

SELECTED WORKS
of
CORNELIO
FABRO

VOLUME 19

Introduction to St. Thomas:
Thomistic Metaphysics and Modern Thought

CORNELIO FABRO

IVE Press



Edited by the Cornelio Fabro Cultural Project
of the Institute of the Incarnate Word

Cover Design

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Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata

Originally published in Italian as *Introduzione a san Tommaso: La metafisica tomista & il pensiero moderno*

First edition by Edizioni Ares, Milan 1983

Second edition with posthumous additions by Edizioni Ares, Milan 1997

Third edition, first in *Opere Complete*, Volume 34, by EDIVI, 2016

First English translation published 2022

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www.corneliofabro.org/en

www.ivepress.org

ISBN: 978-1-939018-87-8

eISBN: 978-1-947568-28-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018933676

Printed in the United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

A thinker's life is not made for shining in the shadowy events of history, but rather for seeking the truth, in the silence of reflection, so as to communicate it to others.

Destined by Providence to achieve thought's most imposing task—that of the synthesis of faith and reason, of nature and grace, which demanded the maximum amount of inner concentration—Thomas Aquinas had a rather troubled childhood and life. He encountered conflict and opposition from every direction, all the while savoring early on the bitterness of misunderstandings and the condemnations of the envious and the mediocre. Yet, after so many conflicting circumstances, a higher level of harmony revealed itself, one that his consciousness knew how to grasp and realize with lucid reflection, as if driven by the rhythm of the problems of which he alone, for the first time in the history of Christianity, felt the intimate prodding, the precise meaning, and the essential points.

It now seems certain that he was born in the castle of Roccasecca in the Kingdom of Naples, to Landulph of Aquino, Count of Roccasecca, and Theodora of Chieti (but who was originally from Lombardy). Given the certainty of the date of his death (March 7, 1274), and since his official biographer William of Tocco affirms that the Saint had just completed 49 years of life, the date of his birth would be approximately in the final months of 1225 or early 1226.¹

An episode from his childhood is particularly striking: a lightning bolt killed his younger sister in the castle of Roccasecca, yet left the young Thomas, who was nearby, unscathed. In 1230, at the age of five, his parents placed him among the *pueri oblati* of Montecassino to be educated with the intention of introducing him to the monastic life, secretly hoping that he might reach the highest office of abbot and thus increase his family's influence. Instead, certainly due to his own mature deliberation, along with

—according to his disciple and biographer William of Tocco—the counsel of the Abbot himself, and because of the devastation that Montecassino had suffered from Federick II in 1239, Thomas returned to his family and went to study at the University of Naples. It was there that he received his first direct initiation into Aristotelian philosophy by teachers like Martin of Dacia for logic, and Peter of Ireland for natural philosophy (cf. William of Tocco, but other, more succinct, biographers like Peter Calo and Bernard Gui, do not mention this). His Dominican vocation began to emerge at the University of Naples, through the work of the Dominican priest John of St. Julian. Against his family’s opposition, which did not spare him physical or moral abuse, Thomas maintained a heroic dedication that won his sister Marotta over to religious life. It seems that the Saint had received his religious habit from the hands of his master general, John the Teutonic, between 1243 and the end of 1244. He finally obtained his freedom by escaping, and then he was sent to complete his higher studies. Given Tocco’s emphasis,² some maintain (Mandonnet, Grabmann, Glorieux, Castagnoli) that his first destination was the University of Paris from 1245 to 1248, as is suggested by the famous letter on May 2, 1274 by the Parisian masters of arts, where “the city of Paris, the noblest of all university towns,” is presented as “the one who first educated, nurtured, and cherished him” (*omnium studiorum no-bilissima parisiensis civitas; ipsum prius educavit, nutrivit et fovit*) (Cf. *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis*, ed. Denifle-Châtelain, Paris 1889, vol. I, no. 447, p. 505). In 1248, Albert the Great established the *studium generale* in Cologne, and Thomas attended theology courses as immediate preparation for the priesthood. At Albert’s school, Thomas worked not only with the entire *corpus aristotelicum*, but also with the Arabic and Greek commentators who had been translated at that time, and especially the *corpus dionysianum* which revealed to the master his real potential. Through the insistence of Albert, who solicited the Dominican Cardinal Hugh of Saint-Cher’s good will, in 1252 the general of the Order called Thomas to Paris to fill the vacancy of bachelor in theology of the Dominican chair. After bitter disputes, fuelled by secular masters who had to yield to Pope Alexander IV’s direct intervention,³ Thomas obtained his *licentia docendi* in June of 1255, but was only admitted to the college of professors (together with St. Bonaventure) the following year on August 15, 1256, starting his teaching career as *magister regens* in the month of October.

By now, Thomas's entire life was absorbed by the academic activities that took place alternately between the universities of Paris and Italy. The first Parisian teaching period (1256–59) was disturbed by the attack of secular masters (led by William of Saint-Amour) to prevent mendicant orders from entering the university. His adversaries also threw into the mix the question of the *Evangelium aeternum*, but did not succeed because of the Pope's personal intervention. At the end of the 1259 academic year, Thomas travelled to Italy, after having participated in the general chapter at Valenciennes on Pentecost in June of 1259, collaborating with St. Albert the Great and Peter of Tarantasia (afterward Pope Innocent V) on the compilation of the Order's *Ratio studiorum*. (Cf. *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis*, ed. Denifle-Chatelain, Paris 1889, vol. I, no. 385, pp. 385 ff. See also, *Fontes vitae s. Th. Aquin.*, fasc. VI, no. XV, pp. 559 ff). This first Italian stay (1259–68) lasted almost ten years, and it was the most uninterrupted and tranquil period of the Saint's life, during which a prodigious academic activity unfolded. It is probable that he taught at the *Studium* or *conventus Curiae*, and then was called by Urban IV to Viterbo and later to Orvieto. The years 1265–67 found Aquinas at the Roman convent of St. Sabina with the task of restructuring the Order's *Studium generale*. It is probable that in 1267–68 he was still at Viterbo with Clement IV. At the court, he befriended the Flemish brother William of Moerbeke, who gave him valuable assistance both with the revision of old versions and with new versions of the Greek texts of Aristotle, some of the major Greek commentators of Aristotle, and Neoplatonic texts—in particular, Proclus's *Στοιχείωσις Θεολογική*, in 1268, Simplicius's commentary on the *Categories* in 1266 and *De coelo et mundo* in 1271, Ammonius's *Peri hermeneias* in 1268, Themistius's *De anima* in 1268, and John Philoponus's *De anima*, also in 1268. Before these texts was the 1260 version of Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary on *Meteorology*, translated at Nicaea. At the end of 1268, perhaps by order of the Pope himself, Thomas was on his way to Paris where in January of 1269, he began teaching, continuing into the 1270–71 academic year.

This second Parisian teaching period was the most turbulent time in the Saint's life and a bitter struggle on all fronts: first and foremost was the flaring up of Averroism in the Faculty of Arts, then the open resistance against his own Aristotelianism by the dominant Augustinian strand of the Faculty of Theology—seemingly under the direct inspiration of St.

Bonaventure⁴—culminating in the stormy debate of 1270 that encompassed the principal theses of Thomism (and in particular the “unicity of the substantial form”) in the presence of Stephen Tempier, bishop of Paris, in which Thomas “was almost the only one who held that view” (*fuit quasi solus huius sententiae*). Eventually, the battle against the mendicant orders was rekindled by the secular masters Gerard of Abbeville and Nicholas of Lisieux, who provoked two admirable writings from the Saint: *De perfectione vitae spiritualis* and *Contra doctrinam retrahentium a religione*.

In the spring of 1272, Thomas was tasked by his superiors (at Charles of Anjou’s invitation) to restructure the teaching of theology at the University of Naples. In addition to teaching—which took place during the entire 1272–1273 academic year and the first part of 1273–1274 until January—Thomas worked intensely on the third part of the *Summa theologiae*, the composition of opuscula, commentaries on Aristotle, and the Lenten preaching to people in the vernacular language. In January of 1274, he was invited by Gregory X to the Council of Lyon. He set out, accompanied by his faithful secretary Reginald of Piperno, when *en route* he was seized by a strange illness that, after resisting the loving care of his niece Francesca (the countess of Ceccano who lived in the Castle of Maenza), brought about his death on March 7, 1274, in the Cistercian abbey at Fossanova, where, sensing that the end was near, he had sought their hospitality. He was canonized by John XXII in Avignon on July 18, 1323, and was declared “the Angelic Doctor” in 1567 by the Dominican St. Pius V, which is his title of honor along with the official title *Doctor communis*. Even his teacher St. Albert the Great, who rushed to Paris in 1277 to defend him against condemnation, proclaimed that Aquinas was the “splendor and flower of the whole world.”⁵

Up to this point, we have only covered a biographical outline of dates: the biographers, beginning with the earliest ones (Peter Calo, William of Tocco, Bernard Gui, and others), willingly spread anecdotes of Thomas, highlighting with fraternal satisfaction especially those episodes from his academic life (where his genius was unrivalled) as well as his magnanimity of spirit with his confreres, with his often contentious and quarrelsome colleagues, and with their personal allies (for instance, the episode in Paris about the nerve of the custodian who reprimanded him during a lesson is well-known). Thomas was a man of princely spirit, who lived and wanted to live the life of a simple religious in constant and complete humility.

His biographers carefully tell us about his physical build and complexion: there is one impressive portrait that has not failed to influence art from the fourteenth century until now.⁶ Let us consider a passage, an eyewitness testimony from Tocco, that seems to connect itself to this tradition:

It is said (*dicitur*) of his physical and spiritual structure that he was of great size, tall and straight in stature, almost a reflection of the up-rightness of his soul; he had a large head (*magnum habens caput*), because the perfections of the sensory powers that prepare the exercise of reason require perfect organs.⁷ He was somewhat bald.⁸ He had a very delicate physiological complexion (*tenerissime complexionis in carne*), and it was a manifestation of the height of his exceptional intelligence. . . . He was of great strength and demonstrated it when he had to move his body in certain special acts of virtue: his strength of soul enabled him to overcome all fears and his pious humility allowed him to appreciate even the things [that others deemed] worthless. . . . He thus gave the impression that God had prepared his body with organs of such nobility that they were compliant to the exercise of virtue and never in conflict with the dictates of reason.⁹

Thomas's intellectual capacities were indeed exceptional as he himself attested when responding to a certain friar Daniel d'Augusta: "I believe to have always understood everything that I have read." Indeed, speaking informally with students, "he admitted—not out of vainglory but out of recognition to God for the graces received—of not having ever read a book without completely (*ad plenum*) understanding it."¹⁰ The exceptional power of his memory is attested first of all by his knowledge of the Bible and of Aristotle, which was probably acquired during his adolescence at the University of Naples and then during two years of house arrest. Referring to such an amazing memory, his biographers cite the compilation of the *Catena aurea super quattuor Evangelia*, or a commentary composed *ad praeceptum Urbani pape* with patristic texts that he "had read in the libraries of various monasteries remembering and transcribing the majority of them by memory as if they were still before his eyes."¹¹

His penetrating mental capacity is especially evident in his ability to take up from the scarce patristic and philosophical texts at his disposal—scarce with respect to the enormous quantity of texts that we find today in the finest editions in public and private libraries—speculative intuitions

that, either in philosophical reflection or in theological meditation on faith, hold up in comparison with those leading lights of all time, before and after him. These “propositions of truth” offer the pinnacle and passion for the future philosophical or theological journey. Thomas’s originality shines through thanks to the intention and the precept to follow his teaching, especially by his order, and then by the very ecclesiastical authority itself. Such originality had a way of continuing on for centuries, even to today, although—as we will observe later—it was not able to keep itself at the level of that exceptional revolutionary spirit that many of his contemporaries recognized yet opposed, and that a handful of faithful disciples sought to defend.

The heroic exercise of Christian virtues is amply attested in detail by references in the first *Vite* that we have been citing and in the *Atti* of the canonization process.¹² Particular aspects are emphasized: his detachment from earthly goods and honors, his love for the simple and the poor—to whom he was generous in providing assistance, also given the means of his family. His biographers and the majority of testimonies in the canonization process emphasize his purity of soul and body: the testimonies often like to call him “virgin.” This very rare privilege in Christian hagiography¹³ was for Thomas above all a reward for the victory over temptation (organized, it seems, by his own family members when they kept him imprisoned in the castle at Monte San Giovanni Campano): “While he was alone, a beautiful girl (*puella pulcherrima*)¹⁴ entered the room scantily clad, and through her facial expressions, playful caresses, jests, and every other means that a woman of her kind has at her disposal, tempted him to sin.” The young Thomas was certainly not frigid, but he rebuffed her threateningly with a flaming brand, a brand he used to trace the sign of the cross on the wall. Then in tears “he asked God for the girdle of perpetual virginity; then falling asleep, two angels came and fastened a cord around his hips all the way up to his kidneys, so tight that it made him groan. Thus, for the rest of his life he no longer felt the promptings of the flesh within him.”¹⁵

Of particular importance in the Naples canonization process—in addition to that of William of Tocco (pp. 345–355), who acted as secretary to the pontifical investigation commission in both processes—is the deposition of Bartholomew of Capua (*logotheta et protonotarius regni Siciliae*), who, during his studies in law at the University of Naples, often

frequented the Convent of St. Dominic and provided first-hand accounts from some Dominicans who knew the Saint personally: among them emerged John of Caiazzo (“who was Thomas’s student at Paris and at Naples”) and John of San Giuliano, “a very old friar, a man of long life and great humility, who, it was said, knew said Brother Thomas Aquinas when he was received into the Order of Preachers” (p. 371).^a The deposition had a unique importance not only because it contained a list of Aquinas’s writings (paragraph LXXXV, pp. 371–389),¹⁶ but also for the detail and the importance of the biographical notes. The ones worth mentioning in particular are those referring to his attachment to the religious life and his studies: for example, his early entrance into the Dominican Order—“As soon as he reached the age of discretion, very early, not even a teenager” (*Statim quod ad annos discretionis, multum anticipando, pervenit, nondum pubes adhuc*) (p. 371); the request to always have the breviary and the Bible with him, with the consequence that “upon leaving his house arrest, he was uncertain of very few Biblical verses” (*exiens de carcere paterno in paucis punctis biblie dubitabat*) (p. 372); the intense rhythm of his daily schedule, dedicated entirely to prayer and study (p. 373); the total detachment from goods and human honors (cf. the discussion about the cardinalate with Friar Reginald, pp. 375 ff.); the testimonies of faith during his final sickness and in the face of imminent death (pp. 378 ff.); the trip by Albert the Great (elderly by then) to Paris to defend his pupil against the attacks of his adversaries (p. 382); the testimony of the Augustinian Cardinal Giles of Rome communicated to him by his fellow Augustinian Cardinal James of Viterbo: “Brother James, if the Dominicans wanted, they could make themselves wise and understanding, and make us idiots, if they did not share the writings of Brother Thomas with us” (p. 384).^b Regarding their exceptional confrere, those elderly religious friars preserved an image of holiness to no less of a degree than they preserved his doctrines, although perhaps for them his holiness was more important, and certainly more surprising, than his doctrine. They identified—something that does not occur very often in hagiography—the origin of that doctrine: “They truly believed that the Holy Spirit was with [Thomas], because they always saw that he had a happy, gentle, and agreeable expression” (p. 372).^c Prayer and study, teaching and writing, totally occupied his days; prayer, however, had the priority, such that it interrupted the vast plan of his philosophical and theological work that he had in his hands (even the *Summa Theologiae*

itself) to let himself die and to happily and trustingly offer himself in death, certain of finding himself at the gates of Life. Thomas saw the ideal of his life in this total dedication to God in the search for truth, and it is from here that his life draws its happiness and light. Since Thomas had at once both the temperament of a mystic and of a researcher, his symbol, which is attested to in art—particularly in Fra Angelico's *Crucifixion* in the refectory of the Convent of St. Dominic in Fiesole—is a radiant sun that shines like a ruby on his chest. In him, brilliant clarity of thought and burning mystical experience grow together as an intimate organic unity. God alone was the chief end and the only longing in the life of Thomas Aquinas. As a young friar in the monastery of Montecassino, he often asked his teachers this question: "Who is God?" For his whole life, he could not help but reflect upon the response to this question, and the yearning to attain the unveiled vision of God became the burning flame that consumed him until his death when he was not yet fifty years old.

Perhaps one of the more emblematic episodes in Thomas's life was the conversion of a Jewish father and son, which concludes Batholomew's deposition. Rich and learned, they were guests (during the Christmas festivities) of Cardinal Riccardo Annibaldi, who introduced them to the Saint saying: "Friar Thomas, try with your good and holy words to speak to these stubborn folks." So Friar Thomas responded that "he would willingly say how much better he could speak if they would want to listen." They went into the chapel of the castle, exchanging questions and answers at length. Seeing that the discussion was heading in a good direction, Thomas excused himself saying, "Now go and think about these things; tomorrow come back here to share and explain to me your doubts." So it happened, and the next day (Christmas Eve) the father and son returned to the chapel and picked up where they left off. At a certain point, the voices of Thomas and his partner [friar Reginald?] could be heard singing the *Te Deum*. Upon hearing that song, the Cardinal, his chaplains, and relatives began to sing along. The Cardinal himself (although he suffered from gout) baptised the two neophytes and celebrated the event with an impressive meal to which many members of the Roman nobility were invited. The new converts gave this witness: "Those Jews told the cardinal that they entered, as stubborn as ever, into the chapel to speak with that Brother Thomas, and as they heard him speaking they were immediately changed and were scarcely able to answer or contradict what he said" (p. 390).^d This goodness and the

profound magnanimity of soul in Thomas was the fruit of a long lesson in overcoming adversity in life, a life which was not easy for him—as if God wanted to strengthen him with the most demanding of struggles that demolish the weak but incite the strong to dedicate themselves (to the very limit of their strength) to the mission they regard as their own. However, above everything else, he set kindness, the readiness to put himself at the service of others, powerful or lowly—whether they were popes, prelates, princes, humble religious, or even soldiers—as is attested by the picturesque array of his opuscula. It is therefore from real life (and not from some scholastic exercise) that he praises goodness as the supreme strength of spirit:

Whoever has a will is said to be good insofar as his will is good, for it is by the will that we make use of all that we have up to us. Hence a man is not said to be good because his intellect is good, but rather because he has a good will. Moreover, the will looks towards the end as its proper object. Thus the saying, “We exist because God is good,” refers to the final cause.^{17e}

Thus, beyond any intellectualist scheme, here is the best recognition of (as Kierkegaard would say) that fundamental quality of the “common man” (*menige Mand*), which is what each one of us must be. The medieval style of the biographies did not go further than those chronicled annotations, as is shown by the parallel procedure in the other biographies by Peter Calo, William of Tocco (even though he was nearby and could observe not only the facts but also the great movements of soul and spirit), and Bernard Gui. The texts from the canonization process remained connected to the questionnaire that the Commission gave to the respondents. However, I still think it is important to highlight two particular aspects that the biographers and eyewitnesses judged worthy of special mention: these regard the unique condition of his body—one aspect prior to his death and another one afterward. The first particularity is his extraordinary purity, with his complete victory over the movements of sensuality, as if a celestial air emanated around him. In this respect, both biographers and eyewitnesses are almost unanimous in calling him a “virgin,” which is a rather unusual title in Christian hagiography (it is attributed as a special privilege to John the Evangelist; cf. Jn 21:7, 20). There are some perhaps unreliable

testimonies, but they are significant nonetheless. Albert of Brescia, the Saint's student in Naples, attests to a vision of Albert the Great in which St. Augustine praises St. Thomas: "He is with me. He is my son, who has followed the doctrine of the apostles and my doctrine in everything, and who illuminated the Church of God with his doctrine . . . His glory is equal to mine, except that he exceeds me in his aureole of virginity" (*Fontes*, p. 357).^f See also the note in William of Tocco, ch. 21, p. 95, which refers to the same testimony but adds at the end: "We are also equal in glory" (*Sumus tamen pares in gloria*).¹⁸

The other particularity is the aroma that emanated from his body, which remained incorrupt for 14 years after his death. Again, it is William of Tocco who assembled the testimony,^{19g} certainly by word of mouth from the very same monks at Fossanova. The Saint was very fond of his sister Theodora, who took care of him as he recovered his health in the abbey of Fossanova, and she asked the Abbot to give her the right hand of her brother. Leaving for the tomb, "and carrying their tools they had scarcely lifted the stone of the tomb and when the precious treasure of the holy body was uncovered, there came from there a great aroma" (*Vita*, ch. LXVIII; *Fontes* p. 141).^h Bernard Gui's testimony is the most striking and colorful, as he tells of the exhumation by those same monks who, fearful of being deprived of that holy body, wanted to move and hide it in an adjacent chapel:

And when the tomb was opened, what pleasantness of fragrant aroma issued forth immediately! The whole chapel and even the cloister of the monastery itself, into which the scent was spread, was filled so miraculously by its sweetness, that it seemed that they had not opened the burial place of a dead body, but a storeroom of aromatic spices. That aroma which came from the body of the Saint, inasmuch as the concern and curious diligence of the monks could ascertain, poured forth miraculously, perfuming the body itself.

["When the tomb was opened, the body – although laid in a humid place, with its religious habit – was found incorrupt"] on account of that sweet-smelling scent emitted by the body . . . Upon examination, it was agreed that the body, even deceased, would emit only the very sweet

scent of divine virtue, being a body from which the stench of mortal sin never issued” (*Vita*, ch. XLV; *Fontes*, pp. 210 ff.).²⁰ⁱ

It is surprising that the witnesses, religious with great piety and contemplation, were deeply moved by the purity of the Saint’s life, the depth of his thought, and the admirable fragrance of his still incorrupted body.

The ancient biographers and witnesses in the canonization process agree when pointing out the Saint’s meek and kind character, before the arrogance of others. However, this character was not the effect of indifference or ineptitude regarding the defense of the truth. Indeed, he showed this with his cutting expressions toward his contemporary adversaries in at least two cases.²¹ This time we will leave the original text in its refreshing quality: these passages concern the conclusions of two opuscula, from two important stages in his firm refutation of errors, both of which are very similar in style. These are the refutations of those who were opposed to religious orders, and of the Averroists.

- A. “Here therefore is all that occurs to me at present to write against the pernicious and erroneous teaching which deters some men from entering religious life. If any man desires to contradict my words, let him not do so by talking nonsense before boys but let him write and publish his writings, so that the intelligent may judge what is true, and may be able to confute what is false by the authority of the Truth” (*Contra doctrinam retrahentium a religione*, ch. 16 conclusion; ed. Leonine, vol. XLI, Rome 1970, fol. 74, lines 164–171).^j Here the Saint obtained a complete victory with the satisfaction of exalting his vocation.
- B. “This then is what we have written to destroy the error mentioned, using the arguments and teachings of the philosophers themselves, not the documents of faith. If anyone glorying in the name of false science wishes to say anything in reply to what we have written, let him not speak in corners nor to boys but may he write against this writing, if he dares. He will find that not only I, who am the least of men, but many others zealous for the truth, will resist his error and correct his ignorance.”^{22k} Here, however, the Saint’s victory was less complete: Averroism continued, not

only in Paris, but also in other universities until the Renaissance. The most thorough refutation comes from Ficino in his major work entitled, *Theologia Platonica: seu de immortalitate animorum*,²³ and from the condemnations of the Fifth Lateran Council under Leo X.²⁴

- C. Less energetic, but no less firm, is the protest from the third opuscula, *De perfectio spiritualis vitae*, an ascetic-juridical argument against Gerard of Abbeville. The style is less vibrant than the two preceding conclusions, and the Saint explicitly refrains from insults, but with no less firmness: “If anyone desires to write a reply, it would be most welcome to me. For there is no better way to elucidate truth and to confound error than by confuting the arguments brought against the truth, according to that saying of Solomon, ‘Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of a friend’ (Prov. 27:17)” (ed. Leonine, vol. XLI, fol. 111 b 99–104).¹

Thus, Thomas was nothing but a genius and a saint, and certainly whole-hearted in his defense of the Truth (whether speculative or practical), a tribute to the coherence of, and fidelity to the existential choice that pushed him to leave Montecassino behind for a life full of risk and hardship in the service of Christianity.

¹ William of Tocco, *Vita sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, ch. 65, in D. Prümmer & M. H. Laurent (eds.), *Fontes vitae sancti Thomae Aquinatis* (St. Maximin: Revue Thomiste, 1924–1937) fasc. 2, p. 138. See also: Tommaso Leccisotti, *S. Tommaso d’Aquino e Montecassino, Miscell. Cassinese* 32, Montecassino 1965.

² Op. cit., ch. 7; ed. cit., p. 72.

³ Cf. Alexander IV, “Lettera al Cancelliere dell’Universita’ di Parigi ” (March 3, 1256) in *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis*, ed. Denifle-Chatelain, Paris 1889, vol. I, no. 270; see also, nos. 293 and 317.

⁴ Cf. J. D'Albi, *Saint Bonaventure et les luttes doctrinales de 1267–77*, Paris 1923. See also, C. Fabro, “Teologia dei Nomi Divini nel Lombardo e in S. Tommaso,” in *Pier Lombardo*, IV, 1–4 (1960), pp. 77–93.

⁵ *Fontes vitae sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, fasc. 4, p. 382.

⁶ L. Ferretti, *Arte sacra italiana: San Tommaso d'Aquino*, Turin 1923 (compare with RLT starting from vol. 1, 1969 esp. the section on *Iconography*).

⁷ Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 9, 421 a 25–26.

⁸ Even the process of canonization mentions this: in section XV (Friar Octaviano of Babuco) from the Abbey of Fossanova knew the Saint “for four years or about that” (*per annos quatuor vel circa*) before his death and participated in the funeral rites; after a description of his virtue he adds, responding to the investigators: “He [Brother Thomas] was large and fat in stature and bald above the forehead,” (*Fuit [frater Thomas] magne stature et pinguis et calvus supra frontem*) (*Fontes*, p. 287). Compare section XLV, Peter of San Felice (p. 323).

⁹ William of Tocco, *Vita*, ch. XXXIX, pp. 111 ff. Peter Calo describes Thomas in almost the same terms (*Vita*, ch. XXI, p. 40) and so does Bernard Gui (*Vita*, ch. XXXV, pp. 201 ff.). Someone had shown Tocco's witness as the common source for the two later authors. The editor D. Prummer instead thinks (because of some discrepancies) that all three descriptions derive “from a common source, which is perhaps Friar Reginald, Thomas's confrère, or some ‘accounts’ that Bartholomew of Lucca indicates” † (*Fontes*, p. 40, no. 1).

† “ex communi fonte, qui forsan est frater Raynaldus socius S. Thomae, aut ‘historiae’ quas indicat Ptolemaeus de Lucca.”

¹⁰ P. Calo, *Vita*, p. 40.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41. Cf. William of Tocco, *Vita*, ch. XLI, p. 114.

¹² The title is *Liber de inquisitione super vita et conversatione et miraculis fratris Thomae de Aquino*, ed. M. H. Laurent, *Revue Thomiste*; see also *Fontes*, pp. 267–407. This is the process that was held in Naples starting on Saturday, July 21, 1318. The second process (*De inquisitione super miraculis fratris Thomae de Aquino*) took place in the abbey of Fossanova

in 1321, starting on March 10 (pp. 411–510). Even in the process at Naples, many testimonies about his miracles were gathered.

¹³ *Acts* of the first process, pp. 290, 301, 326, 332, 345, 373, 385.

¹⁴ See William of Tocco, *Vita*, ch. X, p. 75. Also Bernard Gui, after a magnificent prologue of Biblical inspiration: “And so a most beautiful yet unchaste girl, like a serpent with human appearance, entered into the room in which Thomas was alone and held captive. . . . Presently with a snakelike gaze, and lustful words and touches she sought to entice the innocent youth . . . followed by the stirrings of the flesh” † (ch. VIII, p. 174). William of Tocco: “when he felt in himself the surging of the stirrings of the flesh” (*cum sentiret in se carnis insurgere stimulum*) (p. 75).

†“Ingreditur itaque cameram in qua solus sub tali tenebatur custodia puella pulcherrima, impudica, quasi serpens humana facie . . . Que nunc vipereo aspectu nunc verbis lascivis et tactibus quaerit allicere innocentem iuvenem . . . subsequuntur stimuli in juvenili corpore.”

¹⁵ William of Tocco, *Vita*, ch. X, p. 75. Peter Calo has two particular remarks of crude realism, and this can confirm the claim made by Prümmer regarding an early source: a) “And when he felt the movement of the flesh, he became sad on account of inflammation”; b) “yielding a flaming branch . . . boldly struck at the unchaste girl and expelled her from the room.” † He adds that it is St. Thomas himself who prays to God to grant him in the future “integrity of mind and body” (*integritatem mentis et corporis*) (*Vita*, ch. VII, p. 23). Also Bernard Gui: a) “a most beautiful girl” (*puella pulcherrima*); b) “followed by the stirrings of the flesh” (*subsequuntur stimuli in juvenili corpore*). According to the biographer, St. Thomas himself revealed this episode—both the temptation and the angelic girdle—to his secretary Friar Reginald of Piperno (*Vita*, ch. VII, p. 173 ff.).

†“At ille cum motus carnis sentiret, tristis effectus de inflamacione; ticionen de igne excutiens, ipsam . . . impudicam percussit fortiter, de camera expulit.”

¹⁶ It is worth mentioning the appraisal of *Lectura super Ioannem*, “*qua non invenitur melior*” (p. 389).

¹⁷ ST I, q. 5, a. 4, ad. 3. See also, ST I, q. 48, a. 6: “Now we use all things by means of the will. Hence it is from a good will, which makes a man use

well what he has, that a man is called good, and from a bad will he is called bad. For a man who has a bad will can use ill even the good he has.”[†] For similar texts, with various nuances, see *In II Ethic*, no. 451; *De virtutibus in communi*, a. 7, ad 2 ; *In epist. ad Galatas*, ch. V, lect. 6, no. 332, ed. Taur., p. 637; *In Ev. Matth. expositio*, ch. VII, lect. 2, no. 148, ed. Taur., p. 138; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 5, ed. Taur., p. 461 b. The profound reason is in the existential priority of will in the structure of the person (*intelligo quia volo*), but more on this later.

[†] “Utimum rebus omnibus per voluntatem. Unde ex bona voluntate, qua homo bene utitur rebus habitis, dicitur homo bonus; et ex mala malus. Potest enim qui malam habet voluntatem, etiam bono quod habet male uti.”

¹⁸ The texts are pleased to report this rare privilege of the Saint. Cf. *Fontes*, p. 206. (Bernard Gui, who refers to the testimony of Friar Reginald, the secretary and confessor, p. 273; Peter Grasso, “Many held that he was a virgin as if he had just been born” (*Multi tenebant quod esset virgo, sicut ex utero matris suae*); likewise, with the same words, the abbot of Fossanova, Friar Nicholas, pp. 278–290. Brother Conrad of Suessa, “[Thomas] was chaste so as to be regarded as a virgin” (*et catus ita quod reputabatur virgo*), p. 326; also William of Tocco, p. 345; Bartholomew of Capua, “They heard it publicly said, and thus commonly held, that Thomas was a virgin, pure and undefiled” (“*Et audivit publice dici, et sic tenetur communiter, quod ipse fuit virgo, mundus et integer*”), pp. 373 and 385). So concludes the solemn testimony during the canonization given by John XXII.

¹⁹ The initial source is always Reginald of Piperno, the Saint’s secretary, who heard his last general confession: “of [Thomas] he testified before God that he was always found pure, like a five-year-old boy,” (Bernard Gui, *Vita*; *Fontes*, p. 206).

²⁰ The miraculous aroma is repeated in the second relocation of the body (seven years later), emanating not only from the body but also from all the vestments which “were shown to be fragrant, complete, and entire” (*reperita sunt odorifera, integra e illesa*), (*Vita* ch. XLXVII; *Fontes*, p. 211). During the process of canonization, this testimony is recounted by the Abbot (*Fontes*, p. 278), the other friar Nicholas of Fresolino (p. 281), Friar Martin of Pastina (p. 283, “a great fragrant scent” [*magna fragrantia odoris*]), friar Octavian of Babuco (p. 287), Nicholas of Priverno (p. 292, “a great fragrant

sweetness emerging” [*magna suavitate odoris re-fragans*]). All of these are first-hand accounts, and many more could be mentioned (cf. *Fontes*, pp. 301, 337, 354, 368, 380).

²¹ His qualification of “in the most foolish way” (*stultissime*) in response to the materialistic pantheism of David of Dinant (I, 3, 8: Gabriel Théry, *David de Dinant*, Kain, 1925) is well known and can be applied (it seems to me) also to the forms of dynamic evolution by A. N. Whitehead and Charles Harsthorne, and especially to Teilhard de Chardin’s evolutionary thought, which is in vogue at the moment (cf. the June 13, 1962 *Monitum* from the Holy Office). For more on Whitehead, see my *Introduzione all’ateismo moderno*, 2nd ed., Rome 1969, vol. II, pp. 824 ff. The literature on Teilhard’s pantheism is vast and now Karl Rahner is explicitly moving closer to his thought, especially in the *destructio Christologiae* presented in *Concilium*, no. 3 (1982), pp. 136 ff., titled: *Gesu, Figlio di Dio?* (Be sure to note Rahner’s customary caution when covering his own back amid his negations).

²² Ch. 5, no. 124, ed. Leo W. Keeler, Rome 1936, p. 80, lines 31–37. The Saint treats Averroes no better: “he perversely explains” (*perverse exponit*), (Aristotelem: no. 65, p. 6, lines 51 and 69), and “he is not a follower of Aristotle, but rather the perverter of Aristotle’s philosophy”

²³ For more on the explicit connection between Ficino and St. Thomas, see C. Fabro, “Influenze tomistiche nella filosofia del Ficino” in *Studia Patavina*, 3 (1959), pp. 396–413 (republished in *Esegesi tomistica*, pp. 313–328).

²⁴ DZ 1440–1441. Even Ficino’s work, in reclaiming personal immortality, is all directed against the invasion of Averroism during that century. The essence of Averroism is, on the negative side, the refutation of the “harmony between faith and reason” with the concomitant exaltation of reason (*gnosi*) above divine-historical revelation. Averroism is often in agreement with Epicurian morals and has never been eradicated. At the beginning of the 20th century, it exploded with modernism, which, despite the enlightened analysis and subsequent denunciation by St. Pius X, smouldered under the ashes and exploded after Vatican II, as we will discuss later. Only a miraculous conversion of people’s conscience will dissipate this dark cloud which hovers over the contemporary Church and

deprives the world of the salvific radiance of the truth of Christ, the God-man.

^a “fuerat scholaris eius Parisiis et in Regno; antiquus frater valde, homo magne vite et humilitatis, qui dicebatur notorie dictum fratrem Thomam de Aquino recepisse in Ordine Predicatorum.”

^b “Frater Jacobe, si fratres Praedicatores voluissent, ipsi fuissent scientes et intelligentes et nos idiotae, [si] non communicassent nobis scripta fratris Thomae.”

^c “Quod ipsi vere credebant Spiritum Sanctum esse cum eo, quia semper videbant ipsum habere alacrem vultum, mitem et suavem.”

^d “Dixerunt autem dicti Ebrei dicto cardinali quod incontinenti ipsi intraverunt dictam ecclesiam cum eodem fratre Thoma et audierunt eum loquentem statim totaliter immutatis fuerunt et vix poterant obviare seu contradicere dictis eius.”

^e “Quilibet habens voluntatem, dicitur bonus in quantum habet bonam voluntatem: quia per voluntatem utimur omnibus quae in nobis sunt. Unde non dicitur bonus homo, qui habet bonum intellectum: sed qui habet bonam voluntatem. Voluntas autem respicit finem ut obiectum proprium: et sic, quod dicitur, “quia Deus est bonus, sumus,” refertur ad causam finalem.”

^f “qui mecum est; ipse enim est filius meus qui doctrinam apostolicam et meam in omnibus est secutus, et Ecclesiam Dei sua doctrina illuminavit . . . qui mihi in gloria est aequalis excepto quod ipse in virginitatis aureola me excedit.”

^g “de quo testificor coram Deo quod, quod ipsum semper ita purum inveniri, sicut puerum quinque annorum.”

^h “et ferries instrumentis vix elevato lapide sepulturae, et patefacto Sacri Corporis pretioso thesauro . . . magnus inde odor exivit.”

ⁱ “Et aperto sepulcro tanta inde subito fragrantis odoris suavitas emanavit quod totam capellam, claustrumque ipsius monasterii, quod diffusum est, sic mira eadem suavitate replevit, ut non videretur patuisse defuncti corporis sepultura sed multorum aromatum apotheca. Quod de ipsius sancti

corpore exiens, prout ex sollicita curiosaque monachorum indagine corpus ipsum odorantium compertum est, mirifice fundebatur; et ex odore odoriferi corporis redolentem. . . . Conveniens autem fuit ut corpus illud etiam examine nonnisi odorem suavis-simum divina virtute redderet, de quo fetor mortalis criminis non existiisset.”

^j “Haec igitur scripta sunt quae ad praesens scribenda occurrunt contra erroneam et pes-tiferam doctrinam avertentium homines a religionis ingressu. Si quis his contradicere voluerit, non coram pueris garriat, sed scribat et scripturam proponat in publico, ut ab intelligentibus diiudicari possit quid verum sit, et hoc quod erroneum est auctoritate veritatis confutetur.” (*non tam fuit Peripateticus, quam philosophiae peripateticae depravator*) (ch. 2, no. 59, p. 38, lines 37–39); and later: “where we rightly said above that he is the perverter of Aristotle’s philosophy” (*unde merito supra diximus eum philosophiae peripateticae perversorem*), (no. 121, p. 78, lines 36–37).

^k “Haec igitur sunt quae in destructionem praedicti erroris conscripsimus, non per documenta fidei sed per ipsorum philosophorum rationes et dicta. Si quis autem gloriabundus de falsi nominis scientia, velit contra haec quae scripsimus aliquid dicere, non loquatur in angulis nec coram pueris: sed contra hoc scriptum scribat, si audet; et inveniatur non solum me, qui aliorum sum minimus, sed multos alios veritatis zelatores, per quos eius errori resistetur, vel ignorantiae consuletur.”

^l “Si quidam vero contra haec rescribere voluerint, mihi acceptissimum erit; nullo enim modo quam contradicentibus resistendo aperitur veritas, et falsitas confutatur, secundum illud Salomonis ‘Ferrum ferro acuitur, et homo exacuit faciem amici sui.’”

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