

## On Milbank and Pickstock's *Truth in Aquinas*

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JOHN MILBANK and Catherine Pickstock have written a short book, but one which addresses many very deep questions.<sup>1</sup> The authors are attempting to provide a remedy for the contemporary crisis regarding truth, a crisis which in some quarters involves a complete rejection of the human ability to know truth. Milbank and Pickstock see what they call their “new reading” (xiii) of St. Thomas on truth as helpful in restoring confidence in the human participation in knowledge of truth. In this short review essay, I will indicate how the general theme is followed out, and call attention to a few problems which are symptomatic overall. I will limit myself for the most part to the first two (of the four) chapters.

The four chapters speak of “Truth and X”—the four “X”s being “correspondence,” “vision,” “touch,” and “language.” The first concerns the general ontology regarding truth, stressing “the truth of things” themselves and the relation to the divine mind which this implies; the second bears on our knowledge in its continuity from natural reason through faith to the beatific vision; the third, focusing on the Incarnation of the Word of God, involves us in the submission of intellect to the sense of touch, in an “ontological reversal” which characterizes the economy of salvation of fallen

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<sup>1</sup> John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001).

humanity; the fourth turns to the sacrament of the Eucharist and the words "This is my body": we consider how our sacramental, ecclesial life establishes our relation to the truth.

While I admire the authors' ambition to eliminate any intellectual or spiritual "schizophrenia," any failure to appreciate the unity of integral Christian mind, I am in general unhappy with the detailed effort. It is not only that the authors write in a way I often find less than lucid, but that I am frequently far from agreement with their interpretation of St. Thomas.

Pickstock, who writes the first chapter, asking where truth is to be found, begins with things themselves. In so doing, she sees herself as speaking in harmony with Thomas in *De Veritate* 1.1. There, Thomas is answering the question: what is truth, and he presents it as having a place among the transcendentals, thus as identical with being and adding to the concept of being only an additional notion (a relation of reason).<sup>2</sup> Pickstock thus sees us as knowing the truth inasmuch as we see in things their fidelity to their own existence in the divine mind. This actually encourages Pickstock into making some rather unsuitable assertions. For example:

[D]istinct things simply would not *be* without the Soul's knowing of them. Therefore Soul, as a further refraction of Being, does not primarily mirror phenomena, but is itself a primordial mode of Being. So, assimilation or adequation here, though obviously including crucial elements of a realist concept of truth, has an idealist dimension as well, which suggests that this is by no means an ordinary kind of correspondence. Being is not prior to knowing, so if Being measures knowledge, knowledge equally measures Being. One might call this "ideal realism". For indeed, because Truth and Being are convertible, one with another, there is a continuity between the way things are in the external material world and the way things are in our mind.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, he even therein presents truth as the cause of our knowledge, evidently referring to the truth of things. I will use "DV" for *De Veritate*, "CM" for Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, "CP" for his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*.

<sup>3</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 8 (all upper case usage is in the text).

"Soul" here refers, it would seem, to the divine mind. It is, indeed, the origin of the being of things.<sup>4</sup> What is the "idealist dimension"? It evidently refers to the divine simplicity, where the act of being and the act of understanding are identical. Notice how easily we slip from the pair "knowledge and being" to the pair "truth and being" (though knowledge, for Thomas, is hardly a transcendental). However, is it true that though being measures knowledge, knowledge equally measures being?

We see how the distinction between creator and creature has been simply glossed over. Obviously, it is the *divine* mind which measures created being, and it is created being which is the measure of the human mind.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the meanings of terms such as "being" and "knowledge" and "truth" are obtained by us as experiencing the things of creation, where, certainly, being and knowledge are not identical. When we apply the words to God, we know that they do not have altogether the same meaning, since when said of creatures, they signify definitionally distinct items, whereas when we say them of God, we do not intend so to use them.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, while we do not know the full meaning of any of these names as said of God, we do know enough to discern an order of appropriateness. Thus, "being" is the maximally proper thing to say about God, and so "knowing" is less suitable.<sup>7</sup> It is such considerations which eliminate any "idealist dimension" in Thomas's doctrine.

However, I would add this. St. Thomas, during his writing career, moved from a position concerning truth influenced by St. Anselm to one more fully in accord with Aristotle. The position of Anselm is well expressed in the following statement from him:

[T]he truth which is in the existence of things is the effect of the highest truth, and it in turn is the cause of the truth which

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<sup>4</sup> However, it is crucial that the divine knowledge, merely as knowledge, is *not* the cause of things; only that knowledge as conjoined with will causes things: *ST* 1, q. 14, a. 8. That is part of the anti-idealism of Thomas.

<sup>5</sup> *ST* 1, q. 14, a. 8, ad 3.

<sup>6</sup> *ST* 1, q. 13, a. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *ST* 1, q. 13, a. 11.

belongs to knowledge and of that which is in the proposition; these [latter] two truths are cause of truth for nothing further.<sup>8</sup>

In *DV* 1.1, there is still very much the idea that the *truth* of things is the cause of our cognition, but Thomas could well be said to have designed certain texts in *ST* 1, q. 16 to correct what he himself had previously been too ready to say. Thus, in *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 1, ad 3, we have the forthright statement: “[T]he *being* of the thing, not its truth, is the cause of the truth of the intellect.”

The body of that first article in q. 16, stressing that truth is primarily in the intellect, and only derivatively in things, insists that it is only through derivation from an intellect on which it depends that a thing can be called “true”. Thomas explicitly eliminates as inappropriate the consideration of the relation of natural things to our intellect in a presentation of truth. Indeed, all three replies to objections in the article turn on the need to eliminate this consideration from the discussion.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, in *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 6, where it is asked whether all are true by virtue of the one divine truth, it is carefully taught that “*verum*,” as said of things, is not so said on the basis of an intrinsic form of “truth.” We read:

But if we speak of truth [*de veritate*] according as it is found in things, thus all are true [*verae*] through one first truth [*una prima veritate*], to which each is assimilated in function of its entity

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Anselm, *De Veritate*, cap. X; *PL* 158: 479A: “Vides etiam quomodo ista rectitudo causa est omnium aliarum veritatum et rectitudinum, et nihil sit causa illius?—Video et animadverto in aliis quasdam esse tantum effecta; quasdam vero esse causas et effecta: ut, cum *veritas*, quae est in rerum existentia, sit effectum summae veritatis, ipsa quoque causa est veritatis quae cogitationis est, et ejus quae est in propositione: et istae duae veritates nullius sunt causa veritatis . . .” (my italics).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas also completely revises his views on which definitions of truth are more formal, as he moves from *DV* 1.1 to *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 1: cf. my essay, “St. Thomas’s Successive Discussions of the Nature of Truth,” in Daniel Ols, OP (ed.), *Sanctus Thomas De Aquino: Doctor Hodiernae Humanitatis* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 153–68. See also my “A Note on Metaphysics and Truth,” Proceedings of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas for 2001, *Doctor Communis, Atti della II Sessione Plenaria* [2002]: 143–53.

[*entitatem*]. And thus, though the essences or forms of things are many, nevertheless there is [only] the one truth of the divine intellect in function of which all things are denominated "true."

The point is made in contrast to the many created truths in our intellects. The whole article is designed to make the point that, just as there is no *health* in, for example, the exercise which is called "healthy," so there is no *truth* in the thing that is called "true" relative to the divine mind. What relates the thing to the divine mind is not its own truth, but its *entity*. In this, the case of "truth" is quite unlike that of goodness: not only are things called "good" by virtue of the divine goodness, but each is called "good" by virtue of its own intrinsic formality: "goodness."<sup>10</sup> We read:

Thus, therefore, each thing is called "good" in function of the divine goodness, as by the first exemplary, efficient, and final principle of goodness entire. Nevertheless, each thing is called "good" in function of the likeness of the divine goodness inhering within it, which is formally its own goodness denominating it.<sup>11</sup>

The reason for such a different treatment is that the good is in things, while the true and the false are in the intellect.<sup>12</sup>

This move on Thomas's part to correct the *DV* 1.1 presentation pertains precisely to the elimination of any "idealist dimension" in what he had previously said. I say all this because of what we get from Pickstock:

One might begin by saying that truth is a *property of things*, that a thing is true if it fulfils itself and holds itself together according to its character and goal. Thus, one can say "This is true rain" if it is raining very hard . . . . for Aquinas, this would be an entirely proper use . . . .<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *ST* 1, q. 6, a. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 1, q. 16, a. 1. Indeed, in the mind itself, truth is not something pertaining to the real entity of the mind or of knowledge, but to *what* the intellect says and knows. Cf. *Summa contra Gentiles* Book 1, ch. 59.

<sup>13</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 9 (my italics). However, this is not so. Thomas, even in *DV* 1.4, calls the use of "truth" said of all things "truth, improperly said."

The whole exercise in this first chapter could be taken as a commentary on such a text as *ST* 1, q. 105, a. 3, on whether God moves immediately the created intellect (which he does, as conferring both the power of intellection and the intelligible forms of things). Nevertheless, one finds this statement:

[R]ather than correspondence being guaranteed in its measuring of the given, as for modern notions of correspondence, it is guaranteed by its conformation to the divine source of the given. While to advance to this source is of course to advance in unknowing, *it is only in terms of this unknowing, increased through faith, that we confirm even our ordinary knowing of finite things.*<sup>14</sup>

Now, here, we do not seem to be with Thomas in *ST* 1, q. 105, a. 3 or anywhere else. Knowledge of truth does not necessarily involve any relating to its divine origin. And it is guaranteed by its derivation from things themselves and by the nature of our knowing powers.<sup>15</sup> Obviously, for Thomas, presenting God as the origin of our knowledge of truth itself depends first of all on our attaining to the truth about many created things. At the least, Pickstock is playing on the word “guarantee.”

But consider *ST* 1–2, q. 109, a. 1. It famously asks whether the human intellect can without grace know something true. The answer is, in general, that it can. Thomas explains that “grace” can refer to the altogether gratuitous moving of all things by God, and without this “grace” nothing happens, including our knowing the truth. He goes on to present the intrinsic formal power by which we know, and this has a variety of grades. The natural grade suffices for our knowledge which can be derived from sensibles. We read:

[T]he human intellect has a certain form, viz., the intelligible light itself, which is of itself sufficient for the knowing of some intelligibles, i.e., for knowing those to the knowledge of which we can

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 18 (my italics). In the Preface, xiii, they had said that Thomas’s position is that “all truth is a matter of faith as well as reason, and vice versa,” though they also said that “truth is immediately accessible to the simplest apprehension.” It is hardly Thomas’s position that all truth is a matter of faith.

<sup>15</sup> *ST* 1, q. 84, aa. 6–8; 1, q. 17, a. 3, ad 2.

come through sensible things. But the human intellect cannot know higher intelligibles unless it be perfected by a stronger light, such as the light of faith or of prophecy: which is called "the light of grace" inasmuch as it is added over and above nature.<sup>16</sup>

If we keep in mind Thomas's description of our knowing the truth, as given in *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 2, we can see that there is no need for any divine guarantee. Pickstock is certainly not true to Thomas in this essential respect.<sup>17</sup>

In the last paragraph of her fifth section, Pickstock criticizes "modern" correspondence as laying claim to grasping "phenomena as they are in themselves, and not as they are insofar as they imitate God."<sup>18</sup> Now, why not simply say that one can grasp one dimension of the situation, the self of things, and not grasp (yet) their relation to God? Thomas very carefully distinguishes between the *self* of things which are beings by participation, and the *relation to a cause* which *follows* upon their having that participational mode of being.<sup>19</sup> One indeed notices Pickstock's strange conception of participational being. We are told:

Just as we only exist for Aquinas by participating in Being—which is also "accidental" to our essence, since we do not "have" to be, and yet superessential, since Being alone gives us our determinate essence—so also we only exist humanly . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Besides the fact that Thomas in general rejected the Avicennian conception of *essence/esse* composition, judging "accidentality" to

<sup>16</sup> *ST* 1–2, q. 109, a. 1.

<sup>17</sup> On p. 94, Pickstock, discussing the presence of Christ in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine, calls our denial of the presence of the substance of bread and wine a "benign, doxological" skepticism, and says: "[I]t really is *only* this benign skepticism upheld by a faith in a hidden presence of God which could ever fully defeat the more threatening skepticism of philosophy." [her italics] Now, there doubtless are people who need faith to protect them from philosophical skepticism, but faith is not the only adequate safeguard against it. In general, nature is really enough.

<sup>18</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *ST* 1, q. 44, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 12.

be incorrect, and saving it only for the sake of a saying of Hilary,<sup>21</sup> there is also Thomas's constant mode of presenting the subsisting thing as such, namely that it properly "has" *esse*: see, for example, ST 1, q. 90, a. 2:

That is properly said to "be" which *itself HAS being* [*illud . . . proprie dicitur esse quod ipsum habet esse*], as subsisting in its very own being [*ut subsistens in SUO esse*]; hence, only substances are properly and truly called "beings." Whereas an accident does not have being . . . [*Accidens vero non HABET esse . . .*].<sup>22</sup>

What is crystal clear is that the entire doctrine of knowledge of truth in Thomas has its foundations in our knowledge of *being* as considered in material, sensible things. Everything said about God, as to natural knowledge, flows from our certainty of the truth of our first principles, known from the start. That this is the effect of the divine operation is discovered in that way, and, for the metaphysician, is quite certain.

Chapter 2 by John Milbank, and entitled "Truth and Vision," is about the unity of faith and reason in Thomas. He presents Thomas as an author who needs "interpretation." There is no doubt that there is sometimes need to check one text against others, but I would say that the esoterism is grossly exaggerated by Milbank.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. e.g. *Quaestiones de quolibet* 12.4.1 [6], in the Leonine edition, vol. 25/2 (Rome/Paris: Commissio Leonina/Cerf, 1996), 403–4. Thomas had been asked whether the *esse* of the angel is an accident. His reply is a strong rejection of such an idea (though he does save the wider use of the word "accident" regarding *esse*, in connection with the saying of Hilary of Poitiers that *esse* is not an accident in God). (For the date, Easter 1272, see the Introduction by R.-A. Gauthier, OP, in vol. 25/1, 160\*; Easter in 1272 was April 24, and Thomas had to be in Florence for the Chapter of his province in June. It is the fruit of Thomas's last academic activity in Paris, before returning to Naples. *The Twelfth Quodlibet* is a set of notes from St. Thomas himself, not themselves intended for publication, but for the eventual preparation of a publication never actually produced.) I argue against the accidentality of *esse* as conceived by Joseph Owens in my essay, "Saint Thomas, Metaphysical Procedure, and the Formal Cause", *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989), 173–82.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. 1, q. 45, a. 4.

Since he makes a very sweeping set of pronouncements, I will fix on a few passages with which I simply cannot agree. Take first his view concerning the unity of faith and reason as "successive phases of a single extension *always qualitatively the same*."<sup>23</sup> While it is true that Thomas presents reason and revelation as both involving phantasms and intellectual light, I would say that Milbank obscures the significant difference.

First of all, I note his contention that "[i]t is only in post-Baroque conceptions of revelation that faith appears to answer to something 'more'—to new disclosures of information about God and about what God has done."<sup>24</sup> Thomas Aquinas, hardly post-Baroque, assures us that faith does involve disclosures of information of a sort which reason could never provide:

[I]t is to be said that though admittedly through the revelation of grace in this life we do not know concerning God what he is, and thus we are united to him as to someone unknown, nevertheless we more fully know him . . . inasmuch as we attribute to him on the basis of revelation some things at which natural reason does not arrive, such as that God is trinity and unity [*trinum et unum*].<sup>25</sup>

Thomas is speaking of "new disclosures of information about God."

Secondly, the "qualitative" sameness contention seems to me to eliminate the difference between human nature and divine nature. It is quite true that it is the one divine nature whence come all intellectual light and all intelligibility. Thus, all created intellects are moved by God.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, there is such a thing as human nature and there are such things as the angelic natures. The human agent intellect is indeed a participation in divine light, but it is a specific qualitative form, distinct from angelic intellectual light as well as from the divine light. That is why it is true that the agent intellect is a power of the human soul.<sup>27</sup> That is why it is properly understood as *flowing from the essence of the human soul*, i.e., that the

<sup>23</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 24 (my italics).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1.

<sup>26</sup> *ST* 1, q. 105, a. 3.

<sup>27</sup> See *ST* 1, q. 79, a. 4.

human soul is the productive or active cause of the agent intellect.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the grace which perfects the soul supernaturally must be an inner quality,<sup>29</sup> whereby we come to do things proper to a *higher* nature. It is significant that we had, in chapter 1 (page 12), the strange idea that the specific difference of the human being was somewhat “accidental.” No wonder, with this sort of extrinsicism, that one can take faith and reason in the sort of continuity that Milbank does. Of course, both faith and reason are perfections of our intellect. However, as Thomas carefully explains in *ST* 2–2, q. 2, a. 3, the human intellect through faith is under the movement proper to the divine nature; that it is appropriately positioned ontologically to come under such immediate movement by the divine nature is seen from its natural access to the universal notions of being and goodness, the proper effects of the universal principle of being. It is a matter of an ordered hierarchy of natures.<sup>30</sup> Milbank’s “phase” conception for distinguishing faith and reason is quite inadequate, I would say.

Next, in part III, Milbank speaks of the distinction between philosophy (including philosophical theology) and theology or *sacra doctrina*. We get immediately what I would call a depreciation of the nature of metaphysics, since it is said that it treats of God, the first cause, “only . . . insofar as it is obliged, like any science, as part of its procedure, to inquire into the causes of its subject-matter.”<sup>31</sup> Now, in reading this, a person might not suspect that, according to Thomas:

[F]irst philosophy itself in its entirety is ordered to the knowledge of God as to an ultimate goal, and hence is called “divine science” . . . .<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, Milbank says that it knows about God *an est*. This is not the whole truth, as the very texts to which he sends us make clear. Thus, *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 12 says:

<sup>28</sup> *ST* 1, q. 77, a. 6 and 1, q. 79, a. 4, ad 5.

<sup>29</sup> *ST* 1–2, q. 110, a. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. similarly *ST* 1–2, q. 62, a. 1 and 3, on the sort of addition to human nature provided by the theological virtues.

<sup>31</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> *ScG* Book 3, ch. 25.

[Through sensible things] we can be led to this, that we know concerning God whether he is [*an est*]; and that we know concerning him those things which necessarily belong to him inasmuch as he is the first cause, exceeding all his effects. Hence, we know about him how he stands with respect to creatures, viz. that he is the cause of all; and the difference of creatures from him, that he is not something of those things which are caused by him; and that these are not denied of him because of his deficiency, but because he super-exceeds.

Also, Milbank suggests that *sacra doctrina* has reserved to it “the exposition of the *quid est*,” though he immediately qualifies this as limited to remote intimations revealed. However, *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1 tells us flatly that revelation does not yield knowledge of the divine *quid est*. It does, as I noted earlier, say that we have information about God which we otherwise would not have, such as his being trine and one.

In presenting the presence of metaphysics within *sacra doctrina*, Milbank speaks of metaphysics as offering “illusory relative certainty.”<sup>33</sup> This, again, is not Thomas’s conception of what he is doing. Milbank fails to appreciate the role of nature, and human nature in particular.<sup>34</sup>

Milbank, not merely content to override the texts, also attempts to rewrite the logic of metaphysical demonstration. He says:

... [Thomas’s] ‘demonstrations’ of God’s existence can only be meant to offer weakly probable modes of argument and very attenuated ‘showings’.<sup>35</sup>

How different is the teaching of Thomas Aquinas! Anyone at all familiar with his work knows the strength of the word “demonstration” used of an argument. In *ST* 1, q. 2, a. 2, Thomas recalls the distinction between the demonstration “why it is so” and the demonstration “that it is so”. He tells us quite unqualifiedly that “God exists” is demonstrable in the latter mode. He goes so far as to say that “nothing prevents” someone who does not grasp the

<sup>33</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 28.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2; 1, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 28 (the “scare-quotes” are Milbank’s).

demonstration from accepting it on the basis of faith (*ut credibile*).<sup>36</sup> Obviously, he does not consider that there is anything intrinsically weak about the result of the demonstration.

Milbank might be deceived because of *ST* 2–2, q. 4, a. 8, which compares faith to the intellectual virtues as regards certitude. However, faith is being considered there relative to its proper objects, which are beyond human intellection. This has not to do with a faith-grasp of metaphysical truths by someone who does not understand the metaphysical demonstration.

On Thomas's view of philosophical wisdom, that is, metaphysics, one should consult *ST* 1–2, q. 66, a. 5. Metaphysical wisdom considers the highest object, God, and it thus judges all the rest of our intellectual life. As we read in *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*,<sup>37</sup> metaphysics is most certain, that is, more certain than any other science, inasmuch as it attains to the primary principles of beings. In commenting on Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.3 (1005b8 and ff.), where Aristotle asks whether it pertains to metaphysics to consider the first principle of demonstration, and argues that it belongs to metaphysics to be most certain, and this can only be so if it pertains to it to consider the most certain principles of all, Thomas agrees completely.<sup>38</sup> Obviously, as divine science, it more properly belongs to God than to us, and is possessed by us only imperfectly in this life. However, within this life it is closest in nature to beatitude.<sup>39</sup>

Milbank claims:

Thomas asserts the tentative character of all philosophical deliverance about God in the face of revelation, and claims that even philosophic “certainties” are either confirmed more strongly, or can even be overruled by *sacra doctrina*.<sup>40</sup>

At this point he gives references to *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 1 and 1, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2. These texts certainly do not make his point. In article 1

<sup>36</sup> *ST* 1, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Sententia Libri Ethicorum Aristotelis* Book 6, lect. 5 (Leonine edition, vol. 47/2, Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1969: lines 102–6 (concerning Aristotle at 1141a12–17).

<sup>38</sup> *CM* Book 4, lect. 6 (no. 596); and also *CM* Book 1, lect. 2 (no. 47).

<sup>39</sup> *ST* 1–2, q. 66, a. 5, ad 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 30.

Thomas says that there is need of revelation even concerning those truths about God which human reason can investigate. The reason is that such truth would come to light only for a few, and after a long time, and with an admixture of error; whereas the entire salvation of man depends on knowledge of such truth. The weakness envisaged is strictly on the side of the particular knowing subject, not as regards the nature of the human mind and its available natural objects. The article itself rather confirms the existence of thoroughgoing certainty for anyone who really sees what is being said in the philosophical argument.

Philosophic certainties are not "confirmed more strongly" by *sacra doctrina*, unless one is speaking about some particular person who has failed to grasp the philosophical truth.

In *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2 it is said that whatever in other sciences is found repugnant to the truth of *sacra doctrina* stands condemned as false. Of course. But that simply cannot apply to a demonstrated philosophical truth. That is why St. Thomas, in *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 8, can confidently say that arguments made against the truths of faith cannot be demonstrations. As he says: "It is impossible for the contrary of what is true to be demonstrated."<sup>41</sup> Thomas does not assert the tentative character of all philosophic deliverance about God in the face of revelation. He asserts the existence of philosophical demonstrations, truths that are necessarily compatible with the truths of faith.

Every step of the way in this book, one finds oneself in disagreement. Thus, for example, we are told that Hume's criticism of the metaphysics and physics of causality was "correct." However, the Dionysian view circumvents the criticism, since in this view a cause does not really precede its effect, since it only becomes cause in realizing itself as the event of the giving of the effect.<sup>42</sup> Now, this is something one finds in Aristotle. Thus, at *Physics* 2.3 (195b4–6 and 17–21), we are told that all the four types of cause can be either actual or potential, and that the difference is that while the potential cause can exist when the effect does not, the actually causing cause and the actually being effected effect must be simultaneous.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Truth in Aquinas*, 31.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *CP* Book 2, lect. 6.

In general, this book masks Thomas's practice of showing "the way up" from effects to causes, on which philosophical argument in matters divine depends, even as he presents the "from the top down" ultimate sapiential vision. N-V