

The Problem of the Relationship between Philosophical and Theological Wisdom in the Scholasticism of the 13th and early 14th Centuries

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The Ominous Wisdom of Aristotle, The Philosopher

In the first ordinary question of the secular Oxford theologian Henry of Harclay (ca. 1270–1317), a question dealing with the possibility of accurately predicting the second coming of Christ, we read the following account of a story told by Alexander Neckham (1157–1217), a Christian theologian and Abbot of Cirencester (ca. 1212):

We should also look at the remarkable story Alexander Neckham tells in his second book of *On the Nature of Things*, in the chapter called ‘On the Jealous’. It concerns the evidence for Antichrist’s coming. He writes that Aristotle, the Philosopher, when about to go the way of the flesh, gave instructions that all of his subtlest writings were to be placed with him in his tomb, so that they could be of no use to those who came after him. When he was alive, he fortified a place for his tomb with his own hands so that to this day no one has been able to enter it. This place, Neckham writes, will be given over to Antichrist when he comes. Antichrist, then, will work wonders by means of the cunning inventions (*per ingenia subtilia*) to be found in Aristotle’s writings, so much so that the foolish will take him for God. At that time, if anyone were to know where Aristotle’s tomb was and were to see it lying open, that person could (if the story is true) argue that Antichrist had come. [Transl. by Edwards & Henninger]¹

The story Henry of Harclay narrates is an excellent illustration of the ambiguity characteristic of the attitude of thirteenth-century university professors toward Aristotle’s recently discovered legacy. On the one hand, one recognizes the immense respect and admiration for Aristotle’s intellectual acumen. On the other hand, one senses the enormous tension between Aristotle’s intellectual universe and the Christian worldview. Alexander Neckham’s² association of Aristotle’s most sophisticated writings with the deviousness of the Antichrist creates the double impression of Aristotle as an individual of profound but ominous insight.

Once Aristotle’s philosophical writings became an established part of university education,³ Christian scholars faced the difficult challenge of reconciling Aristotle’s intellectual world with the claims of Christian doctrine. Aristotle had distinguished between philosophical (*sophia*) and practical wisdom or prudence (*phronesis*). Broadly speaking, prudence involves the know-how requisite for performing adequate actions in different realms of human endeavor. In the narrow sense, prudence is moral wisdom, i.e. the knowledge of the principles conducive to a good and fulfilling human life and the expertise in applying those principles to the varying circumstances of human existence.⁴ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle calls philosophical wisdom an intellectual virtue and defines it as the product of both science (*epistēmē*) and intuitive grasp or understanding (*nous*). In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle links philosophical wisdom with the study of the first principles and highest causes. Christian scholars had to show that philosophical wisdom is insufficient on its own and that a higher form of wisdom is required in addition to philosophical wisdom.⁵

Thomas Aquinas is the prime example of the attitude according to which theological wisdom complements and completes philosophical wisdom. For him, natural human reason is powerful but limited. The wisdom acquired through the study of Sacred Scripture can assist the human intellect in the pursuit of absolute truth. In fact, some of the truths of faith fall within the domain of human reason and can be examined independently of Scripture. Revelation provides the additional supernatural dimension to truth as known by human reason. This dimension transcends the natural light of reason and it is yet indispensable for a complete account of reality.⁶

As witnessed by some of the theses of the famous 1277 Parisian Condemnation, Aquinas's generous interpretation of the relationship between philosophical and theological wisdom posed some insurmountable conceptual problems, e.g. regarding the compatibility between the biblical doctrine of creation in time and Aristotle's hypothesis of the eternity of the universe.⁷ Moreover, some scholastics questioned the very existence of wisdom other than that associated with the practice of philosophy. Thesis 182 of the condemned propositions, for instance, asserts that "one does not know anything more by the fact that he knows theology."⁸

It is difficult to imagine a more radical assault on the value of theology as an independent theoretical discipline than the claim that the knowledge of the theologian, and not just any self-professed theologian but the well-trained university theologian, amounts to nothing more than what one might come to know by natural means alone. At the heart of the mistrust of theology's independent status was the conviction that theology, as a purely theoretical discipline, does not and cannot satisfy Aristotle's requirements for it to be called wisdom. We can, therefore, ask: What Aristotelian requirements did theology fail to meet for it to be justifiably called wisdom, and if theology can be called wisdom in some sense, how did Christian theologians conceive of the relationship between theological and philosophical wisdom?

Certitude with respect to First Principles as the Starting Point of Philosophical Wisdom and the Possibility of a Scientific Theology⁹

In both his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Metaphysics*, Aristotle characterizes wisdom (*sapientia*) as the highest and most certain of all the sciences. In Book VI of the *Ethics*, Aristotle describes wisdom as the knowledge of divine things and as the most certain, crown-science.¹⁰ In Book I of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle defines wisdom as the science of the first and highest causes.¹¹ The wise man, according to Aristotle, governs and is not governed.¹² The wise man knows all things universally; he knows the most difficult things, has certitude, is capable of providing an account of the origin of his own knowledge, and masters the supreme and most autonomous science.¹³ Later on in *Metaphysics*, Book VI, Aristotle associates philosophical wisdom with the science of first philosophy (or metaphysics), which deals with the causes and principles of beings as beings.¹⁴ Aristotle also calls metaphysics the most enjoyable and divine of the theoretical sciences.¹⁵ For a brief moment in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the speculative study of being as being becomes a theology, i.e. a study of God. This occurs in *Metaphysics*, Book XII, where Aristotle introduces the concept of the unmoved mover and discusses the life of God.¹⁶

Aristotle's various characterizations of metaphysics gave rise to differing scholastic conceptions of the genuine object of metaphysics as a science: the first and highest causes, being as such, God and the separate intelligences.¹⁷ Because of Aristotle's association of philosophical wisdom with the practice of metaphysics and because of Aristotle's categorization of metaphysics as the supreme and most autonomous science, Christian theologians attempted to incorporate metaphysics into the study of theology and met, as a result, with the difficulty of transforming theology into a scientific discipline in the Aristotelian sense of the term. The most formidable objection to the enterprise of justifying the scientific status of theology was based on Aristotle's requirement of certitude with respect to the first principles and causes. Aristotle's requirement meant that one can never be mistaken with respect to the starting points and first causes of one's scientific investigation.¹⁸

But can theology meet Aristotle's certitude requirement in order to be called science and wisdom in the Aristotelian sense? Thomas Aquinas argued that since theology is based on divine revelation and not natural hu-

man reason alone, theology is rightfully called the highest wisdom.¹⁹ He attempted to handle Aristotle's certitude requirement by postulating the existence of a higher science, that of God and the blessed, to which theology in this life is subordinate and from which it derives the certitude of its own principles. The truths of Christian doctrine, according to Aquinas, are not evident in the light of natural reason, but they are nevertheless certain because they are evident to God and those who see God face-to-face in heaven.²⁰ The obvious philosophical problem with Aquinas's account of theology as a scientific discipline and a form of wisdom is that, regardless of its indebtedness and proximity to Aristotle's model of the subalternation of the sciences in terms of the derivation of their first principles, Aquinas's account rests upon the assumption that there is indeed a science of God and the blessed which guarantees the credibility of theological doctrines and the reliability of the theological method.²¹ One may ask how one assumption can give any more credibility to another assumption if it is possible that the initial assumption is false. In other words, how can one have certitude with respect to one's starting points in theology in this life if it is uncertain whether there indeed is any higher science – the theology of God and the blessed – capable of providing the lacking certitude.

Philosophical Wisdom in the Service of Deductive and Declarative Theology

The thirteenth-century debate over the relationship between theological and philosophical wisdom gave rise to two competing conceptions regarding the place of philosophical wisdom in the actual practice of theology in the context of university education. These conceptions are known under the titles of “deductive” and “declarative” theology and can be understood, at least indirectly, as emerging from an inherent ambivalence in the medieval scholastic view of philosophy as a servant (*ancilla*) with respect to theology – *ancilla* in the sense of *famulatus* (“submissive service”) and *ancilla* in the sense of *subalternatio* (“lower in priority”).²² According to “deductive” theology, philosophical wisdom allows one to derive conclusions from the articles of faith in harmony with strict scientific procedures. The approach can be traced to the writings of William of Auxerre (ca. 1150–1231) and Aquinas, but the Dominican theologian Godfrey of Fontaines (ca. 1250–ca. 1306) was among its most prominent representatives. According to “declarative” theology, philosophical wisdom amounts to no more than aiding one's comprehension of the mysteries of faith and deepening one's belief. The model of “declarative” theology, also called “defensive” or “persuasive” theology, was inspired by Aurelius Augustine. The Franciscan theologian Peter Auriol (ca. 1280–1322) was among the most well-known exponents of this type of theology.²³

Both approaches depart from Aquinas with respect to what it means for theology to have certitude. Godfrey of Fontaines distinguished between *certitude of evidence* (objective certitude) and *certitude of conviction* (psychological certitude) and argued that Aquinas was mistaken in calling theology a science in the strict sense of the term because that implied that theology has both kinds of certitude. For Godfrey, theology is a science in an improper sense only, *viz.* in the sense that it studies the loftiest subject matter and in the sense that it is more evident to the theologian than to the simple believer.²⁴ But whereas deductive theologians conceived of the theological method in the narrow sense of making proper inferences from the principles of faith, declarative theologians understood the theological method as also involving the clarification of theological concepts and terms, on the one hand, and the explication and defense of essential Christian doctrines, on the other.²⁵

Philosophical and Theological Wisdom as Autonomous and Mutually Exclusive Realms

Especially problematic from the point of view of Christian theology was the theory that theology and philosophy constitute two independent and mutually exclusive realms of inquiry. This theory was associated with the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd or Averroës (ca. 1126–1198), whose many commentaries on Aristotle served as a powerful tool for the study and incorporation of Aristotle's philosophy in the Latin West. But Averroës was not only a commentator. He also wrote several philosophical treatises aimed at expounding and defending Aristotle's philosophy against the criticism of Muslim theologians and the syncretism of Avicenna's philosophical system. The key to understanding Averroës' view of the place and role of philosophy in relationship to the practice of Islam is *The Decisive Treatise (Fasl al-maql)*, which explored the relationship of “parentage” (*ittisal*) between

the way of life advocated by the Qur'anic Law (*shari'a*) and the wisdom (*hikma*) pursued in philosophy.²⁶ According to Averroës, the Law recommends the use of rational analysis and encourages philosophical reflection.²⁷ There cannot be a genuine opposition between religious (or revealed) and philosophical truth.²⁸ If a specific Qur'anic text contradicts established philosophical doctrines, the scholar ought to apply the means of figurative commentary to get to the true meaning of that text.²⁹ If the scholar, presumably the qualified judge of difficult questions, makes an interpretive mistake, he is excused according to the words of the Prophet insofar as he has at least made a personal effort (*ijtihad*) to solve the conceptual problem posed by the Qur'anic text.³⁰ Most importantly, however, because of its character of a universal revelation, the Qur'an makes possible different levels of comprehension of one and the same Truth in agreement with different levels or degrees of education. The most educated men, those trained in Aristotelian syllogistic logic, are capable of penetrating the symbolic veil of the Qur'anic text and grasping its unifying meaning.³¹

Thirteenth-century Latin followers of Averroës (also known as Latin Averroists) were not familiar with the complex analysis of the relationship between Muslim Law and philosophy in Averroës' *Decisive Treatise* and believed that he had advocated the theory of double truth. According to this theory, there is no genuine unity between theological and philosophical wisdom. One could speak as if from two different perspectives or points of view: that of the theologian and that of the philosopher. These two perspectives are incompatible, and so what the theologian considers true is regarded as false by the philosopher and *vice versa*.³² The figures associated with the theory of double truth were Siger of Brabant (*ca.* 1240–*ca.* 1284) and Boethius of Dacia (*fl. ca.* 2nd half of the thirteenth century). The teachings of these two Parisian thinkers and some unknown members of the Arts Faculty were the primary target of the 1277-*Condemnation*.³³ The separation of faith and reason is especially evident in the writings of Boethius of Dacia. Boethius did not actually deny the truth of Christian revelation. He only attempted to impose clear boundaries on what humans can know by natural means alone.³⁴ One of the most important aspects of Boethius's thought, however, is the view that the philosophical lifestyle, which involves the rational investigation and pursuit of truth, is the most fulfilling and enjoyable way of life. This is not to say that a human being has no higher supernatural end beyond the reach of the present life. It does mean, however, that, in this life, there is no more fulfilling and happy life than that of the philosopher.³⁵

Philosophical Wisdom as a Fool's Wisdom

In the aftermath of the 1270 and 1277 Parisian *Condemnations*, Christian scholars were much more apprehensive about the project of establishing a Christian philosophy through a straightforward synthesis of the claims of Christian revelation with the demands of Aristotelian metaphysics and syllogistic logic. Christian thinkers attempted to show the limitations of Aristotle's philosophy by pointing out areas where the Aristotelian conceptual apparatus was ill-equipped to deal with fundamental insights peculiar to the Christian worldview. A good example is the Franciscan theologian and philosopher, John Duns Scotus's attempt to re-cast Aristotle's account of the process of moral deliberation in terms of the relationship between the human intellect as a merely natural power incapable of self-determination and the human will as a fully rational, self-determining power.³⁶

One of the most remarkable developments pertaining to the problem of the relationship between theological and philosophical wisdom concerns the application of Aristotelian syllogistic logic to principal Christian doctrines such as the belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation. Protecting the integrity of theological discourse required either excluding these doctrines from the domain of Aristotelian syllogistic logic altogether or modifying the art of syllogistic demonstration by means of special rules applicable solely in the context of belief. I focus mainly on the view according to which Christians are bound by special rules of faith. According to this view, the authority of Scriptural and Ecclesiastical Tradition and not natural reason as such is the final arbiter in matters of faith.³⁷ Christians ought to respond to arguments against faith by using the rules of the logic of faith (*logica fidei*). In essence, this view implied that – ordinary logic aside – the theologian obligates himself to principles governing an imaginary logical game in which one ought to accept whatever follows from given premises taken as true and reject all consequences incompatible with these premises.³⁸ The English Dominican theologian Robert

Holcot (b. ca. 1290–d. 1349), whom I shall discuss in more detail, was among the main advocates of the logic of faith. But the roots of this view can be traced to the writings of the most well-known medieval logician, the Franciscan theologian and philosopher William of Ockham (b. ca. 1285–d. 1347/49), who maintained that theology begins with premises and involves consequences which are not open for debate, but whenever a theological problem arises that is not immediately related to the official doctrinal formulations of the Church, the problem is to be examined according to the rules of ordinary reasoning.³⁹

Robert Holcot was both a Dominican friar and a follower of William of Ockham. H.G. Gelber notes that “Holcot’s education took place in the wake of William of Ockham’s career at Oxford and of the beatification of Thomas Aquinas.”⁴⁰ Holcot’s thought presents therefore an excellent study case for exploring early fourteenth-century scholastic attitudes to the relationship between theological and philosophical wisdom. Furthermore, Holcot wrote a substantial and widely circulated commentary on the Book of Wisdom.⁴¹

There has been a considerable debate about how to interpret Holcot’s views regarding the relationship between faith and reason. Earlier twentieth-century scholars had taken Holcot to be a skeptic. The growing consensus is that he was not a skeptic.⁴² It is easy enough to show why Holcot gained the reputation of being a skeptic. Holcot was deeply interested in circumscribing and differentiating from each other the realms of theological and philosophical wisdom. In one of the questions belonging to Holcot’s first *Quodlibet*, we find an enlightening treatment of whether Catholics ought to concede contradictory propositions. The treatment is contained in the first article of a question titled: “Whether this [proposition] ought to be granted – ‘God is Father and Son and Holy Spirit.’” Holcot lists ten instructions regarding what a Catholic ought to accept and/or reject. He says, for instance, that a Catholic ought to concede statements contrary to reason, and, more precisely, statements with unknown truth value.⁴³ Furthermore, only the Vicar of Christ on earth, that is the Pope, has the authority to determine what ought to be granted or not.⁴⁴ A Catholic should not endeavor to demonstrate the truth of the articles of faith through natural reason but only by means of authority, revelations, or miracles.⁴⁵ A Catholic should not attempt to respond scientifically to the arguments of heretics and philosophers unless those arguments are formally incorrect. A Catholic cannot in principle demonstrate the falsity of the premises of heretical or philosophical arguments because doing so requires demonstrating the truth of the articles of faith, which is beyond the ability of the wayfarer (*viator*) in this life.⁴⁶ Most importantly, Holcot states that a Catholic ought to respond to arguments contrary to faith on the basis of spiritual rules. He gives the example with Anselm of Canterbury’s rule which stipulates that one ought to grant the unity of the Trinity in syllogistic discourse unless the identity of the persons is undermined as a result of a given syllogistic argument. In the latter case, Holcot says, one ought to accept the premises of the argument and deny the conclusion.⁴⁷ Ultimately, a Catholic ought not to use any logic in conceding or rejecting propositions and consequences pertaining to faith unless the Church has so determined. Natural logic, Holcot states, cannot handle satisfactorily the subject matter of faith (*credibilia*). A case in point, according to Holcot, is the following expository syllogism (i.e. a syllogism involving singular premises)⁴⁸:

- (P1) This thing is the Father.
- (P2) This thing is the Son.
- (C) Therefore, the Father is the Son.

One should not accept the conclusion of the syllogism although the argument is formally impeccable.⁴⁹ In response to the objection that it is pointless for a theologian to learn logic,⁵⁰ Holcot states that the study of logic in theology is useful mainly for the purpose of defeating sophistical arguments.⁵¹

What can we tell about Holcot’s understanding of the relationship between theological and philosophical wisdom on the basis of the aforementioned directives pertaining to the use of logic in theology? We might be tempted to infer that Holcot was indeed highly skeptical with respect to what natural reason can achieve in the realm of theology. In the prologue to his *Wisdom* commentary, Holcot indeed states that “the strength of the

secular sciences does not exceed the power of human reason whereas the strength of the most sacred theology, which ensues from the authority of the first truth, exceeds the power of any given [human] intelligence.”⁵² Moreover, there is no room for a philosophical practice apart from the practice of Christianity. The Church has absorbed the ancient wisdom of Plato, Pythagoras and Aristotle. Compared to Christ, the wisdom of the philosophers is foolishness.⁵³ Does all this mean that one ought to embrace Christianity blindly? Oberman explains that Holcot’s aim is not to eliminate or negate reason altogether but, rather, to humble reason’s pretensions to absolute certitude in matters of faith. Reason can only supply probable and insufficient grounds for belief in God. Reason, however, is an indispensable tool for any genuine effort (*facere quod in se est*) to come to terms with the divine. Revelation presupposes the use of reason even though the complete grasp of the divine is beyond the reach of reason.⁵⁴

A Probabilistic Natural Theology – Concluding Unscientific Postscript

One may ask in the end whether, and if so, to what extent did scholastics achieve the sought for synthesis between theological and philosophical wisdom? Before I attempt to answer this question, I should like to make two important points. My first point is that the conflict between Christian theology and the philosophy of Aristotle involved more than a mere opposition between dogmatic adherence to the authority of Scripture, on the one hand, and the rigor of Aristotle’s scientific criteria. Christian theologians were also deeply influenced by the Augustinian view of the mind as deficient and in need of direction through divine illumination. In essence, then, the confrontation between Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy was a confrontation between two very different systems of thought – the Augustinian and the Aristotelian – with their incompatible standards of truth and rationality.⁵⁵

My second point is that prior to the arrival of Aristotle in the West twelfth-century thought shows strong continuity with the ancient Platonic ideal of philosophical wisdom as the speculative pursuit of eternal and immutable reality, on the one hand, and self-knowledge as the best form of therapy in this life, on the other.⁵⁶ From the perspective of the Platonic ideal, wisdom encompasses both an objective dimension – the knowledge of what is unchangeable – and a subjective dimension – the knowledge of oneself.⁵⁷ Under the influence of Aristotle, thirteenth and fourteenth-century scholastics conceived of wisdom as primarily an *objective* or *epistemic* mode.⁵⁸ At the dawn of the Renaissance, however, we find in the writings of theologians such as Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) and Nicolas of Cusa (1401–1464) a serious effort to revitalize the Platonic ideal of wisdom as the unifying horizon of the objective understanding of first truths and self-knowledge.⁵⁹

Given my two provisos regarding the complexity of the actual historical context, I suggest that medieval scholastics failed to fully synthesize theological and philosophical wisdom. This failure, however, was in some sense inevitable given the nature of such an ambitious enterprise. Scholastic theologians in general believed that theology is in a unique position insofar as it provides a corrective with respect to philosophy’s claim to be the master discipline in virtue of philosophy’s genuine concern with wisdom. Medieval scholastics had to claim this corrective function for theology as a theoretical discipline insofar as they maintained that theology begins with revealed knowledge, which, by definition, cannot be erroneous. From the point of view of philosophy as the master discipline, however, theology is inescapably problematic insofar as it demands adherence to propositions that may be ultimately false. It would be entirely anachronistic, nevertheless, to suppose that the medieval scholastics operated with a conception of philosophy as a fully autonomous discipline, a discipline independent of any other, and especially independent of theology. This kind of conception, in essence based on assumption, is more characteristic of the modern “secular” understanding of philosophy,⁶⁰ some elements of which are of course latent in medieval scholasticism as witnessed by the 1277 Parisian Condemnation of Latin Averroism.

Most importantly, *if*, as James F. Anderson points out, “Christianity is true, philosophy is not absolutely autonomous; there is a higher science possible to man: a science based not on naturally known principles, but on principles revealed by God. If such a science – theology – exists, philosophy is necessarily inferior to it in the

very order of science.”⁶¹ Suppose a philosopher granted the possibility of there being a science higher than philosophy and abandoned the dogmatic insistence on philosophy’s wholly independent status (and, according to Anderson, “[i]t is impossible to maintain the absolute autonomy of philosophy without denying that theology is a science [...]”⁶²), how can the scholastic theologian attempt to make a case for the truth of Christian convictions? Perhaps the very best a theologian can do is showcase the plausibility of revealed truths by means of a *probabilistic natural theology*. This kind of theology insists that natural reason can indeed provide good although not definitive grounds for belief in the existence of God. A contemporary proponent of this view is Richard Swinburne. According to Swinburne, natural and revealed theology can only differ in the degree of the probability of their proofs. Any evidence in support of the claim that God exists makes it more probable that God has indeed revealed Himself, and, similarly, any evidence in support of the truth of specific revealed doctrines (the Trinity or the Incarnation) makes it more probable that God exists.⁶³

Finally, one might also think of the possibility of a natural theology in terms of testing the belief in God’s existence through the method of counterexample and holding on to this belief in the absence of evidence to the contrary. One may thus be certain that God exists but not in the sense that it is impossible for one to be wrong. Moreover, one may claim certainty with respect to revealed truths at least insofar as one can show that these truths are not logically impossible.⁶⁴

Given then that the pursuit of wisdom as an all-comprehensive and complete account of reality as such (i.e. knowledge of reality as if *sub specie aeternitatis*⁶⁵) is not an entirely contradictory, and, so, meaningless project, and given that the theologian and philosopher are interested in the same kind of wisdom and that both keep an open mind, it should in principle be possible to show whether or not theological and philosophical wisdom do indeed converge. All one can say in the end is that if theologians and philosophers are equally motivated by the desire for truth and wish to unravel the ultimate mystery of reality, they are bound to work together toward an ever more increasing understanding of the absolute foundations of reality.⁶⁶

Endnotes

- 1 Henry of Harclay, *Ordinary Questions*, ed. by Mark G. Henninger, SJ, English translation by Raymond Edwards & Mark G. Henninger, SJ, *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi XVII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Q. 1, n. 83, p. 63.
- 2 Unlike at Paris, where the public and private teaching of Aristotle’s *libri naturales* and *Metaphysics* was forbidden up until about 1240, Oxford scholars began commenting on Aristotle’s writings early during the thirteenth century. Alexander Neckham was the first English scholar who applied natural philosophy in theology. See Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, transl. by Leonard Johnston (Louvain: Nauwelaerts Publishing House, 1970), 108. See also Monica Asztalos, “The Faculty of Theology,” in *A History of the University in Europe*, Vol. 1, ed. Hilde De Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 409–441, at 426.
- 3 The translation process of Aristotle’s works of natural philosophy (*libri naturales*) and those of his Arabic commentators had begun in the second quarter of the twelfth century. In 1210, ecclesiastical authorities at Paris imposed a ban on the public and private teaching of Aristotle’s natural philosophy. The ban was eventually lifted (ca. 1240) and Aristotle’s *libri naturales* entered the curriculum of the Parisian Faculty of Arts. Aristotle’s metaphysics followed suit. See Asztalos, “The Faculty of Theology,” 420–422. See also Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West*, 66–77, 108–109.
- 4 See John Kekes, *Moral Wisdom and Good Lives* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 16–17.
- 5 The main issue here concerned the epistemic status of theology with respect to Aristotle’s understanding of science. See Asztalos, “The Faculty of Theology,” 423–424.
- 6 *Thomas Aquinas on Faith and Reason*, ed., with introductions by Stephen F. Brown (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 114–115. See also Asztalos, “The Faculty of Theology,” 423–424.
- 7 For a concise discussion and essential bibliography regarding the Parisian condemnations of 1270 and 1277, see John F. Wippel, “The Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277,” in *A Companion to Philosophy in the*

Middle Ages, ed. by Jorge J.E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 24 (Malden, MA/Oxford, UK/Carlton, Victoria, AUS: Blackwell Publishing, 2006 (hardback 2003)), 65–73. For the errors associated with Aquinas, see Stephen F. Brown and Juan Carlos Flores, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements 76 (Lanham, MD/Toronto/Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2007), 316.

- 8 See Brown and Flores, *Historical Dictionary*, 314.
- 9 My discussion focuses primarily on the problem of reconciling theology and philosophy as theoretical or speculative disciplines on the basis of Aristotle's criteria for science. I do not talk about the problem of reconciling the purely theological concept of wisdom as a *gift* of the Holy Spirit and the Aristotelian concept of wisdom as an *acquired intellectual habit*. I also do not talk about the medieval scholastic discussion of the problem of defining wisdom as both *understanding* and *science* (which is basically the problem of the identity of wisdom as a virtue). For a discussion of these particular problems, see Risto Saarinen, "Wisdom as Intellectual Virtue: Aquinas, Odonis and Buridan," in *Mind and Modality: Studies in the History of Philosophy in Honour of Simo Knuuttila*, ed. by Vesa Hirvonen, Toivo J. Holopainen and Miira Tuominen, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 141 (Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 2006), 189–198, esp. 191–192.
- 10 Jacqueline Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis: Un florilège médiéval, étude historique et édition critique*, Philosophes Médiévaux XVII (Louvain/Paris, 1974), p. 240, n. 113: "Sapientia est cognitio rerum divinarum habens caput inter omnes alias scientias."; n. 114: "Sapientia est certissima omnium aliarum scientiarum."
- 11 Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis*, p. 115, n. 11: "Sapientia est scientia primarum et altissimarum causarum."
- 12 Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis*, p. 116, n. 13: "Sapientis non est ordinari, sed ordinare oportet, id est sapientis est regere et non regi."
- 13 Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis*, pp. 115–116, n. 12: "Sapientem oportet scire omnia in universali et scire difficillima et habere scientiam certiore et scire reddere causas ipsorum quae scit et habere scientiam quae subordinet alias scientias subservientes et habere scientiam quae sui ipsius sit causa et non alterius."
- 14 Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis*, p. 126, n. 143: "Metaphysica considerat causas et principia entium in quantum entia."
- 15 Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis*, p. 127, n. 147: "Tres sunt partes philosophiae speculativae, scilicet naturalis, mathematica et divina, id est metaphysica."; n. 150: "Theoricae scientiae, id est speculativae, aliis scientiis sunt delectabiliores et metaphysica theoreticis."
- 16 Aristotle's unmoved mover or God has little to do with the gods of Greek polytheism and with the idea of a supreme, benevolent, creative, omnipotent, and omniscient deity at the heart of Christian monotheism. Aristotle's prime mover is a theoretical construct meant to provide a solution to the problem of the beginning of movement in the physical universe. See Adam Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians: The Divine Arche* (Aldershot, U.K./Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 182–183. See also Mary Louise Gill, "First Philosophy in Aristotle," in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. by Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 31 (MA/Oxford, UK/Carlton, Victoria, AUS: Blackwell Publishing, 2009 (hardback 2006)), 347–373, at 368–369.
- 17 See Joël Biard, "God as First Principle and Metaphysics as a Science," in *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*, ed. by R.L. Friedman and L.O. Nielsen, The New Synthese Historical Library 53 (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 75–97, at 76–80; Severin V. Kitanov, "1200-luvun aristotelismi," *Keskiajan filosofia, toim. Vesa Hirvonen & Risto Saarinen* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, Helsinki University Press, 2008), 47–64, at 52–53.
- 18 Andreas Speer, "Certitude and Wisdom in Bonaventure and Henry of Ghent," in *Henry of Ghent and the Transformation of Scholastic Thought: Studies in Memory of Jos Decorte*, ed. by Guy Guldentops and Carlos Steel (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 75–100, at 83.
- 19 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 6, resp.
- 20 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 2, resp.
- 21 I have in mind the deductive approach, according to which the theologian derives conclusions from the articles of faith.
- 22 According to S.F. Brown, the term "*subalternatio*" could be taken to affirm the superiority of revealed truth

- in relation to philosophical truth but it could also be interpreted as allowing for the development of an independent scientific discipline. See Stephen F. Brown, "Theology and Philosophy," in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 267–287, at 273–274.
- 23 Brown and Flores, *Historical Dictionary*, lx–lxiii; Stephen F. Brown, "Declarative Theology After Durandus: Its Re-Presentation and Defense by Peter Aureoli," in *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Stephen F. Brown, Thomas Dewender, and Theo Kobusch, *Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* 102 (Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 2009), 401–421, at 406–407 and 417–421; Stephen F. Brown, "Declarative and Deductive Theology in the Early Fourteenth Century," in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter? Qu'est-ce que la philosophie au Moyen Âge? What is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?* Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale 25. Bis 30. August 1997 in Erfurt, hrsg. von Jan A. Aertsen und Andreas Speer (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 648–655, at 648–649.
- 24 Brown and Flores, *Historical Dictionary*, lvii–lix; Brown, "Declarative and Deductive Theology," 650.
- 25 Brown and Flores, *Historical Dictionary*, lxi–lxii; Brown, "Declarative Theology After Durandus," 415–416; Brown, "Declarative and Deductive Theology," 650–651.
- 26 See Roger Arnaldez, *Averroes: A Rationalist in Islam*, transl. by David Streight (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 79.
- 27 Arnaldez, *Averroes*, 80–81.
- 28 Arnaldez, *Averroes*, 82.
- 29 Arnaldez, *Averroes*, 82–83.
- 30 Arnaldez, *Averroes*, 87–88.
- 31 Arnaldez, *Averroes*, 88–89.
- 32 I should note in this connection that Parisian arts masters were required until the 15th century to swear obedience to a statute stating that any questions pertaining to faith ought to be determined according to faith, not according to reason, and that one is not allowed to discuss arguments contrary to faith. See Asztalos, "The Faculty of Theology," 424.
- 33 Brown and Flores, *Historical Dictionary*, 43–46.
- 34 Brown and Flores, *Historical Dictionary*, 59–60.
- 35 Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, transl. by Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA/London, U.K.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 262. See also Andreas Speer, "The Vocabulary of Wisdom and the Understanding of Philosophy," in *L'Élaboration du Vocabulaire Philosophique au Moyen Âge*, Actes du Colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve et Leuven 12-14 septembre 1998 organisé par la Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale, édité par Jacqueline Hamesse et Carlos Steel (Louvain: Brepols, 2000), 257–280, at 275–276.
- 36 See S.V. Kitanov, *Beatific Enjoyment in Scholastic Theology and Philosophy: 1240–1335* (Ph.D. diss. University of Helsinki, 2006), 245–247.
- 37 Whether the final arbiter in matters of faith ought to be the pope himself or a general council was by no means a settled question in the scholastic middle ages. The doctrine of papal infallibility was not formulated definitively until 18 July 1870 at Vatican Council I. The roots of the doctrine, however, can be traced back to fourteenth-century scholastic authors. For the origin and history of the doctrine of papal infallibility in medieval scholasticism, see Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility 1150–1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972).
- 38 Hester Goodenough Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise: Contingency and Necessity in Dominican Theology at Oxford, 1300–1350* (Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 2004), 183–185. See also Michael H. Shank, "Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand": *Logic, University, and Society in Late Medieval Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 74–79.
- 39 S.V. Kitanov, "Peter of Candia on Beatific Enjoyment: Can One Enjoy the Divine Persons Separately from the Divine Essence?," *Mediaevalia Philosophica Polonorum* 35:1 (2006): 144–166, at 159–161.
- 40 Robertus Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason: Three Questions on the Nature of God*, ed. by H.G. Gelber, *Studies and Texts* 62 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), abstract page.

- 41 Kimberly Georgedes, "Robert Holcot," in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 609–610, at 609.
- 42 See Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, 2. For a discussion of Holcot's supposed skepticism, see Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 238–243.
- 43 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 31, lin. 10–12: "Circa primum articulum, dico primo quod Catholicus debet concedere illa quae sunt contra rationem, hoc est, aliquas propositiones de quibus non potest sibi constare utrum sint verae vel falsae."
- 44 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 32, lin. 32–p. 33, lin. 44.
- 45 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 33, lin. 45–48: "Quarto, dico quod Catholicus non debet niti ad probandum vel ostendendum quod sic est sicut articulus dicit per rationem innitentem lumini naturali, sed tantummodo per auctoritates et revelationes vel miracula."
- 46 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 33, lin. 51–57: "Quinto, dico quod nec Catholicus debet niti ad respondendum scientificè ad argumenta haereticorum et philosophorum nisi sint argumenta peccantia in forma, quia hoc non est sibi possibile, quia respondere scientificè ad argumentum peccans in materia est ostendere aliquam praemissam esse falsam, sed impossibile est Catholico ostendere quod oppositum articuli est falsum quia hoc esset ostendere ipsum articulum esse verum, quod est impossibile viatori de lege communi."
- 47 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 33, lin. 58–62: "Sexto, dico quod argumentis factis contra fidem responderi debet per regulas Catholicas quae sunt spirituales in spiritualibus materiis secundum determinationem sanctorum, sicut in materia de Trinitate dantur regulae quod omnia sunt unum in divinis ubi non obviat relationis oppositio, et concedere tunc debet praemissas et negare conclusionem [...]"
- 48 For an account of this problematic expository Trinitarian syllogism, see Simo Knuuttila, "Validity and Logic in Late Medieval Thought," in *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*, 121–142, at 126–127.
- 49 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 35, lin. 102–p. 36, lin. 116.
- 50 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 36, lin. 117–118: "Contra ista: si ista sunt vera, sequitur quod non sit utile theologo addiscere logicam."
- 51 Holcot, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, p. 36, lin. 119–123: "Dico quod sic, magis tamen ad respondendum et solvendum rationes sophisticas quam ad adducendum. Dicunt enim multi contra fidem et frivolas inducunt rationes, et ad tales sufficit ingenium per logicam informatam, unde Aristoteles, *De pomo*, et tamen eodem modo logica est necessaria, ut beatus a loco non legatur."
- 52 Robertus Holcot, *Super libros Sapientiae* (Hagenau, 1494), prolog., F, tertium principale: "Robur namque scientiarum secularium non excedit potestatem rationis humane; sed certe robur sacratissime theologie est prime veritatis auctoritas que cuiuslibet ingenii vim excedit."
- 53 Holcot, *Super libros Sapientiae* (Hagenau, 1494), prolog., E: "Petra autem erat Christus, cui nullus hereticus nec philosophus comparatur, sicut in Ps. 140: 'Absorpti sunt iuncti petre iudices eorum,' [140(141):6] glossa. Iudices eorum sunt potentes et doctores qui de moribus iudicabunt. Plato, Pithagoras et Aristoteles absorpti sunt petre iuncti, idest, comparati Christo, per se videntur aliquid dicere, sed iunge et compara eos Christo, et nihil sunt, mortui iacent, et stulta est sapientia eorum, hec glossa." See also Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 242.
- 54 See Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 243–244.
- 55 See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition, being Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1988* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 109–111.
- 56 Andreas Speer, "The Vocabulary of Wisdom and the Understanding of Philosophy," in *L'Élaboration du Vocabulaire Philosophique au Moyen Âge*, édités par Jacqueline Hamesse et Carlos Steel, *Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale* 8 (Louvain: Brepols, 2000), 257–280, at 259–263.
- 57 Speer, "The Vocabulary of Wisdom," 262.
- 58 Speer, "The Vocabulary of Wisdom," 279.
- 59 Speer, "The Vocabulary of Wisdom," 280.
- 60 See James F. Anderson, "Is Scholastic Philosophy Philosophical?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*

10:2 (1949): 251–259, at 257.

61 Anderson, “Is Scholastic Philosophy Philosophical?”, 257–258.

62 Anderson, “Is Scholastic Philosophy Philosophical?”, 259.

63 Richard Swinburne, “The Revival of Natural Theology,” *Archivio di Filosofia* 75:1–2 (2007): 303–322, at 321.

64 I thank Ronald J. Glass for this suggestion.

65 The possibility of knowing reality as such characterizes philosophy in its pre-critical phase, prior to *correlationsim* – the view that we can never grasp an object “in itself,” *independently of* or *in isolation from* its relation to the subject. See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, transl. by Ray Brassier (London/New York: Continuum, 2008), 5.

66 I find especially supportive of my view Pope John Paul II’s admonition to philosophers and philosophy teachers to “have the courage to recover, in the flow of an enduringly valid philosophical tradition, the range of authentic wisdom and truth – metaphysical truth included – which is proper to philosophical inquiry.” See John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason*, Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1998), 128.

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