t kill if he weren’t moved to revenge, although satisfying hunger and revenge are the last effects achieved. The causes internal to the effect are the material and formal causes (see *matter* and *form*).

Change. See *Motion*.

Concept, Conception. The first *operation* of the *intellect* (conception), which expresses itself in an idea (concept). It is the identification of the mind with the *essence* of the thing perceived via the process of *abstraction*. The concept is the definition of the thing. (See also *Form*.)

Conscience. From “cum + scientia” (“with knowledge”). The judgment which applies the precepts of the moral law (cf. *law*) to particular cases. It is binding in function of the knowledge one has of the law. Hence an erroneous c. binds like a correct c., although the obligation remains to form an upright c.

Effect. Cf. *Cause*.

Efficient Cause. See *Cause, #1*.

Equivocal. See *Analogy (of terms)*.

Essence. The *nature* or whatness of something which has, or is capable of receiving, *being* (esse). The *essence* of man is rational animal, the (remote) essence of dog is non-rational animal (we do not know its *specific difference*); the essence of God is His being. The essence is that whereby we define a thing. (See also *substance, form*.)

Evil. In S.T. evil is non-being by way of privation of *being*, hence of the *good*. Physical e. is the privation of something due to a being's *nature*, as the lack of an eye in a man; moral e. is the freely chosen privation of a due good through the perverse choice of something incompatible, under the false guise of a good. Thus, sin is a moral e. as the deliberate deprivation of what is due and good for a person.

Final Cause. See *Cause, #2*.

Form. The actual (as opposed to potential) constitutive element of a thing; its formal *cause*. Together with *matter* it causes the things to be from within. For all practical purposes here, it is the same as *essence*, but in the sense of actually existing rather than in our *knowledge*.

Freedom, Liberty. A property of the *will*, the opposite of necessity. There is f. of action when a person chooses to act or not to act, and f. of specification when, having chosen to act, a person opts to act in one way rather than another. Every being (God included) is bound, however, by the necessity of its nature. Thus all are bound to act by what is, or apprehended as, *good*.

Genus. Similar to the ordinary scientific meaning. G. is the general category to which we assign a thing. It differs from *species (#1)*, which is a category within it. For instance, man is of the genus animal, but of the species rational. Animal in turn is of the higher genus living, where it becomes a species along with plant.

Good. *Being* as the object of *appetite* or *will*. All things desire the good (see *appetite*), whether freely or by necessity of *nature*, whether the good is truly recognized or mistakingly so. The ultimate good of every nature is its ultimate end, which is achieved by operation. In intelligent beings the ultimate good is the same as *beatitude*.

Grace. The free and undeserved help that God gives to intelligent beings to enable them to move toward and achieve (supernatural) *beatitude*. G. is either sanctifying ("gratum faciens") or actual ("gratis data"). Sanctifying g. is the habitual inherence of God's favor in the soul, rendering it pleasing to Him. Actual g. is a passing influx in aid of

one's operations. The "Grace of Christ" is divine favor given to humanity through the plenitude of g. in the humanity of Christ.

Habit. An *accident* that stands midway between *act* and *potency* which modifies the faculties of a *substance* by inclining it to operate in one way rather than another with ease and a certain naturalness. *Virtues* and *vices* are habits, giving them a certain existence even when not in act, as when one is asleep.

Infinity. Literally, "no limits." The state of being unlimited. In God it is absolute, meaning He has no limits whatsoever; in creatures it is relative, as in numbers. In the latter case, i. exists only in the mind because in reality an infinite progression is made up of divisible (hence finite) units. So a continuum (as of numbers) is potentially infinite but actually divisible.

Intellect. The power of certain higher beings, called intelligent or rational beings, to attain *truth*. In man this is done through *abstraction*. The intellect's operation is *knowledge*, whether through intuition or discursive reasoning. By its operation the i. becomes one with the object known through the intelligible *species*. Considered as a power the i. is called the active, or agent, intellect; considered as a *potency* it is called the passive, or possible, intellect.

Intellection. See *Knowledge*.

Judgment. The *operation* of the *intellect* which expresses the identity of one concept with another, resulting in *truth*. Thus, "The tree [concept] is [judgment] a redwood [concept]."

Justice. 1. The moral *virtue* which determines the giving or claiming of rights. There is divine j.; natural j.; j derived from nature (called "jus gentium"); civil j. pertaining to the government re its citizens; and vindictive j. 2. Man's original state prior to the fall and restored by the merits of Christ.

Knowledge. 1. The content of intellectual *operation*, considered in general. 2. The same as *science*. 3. Understanding ("intellectus").

Law. Precepts of order. Divine 1. is the intent of the Creator to move all creatures toward their end. Since God endows every creature with the wherewithall to move toward its end, natural 1. is participation of the divine 1. in every creature (called the moral 1. in rational creatures). God endows every human with the habit of *synderesis* which contains the precepts of the moral 1. whereby we know what is to be done and what avoided. Civil, or positive, 1. is the precepts of the human community.

Life, Living. 1. Self-moving. The life of a living being is its being; to remove its life is to remove its being. 2. Used metaphorically, as "living waters," based on similitude with a living thing.

Love. 1. The *operation* of the *will* toward the *good* and its fruition upon attaining it. Love is to the will what knowledge is to the *intellect*. The good can be either one's proper good or another's. One becomes another by knowledge in drawing the other into one's own being; one is united to another in love, maintaining the other's proper being. 2. In man 1. is also a *passion*.

Matter. 1. *Prime matter*. 2. *Quantity*. 3. The subject of discussion or treatment.

Material Cause. See *Prime matter*.

Metaphysics. A term taken from the work of Aristotle, The *Metaphysics* ("beyond physics"). Unlike physics, which, in Aristotelian terms, is the philosophy of nature, m. is the philosophy of being (*esse*) as such, the highest and most abstract of the natural sciences, as distinguished from the supernatural. M. is also called (natural) *wisdom*. S.T. seldom, if ever, uses the term m. but speaks of *philosophy* or *wisdom* or first philosophy. The term m. has nothing to do with the modern meaning of hidden or esoteric knowledge.

Motion. Acc. to the context, m. could mean local m., as when something moves from point A to point B. Or it could mean any change, as the change of wine into vinegar would be a substantial change or motion; or a change in quantity, as when Socrates loses 15 pounds but remains Socrates, an instance of accidental *motion* or change. Living things are self-moving, in that one part moves another; inanimate things are always moved by something extrinsic.

Nature. 1. The *essence* of a thing considered as the basis of *operations*. 2. The universe and its laws.

Operation. The action of a thing. It is an *accident* which either remains in the operator (*agere*), like thinking or willing, etc., or terminates in something extrinsic (*facere*), like an artist painting a portrait, or a carpenter building a house. O. is the operator's way of achieving its end and perfection (*final cause*). O. is often called action or act (but see Act). O. follows upon the *nature* (#1) and *being* (*esse*) of a thing.

Passion. Unlike our modern understanding, p. for S.T. is identical with emotion. Coming from the Latin "pati," meaning "to suffer," or "to be subjected to," p. is changes that take place in the body as the result of stimuli. As such, p. can exist only in a corporeal being. The stimuli are things apprehended as good or evil or delectable or difficult, and have a pre-rational effect upon the body. So in themselves p.s are morally

indifferent but become morally accountable *operations* and *habits* when willed.

Perception. The unification of the *operation* of *sensation* by the *sensus communis* into a single knowledgeable.

Perfection. The state of possessing one's end. In intelligent beings it is *beatitude*. Relative to *operations* it is the possession of all their parts.

Philosophy. Literally, the love of *wisdom*. The *science* of *causes* and effects. As such p. is the queen of all natural sciences. In its form as *metaphysics* p. is the highest natural wisdom. For S.T. p. is distinct from *sacred doctrine* but is its vestibule and handmaid.

Potency, Potentiality. Being in the sense of becoming or possibility. It is pure not-yet-but-possible actuality until it is actualized by *form* and receives *being* (*esse*). Thus, *essence* is potency in reference to being; *substance* is potency in respect to *accidents*; within a material substance, *prime matter* is potency in respect to substantial *form*.

Prime Matter. The limiting *potency* within a *substance* whereby it is individuated. Thus, the *essence* humanity becomes limited by p.m. to this individual man. P.m. is the material *cause* as distinct from formal *cause* (*form*) of the substance, and the principle of quantified matter—parts outside of parts.

Prudence. "The queen of the moral *virtues*." The *habit* that disposes one to right *operations*. By judging from past experiences, p. orders the future acc. to right reason. It therefore compenetrates all moral activity. Unlike the other moral virtues, which reside in the *will*, p. resides in the *intellect*. (Compare with Art.)

Quality. *Accident* which modifies a *substance*, giving it characteristic properties such as color, texture, heat, etc.

Quantity. The first *accident* of a material *substance*, which accounts for its extension in space and *time*.

Reason, Reasoning. In Latin "ratio." 1. The discursive *operation* of the *intellect* in identifying two *concepts* by their mutual identity with a third concept. Thus, "Man is risible. But Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is risible." The process of reasoning is a sylogism. A system of syllogisms is *science* (#1). The study of right reasoning is logic. R. is proper to human beings because our knowledge is based on *sensation*. Immaterial intellectual beings, such as God and angels, have no need of reasoning. 2. The meaning or *essence* of something. 3. The rule of doing something; the due order of presentation. 4. Sometimes used as the purpose or motivation for something.

Revelation (divine). God's disclosure to man of truths about Himself and the divine order, most of which are beyond human experience, through the vehicle of inspiration. Those whom God inspired were the sacred authors of Scripture of both testaments and the Apostles, who were the foundation of the Church. Christ, the Word of God, was the fulness of revelation, which, through the Holy Spirit, He passed on to the apostolic Church. R. is the principle of *sacred doctrine*, as experience is the principle of human *science*.

Right (Jus). That which is owed to oneself or another intellectual being as the result of action, whereby the natural balance is reestablished (see *Justice*).

Sacred Doctrine, or Theology. The *science* of God and things divine based on faith in divine *revelation*. S.d. is distinguished from *philosophy* or *metaphysics*, which is based on sensation and human experience. The object of s.d. is the supernatural, but not exclusively. Some truths about God are known by reasoning from experience. Even though they are part of philosophy, they are preambles or prolegomena to s.d., as, for instance, the proof of God's existence, His unity, etc.

Science. 1. Systematic reasoning, or discursive knowledge, which proceeds from principle to conclusion in syllogisms, building up a body of knowledge about a subject. S. among the scholastics is to be distinguished from the more popular modern notion of s. as empirical knowledge that always proceeds a posteriori.
2. Generally, the same as *knowledge*.

Sensation. The *operation* of the senses, analogous to *knowledge* which is the operation of the *intellect*. All human knowledge begins with s. The sensus communis unifies the operation of the five senses into a single *perception*.

Species. 1. See *Genus*. 2. A representative form, as the *perception* and knowledge of a tree is by means of the species of a tree in the senses and possible *intellect*. 3. In general, any representation.

Specific Difference. That within a *species* that accounts for its difference from other species of the same *genus*. Usually it is unknowable to us. But in the case of the human species, it is rationality within the species of animal.

Substance. The *essence* of a thing considered as "standing under," and receptive of, its *accidents*. Thus, Socrates is the substance, while his changeable weight, color, location, etc., are accidents. (Cf. also *Motion*.)

Synderesis. A Greek term which means the *knowledge* of basic moral

principles innate in every human being. It can be stated as "Good must be done, evil avoided."

Theology. See *Sacred Doctrine*.

Time. As defined by Aristotle, the number of *motion*

Truth. 1. *Being* as the object of *intellect* or *knowledge*. 2. The conformity of the mind to reality by means of *judgment*.

Unity or Simplicity. Lack of parts and complexity. Thus, God is one, or simple; creatures have parts and are complex.

Vice. A *habit* that inclines one toward *evil*. The opposite of *virtue*. Thus, ignorance is a vice of the *intellect*, pride a moral vice, or vice of the *will*.

Virtue. A *habit* that inclines the *intellect* or *will* to what is proper and *good*. There are 3 types of virtues: theological v.s (faith, hope, and charity) are infused by God and are supernatural; intellectual v.s (e.g. wisdom, knowledge, science) inhere in the intellect; and moral v.s (justice, fortitude, and temperance, adhere in the will; prudence, a moral virtue, adheres in the intellect). In the state of *grace*, the moral virtues are supernaturalized.

Will. The faculty in intelligent beings that follows upon the *intellect* and operates by desiring the *good* which is recognized by the intellect. Like the intellect, the will is both a power and a *potency*. It is free (cf *freedom*). Whereas the intellect becomes identified with the object within the knower, the w. desires the object in the latter's own being.

Wisdom. 1. Knowledge of first things and last things. Hence, *sacred doctrine* and *philosophy*. 2. In a relative sense, w. is knowledge that is directive. Thus, the wisdom of a construction engineer directs the knowledge of a carpenter, while the wisdom of an architect directs the knowledge of the construction engineer, etc.