Aquinas's Views on Teaching

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Teaching, Healing and the Theological Dimension

As a teacher and philosopher, Thomas Aquinas sets out to investigate the nature of pedagogical activity in his treatise, *On the Teacher* in *Articles 1–4, Question 11* of the *Disputed Questions on Truth.*[1] His analysis of teaching and of the teacher's role are informed, as one might expect, by his epistemological views and theological beliefs. One of the first issues that Aquinas has to confront is a theological one, namely, whether or not one can describe any human being as a teacher if one believes that God is the pre-eminent teacher as the primary source of all knowledge. While the latter proposition may seem rather problematic to contemporary Western thought, it was an acceptable issue for discussion in Aquinas's time and is formulated by him in various ways in a number of the objections cited at the beginning of *Article 1.* Many of these appear to originate from the Augustinian tradition, together with some others from scriptural sources, and all of them argue along the lines that the Christian belief in God's noetic power is difficult to reconcile with our human capacity to function freely as independent cognitive beings.[2] In terms of pedagogy, this becomes a debate about the very existence of an authentic human pedagogy if God is believed to be teacher *par excellence.* Aquinas decides to deal with this problem at the outset.

He begins by identifying two areas as significant: the concept of form and the concept of external agency. It is the latter that typically defines teaching as that whose principal aim is to facilitate others to formulate an understanding of reality. Aquinas insists that proximate causality is intrinsic to the natural order of the universe and says that to deny this is unreasonable since the existence of a proximate external agency in no way diminishes the importance of the primary cause. This means, in the human context, that the teacher must be considered as an example of a legitimate external noetic agent whose business it is to stimulate knowledge in others. Before discussing this point, St. Thomas sets out to explain just what the acquisition of knowledge involves. All knowledge, he argues, is derived from basic noetic seminal principles which "pre-exist in us" *(Art. 1).* These "first concepts of the understanding" *(primae conceptiones intellectus)* are, according to Aquinas, immediately known through our ability to abstract what is

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intelligible from sensory data. This is an interesting point which sounds almost Platonic. Knowledge comes from knowledge, Aquinas seems to be saying, and initially originates in some primary form of immediate abstraction. He continues in a rather Augustinian way, by giving as examples of what he means, the understanding of being and of unity *(ratio entis, et unius)*, which, according to him, represent general cognitive principles that imply further noetic consequences. These principles constitute the point of departure for the acquisition of knowledge in the following way:

> When, therefore, the mind is led from these general notions to actual knowledge of particular things, which it knew previously in general and, as it were, potentially, then one is said to acquire knowledge. *(Art.1)*

The process implies an active noetic disposition that facilitates the acquisition of knowledge by an agent that will bring what is potentially knowable into actuality. Aquinas uses the example of healing where the doctor, by "strengthening" nature and prescribing medicines, assists nature as the primary agent of health in order to restore health to the sick person. The acquisition of knowledge is similar, Aquinas claims, since the noetic potential is active in each individual, and therefore either requires nature in the form of the natural reasoning processes, or the external agency of the teacher who can "strengthen" and support these processes, to bring about knowledge. There are two ways of being cured, he claims: on the one hand, by knowledge by nature itself unaided, or alternatively by nature with the assistance of medical help.[3] Likewise, we can learn by our own natural ability to reason and find things out by ourselves *(et hic modus dicitur inventio)* or alternatively, we may need someone else to assist our natural reasoning power, by instruction or tuition *(et hic modus dicitur disciplina)*. The latter, of course, is how the teacher moves and stimulates the student:

> the teacher furnishes the pupil's intellect with a stimulus to knowledge of the things which he teaches, as an indispensable mover, bringing the intellect from potentiality to actuality. *(Art.1 ad 12)*

Pedagogy is, in fact, an art, according to St. Thomas, and involves demonstrating to others the process by means of which one acquires knowledge for oneself:

> For the teacher leads the pupil to knowledge of things he does not know in the same way that one directs himself through the process of discovering something he does not know. *(Art.1)*

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The consequence of teaching as demonstration is thus defined by Aquinas as the art of facilitating others to engage in a voyage of noetic discovery by showing them how to apply general self-evident principles to specific issues, and then to particular conclusions, and then to others. This means teaching students how to reason, in effect, through a "chain" of argumentation. Crucial to such a process is the symbolic mode since it serves as the instrument by means of which we learn how to communicate and understand. St. Thomas sums up his definition of teaching as follows:

> Therefore, just as the doctor is said to heal a patient through the activity of nature, so a man is said to cause knowledge in another through the activity of the learner's own natural reason, and this is teaching. *(Art. 1)*

Towards the end of *Article 1*, St. Thomas reminds us of another kind of teaching, that is, where the content of what is taught is not based on self-evident principles or, at least if it is, this is not made clear. The knowledge acquired here, if accepted, rests on faith or opinion, although Aquinas adds, even in this case, rational principles operate since the student realises, for example, that accepting the noetic content means rejecting what is contrary to it.

In the final few sentences of the first article, Aquinas returns to the ultimate cause of human enlightenment, stating that the fundamental noetic principles have been divinely implanted in us and to that extent humankind reflects the divine state. God functions like nature, he concludes, as an interior and principal force, although he insists that this is not to deny that teaching, like healing, is a valid human activity.

Teaching How to Think

Acquiring knowledge in a dynamic noetic voyage of discovery of what is potentially if not actually known and demonstrating as a teacher what this involves as a process of enlightenment, defines the role of pedagogy for Aquinas. In his view, teachers must be aware of their role as cognitive-demonstrators so that communicating how to think constitutes for Aquinas the essence of what is taught. This process is personified much earlier by the Platonic Socrates, who in displaying his own attempts to facilitate others to reach conclusions, stimulated his audiences to act similarly in their own approach to the relevant subject matter under investigation. It is this that constitutes the interpersonal dialectic intrinsic to the Platonic dialogues. This is also captured in the role of the Socratic midwife in *Theaetetus 149a-151d* where Socrates describes himself as the facilitator of the birth of new knowledge by

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means of a philosophic therapy. This birth process is also metaphorically depicted in the Cave narrative of Plato's *Republic (514a-521a)* as a journey on the path to noetic enlightenment which must be undertaken by those who aspire to rule Plato's educational state.[3] Teaching others how to think is thus an essential part of the teaching process, as Plato conceives it, and the teacher, as noetic guide, must be capable of communicating this through content and activities that will stimulate students to actively engage in a critical way with the world around them. This principle is also enunciated in the writings of the twentieth century philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was a teacher himself, albeit a rather unconventional one during his second period at Cambridge. He puts this issue rather well in his Preface to *Philosophical Investigations:*

> I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.[4]

Even before his death, he echoed the same sentiments when he spoke to his Irish friend, Maurice Drury: "Drury, whatever becomes of you, don't stop thinking."[5] One might indeed claim this as the ultimate objective of all teaching and learning, namely, how to think appropriately about our experiences and ways of being.

The Teacher as Noetic Therapist

If the teacher, then, is to be viewed as a noetic therapist whose agency facilitates others to think effectively by demonstrating what the latter involves, Aquinas's comparisons of teaching with the physician's role in healing are very relevant. It is interesting that the contemporary German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, makes somewhat similar claims when he interprets what he believes occurs during the healing process when a doctor restores someone to health.[6] There is also the suggestion by Gadamer that some quality of mystery attaches to therapeutic relationships — something which cannot be quantified nor wholly identified. The French philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, also takes the view that there is an element of mystery intrinsic to the dynamics of interpersonal presence which will remain forever elusive and enigmatic.[7] This is an aspect of teaching which many teachers will easily recognise in their own pedagogical practice during those times when they instinctively recognise this unquantifiable and unpredictable element in the dynamics of the teaching-learning relationship. It is fair to say that Aquinas himself acknowledged the existence of this in pedagogy, certainly in terms of divine and supernatural intervention, despite his emphasis on the teacher's need to display the logic of argumentation and

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what the structure of thinking involves. He was also very aware of the role of the imagination both for cognition and for instruction, especially with regards to the flexibility offered by imagery that might appeal to various levels of understanding in more or less cognitively sophisticated ways.[8] It is now time to look briefly at the importance that the symbolic mode had for Aquinas as a pedagogical possibility in the communication of understanding.

Signs, Symbols and Communication

Aquinas's writings constantly emphasise the role of the symbolic as the means by which what is potentially knowable comes to be understood by our active intelligence:

> Our intellect derives intelligible likenesses from sensible signs which are received in the sensitive faculty, and it uses these intelligible forms to produce in itself scientific knowledge *(scientia)*
>
> *(Art.1 ad 4)*

In teaching, these intelligible forms are caused by the active intelligence and mediated by the teacher who presents the student with signs and images of what is intelligible. In this way, the teacher's words, whether heard or seen, function as an external means of causing knowledge. Aquinas remarks on the closeness of the teacher-student relationship by saying that the teacher's words are "more proximately disposed to cause knowledge than things outside the soul." *(ad 11)*.

As a self-declared Aristotelian, Thomas naturally recognised the importance of imagery resulting from the sensory powers and the role that the imagination plays in constituting the personal basis for forming images that are essential to the noetic process. This is also important for pedagogy where images are constantly utilised by both teacher and learner as a means of conveying and acquiring knowledge. This raises the question as to just what it is that occurs in the symbolic region when the teacher, as noetic agent, and the learner as potential knower, relate through the symbolic mode in such a way that a new understanding emerges. This is not just a question for pedagogy in particular but for human communication in general which is why Aquinas's analysis of the teaching-learning process is so intriguing. In effect, it offers us suggestions for investigating the kind of dynamics that are intrinsic, not only to pedagogy, but to human communication in general. Does that mean that human communication must now be defined as a permanent form of teaching and learning? This is, to some extent, what might be gleaned from the emphasis on dialectic in the Platonic dialogues where authentic discourse is understood to lead us towards the real. It is also a

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claim that is implied in the writings of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher, who opts for a democratising pedagogy aimed at social justice for those who are oppressed.[9] If indeed it is true that human communication of any kind represents an ongoing pedagogical process, then it follows that an analysis of teaching must *de facto* constitute an analysis of how we communicate with one another. This would undoubtedly make Aquinas's account of teaching all the more exciting since it would then be, by implication, an analysis of the nature of human discourse itself In this writer's view, if teaching means sharing knowledge with others[10], then it is true that much of human discourse is either explicitly or implicitly pedagogical in character and maps in principle and in practice the entire process of human communication. This is certainly recognised by Paulo Freire who tends to regard pedagogy as mapping human relationships in an almost exclusive sense. St. Thomas, like Freire, would agree, albeit from a different point of view, that good teaching means the effective communication of shared knowledge and it is certainly true that the dynamics of pedagogy and of pedagogical relationships do provide some very useful insights into the nature of human communication as an existential phenomenon. The communication process intrinsic to pedagogy is described by Aquinas in the following passage when he argues against the view that teaching is simply *transferring* knowledge:

> We do not say that a teacher communicates knowledge to the pupil, as though the knowledge which is in the teacher is numerically the same as that which arises in the pupil. It is rather that the knowledge which arises in the pupil through teaching is similar to that which is in the teacher, and this was raised from potency to act, as has been said.
>
> *(Art.1 ad 6)*

The pedagogical relationship is therefore, as Aquinas states here as previously, not a quantitative transfer of knowledge but a way in which a student in stimulated to learn by having his or her ability to know, activated. Teaching thus can truthfully enlighten the mind through the teacher's co-operation with the light of reason, supporting it externally "to reach the perfection of knowledge" *(ad 9)*. St. Thomas explains what this involves:

> For the teacher sets before the pupil signs of intelligible things, and from these the agent intellect derives the intelligible likenesses and causes them to exist in the possible intellect.[11] Hence, the words of the teacher, heard or seen in writing, have the same efficacy in causing knowledge as things which are outside the soul." *(ad 11)*

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Universal to all human communication, pedagogical and otherwise, is the existence of the symbolic as the basis for intellectual abstraction. This is not disputed by Aquinas even though he is careful to say that, although knowledge of reality is produced in us through the knowledge of principles, the latter is represented to us in the form of signs *(Art.1 ad 2)* which can often be somewhat ambiguous *(Art.1 ad 3)*. The latter is an important point since Aquinas regards the symbolic mode to represent a flexible medium which can represent things in ways that are paradoxically both clear and obscure;

> To some extent we know the things we are taught through signs, and to some extent we do not know them. *(ad 3)*

Symbols can both conceal as well as reveal and this is consequent on our previous knowledge of what it is which we are trying to understand.

Summa Theologiae

In the *Summa Theologiae I 117.1*, we find a somewhat similar approach to that of his treatise *On The Teacher* in *De Veritate* although there are some minor differences, particularly with regards to Aquinas's explicit rejection of the Platonic view which holds that knowledge emerges out of a process of recovery and recall.[12] However, although the Thomistic claim is that knowledge is acquired as a consequence of one's intelligence acting on what is potentially knowable, one wonders how essentially different is the Platonic concept of recovery from that of St. Thomas's theory of an active noetic process which can unpack the implications of what is contained in the seminal principles. That being said, Aquinas does repeat his claim in *Summa Theologiae* that the teacher causes knowledge by moving the student from potentiality to actuality and once again compares pedagogical activity to that of healing. Defining teaching like healing as an art, St. Thomas goes on to expand on some of the points made in *De Ver. 11.1* by identifying two pedagogical approaches: one which provides students with supports and instruments which can be intellectually used to acquire knowledge,[13] the other placing before the students an order of principles leading to conclusions. The methodology employed in both cases seems to involve logical procedures, which once again emphasises Aquinas's contention in *De Ver. 11.1* that the teacher's role consists in displaying how rationality functions in the acquisition of knowledge, something which also seems to be confirmed by his reference to Aristotle's claim that a demonstration is a syllogism which causes knowledge.[14] If this impression is correct, namely, that Aquinas's

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teacher is essentially communicating logical procedures by demonstrating what this involves to the student, then pedagogy, in this account, seems to be principally concerned with logical processes as the primary content of teaching and learning.

Teaching Ourselves

De Veritate, Q.11, Article 2 examines the issue of whether we can validly claim to teach ourselves. Once again, this would appear to be a rather strange subject to debate in the contemporary world in which all sorts of people argue that they can teach themselves a variety of things, from learning how to swim, to how to drive a car, to how to speak a new language. Indeed, at a more fundamental level, people claim that they taught themselves to walk and talk.[15] At the beginning of *Art.2,* a number of reasons are put forward supporting the latter claims, namely, that we can teach ourselves and, since these are formulated as objections, we know immediately from this format that Aquinas is going to argue, on the contrary, that we cannot be described as teachers of ourselves. Thus *objection 4*, states, for example, that knowledge by means of self-discovery must support the conclusion that we teach ourselves while *objection 5* argues that we can inspire ourselves and thus serve as our own pedagogues. Finally, *objection 6* concludes that if physicians can heal themselves, then similarly, each of us can function as teachers of ourselves.

Aquinas begins his reply by acknowledging that, while it is true that we can discover knowledge for ourselves and be the cause our own knowledge, this does not mean that we can teach ourselves. He explains this by arguing that since teaching implies the perfect activity of knowledge in the teacher, which then causes knowledge in the student, no one can be properly called their own teacher. This is another way of saying that we cannot be both potentially and actually knowledgeable in the same respect as teacher-student. This also means that the potential pre-existence of knowledge in the student is of a different order to the way in which it resides in the teacher as teacher. Aquinas sums up his conclusion as follows:

> it is impossible for one actually to have knowledge and not to have it, in such a way that he could teach himself *(De Ver. 11.2 ad 6)*

What is interesting here is that despite Aquinas's assertion that we can acquire knowledge by ourselves, the ability to teach must still be regarded as a quite unique and eminently superior way of communicating knowledge, where the teacher is identified as the active noetic agent who initiates the essence of the kind of communication that

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pertains to pedagogy. This emphasis is quite different to the way in which, for example, Paulo Freire describes the teacher as a liberating facilitator of a democratising form of knowledge which has social justice and equality as its principle aim, particularly for those who are marginalised. This difference in approach may also reflect the contrast between St. Thomas's hierarchical model of knowledge which posits God as the supreme teacher, followed by the angelic intelligences as intermediate pedagogues located between God and human beings, and Freire's egalitarian model where all are equal, teachers and students alike, as participators in a noetic process where each is trying to learn from each other more than they already know. However, perhaps Aquinas is also implicitly emphasising the noetic perfection of God which is perfectly omniscient and contains no potential knowledge whatsoever.

Angelic Teachers

In *Article 3,* Aquinas investigates another topic which sounds somewhat bizarre to the contemporary Western ear, namely, whether angels can teach human beings. As I have pointed out elsewhere,[16] the acceptance of angelic beings was by no means confined to Christians before and during Aquinas's time but was also a feature of Jewish and Islamic thought, not to mention its importance in classical times for such great thinkers as Plato and Plotinus.[17] Indeed, it is interesting that St. Thomas himself adopts a Platonic approach by describing the angel as an intermediary between divine and human, in this case, as an educator:

> We must bear in mind that, since an angel is between God and man, due order requires that he should have an intermediate mode of teaching, lower than God's but higher than man's. *(De Ver. 11.3)*

This leads to an interesting comparison between divine and human pedagogy. Aquinas begins by noting that, for the human activity of knowing, some matters can be known immediately, whereas other kinds of knowledge can only be acquired by examining other noetic principles. Aquinas sums this up by saying that we obtain knowledge of what we do not know through "intellectual light and self-evident concepts", the latter having the same relationship to the active intelligence as "tools to the craftsman". *(De Ver. 11.3)* God causes human knowledge in both these ways, claims St. Thomas:

> He adorned the soul itself with intellectual light and imprinted on it the concepts of the first principles, which are, as it were, the sciences the sciences in embryo, just as He impressed on other physical things the seminal principles producing all their effects. *(De Ver. 11.3)*

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This statement, which is once again reminiscent of Augustinian thought, is explained in some detail by St. Thomas. He begins by stating that since all human beings by nature share equally in the specific nature of intellectual enlightenment, God does not interfere with this natural order. However, God can be described as the cause of knowledge in human beings where new knowledge is caused by self-evident principles, through displaying certain sensory signs that allows the mind to bring into actuality what was implicitly contained in these noetic principles and "in a certain sense in potentiality." *(De Ver. 11.3)* According to Aquinas, the angel, on the other hand, who is more perfectly enlightened than human beings, can strengthen the latter's intellectual light infused by God, on the basis that anything imperfect in a given category, can be rendered more powerful through contact with something more perfect in the same category. The theory of angelic enlightenment of the human mind derives from Aquinas's religious and cosmological views (which are ultimately Neoplatonic in origin), which are effectively depicted in his image of the circle of enlightenment outlined in *Summa Theologiae I 89.1* where God as the central primary source of knowledge, radiates intellectual light, with the angelic intelligences always located closer to the divine source than human beings who reside much further away. This is because the latter's existence is at the boundary of the physico-temporal and the non-bodily non-temporal dimensions of reality.[18] It is important to bear this in mind when we read Aquinas's theory of angelic pedagogy and his claim that angelic intelligences also assist human learning by stimulating in us, through the imagination, the conception of certain ideas, which, in St. Thomas's view, can also occur during sleep and in states of insanity.[19] The point here seems to be that the angelic teaching of human beings is an extraordinary event, such as in forms of prophesy.[20] He claims in *Summa Theologiae I 117.2* that:

> angels are never enlightened by men concerning Divine things. But men can by means of speech make known to angels the thoughts of their hearts: because it belongs to God alone to know the heart's secrets. *(ST I 117.3)*

Teaching, Contemplation and The Active Life

In the final *Article* 4 of his treatise, *On the Teacher,* Aquinas explores the issue of whether or not teaching is related to the contemplative or active life. This seems to have been an important issue for St. Thomas himself who, in a number of places, declares that the contemplative life is superior to one which he defines as active.[21] He insists that contemplation represents the highest form of human experience since it

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is concerned with the contemplation of truth.[22] From a Thomistic point of view, this ultimately means contemplating God's essence as the source of all truth which defines contemplation as a wholly personal involvement that is orientated towards a continuous face to face encounter with God terminating in ineffable delight.[23] This is the broad context in which Aquinas will examine whether teaching as a process belongs to a life of contemplation or activity.

On the face of it, the answer seems obvious enough, certainly to any teacher, namely, that teaching is very much an activity and indeed this is Aquinas's conclusion also. St. Thomas begins by distinguishing the life of activity which is concerned with temporal matters, the focus of human acts, from the life of contemplative meditation which deals with the intelligible nature of things. The consideration of truth is the goal of the latter process, which, as was said, ultimately means contemplating the uncreated truth of God, whereas the active life, properly speaking, is, according to Aquinas, directed towards helping one's neighbour. Once again, Aquinas is identifying an aspect of the teacher's motivation which is definitive, namely, the vocational one of helping others to learn.

As regards teaching, the noetic content in itself can be defined as subject matter for contemplation, but as content-to-be-communicated it defines teaching as an activity. Aquinas concludes that, although in some sense teaching is a function of contemplation, more properly speaking it belongs to an active rather than contemplative life. He sums up this view as follows:

> The insight of the teacher is a source of teaching, but teaching itself consists more in the communication of things seen in the vision of them. Hence, the insight of the teacher belongs more to action than contemplation. *(De Ver. 11.4 ad 3)*

That being said, Aquinas does insist that the contemplative life is a source of teaching "just as heat is the source of the act of warming, and is not itself that activity." *(ad 4)*

He returns to this subject in *ST II 181.3* where he explains that, since teaching involves speech as the audible sign of an inner concept, teaching belongs to the active life because it involves directing by outward action one's inward conception of truth.[24] The object of this speech-action process, namely, the hearer, also defines teaching as part of the active life. However, Aquinas is careful to emphasise that teaching does belong to the contemplative dimension with regards to the actual conception and consideration of truth and the delight this engenders for the one receives it, which, for St. Thomas, is the teacher although clearly too the student has a similar role when he or she learns

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what is taught.[25] In a further footnote to this, Aquinas declares in *ST II-II. 182.3* that the contemplative life is not impeded by the active one. While admitting that a busy life which is concerned with external activity will affect contemplation, nevertheless Thomas believes that an active life can also be directed towards calming and directing our internal passions and from that point of view helps rather than hinders one's ability to contemplate.

The Value of Teaching

There is no doubt that Aquinas held teaching in high esteem. As a teacher himself throughout most of his life, he was conscious of its theological and political importance for the times in which he lived. His belief in its divine origin and of its central role in the enlightenment of the human mind runs parallel to and is derived from his understanding of the human intellect as that which essentially defines our form of life and the means whereby we resemble God. His defence of the life of the mind and his ability to display the force and energy of his own in the service of what he considered to be of most importance, personally testify to its centrality for him. It is also perhaps fitting that he is called the Angelic Doctor since his model of created intelligence undoubtedly is that of the angelic whose immediate apprehension and possession of the "fullness of intellectual light" *(ST I.58. 3)* designates the angelic intelligence as being truly intellectual, according to him. Aquinas often compares the latter to the human intellect which has to struggle discursively to acquire whatever knowledge it can. His respect for teaching as a human way of life is also undoubtedly linked to his perception of its function in assisting the human mind to function more effectively and above all, directing and encouraging it on the path to truth.

1 The translation of the text used here is that of McGlynn in *St.Thomas Aquinas The Disputed Questions on Truth Vol.II*, trans. by James V. McGlynn SJ, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 195, pp.77-101.

2 See *objections 1,5,7,8,9,11,15,16 and 17, Article* 1.3; Aquinas compares teaching and healing in a number of places. Cf. also *De Ver. 11, Art.2 & 2 ad 6.*

3 See Gadamer on this in *Dialogue and Dialectic*, Hans-Georg Gadamer, trans. by P. Christopher Smith, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1980, pp.73–92.

4 *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1974, p.vii.

5 *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. Rush Rhees. Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1974, p.170.

6 *The Enigma of Health*, Hans Georg Gadamer, trans. by Nicholas Gaiger and Nicholas Walker, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp.32–33.

7 In his writings, Marcel insists on constantly drawing attention to the mystery of being and of interpersonal presence. See, for example, *The Philosophy of Existence*,

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Gabriel Marcel, trans. by Manya Harari. Harvill Press, London, 1948, pp.1–31 and *Mystery of Being Vol.1*, Gabriel Marcel, Gateway Editions, South Bend, Indiana, 1978, pp.197–219.

8 See Patrick Quinn, "Faith as Noetic Power in the Writings of Aquinas" in *The Propagation of Power in the Medieval West*, ed. by Martin Gosman, Mo Vandeijagt & Jan Veenstra, Egbert Forsten, Groningen, 1997, pp.313-325.

9 See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire, trans. by Myra Bergman Ramos, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, 1972; *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Paulo Freire, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1972; *Education. The Practice of Freedom*, Paulo Freire, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976; *The Politics of Education*, Paulo Freire, trans. by Donaldo Macedo, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., Hampshire, 1985.

10 I am indebted to my daughter Barbara for this succinct definition of teaching as shared knowledge.

11 The possible intellect *(intellectus possibile)* in Aquinas's terminology refers to the *capacity* of the mind to understand as distinct the mind actively seeking understanding.

12 At the beginning of the discussion in *ST I. 117.1*, he discusses Averroes' views on the intellect rather than those of Avicenna (in *De Ver. 11.1*).

13 Aquinas gives as an example of this, putting before a student some sense-based illustrations which suggest similarities and differences.

14 Note the Aristotelian references in *De Ver. 11.1* and *ST I. 117.1*.

15 Wittgenstein makes some interesting claims on this in *Philosophical Investigations*, p.2e *et seq.*

16 See *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, Patrick Quinn, Avebury, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1996, pp.43–44.

17 See Plotinus on guardian angels in *Plotinus The Enneads*, trans. by Stephen MacKenna, introd. & ed. by John Dillon, Penguin Books. 1991. pp.166-173.

18 See my *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, pp.48-50 and *52-65* and also my article. "Aquinas's Model of Mind" in *New Blackfriars*, Vol.77, No.904, May 1996, pp.215–223.

19 See my *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God, pp.70-71* for some related remarks on a somewhat similar topic.

20 See, for example, *ST II-II. 172.2.*

21 See, for example, *ST II-II. 182.2.* His point here is of some contemporary relevance in that living a contemplative religious life today, say as a Carthusian monk or Buddhist priest, may be questioned at least in Western society, in terms of its usefulness.

22 See *ST II-II 180.1 et seq.*

23 See *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, pp.83-87.

24 This again suggest, as mentioned earlier, the universality of teaching as a human process which maps all human discourse, since human communication concerns externally directing our thoughts towards others.

25 There is an interesting link up here between Aquinas's concept of the teacher in the role of teacher-as-student when conceiving, considering and enjoying knowledge, and his concept of the student as the one-taught-by-the-teacher. The latter student, of course, must also enjoy a contemplative as well as active role in that s/he must also reach a stage of conceiving, considering and enjoying whatever knowledge is communicated by the teacher.

26 St. Thomas was proclaimed Angelic Doctor in 1527.

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