

Contextualizing Theoretical Reason: Thomas Aquinas and Postmodernity

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The fundamental negations of postmodern thought are well known and have occasioned much controversy: claims to universal truth are a hidden mask for the will to power; reason has no stable unity across the deep ruptures and fragmentations of history; radical contingency undermines the search for necessities in thought; reason is never just reason, but reason contextualized in this individual, this group, this time or this place. At first sight the main theses of Thomistic noetics appear at odds with their postmodern counterparts; for theoretical reason, according to Aquinas, is fully at home only in the grasp of atemporal, universal necessities. *Scientia*, the perfect work of reason, consists in just such a grasp, while the inferior intelligibility of the contingent is left to the imperfect habitus of opinion. To contextualize reason is thus to abandon the stance of *scientia* for the fluctuations of opinion, or worse, to reduce thought to the level of the imagination, whose objects *phantasms* are always particularized and never self-identical.

Within the great diversity of things known by the theoretical or speculative sciences, the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition has constantly emphasized those common characteristics that render these things *objects* of scientific knowing. Necessity, timelessness, and universality are accordingly posited as formal properties attaching to all objects of theoretical *scientia*. Postmodern thinkers have sharply criticized this emphasis, identifying it as "the specific form of the will to knowledge that is Plato's legacy to western thought. . . . a love of an ideal intelligibility that can be separated from appearance, of a sameness that seeks to institute an identity amid multiplicity."¹ To counter this legacy, they have sought to place a wedge into our philosophical self-understanding,

¹ James W. Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1990), 93.

“permitting the introduction into the very roots of thought, of notions of *chance*, *discontinuity*, and *materiality*.”²

The classical ideal of *scientia* and the postmodern search for a narrative of reason’s contingency thus face off as two competing and mutually exclusive paradigms of reason. But Thomists true to their Common Doctor cannot settle comfortably into this status quo. Questionable as postmodern claims may be, we must nevertheless seek to uncover whether they do indeed have some foundation in truth. With this in mind I propose the following thesis.

Thomists should continue affirming the necessity, timelessness, and universality of the proper objects of theoretical *scientia*. In this respect the gulf which separates us from postmodern philosophy is not easily crossed, and is perhaps unbridgeable. Yet we should not infer that these predicates of speculative *objects* extend to the cognitive *acts* by which such objects are known. On the contrary, these acts are not exempt from the conditions of contingency and temporality that so deeply affect our lives as individual and social beings. On this level there is, I think, much that the Thomist may learn from postmodern explorations into human thinking. By the same token we must affirm that a recognition of contingency within human cognitive acts need not entail the rejection of necessity, timelessness, and universality, in respect to the *objects* known by those acts. In other words, the contextualization of human cognitive acts in the lives of individual agents, lives which are situated within a complex interplay of social, political, and historical determinations, need not militate against the objectivity of those acts.

The argument will proceed on three levels. First, we shall consider the respect in which the speculative intellectual act, despite the universality of its object, is nevertheless individualized in individual knowers, a point emphasized by Aquinas in his debate with the Latin Averroists. Next, we shall investigate how theoretical cognitions are temporally situated in human lives. Lastly, in order to integrate postmodern reflections on “the power effects of knowledge,” we shall consider the manner in which theoretical knowing enters the field of voluntary, human action. In each case I wish to indicate how Aquinas’s approach to theoretical knowing, at first sight so antithetical to postmodern concerns, does, in fact, create an opening through which those concerns may pass. My hope is that a keener awareness of Aquinas’s teaching on the individuality, temporality, and voluntariness of theoretical cognitions may serve as a springboard for dialogue between Thomists and postmodern thinkers.

² Michel Foucault, “The Discourse on Language,” trans. Robert Swyer and published as appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1971), 231. Cited by Bernauer, *Michel Foucault’s Force of Flight: Towards an Ethics for Thought*, 92.

AFFIRMING THE INDIVIDUALITY OF COGNITIVE ACTS
 "AGAINST THE AVERROISTS"

The Averroists held that the possible intellect, source of intellectual knowledge in humans, is a power existing in separation from those individual subjects who come to know by its mediation. On this view the agency responsible for acts of intellectual cognition does not belong to individual humans but rather to a separate substance. If a multitude of humans are together capable of knowing a thing numerically one, this can only be possible, they argued, because human beings all participate in a unitary intellectual act, an act that is one in number and not just one in kind. Aquinas summarizes this position in the polemical treatise *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*: "Therefore, it is impossible that there be numerically two things understood in me and in you. There is, one alone, then, and numerically only one intellect in all."³ The same point is made even more succinctly in the early work *De ente et essentia* where the author writes that "the Commentator . . . wanted to conclude that the intellect is one in all men from the universality of the apprehended form."⁴

Aquinas could neither embrace this position nor reject it outright. An unqualified embrace was impossible, since both moral responsibility and man's participation in the Beatific Vision require the personal possession of mind. An outright rejection was impossible, due to his unwavering commitment to the objectivity and intersubjectivity of knowledge. "Therefore it must simply be conceded," he writes, "that the understanding of one thing, say a stone, is one alone, not only in all men but also in all intelligences."⁵ Moreover, Aquinas clearly perceived the difficulty that his own position regarding the individuality of the act of knowing raises in relation to the equally important exigency of universality among knowers. He does not hesitate to state this difficulty boldly, as two objections to his own theory:

If my intellect is distinct from your intellect, my intellect is individual (quodam individuum), and so is yours. . . . Now whatever is received into anything must be received according to the condition of the receiver. Therefore the species of things would be received individually into my intellect, and also into yours: which is contrary to the nature of the intellect which knows universals.

Further, the thing understood is in the intellect which understands. If,

³ *De unitate*, chap. 5 (43:311/128-31). Unless otherwise indicated, in referring to Aquinas' works I shall use the Leonine edition, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia* (Rome, 1982-), citing volume, page, and line number (when available). Translations of the *De unitate* are taken from *Aquinas against the Averroists: on there being only one intellect*, Ralph McInerny, trans. (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993).

⁴ *De ente*, chap. 3 (43:375/107-10). ⁵ *De unitate*, chap. 5 (43:312/159-63).

therefore, my intellect is distinct from yours, what is understood by me must be distinct from what is understood by you. . . . But this is contrary to the nature of the intellect; for then the intellect would seem not to be distinct from the imagination. It seems, therefore, to follow that there is one intellect in all men.⁶

In order to respond to this challenge Aquinas found himself drawn into a seeming paradox. On the one hand, his metaphysics will not permit any exception to the ontological law that only particulars can be said to exist. True especially of primary substance, this principle applies without exception to the operations of substance, cognitive acts included. To emphasize this point Aquinas restates the phrase "hic homo singularis intelligit" throughout the *De unitate intellectus*, using it as a kind of *leitmotif*.

On the other hand, whenever Aquinas speaks about human thinking, he stresses the properties of universality and receptivity, which characterize this activity. To know is to engage in an operation which directs the cognitive agent to the unlimited field of being outside of itself. The possible intellect is thus defined as a radical openness to being, an internal capacity to receive the forms of external things and behold them within the immanence of the self: "The intellect is a receptive power (*vis passiva*) in regard to the whole of universal being."⁷

This, then, is the paradox. The faculty of knowing is particularized in each individual. This includes both the agent and the possible intellects, which together concur to produce concrete acts of intellection in cognitive agents. Yet these same acts are ordered beyond the limited bounds of each individual knower to a grasp of the universal. Aquinas speaks of this duality in his *Quodlibet* 7, where he notes that knowledge (*notitia*) may be considered from two different sides: "either according as it is compared to the one knowing, in which case it inheres in the knower as an accident in a subject. . . . Or according as it is compared to what is known, and in this way it does not inhere in something, but rather is ordered to something else (*ad aliud sit*)."⁸

The object which specifies the acts of theoretical knowing is therefore not the soul itself or the cognitive faculty, but rather the quiddity of sensible things, grasped in the light of universal principles: "the intellect cannot know the singular in material things directly and primarily. . . . Hence our intellect knows directly the universal only."⁹ We thus encounter the paradox of an intellectual

⁶ *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, qu. 76, art. 2, objections 3 and 4 (5:216). Translations of the ST are from the 1947 Benzinger edition, with occasional alterations.

⁷ ST I, qu. 79, art. 2, ad 3 (5:260).

⁸ *Questiones quodlibetales* 7, qu. 1, art. 4 (R. Spiazzi, ed. [Turin: Marietti, 1956], 138).

⁹ ST I, qu. 86, art. 1, c. (5:347).

activity which is fully individualized and unique to each person, but which at the same time is formally specified by a knowledge of the universal.

This paradox is related to what has often been described as a tension in the heart of Aristotle's philosophy. Commentators have frequently noted that the Aristotelian metaphysics is centered on the primacy of individual substances, while his rational psychology is centered on the intelligibility of the universal. The impression of a fundamental dualism is thereby created.¹⁰ Aquinas takes this a step further by transporting the apparent dilemma into the heart of the intellect itself. Hence, this tension arises in a more acute way for Aquinas than it did for the Stagirite, since the former holds explicitly that the agent and possible intellects are proper to each individual human being, thereby committing himself to the position that the intellect is both a particular power in each person and a faculty for apprehending the universal. Aquinas is fully aware of the tension in his account of knowledge. His approach here, as in other areas, is to embrace the difficulty in order to show how the terms of the dilemma, which at first sight seemed mutually exclusive, are compatible aspects of a unified whole.

He begins the task of unraveling the philosophical knot wherein singular subjects are opposed to the intelligibility of the universal by casting a critical eye on the terms of the dilemma. Is it true that the individual *as such* stands in opposition to the universal? Or is it the case that only individuals of a certain kind necessarily exclude such a reference? A brief response to this query is offered in the final chapter of the *De unitate intellectus*:

Therefore, there is one thing that is understood by me and you, but it is understood by means of one thing by me and by means of another by you, that is, by different intelligible species, and my understanding differs from yours and my intellect differs from yours. Hence Aristotle in the *Categories* [chap. 2, 1a25-27] says that knowledge is singular with respect to its subject. . . . Hence when my intellect understands itself to understand (*intelligit se intelligere*), it understands some singular activity; when, however, it understands understanding simply (*intelligit intelligere simpliciter*), it understands something universal. It is not singularity that is repugnant to intelligibility, but materiality. . . .¹¹

The basic thrust of this passage can be summarized as follows. First of all, as social beings we are conscious of sharing common objects of perception. On

¹⁰ In *Aristotle and the Problem of Value* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), Whitney J. Oates voices this reading of Aristotle: "The dilemma may be stated in this way: On the one hand, Aristotle holds that the individual particular is that which is ultimately real; yet, on the other hand, we can never know this real individual particular, for the general, the universal, is the genuine object of our knowledge, something we abstract from particulars" (74).

¹¹ *De unitate*, chap. 5 (43:312/226-38).

a tennis court the two players are attentive to the very same tennis ball. They share a common cognitive focus on a unique thing, "one thing that is understood by me and you." But at the same time, although the ball is one, the actual perceptions are multiplied according to the diversity of knowers; for this reason one player can strike the ball while the other can miss: "it is understood by means of one thing by me and by means of another by you." Paradoxically, while an object may be shared by several knowers it still remains proper to each one of them: "and my understanding differs from yours."

This in turn leads to a second common perception about knowing. When I engage in the act of knowing I am aware that this act is outwardly directed; it aims at an objective content. I don't just know indeterminately, I know this or that. Cognitive acts always have intentional objects. In addition, such intentional objects are never completely immersed in a *hic et nunc* singularity, since they always include a relation to many other things of like kind, a relation that is part and parcel of the perception itself. True, I am now playing with this singular tennis ball. But it is not the fact that it is an absolutely unique something that directs my attention when I use it to play tennis, but rather those common properties it shares with all other tennis balls. It is because this particular ball is like all other balls that it is a suitable instrument for playing tennis, not because it is exclusively different and unique. All objects of human perception (as opposed to purely animal sensing and imagining) include the awareness of common properties which extend over particulars and which unite those particulars into classes of different kinds. This is presumably what Aquinas means when he states that "when it [my intellect] understands understanding simply, it understands something universal."

Finally, although I perceive the act of understanding to be outwardly directed to what is universal, it remains true that I also perceive my particular self as the possessor of that cognitive intentionality. I am never so absorbed in an object of cognition that my individual identity completely disappears from view. Hence, at the same time that I perceive the object of cognition to be directed to the universal, I implicitly perceive my act of knowing to be a particular act originating from my individual being: "when my intellect understands itself to understand, it understands some singular activity." Aquinas holds that these two poles *universal object/singular act* are indissolubly united in all acts of intellectual cognition; the ordinary human experience of knowing necessarily includes both sides of the equation. Since singularity and universality are thus present within the "given" of the human experience of knowing, it would be erroneous to posit them as mutually exclusive properties: "it is not singularity that is repugnant to intelligibility, but materiality." By this last qualification Aquinas indicates that what inhibits certain subjects from

enjoying an apprehension of the universal is not their individuality but their existence in matter.

On the basis of this distinction between the two poles present in all human knowing *individuality of the act/universality of the object* Aquinas subsequently notes that the study of mind may proceed along two distinct but complementary paths: "one way, according as the intellect is apprehensive of being and universal truth; the other way, according as the intellect is a certain thing (*quaedam res*), a particular power having a determinate act."¹²

The first of these approaches is metaphysical in nature, an *ontology of knowing*, while the second pertains to the sphere of moral psychology and may be termed an *ethics of knowing*.¹³ Intellectual knowing is clearly an object for metaphysical discourse, for it is an activity requiring immateriality both on the part of the subject exercising the activity and on the part of the mode in which intentional objects are united to the subject. The metaphysician accordingly studies cognitive being insofar as it transcends the conditions proper to matter, motion, time, and the individuality of epistemic agents. This consideration does not entail the thesis that human knowing bears no relation to such conditions, but only that it does not pertain to the science of being *qua* being to describe them in detail.

The metaphysical nature of Aquinas's approach to the study of knowledge can easily mislead his readers into concluding that he altogether neglects the temporal and social dimensions of human knowing that are emphasized in postmodern treatments. Yet this criticism would be founded on a misunderstanding and a neglect of the full scope of his teaching on knowledge, which is not limited to the abstract and universal perspective of metaphysics. He also studies knowledge from within the vantage point of what he terms "moral science" (*scientia moralis*) or "operative science" (*scientia operativa*). The groundwork for this approach is laid out in the *prima secundae* of the *Summa theologiae* and in the disputed question *De virtutibus*, where he argues that since theoretical cognitive acts are exercised by free choice of the will,

¹² *ST I*, qu. 82, art. 4, ad 1 (5:303).

¹³ Joseph Maréchal is one of the few Thomists to explicitly recognize a distinction between two approaches to knowledge, although he calls the metaphysical treatment of reason "logical" and the ethical treatment "psychological:" "La manière dont, en fait, nous abordons les données nouvelles qui pénètrent dans notre conscience, dépend donc de dispositions complexe, spéculatives, affectives et volontaires, renforcées ou modifiées au fil de l'expérience 'écoulée.' Une théorie logique de l'opération intellectuelle comme telle peut faire abstraction de ces facteurs contingents; une théorie psychologique des opérations intellectuelles qui s'enracinent effectivement en nous, devrait, au contraire, tenir compte des 'habitus' spéculatifs et pratiques." *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, cahier V (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1950), 405.

they require guidance from practical reason, as do all freely chosen acts.¹⁴ To an objection which states that speculative reason is entirely detached from the will, the principle of human acts (and thus morality), Aquinas replies that the faculty of will applies even the speculative reason to its operation of understanding and judging.¹⁵ He subsequently notes that these willed acts of theoretical cognition are preceded by the *imperium*, a practical judgment ordaining the accomplishment of a determinate operation, thus grounding the assertion that practical reason can ordain the performance of even theoretical cognitive acts.¹⁶

Unlike metaphysics, moral science does not approach the individual entity in order to discern how it exemplifies a universal principle of explanation. On the contrary, as a practical science, ethics considers universal principles only insofar as they contribute to a comprehension of the persons to be guided in their actions. And as Aquinas never tires of repeating, actions are as fully singular as the persons whence they derive and the unique conjunction of circumstances in which they occur, *actus sunt circa singularia*.¹⁷ Moral science accordingly achieves completion when it discerns the concrete, existential conditions specific to human acts.¹⁸ As a result, those features of reality which a metaphysical analysis would regard as merely contingent and outside the scope of its consideration, become essential to the perspective of moral science.

More specifically, those features of human knowing that metaphysics or logic leave aside as accidental properties, become crucial when ethics addresses how human beings make use of their cognitive powers to moral ends. In this manner the ethicist seeks to determine how individuals appropriate their own cognitive teleology, taking into account the context of their choices, affective inclinations, character, historical and social context, and the like. Accordingly

¹⁴ See especially *ST I-II*, qu. 17, art. 6, *sed contra*: "Actus rationis exercentur per liberum arbitrium" (6:122); cf. *De virtutibus*, qu. unicus, art. 7: "... verum possit esse volitum, prout homo vult intelligere verum" (E. Odetto, ed. in *Questiones disputatae* [Turin: Marietti, 1965], 724).

¹⁵ *ST I-II*, qu. 16, art. 1, ad 3: "... etiam ipsa ratio speculativa applicatur ad opus intelligendi vel iudicandi, a voluntate" (6:114).

¹⁶ See *ST I-II*, qu. 17, art. 6, c. (6:122). For a treatment of Aquinas's views on the possibility and nature of moral responsibility within the activity of speculative thought, see Gregory Martin Reichberg, "Aquinas on Moral Responsibility in the Pursuit of Knowledge," in David Gallagher, ed., *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 61-82.

¹⁷ See for instance, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum* 3, 1 (47.1:119/143-45): "... quia vero actus sunt singularia, magis est iudicanda condicio actus secundum considerationes singularium quam secundum considerationem universalem."

¹⁸ *ST I-II*, qu. 6, prologue: "Quia operationes et actus circa singularia sunt, ideo omnis operativa scientia in particulari consideratione perficitur."

the virtue of prudence can, and should, give direction to even speculative cognitive acts,¹⁹ insofar as the intellect is actualized according to determinate circumstances, as are the other powers of the soul.²⁰

For instance, it is from within the perspective of the ethical employment of human cognition that Aquinas takes up a discussion of the intellectual virtues.²¹ These habitus are rooted in the concrete historicity of the individual; they express the manner in which a person's past activity influences his or her cognitive action in the present.²² Similarly, he discusses how a catastrophe of historical and social dimensions—the sin of our first parents—has affected our intellectual operations and must be taken into account in order to understand why truth is so difficult to attain in our present circumstances.²³

Further examples of Aquinas's attention to the temporal and social dimension of human knowing could be multiplied, and would surely merit more extensive treatment. Yet in view of our present purpose we must advert to an even more fundamental issue, which is presupposed in any such investigation. If intellectual cognition in humans is indeed an immaterial operation, as Aquinas clearly maintains, how can this operation possibly be in any way affected by temporal context, if, as he also maintains, time is the measure of corporeal beings subject to motion? Are immateriality and temporality mutually exclusive properties of mind?

¹⁹ The role of prudence in directing the concrete exercise of the speculative acts is explicitly affirmed in *ST II-II*, qu. 47, art. 2, ad 2: "... ipse actus speculativae rationis, secundum quod est voluntarius, cadit sub electione et consilio quantum ad suum exercitium, et per consequens cadit sub ordinatione prudentiae" (8:349). Aquinas is quick to add, however, that the influence of prudence does not extend into the very relation between the speculative act and its object, for here the speculative intellect is alone sufficient to determine itself to the object: "Sed quantum ad suam speciem, prout comparatur ad obiectum, quod est verum necessarium, [actus speculativae rationis] non cadit sub consilio nec sub prudentia" (*ibid.*).

²⁰ This is an extension of the general principle that active or passive powers cannot act or be acted upon at any time whatsoever, but only in a determinate way and in some definite time. On this point see *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio* 9, lect. 4, no. 1816 (R.M. Spiazzi, ed. [Turin: Marietti, 1950], pp. 434-35).

²¹ The primary loci of such discussion are *ST I-II*, qq. 56-58, and *Sententia Libri Ethicorum* 6.

²² The relation between habitus and the concrete historicity of the individual person has been well noted by Maréchal: "L' 'habitus' est, pour ainsi dire, une second nature, interposée entre l'acte premier et les actes secondes: c'est la pesée sourde du passé sur l'activité du présente. L' 'habitus' s'ajoute à la forme naturelle de chaque puissance, pour influencer à l'avance tout exercice de celle-ci" (*Le point de départ*, cahier V, 405).

²³ As a representative statement of this position, see *ST I-II*, qu. 85, art. 3. For a systematic, contemporary treatment of this theme, see Jacques Maritain, "Réflexions sur la nature blessée," *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 13 (Fribourg, Switzerland; Paris: Éditions St. Paul, 1993), 768-822.

THE TEMPORALITY OF THINKING

Clearly many *objects* of human cognition include direct reference to temporal context. This holds especially for the objects of practical cognition, human actions, which are always situated within a temporal and historical continuum. So moral science and prudence can discharge their respective functions only by conscientiously weighing the temporal context of the acts they must guide. Notwithstanding the temporal and historical character of many cognitional objects, particularly those pertaining to the sphere of action, to assert that *all* intellectual objects are temporally referenced would surely miss the mark. Aquinas is quick to point out that neither mathematics nor metaphysics include matter or motion within their formal objects. And the exclusion of matter and motion, whether by abstraction or separation, necessarily entails the exclusion of temporal considerations, since time is the measure of change.²⁴

Aquinas does soften this exclusion by noting that although mathematics and metaphysics prescind from treating motion and time *per se*, nevertheless their respective principles may be applied *per accidens* to things that change and are in time. This is the work of the natural and intermediate sciences.²⁵ Moreover, he does acknowledge that all intellectual *judgments*, including the purely theoretical judgments of mathematics and metaphysics, involve an indirect reference to temporal determinations, owing to the "return to phantasms" necessary for all completed cognitions. In reply to an objection stating that "the intellect abstracts from time, as also from other individual conditions," Aquinas writes that "for as much as the intellect turns to the phantasms (*ad phantasmata convertit*), composition and division of the intellect involve time."²⁶ In another, earlier text, he establishes this same point in greater detail, noting that time enters into the intellectual operation of the human being for two reasons: (i) this knowledge *originates* from phantasms, which always have a determinate temporal reference, and (ii) this knowledge comes to completion in the judicative act, composition and division, whereby our intellect uses phantasms *to apply* previously abstracted intelligibles to the sensible things of our experience.²⁷

Despite these qualifications, he still contends that this temporal horizon does not characterize metaphysical or mathematical objects directly and of themselves.

²⁴ This is discussed in *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, qu. 5, aa. 3-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, art. 3, ad 5.

²⁶ *ST I*, qu. 85, art. 5, ad 2 (5:341).

²⁷ *Summa contra gentiles* 2, chap. 96, Item: "... operationi autem intellectuali nostrae adiacet tempus, quod a phantasmatis cognitionem accipimus, quae determinatum respiciunt tempus. . . . Componit autem aut dividit applicando intelligibilia prius abstracta ad res: et in hac applicatione necesse est cointelligi tempus" (13:572).

The principle of non-contradiction or the Pythagorean theorem are as true for us today as they were for Aristotle or Euclid; in this sense they are timeless truths. The reason: the human intellect grasps the essential properties of things by abstracting intelligibles from sensible conditions, "so that in this operation it comprehends the intelligible apart from time and the condition proper to sensible things."²⁸ In this manner Aquinas carefully delineates the extent to which temporal duration can shape our thinking: The apprehension of indivisibles – the mind's first operation – enjoys greater freedom from time than composition and division – the mind's second operation. So the human intellect's relationship to time is complex: "in composition and division our intellect always links up with time, past or future, but not in understanding what a thing is."²⁹

In any event, regardless of the a-temporality of such theoretical objects, Aquinas does not hesitate to affirm the temporality of human cognitive acts, even those of the metaphysician and mathematician. Again he discerns an ontological duality between the cognitive act and its corresponding object, a duality that nevertheless co-exists with the intellect's natural or acquired proportion to its object, requisite for all truthful cognition.

Let us begin with a possible objection to the thesis that *all* cognitive acts are bounded by time. If the act of knowing is indeed an instance of immanent activity, then it is difficult to conceive how it may be measured by a temporal duration; for any operation *per se* involves time if it stands in need of something future to attain its proper completion. Yet intellection (*intelligere*) is not a motion, a way to completion; rather it is an *actus perfectus*, possessing its complete form at the very instant of its enactment.³⁰ In this sense it is true to say with Thomas that intellection is above time, *intellectus est supra tempus*.³¹

Still, while transcending time in its formality as intellection, human thinking is nonetheless measured by temporal duration, in three ways: (i) *per accidens*, by reason of its union with the body; (ii) *per se*, insofar as it is an operation which includes reasoning or inquiry; and (iii) *by participation*, because it is intellection only imperfectly and not by its very essence.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*; cf. *Quodl.* 4, qu. 9, art. 2, c.: "... [tempus] per se commiscetur operationi intellectus humani componentis et dividit . . ." (Marietti, p.82).

³⁰ *De veritate*, qu. 8, art. 14, ad 12: "... illa operatio per se cadit sub tempore quae exspectat aliquid in futurum ad hoc quod eius species compleatur, sicut patet de motu qui non habet speciem completam quousque ad terminum perducatur: non est enim idem specie motus ad medium et ad terminum; operationes vero quae staim habent suam speciem completam, non mesurantur tempore nisi per accidens, sicut intelligere, sentire et huiusmodi . . ." (22.2:266/302-311).

³¹ *ST I*, qu. 85, art. 4, ad 1 (5:339); *I-II*, qu. 113, art. 7, ad 5 (7:339): "Mens autem humana quae iustificatur, secundum se quidem est supra tempus, sed per accidens subditur tempori."

In the first way (i), Aquinas notes that *per accidens* cognitive acts are immersed in time insofar as they are operationally joined to corporeal sensory organs subject to motion. Dependency on the sense powers, external and internal, affects human thinking with an inevitable temporal dispersion. The phantasms produced by our internal senses play an especially important role in this regard: as images of individual sensible things immersed in time, they too are intrinsically measured by time. Consequently, since there is no actual thinking without them, there can be no thinking without succession and time: *nihil potest homo intelligere sine continuo et tempore*.³²

In the second way (ii), Aquinas writes that "since the intellect passes from potentiality to act, it has a likeness to things which are generated, which do not attain to perfection all at once but acquire it progressively,"³³ because "everything which is moved [from potency to actuality] acquires something by its movement, and attains to what it had not had previously."³⁴ This is the act of reasoning, whereby we think with succession: from one thing understood something else is subsequently inferred; the mind is thus led from knowledge in potency to knowledge in act. Hence, insofar as human knowledge is inherently progressive, it is a *discursus*; as a *discursus* it is a motion, and as a motion it is in time. Accordingly, to the extent that human knowing is a *ratio*, it is measured *per se* by time.³⁵

At this juncture one might justifiably reply that not all acts of human knowing are ratiocinations, while conceding that most are. Acts of intuitive awareness (*intellectus*) do occur and in such moments our thoughts seem measured by a

³² Aristotle, *De memoria et reminiscencia*, 450a7-10, cited approvingly by Aquinas in *Sentencia Libri De sensu et sensato* 1, 2, with the following explanation added: "Quod quidem accidit in quantum nichil potest homo intelligere sine fantasmate: fantasma enim oportet quod sit cum continuo et tempore, eo quod est similitudo rei singularis que est hic et nunc" (45.2:108/51-57).

³³ *ST I*, qu. 85, art. 5, c. (5:341); cf. qu. 58, art. 3, ad 1: "... discursus quendam motum nominat. Omnis autem motus est de uno priori in aliud posterius" (5:83).

³⁴ *ST I*, qu. 9, art. 1, c. (4:90).

³⁵ Aquinas never states outright that the operation of reasoning is measured *per se* by time. In a famous passage from the commentary on *De anima* 1,10 he appears to state the contrary, arguing that the operations of the intellect are called motions in a metaphorical sense only, *operationes autem intellectus non dicuntur motus nisi metaphorice* (45.1: 51/12-13). Yet here he clearly has in mind *intellectus*, the act from which the intellect takes its name, which, being an *actus perfecti*, transcends motion and time. In another context (*ST I*, qu. 64, art. 2, c.), where he takes care to distinguish *intellectus* from *ratio*, the mutability of the latter is contrasted to the immobility of the former: "Angelus apprehendit immobiliter per intellectum, sicut et nos immobiliter apprehendimus prima principia, quorum est intellectus: homo vero per rationem apprehendit mobiliter, discurrendo de uno ad aliud, habens viam procedendi ad utramque oppositorum" (5:141).

duration other than time. Jacques Maritain refers to the super-temporality of thought in his *Approaches to God*.³⁶

The operations of the human intellect are in time, and indeed, subject to time, but in an extrinsic manner and only by reason of the materiality of the senses and the imagination to whose exercise they are bound. In themselves they are not subject to the flux of impermanence. They emerge above time. They exist in a duration which is a deficient imitation of eternity, a succession of fragments of eternity, for it is the perseverance in being of spiritual acts of intellection or of contemplative gaze. Thus this duration is composed of instances superior to time, each of which may correspond to a lapse of time more or less long, but is in itself without flow or movement or succession a flash of permanent or non successive existence. Such is the duration proper to thought.

Should we conclude that Aquinas's comments regarding the temporality of human thinking thus apply to *some* acts of thinking but not unqualifiedly to them all? In other words, do acts of *intellectus* escape the temporal condition? Does the Thomistic teaching on intuitive insight decisively set itself apart from the postmodern emphasis on temporality in human thinking?

This question may be answered both affirmatively and negatively. Yes, some intellectual acts are non-discursive. No, even these intuitive acts are never wholly independent of time; they too involve succession, albeit of a very special kind. True enough, the act of intuitive awareness is not a *kinesis*, but an *energia*, wholly complete at the very instant of its enactment, thus standing outside the order of motion and time. Nevertheless, in created or participated knowers such acts are necessarily multiple. No one act of human or angelic cognition can grasp the whole of what is, otherwise we would be God, who utters Himself and the universe in one Word only.

Our intuitive insights, when we have them, are fragmentary; so too are the intellections of the angels, who can know the cosmos only through a multitude of ideas (*species intelligibilis*). No two intelligible *species* may be considered simultaneously, or to put it more simply, it is impossible for the human or angelic intellect to actually think of two things, formally distinct, at once.³⁷ Thus, when engaging in acts of intuitive insight we (angels and humans) pass from one actual consideration to another, from one focus to another, and here there is a real succession. It is not that we think of one thing *from* another, as in reasoning, but merely that we think of one thing *after* another (discontinuous succession of intuitive insights). Consequently, while there is no before and after in the act

³⁶ Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God*, trans. Peter O'Reilly (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 77.

³⁷ For example, see *De veritate*, qu. 8, art. 14; *Contra gentiles* 2, chap. 101; *ST* 1, qu. 58, art. 2.

by which an angel (or human having an intuitive insight) understands a single intelligible form, there is nothing to prevent a number of such operations from being ordered according to before and after.³⁸ Due to the creaturely condition of intellectus, by its very nature a *participated* intellectus, acts of intuitive insight are never perfectly continuous; thought must pass from one thing to another, never resting immobile in the self-same intelligible word. The succession of intuitive insights thus affords us a third way (iii) in which thinking is measured by time, for here there is a real distinction of prior and posterior instants.

Yet Aquinas adds an important caveat to this claim. This succession of immobile operations is of a quite different order from the succession of corporeal substances: it is a passage from one complete act to another complete act, rather than a passage from potency to act (as occurs in reasoning); and it is non-continuous. Thus Aquinas concludes that the measure of this discontinuous succession is "not the same as the time which measures the movements of the heavens, and whereby all corporeal things are measured, which have their changeableness from the movement of the heavens."³⁹ By this caveat he thus shows how our inner psychic life possesses its own distinctive temporal measure, rejoining Husserl, Heidegger and others, who argue that the temporality of thinking is irreducible to the worldly time measuring bodies in motion. And lest

³⁸ See *De veritate*, qu. 8, art. 15, c., where Aquinas distinguishes between knowing one thing *in* another, and knowing one thing, *from* another: "Differt autem cognoscere aliquid in aliquo et aliquid ex aliquid" (22.2:268/89-90). The first type of mediation in knowing is compatible with the intuitive insight of the angels, while the second is excluded. In the previous article (14, ad 12), however, Aquinas notes how angelic cognition is not altogether exempt from succession: "Unde patet quod ipsum intelligere angeli neque per se neque per accidens cadit sub tempore; unde in una eius operatione qua intelligit una intelligibile, non est prius et posterius; sed hoc non prohibet quin plures operationes possint esse ordinatae secundum prius et posterius" (22.2:266/319-23). Cf. *Contra gentiles* 2, chap. 101: "Est igitur in intellectu substantiae separatae quaedam intelligentiarum successio. Non tamen motus, proprie loquendo: cum non succedat actus potentiae, sed actus actui" (13:600). Aquinas adds, however, that this succession of discontinuous instants does not characterize all acts of angelic thinking, but only those acts by which the angel knows things other than itself through its infused species. By contrast, the angel's self-knowledge includes no succession whatsoever; it is thus measured by aevum, and not by time (continuous or discrete). On this last point see *De potentia*, qu. 4, art. 2, ad 19.

³⁹ ST I, qu. 53, art. 3, c. (5:35). In the reply to the first objection (ad 1), Aquinas further clarifies the nature of this angelic succession, speculating that if this succession is indeed non-continuous (as he does in fact maintain), then "non habebit proportionem ad tempus quod mesurat motum corporalium, quod est continuum: cum non sit eiusdem rationis" (Ibid). Cf. qu. 85, art. 4, ad 1: "intellectus est supra tempus quod est numerus motus corporalium rerum" (5:339); also I-II, qu. 113, art. 7, ad 5: "Sed in his quae sunt supra tempus, aliter se habet. Si quae enim successio sit ibi affectuum vel intellectualium conceptionum, puta in angelis, talis successio non mesuratur tempore continuo, sed tempore discreto . . . (7:339).

one suppose that this pertains only to rare moments of intuitive insight, and not to the daily fabric of human life, Aquinas reminds us that all completed intellectual cognitions, including those reached by reasoning, include some share of intuition: "for the discourse of reason always begins from simple understanding (*ab intellectu*) and concludes with simple understanding (*ad intellectum*): for we reason by proceeding from principles simply understood, and the discourse of reason is perfected when we grasp with simple insight what hitherto was unknown."⁴⁰

DESIRE FOR TRUTH AND THE POWER EFFECTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Thus no created intelligence can attain to the timeless immobility of divine intellection: since no created intelligence is perfectly exempt from succession, and all succession is measured by time (continuous or discrete), we may conclude that no such intelligence is entirely exempt from temporal duration. At this juncture Aquinas raises a question: If created intelligences cannot think about all that they can know with perfect simultaneity, what enables them to *shift their attention* from one object of thought to another? The intellectual faculty is itself unable to effect this shift, because while it actually thinks about one intelligible, it remains in potency to all other intelligibles. Insofar, however, as it is in potency, it cannot function as the efficient cause of its own passage to actuality: Things are drawn from potency to act by an agent already in act, and the same thing cannot be both mover and moved at the same time and in the same respect. Yet we do move ourselves from one act of thinking to another; without a doubt this is one of the most conspicuous features of our cognitive life. Hence we cannot elude the question: What agency is the cause of this vicissitude in our mental operations?

Aquinas's reply to this query should be of little surprise, for it dovetails with the reflective awareness of our cognitive activity that is part and parcel of our daily lives: cognitive agents are impelled by *desire* to seek out objects for reflection. This voluntary employment of the mind is most manifest in those instances when we advert to knowledge already in our habitual possession,

⁴⁰ ST II-II, qu. 8, art. 1, ad 2 (8:66-67). For a discussion of intuitivity in reasoning, see Jacques Maritain, "Pas de savoir sans intuitivité," *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 13, op. cit., especially 937-47. For further elucidations on Aquinas's understanding of temporality in human and angelic knowing, the reader may profitably consult J. Peghaire, *Intellectus et Ratio selon S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin; Ottawa: Inst. d'Études Médiévales, 1936); and Carl J. Peter, *The Doctrine of Thomas Aquinas Regarding Eternity in the Rational Soul and Separated Substances* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University, 1964).

bringing into conscious awareness an insight preserved in the intellectual memory:

The angelic intellect is not identically related to all the [cognitional] forms it has within itself, because sometimes it is in perfect act in regard to one form but not with regard to others. The will reduces the intellect from potency to act. Consequently, Augustine says that an angel understands when it wills (*cum voluerit intelligit*).⁴¹

This claim arises within Aquinas' discussion of succession in angelic thinking, but its application is not restricted to the sphere of the separate intelligences; similar remarks about the role of the will in cognition appear in the context of his discussions about human thinking. Particularly telling is *Summa theologiae* I-II, qu. 9, art. 1, where he points to a twofold potency of the human mind, a twofold indetermination that must be overcome if concrete acts of intellection are to occur: first, with respect to its actuation by the intelligible object, originally open to all intelligible objects, the intellect must be *specified* by one of them in order to be knowing in act; second, with respect to the very *exercise* of the intellectual act, originally open to the option of either thinking or not thinking about any particular object, the epistemic agent must effect a choice in order to be actually knowing. The first potency pertains to the register of formal causality (order of specification) and is overcome by the reception of an intelligible form; the second potency pertains to the register of efficient and final causality (order of exercise) and is overcome by an impulsion that springs from the will of the epistemic agent, directing the intellectual faculty to actually consider a determinate intelligible form, for the sake of a desired good.

Crucial, then, to Aquinas' account of created thinking is the role ascribed to the will, the primary source of efficient causality within the rational agent. Using a formula attributed to St. Anselm, he calls the will "the motor of the soul's powers" (*motor omnium virium*), explicitly indicating that the intellect too is comprised under its governance.⁴² In modern parlance we would say that persons know determinate objects only under condition that they *attend* to them. Attending is voluntary (especially in the realm of intellectual cognitions, while sensory cognitions, in contrast, frequently escape our voluntary control) in at least this minimal sense: objects of intellectual cognition never compel our consideration to such a degree that we are unable to avert our gaze from them. Thinking can never be inwardly or outwardly coerced: "no matter what an object

⁴¹ *De veritate*, qu. 8, art. 14, ad 17 (22.2:266/345-49); cf. *Contra gentiles* 2, chap. 101.

⁴² For a representative passage, see *De veritate*, qu. 10, art. 2, ad 4: ". . . et de hoc modo [habitualiter] cognitionis [intellectus possibilis] reducitur in actum perfectum per voluntatem quae, secundum Anselmum, est motum omnium virium" (22.2:302/203-206).

might be, Aquinas observes, it is in a man's power not to think of it."⁴³ Moreover, many of our cognitions are voluntary in a stronger, more positive sense, by virtue of their inception in desire: for we frequently engage in inquiry as a consciously willed project, setting out by choice to reflect along determinate lines, in view of a desired end. "There is as much movement, as much controlled, directed, purposive, goal-directed movement, as much desire, force, vigor, energy, drive, urge, and urgency in intellectual action as in physical action."⁴⁴

*Verum est bonum intellectus.*⁴⁵ By this formula Aquinas succinctly summarizes his understanding of the relation between thinking and voluntary desire. *Verum* refers to the mind's conformity with reality in the act of judgment. *Bonum* refers to the perfection that accrues to the mind by virtue of that conformity. Since each existing thing desires its own completion, the human intellect too, as an inherent form, is inclined to truth as to its connatural good. This inclination the intellect knows when it spontaneously reflects on its own act, apprehending its apprehension of being as perfective for itself, thus awakening the soul's power of conscious appetite – the will. Desired when lacking and enjoyed when possessed, speculative truth thus enters the field of the will's dynamic attraction to the good.⁴⁶

To say that truth is a good is not equivalent to affirming the *moral* goodness of all truth seeking. Aquinas is quick to point out that the knowledge of truth, although good in itself, may *per accidens* become morally bad, by reason of some disorder arising in its pursuit.⁴⁷ Perfective of the human mind, truth invariably has the *ratio boni*; nonetheless, desire for the truth and satisfaction in its attainment may stray from the bounds of legitimate moral rectitude⁴⁸ This

⁴³ *ST I-II*, qu. 10, art. 2, c. (6:86).

⁴⁴ Michael Stocker, "Intellectual Desire, Emotion, and Action," *Explaining Emotions*, A.O. Rorty, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 328.

⁴⁵ Aquinas makes abundant use of this formula, e.g. in *De veritate*, qu. 1, art. 8, c. (22.1:28/140-41); *ST I*, qu. 94, art. 4, c. (5:418); *I-II*, qu. 57, art. 2, ad 3 (6:336); *II-II*, qu. 1, art 3, ad 1 (8:12).

⁴⁶ In *ST I*, qu. 82, art. 4, ad 1, Aquinas explains how the intellect's operation is encompassed within the will's motion to the good: "Si vero consideretur voluntas secundum communem rationem sui obiecti, quod est bonum, intellectus autem secundum quod est quaedam res et potentia specialis; sic sub communi ratione boni continetur, velut quoddam speciale, et intellectus ipse, et ipsum intelligere, et obiectum eius, quod est verum, quorum quodlibet est quoddam speciale bonum. Et secundum hoc voluntas est altior intellectu, et potest ipsum movere" (5:303).

⁴⁷ *ST II-II*, qu. 167, art. 1, c.: "Sed ipsa enim veritatis cognitio, per se loquendo, bona est. Potest autem per accidens esse mala, ratione scilicet aliquius consequentis: vel in quantum scilicet aliquis de cognitione veritatis superbit . . . vel in quantum homo utitur cognitione veritatis ad peccandum" (10:345).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: ". . . appetitus vel studium cognoscendae veritatis potest habere rectitudinem vel perversitatem."

is an application of the principle that deliberately willed acts are never morally indifferent when exercised *in concreto*.

Considered as a free operation of an individual agent, occurring at a definite time, aiming at a end, and using determinate means, engagement in theoretical inquiry never is morally neutral. Like all other human acts, the actual exercise of theoretical knowledge receives its moral quality by virtue of its specific object, end, and circumstances. In this vein, Aquinas comments that making "use of an acquired science is due to a motion of the will," and concludes that "a virtue which perfects the will, as charity or justice, confers the right use of these speculative habitus [the theoretical intellectual virtues]."⁴⁹ Inversely, vices such as pride and injustice can vitiate the appetite for knowledge, breeding a "*curiositas* about intellectual sciences," destructive of human fulfillment.⁵⁰ Aquinas explicitly discusses the moral use of knowledge under the heading of "*studiositas*," which designates a moral virtue whose office consists in rectifying the will to knowledge.⁵¹ "The virtue of attentiveness" would, I think, be a suitable translation for this Latin term, in the new moral sense given it by Aquinas.

Aquinas' analysis of the will's role in theoretical thinking can afford the Thomist a vantage from which to integrate postmodern reflections on the relation between knowledge and power. To speak of "integration" may surprise those who, in the wake of Habermas, view postmodernity (especially in Foucault's formulation) as a recrudescence of medieval nominalist voluntarism (in Nietzschean garb), standing in perfect antithesis to the primacy of *theoria* over *praxis* championed by the classical tradition.⁵²

Yet a case may be made that this reading of Foucault suffers from the misguided assumption that the French post-structuralist does in fact intend to (i) equate "relationships of power" with domination or repression and (ii) collapse knowledge into power, whereby claims to truth are purely and simply reducible to the power effects they have.⁵³ Addressing the first assumption, a recent commentator explains that by "power" Foucault understands "particular

⁴⁹ ST I-II, qu. 57, art. 1, c. (6:364).

⁵⁰ ST II-II, qu. 167, art. 1, sed contra: "Ergo circa intellectivas scientias potest esse curiositas vitiosa" (6:345).

⁵¹ ST II-II, qu. 166: "De studiositate."

⁵² Louis Dupré, for instance, in "Postmodernity or Late Modernity? Ambiguities in Richard Rorty's Thought" (*The Review of Metaphysics* 47 [1993]: 277-295) traces Foucault's geneologies of power structures to Ockham's nominalist theology; see, in particular, 284-85.

⁵³ For instance, in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Jürgen Habermas writes that "Foucault abruptly reverses power's truth-dependency into the power dependency of truth" (274) adding that for Foucault "validity claims are functionistically reduced to the effects of power" (F. Lawrence, trans. [Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1987], 276).

exercises of control over one's actions and those of others; not just dominations or repressions, negative control, but the positive control of reasonings and creations as well," adding that "Foucault is bent on coolly describing how the modern subject constitutes itself a governor of its own and others actions."⁵⁴ As to the second assumption, the same commentator underscores Foucault's own distinction between power relations on the one hand and relationships of communication on the other, citing his explicit denial that the latter are simply "reducible" to the former.⁵⁵ Even more pointedly, Foucault cautions his readers that "those who say that for me *savoir* is a mask for *pouvoir* do not seem to me to have the capacity to understand."⁵⁶

While Foucault recognizes a distinction between truth and its power effects, he plainly takes the latter as his primary concern, suggesting that his own project consists largely (although not exclusively) in disclosing the structures operative in the "political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth."⁵⁷ Thus each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances and which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.⁵⁸

Situating this project within the Thomistic architecture of human knowing presents a number of serious difficulties, two of which merit special mention.

First, Aquinas' various discussions of the appetite for knowledge elucidate how *individual subjects* make moral use of their cognitive faculties; this remains true even when he examines whether or not the ordering of theoretical disciplines falls within the legitimate province of political authority, for the holder of such authority is always an individual person (or persons), who may or may not

⁵⁴ Thomas R. Flynn, "Foucault and the Politics of Postmodernity," *Nous* 23 (1989): 188.

⁵⁵ "No doubt communicating is always a certain way of acting upon another person or persons. But the production and circulation of elements of meaning can have as their objective or as their consequence certain results in the realm of power; the latter [relationships of communication] are not simply the result of the former [relations of power]." "Afterword" to Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd edition, rev. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 239; cited by Flynn, 191.

⁵⁶ Interview with François Eweld, "Le souci de la vérité," *Magazine Littéraire* 207 (May, 1984), 22; cited by Flynn, 191.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" (from an interview conducted by A. Fontana and P. Pasquino), in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 74.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

exhibit good qualities of personal political judgment (*prudencia politica*).⁵⁹ Foucault, by contrast, is less interested in studying individual exercises of power than in describing how determinate relations of power are embedded within each discursive formation. Individual epistemic agents do not establish these relations; rather it is the relations themselves that constitute these agents in their very subjectivation. From this standpoint it becomes altogether plausible to speak of "strategies without a strategist" and "exercises of control without a controller."⁶⁰ Political power is thus no longer conceived solely (or even primarily) as the personal attribute of an individual agent acting through intellect and will.

A second difficulty arises from Foucault's contention that *desire* (comprising power relations and power effects) is constitutive of discursive practice, intrinsic to its very nature.⁶¹ This appears to fly in the teeth of Aquinas' repeated assertions that the will's action, although necessary for the occurrence of concrete acts of intellection, nevertheless remains extrinsic to the very relation of the mind to its speculative object: "the consideration of truth is not science insofar as it is an object of volition, but according as it tends directly to its object."⁶² Ordained by the will in the line of their actual *exercise*, theoretical cognitions are nevertheless elicited directly by the intellect in the line of their objective *specification*.

Despite the seeming incompatibility, and even because of it, Foucauldian explorations into the politics of truth merit close examination by the Thomist, for at least two reasons. First of all, such an engagement can heighten our awareness of what Maritain called *l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle*. As social

⁵⁹ In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics* (*Sententia libri Ethicorum* 1,1), Aquinas asks whether the political ruler, as possessor of the "architectonic science," may regulate not just practical but even speculative science. His reply is instructive: "Sed scientiae speculativae praecipit civilis solum quantum ad usum, non autem quantum ad determinationem operis; ordinat enim politica quod aliqui doceant vel addiscant geometriam, huiusmodi enim actus in quantum sunt voluntarii pertinent ad materiam moralem et sunt ordinabiles ad finem humanae vitae; non autem praecipit politicus geometrae quid de triangulo concludat, hoc enim non subiacet humanae voluntati nec est ordinabile humanae vitae, sed dependet ex ipsa rerum ratione. Et ideo dicit quod politica praeordinat quas disciplinarum debitum est esse in civitatibus, scilicet tam praticarum quam speculativarum, et quis quam debeat addiscere et usque ad quod tempus" (47.1:9/134-48).

⁶⁰ Thomas R. Flynn, "Foucault and the Politics of Postmodernity," 192.

⁶¹ "... neither the relation of discourse to desire, nor the processes of its appropriation, nor its role among non-discursive practices is extrinsic to its unity, its characterization and the laws of its formation" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 68).

⁶² "... veri consideratio non est scientia in quantum est volita, sed secundum quod directe tendit in obiectum." De virtutibus in communi, qu. un., a. 7 (Marietti, 724).

beings we are also social knowers; attention to this dimension of human knowing can supplement Aquinas' very formal treatment of knowledge, furnishing a better understanding of the human intellect in the various modalities of its concrete employment. Secondly, the sharp line drawn by Aquinas between the exercise and the specification of knowledge, and the exclusion of voluntary appetite from the latter, holds true only for those cognitions which terminate in the grasp of an intelligible necessity, viz., judgments of the type *scientia*. In all other judgments, whether of prudence, belief, opinion, and even error, the will must intervene to fix the mind's assent.⁶³ When one considers that most judgments of everyday life are of this second kind, even many that we are accustomed to call *scientific*,⁶⁴ then the exigency of grasping "*the possible positions of desire in relation to discourse*"⁶⁵ is incumbent on any Thomist seeking to articulate a theory of knowledge adequate to real cognitive practice.

⁶³ For a representative statement of this position, see *ST II-II*, qu. 1, art. 4; cf. *De veritate*, qu. 14, art. 1.

⁶⁴ Yves R. Simon aptly describes this aspect of scientific knowing: "What goes on . . . under the name of science is to a very large extent made up of factual information, educated opinion, and probability; yet this aggregate owes its existence to a nucleus of hard objective necessity, to which it is connected by the scientific habitus" (*Work, Society, and Culture* [New York: Fordham University Press, 1971], 166). In *A General Theory of Authority* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), he likewise mentions how the will may intervene in such judgments: "Objectivity is held in check by obscurity. An assent which is firm without being necessary cannot be anything else than voluntary (92).

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 68.