

St. Thomas as Teacher: A Reply to Professor Pegis

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I

THE VARIOUS encyclical letters of recent popes on St. Thomas Aquinas are well known to professors in seminaries, universities, and colleges, yet it may not be amiss to single out a few excerpts in order to underline a common theme which runs throughout them. Pope Leo XIII says: "Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others."¹ He had noted earlier: "With wise forethought, therefore, not a few of the advocates of philosophic studies, when turning their minds recently to the practical reform of philosophy, aimed and aim at restoring the renowned teaching of Thomas Aquinas and winning it back to its ancient beauty."²

Pope Pius X wrote:

We therefore desire that all teachers of philosophy and sacred theology should be warned that if they deviated so much as a step, in metaphysics especially, from Aquinas, they exposed themselves to grave risk. We now go further and solemnly declare that those who in their interpretations misrepresent or affect to despise the principles and major theses of this philosophy are not only not following St. Thomas but are even far astray from the Saintly Doctor.³

¹ *Aeterni Patris*, 31, in *The Church Speaks to the Modern Mind*, ed. Etienne Gilson (Garden City, N. Y., 1954), p. 50.

² *Ibid.*, 25, p. 47.

³ *Doctoris Angelici*, as quoted in "The Authority of St. Thomas Aquinas," S. Ramirez, *The Thomist*, XV (1952), p. 64.

Finally, Pope Pius XII declared:

It is well known how highly the Church regards human reason, for it falls to reason to demonstrate with certainty the existence of God, personal and one; to prove beyond doubt from divine signs the very foundations of the Christian faith; to express properly the law which the Creator has imprinted in the hearts of men; and finally to attain to some notion, indeed a very fruitful notion, of mysteries. But reason can perform these functions safely and well, only when properly trained, that is, when imbued with that sound philosophy which has long been, as it were, a patrimony handed down by earlier Christian ages, and which moreover possesses an authority of even higher order, since the Teaching Authority of the Church, in the light of divine revelation itself, has weighed its fundamental tenets, which have been elaborated and defined little by little by men of great genius. For this philosophy, acknowledged and accepted by the Church, safeguards the genuine validity of human knowledge, the unshakable metaphysical principles of sufficient reason, causality, and finality, and finally the mind's ability to attain certain and unchangeable truth.⁴

The concern of these Popes, and others, in promoting St. Thomas is directed to the *teaching* of both philosophy and theology in various Catholic institutions. Everyone at the college level has to begin his study of philosophy and theology somewhere and somehow. Should this be left simply to chance or to any passing whim of the professor? What anyone should desire is that he be initiated into so important an area of human thought under the best circumstances and with the best teachers possible. Though centuries of experience, the Church had learned that St. Thomas was the best teacher to rely upon for just this purpose;

. . . a lover of truth for its own sake, richly endowed with human and divine science, like the sun he heated the world with the warmth of his virtues and filled it with the splendor of his teaching. Philosophy has no part which he did not touch finely, at once and thoroughly; on the laws of reasoning, on God and incorporeal substances, on man and

⁴ *Humani Generis*, National Catholic Welfare Conference, p. 14.

other sensible things, on human actions and their principles, he reasoned in such a manner that in him there is wanting neither a full array of questions, nor an apt disposal of the various parts, nor the best method of proceeding, nor soundness of principles or strength of argument, nor clearness and elegance of style, nor a facility for explaining what is abstruse.⁵

The Church, therefore, in her solicitude for the sound education of the faithful in the crucial subjects of philosophy and theology, is urging the use of St. Thomas as a guide and teacher in attaining a sound and initial formation in these subjects. In this connection, Pope Pius X noted:

We warn teachers to keep this religiously in mind, that disregarding Aquinas even slightly cannot be done without great harm. A small error in the beginning, to use the words of Aquinas in the prologue to his *De ente et essentia*, becomes very great in the end.⁶

II

With these and other passages from encyclicals in mind, emphasizing the role of St. Thomas as teacher, I should like to add further comment to the recent exchange between Prof. James Anderson and Prof. Anton Pegis. Anderson, in his article,⁷ in the light of two recent works by Pegis,⁸ raised the question whether St. Thomas was a philosopher and answered it affirmatively. In replying to Anderson, Pegis points out that the question "was St. Thomas a philosopher?" is an historical one, and a part of the larger problem of whether philosophy as used by theology is philosophy at all, to which Pegis addressed himself in the two works mentioned. In replying to Anderson,

⁵ *Aeterni Patris*, 17, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁶ *Sacrorum Antistitum*, as quoted by Ramirez, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁷ "Was St. Thomas a Philosopher?" *THE NEW SCHOLASTICISM*, XXXVIII (1964), 435-444.

⁸ *The Middle Ages and Philosophy: Some Reflections on the Ambivalence of Modern Scholasticism*, (Chicago, 1963); *St. Thomas and Philosophy* (Milwaukee, 1964).

then, having thus related the two questions, Pegis goes on to argue that St. Thomas was not a philosopher, by maintaining that he was a theologian in whom philosophy lived as theology. This is the main thrust of his argument although several other issues are raised and answered.⁹

Pegis rightly raises the historical dimension of the question, for in order to know what St. Thomas was, whether philosopher or theologian, we have to understand him "in his own world and in his own intention."¹⁰ Now there are limits to how much we can know in this precise respect even under the best conditions of historical research, but we do know quite a bit. We know a good deal of what he did during his life, how he was educated, his role as a teacher, and the works he has written. From all this we would certainly conclude that he was a theologian, that primarily he wrote theological works, and that indeed his greatest works are theological in nature. But we also know as historical fact that St. Thomas was active in making the study of philosophy and natural science compulsory in the training of Dominican scholars. Thus in 1259, St. Thomas was one of a group of Dominicans who met to revise the regulations governing the course of studies in the Dominican order and that, with regard to the eighth regulation adopted, "it is no doubt true that the intent of this regulation was to stress the importance of philosophical training. Certainly Albert was a vehement supporter of more work in philosophy, and there is no question that Thomas Aquinas was also fully in agreement with this order."¹¹

We know also as historical fact that from an early period in his life through to the late part he wrote a number of philosophical works. Before 1256 he wrote two important philosophi-

⁹ "Sub Ratione Dei: A Reply to Professor Anderson," *THE NEW SCHOLASTICISM*, XXXIX (1965), 141-157. Hereafter referred to as *SRD*.

¹⁰ *SRD*, p. 141.

¹¹ V. Bourke, *Aquinas' Search for Wisdom* (Milwaukee, 1965), pp. 87-88.

cal opuscula: *On Being and Essence* and *On the Principles of Nature*. Toward the close of his life he was engaged in the extensive work of writing commentaries on the works of Aristotle. It would seem fair to say that any one of these commentaries would in the eyes of competent scholars, then and now, qualify St. Thomas as a first-rate philosopher. The view is no longer seriously maintained that St. Thomas, in commenting on Aristotle, unthinkingly repeats the substance of Aristotle's thought all the while reserving his own "personal" views;¹² it would be even worse to suppose that he was not enough of a philosopher to understand the philosophy he was commenting on.

Now all this is so utterly transparent that Pegis presumably must have had something else in mind in taking the position he does.

What question did I raise? I wanted to know whether we can learn philosophy from a theologian, and specifically from St. Thomas. If so, I next wanted to know under what conditions such an undertaking was possible. I thought that the undertaking was possible if, in reading St. Thomas, we read as theology what he wrote as theology and *then* undertook, on our own responsibility and in our own name, to develop

¹² "The Aristotelian commentaries have their own value as sources for the study of the progress of Aquinas' thought. Somehow the notion has developed among some Thomistic scholars that they are not as important, for the student of Thomism, as the great theological writings. It is sometimes implied that they do not represent the personal thinking of St. Thomas. This attitude must be regarded with a grain of salt. Thomas Aquinas spent a good part of his time as a mature scholar in trying to explain what Aristotle said. Obviously he does not always agree with this pagan Greek philosopher, but he must have felt that it was useful to expound his philosophy. As far as we know, it was by personal choice that Thomas did these expositions—no rule of his Order, or regulation of the schools in which he taught, required such extended studies of Aristotle. Indeed, as a teaching theologian, Thomas may have had at times to justify to his superiors the time and energy that he was devoting to nontheological work. Yet even in his last years at Naples, he continued to study Aristotle. The exposition of the treatise *On Generation and Corruption* was one of his last writings. It would be a mistake, then, to disregard the Aristotelian commentaries." V. Bourke, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

a philosophy using his principles. I thought, in other words, that with St. Thomas' principles we could develop our own philosophy but could not develop any "Thomism" if this name means anything more than the use of St. Thomas' principles. To say that St. Thomas was a theologian is to say that a philosophical Thomism has never existed: he did not create one; he created something better, namely, a theology.¹³

We come now to a substantive issue. Two initial points can be made here. The first, still on the historical level, is that St. Thomas in fact wrote philosophical treatises from which one does learn philosophy, and his being a theologian did not preclude his engaging in a strictly philosophical enterprise. This point cannot be ignored. The second point concerns the position that St. Thomas' being a theologian means that a philosophical Thomism has never existed; this position, if tenable, is not so simply on historical grounds. Such a position rests primarily on the understanding of what philosophy is, what theology is, and the relationship between them.

It was to this latter position that Anderson addressed himself in his reply. Among other points, Anderson argued that the adjective "Christian" does not qualify the nature of philosophy but designates its ministerial role in relation to Christian truth; further, if operative powers are specified by their acts, and the acts by their objects, then philosophy, as a *habitus* and as a certain existing quality of the mind, possesses a character distinctively its own. Such philosophical knowledge, Anderson maintained, St. Thomas had and used both in his philosophical writings and in his ministerial use of philosophy in theology.

Pegis acknowledges the distinction between the habits of theology and philosophy. "But all that can be proved from the existence of habits is that their possessor *can act* in certain ways: he *can* philosophize."¹⁴ Presumably, this stressing of the *can* means that one can philosophize without ever actually

¹³ *SRD*, p. 145.

¹⁴ *SRD*, p. 149. Italics in original.

philosophizing in the distinctive sense of the term, although how one would acquire a habit in this way is puzzling. "Unfortunately, however, Thomistic philosophy as a habit died with St. Thomas."¹⁵ The relevance of this remark depends upon how one understands "Thomistic philosophy," and I shall refer subsequently to this point. For the moment, accepting some legitimate sense in which it can be said that Thomistic philosophy as a habit died with St. Thomas (and, in the same line of argument, so did his theology as a habit die with St. Thomas) we still have, as Pegis acknowledges, the orderly works of St. Thomas.¹⁶

"Let us limit ourselves to the two *summae*."¹⁷ This, of course, is quite a narrowing of the case. Even granting that the two *summae* are the greatest works of St. Thomas, they form only a part of his tremendous list of published writings. Indeed, one could, with good reason, regard it as quite unhistorical so to limit the issue on whether St. Thomas was a philosopher;

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ In order not to distract too much from the main line of argument, I should like to note here the difficulty one encounters in following Pegis in the paragraph starting on p. 149 and ending on p. 150. On the one hand, he acknowledges that St. Thomas had philosophy as a habit, but presumably meaning thereby that St. Thomas would be a philosopher only in the sense that he *can* philosophize. How St. Thomas could have this habit without acquiring it by distinctive acts of philosophizing is, as I have suggested, puzzling; moreover, how Pegis knows St. Thomas had this habit unless St. Thomas exhibited acts of this acquired habit is more puzzling still. Pegis claims, in this passage, "Anderson argues *a posse ad esse*: since St. Thomas did not confuse the specification of habits, he must have been a philosopher *in actu exercito*." But the relevant question is: how could anyone have the philosophical habit unless he were a philosopher *in actu exercito*? Pegis appears to rest his argument on the view also expressed in this passage that St. Thomas was not a philosopher in the sense of establishing a philosophy existing for its own sake as a human work. But it is exactly this view that is the question at issue. What also clouds the issue here is Pegis' view that for St. Thomas to be a philosopher, he must be so in an utterly personal sense, a sense which one cannot find verified in the writings of St. Thomas, whether theological or philosophical. I shall return to this "personalist" conception subsequently.

¹⁷ *SRD*, p. 150.

after all, if we are intent on examining the historical dimension of the question, we should examine the whole record. Nevertheless, there is a specific issue to be met in this restricted approach.

The position of Pegis is that philosophy is present in the *summae as theology* (which he underlines). At the same time he maintains that

the question is not whether there is philosophy present in the *summae*. There is. The question is: what sort of reality does it have as the work of a man for whom (a) the subject of a science is related to it as the specifying object is related to a power or a habit; and (b) God is the subject of *sacra doctrina* in the sense that *omnia autem pertractantur in sacra doctrina sub ratione Dei*.¹⁸

Let us deal with the latter point first. The *Summa Theologiae* is clearly a theological work. It is theological because its principles rest on revelation, and under the aspect of the revealable, the topics treated in *sacra doctrina* follow a theological ordering. All would agree on this point, as well as the fact that God is the subject of this science. With regard to the latter, Pegis refers to question 1, article 7 of *Prima Pars*, particularly the second objection and its reply. The force of the objection is in this sentence: "Sed in sacra Scriptura determinatur de multis aliis quam de Deo, puta de creaturis, et de moribus hominum," and therefore, it is argued, God is not the subject of this science. The reply points out that "omnia alia quae determinantur in sacra doctrina, comprehenduntur sub Deo: non ut partes vel species vel accidentia, sed ut ordinata aliquid ad ipsum." The last two clauses, which Pegis does not include in his quote, show that everything treated in this science is in some way ordered to God as the subject of this science. Now clearly many of the things treated in this science, for example things about creatures and human morality, are not treated expressly under the aspect of revealable, but are

¹⁸ *SRD*, p. 151.

determinations and conclusions reached by human reason itself, and which hold true apart from what we know from revelation or from arguments based on revelation. The conclusions thus reached in a philosophical way serve ministerially to make the teaching of *sacra doctrina* clearer. As St. Thomas had said just a little earlier:

This science [*sacra doctrina*] can draw upon the philosophical sciences, not as though it stood in need of them [i. e., theology in a perfect state would not, but this is not the way man knows theology now], but only in order to make its teaching clearer. For it accepts its principles, not from other sciences, but immediately from God, by revelation. Therefore it does not draw upon the other sciences as upon its superiors, but uses them as its inferiors and handmaidens: even so the master sciences make use of subordinate sciences, as political science of military science. That it thus uses them is not due to its own defect or insufficiency, but to the defect of our intellect, which is more easily led by what is known through natural reason (from which proceed the other sciences), to that which is above reason, such as are the teachings of this science.¹⁹

The philosophical sciences, in so being used, do not cease to be philosophical knowledge when so employed. The pages of both *summae* amply testify to this use of philosophy to help make clearer the teaching of theology.²⁰ Pegis speaks of a *theology* of man in the *Summa Theologiae*, inasmuch as the *consideratio theologi* treats man *sub ratione Dei*. This way of putting the matter can be ambiguous. If it means that the topics in the treatise on man are dealt with in a theological order and that, when philosophy is used in the service of theology, the

¹⁹ *Summa Theol.*, I, 1, 5, ad 2.

²⁰ "The mere fact that a theologian repeats a philosophical argument in a theological work does not mean that the argument becomes theological. There are many sections in the *Summa of Theology* where the reasoning moves from an initial experience of natural things or events to certain conclusions about the life and properties of man, for instance; this is philosophy being used by Thomas Aquinas, in the service of theology." V. Bourke, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

philosophical truth is *judged* by theology, and serves to manifest truths beyond philosophy, then the formulation is intelligible. If the formulation means that everything in the treatise is theology in the sense that all topics are derived formally from what is revealable, this is clearly not the case. Many philosophical truths are drawn upon to aid man in understanding theological truths, and hence the ordering of all things to God. A perusal of the contents of the treatise on man makes this evident. To cite only a few instances: the distinction of the various powers of the soul from each other and from the essence of the soul; the enumeration of the exterior senses; the role of the agent intellect; the distinction between sense and intellect; how the will moves the intellect; how the intellect knows material things; etc., etc.,—all these and many more illustrate how *sacra doctrina* draws “upon the philosophical sciences . . . in order to make its teaching clearer.”²¹

The prior point Pegis listed, namely, that “the subject of a science is related to it as the specifying object is related to a power or habit,”²² Anderson dealt with in his article. Pegis

²¹ *Summa Theol.*, *loc. cit.* On page 151, Pegis, in speaking of a theology of man in the *Summa Theologiae*, directs our attention to the *proemia* of I, 78, 75 and 84. Let us take the *proemium* to q. 75, the beginning of the treatise on man. The relevant sentence is: “Now the theologian considers the nature of man in relation to the soul but not in relation to the body, except in so far as the body has relation to the soul.” This is the theologian’s order of treatment, namely, to draw upon the philosophical sciences to the extent they aid in developing the science of theology. A philosophical treatment would not observe this order; it would have to consider fully, in a different ordering and context, the relation of the soul to the body. But we cannot regard all the distinctions, precisions and analyses St. Thomas brings to bear throughout the treatise on man as revealable or as deducible from what is revealable. Even Gilson, whom Pegis so closely follows, would not make the sort of identification of philosophy and theology that Pegis appears to seek: “We are not maintaining that St. Thomas identified the two notions of ‘revealable’ and ‘philosophy,’ nor do we claim that the philosophy of St. Thomas cannot be legitimately examined from another point of view.” *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas* (New York, 1956), p. 14.

²² *SRD*, p. 151.

writes: "Anderson has proved that, having the habit of philosophy, St. Thomas could philosophize and that this habit was distinct from the habit of theology. But St. Thomas' doctrine of habits has another part, and I cannot understand why Anderson did not consider it."²³ This other part consists in seeing the "formal effect of one habit on the act of another when the act of the second habit is under the dominion of the first habit."²⁴ Pegis thereupon refers to St. Thomas' treatise *De Caritate* where

in affirming that charity is the *forma*, the *motor*, and the *radix* of the virtues, he [St. Thomas] sets down as his starting point what is the principle of his doctrine of habits. The immediately relevant part of the text reads as follows: . . . sciendum est quod de habitibus oportet nos secundum actus iudicare; unde quando id quod est unius habitus est ut formale in actu alterius habitus oportet quod unus habitus se habeat ad alium ut forma.²⁵

From this passage Pegis concludes: "The text requires us to say that, since everything in theology is there *sub ratione Dei*, the philosophical activity itself that has gone into the making of the *Summa Theologiae* is formally theology." Let us first see, however, how St. Thomas applies this doctrine in the context in which it appears. St. Thomas goes on to talk about the acts of the will, that the form of the will is its object, which is the good and the end, leading to the heart of the answer: "Manifestum est autem quod actus omnium aliarum virtutum ordinatur ad finem proprium caritatis, quod est eius obiectum, scilicet summum bonum." What are these other virtues and habits which are so ordered? "Et de virtutibus quidem moralibus manifestum est . . . Sed de virtutibus aliis theologicis idem manifestum est. . . ." The context is clear. St. Thomas is discussing habits and virtues in the unqualified sense, virtues involving appetite.²⁶ The intellectual virtues are not referred to

²³ *SRD*, p. 150.

²⁴ *SRD*, p. 152.

²⁵ *SRD*, p. 153.

²⁶ When St. Thomas asks the same question in the *Summa Theol.* (II-II,

inasmuch as they do not fall under the primary meaning of virtue, since they are not located in the appetite, nor do they have a relationship as such to the will (as the theological virtue of faith has).

In order to apply the doctrine contained in the opening sentence of the article in *De Caritate* to intellectual habits and virtues, we would have to bear in mind the distinction of intellectual habits and how they are related to each other. We would then proceed along the following lines. We presume the distinction between philosophy as a habit and theology as a habit, and this specific differentiation remains in a way that it does not in the relationship between charity and the moral and theological virtues. We would not, for instance, speak of faith (nor charity) as formal in relation to acts of the intellectual virtues. We must then return to the question of how philosophy is related to theology, and particularly how philosophy is used by theology. We have to resolve this question in conformity with the sort of habits and acts which are proper to intellectual virtues. What this principally comes down to is that the theologian, in virtue of the superiority of his knowledge—the greater intelligibility of his object—judges that a given philosophical truth will be of use in manifesting a truth related to the principles of theology. This means that a philosophical truth is used in the order of manifestation to illumine a truth beyond its own order. And this means that a philosophical truth is still a work of natural reason though employed by a theologian in a theological context, and this implies philosophical activity on the part of the theologian in order to know which philosophical

23, 8) that he does in *De Caritate*, he makes the context even clearer at the very outset: "Respondeo dicendum quod in moralibus forma actus attenditur principaliter ex parte finis: cuius ratio est quia principium moralium actuum est voluntas, cuius obiectum et quasi forma est finis. Semper autem forma actus consequitur formam agentis. Unde oportet quod in moralibus id quod dat actui ordinem ad finem, dat ei et formam." It is in a moral context that the doctrine on habits being enunciated has application.

truths are relevant to help manifest theological teaching. Is there evidence that St. Thomas understood philosophical questions in their own right, which he would have had to do in order to know which philosophical truths are appropriate for theology? We have already answered this question, even historically.

III

It is apparent, from the foregoing, that I am in some basic disagreement with Pegis' position on philosophy and theology in St. Thomas. Nevertheless, there are certain points in his presentation that I would not wish to ignore. Despite the sort of disagreement I have, I think that Pegis has done considerable service in stressing the role of St. Thomas as a theologian. While this is not news, Pegis has shown in various ways the significance of understanding how St. Thomas is a theologian and how he can be misunderstood and misapplied if not read in a theological context when he should be so read. Too often, either *Summa* has been treated as though it were primarily a philosophical work; too often, textbooks have wrenched selections out of either *Summa* ignoring the theological ordering under which they fall. Another point which Pegis well calls attention to is the confusion and difficulty which ensues when one tries to be a Thomist in a way that only St. Thomas could be one. Allied with this matter is the sort of problem which Pegis shows arises when one attributes too readily, and at times unhistorically, to St. Thomas what one is engaged in at the present time.

Limitations of space prevent me from considering all relevant issues raised by the exchange between Anderson and Pegis.²⁷

²⁷ I must note briefly Pegis' reference to St. Thomas' Commentary *In Boeth. de Trin.*, II, 3, obj. 5 and the reply. This article is on whether one can licitly use philosophical arguments and authorities in "scientia fidei." The fifth objection is that philosophy should not be mixed with sacred teaching, that the water of secular wisdom should not be mixed with the wine of divine wisdom. Pegis quotes the following from the reply to the fifth objection: "... quando alterum duorum transit in dominium alterius, non reputatur mixtio, sed quando a sua natura alteratur. Unde illi, qui

The meaning of Christian philosophy, and the Christian philosopher (distinct notions) is one. The meaning of Thomistic philosophy is another, and were I to discuss this involved problem, there are some things in Pegis' analysis I would find helpful and revealing. On the other hand, in regard to the problem of how a philosophical Thomism can be relevant today, I would cite James Collins' fine article on "A Philosophical Thomism,"²⁸ in which he also shows how St. Thomas the theologian uses the philosophical sources of evidence and order of reasoning where they are appropriate within the general theological movement of his teaching.²⁹

One matter I must still refer to, however briefly, and this will lead me to my over-all conclusion. This is Pegis' notion

utuntur philosophicis documentis in sacra doctrina redigendo in obsequium fidei, non miscent aquam vino, sed aquam convertunt in vinum." But the *opening* sentence of this reply should be kept in mind: ". . . ex tropicis locutionibus non est sumenda argumentatio, ut dicit Magister II distinctione III Sententiarum, et Dionysius dicit in Epistola ad Titum quod symbolica theologia non est argumentativa, et praecipue cum illa expositio non sit alicuius auctoris." One may, then, within prescribed limits, employ figurative expressions to suggest certain likenesses and relations; thus, in the present instance, we may speak of a certain subsuming of philosophy when used in theology as like the changing of water into wine. But beneath the metaphor we must bear in mind that such a usage of philosophy presupposes, as a literal point, the specific distinction of philosophy from theology in regard to its proper object, a point emphasized in so many places in the writings of St. Thomas. The reply to the fifth objection is in response to a specialized difficulty, couched in figurative language. The formal and doctrinal response to the question at issue appears in the corpus of the article. There St. Thomas enumerates three ways in which philosophy can be used in theology, of which the first is the most relevant for showing that philosophy, as a *work of natural reason*, is licitly used in sacred doctrine: "Primo ad demonstrandum ea quae sunt praebula fidei, quae necesse est in fide scire, ut ea quae naturalibus rationibus de deo probantur, ut deum esse, deum esse unum et alia huiusmodi vel de deo vel de creaturis in philosophia probata, quae fides supponit."

²⁸ THE NEW SCHOLASTICISM, XXXII (1958), 301-326.

²⁹ Collins notes: "One need not proceed by laying down that there is only one valid way of doing a philosophical reconstruction of Thomism. It may still be possible for some people to philosophize according to one or another of the theological orders used by St. Thomas in his major theological writings." *Art. cit.*, p. 317.

that for St. Thomas to be a philosopher one must have a personal philosophy, that he must "create" an autonomous philosophy in an utterly personal sense. In his article, Anderson replied to this notion of St. Thomas' "personalism," to which I might add the following. There is a legitimate sense in which we can speak of St. Thomas' philosophy as personal if we mean by that what St. Thomas has said in his writings. But the notion that St. Thomas conceived philosophy itself (or theology) as his personal thought, that he was a personal system-builder,⁵⁰ that he "created a philosophy" or a "theology," is alien to the spirit and letter of St. Thomas' writings; moreover, it is a modern conception of what philosophy is. What constantly strikes the reader in all of St. Thomas' writings is the utterly impersonal, wholly objective manner in which he approaches philosophy and theology. True enough, sciences as habits exist only in people's minds, but that does not preclude their being universal as communicable to all human minds adapted to acquiring them. For St. Thomas philosophy, and knowledge generally, has a radical dependence on things as they are, not on our creation of what things are in our own minds. Can anyone seriously imagine St. Thomas regarding his works in philosophy and theology as his private, subjective possession, his and only his, in the manner in which a man lays claim to *his* toothbrush? What typifies St. Thomas, rather, is his over-riding desire to make available philosophical and theological truth to any capable, well-ordered mind; and he was humbly aware that he could contribute to this task, profiting from others as well as using his own resources. And since much of philosophy and theology is not restricted merely to one time or to one culture, he remains so helpful for us now. This is why St. Thomas should appear to us now most of all as pre-eminently the teacher.

⁵⁰ Herein lies some of my misgiving about the terms "Thomist" and "Thomistic philosophy" or "Thomistic theology" when they convey such meanings.

I had a dual purpose in mind in beginning this article with some quotations from encyclicals. The first one, indicated then, and perhaps more striking now, is that St. Thomas is being proposed to us constantly and urgently as the teacher we should most of all rely upon. The implication is that in so being guided into philosophy and theology by St. Thomas as the teacher, we in turn could become teachers and teach others, and perhaps become competent philosophers and theologians. We would not thereby become "Thomists" in a rigid and narrow way, nor in a sense Pegis has cautioned against, but, rather, able in the domain of philosophy and theology because of having had a good teacher.

A second purpose I had in mind in quoting from the encyclicals is that they make abundantly clear that St. Thomas is being proposed as a teacher not only of theology but of philosophy as well. In this connection, I should like to include one final quotation from an encyclical. After noting that "philosophy has no part on which he did not touch finely, at once and thoroughly," Pope Leo XIII goes on to say:

The Angelic Doctor, in his speculations, drew certain philosophical conclusions as to the reasons and principles of created things. These conclusions have the very widest reach, and contain, as it were, in their bosom the seeds of truth well-nigh infinite in number. These have to be unfolded with most abundant fruits in their own time by the teachers who come after him.³¹

All the foregoing would therefore seem to lead to the following general conclusion. St. Thomas is being recommended to us as the teacher to follow in philosophy. And because he was so good a teacher of philosophy, and was a philosopher *in actu exercito*, he was so eminently a theologian, which remains his primary role as it was also his overriding concern.

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³¹ *Aeterni Patris*, as quoted by Ramirez, *art. cit.*, p. 57.