CHAPTER 12

From Theology to Philosophy: The Changing Status of the Summa Theologiae, *1500–2000*

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"Like another Bible" (*Quasi altera Biblia*): This is how the German Protestant polymath Daniel Georg Morhof (1639–91) described the status enjoyed by the *Summa Theologiae* in his time, at least in Catholics lands (Morhof, *Polyhistor*, p. 86). In 1567, Aquinas had been declared the fifth "Doctor of the Church" by Pope Pius V, which made him the first medieval author put on a par with the Church Fathers. Two centuries earlier, the very existence of the *Summa* itself had been used as an argument for elevating its author to sanctity: Each article is a miracle of its own, according to the canonization bull (Mandonnet, "Canonisation," p. 39). No other single work of theology – besides the Bible – received more attention throughout the entire early-modern period than Aquinas's *Summa*. In his still valuable 1924 catalogue, Anton Michelitsch (1865–1958) listed hundreds of early-modern commentaries on the *Summa*, mostly printed ones, for just the 1500–1800 period, and his list could easily be multiplied by ten or more today if we took into account the still largely unmapped early-modern manuscript production.[1] Even in Protestant lands, Aquinas had his unexpected supporters: Some Lutherans saw in the *Summa* a real antidote to the rising wave of Roman Jesuitism dominating early-modern Catholic theology. Like the Bible, the *Summa* had become one of the first global books. It was available in all South American, coastal African, and South Asian mission libraries, and even outside the Catholic world: Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) discussed some of its themes at colonial Yale, and Theophylact Lopatinsky (d. 1742), taught on the *Summa* in Moscow Academy, in an attempt to renovate orthodox theology.[2] Most impressively perhaps, Ludovico

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[1] Michelitsch, *Kommentatoren*; also Kennedy, *Catalogue*, Berger and Vijgen, *Thomisten-Lexikon*.

[2] He composed a manuscript *Scientia sacra* (1706–10). On this context, see Plested, *Orthodox Readings*, pp. 173–4.

Buglio (1606–82), a Sicilian Jesuit who died in Beijing, translated the First and Third Parts of the *Summa* into Chinese – almost three centuries before its first comprehensive translation into English.

This editorial bounty raises several questions: First, what made Aquinas such an important figure, apparently eclipsing all other medieval theologians during the early-modern and contemporary period? Second, why, among his massive production of philosophical, theological, and biblical commentaries, was the *Summa Theologiae* singled out? Third, can we identify a beginning and an end to this vast movement, and what were the major fault lines in the history of its reception? Histories of Thomism abound: The first appeared as early as the seventeenth century, and arguably the best – an almost 900-page historical survey by the Austrian prelate Karl Werner (1821–88; *Der Heilige*) – even predates the official "rebirth" of Thomism following Leo XIII's famous encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879). Almost all recent surveys of post-medieval Thomism follow a "Decline and Rebirth" paradigm,[3] strongly influenced by Jacques Maritain's (1882–1973) disparaging comments on the "demon of mediocrity" that had seduced early-modern commentators, obscuring the true Thomas Aquinas (Maritain, *Antimoderne*, pp. 119–21). The entire period is often dismissed as degenerate: The Dominican Yves Congar (1904–95), a key figure of the Second Vatican Council, denounced the most influential *Summa* commentary of the eighteenth century written by a fellow Dominican as a "system of abstractions and prefabricated solutions" (Congar, *Situations*, p. 55).[4]

In what follows, I shall propose a very different narrative: First, I will argue that Thomism *never* declined, but that it remained a powerful current even in the heyday of the Enlightenment. Second, I will claim that the eighteenth century, often presented as the "waning" (Curran, "Christianity," p. 64) of Thomism, is in reality the true key to understanding the conditions and forms of its later nineteenth-century "revival." Third and last, I will have to explain why, among Aquinas's huge intellectual production, it was the *Summa* that ensured his persistence as an authority during these centuries. To establish these points, attention must also be given to material history: the place of Aquinas in the Gutenberg galaxy and the institutional decisions governing the

[3] Among those accessible in English, see: Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa*, pp. 93–130; Cessario, *History*; McGinn, *Aquinas's Summa*, pp. 117–209.

[4] Congar's target here was the vast *Summa* commentary (19 vols., Liège, 1746–51) compiled by the French Dominican Charles-René Billuart (1685–1757).

teaching of scholastic theology and philosophy. Finally, we will have to enquire a bit more closely about his readers, who were not all, as we shall see, aspiring priests in the hallowed halls of Catholic seminaries.

12.1 The Historical Triumph of Aquinas

From a medieval point of view, Aquinas's triumph was in no way evident: Within his own Dominican tradition, it took time and many disputes for his authority to emerge.[5] English Dominicans in particular proved firm adherents of nominalism during most of the late medieval period. On a strictly textual level, the *Summa* had long been overshadowed by Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, which formed the basis of theology instruction until the sixteenth century. Therefore, the emergence of a *Summa*-centered Thomism initially seemed to be a highly regional phenomenon. In Cologne, Henry of Gorcum (c. 1378–1431), a student of John Capreolus in Paris and later vice-chancellor of the university, as well as his pupil John Tinctor (d. 1469), started using the *Summa* for teaching purposes. In 1483, the Dominican *studium generale* of Cologne confirmed this practice, and Konrad Köllin (d. 1536) is now commonly remembered as one of the first great early-modern commentators on the *Summa.* Likewise, in Paris, this use of the *Summa* long remained a Dominican affair: Peter Crockaert (1465–1514), a Flemish student of the Scottish nominalist John Mair, imposed the *Summa* at the *studium generale* of Saint-Jacques in 1509, abandoning the *Sentences*, a move confirmed by the 1523 General Chapter of the Dominican order held in Valladolid. Francisco de Vitoria (1492–1546), returning from Paris the same year, is often remembered as having been the first to impose this practice in Spain. In reality, the older Constitutions (1422) of Pope Martin V had already stipulated that the "Thomistic" chair could use the *Summa* (while the "primary" chair had to use the *Sentences*), and the powerful Archbishop of Seville (today mainly remembered for his inquisitorial zeal), Diego de Deza (1443–1523), a Dominican who had previously taught at Salamanca, had imposed the *Summa* in his newly founded college of Saint Thomas (1517).[6]

A second step in this triumph of Aquinas's *Summa* was its progressive adoption *outside* the Dominican order, in three concentric circles of

[5] For this history, see Roensch, *Thomistic School* and Robiglio, *La sopravvivenza*.

[6] On this evolution, see: García Villoslada, *Universidad*, pp. 279–307; Guelluy, "L'évolution"; Goris, "Thomism"; Lécrivain, "La Somme"; Barrientos García, "La teología"; Toste, "Commentaries"; Lanza and Toste, "The Sentences" (for the Spanish context).

scholastic education: among the new religious orders, in the faculties of theology of the new universities, and also in the seminaries of the secular clergy, which became increasingly important in the early-modern period. Why Aquinas, and not one of the other medieval authorities that enjoyed great respect, in particular successors in the late medieval faculties of theology, such as John Duns Scotus, Gregory of Rimini, or Gabriel Biel? In the general humanist onslaught on the technical language of medieval scholasticism, it is interesting to note that Aquinas was usually the only one spared. Even Lorenzo Valla (1407–57), the most powerful Renaissance critic of abstruse scholastic language, managed to find some kind words for Aquinas in a *Praise* delivered at the Minerva, not without expressing reservations about Aquinas's defense of rational theology (Valla, "Praise," p. 22).

To save Aquinas from the wreck of medieval scholasticism, it was essential to portray him as the true medieval heir to the Church Fathers, in particular Augustine. The strongest case was made by Sixtus of Siena (1520–69), a converted Jewish Dominican of the Italian Renaissance, who used the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis to argue that Augustine's soul had migrated into Aquinas's body (*Bibliotheca*, p. 560). This Augustinian image was also at the heart of Aquinas's reception at the Council of Trent (1545–63), which proved decisive in redefining theological identity within the Catholic world for the following centuries. Franciscan, Augustinian and humanistically minded theologians were numerous and powerful at the Council. It therefore became important for the Dominican faction in particular to present Aquinas as a true Augustinian – and not as a scholastic – in order to gain preeminence over the other medieval authorities and also to make him the best herald against the competing Protestant interpretation of the Church Fathers. Historically anterior to both humanism and late medieval nominalism, Aquinas was presented as a safe haven against Biblical literalism and predestinarianism. This was the context of Pope Pius's declaration of Aquinas as Doctor of the Church in 1567, just after the end of the Council. As a result, post-conciliar histories all enshrined the role of Aquinas: According to a rapidly popularized legend, in particular by the influential Church history of Cesare Baronio (1538–1607), the Council itself is said to have been celebrated with two books on the altar, the Bible and the *Summa* (Baronius, *Martyrologium*, p. 112).[7]

[7] For a contemporary historical sketch of this "triumph" of the *Summa* and of Aquinas's authority, see Camblat, *Opusculum secundum*; a good general historical survey for the seventeenth century is provided by De Franceschi, "L'empire thomiste."

Not all theologians shared such enthusiasm. The Franciscans and other congregations fought for their own scholastic heroes. And if we look at the young Society of Jesus (established 1540), we find numerous voices rejecting Aquinas during the long debates leading to their famous *Ratio Studiorum* (1599). Alonso Pisano (1528–98), a Spanish Jesuit active in Poland, wrote that he believed it inopportune to use the *Summa* as a manual for instruction in moral theology. Theology should go back to revelation and not restrict itself to the words of a specific teacher; he added that Aquinas's scholastic *habitus* would be rejected by many "Northerners" and that he would be useless to convert Protestants, who despised him as "a simple monk who knew neither Greek nor Hebrew" (Theiner, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 368–73). These reservations were eventually overcome, and the *Ratio* adopted the *Summa* of Aquinas as the key text from which to conduct theological studies, although in practice a wide *delectus opinionum* was tolerated among Jesuit teachers. It constituted the fundamental material for four years of scholastic theology, as opposed to only two dedicated to Sacred Scripture.[8] A similar movement can be observed in all the new congregations and in the reforms of the old ones, which almost all adopted Thomas Aquinas as an authority. This was particularly so for the reformed Carmelites and the Benedictines, who all became staunch and solid Thomists. Some smaller but often locally influential congregations took the same pro-Thomistic stance, such as the *Teatini* in Italy or the French Cistercian reform of the *Feuillants*. This provoked a sometimes violent "scholastic war" (*bellum scholasticum*) that raged during most of the early-modern period, either between Thomists and their opponents or between Aquinas's own competing interpreters (Schmutz, "*Bellum*"). In time, the triumph of Aquinas became so complete that many attempted concordist syntheses between Aquinas and Bonaventure (a Capuchin speciality), or Aquinas and Giles of Rome (for the Hermits of Saint Augustine). Eventually, only the Franciscan-Scotist tradition would remain an anti-Thomistic fortress, but sometimes rebuilt according to a Thomist plan: the Neapolitan Franciscan Angelo Volpi (d. 1647) composed a multi-volume Scotist *Summa Theologiae Scoti* (1622–46) but organized its contents as Aquinas did, and Girolamo da Montefortino (1662–1738) composed a work that completely mimics the *Summa* in Scotistic terms.

[8] For the history and organization of the theological curriculum, see Theiner, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 148–64; Schmutz, "Les normes."

A similar movement would eventually win within the major universities. They were in no way uniform, and the use of the *Summa* was initially just a barometer of Dominican or Jesuit influence: The first one to have accepted the *Summa* as textbook was the Italian university of Pavia, which in 1480 started nominating its Dominican professors on the condition that they read the works of Aquinas. It was at this university that the famous Tommaso de Vio (Cajetan, 1468–1538) started teaching in 1497, using the *Summa* after having previously taught on the *Sentences* in Padua in 1493.[9] His role was certainly important in giving institutional support to the use of Aquinas in the *studia*, but the majority of universities did not follow his lead. During most of the sixteenth century, their teaching practices remained closely attached to the *Sentences*. It was only in the aftermath of Trent that this situation progressively changed, when many universities were prompted to establish new "bodies of doctrine" (*corpus doctrinae*), in which the thought of Thomas Aquinas constituted a key element. In Spain, these tendencies were also actively supported by more down-to-earth political maneuvers that had little to do with doctrine, namely the close-knit institutional ties between the Dominican order and the Spanish royalty, to whom it provided an efficient armada of inquisitors, censors, bishops, and confessors. The 1561 new statutes of the University of Salamanca stipulated in rather paradoxical fashion that holders of the Morning and Evening Chairs should read the *Sentences* according to the order of the *Summa* of Aquinas (Barrientos García, "La teología," p. 69). The pro-Dominican policy would gain even more momentum with the new chairs endowed by the powerful Duke of Lerma (1552–1625) at the universities of Salamanca, Valladolid, and Alcalá; among the holders of these chairs, we would find some of the seventeenth century's most illustrious Thomists. In Louvain and Douay, a similar phenomenon could be observed with the creation of new chairs explicitly dedicated to Thomism in addition to those of *Sentences* and of Holy Scripture.[10] In France, the new statutes of the University of Paris (1598–1600) still mentioned the *Sentences* as a textbook, but in practice it was dropped as of the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the *Summa* was the only text in use. The regulations for the three types of theology examinations (*baccalaureus*, *licentia*,

[9] On this Paduan revival of Thomism, see Gaetano, *Renaissance Thomism*.

[10] On the Louvain context, see Brants, "La création" and Martin, "L'introduction." For Salamanca, see Belda Plans, *La Escuela*, with references to the numerous studies by the unsurpassed Spanish Dominican scholar Vicente Beltrán de Heredia (1885–1973).

and *tentativa*) were all based on parts of the *Summa*. In Rome, special chairs were endowed at the Casanatense in order to explain the *Summa*. Thus, it seemed that the triumph could not have been more complete, as the French Jesuit Pierre Labbé (1596–1678) put it in an often printed *elogium*: "[N]othing rises after the *Summa*, be it not the splendor of glory" (Labbé, Elogia).[11]

As a material consequence of this massive change in teaching, the market for editions and commentaries on Aquinas's works skyrocketed. We still lack a comprehensive study explaining the background to and promotion of the *Summa's* numerous editions, and we can here mention only some of the most important ones. Three years after he was declared Doctor of the Church, the so-called *Piana* edition was published in Rome (1570, named after Pope Pius V), the first comprehensive new early-modern attempt, reprinted in a 1593 Venetian edition in 18 volumes.[12] Before that, the first complete edition had been published in Basel in 1485. Almost every important printing town of Europe would have its own edition, but only a handful made real progress: We can mention the 1569 Antwerp edition (reprinted 1570) by the Louvain humanist and logician Augustin Hunnaeus (1522–78), which long remained standard; the 1612 Antwerp edition by Cosme Gil Morelles (d. 1636); the little-known but precious Douay edition, based on an older 1496 Roman edition and new collations of manuscripts kept in Northern France, which was counterfeited by Paris printers in 1622; the Lyons edition, promoted by the Parisian Dominicans starting in the 1630s (published 1655), and finally the new edition by the French Dominican Jean Nicolaï (1663–85), and the Venice edition by Bernardo Maria de' Rossi (1687–1775). Of particular interest are the numerous "derivative works" produced around the *Summa* that also distinguish the early-modern reception from the medieval tradition. Spanish artists excelled in representing the triumph of Aquinas and the *Summa Theologiae*.[13] We find the first attempts to offer a vernacular translation, such as Léonard de Marandé (fl. 1620–50)

[11] This *Elogium* was often reprinted and included in many other works of scholastic theology. Note that Labbé composed an equally influential praise of John Duns Scotus, an evident sign of the Jesuit's freedom of theological opinion.

[12] First attempts to list the Renaissance editions can be found in Échard and Quétif, *Scriptores*, pp. 322–3 and Touron, *La vie*, pp. 779–84. See also De Franceschi, "L'empire thomiste," pp. 321–2.

[13] See for instance Diego Velázquez's *Temptation of St Thomas Aquinas* (1632), Museo de Arte Sacra, Cathedral of Orihuela (Spain) or Francisco de Zurbarán's *Apotheosis of St Thomas Aquinas* (1631), an altarpiece of the Dominican convent of Seville, now at the Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes, Sevilla (Spain).

in France, who tried to accommodate the *Summa* to the "impatient French mind," by immediately translating the conclusions rather than the initial objections (Marandé, *La Clef*). The *Summa* was submitted to all the pedagogical innovations of the Renaissance: It was either completely rewritten in the form of axioms or in syllogistical form to facilitate the student's capacity to draw firm conclusions from premises (Ochoa, *Omnes*; De' Medici, *Explicatio*), or transformed into a huge didactic poem (Gravina, *Rhytmicum*; Penon, *Hymnus*). French Dominicans also attempted an impressive visualization of the *Summa* in a series of explanatory diagrams.[14]

12.2 Thomistic Hermeneutics

Once his central authority was admitted, the following centuries were mainly marked by an ongoing debate between the interpreters of Thomas Aquinas about the right meaning of his *littera* and his intention. This became an important hermeneutical problem: How to understand Thomas after three centuries of non-Thomistic theology had completely modified the very language of theology. In a precious work for historiography, Xante Mariales (ca. 1580–1660), a Venetian Dominican, attempted for the first time a complete overview of the conflicting interpretations of the *Summa* among all recent commentators (Mariales, *Bibliotheca*). There was not one Thomism, but a multiplicity of varieties: As the Spanish Jesuit Cristóbal de Ortega (1597–1686) observed: "Dominican Thomists … are largely different from the Thomists of our Society" (Ortega, *De Deo*, p. 2). The debate would rapidly degenerate into a war of invectives: *Spurious Thomista*, *pseudo-Thomista*, etc. were common names thrown at opponents; partisans claimed being *vere Thomista*, *rigidus Thomista*; historical distinctions were made between *Thomista antiquior, vestutior* (Ortega, *De Deo*, pp. 39, 80, *passim*), or a *Thomista iunior*. Especially during the first part of the seventeenth century, the Jesuit commentators excelled in giving "liberal" interpretations from Aquinas, using him more as "light" (*lux*) than as a "leader" (*dux*). The famous Coimbra commentators have expressed it in a striking metaphor: Aquinas's doctrine should be considered a "Lesbian Rule" (*regula lesbia*), referring to the flexible leaden rule used by the ancient builders

[14] See for instance a striking anonymous manuscript from the Convent of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré: *Abrégé de théologie et de métaphysique sous forme de tableaux* (s. XVII), Paris BNF, Ms. lat. 18166.

from the Greek island of Lesbos, mentioned by Aristotle (NE 5.10). Among all medieval authorities, his doctrine is commendable because it accounts for unusual cases as well as new terrain in theology.[15]

On the opposite side, the theologians of the Dominican order and their Carmelite allies rapidly took over the role of the "wardens" of the true doctrine. The Salmantine Domingo Báñez, often celebrated as a "rigorous" or "staunch" Thomist, famously lamented that the "Thomists of our time either do not read Aquinas, or just do not care about him" (*Commentaria*, vol. III, p. 796). This protestation of orthodoxy should not, however, be taken at face value and obscure the fact that the Dominicans introduced many novelties – starting with the famous *praemotio physica*, perhaps the seventeenth century's most discussed concept, introduced to explain the relationship between the first divine cause and secondary human free agency.[16] As of the 1640s, the competing Jesuits and Jansenists would challenge the Dominican "right" to embody true Thomism, both groups seeking a "Thomistic refuge"[17] in order to advocate for the orthodoxy of their views which had come increasingly under attack from the papacy and from one another, especially in the decade-long debates about the compatibility between human freewill and divine grace. With so many "Thomists," guidelines were needed: In 1693, Tirso González de Santalla (1624–1701) drafted for the Roman inquisitors a *Parallelism of True and False Thomism* (Serry, *Historiae*, coll. 373–80), whose aim was to disqualify the use of Aquinas by the Jansenists and advocate for the Thomist orthodoxy of the Jesuits.

What role did the *Summa* play in this enduring quest for Thomistic orthodoxy? If Thomism could become a "Lesbian Rule," it was because Aquinas had written so much over his career and so one could easily find competing opinions in his work. "This is what I can hardly suffer," protested the French Jansenist philosopher Antoine Arnauld (1612–94), "when in order to explain the true feelings of Saint Thomas, one looks for them in places different from his *Summa*" (Arnauld, *Lettres*, p. 169). To remedy the numerous violent doctrinal disagreements, it was thus necessary to enshrine the *Summa* as the absolute touchstone for orthodoxy. "*In Summa correxit"; "Neque in Summa hoc dixit"*: These were

[15] The metaphor of the Lesbian Rule was often used by Renaissance writers to attack the opportunism of lawyers, bishops, or even popes. In philosophy, its use seems to date back to the Collegium Conimbricense, *De Anima*, p. 67.

[16] On the concept and debate, see key texts in Beltrán de Heredia, *Domingo Báñez*, and studies by Hübener, "Praedeterminatio," and Knebel, *Wille*, with most of its bibliography.

[17] For the Jansenist strategy, see De Franceschi, *La puissance*.

already common expressions used by Domingo de Soto (1495–1560), the acclaimed Salamanca Dominican commentator and Tridentine theologian, when he tried to solve some vexed issues on the value of sacraments (Soto, *Commentariorum*, p. 852).[18]

12.3 Dismantling the *Summa*

A striking fact is that a great number of early-modern *Summae* published during the early-modern period in the name of Aquinas did not respect the order of their original model. First, they largely dismantled the *Summa* into different units that became increasingly isolated from each other. Second, they distinguished within the *Summa* between matters that were dependent upon revelation and matters that could be investigated by pure reason. A material consequence is that the *Summa* was often not printed as a whole: When Peter Schöffer (ca. 1425–1503), one of Gutenberg's trainees and later rivals, produced its very first printing, in Mainz (1467), it contained only the Second Part of the Second Part.[19] This indicates that the work's treatment of morality was seen as the most important element in the German pre-Reformation and humanist context, and this would remain an important trend. The "practical" parts of the *Summa* (on human actions, virtues and vices, sacraments) certainly won the statistical battle between what became known as the two parts of theology, namely the *theologia speculativa* (based on the First and Third Parts, i.e., God and Christology) and the *theologia practica* (most of the rest, dealing with humans). Although Aquinas had clearly stressed that the *theoretical* end of contemplation was the highest goal of theology (and also the highest human good), "his argument is not seen as convincing by all," observed the Spanish Jesuit Juan Maldonado (1533–83; "De constitutione," p. 251), like many who insisted on the practical dimension.

Rather than a model to follow, Aquinas's *Summa* thereby became something like a quarry from which to extract the building blocks

[18] This passage by Soto has often been quoted in later treatises on confession and moral theology. Aquinas would often be attacked on this issue, especially in France: See for instance de Launoy, *Veneranda*, pp. 229–30, where he clearly opposes Peter Lombard's authority against the "errors" of Aquinas, who claims that it is not necessary that the act of confession should be preceded by contrition.

[19] First attempts to list the Renaissance editions can be found in Échard and Quétif, *Scriptores*, pp. 322–3 and Touron, *La vie*, pp. 779–84. For a tentative list of later editions, see De Franceschi, "L'empire thomiste," pp. 321–2.

of a new literary genre of post-Tridentine scholasticism, the *Cursus Theologicus*, divided into "parts" which did not at all correspond to the parts of Aquinas's *Summa.*[20] The fundamental division between theoretical and practical theology was reflected in a new nomenclature, such as the progressive introduction of the neologism "fundamental theology" (*theologia fundamentalis*) to designate the first speculative parts of theological education, later also dubbed "dogmatic" theology (*theologia dogmatica*).[21] The practical parts became an autonomous discipline under the title *theologia moralis*,[22] which explains why the Second Part of the Second Part received such extraordinary attention during these centuries. Moral theology gave birth to a number of subdisciplines, such as casuistry (or cases of conscience), which sparked an immense debate throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with a succession of polemics between probabilists and anti-probabilists.[23] Several traditions added a third, more apologetical and defensive part, absent as such in Aquinas: "polemical theology" (*theologia polemica*). The theological unity between theory and practice, advocated by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa*, had become a scattered field.

An even more radical questioning of the *Summa*'s structure consisted in completely rearranging its order in commentaries: not starting with God, but starting with the treatise on faith, extracted from its original spot in the Second Part of the Second Part and placed at the outset of the theology course. This move can be interpreted as a typically modern process of subjectivizing theology: Faith, as the subjective capacity to assent to supernatural mysteries, is more important than the objective nature of these mysteries themselves (God, the Trinity, Incarnation, etc.). This way of reorganizing theology was championed, for instance, in the *Marrow of Theology* (1650), a small but very influential treatise published by a secular Sorbonne-educated priest, Louis Abelly (1603–91). In the following decades, numerous theology courses in both print and manuscript form started explicitly with the *De Fide*, as for instance the three-volume course (1736) by the French Jesuit Paul Gabriel Antoine (1679–1743). This trend continued in the eighteenth century, when "fundamental

[20] See on this Farley, *Theologia* and Hell, *Entstehung*, pp. 57–66.

[21] See: Stirnimann, "Fundamentaltheologie"; Niemann, "Fundamentaltheologie" and Niemann, "Zur Frühgeschichte"; and Filser, *Dogma*.

[22] On this general movement, see the (very Jesuit-centered) investigation by Theiner, *Die Entwicklung*; Vereecke, *Etudes*; Mahoney, *The Making*.

[23] The classic presentation remains Deman, "Probabilisme"; recent studies include Schüssler, *Moral*, and Gay, *Morales*, all with excellent bibliographies.

theology" courses included long preliminary sections justifying the rational nature of religion in general (*demonstratio religiosa*), before turning to the more specific Christian revelation and Catholic Church (*demonstratio christiana* and *demonstratio catholica*, respectively). This became the key method of theologians wishing to rebuke Enlightenment critiques of religion as "irrational" or "superstition." In Vienna, the Italian-born Dominican Pietro Maria Gazzaniga (1722–99), started his theology course (1777) in highly Ciceronian fashion, insisting on the practical function of religion rather than starting with the existence of a transcendent God, in order to seduce readers used to the criticism of revealed religion by Spinoza, Toland, or Voltaire.

A second way of dismantling the *Summa* consisted in distinguishing between its revealed and non-revealed contents. It is usually overlooked by historiography that huge chunks of the *Summa* were exfiltrated into *philosophy* courses, rather than serving as a basis for *theology* courses. This specifically philosophical use of the *Summa* concerned not just natural theology (such as discussions on matter and form, eternity and time, potency and act) mainly extracted from the First Part, but also the *Summa's* discussions of ethics. For instance, when Jan van Malderen (1563–1633), taught the First Part of the Second Part in Louvain, he conspicuously left out the treatise on passions (questions 22–55), claiming it "belongs to philosophy" (*Commentaria*, p. 179). The survival of "philosophical" ethics courses in other countries, such as in the French colleges or Italian universities, should therefore not be mistaken for a form of Aristotelian resilience: On the contrary, most of them were nothing more than abridgments and commentaries of the ethical parts of Aquinas's *Summa*. A vivid example is the ethics course drafted by Eustachius a Sancto Paulo for his acclaimed philosophy course, aptly entitled *Summa Philosophica* (1609), famous for earning the praise of Descartes as one of the best of his own time. A close look at its structure shows that it consists mainly of a selection of headings taken from the Second Part, with special concern not to include specifically theological subjects, such as the cardinal virtues or the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Complete philosophy courses (*cursus philosophici*), such as Eustachius's were plentiful in the early-modern age. Religious congregations, provinces, and individual colleges commissioned such textbooks, and they became the standard for teaching everywhere. Some of them openly mimicked the organization of Aquinas's *Summa* by their division into four parts (considering that the Second Part is in reality composed of two parts). A Milanese Jesuit, Cosmo Alamanni (1559–1634), was

probably the first to have suggested this new presentation, dividing his philosophical textbook into parts called *Ia*, *Ia-IIae*, *IIa-IIae*, and *IIIa* (Alamanni, *Summa philosophiae*). The model was followed by another more orthodox Thomist, the French discalced Carmelite Philippus a Sanctissima Trinitate (1603–71), who claims to have "derived" an entire philosophy course from Aquinas's theological *Summa* (*Summa philosophica*, Ad lectorem). Among the Dominicans, Antoine Goudin (1639–95) wrote a similar *Summa of Philosophy According to the Firm Principles of Aquinas* (1670), which was to prove tremendously influential into the nineteenth century, when one of the German promoters of "neo-Thomism" (Plassmann, *Vorhallen*) used it as a model. In the German lands, the Benedictines transformed the University of Salzburg into a flagship of philosophical Thomism, as illustrated by the work of Ludwig Babenstuber (1660–1726; *Philosophia*).[24] In the eighteenth century, a plea for "neo-Thomism" was made by the Master General Joan Tomàs de Boixadors (1703–80) in the form of an encyclical epistle to his order, *De Renovanda et Defendenda Doctrina Sancti Thomae* (1757). Several textbooks answered this call, and contributed to transforming the *Summa* into a work of *philosophy* and not *theology*: This was the case with the Dominican Salvatore Maria Roselli (d. 1784) for his lectures at the Roman Minerva, and of Vincenzo Buzzetti (1777–1824), a professor at the Collegio Alberoni in Piacenza, an institution which is often seen as the cradle of neo-Thomism.[25] By extracting from Aquinas's *Summa* enough to fill a complete textbook of philosophy, all these authors contributed to establishing a firm "Aristotelian-Thomist" paradigm, presenting the Angelic Doctor as the best exponent of Aristotle's perennial philosophy, and therefore as the best antidote against philosophical novelties such as Cartesianism, atomism, mechanistic physics, or modern forms of skepticism.

12.4 Is the *Summa* Theological?

An even more radical stance was taken by early-modern readers of Aquinas: They did not attempt to "derive" philosophy from the *Summa Theologiae*, but questioned its very theological nature. The suspicion came

[24] On the Salzburg tradition, see Bauer, *Metaphysik*.

[25] On this tradition, see: Narciso, "Neotomismo"; Narciso, *Salvatore Roselli*; Rossi, *Il movimento*. For a general presentation of these now widely forgotten manuals, see: Colombo, "La manualistica"; Schmidinger, "Der Streit."

from all those who believed that Aquinas's work was giving too much weight to human rationality in its scrutiny of divine nature and the history of salvation. This approach included a broad and improbable coalition of humanists, partisans of a purely pastoral conception of theology, early Protestant reformers, and Catholic critics of scholastic methods in theology. Arguably the most famous criticism came from Luther, who transformed *thomista* into a bad word, to be thrown at somebody who "prostitutes" human reason to the devil and misunderstands the practical nature of the theology of the cross: There is only one place for *speculative* theology, namely "with the devil in hell," claimed the German reformer in a famous table-talk (Luther, *Table Talk*, p. 22). Thomism, as the paramount example of a theology which claims to be *magis speculativa, quam practica*, as asserted in the first question of the First Part (1.4c), is widely accused of "extinguishing the faith." True Christian theology had to shy away from the *theologia philosophica* dear to the "popish schools" (*in scholis Pontificiorum*), as the reformed Utrecht theologian Peter van Mastricht (1630–1706) expressed it (van Mastricht, *Theologia*, p. 8). They missed the practical dimension of theology, which was at the heart of the Reformation, and as a result, their work should be considered not Christian and theological, but quasi-pagan and philosophical. If any medieval scholastic authority had to be used, then many Protestant academic theologians usually preferred to turn toward alternative sources, such as Bonaventurian skepticism or advocates of the practical character of theology, such as John Duns Scotus or a later Dominican such as Thomas of Strasbourg.[26]

Not all reformed theologians shared such harsh judgments. Many showed a more conciliatory attitude toward Aquinas through an interesting polemical argument: Because he had become the paramount authority for the Catholics, it could be profitable for the Protestants to show that Aquinas's views were akin to those of the reformers, thereby efficiently debunking the Catholic claim to be the true and universal church. This strategy was pursued by the Alsatian Lutheran Johann Georg Dorsche (1597–1659),[27] who tried to show similarities between Aquinas and the Augsburg Confession in a 600-page volume offering very close readings of the *Summa* (*Thomas Aquinas*), anticipating from that point

[26] See for instance Meisner, *Philosophia*, p. 855, who invokes the authority of Bonaventure, claiming that it is sometimes better to doubt than to define at all cost.

[27] See also, in a similar vein, Reiser, *Vindiciae*. In this context, see Zeller, "Orthodoxie"; Donnelly, "Calvinist Thomism."

of view the twentieth-century Protestant appropriation of Aquinas: "In many … articles we can happily and successfully use Aquinas against the Papists," commented another later reformed bibliographer (Serpilius, *Commentatores*, p. 177). But the most revealing use of the *Summa* in the Protestant academies came from those who saw its value in its *philosophical* nature, once it was admitted that its theology was useless. A good example of this attitude was Petrus van Mastricht's own teacher in Utrecht, Gisbert Voetius (1589–1676). He did not shy away from recommending the *lectio ipsius summae Thomae* when it came to acquire a basic understanding of scholastic theology, "at least in its principal places and questions" (Voetius, *Exercitia*, p. 61).[28] Voetius believed Aquinas was a lesser evil for religious orthodoxy than the new dualistic philosophy of Descartes. This Protestant use "decatholicized" Aquinas's *Summa* and produced the perception that it could be treated as a work of philosophy.

A similar attitude became noticeable in Catholic lands. Their heralds were those who did not believe the classical Tridentine claim that Aquinas was the best exponent of the Church Fathers, but that it was better to go back to the Fathers themselves. Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638), arguably the seventeenth century's most important theologian, said about contemporary scholastic theologians that they were more "illuminated by Aristotle than by the Holy Spirit" (Jansenius, *Augustinus*, p. 14). This anti-scholastic attitude gave birth to a new form of theology, *positive theology*, often seen as one of the most important innovations of early-modern Catholic theology.[29] Rather than rationally deriving conclusions from a limited set of revealed propositions, as in Aquinas, positive theology endeavored to establish vast catalogs of all the Biblical, patristic, and historical sources and arguments about a specific point of doctrine or dogma. French theologians – often Jansenist or crypto-Jansenist – led the way in this return to the *ancienne théologie*. While positive theology required immense erudition, mastery of ancient languages, and critical skills to establish theology's historical sources, at the same time it commended a certain form of fideism. Accordingly, the French historian Louis Le Gendre (1655–1733) offered a down-to-earth explanation of the century-long success of the *Summa*: Scholastic theologians

[28] On Voetius's conciliatory attitude toward Aquinas and the Catholic scholastics, see Goudriaan, *Orthodoxy*, *passim*.

[29] On the development of positive theology, see: Guelluy, "L'évolution"; Tshibangu, *Théologie positive*. On its origins, see: Andrés Martín, *La teología*, pp. 181–7, 303–7; Hofmann, *Theologie*; Stirnimann, "Fundamentaltheologie"; Quinto, *Scholastica*, pp. 238–47.

are just a lazy bunch! It is indeed easier and faster to read the *Summa* and pretend to be wise than to know the Bible and the Church Fathers in detail (Le Gendre, *Les mœurs*, p. 98).

But in spite of this widespread onslaught against scholasticism, almost all – including Jansenius himself – refrained from directly attacking the authority of Aquinas, untouchable as doctor of the Church. The most sophisticated method for challenging the theological value of the *Summa*, while at the same time upholding the authority of Aquinas, was yet to come: It was simply to *deny* that he was the *author* of this terrible work of scholasticism entitled *Summa Theologiae*. In a century saturated with debates about forgery and authenticity (Grafton, *Forgers*), the first to have used this strategy was the Gallican Jean de Launoy (1601–78). After having discovered a manuscript panegyric by Peter Roger, composed in 1323, which did not mention the *Summa*, he concluded that the *Summa* had not been written by Aquinas but must have been the work of some later medieval degenerate scholastic. It led to an important dispute, with an effective rebuttal by the French Dominican Noël Alexandre (1639–1724).[30] Another controversy erupted about the alleged plagiarism of Aquinas, given the *verbatim* correspondence between the *Summa* and some passages of the *Speculum Morale* attributed to Vincent of Beauvais (who died before Aquinas), which had been printed in 1624. Jacques Echard (1644–1724), one of the fathers of Dominican bibliography and historical criticism, resolved this knotty problem with a vibrant demonstration. But the most flamboyant strategy was the work of Jean Hardouin (1646–1729), the eccentric librarian of the Jesuit College of Louis-le-Grand in Paris. Not only did he consider the work to be spurious, but he even doubted the existence of its author (as he did likewise for most of pre-modern literature). In a four-volume manuscript critical discussion of the *Summa*, he admirably summarized the general spirit of all those Catholics who believed that the *Summa* had little to do with theology, attributing it to an atheist: "He entitled his work *Summa of Theology*, whereas in reality it is nothing else than a purely philosophical summa (*summa mere philosophica*)." Its author "had no knowledge of the true God," which explains "why in the body of the articles, which always starts with the formula *I respond by saying*, he always makes use of

[30] See Launoy, *Veneranda*, pp. 289–90, where he speaks about *Beatus Thomas, vel alius quis sub illius nomine scripsit* (a passage highlighted in De Franceschi, "L'empire thomiste," p. 319); Échard, *Sancti Thomae Summa*. See a good reconstruction of the debate in Zahora, "Thomist Scholarship" (who does not, however, mention the Launoy episode).

arguments that are only supported by natural reason or by the philosophy of Aristotle, Avicenna and others" (Hardouin, *Censura*, vol. I, f. 5v).

12.5 Transforming the *Summa* into a Philosophical Classic

The paradox of regarding the *Summa* as a work of philosophy also characterizes its reception in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII officially started the vast movement now known as "neo-Thomism" with the encyclical *Aeterni Patris.*[31] Its pastoral tone should not overshadow the fact that *philosophy* was at the heart of the project, and not *theology*. After a century marked by the rise of liberalism and socialism and politics, the development of idealism and materialism in philosophy, and the explosion of science into a realm of increasingly disconnected disciplines, the encyclical intended to restore an imagined medieval unity of knowledge.

A first immediate outcome was the start of the so-called Leonine edition, which is still underway today, an attempt at a critical edition of Aquinas's complete works. Among the first printed volumes stands the *Summa* (vols. IV–XI, 1882 ff.), in a version which to this day remains an embarrassment to Dominican scholarship.[32] The second immediate outcome was a confirmation of the "philosophical turn" taken by Thomism.[33] The desired program of dialogue with modern science has probably best been carried out by the Institute of Philosophy founded by Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier (1851–1926) in Louvain, who used Thomism as an encompassing paradigm to organize modern studies of chemistry, physics, and mathematics with a general reflection on human finality and happiness. This new philosophical Thomism would also soon take a repressive form: In 1914, Pius X issued the famous *24 Thomistic Theses*, drafted by the French Dominican Édouard Hugon (1867–1929), as a preceptive list of what all Catholic institutions should teach in courses of philosophy (they were integrated into Canon Law in 1917).

[31] On the origin of the encyclica and the neo-Thomist movement, see in particular the essays by Coreth, Neidl and Pfligersdorffer, *Christliche Philosophie*, which contain very complete bibliographies; Bonansea, "Pioneers," for a good summary of the Italian context; Scheffczyk, *Theologie* for Germany; and general studies by McCool, *Catholic Theology, Unity, Neo-Thomists*; Prouvost, *Thomismes*. The real authorship of the encyclical remains a matter of debate to this day: Some have argued for the Corsican Dominican Tommaso Zigliara (1833–93), and others have attributed its drafts to the Jesuits Joseph Kleutgen (1811–83) and Matteo Liberatore (1810–92). All were prominent professors of philosophy. On this debate, see Boyle, "A Remembrance."

[32] See the remarks in Pasnau, *Treatise*, p. 413, and Bataillon, "Recherches."

[33] A point well made by Weisheipl, "Revival."

These theses were very general principles for describing reality, all of which could be traced back to some philosophical distinctions used in the *Summa*: potency and act, matter and form, analogy between uncreated and created being, the immortality and subsistence of the soul, etc. New "Aristotelico-Thomist" textbooks were published in large numbers, including the first ones in English, such as the quickly produced translation of the *Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy* (1931) by the French Dominican Antonin-Dalmace Sertillanges (1863–1948) and *Modern Thomistic Philosophy* (1934–35) by R. P. Phillips.[34] The same period witnessed massive translations of the *Summa*, such as the famous edition produced by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (22 vols., 1912–33).

Of course, the *Summa* also remained a theological classic, and the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not short of linear commentaries. French romantic Catholicism played an important role here as early as in the 1820s, defending in particular the heritage of Charles-René Billuart (1685–1757) who had started his theology course with a treatise on the *cardinal*, and not *theological* virtues.[35] The size of some of these commentaries was intimidating, such as the 25 volumes by the Servite Alexis Lépicier (1863–1936) or the 21 volumes by the Dominican Thomas Pègues (1866–1936). Pègues, known for his royalist and anti-modern positions, also produced a catechism-style abridged version of the *Summa* (Pègues, *Catechism*). Some of them were strongly linked to the anti-modernist mentality: Louis Billot (1846–1931), a French Jesuit famous for his reactionary ideas, provoked a considerable debate by arguing that atheists are ultimately incapable of morality – the exact opposite of what Francisco de Vitoria (1492–1546) and so many early-modern commentators had tried to defend during the Renaissance (Billot, *De personali*, pp. 24–32; Billot, "La providence"). But these vast scholastic commentaries were rapidly denounced as an improper way to do theology in the twentieth century. A striking example was the work of Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895–1990), one of the fathers of the so-called *Ressourcement*-theology and a student of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877–1964), the "sacred monster of Thomism" (Peddicord, *Monster*). In a book condemned by the Vatican in 1942, Chenu violently attacked the "systematization" of theology that had "obscured" the innovative and

[34] For a sampling of these Thomistic teaching texts produced in English in the first half of the twentieth century, see Haldane, *Modern Writings*.

[35] On the work of Billuart and its important legacy, see De Franceschi, "L'exténuation."

spiritual approach that had characterized Aquinas himself (Chenu, *École*, p. 123). He issued an invitation to a complete reconsideration of the historical context and the literary style of the *Summa*, uncovering its forgotten neo-platonic structure (Chenu, *Toward Understanding*; Hankey, *God in Himself*). This marked a generalized ebbing of the *Summa* in Roman Catholic theology, in favor of a "new theology" inspired by the Bible, the Church Fathers, and the tradition, that would eventually come to full expression after the Second Vatican Council.[36] John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998) can so far be considered as the last Thomistic act of the Vatican.

This relative theological disavowal of the *Summa* did not affect its growing reception as a purely *philosophical* work, fulfilling in a certain way Jean Hardouin's seventeenth-century prophecy. The fact that the *Summa* was at the heart of the thought of Étienne Gilson (1884–1978), Jacques Maritain, Gustav Siewerth (1903–63), or Josef Pieper (1904–97), who all considered themselves *philosophers* and not *theologians*, transformed the work into a classic of the discipline. Since the 1930s, and to this day, self-declared Thomists have constituted an easily identifiable and vibrant intellectual community in philosophy departments of numerous Catholic universities, including North America. But what is more interesting is the success of the *Summa* outside of strictly confessional circles. Starting in the 1940s, Richard McKeon (1900–85), himself a former student of Gilson in Paris, introduced sections of the *Summa* as part of a renewed liberal arts curriculum in the University of Chicago. In 1952, Mortimer Adler (1902–2001) imposed the *Summa* as the only medieval title (with Dante and Chaucer) of the *Great Books of the Western World* series, between Augustine and Machiavelli. Likewise in Chicago, Yves Simon (1903–61) popularized the idea of Aquinas as a Neo-Aristotelian at the Committee on Social Thought, gaining a powerful secular conservative following. In Oxford, Peter Geach (1916–2013) was famed for keeping "always to hand" a pocket edition of the *Summa* (Kenny, "Form," p. 65) and for using it in his classes on logical or metaphysical themes. Geach's method is often considered the birth of "analytical Thomism,"[37] which has led to stripping the *Summa* of most of its

[36] For a good synthesis, see Schoof, *Survey*, and more recently Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie*; for post-Vatican II, see contributions in Fourcade and Avon, *Nouvel Âge*. On the place of Thomism at Vatican II, see Komonchak, "Thomism."

[37] For a synthesis of analytical Thomism, see Paterson and Pugh, *Analytical Thomism*; on current debates and disagreements, see Kerr, *After Aquinas*.

theological overtones: Anthony Lisska argues for instance that the "existence of God is, in a structural sense, neither a relevant concept nor a necessary condition for Aquinas's account of natural law" (Lisska, *Natural Law*, p. 230) – a sentence that certainly made Billot and others turn in their graves.

This philosophical reading of Aquinas and its promise for a fully rationalized "theism" has also made considerable progress in reformed circles during the last decades, with the blessing of Karl Barth (1886–1968): He admitted that although Aquinas's thought does "not point us to the Reformation," it was essential to dissociate him from "typical … post-Tridentine Catholicism" and "Roman Jesuitism"; as a result, "there is a lot that the Evangelical theologian can learn in Thomas' [*Summa*] as a well-chosen compendium of all preceding tradition" (Barth, *Dogmatics*, p. 316). Strongly Lutheran-educated Norman Kretzmann (1928–98) became a leading historian of medieval rational theology, and self-declared Episcopalian or Anglican professors of philosophy such as Brian Leftow, Marilyn Adams, or Peter van Inwagen do not hesitate to use Aquinas in their treatments of the important questions of philosophical theology. The *International Handbook of Protestant Education* (Jeynes and Robinson) now dedicates a chapter to Aquinas.[38]

12.6 Conclusion

In his acclaimed essay on good taste, the Italian Enlightenment thinker Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750) ensured that among all scholastics, theology had kept its "majesty" only in Aquinas, but that it had degenerated subsequently, due to the arid and nasty style of later scholastics who made unnecessary conceptual complications (Muratori, *Riflessioni*, p. 112). Muratori was one of those who contributed to popularizing the powerful paradigm of the late medieval "decline" which I set out to challenge in this chapter. In reality, the history of Thomism has rather been a steady stream of commentaries: There was certainly no eighteenth-century "waning," and the late-nineteenth-century neo-Thomism was not so much a "renewal" as a reenactment of a number of seventeenth-century options.

In navigating this stream, the *Summa* was a vessel that has been continuously adapted, and sometimes even completely deconstructed and

[38] For a critical assessment of these Protestant appropriations, see Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin*.

rebuilt in different ways. Today's philosophy students will have difficulties in recognizing the fact that it was initially drafted with a pastoral goal for the instruction of Dominican "beginners." Its success proved uninterrupted, but for highly contradictory reasons: Whereas post-Tridentine theologians saw it as a synthesis of the Church Fathers, nineteenth-century scholasticism transformed it into a monument of rationalism. One reason, however, seemed to have convinced all those who see in Aquinas the "arbiter" of all theological and philosophical disputes of their age: its permanent quest for moderation and conciliation between extremes, which lies at the heart of its scholastic method of objections, conclusion and responses, and which consistently allowed Thomism to be presented as some sort of middle way between extremes – such as naturalism and supernaturalism, fideism and rationalism, voluntarism and intellectualism, legal positivism and naturalism, libertarianism and compatibilism, realism and idealism, etc. As noted by Massoulié, "between opposing doctrines, the middle path is always Saint Thomas' doctrine" (Massoulié, *Divus Thomas*, p. 7).