

# Learning and Discipleship

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## 1 Prooemium

It falls to my lot to introduce the lecturers during the year, and before the first lecture I have the custom of giving a brief account of the lecture series itself. I will try to keep it brief tonight because my own lectures are, I think, unduly long. In particular, I would like to talk about why we have a required lecture series as a part of the curriculum. Let me state the reasons in summary. We intend the lecture series to be complementary, though only in a small way, to what we do in the classroom, and this in two ways: as regards *method* and as

regards *content*. As regards method, you know that our method of procedure in the classroom is by way of discussion; we do not always completely succeed in this, but this is what we aim at. For we think that this encourages a more active involvement by the student in what he is learning, and that such involvement bears fruit that would not otherwise come about. Secondly, it gives the tutor a better sense of where the students are and how well they are attaining the object they are pursuing in common. We do not regard this as the only way to learn, or even as the only way to learn well. In fact, the discussion method does have certain disadvantages. Most of you know this from experience. There are frequent interruptions, the discussion strays from the point, there is a very uneven distribution in the quantity and quality of the contributions from various members. So that there is at best an imperfect result. However, we follow this method because we have found by experience that it works best, all things considered. Most practical procedures involve some kind of compromise. There are both strengths and weaknesses in any method; one must consider what works best, all things considered. So we follow the discussion method in class as well as we can because we have found from experience that it works best for us.

But the lecture method, by contrast, has certain advantages. For example, *if* it is well done, the presentation of doctrine is more coherent and continuous. The thought of the student is more firmly and explicitly directed to the truth and, from time to time, that can be necessary. Lectures also require a longer attention span, and to practice attending at length to discussion develops a very valuable habit in the learner. Of course this works well only when the lecturer has the mastery of the subject matter and a good understanding of the order of learning. And such a lecturer is not at all common. So we hope that the lectures that we give here will complement the classroom discussion by giving the students an experience of and a practice in a method of learning which is good in and of itself but not the same as the one that they pursue day by day in the classroom.

I might note in passing that those of us who founded this college were not educated through the discussion method. We were educated through lectures, but the lecturers whom we had and who actually taught us something were able and willing to answer questions. One could interrupt the discourse at any point and raise a question and the teacher would discuss that question at length; he would not leave off until the student was satisfied. So we were taught by a modified lecture method in which certain of the virtues of discussion were incorporated. We do not maintain by any means, then, that

one cannot learn in any other way than the way that we follow here; rather, as I said earlier, it is our conviction, borne upon experience, that, all things considered, education goes better here if we encourage active classroom discussion. The teacher leads more by question and suggestion than by simply laying things out, one after another.

The second way in which we try to complement what happens in the classroom is in terms of the content of the lecture series. It cannot be said too often that the education which we offer here is not, nor does it pretend to be, anything more than a beginning of the intellectual life. It is our hope and our plan that when you graduate from this college you will continue that kind of life to the extent that your personal circumstances permit. What we are trying to give you here is a good start, to lay a foundation upon which you can build in your intellectual life after you leave. So the lectures here will at least in a small way indicate the incompleteness of what we do, and encourage you to pursue further the things you have begun to learn here.

How do the lectures indicate the incompleteness of what we do here? There are a number of ways. In some cases, the lecture brings your attention to something worthwhile that we do not investigate here at all, or maybe investigate only in a small way. It makes you aware of the fullness of the things that are to be learned but which you will not learn here. A second way in which the lecture series helps us is that a good lecturer will frequently carry somewhat further, work out more fully and in greater detail, something we have begun in the program. He shows you that some question we have discussed in the program is not finally over and done with; that we have perhaps made a good beginning, but there is much more to be seen. He develops what we have begun in greater detail, with a certain clarity and completeness, at least in one direction or another, and shows you how you can go further from the things you have already learned. Finally, occasionally a lecturer will present views which present a reasoned opposition to conclusions which may have been reached in class discussion. Heraclitus says, "War is the father and the master of all things." Though what he says may not be true about reality in general, it has a lot of truth about the life of the mind. Without contradiction, objection, and counter-argument, it is very difficult for anyone to advance beyond his original indistinct view of things to a firmer and clearer understanding. So, we like to encourage disagreement, not as an end in itself, but as a way of helping you deepen your understanding of things which you have begun to apprehend in some way, but not yet thoroughly. Our first grasp of things is not very good.

Let me make an aside here. When I was in charge of arranging the lectures, I used to be tempted sometimes to invite certain notorious dissenters and intellectual rogues to give lectures here; but I was held back by two considerations. First of all, it is an unavoidable fact that when you invite someone to give a lecture you are giving him a kind of honor. The friends and supporters of the college would not understand well the invitation of persons such as that, because the invitation seems to give them a kind of endorsement. Indeed, the payment we make to guest lecturers is called an “honorarium,” an act of honor. So that held me back. Secondly, given the reputations of such lecturers, those who attend might come expecting an intellectual brawl—them against us—and under such circumstances learning does not ordinarily take place. From disagreement, yes; from a brawl, less commonly. The intention becomes to win a battle, as it were, not to understand; to drive the opponent from the field in disgrace, not to deepen one’s own understanding of the issues being discussed. So, I restrained myself, regretfully, and hoped that I could meet such individuals on neutral ground.

Nevertheless, in spite of all our precautions, we have had a number of bad lecturers in the course of the College’s history. Some of them actually elicited very good discussions. In fact, I remember that one of the lectures that I thought was, in terms of doctrine, one of the worst led to one of the most fruitful question periods we have ever had. The students were sufficiently capable of dealing with what was said by the lecturer to have a serious discussion, pro and con, afterwards, and the lecturer left the college in high good humor. He did not feel like he had been attacked or “sandbagged”; he thought we had just had a lively discussion. Now, I think he was refuted, but that was not his impression. So the night was in almost every way a success. That does not happen very often but it might happen tonight. I hope not.

So, in general, those are our reasons for having a lecture series in addition to classroom work. You should have the experience of the lecture. There are ways of learning from lectures, both positively and negatively, that should not be passed over in the course of your studies.

Now we also have concerts. I cannot talk about this at length because that could be another lecture all by itself. I will content myself with an assertion. It is my conviction and that of many of my colleagues (and of *all* of the founders), that there is no philosophy without music, or there is no philosophy without *good* music. The soul must be disposed to the love of the true and the reasonable and there is no way to do that without music. So the concerts we offer as part of the series are our testimony, however

slight, to our conviction that good music is necessary to the philosophical life. The concert series is a small thing; we do not have a great number of concerts. Some of you, perhaps, will go back to your rooms and listen to the Grateful Dead or the Rolling Stones on your phonographs, and we regret that profoundly. And we think that if you persist in that behavior you will never become wise. We have had only moderate success, so far, in making you aware of that fact. But still we bring it to your attention, and we do this by offering certain concerts in which good music is played, to please you reasonably, to relax the tensions in your souls, and to dispose them rightly to the intellectual efforts that are the principal business of your life. Now, of course, we are limited in that respect. We cannot get the Los Angeles Philharmonic out here, and even if we could, the sound might bring down these walls. We cannot even afford the English Chamber Orchestra, though I would certainly pay for them if I could. We do try to have chamber groups of fine musicians who will play good music and who will give you a kind of sensible example of what the founders think you ought to be listening to in order to dispose your souls to the difficult tasks of philosophy and theology, which are your principal tasks here (taking philosophy in its broadest sense as a love of wisdom). So I sum up by saying that there is no philosophy without music, as Plato said centuries ago in the *Republic*. That is my introduction to the lecture series. Now I shall turn to my lecture.

The title of my lecture is *Learning and Discipleship*. It will be in three parts. In the first part, I shall talk about what it is to be a disciple, about the kinds of discipleship, and about those who look like disciples but are not. The second part of my lecture will advance a thesis. I will maintain that there is no true learning without discipleship. I do not know that I can demonstrate that thesis, but I will manifest it and support it. In the third part of my lecture, I will discuss the bearing of discipleship upon the nature of this college in particular, because this college is unique or nearly unique in that it defines itself by discipleship. In other colleges you may find disciples of great masters, of Saint Augustine, of Saint Thomas Aquinas. But the colleges at which they teach do not *define* themselves by discipleship. If anything, they regard discipleship as something undesirable in those who teach within their walls. Thomas Aquinas College is unique at least in this respect. Not only does it put up with disciples; it defines itself by discipleship.

With this in mind, let me turn to the first part of my lecture. But I should like to talk briefly about my method beforehand. I have found from long and bitter experience that I cannot read a lecture from a prepared text. When I

do so, I soon cease to understand what it is that I am saying. I become a sort of reading machine, like a computer that scans. Secondly, I have no sense of my audience, I do not know if they are there or not, with or against me, or just daydreaming. So instead of reading from a completely written text, I shall work from an outline and notes, composing sentences and paragraphs as I go along. Unfortunately, one consequence of this way of delivering a lecture is that there will be certain repetitions and grammatical and syntactical confusions, and you are just going to have to endure this, because we cannot have it both ways. As I said before, when comparing the discussion method to the lecture method, there are advantages and disadvantages. But all things considered, it will go better my way. At any rate, I will do my best.

## 2 What is a Disciple?

### 2.1 What is a Disciple?

I now turn to the first part of my lecture: “what is a disciple?” Under this title I will discuss three things. First, what it is to be a disciple. Secondly, the varieties and kinds of disciples. And thirdly, those who appear to be disciples but are not. First of all, then, what is a disciple? “Disciple” means, in terms of its etymology, “learner”. It comes from the Latin word *discipulus*, which comes from the verb, *discere*, which means “to learn.” So the first step to make in defining “disciple” is to say that a disciple is one who is learning or one who learns.

Is that sufficient? Well, certainly not, because learning can come about in many ways. If by learning you mean coming to know something one did not know beforehand, that can happen in a variety of ways. One can come to know, for example, by instruction or by personal discovery or even by revelation. So there are many ways of coming to know what one does not already know. But a disciple is not just any sort of a learner but one who comes to know from someone who already knows. The disciple is the correlative of the teacher. A teacher is one who, from the knowledge that is in himself, causes knowledge in someone else. The teacher so understood is both like and unlike the doctor. A doctor acts in virtue of his knowledge of the art of medicine. But the effect he has on his patient is not knowledge but something else. The doctor does not by his activity make his patient into another doctor. The teacher, by contrast, makes his learner like himself.

Euclid, the geometer, makes us who are his students likewise geometers. The learner and the teacher, then, become one in their knowledge. This is an example of like producing like, as when man begets man. One might say, then, to begin with, that the disciple is not simply someone who learns but someone who learns from another who knows.

So a disciple, properly so called, is the correlative of a teacher, one who learns from another and learns just what that other one knows. This is in contrast to discovery or learning by experience or learning from one's mistakes or even learning from those with whom one continues to disagree. A disciple may learn in all these ways. In fact, he may need to learn in all these ways; but that is not the kind of learning that makes him a disciple. He is a disciple insofar as he learns from somebody who already knows. When you learn from experience, you do not learn what experience itself knows. Nor when you learn from someone who is in error, through the give and take of argument, do you learn what that person already knows. So there are many sources of learning, but not all of these sources are what make you a disciple. It is only when you learn from someone who actually knows that you are a disciple. So one might say that the disciple is defined by two relations. A relation to the thing he learns and a relation to the one from whom he learns. A disciple is one who learns from another; he is a disciple of someone. So there are two relations: one, to the object of study that he hopes to learn, and a second to the one from whom he hopes to learn it.

Is our definition then complete? It would seem not. Are there not some who are called disciples but are not learning, and may, in fact, never learn? And do not the ignorant and the sophistical have their "disciples" also? Is our definition universal? The answer to this question is not difficult and brings us to the completion of our definition. What we have been describing so far is the disciple in full actuality, the perfection of discipleship. But just as we call someone a learner not only when he is actually learning but also when he is intent upon learning, so we may speak of a disciple not only when a man is actually learning from another or has learned from another, but also when he is only *intent* on learning from another. The disciple is the man who bends his efforts to learn from that other, whose life effort is to learn from that other. He may not succeed, but he may rightly be called a disciple because his intention is in that direction. To have the fullness of discipleship, he would have to be learning in fact; but the name can rightly be applied to him so long as he has the disposition which causes him to devote himself to learning from some other. This gives us the universal difference which

completes our definition.

Now, one might ask, “What is presupposed to such an intention?” The answer, in a word, is *faith* or *belief*. A disciple in the sense I intend is one who *believes* that some other man is a knower and submits to the direction of that other man in order to become a knower himself, in order to come to know what that other already knows. One cannot define the disciple properly apart from faith.

Now, this faith is two-fold: the disciple has faith both that the other man knows and that he, the disciple, by submitting to the direction of that other man, will himself become a knower, at least as much as it lies within him to become a knower. (No teacher, after all, can supply for the deficiencies of nature and nurture). This faith can also be of more than one kind. It may be the theological virtue of faith, but it is not always so. Sometimes the faith in question is only human. What is universal in discipleship is faith. One believes what one does not see. This faith may be more or less well founded. There are mistaken beliefs, mistaken trusts. But in all cases of discipleship, the disciple has this belief, both in the knowledge of the master and in his ability to direct the disciple to knowledge. I think we have now arrived at sufficient definition for our discussion tonight.

## 2.2 Kinds of Discipleship

This definition leads very naturally to the next consideration: how one kind of discipleship differs from another. Now, the differences among discipleships correspond, of course, to the differences among teachers. Since it is easier to discuss the differences among teachers than to discuss the differences among disciples, let us discuss the differences in discipleship in the light of the differences of teachers.

Let us talk, first of all, about the human teacher, since he is in most respects more known to us. What do we say about the human teacher? Well, first of all, he does not teach us everything. He does teach us something, but not everything. On the contrary, the learner must already know some things that he has not received from the teacher in order to be instructed by him. Thus, the human teacher depends upon prior knowledge in the learner, prior knowledge which the teacher himself has not produced. This leads to a sort of definition of teaching: to lead the learner from what he already knows to what he does not know. The human teacher is not an original source of knowledge, but a kind of subordinate and assisting cause, as we shall see

more fully in a moment.

Now the things that have to be known beforehand are of more than one kind. On the one hand and most obviously, there are certain things that must be naturally known to the learner if he is to receive instruction; he must know certain things which are self-evident and upon which all further progress depends. Examples of such truths are: “a whole is greater than its part,” or “things which coincide are equal,” or “a thing can not both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect.” The learner cannot receive these things from a teacher; he must already have them. If the learner (*per impossibile*) did not have them, there is no way a teacher could teach them to him. But, as the case is, these things are naturally known to every man. He cannot help but know them, perhaps in spite of himself. He might deny them in words, but he cannot think otherwise in his mind.

In addition to these naturally known truths, there are other things, which we may call the facts of experience. For example, if I were to lecture to you about white, black, red, and green, I would pre-suppose a certain experience within you, the experience of seeing color. If you did not have that experience, if you were born blind, there would be nothing I could say to you about that matter which would have a determinate meaning for you. Either you get the experience of color from your own natural capacity or not at all. So if there is a doctrine about colors that a man could teach, he still could not teach it to someone with no experience of color. The human teacher, then, is not a total cause of knowledge, because his teaching presupposes some knowledge in the learner which he himself cannot possibly impart.

A second thing to be noted is that a human teacher is not the principal cause of learning but only an assisting cause. The principal causes are within the learner: first, the natural power of his own understanding; and second, the premises which he already knows. Now, the teacher is not a mere instrument; he is more noble than that. So, for example, he is not like the chisel and the hammer of the sculptor, tools which do not have within themselves the form which is to be communicated. That form is only in the mind of the sculptor. The teacher, on the other hand, has within himself the form or quality that is to be imparted. He knows that which the student is to learn. So, he is a more noble cause than a mere instrument. Nevertheless, he is still an assistant and not a principal cause. He may be compared to a doctor who sets a bone. The doctor does not knit the bone; he does not make the two parts one whole. What he does is to arrange the parts in the proper alignment, but it is nature, a principle within, that mends the bone. Likewise, the teacher

is not principal cause. He only assists the principal cause by putting the objects of thought in order, which objects are already within the mind of the learner. He is like the assistant who aids an artisan by holding firm that upon which the artisan operates. He does not impart the form or quality, but he does make it possible for the artisan to do so by holding things in such a way that the power of the principal agent can be effective.

How is this true in the case of the teacher? He arranges the objects of thought in such a way that the internal power can take its effect. I would like to discuss this in some detail, at least by way of example. The first and most obvious case is with objects that can only be known as conclusions. The disciple will learn these things only as a result of some argument. He needs the teacher for that argument. How is this so? In two ways, one of which builds upon the other. First of all, the teacher must bring to the mind of the learner that which he already knows. What he knows habitually must be made actual in his mind for the conclusion to be seen. The teacher can do this merely by asking questions, or by proposing premises to which the learner will assent because he can see immediately that they are true, even though he may never have considered them explicitly before. In so doing, the teacher does not really give the learner something he does not already have, but rather brings to his mind in a usable form something he does already have.

Secondly, and perhaps closer to the effect, the teacher proposes things to the student in a certain *order*. Without that order, the student may already have the premises he needs, but still not see the conclusion, because the premises have never been brought together before his mind in the proper order. When a teacher who knows the right order displays it to the learner, then the latter can see the conclusion from the order in which the premises are put. But the principal cause is not the mind of the teacher; it is rather the internal light and power of the mind of the learner. Still, that power could not take its effect unless the premises were put in order.

We find an excellent example of this procedure in the dialogue that even the freshmen have now read, the *Meno* of Plato. In the middle part of that dialogue we see Socrates instruct a slave boy about the doubling of the square.<sup>1</sup> Socrates maintains that the result of what he does is nothing but recollection. This is questionable but it does have a certain verisimilitude, for we see that Socrates' typical way of proceeding is by way of asking questions.

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<sup>1</sup>*Meno* 82a-86c.

He does not ask the learner to agree to what he says just because he says it. He asks a question, and so elicits from the learner the premises that are proximately and decisively necessary for the conclusion. Most importantly, he puts the questions to the learner in a certain order: this question after that question; next, this other question. If Socrates had proposed the questions at random, nothing would have been learned. As it happens, Socrates knows the order in which to put the questions. So, if we ask, what does Socrates give to the slave boy that the slave boy does not already have, the answer is, in a word, *order*. What does Socrates *not* question the slave boy about? Order. He *gives* him the order, and by giving him the order he makes it possible for the slave boy to see from the things he already knows a further conclusion that is implicit in those things. One might even say, in this particular case and perhaps in other cases like it, that if the slave did not get the order from Socrates, he would never have gotten it. That is what Socrates does for him and which he could not do for himself. So that is one way in which the teacher assists nature, the internal principle, the natural light of our understanding.

Another way in which the teacher assists nature is by proposing certain sensible things to the mind of the learner, things that lead the learner to the knowledge of things that are not sensible but only intelligible. What is most known to us are the things that we sense. And in dealing with the things that we cannot sense, it is in keeping with our condition that the teacher lead us from the things that can be sensed and understood to the things that can only be understood. Such a procedure pre-supposes a likeness between the one sort of thing and the other. This particular procedure is called *manuductio*: “leading by the hand”. It manifests to the learner the natures of things that can never be reached on their own by likening them to the things that we can sense. We find an excellent example of this in Aristotle’s treatise on the soul. At the end of the second book of the *De Anima*, Aristotle proposes this definition of sensation: to sense is to receive the form of something without its matter.<sup>2</sup> He manifests this definition by saying that sensing is like pressing a signet ring upon wax, for when you press the signet ring upon wax, the wax receives the form or shape of the ring without itself becoming a ring. In fact, when you look at the wax afterwards and ask what the form or shape is, you say it is the shape of the signet ring, but it is in the wax. So the wax possesses the form of another without being that other. Aristotle applies this illustration to the case of sensation. When we see red, for example, we

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<sup>2</sup>*De Anima* 424a17–25.

must receive red (which is a form or quality) within ourselves, because the object known must be within the knower. But what is unique about this reception? It is just that we receive the red in such a way that we ourselves do not become red. The seer does not become the red thing that he sees, nor does he become another red thing. He does not become red at all except, perhaps, in some extended sense of the word. (As Aristotle says, “the soul is *in a way* all things”.<sup>3</sup>) So when one senses, one takes on the forms of things without becoming the things whose forms have been received. So Aristotle has led us from the sensible illustration, which is not really an example of sensation but something like sensation, to see more clearly something that can be grasped only by the mind. One cannot *see* what sensation is.

A third thing a teacher does is, in my experience, at least in certain respects, the most crucial of all. He directs you in the order in which you entertain questions. He tells you what you should think about now and what you should think about later, what you should investigate first, what you should investigate later. Because the mind is not equally disposed to all the objects that it might know, those objects have to be taken up in a certain order. If they are not taken up in that order, no one will learn anything of great significance. The case of the mind is not quite like that of the senses. I can look out the window and see a mountain fifty miles away as quickly as I can see the ground beneath my feet. By comparison with the mind (and I say *by comparison* because this is not altogether true) all the objects of sense are, as it were, immediate. There is no particular order in which we must sense them. But the objects of thought are not all equally evident, nor can they all be objects for us at once. Because of this, it is important for us to realize that they must be investigated in a certain order. What the teacher tells us, if we trust him, is the order in which those things can be investigated. He says, at least implicitly, “Do not rush immediately into the investigation of every possible question, but do *this* first and then *this* and then *that*.” And this requires faith and trust in the learner.

As an example, look at the First Part of Saint Thomas’s *Summa Theologiae*. What is the principal doctrine in that book? Manifestly, the dogma of the Blessed Trinity, the most precious and the most profound of all of the things we know by faith. It is first in our interest because it is part of the Creed. It has been in my soul since I was a child. It is what I want to know about, it is where my questions are. Yet it is not the first thing Saint Thomas

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<sup>3</sup>*De Anima* 431b14.

investigates. In effect, he says “not yet.” First he talks about the existence of God and His attributes, about His simplicity, about His unchangeability, about His eternity. He talks about the Divine Understanding and the Divine Will. Only then are we prepared to investigate the holy doctrine of the Blessed Trinity properly. So Saint Thomas in effect tells us to hold back, to do other things beforehand; he is saying that if we do this *first*, we can do that well. But if we do not do this first, we will not do that well.

One of the reasons I am profoundly grateful to my own teachers is that, when I was a beginner in philosophy, they directed me firmly with respect to such things. They told me, do not think about that now, think about this. For if you grow up in the modern intellectual milieu, almost as soon as you begin to study philosophy you are confronted with a number of difficulties that question the very possibility of knowledge, the reality of the external world, and other things which should be taken as given, especially by a beginner. And you can easily get lost in questions of that sort. So I am grateful to my teachers and pray for them every day of my life because they directed me away from such questions. They said, “Is that a problem for you out of your own experience?” I would say, “no.” “Why is it a problem for you?” “Because somebody said so.” “Leave it aside, wait until you are older and wiser; then you can fruitfully investigate those skeptical questions; they are not the beginning of philosophy. They pre-suppose that a great many things have been understood beforehand.” And if I had not been directed that way, I would be much worse off now. I would in fact be nowhere. I certainly would not be standing here.

Perhaps, then, the least manifest but almost the most important thing that a teacher can do for you is to tell you *what* to think about *when*. But he cannot do this for you unless you have faith in him, because you cannot see, at first, why he tells you to pay attention to *this* and to ignore *that*. But if you trust him, this trust will bear fruit, if he is a good teacher.

So these are examples of how the teacher orders our thoughts. Like a doctor, he is not a principal cause, but he does give an order to our thoughts without which most of us would never get anywhere.

Now there is a third thing about the human teacher which is unhappy but all too true. The third, and the most obvious, thing is that the human teacher is fallible, he can be mistaken. Not about all things perhaps (no one of us falls quite that far), but about the proper objects of theology and philosophy, because such objects are precisely the things about which we can be mistaken. Man does not fail in everything but he fails in something.

One might even push this further and say that there is no one among the human teachers, wise though he may be, who has not fallen short in one respect or another. We see this from the teaching of the Church. Under the light of faith we see that even great philosophers like Plato and Aristotle erred on many points. Perhaps not on the most fundamental points, but on points that, though secondary, are nevertheless very important. So one must always have a certain reservation with respect to the human teacher. He is not infallible, he is not truth. He has at best certain particular truths, and he can be wrong about this or that.

Well, that being the case with man, let us now turn to a happier case. Not only man, but God also is a teacher. God is the greatest teacher of all and He contrasts with man in all those particular aspects of the teacher which we have been looking at. For God's knowledge is the cause of all of our knowledge and not just some of it. This is true, first of all, because He is the author of our nature. The natural light of our understanding, our natural power of understanding, is a participation in God's understanding. It is something derivative; it is, as it were, a spark or reflection of that light which shines perfectly in God. Thus, everything we know naturally, we know by God's causality. And He is the author of our nature by His own knowledge, and so our own nature, which is for us the source of our first and most certain knowledge, is itself derived from the divine understanding. In causing us to be and to be the kind of things we are, He, in fact, teaches us, because His causality gives rise to the natural power of our understanding, in the light of which we see whatever we see of first principles.

Furthermore, God is the first mover. In all my intellectual movements, in any of the activities in which I move myself, such as reasoning and defining and the like, I am a moved mover. I am not simply a mover but a moved mover. I have moved myself in virtue of being moved by God. So He is more a cause of the conclusions I draw when I learn by argument than I am myself. For He is the first cause of my self-movement.

And again, God makes the things from which we learn. As Saint Paul says, God instructs us about Himself, about His eternal power, about His deity and His goodness, from the things He has made.<sup>4</sup> God, in making the material world which we perceive, is in fact acting as a teacher, teaching us about Himself from the things He has made.

And most remarkably, God teaches us through Revelation. He reveals

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<sup>4</sup>Romans 1:18-23.

things about Himself that we could never discover from the things He has made. From the very beginning, He has spoken to us in various ways about the things which surpass our understanding, through His prophets and sacred authors, and finally, and perfectly, through His own Divine Son.

So there is no way for us to come to know in which our knowledge is not derived from God, or, more precisely, derived from God's own knowledge. In all of our coming to know, God is the teacher.

It follows from the foregoing that God is not only an assisting cause of our learning but also the principal cause. His understanding is the *per se* and immediate cause of the rational soul and its power of understanding. This does not mean that He cannot teach in the human way also. God became man so that he might teach us in our way, but this is manifestly not the extent of His teaching power. God became man to teach us in a way that is congenial to our nature. But this pre-supposes the other ways in which He is our teacher, in which He is not the assisting cause but the principal cause. It is not false to say that God helps us—that is a true statement. But it is a truer and more fundamental statement that God originates us. There is nothing good in us of any sort which we have not received from Him. The human helper always pre-supposes something he has not supplied. But God is not only our helper; He is also the one who originates us. There is nothing good in us that comes not from Him. Even Socrates saw this truth in some way.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that God is the principal cause in all things helps to explain certain things said in the Gospel that are puzzling and even paradoxical. In one part of the Gospel, someone addresses our Lord as “good teacher”, and Our Lord brings him up short, and says, “One there is Who is good, God.”<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere He says, “Do not be called ‘Rabbi’ (teacher). . . for one only is your Master, the Christ”; and “call no man on earth your father, for one is your Father, Who is in heaven”.<sup>7</sup> This statement should puzzle you, especially if you love and honor your parents. But Scripture itself directs us in the right way. Christ Himself, Who says that He alone is our Master, also told His disciples to go forth and teach all the nations.<sup>8</sup> And He Who tells us to call no one on earth our father also rebuked the Pharisees for not taking care of

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<sup>5</sup>Euthyphro 14e–15a.

<sup>6</sup>Matth. 19:18.

<sup>7</sup>Matth. 23:8–10.

<sup>8</sup>Matth. 28:18–20.

their fathers and mothers in need.<sup>9</sup> The commandment “Honor thy father and mother,” is of God’s own authorship. So if we put these texts together with what we have just said, we see how to understand them. God is not the only teacher, but He is the only teacher *without qualification*. Every other teacher is a learner and is a teacher in virtue of being a learner, so that his learning is pre-supposed to his teaching. It is not true that he is in no way a teacher, but only that he is not the teacher in the most perfect way, because he has so little a share in teaching that he must already be a learner to be a teacher. It is like unto a man’s fatherhood. To be a father is to be an origin, yet every human father has a father. Every human father is a fathered father. And he is a father in virtue of God’s fatherhood. So the human father is not a father without qualification. In this light, the proposition that God alone is teacher and father does not seem strange after all. It is important to realize that every human teacher is more a learner than a teacher, and is a teacher in virtue of being a learner.

The third point, which is once again most obvious by comparison, is that God cannot be deceived, He cannot be wrong. As the Act of Faith has it, He can neither deceive nor be deceived. Thus, for the learner to know what God says is to know the truth. With respect to a human teacher that is not so. To know what he says is one thing, but to know whether what he says is true is another.

One might say, then, that both God and man are teachers. Consequently, one might be a disciple of one or the other. But because as teachers God and man differ radically in kind, so too will the discipleships corresponding to each sort of teacher. “Teacher” and “disciple” are not said univocally. Let us speak briefly about the differences in the light of what we said about the teacher.

We defined the disciple by faith and submission. This faith and this submission is not the same when the teacher is God and when it is a man. First let us consider faith. Our faith in God is more certain than any knowledge that we can gain through discipleship to Him. In man, however, our faith is less certain than the knowledge we hope to obtain through discipleship. Secondly, in the case of God, our faith continues throughout this life. There is no going beyond faith. Only in the next life does faith give way to vision. In this life faith is a constant. With respect to the human teacher, that is not so. As one learns from the human teacher the element of faith diminishes,

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<sup>9</sup> Matth. 15:3–9.

because one begins to see for oneself what one has beforehand accepted on faith from the teacher. So, it is possible for a human disciple to reach equality with his teacher. And then, perhaps, to surpass him. That never happens when God is the teacher. So, a corollary is the fact that, although God and man may know the same things, the knowledge they have is not of the same kind. In contrast, the knowledge one acquires from the human teacher is not only the knowledge of the same things but is also the same kind of knowledge. When I study Euclid I become a geometer; the geometry that I now have is the same kind of knowledge that Euclid had. The definition of knowledge is the same, univocally, here, for teacher and learner. But with respect to God, of course, this is not so. He knows what we know, or at least he knows what we believe, in a different way, even though He tells us. His knowledge is not of the same kind as ours.

The second difference concerns our submission to the teacher. We submit to God, to His authority, without reservation. Not only do we receive direction from Him but we also believe what He tells us and we believe it without reservation. With respect to the human teacher, of course, there is always some reservation. We recognize that he is but a man like ourselves and that his direction can be fallible in this way or that, and that what he says may on a particular occasion be mistaken. What Saint Thomas describes as “the fear of the opposite<sup>10</sup>” is characteristic of all human discipleship. One does not have unreserved confidence in the human teacher. This absolute difference between the Divine mind and the human mind can in no way be overcome. Even in beatitude, where we see God face to face, there is a sort of fear, because there is no way we can possibly understand God as fully and perfectly as He understands himself. That is why the saints say that the blessed do not comprehend God. When we comprehend something we “surround” it with our mind, so to speak; we understand it to the extent of its understandability. This does not happen when we understand God, even in beatitude. It is impossible for a creature, even a beatified one, to understand God as fully as God understands Himself. So as Saint Thomas says, there is, even in beatitude, of a sort of fear, a fear of equating oneself with the object of the vision. We see, then, as a consequence a difference between the discipleship we owe to God and the discipleship we owe to man, no matter how wise that man may be. One may be a disciple to God or a disciple to a man, but these discipleships differ radically in kind.

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<sup>10</sup>In I Post. Anal. Proem. n. 6.

But we have not yet sufficiently distinguished the kinds of discipleship. We have discussed the extremes, simply human and simply divine discipleships, but the middles, which are less clear, remain to be discussed. For there are those who are only human but whom God has given authority to teach in His name. That God should give such authority is not surprising. We find that this is everywhere God's way. As Saint Thomas puts it, He wants to give to His creatures a share in the dignity of causality.<sup>11</sup> He does not intend to be the only teacher; rather, He must be the first teacher and the origin of all teaching, but He also wishes to associate others as much as is possible in the work of teaching. This is part of God's mercy and, in a certain sense, His greatest mercy: to let us share in His work of making things perfect.

So there are, first of all, those who speak or write by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These are often described as the sacred authors and their writings as Sacred Scripture. Saint Augustine says the following: "Since they wrote the things that He showed and uttered to them it cannot be pretended that He is not the writer, for His members but executed what their Head dictated."<sup>12</sup> Saint Gregory speaks in a similar way: "The Holy Ghost is faithfully believed to be the author of the book [of Scriptures]. He therefore wrote those things Who dictated what was to be written; He wrote Who in this writer's work was also the inspirer."<sup>13</sup> In these sacred books, then, the authors speak for God Himself because He inspires them. Their word is His word. The Church has always held, therefore, that the Scriptures are all together free from error. Pope Leo XIII said, "It is impossible that God Himself, the Supreme Truth, can utter that which is not true."<sup>14</sup> Saint Paul says something like this to Timothy as well: "All Scripture inspired by God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct and to instruct to justice."<sup>15</sup> He does not say to Timothy, "Look over Scripture and see the better parts and the worse parts and use the better parts;" or "Some of it is not so good, so look at the parts that are true." He says, "All Scripture teaches," as if to say Scripture is free from error. No other position is really consistent with the belief that Scripture is God's own word. It is God speaking through the human authors by way of inspiration.

But, nevertheless, as Scripture itself teaches, Divine authority resides not

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<sup>11</sup>Cont. Gent. III, cc. 69–70.

<sup>12</sup>De Consensu Evangel. I. i. c. 35.

<sup>13</sup>Praef. In Job. n. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Providentissimus Deus, VII.

<sup>15</sup>II Tim. 3:16.

only within these Sacred Books but also within the Apostles and their successors, and especially the successors of Saint Peter, the rock upon whom the Church was built. In this vein, the Lord told His Apostles to go and teach all the nations, and said to them, “I will be with you even unto the consummation of the world,”<sup>16</sup> and “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”<sup>17</sup> And perhaps most strikingly, He said to His disciples, “He who hears you hears me,”<sup>18</sup> as if to say, “you may speak in My name.” Thus, when the bishops, in communion with the Holy Father, or the latter on his own initiative, propose a doctrine definitively to the Universal Church, they cannot be mistaken. Christians owe to that teaching a faithful submission, accepting not only practical directions but also assenting to the truth of what has been proposed. But note that this infallibility belongs to the Apostles and their successors only when they formally intend to determine some point of doctrine for the Church. It does not extend to the things they may think, say, or write in other respects. For example, even while a man is Pope he might entertain theological views that are heretical. He might even write a book expressing those views. That is entirely possible. But he will not propose those views to the Universal Church as something to be definitively believed. One of my teachers once told me that there was a certain pope (some centuries ago) who did have some heretical notions of his own and was in fact about to propose them to the Universal Church as something to be believed. But instead, he died. What we have is not a guarantee of the personal orthodoxy of the Holy Father, but rather that he will not teach what is contrary to the truth when he acts as the Universal Teacher of the Catholic Church, following the mandate that has been given to him by Christ. He may in his personal life be a complete rogue (and there have been popes of that sort) and he may even be profoundly disordered in his own beliefs. The guarantee of Christ is only that He will not teach false doctrine in His name.

The question of how one knows whether the Pope or the bishops in council intend to teach in the name of Christ or not is secondary to our concerns here, though in itself an important question. Sometimes the language of a document indicates explicitly and unmistakably that a teaching is definitive. For example, many of the dogmatic pronouncements of the Church include

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<sup>16</sup>Matth. 28:19–20.

<sup>17</sup>Matth. 16:18–20.

<sup>18</sup>Luke 10:16.

the formula *anathema sit*: “(If anyone says the contrary) let him be accursed.” Such explicit language clearly indicates defined doctrine. A faithful believer cannot deny that this is Christ speaking through His Church. Sometimes other but similar formulas are used. Here is a formula from the apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, on the Assumption of Mary, by Pope Pius XII: “By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, and our own, we pronounce, declare, and define that it is divinely revealed teaching that the Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven. If anyone will have voluntarily dared to deny or call into doubt what has been defined by us he will know that he is quite fallen away from the divine and Catholic faith.” One cannot get more explicit than that.

Concerning the ordinary universal teaching of the Magisterium, however, such as what is taught by the Holy Father in encyclicals, the criteria are not so clear. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Vatican Council states that the mind and intention of the Holy Father are made known “principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.”<sup>19</sup> For example, note the language of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*: “Now that we have sifted carefully the evidence sent to us and intently studied the whole matter as well as prayed constantly to God, we, by virtue of the mandate entrusted to us by Christ, intend to give our reply.”<sup>20</sup> Not as emphatic, not as explicit, but quite sufficient. In the same letter, the Holy Father asserts without qualification that the principal assertions of his letter are the doctrines of the Church.<sup>21</sup> He says certain things by way of explanation and certain things by way of illustration that are not proposed in the same way, i.e., definitively. But with regard to the principal assertion, which is an unqualified condemnation of contraception, he says that it is the doctrine of the Church. So, the language is not as solemn or as explicit or indeed as impressive as the language of *Munificentissimus Deus*, but it is sufficient.

On the other hand, the Holy Father might even during his pontificate write a book of theology, without proposing what he says as an apostolic teaching. And such a book ought to be received with respect and attention, but should not be assumed to be an exercise of the supreme teaching author-

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<sup>19</sup>*Lumen Gentium*, n. 25.

<sup>20</sup>*Humanae Vitae*, n. 6.

<sup>21</sup>*Humanae Vitae*, nn. 14–16.

ity which enjoys the charism of infallibility. An example of that in recent years was a text from our present Holy Father, *Mulieris Dignitatem*. At the beginning of that text he says explicitly, “this is a meditation.” He does not say, “this is a teaching.” So such a doctrine should be received in the proper spirit. It is not a definitive account of the Church’s doctrine, but something the Holy Father proposes to us for our serious consideration. That is quite a different matter.

We have spoken, then, about these two: the inspired authors of Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church, who teach with an authority that is more than human. Their authority is not simply human but is a participation in God’s authority. “He who hears you hears Me.” Have we completed our account of those who teach with more than human authority? Not quite. There are certain wise men, faithful sons of the Church, whom the Church herself recognizes and commends as trustworthy and excellent teachers. These men are called the Doctors of the Church. “Doctor” here means “teacher.” (It does not mean “physician” in this context.) It comes from the Latin verb *docere* which means “to teach.” These doctors are not only of the Church in the sense of being worthy members of the Church, they are also teachers of the Church in the sense that they teach the Church. Because of the recognition which the Church affords them, their teachings take on an authority which is more than human. For they too partake in the teaching authority of the Church. Of course, this particular authority is not original with them but derives from a subsequent recognition. In this way it is like the canonization of saints. Canonization does not make a saint holy, it only recognizes the holiness that is already there. Similarly, to declare a great mind a Doctor of the Church is not to make him wise but to recognize and to declare him to be wise.

The greatest example, of course, of such a teacher, of such a wise man, is our own patron, Saint Thomas Aquinas, who is the doctor of doctors. As Pope John the XXII said during Saint Thomas’ canonization procedures, “His doctrine could only be miraculous because he enlightened the Church more than all the other Doctors.”<sup>22</sup> Two things are said here. First, that Saint Thomas is not merely wise, but that he enlightens the Church. He makes the Church wiser. And secondly, that his position is unique. Not all doctors are equal. Saint Thomas is the doctor of doctors, the doctor whose

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<sup>22</sup> *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. I–martii, 681–682. Quoted by Santiago Ramirez, “The Authority of St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist*, 1953, vol. I, p. 22.

doctrine enlightens the Church more than that of any other. Indeed, one might say that Saint Thomas' greatest glory is precisely that time and again the Church has made his doctrine her own. The most striking example of this is what is recounted about the Council of Trent, which is one of the greatest of all doctrinal councils. While the fathers at Trent were deliberating, they put upon the altar, opened, three books: Sacred Scripture, The Decrees of the Supreme Pontiffs, and the *Summa Theologiae* of Saint Thomas, as Pope Leo XIII says, "whence they could draw counsels, reasons, and answers."<sup>23</sup> No other doctor of the Church has received that kind of commendation. Pius V calls Saint Thomas "the most brilliant light of the Church, whose works are the most certain rule of Catholic doctrine."<sup>24</sup>

This authority of Saint Thomas extends to philosophy as well. For the Church cannot ignore human wisdom. There is no philosophical issue of major and fundamental importance which does not have an intimate bearing upon the Faith. The Church, therefore, determines about philosophical issues with the authority received from Christ, because otherwise she could not adequately explain and defend the truths of Revelation. Since Saint Thomas' canonization (about 50 years after his death in 1274) he has been commended by every single subsequent pope and in the terms that are without parallel. They have commended his teaching, for example, to all those who study Scripture, and to all those who study theology and philosophy. I recently read an article in which about eighty closely printed pages were simply a recounting of the tributes of the Holy Fathers to Saint Thomas, their commendations of his teachings, and, most importantly, their directions to follow him in the study of philosophy and theology.

For there is more than commendation; the faithful are instructed to be disciples of Saint Thomas. As Pius XI says, "Let everyone hold inviolable the prescription of the Code of Canon Law, 'that teachers shall treat the studies of philosophy and theology and train students therein according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor and religiously adhere thereto,' and all should obey this regulation in such a manner that they can truly call Saint Thomas their teacher."<sup>25</sup> What this pope is telling us in so many words, and what so many other popes tell us, is that if we wish to become wise, or even to make a good beginning of wisdom, Saint

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<sup>23</sup>*Aeterni Patris*, n. 22.

<sup>24</sup>*Mirabilis Deus*, April 11, 1567. Quoted by Ramirez, *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup>*Studiorum Ducem*, 323, 324.

Thomas must be for us not simply someone whom we respectfully read and study, but someone who is our master. (I'll talk more about that later.) So, we may follow Saint Thomas confidently as our master, for the Church has unmistakably indicated that he is a master; i.e. one who knows and can teach.

Thus we see that God in His mercy has provided for the would-be disciple. He has resolved for him his principal difficulty. For, as we said, the disciple must believe. He must trust someone. If he is to be a disciple, he has to believe that someone in particular knows, so that he can submit himself to this one's direction in order to become a knower. Left to himself, how is he to find such a master? He does not even know where to look. And if he finds such a one, how is he to recognize him? He must recognize him by certain signs, because he is not yet a knower. But judgments based on signs are fallible, and can lead to serious mistakes and intellectual disorders. Many look wise who are in fact not wise. Perhaps most of those who look wise are not wise. So, there is a dilemma that the man properly imbued with the spirit of discipleship is faced with, a dilemma that he can hardly resolve on his own. No one will safely direct him to the teacher. But as Pius XI says, it was said in the Old Testament: "Go to Joseph," to receive food for your bodies; likewise, "Go to Thomas," to receive the food of solid doctrine to nourish your souls.<sup>26</sup> Follow his example, follow his direction, become his disciples, and you will be on the way to wisdom. You may not be educable, but if you are educable, this is how you become educated. The Church, then, guided by the Holy Spirit, has clearly pointed out to us the teacher, and we may follow him with confidence.

I have discussed two things: what it is to be a disciple and the different kinds of discipleship. For there is not just one way to be a disciple, there are many ways. One is a disciple of God, of his Church, of Holy Scripture, and of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

## 2.3 True Discipleship and Apparent Discipleship

But up to now, I have been speaking about the true disciple. Let us now speak about the *apparent* disciple, the one who looks like a disciple but is not. I shall mention examples of those who look like disciples but are not, because they err by excess or by defect. As you know, the extremes resemble

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

the middle, but do not resemble each other. Black and white resemble gray, but they do not resemble each other. The cowardly man looks like the brave man but not like the rash man. The rash man looks like the brave man but not like the cowardly man. So let us see how those who are disciples only in appearance bear this out. I shall give two pairs of examples, one more extreme than the other. Obviously, one of the worst cases is to regard a human teacher as if he were divine. The clearest example I have seen of this is from the Arabian philosopher Averroes, with respect to Aristotle (who is, as a matter of fact, quite worthy of disciples). Here are Averroes' words:

I believe that this man (Aristotle) was the rule and measure in nature, and indeed the exemplar which nature invented to demonstrate final human perfection in all matters. . . we praise God who separated this man from all others in perfection and gave him the ultimate human dignity, which no other man will ever be able to attain in any age whatever.<sup>27</sup>

So, in other words, Averroes thinks that Aristotle is divine, or very nearly so. It seems that he is giving to Aristotle a power and authority that no human teacher can possibly possess. In fact, given the fallibility of man, even the wisest of us fail in this or that. The Church has even had to declare that in certain particular matters of doctrine Aristotle is wrong. He is not the exemplar of human perfection, though he is a mighty good philosopher. And there are consequences: in having this thoughtless and extravagant devotion to Aristotle, Averroes seriously distorts his doctrine in several particulars. Saint Thomas, in speaking about Averroes, who is often referred to as the Commentator (i.e., on Aristotle) says that he was not so much the Commentator as the Depraver. This is a not unnatural result of the exaggerated respect he had for Aristotle. If one gives a human teacher an authority that is more than human, one may well end up exaggerating his doctrine into an extreme and mistaken form. This is a very obvious example of sin by excess. Aristotle deserves respect but not that kind of respect.

The worst sort of defect, on the other hand, is to regard the divine teacher as if he were merely human. An example of this is found in certain contemporary Scripture scholars who profess that the Scripture is the word of God, but then proceed to treat it as if it were only the word of man. Even the

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<sup>27</sup>Quoted by Fr. Charles N. R. McCoy in *The Structure of Political Philosophy* (N.Y., McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 128.

words of our Lord reported in the Gospel are often treated this way. This seems to be the position of such scholars: when God became man he took on our nature, and took up along with that nature certain limitations, among which is a limitation of knowledge. When Christ speaks to us (they say) from his human understanding, using human language, that language expresses an understanding which is limited and affected by the particular circumstances of His own time and place on earth. Thus, we are not hearing God's truth in its purity, but a sort of mixture in which there are contingent human elements standing in perpetual need of correction. The divinely infallible and the humanly fallible are mixed together in such a way one can never quite sort the one out from the other. One of these scholars even said (and this is a shocking statement) that the mentality of Our Lord is simply the mentality of a first century Galilean peasant, and that one must therefore understand His statements as bound and limited by the kind of mentality one might expect from such a man. (This is an amusing statement, though, because our Lord was not a peasant, he was a townsman; even in the light of what that scholar would admit as historical fact, his comment is witless.)

At any rate, it is clear enough that for a man who thinks of Christ that way, the teaching of God made man has no more authority than the teaching of any other man; in fact, it apparently has less authority than the teaching of our sophisticated scholars. As Christians, however, we believe that Christ's humanity is an instrument of His divinity. We are taught that through the human the divine is made known to us: God's word is made known to us though human words. And we also hold that Christ's humanity is perfectly subject to His divinity, so that no least falsehood or incorrectness can come forth from his mouth. The position of these scholars reminds me of the position of certain atheists who say that even if there were a God, there would be no way that He could tell us anything. For example, we find this claim in a very amusing essay by Jean-Paul Sartre, a French atheist, who tells the story of a lady who kept on getting messages on the telephone telling her what she should do. This troubled her greatly. She was asked, "But who is it who speaks to you?" And she replied, "He says he is God."<sup>28</sup> The point that Sartre tries to make out of this is that, even if there were a God, there would really be no way He could get through to us. He might say something to us but we could never realize that it was Him speaking, and we would always

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<sup>28</sup> *Existentialism is a Humanism*; in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, edit. Walter Kaufmann (World Publishing, N.Y. 1956), p. 293.

be wondering, “Is that really God talking to us, or is it perhaps somebody else who is pretending to be God?”

Now that is a very strange thing to say, when you think about it. If you are willing to swallow the camel of God’s existence, why worry about the gnat of His being able to tell us what He wants to tell us. It is as if other human beings can get through to us if they try long enough, but no matter how long God tries, He cannot quite make us aware of the fact that He is telling us something. It is a strange position, to be sure, but in its implications it is atheism. If God cannot tell us what He is thinking without His message being inextricably mixed up with the human and the erroneous, then He cannot tell us anything certainly and clearly, which is tantamount to saying that there is no God.

My second set of examples is less extreme, and has to do not with those who treat the human as divine or the divine as human, but with those who treat the human as human, but are nevertheless extreme in their attitude towards their teachers. One example of excess is the one who is not so much the disciple as a partisan and imitator of his master. He adopts readily all the opinions of his master and asserts them pugnaciously. He imitates his master in all things. It is not enough that he take doctrine from him, but he must take other things as well. If his master wears three coats and smokes a pipe he will do likewise. He looks like him, he sounds like him, finally he even smells like him. He sees himself as a sort of knight or warrior in an intellectual crusade, and he is on the right side. I would like to call such a man a cape and sword disciple, for he is something of a romantic. However, what he requires from his teacher is not so much knowledge as a set of opinions and mannerisms. In fact, what is typical of such a disciple (or better, “quasi-disciple”) is that he has greatly underestimated the difficulty of learning even from someone who knows, even from a great and wise man. He too quickly assumes that he understands, simply because he has assumed the opinions of this impressive man. Thus he finds, once he is away from the immediate influence of the master, that he does not know what he thought he knew. He finds himself in an intellectual dead end, and soon encounters clever people who show him that he does not know what he is talking about. And the consequence is that he blames his teacher, not himself.

I knew a man some years ago who went through an odyssey of that kind. I did my graduate studies at the Laval University, where there were a number of teachers that were very impressive and who, I think, were wise men. And those of us who went up to study with them were very impressed, but some of

us were carried away. We adopted not only the doctrine which we had learned through their instruction, but all sorts of other things as well, and some of us asserted opinions that were not sufficiently understood just because we had heard them from the master as he walked out the door one afternoon. The subsequent experience of the particular man I have in mind was quite instructive. When he left Laval and went out to live amongst the intellectual barbarians, he had the imprudence to give a talk about Saint Thomas' five proofs for God's existence in the presence of a number of rascals from the University of California who, of course, proceeded afterwards to chop him to bits. But the outcome of that experience was not a humble recognition that he did not know what he should know, but the feeling that Saint Thomas had let him down. The subsequent intellectual history of that man, as far as I have been able to follow it, was that he passed from one academic group to another as fancy took him, but never seriously took to himself the task of learning what he had learned badly when he was at Laval. I have known a few others of that sort also, but I won't name names. You do not know them anyway. Such a "disciple" has a rather small mind and is certainly excessive in his discipleship. He goes overboard; he gives to the human teacher a fealty, a total submission or imitation that is not in keeping with what it is to be a human teacher. Only Christ deserves that kind of imitation.

The other extreme, that of defect, is milder. Here the learner looks like a disciple, but is less than a disciple. He is the man who reads the master with attention and respect, recognizes him as a superior intellect and affirms that he has learned much from him. But he also regards other philosophers, for example, in the same light, even when they disagree in their method, their principles, and their fundamental doctrines. Thus he is not really a disciple as defined above. For he could not possibly believe that they all know what they are talking about; he cannot reverence them all as knowers, for the simple reason that they are in fundamental disagreement. Thus, such a learner is not, strictly speaking, a disciple.

There is clearly some resemblance between the one properly called a disciple and the learner we have just been speaking of: in both cases, there is serious attention to the man who is called a master. But how does a disciple in the proper sense of the word differ from the man we were just considering? First of all, a disciple differs *in the amount of time he spends*. If you think that this man is your master you will read him much more attentively and at greater length and with greater repetition than you read anybody else, and especially anybody who is in opposition to him. Why? Because the other

philosophers give you something to think about, something that you should think about, but you do not expect them to direct you to the truth. Thus, for example, I respect Descartes as a philosopher. He says things I ought to read and consider carefully, but I do not trust him to direct me to the truth.

From this we see the second point of difference, which is precisely that *the disciple accepts direction from his teacher even though he does not see the reasons for that direction*, at least not at first. He hopes to see the reasons later, but he does not see them at once. So the teacher tells him read this, not that, do this first, then that, pay attention to this for now and ignore that. He gives the learner certain directions which the learner takes on faith. The learner does not see that it is the right way, but he believes that it is the right way. He believes that he will realize the fruit if he follows the directions of the master. Again, to use Descartes as my example, in the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes says certain things about how to conduct one's mind in learning, or at least about how he conducts his mind in learning. I am glad to have read those things, for there is much to be learned from them and much of truth in them, but will I submit myself to Descartes and follow a plan of study along the lines which he proposes? Not at all. Why? I do not trust him. Maybe I now know better after years of study, but to begin with I did not actually know, but I did not trust him. So I did not do what he suggested. How was I, then, with respect to Descartes and Saint Thomas? Well, alike and unlike. I did not understand well enough what they were saying, and I did not always see the reasons why, but I trusted the one and not the other. I followed the directions of the one and not those of the other, because I trusted the one and not the other.

This brings us to another attribute of the disciple. The disciple *believes that the teacher is right*. He does not *see* that he is right but he *believes* that he is right. Thus he persists; that is to say, when something is not clear to him or even seems wrong to him, his working hypothesis is that the defect is in him, and that if he persists in study and reflection he will see why the master says what he says and that it is true. He knows perfectly well that it might not be true. And yet he assumes that it is probably true, and that the defect is in himself and not in the teacher. And those of us who study Saint Thomas diligently year after year reap the rewards of that particular attitude. We find ourselves saying, sometimes many years afterwards, "Oh, that is why he said that there." We would never have come to such an understanding, had we not had the faith to persist.

So Aristotle says it, and Saint Thomas says it, and the Church says it: it is necessary for the learner to believe. The crucial point is whom you believe. This is true not only with respect to trusting the direction of your teacher, but also with respect to thinking and believing that certain doctrines are true, even though you do not see them, because you realize that it takes a while to see difficult truths. So you persist with a man whom you trust as your teacher, believing that this will bear fruit. And even if he is wrong about some particular, you see after the fact that the effort you bestowed was worthwhile.

For example, Aristotle was a disciple of Plato. One reads that Aristotle was a disciple of Plato till the end of Plato's days, even though they were in deep disagreement about a number of issues. Aristotle realized that by careful attention and diligence in the study of Plato, even if Plato was wrong about certain matters, he would come out on the winning end, as it were, because Plato was, even if a wrong philosopher, a wise wrong philosopher. There was much that could be learned from him and it was better staying with him than setting off on one's own.

The final difference is that if one regards a man as one's master *he returns to him again and again*. He does not think that after a first reading of a text he has exhausted its meaning, and has taken all that he has to learn from it. He expects that by returning to its teaching again and again he will draw fresh truth out of it. I saw an example of this last summer when a course was given on this campus on Aristotle's *Categories*, one of the first books we read in the program. I have read and studied the *Categories* for many years; I have taught it in class; but what I saw last summer was that there was a great deal more in that book than I had ever seen. It was brought out of the book and brought before my mind and shown to me by someone who regarded Aristotle as his teacher, and therefore paid a lot of attention to that book, attention which made it possible to derive those fruits. That ought to be the case with a disciple. He expects to see more when he follows the teacher more closely and more intently, at least if he thinks of the teacher as a great master. There is a great deal more there, one thinks, than meets the eye.

### 3 Learning and Discipleship

So that is the first part of my lecture and I hope that the next two parts will be shorter. I have talked about what it is to be a disciple; I have talked about the kinds of disciples; I have talked about those who look like disciples but are not, and contrasted them to the true disciple. Now we turn to the second part of the lecture. My thesis is that one cannot learn without being a disciple. One might ask first, “Learn what?” We said earlier that there are a lot of things which one learns from experience, so learning from a teacher is not the only kind of learning and in some respects not the most fundamental. Likewise, there are a lot of particular facts which one must know in order to learn from somebody else. Some of these facts one must get from one’s own experience, or not at all; others can only be learned from being told. Learning in these ways does not make one a disciple.

So let us make a distinction. What we are talking about here is learning those things which are the proper objects of investigation, the objects of philosophy and theology.<sup>29</sup> These are not immediately known, nor are they directly given from experience or by report, but only by way of an investigation, an investigation in which one can go wrong. These are the things I am talking about. Now as regards what is properly known only to God, we must, of course, submit to His authority if we are to learn anything at all. And this is true not only of the articles of the Creed, which are the first principles of sacred doctrine, but also of the many truths which are contained implicitly in those articles. We cannot securely draw these truths out from the principles unless we submit to the teaching authority of the Church. For Christ would not otherwise have commissioned his Apostles as He did. Had the written word been sufficient, He would not have left us a living authority to teach us about these things which are most necessary and most excellent. So clearly, with respect to Divine truth, we are either disciples or we do not learn at all.

But with respect to human learning, which is called philosophy, the matter is not quite so clear. Of course, insofar as philosophy involves the drawing out from revealed truth of what is implicit in it, or prepares us for a more perfect reception of revelation by proposing the preambles of faith, i.e., certain things that can be naturally known about God, then, to that extent,

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<sup>29</sup>Here “philosophy” is understood in its original sense of the love of wisdom. In this sense, it includes not only what the name is now applied to, but also the natural sciences, mathematics, etc.

philosophy stands in need of direction from God's revealed word.

But if we consider philosophy in itself it is not so clear that every philosopher must be a disciple. So my claim is really the following: a man cannot learn philosophy, i.e., human wisdom, unless he be a disciple; that is to say unless he submit himself to the direction of another man who knows.

Here we might interpose a counter-point: we are citizens of a democratic society, and a democratic society is based upon the social condition of equality. This social condition has an effect on the way that one thinks about things. It inclines one to think that there really are no men who stand above others in their wisdom, such that they may be in a position to instruct others about the most fundamental things. Aristotle says this about custom: it makes us think that certain things are true even though we have no particular evidence for their truth; and not only that, it also makes them seem not only true but also self-evident. So that when anybody says the contrary, we reject it not only as false but also as absurd.<sup>30</sup> Tocqueville remarked on this fact when he visited America in the early nineteenth century. He said that the Americans are not philosophical. Their pursuits, which are largely commercial, stand in their way. But they are in fact all Cartesians in their way of thinking about things. That is to say, every American thinks that his own judgement about fundamental things is just as good as anybody else's judgement. And it is not because they have any evidence to that effect, but because the social condition of equality inclines them to think so.

You can see this more clearly if you reflect upon how such a belief conflicts with your experience of particular facts. If you look at the cases that are more manifest, what you see everywhere is inequality. Men differ in beauty, in strength, in virtue, in all sorts of ways. Inequality seems to be the rule of life, not equality. But somehow when it comes to the fundamental things, the philosophical issues that underlie everything else, one is inclined by reason of one's custom to overlook those differences and think that they're not really there, and that no man can really be the master of another intellectually. Socrates talks about this anomaly. You may remember that in some of the dialogues he remarks that when the people want an opinion about ships, they call the shipwrights; when they want an opinion about carpentry they call the carpenters; when they want an opinion about health they call the doctors. But when they want an opinion about how the whole situation, about the good conduct of life for the whole society, then everybody thinks that he has

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<sup>30</sup> *Metaph.* II, ch. 3.

an equal right to speak, and that everybody is equally knowledgeable about these large questions, though obviously not equally knowledgeable about the small questions.<sup>31</sup> This is like what Leo Strauss called retail sanity and wholesale madness.

So what I'm going to do in what follows is to present an argument against the conviction that most of us have just from the democratic custom in which we live and in which we grew up. My argument will be made in this way: I am going to argue from the nature of wonder. Wonder is the passion that characterizes the philosopher as such. One cannot be a philosopher without wonder. One may be wondering and be unsuccessful as a philosopher but the converse never happens. Philosophy grows out of no other passion than wonder.<sup>32</sup> So an analysis of wonder will, I think, bring us to the conclusion that we intend here.

Wonder is not something simple. It is complex; it involves several elements. What are these elements? First of all, *the man who wonders is ignorant and is aware of his ignorance*. He is a man who has a question. When you ask a question you not only are ignorant but you are aware of your ignorance. And further, the man who wonders has a specific focus for his question. He doesn't just know in some of general way that there are a lot of things he doesn't know, but specifically, that there's a particular thing worth knowing that he doesn't know. So the first attribute of the man of wonder is that he is ignorant and aware of his ignorance with respect to a specific issue.

The second characteristic is that *he desires to know*, not just in some momentary way, but wants to know so badly that *he is willing to devote his life to the quest of what he does not know*. That is why philosophy is the work of a lifetime and not of an afternoon or even of four years. We see the opposite very clearly in the dialogues of Plato. There is no man in the history of human thought that I know of who is better than Socrates at revealing to his respondents their ignorance. But how seldom does a zeal for the truth follow upon this revelation? His behavior only earned Socrates a death sentence. People were not at all willing to follow up on what they had been shown. The awareness of their own ignorance led not to an intensification of their desire to know, but to irritation and withdrawal. But the man of wonder not only knows he is ignorant, but also has a desire to know the

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<sup>31</sup>Cf. *Protagoras* 319a–d.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. *Metaph.* I 982b11–27.

things of which he is ignorant, a desire so intense that he is willing to devote his life to discovering the truth.

The third characteristic of the man of wonder is that *he is afraid*, he fears. He fears error. And that is like a corollary of the second feature. Because he desires knowledge as a very great good, worth devoting his whole life to, he also fears error as the worst of all evils. But fear concerns more than evil. Fear is of an evil which is difficult to escape. The man of wonder realizes not only that error is a great evil but that it is an evil that is difficult to avoid. This is a philosophical corollary of the text in the Gospel, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Many pursue, but few find. Many try, but few succeed. So the man of wonder sees that he is involved in a difficult quest, in which failure is more often the result than success. This realization comes out of the very experience that gives rise to wonder, for wonder is usually aroused by the discovery that things are not the way we thought they were. We have a simple and appealing arrangement of things in our minds and something comes along and disturbs that arrangement, and makes us aware of the fact that we don't know the things we thought we knew. A man of wonder is like the philosopher Heraclitus, who says, "The hidden harmony is better than the apparent one."<sup>33</sup> There was an apparent harmony that the man of wonder contemplated beforehand. But now this harmony has been disturbed by contrary indications; his "world picture" has been destroyed. Yet he has desire and confidence. He says to himself, "Well, this is not the harmony that makes things what they are. That's hidden. And that is much better than this. I'm better off leaving aside this superficially appealing harmony and looking for the deeper harmony that is harder to understand but truer." So he realizes that the world is not as he thought it was, and that to inquire successfully into the nature of things requires a great deal more than what he already has. So there is a great fear of error and a reverence for the truth.

The fourth characteristic of the man of wonder is *hope* or *confidence*. If he did not have the hope and confidence that he can learn what he does not know, his passion would give rise to nothing. No one will pursue a difficult good without the hope that he can attain it. So this is the fourth and one might say the decisive feature of the man who wonders. He has hope and confidence that he can come to know what he desires to know.

So, let us suppose we have a man of wonder, a good philosopher in

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<sup>33</sup>Fr. 54. Quoted in Kirk and Raven *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1957), p. 193.

prospect. He is intelligent and he has worthy questions. Let us also suppose he is our contemporary. He looks at the multitude of those who have philosophized before him, and at the variety of human philosophical opinion. What does he observe? A babble of discordant voices. There seems to be no philosophical issue about which men have not had the most profound disagreements. And this is for him a very discouraging experience. He would like to ask his questions and have them answered. What he finds is a cacophony of different answers which are thrust upon him all at once.

What is he to do after such an experience? I think there are three ways he can go. The first way is the way that most take. He can despair and become skeptical. He can give up the philosophical quest as being beyond his powers. If he persists in the academic life he will not be a student of things, trying to understand the way things are, but simply a connoisseur of human thought. He will henceforth study what men have thought about reality rather than what that reality is in itself. He becomes a humanist rather than a philosopher. For as Saint Thomas says, “the concern of philosophy is not to know what men have thought, but what the truth about things is.”<sup>34</sup>

The second reaction, much rarer, is to become, in effect, a Cartesian, a disciple of Descartes. That is to say, he may put out of his mind altogether what previous thinkers have thought and said, and try to work out the answers for himself. In order to do this in a way that seems intellectually respectable, he is going to make certain assumptions. He can’t, for example, assume that he alone among men has the native power to resolve these difficult issues. In fact, Descartes himself, the father of this sort of procedure, says quite explicitly he is no smarter than anybody else. So he has to get another explanation for the failure of the philosophers, and his explanation is this: the former philosophers were natively intelligent and capable of wisdom, but they have not had the right *method*. So the solution to find a method that puts philosophical issues beyond dispute, such that once this method becomes universalized, philosophers will no longer disagree among themselves as they do. Their discussions will not be futile, but will come to determinate conclusions. The next step is not too surprising. The Cartesian asks himself: Where do we find a method whose success is uniformly acknowledged? Clearly, in the mathematical sciences of arithmetic and geometry. Here there is little dispute, and when there is dispute, those who disagree can sit down together and work out their disagreements in a

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<sup>34</sup>In I Arist. De Caelo et Mundo, l. xxii, n. 8.

relatively short time. So, it seems, the solution is to apply to all the other areas of human inquiry a method akin to that of arithmetic and geometry. Let us reduce all our thoughts first to certain simple and clear conceptions that are so obvious that no one can doubt them, and then build up the whole edifice of philosophy, so to speak, just from those. This would be like what we find in Euclid's *Elements*: one starts out with a simple and perfectly clear figure, the circle, and from that figure one derives the whole of plane geometry. The Cartesian proposes that we do the same, or something similar, in all the branches of human knowledge. Well, that is an attractive idea and some philosophers have attempted it.

But at this point I shall do something that is inevitable in a lecture of this kind. I shall make a philosophical assertion: Descartes and his followers have absolutely and completely failed. And the reason is this: not every object of study is equally or in the same way accessible to our minds. In mathematics we are dealing with objects that are uniquely accessible to our powers of knowing, so much so that what is first in the order of nature in mathematics is also first in our own knowledge. In geometry, for example, we start with the circle, which is the first of all figures and the principle of all the rest. We might think, with Descartes, "If only we could do that everywhere." But if we could do that everywhere, we would be God, and not man. Only God begins His thought with the absolute beginning. For us, in most of our learning, we begin with things that are more evident to us but not first in reality, not the causes or principles of the things we are studying.

We should recall here the contrast we made earlier between the mind and the senses. As regards immediacy, there is not much difference between one object of sense and another. I can see the mountain thirty miles away as well as I can see the tree that is thirty feet away. I don't have to look at the tree first; I can open my eyes and look immediately at the mountain. In this respect, the various objects of sense are nearly on a par. With the mind it is not so. Not all the objects we wish to know about are equally close to our minds. We have to go to some first, and thence to others, and we cannot approach them all in the same way.

A consequence is that there is no common method which is adequate for the investigation of all things. Indeed, even the common method which we do have, logic, is not mathematics, is much more difficult than mathematics, and is not, in fact, the sort of thing that everyone agrees upon. It is itself both the common method of science and one of the most difficult of sciences.<sup>35</sup> Things are not as simple as we should like them to be. And

furthermore, in addition to that common method that all the sciences have, there is a method that is proper to each science, because the objects of one science are proportioned to our minds differently than those of another. And since there is no single method for every philosophical problem, Descartes' attempt to employ such a method destroys every department of philosophy, and finally, even mathematics. But that is an assertion. I'll be glad to defend it in the question period, but I'll just leave it at that for now. So the Cartesian procedure is an attempt at a solution, but it is one that doesn't work. It assumes that all philosophers hitherto have failed, but one can succeed if only one finds the right method; and that method is something mathematical or quasi-mathematical. One must introduce into these other chaotic branches of learning that clear, distinct, and indubitable method that belongs to mathematics.

The third alternative, and I think the only one left, is to become a disciple. A man of wonder will say to himself, "What this discordance indicates is not that truth is impossible but that few succeed. If truth is possible and men have been trying to learn it for three thousand years or more, some of them have come up with the truth. There is someone among that babble of discordant voices who knows, and my task as a learner is to find that man." So he's got a task. This is not an easy situation to be in, but I think it is the only way that offers hope. The man of wonder perceives the inadequacy of his own efforts, he rejects the Cartesian alternative, and yet neither does he despair. So what is left for him? Someone must know; someone must have the knowledge to guide him to the truth. So he becomes a would-be disciple in search of a master. 35 <sup>35</sup>

Now let me propose a difficulty which will illuminate my thesis somewhat. Doesn't there have to be a beginning somewhere, someone who learns the truth but does not learn from another? When it comes to a divinely revealed truth, there is no question. What God knows He learns from no one. He is the absolute beginning. But what about human wisdom, the wisdom that men can attain by their own natural powers? Must there not be some wise man who discovers for himself those things which he teaches later to others? So is not my thesis simply false, because not all learning requires discipleship?

Well, I grant this. But let me clarify my thesis. I'm not saying that it is absolutely impossible for a man to learn without a teacher. It is not a contradiction in terms. But it's a possibility whose probability is near zero.

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. Saint Thomas In Boethii De Trinitate, Q. 5, a. 1, ad 2.

For example, it is possible that someone may offer me the presidency of the University of California. Perhaps one of the regents is in the audience, and hearing the brilliance of this lecture, he will say, "This is the man we need." I don't think that would be a contradiction in terms. But, I am not going to bet a dollar against a million on that possibility. As regards that particular prospect, the chances are nearly zero. So I am not saying that learning without discipleship is absolutely impossible. No, I am saying that it is what you cannot reasonably expect to happen in your case or in any other.

I think this is part of the general truth that nothing really difficult among men can be originated except by an altogether implausible conjunction of favorable circumstances. A number of favorable things have to happen simultaneously or in succession. If it is both original and very difficult one can't expect it, and if it should happen once, even less should one expect it to be repeated. Let us take Socrates as an example. If there ever was a philosophical original, he was it. Not that he never learned from anybody else, but it doesn't seem that he was anyone's disciple. He is one of the great originals in human history. But how likely is such a man to occur again? And if there should be such a man, that he should come to be under circumstances such as his. For Socrates to be, there had to be a very improbable conjunction of many different things. To predict him would be like predicting my existence by knowing of the existence of my father. I would never have existed without my father, no doubt, but given the existence of the man who became my father, would you have placed any bets on my existence? Not if you were a good gambler; and even if you were a poor gambler you would not have done *that*.

A further point is that, as Socrates himself says, he did not attain wisdom. He made a good beginning, one on which others could build. It was remarkable good fortune for all of us that Socrates saw certain fundamental things, and saw them well. And so others could build on what he had begun. One thing he saw, for example, was that one cannot know anything unless one can define it. One has to know what things are if one is to make judgements about them. He discovered the rudiments of logic. He also saw how one can argue from opposing positions to advance towards the truth. The dialogues are full of such things. He realized that bodies are not the only realities, and that the primary realities are not bodies. If he had not made these steps, which are fundamental and primary, nothing further could have been done. But he did make, in these respects, the right first steps. So this great philosophical original was not a wise man in the full sense. But he

took some first steps toward wisdom, which made it possible for others who followed him to bring philosophy to a certain perfection.

Now we ask ourselves a further question: Had Socrates not been followed by Plato, and Plato by Aristotle, what would have come down to us? I shall make another assertion here, following Saint Thomas: what was begun in Socrates and was continued in Plato, was corrected and perfected in Aristotle. That is why Saint Thomas describes Aristotle not only as *a* philosopher, but as *the* Philosopher. But there never would have been an Aristotle without a Plato, and never a Plato without a Socrates. This shows even more clearly the improbability of a sufficient beginning. Never again will there be three such men in immediate succession. This is something we cannot expect or gamble on. Such a succession has apparently never occurred in the ages before, and it is not likely to occur again in the future. Furthermore, Plato was a *disciple* of Socrates—not just one who learned from him, but a disciple. And Aristotle was a disciple of Plato. So human wisdom was not brought to its original perfection without discipleship.

Something like this is true with respect to Saint Thomas as well. Saint Thomas is described as the prince of theologians. But Leo the XIII, in quoting Cardinal Cajetan with approval, says that Saint Thomas so revered the minds of all the previous Fathers and Doctors that he seems to have inherited their minds.<sup>36</sup> So there would have been no Saint Thomas without Saint Augustine, without Boethius, or even without Saint Albert, and if I dare to say it, without Aristotle. What Aristotle discovered Saint Thomas could learn. He could not have brought to further perfection things which he had first to discover for himself. He could only do that because he had Aristotle as his teacher. The wisdom of men of later times may go beyond the wisdom of earlier men. But it is only because these later teachers have first been disciples that they can go even farther than their teachers. If Aristotle had not been a disciple of Plato he would never have surpassed Plato; neither would Saint Thomas' philosophical doctrine have surpassed that of Aristotle had he not been a disciple of Aristotle.

Thus, it would seem, the great originals are not the greatest minds, and the greatest minds are not original. The former are unique and improbable beginnings; the latter bring philosophy to a certain perfection only by being at first diligent and attentive to their masters.

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<sup>36</sup>Aeterni Patris, n. 17.

## 4 Discipleship and the College

This concludes the second part of my lecture. Now at the end I shall say something about the role of discipleship in the definition of this college, i.e., how discipleship bears upon the purpose and practice of this college.

I said earlier that this college is unique among all colleges, because it defines itself by discipleship. In other colleges there may be individual teachers who are disciples of great masters like Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas, even though the colleges where they teach do not define themselves in terms of discipleship. This college is unique in that it *defines* itself in terms of, indeed *commits* itself to, discipleship.

How then is it different from other colleges? Well, there are those colleges that are not defined by discipleship at all, which is true of all secular colleges and of most Catholic colleges, which do not submit themselves to the teaching authority of the Church. The latter may call themselves Catholic but their policies and their procedures reflect no discipleship whatsoever to the teaching Church. But we go further than that. We are disciples not only of the Church and Her Magisterium and of Sacred Scripture, but also of those Doctors and Fathers whom the Church has recommended to us as our teachers. We not only call ourselves Thomas Aquinas College, but we define ourselves by discipleship to Saint Thomas. And then, even further, because Saint Thomas is by every sign a philosophical disciple of Aristotle, we define ourselves by discipleship to Aristotle also.

There are, to be sure, kinds and levels of discipleship. We are disciples of the revealed word of God, of the teaching authority of the Church, of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and of Aristotle. These discipleships are not equal, they are not of the same kind, and in fact one is derived from the other. Yet all of them are involved in the definition of this college. That is how we are unique. There are just a few Catholic colleges which actually are subject to the teaching authority of the Church. But so far as I know, none of them have taken the further logical step, and made themselves disciples of Saint Thomas as well. They may be following orthodox theologians and philosophers who do not speak against the doctrines of the Church, but they do not devote themselves to the serious, attentive, and submissive study of Saint Thomas, which we do.

Our entire course of studies, therefore, the order of which we take things up, and the end to which we direct our efforts, is determined by the method, the principles, and the doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas. In junior and

senior theology we devote ourselves exclusively to the study of the *Summa Theologiae*. And, as you know, all four years of philosophy are devoted to the study of Aristotle. That comes from discipleship. We follow Saint Thomas and we follow the philosopher whom he describes as the Philosopher. We regard ourselves as disciples of him also. There is no other school which does that.

There are contemporary theologians who are indeed orthodox and perhaps very instructive. There are, for example, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Josef Pieper, and several others who are honorable; and yet they are not Doctors of the Church. So although we respect such teachers and think them worth considering and worth learning from, we are not their disciples. We are disciples of the man whom the Church Herself has designated, Saint Thomas Aquinas.

So that completes what I wished to say tonight. There have been three different matters discussed: first of all, I explained what it is to be a disciple, the kinds of discipleship, and the difference between a true and an apparent disciple; secondly, I have advanced and defended the thesis that there is no true learning, at least of those things that need investigation, without discipleship; and thirdly, I have indicated very briefly how this college, in leading its students in the quest for wisdom, is defined by discipleship. For we do not think that wisdom can be attained in any other way.