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# SAINT THOMAS AND THE RESTORATION OF CATHOLIC THINKING

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## Abstract

Bishop Pérouse founded in 1859 the 'Académie Saint Thomas d'Aquin' in his diocese. Twenty years later 'Æterni Patris' appears, in which, unlike Pius IX who was content to condemn modern philosophies and see in Thomism the effective remedy against modernisms of any kind, Leo XIII also proposes the solution: 'back to Thomas'! The encyclical engages the entire Catholic Church and the idea is to renew Catholic thinking by returning to the philosophy and theology of Thomas. It is said in 'Æterni Patris', 28: "Domestic and civil society even, which, as all see, is exposed to great danger from this plague of perverse opinions, would certainly enjoy a far more peaceful and secure existence if a more wholesome doctrine were taught in the universities and high schools—one more in conformity with the teaching of the Church, such as is contained in the works of Thomas Aquinas". Leo XIII wants to establish a common vocabulary and basic principles by virtue of which Catholics, especially priests, can face everyday problems. The famous Leonine edition also begins with Leo XIII. Then, on August 4, 1880, Leo XIII declared Thomas the patron of studies in Catholic schools, and Pius X, on July 29, 1914, asked the Catholic philosophy professors to teach the principles of Thomism in universities and colleges. In the same year, the 'Congregatio de Seminariis et Studiorum Universitatibus' elaborates a list of 24 Thomistic theses considered as 'tutae normae directivae'. After the death of Pius X, Benedict XV recommends the doctrine of Thomas and abrogates the 24 theses (1917). For all these reasons and many more, Thomas has always been proposed by the Church as a master of thinking and a model of the right method of doing theology. That is why Thomas bears the title of 'Apostle of truth', as Paul VI called him in the Apostolic letter 'Lumen Ecclesiae', 10. In short, "the minds of all, of teachers as well as of taught, rested in wonderful harmony under the shield and authority of the Angelic Doctor" ('Æterni Patris', 20).

*Keywords:* Thomism, neo-Thomism, paleo-Thomism, scholasticism, theology

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## 1. Preliminaries

I start in the following text from the formula: 'Which Thomism is up-to-date?', which sums up David Berger's conclusions that I am quoting below: "What remains of Thomism today? First of all, it should be noted that for the

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Catholic intellectual this question [...] can not be put aside. [...]. Secondly, a defensive attitude can even today - as in the past - be justified, not if it run the risk of declaring a particular interpretation of Thomas exclusively valid and automatically charge other thinkers with heresy; but if renounces to adapt the doctrine of Thomas to the spirit of the times, and makes instead the proprium of his doctrine fruitful in its function as an alternative to the contemporary *aporias*. Thirdly, it seems to me that the middle way, which the Magisterium has taken regarding content and method, not only corresponds the most to the thought of Aquinas (*via media*) but also is the most intelligible from a systematical point of view.” [1]

Further on, some historical considerations starting from the evolution of Thomism and its destiny in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of the modernity of Thomism and the position of Christian intellectuals are at stake.

In 1865, Otto Liebmann published the work *Kant und die Epigonen*. Each chapter of the work ends with the formula: „Also muß auf Kant zurückgegangen werden” (“so we have to go back to Kant”) [2]. Almost half a century later, in *Logical Investigations (Logische Untersuchungen - 1900/1901)*, Husserl launched the formula: “auf die ‘Sachen selbst» zurückgehen” (“we must go back to the ‘things themselves” [3, 4]. Fernand Van Steenberghe, in turn, speaks of ‘le retour à Saint Thomas’ in a collection of texts published on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday [5].

No one can dispute nowadays that approaching the history of medieval philosophy involves much more than a strictly historical interest. The motivation can be at least doubly distributed: the value as such of the medieval philosophical and theological systems, plus the interest that the doctrine of the medieval authors can still arouse nowadays. Therefore, the question is formulated in the following terms: does medieval philosophy still tell us something, to us, to those of today, it in general and Saint Thomas in particular? This problem, rather than its solution, covers several issues: the revival of the philosophy of Christian antiquity, especially Augustinianism, the revival of Thomism and Scottism. It can be seen, therefore, that some want a reborn Thomism and inaugurated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, others would be satisfied with a revitalized Augustinianism, another part appeals to Scottus. In the present case, after a summary of the schools that claim to be from the scholastics or from older forms of Christian thinking, the return to Thomas will be the strong point of Steenberghe’s intervention, whose reporter, briefly, I shall continue to be.

The encyclical *Æterni Patris* of Leo XIII (August 4, 1879) gives birth to an extraordinary Thomist movement. It is no less true that the Thomist movement split towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into two currents [4], let’s name them: progressive Thomism (or neo-Thomism) and conservative Thomism (or paleo-Thomism).

At the express request of Pope Leo XIII, Désiré Mercier (full name: Désiré-Félicien-François-Joseph Mercier, cardinal since 1907), founded a chair of Thomistic philosophy at the *Université Catholique de Louvain* (1882), a chair which will transform into *the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie* starting with

1899. Thomism thus becomes, in Louvain, a philosophy open to the contemporary world. Thus appeared, under Mercier's guidance, *Revue néo-scholastique*, *Annales de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie*, a *Cours de Philosophie* written by Mercier and his first collaborators, D. Nys and M. de Wulf. Things move quickly despite the fact that the first generation of Mercier's successors, unlike his collaborators, was less productive literary. Its role consisted rather in carrying forward the spirit inaugurated by the founding master. Other neo-Thomists follow: A. Michotte, N. Balthasar, M. Defourny, P. Harmignie. After the Second World War, the *Revue néo-scholastique* becomes the *Revue philosophique de Louvain* (since 1946) precisely to mark its openness to newer or older philosophical and theological currents. Thomist publications increase in number, course programs make way to new currents: Logic, Phenomenology, Philosophy of language. The Louvain movement is contagious. *L'Institut Catholique de Paris* opens to Thomism at the beginning of the last century, and in Milan, Father Agostino Gemelli (1878-1959, physicist and psychologist, is considered the most prominent Franciscan friar of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) publishes the *Rivista de filosofia neo-scholastica* inspired by the Louvain experience. Gemelli is also the founder and chancellor of the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* (Milan, 1921), in which the *Facoltà di Filosofia* professed a Thomism perfectly open to the current issues of those times. *École dominicaine du Saulchoir* (today, *Faculté Dominicaines du Saulchoir*) does the same and, especially through A.-D. Sertillanges and Roland-Gosselin, gives the Thomist teaching a pronounced progressive tone, as do the Jesuits. In 1937, Marie-Dominique Chenu publishes in Paris the book *Une école de la théologie: le Saulchoir*. Five years later, in 1942, the work was included in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* by Pope Pius XII. The reason? Ideas considered too progressive regarding the role of historical studies in Theology and the support of a new method of historical reading. The book will be exonerated and assumed by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council and republished: *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir*, Paris, Cerf, 1985. Neo-Thomist, Chenu enters the Dominican order at the age of 18 and is the founder of the reformist journal 'Concilium'. At the Second Vatican Council he was called as a *peritus* (expert) and has a serious contribution to the drafting of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965).

In addition to neo-Thomism (open to progress and modernist interpretations), there is also a rigid, conservative Thomism, principle being the letter, not the spirit of Thomas. This is the paleo-Thomism (without the historical sense, without the critical spirit and without openness to scientific and philosophical thinking), dominant for a long time in universities, Catholic seminaries or Dominican schools. These institutions professed an ultra-conservative Thomism that would somehow ruin Mercier's work through 'The Twenty-Four Fundamental Theses of Official Catholic Philosophy' ('Thomist Syllabus') imposed on Catholic schools under Pius X (Pius X recommends the study of Thomas the theologian stating that in metaphysical matters the invocation of Thomas can have serious consequences - the encyclical *Pascendi*

*Dominici gregis* presents the errors of modernism and under his pontificate neo-Thomism became the blueprint for Theology). The same conservative spirit will give birth to integrism, a movement against some thinkers with special merits (M.D. Chenu, Y. Congar, H. de Lubac). Maritain himself was at first a ferocious paleo-Thomist, an anti-modernist influenced by Cajetan. Paleo-Thomism still has a merit, it is true that it is a negative one: it compromises the rebirth of Thomism both in the Church and outside it, it sometimes even causes violent reactions. However, things are returning to normal and the *Università Gregoriana* is no stranger to this fact, the effort made to overcome the sclerosis in which Thomism had settled is known.

It is true that there is a historical aspect to this dispute. What is it about? Latin theology throughout the Middle Ages follows Augustine, at least until 1270 when the failure of Aristotelianism is noted, on the one hand, and Thomas asserts himself, on the other. The Franciscans intervene, Paris, Oxford with a Neo-Augustinianism in which Augustine is adjusted by Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism. This less than homogeneous episode does not last long, it is absorbed by Scottism. Only Malebranche will claim directly from Augustine, he and the 19<sup>th</sup> century ontologists who put their work under Augustine's patronage. Blatant cases of Augustinianism! Steenberghen catalogues them, not before acknowledging that Augustine still has admirers in the Church and beyond. This even after Leo XIII officially introduces the hegemony of Thomism. The fight does not stop. In 1930 it was 1500 years since the death of Augustine, 13 years later Father F. Cayré founds in Paris *L'Institut d'études augustiniennes* and *Biblioteca augustiniana parisiensis*, new editions of Augustine appear. In 1954, a great congress dedicated to Augustine takes place in Paris. The bottom line? Augustinian thinking has great affinities with the aspirations of the man of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Intervening in favour of the African bishop are also the Franciscans who consider themselves, through Scottism, superior to Thomism.

## **2. 'Back to Thomas'- some aspects of the revival of Thomism**

One thing seems to be extremely clear: the French Revolution did not serve Christianity in general and the Western one in particular, and the Restoration does not end the religious crisis. The revolution overturns traditional ideas and philosophy (Voltaire, the encyclopaedists, Hume, Kant) puts into question, therefore in danger!, the very foundations of Metaphysics and religion. Catholic thinking seems powerless to neutralize the subversive action of these hostile currents.

The first Catholic reaction will take the form of traditionalism, which bases certainty in moral matters on the concept of tradition (in this case the Old Testament). The matter does not hold and the Church itself believes that in Thomas the foundations of a restoration of Catholic thinking can be found. This is the place where the revival movement of Thomism originates, and the option in favour of Thomas is definitely ratified by the encyclical *Æterni Patris*, the

starting point of the extraordinary flowering of Thomism in the Church and in Catholic circles.

The consequences do not take long to appear and they have in mind the two currents mentioned before. Mercier has problems, he is denounced to the *Congregatio de Seminariis et Studiorum Universitatibus* (which mainly deals with the promotion and regulation of Catholic education). Why is Mercier denounced? Because he objected to the Louvain professors no longer teaching philosophy in French, but only in Latin (as the paleo-Thomists claimed). The Pope reacts, he is about to withdraw his trust in Mercier. But something happens: Cardinal Satolli, an admirer of Mercier, replaces Mazella as head of the previously mentioned congregation, Mercier is rehabilitated and the punitive measures against those from Louvain are withdrawn [6].

However, ultraconservative Thomism does not lose its virulence, it modifies its strategy and moves from the theological space to the secular one, especially in Germany. Ludwig Feuerbach, in *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), sees in Thomism a metaphysical theology responsible for man's alienation. "In Christianity, man was concentrated only on himself, he unlinked himself from the chain of sequences in the system of the Universe, he made himself a self-sufficing whole, an absolute, extra- and supra-mundane being. Because he no longer regarded himself as a being immanent in the world, because he severed himself from connection with it, he felt himself an unlimited being - (for the sole limit of subjectivity is the world, is objectivity), - he had no longer any reason to doubt the truth and validity of his subjective wishes and feelings." [7] He cites, to prove it, numerous texts from Thomas. Then, a neo-Kantian, Rudolf Eucken, published in 1886 *Die Philosophie des Thomas von Aquino und die Kultur der Neuzeit*, in fact a collection of articles published after 1882 as a reply to *Æterni Patris*. It makes no sense, Eucken believes, to revive in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a way of thinking specific to the Middle Ages. Thomism is linked to an outdated way of life because it subordinates reason to faith. Maybe Thomism wants to be a compromise between Aristotelianism and Christianity, maybe!, but this is not possible. All in all, Thomism is fundamentally incapable of assuming modernity, a fact that makes it downright undesirable [8, 9]. In 1889, appeared the work of a Catholic theologian with idealistic tendencies, Jakob Frohschammer: *Die Philosophie des Thomas von Aquin kritisch gewürdigt*. The work is also written against the encyclical of Leo XIII. A Catholic priest takes his work further, a priest from the University of Cologne, Johannes Hessen, avowed anti-Thomist, who writes *Die Weltanschauung des Thomas von Aquin* (Strecker & Schröder, Stuttgart, 1926), a text republished in 1955 under the title *Thomas von Aquin und Wir*. What does it say? That Thomas, dominated by the spirit of the system, is deprived of any contact with reality, that his philosophy is completely enslaved to Theology, that Thomas mistakes Philosophy with religion, succeeding in the strange performance of compromising them both! Thomas makes a fundamental mistake when he wants to Christianize Aristotle by sacrificing the patristic totally indebted to Plato and exaggerates with realism, hence the accusation against

Thomism of being an artificial syncretism. Therefore, Hessen concludes, going back to Thomas is nonsense. Hessen combats Thomism in the name of Christian Platonism, particularly in the name of Augustinianism, and concludes: “Zurück zu Thomas” can only be accepted in the sense of the seriousness that Thomas showed in the study of Christianity and Philosophy, and Thomism it should be made impossible forever [10]. The distrust in Thomas increases!

France also reacts against the revival of Thomism. A voluminous pamphlet appears in 1925 - *La scolastique et le Thomisme* (Gauthier-Villars, Paris) under the signature of Louis Rougier. Thomism, Rougier believes, is closely related to Aristotelianism and the latter one is nothing but a completely failed philosophy. Thomas is even guiltier: he wanted to reconcile reason and faith by transforming Aristotelianism through a distinction inappropriate to it, the distinction between essence and existence in created beings. This attempt fails in its turn and Thomas is incoherent and contradictory. The impasse of Latin scholasticism lies in the fact that it cannot rationally explain the revealed dogma except at the cost of an antinomy that vitiates the value of the proposed explanation or rejects the competence of reason in matters of dogma. The opposition is, at the limit, between the Jesuits and the Dominicans, the first theologians of man, the other theologians of God [11]. Rougier is honest in his own way. He was an honourable epistemologist and a good philosopher of science. Influenced by Poincaré and Wittgenstein, it is no wonder that he becomes a practitioner of logical positivism and logical empiricism. This explains why his objections to neo-Thomism are not necessarily philosophical but Christian and the result of a constant anti-Christian attitude fuelled by the sympathy he shows to Ernest Renan. The opposition to Christianity goes so far that in 1926 he translated Celsus, after Origen, a translation still in use today. Rougier's position does not arouse much sympathy and is not credible. Rougier had been accused of plagiarism by Gilson since 1925, he was a mythomaniac, he was neither a philosopher, nor a theologian, nor a historian, and many more others [12].

Italy, Thomas' homeland, is against Thomas. Giuseppe Saitta brings together a series of texts written in ‘Giornale critica della filosofia italiana’ in the period 1930-1932 under the title *Il carattere della Filosofia tomistica* (1934). He believes that he demonstrates the following fact: Thomistic eclecticism lays the foundations of a theocratic conception of society. Thomism is nothing but the apology, with a philosophical mask, of the papal theocracy which suppresses both civil power, individual spontaneity and inner life. The corrections brought by Thomas: the distinction of powers in the State, the right to revolt against a tyrant, the identification of natural law with reason, only contradict everything that Thomas claimed to correct, so that all Thomism is undermined by such contradictions. Thomas is a compiler, the greatest, it is true, of the Middle Ages, but no more than that! Saitta is convinced that the character of Thomistic philosophy is in no way speculative, but practical: it is essentially a philosophy of the papal theocracy. Thomism is a failed philosophy, and the reason for this failure is found in the absence of any speculative originality and in the absurd

fusion of irreconcilable elements. Thomism can be reduced to an easy game of switching from Aristotelianism to Platonism when Aristotelianism limps and remains mute. All of Thomas' work is dominated by a deep desire to accumulate the knowledge of his time, to rearrange and clarify it in such a way that it can serve the religious and political purposes of the papal theocracy. Thomas was the greatest medieval administrator of knowledge, but he was by no means an original philosopher. When Aristotle does not or cannot respond to his religious program, he has no difficulty in appealing to the Platonic-Augustinian school and widely exploits the insights of Pseudo-Dionysius, Platonists and Neo-Platonists [13].

Other Catholic philosophers, without speaking out against Thomism in order to avoid any form of conflict, prefer either to avoid it or to ignore it (M. Blondel, L. Lavelle, R. Le Senne, G. Marcel). Irenists (from the Greek εἰρήνη - peace), Steenberghen calls them [5, p. 221], but Irenists do not love the storm!, therefore Thomism has no future either, it is obsolete, Irenists think, and they say it half-heartedly!

The matter becomes so serious that Pope Pius XII intervenes with the encyclical *Humani generis* (August 12, 1950) regarding neo-Modernism (New Theology) and other contemporary theological deviations. Here he refers to the Irenists (*Humani generis*, 11 and 12: "these advocate an 'eirenism' according to which, by setting aside the questions which divide men"; "But some through enthusiasm for an imprudent 'eirenism' seem to consider as an obstacle to the restoration of fraternal union, things founded on the laws and principles given by Christ and likewise on institutions founded by Him") and he cites Thomas as an authority referring to *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIæ, q. I, art. 4 ad 3 (where he deals with the object of faith and whether it is something seen); q. 45, art. 2 (deals with the gift of wisdom and whether wisdom resides in the intellect as in a subject). It can be seen that the encyclical is also an indirect defence of Thomas against the exaggerations of the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*Humani generis*, 33: "Indeed Saint Thomas holds that the intellect can in some way perceive higher goods of the moral order, whether natural or supernatural, inasmuch as it experiences a certain 'connaturality' with these goods, whether this 'connaturality' be purely natural, or the result of grace").

In short, if we are "dealing with a *neo*-Thomism, it does not mean that this is, fundamentally speaking, another Thomism. If a *paleo*-Thomism and a *neo*-Thomism are distinguished, they are not separated as if they were two opposing hypostases. Paleo-Thomism and neo-Thomism are moments or ages of the same spirituality and not separate spiritualities." [14] It should also be said that if Thomas' cognitive interest includes the whole of Philosophy, he does not make creative work except in a relatively narrow field. Nothing is more natural, since revelation, teaching us only the truths necessary for the act of salvation, has in mind only those parts of Philosophy that concern the *existence* of God, the *nature* of God, the *origin, nature* and *destiny* of the soul. With one word, for Christian philosophers worthy of this name, faith exerts a simplifying influence and the originality of these philosophers is manifested in the areas directly

subordinated to the influence of faith. This area includes the doctrine about God, the doctrine about man and man's relationship with God. In the same way, we can talk about Christian philosophy in Thomas, and this because his philosophy is born in a Christian framework and leads us to Christ despite the internal autonomy he enjoys. In *Summa contra Gentiles*, at the beginning, Saint Thomas summarizes all the teachings of the Fathers of the Church on this matter. Thomas concludes: if people had at their disposal only reason to know God, the result would be that they would be *in maximis ignorantiae tenebris* (*Remaneret igitur humanum genus, si sola rationis via ad Deum cognoscentum pateret, in maximis ignorantiae tenebris*, I, 4 / "If the only way open to us for the knowledge of God were solely that of the reason, the human race would remain in the blackest shadows of ignorance") [15]. And in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 1, art. 1 the following idea appears: *Quia veritas de Deo, per rationem investigata, a paucis, et per longum tempus, et cum admixtione multorum errorum, homini proveniret, a cuius tamen veritatis cognitione dependet tota hominis salus, quae in Deo est* ("Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors") [16]. Reason needs help (*debilitatem intellectus nostri; debilitatem intellectus humani* - "the weakness of our intelligence" / "the weakness of human intelligence" [16, p. 8]), help it finds in faith. Thomas called this situation *revelabile*. I can summarize Thomas' position as follows: "His problem in the *Summa theologiae* was not how to introduce Philosophy into Theology without destroying the essence of Philosophy; it was rather how to do so without destroying the essence of Theology" [17].

We are put in a position to recognize, whether we want to or not, that throughout history, various doctrinal movements, more or less suspicious, have complained about the patronage of Saint Augustine and have resorted to Augustinianism to justify their most daring theses. Here I recall Protestantism, Jansenism and, closer to us, fideism. The Church always protested against these claims, and Augustine's cause was never confused, in the eyes of the Church, with that of the troublesome disciples. On the other hand, the fact that this happened, and in a constant manner as a matter of fact, could not be understood if, in certain points, Augustine's work did not lend itself, in one way or another, to these tendentious exegesis. Here is the reason why certain great thinkers distance themselves somewhat from the Augustinian doctrine. It is also the case of Saint Thomas [5, p. 272-281]. Thomism is an intellectualist doctrine, clear, balanced and coherent, which cannot be said about Augustinianism in the way these terms work for Thomism. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII, through the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, proposes Saint Thomas as a model for Catholic philosophers and theologians, the success of Saint Augustine registers a turning point, and his influence was maximum until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. After this date, the prestige that grows continuously is that of Saint Thomas.



### 3. Conclusions

The question that arises is that of the relationship between Thomism and Augustinianism. We have four points of view: exclusivist Augustinianism, intransigent Thomism, concordism, and historicism (regarding the two doctrines as irreducible to one another, but equally respectable). These positions are not in pure state, but it is worth noting that the majority of recent authors (after 1930) are partisans of conciliation, of concordism.

A few things to note:

- There are profound differences in temperament and concerns between the two doctrines. Augustine, for example, never tried to scientifically organize his doctrine; in short, we do not find in him the scientific methodology concerns typical of the scholar. The absence of systematization and of technical precision, the digression, the indistinction between Philosophy and Theology (corrected, however, by the implicit and constant orientation of the action towards God), the massive recourse to literary artifices are, for Augustinianism, incompatible with the scientific rigor that we find in Thomism. It follows that Thomas had serious reasons for separating from Augustine.
- On the other hand, doctrinal differences should not be exaggerated. That Augustine is a neo-Platonist, here is an undoubted thing, only that Augustinian Platonism is deeply transformed by the Christian sap so that it is often original. Things are no different with Thomist Aristotelianism. In relation to its Augustinian origin, we can say that Thomism is an Augustinianism consolidated and stabilized by a strong Aristotelian armor, itself perfected by the metaphysical additions of revelation and of neo-Platonism [5, p. 279-280]. If Thomism is superior technically and, consequently, doctrinally, Augustine bends and responds more easily to the aspirations of the modern soul. The revival of Augustinianism is neither a calamity nor a threat. Moreover, in the thinking of the popes, starting not only from *Æterni Patris*, the triumph of Thomism does not imply a rejection of Augustinianism. Scholasticism is a fulfilment of the teaching of the Church Fathers, in particular of Saint Augustine.

Thomas remains with Aristotle against all those lined up on Plato's side, so that Thomism is forced to reconstruct Christian philosophy on other bases than those laid by Saint Augustine [18].

When in *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II talks about Thomas, the pontiff has in mind "the enduring originality of the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas" [19]. And in *Æterni Patris*, 31 we read: "Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others [...]; be ye watchful that the doctrine of Thomas be drawn from his own fountains".

A cautious attitude, 'opportunities and dangers' towards neo-Thomism, the Catholic Church authority and the credibility of the revival of Thomism I find in the 'Conclusions' of Daniel Rober's article and I subscribe to them: "The

presumption of authority as a kind of birthright hinders neo-Thomism and prevents it from finding dialogue partners within the theological academy [...]. Even if neo-Thomism makes further gains in influence among Church authorities, it cannot regain credibility as an intellectual system without engaging opposing views and methods sympathetically [...]. It would do well for them, in seeking a way forward, to heed the words of John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*, a document to which they frequently advert for its praise of Thomas: ‘The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others’ (FR §49) and ‘No historical form of philosophy can legitimately claim to embrace the totality of truth’ (FR §51).” [20]

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