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Toward the Construction of Theology: Response to Richard McKeon

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The accomplishment of genius is both resource and inspiration: resource, because achievement lies like an endless quarry from which the future will draw and with which it will build; inspiration, because greatness stands as the embodiment of value, as an abiding influence which calls upon subsequent human effort. Accomplishment indicates what can be done, but one never repeats the past. To attempt to repeat is to play false even to that historical moment which was not itself the repetition of its predecessor. The past is not the present, nor can it be made to function for the urgencies and problems that are now. They are simply different kinds of time. But the foundational persuasion of humanistic education is that the past does continue to exist and to instruct within the present. It is within this context that I should like to comment upon Richard McKeon's paper.

McKeon has sketched something of the achievement of Bonaventure and Aquinas. He has joined them not to demonstrate that one was right and the other wrong, but to indicate the extraordinary comprehension of both: the integration within their theologies of the divergent enterprises of science, history, and philosophy; the uniqueness, energies, and methodological strengths of each and the complementarity of both. McKeon has called his outline an inquiry rather than an exposition; it is an investigation which he invites others to join to discover the bearing of these works upon the problematic of our times. This is to move our discussion from simply studying Saint Thomas or Saint Bonaventure to studying under them. I should like to take up this invitation in my comment upon the middle section of his paper. Rather than analyze each statement or the interpretation of each historical fact, I should like

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to continue the lines of his inquiry as it provides the resources for contemporary theology.

My thesis is that this can be done in three ways.

1. The restoration of theology as an architectonic knowledge, as a wisdom different from and in serious interconnection with the other arts and sciences of man.

2. The establishment within theology of universal theological arts, that is, arts in the medieval sense of disciplines and methods, skills which permeate and are employed in all theological reflection: systematic, constructive, moral, ascetical, liturgical, comparative, and legal. I propose that among these arts, present and busy, are: hermeneutics or semantics, methodology, philosophy, and history.

3. The derivation of theology out of the specifically religious inquiries of men, that is, that theology attend more seriously and more carefully to the occasions of its existence and vitality in the religious experience and desires of men, in the movement of man toward God or in the movement of God toward man.

Let me explain each briefly.

I

McKeon has noted that theology was in vital contact with the sciences and arts of the thirteenth century. Bonaventure and Aquinas maintained and insisted upon this contact, but did so in radically different ways. Bonaventure “reduced”—led back—all of the sciences to theology and theology to the mystical possession of God. This was not simply because any knowledge which stopped short of God’s revelation in Christ and which attempted completeness and autonomy was finally false.¹ More important, one must enter dialectically into each human inquiry and demonstrate that these knowledges were particularizations of the light which enlightens every man and which drives him to discover various meanings: from artifacts to natural forms to intellectual truths to truths that save “because the multiform wisdom of God, which is lucidly taught in sacred Scripture, is hidden in every knowledge and in every

¹“Philosophica scientia via est ad alias scientias; sed qui ibi vult stare cadit in tenebras” (*De donis spiritus sancti* 4.4). The edition of Bonaventure used throughout these comments is that of the *Opera omnia* (Ad Clara Aquas [Quaracchi]: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902; hereafter cited by volume number and page) (5:475b–476a). Cf. “Christus unus omnium magister,” par. 15. (5:571b). “Si ergo ad notitiam creaturae pervenire non potest, nisi per id, per quod facta est, necesse est ut *verbum verax praecedat te*, in Ecclesiastico” (*In hexaëmeron* 1.10 [5:331a]). Cf. *In hexaëm.* 1.17 (5:332); 4.1 (5:349a); 6.2–4 (5:360b–361b); 7.1–14 (5:365a–367b). The third *Collatio* puts the position strongly and succinctly: “Unde omnes, qui non habet hanc fidem, manum habet amputatam” (*In hexaëm.* 3.9 [5:345a]).

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nature. . . . And it is also clear how full is this way of illumination and how in everything which is sensed or known, *interius lateat ipse Deus*.”² Sacred Scripture is the key because each thing in its deepest truth resembles the Word of God in which it was uttered, and so each thing can suggest the ways in which men should live and the mystical union between God and the soul.³ The organic unity of the sciences with theology in Bonaventure lies both in the illumination out of which they come and in Christ who is the *radix intelligentiae omnium*.⁴ As Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, is the reality in which all things are created, so to know them in any depth is to know them in him. He is the medium of all sciences.⁵ It would be difficult to exaggerate the centrality of Christ in Bonaventure.⁶ He is

²“Et sic patet, quomodo *multiformis sapientia Dei* (Eph. 3:10), quae lucide traditur in sacra Scriptura, occultatur in omni cognitione et in omni natura. Patet etiam, quomodo omnes cognitiones famulantur theologiae; et ideo ipsa assumit exempla et utitur vocabulis pertinentibus ad omne genus cognitionis. Patet etiam, quam ampla sit via illuminative, et quomodo in omni re, quae sentitur sive quae cognoscitur, interius lateat ipse Deus” (*De reductione artium ad theologiam* 26 [5:325b]; cf. *ibid.* 7 [5:322a]). Reduction can mean various things in Bonaventure: “reduci est ad aliquid dupliciter: aut sicut ad principium, aut sicut ad terminum” (*In I sent.* 26.3, ad 1 [1:458]). Fernando Gneo comments: “Anzitutto va ricordato che s. Bonaventura usa il termine *reductio* in contesti molto differenti (Gilson ne conta ben cinque). Ma in fondo, la *reductio* è sempre propria di una realtà incapace di sussistenza assoluta e bisognosa di un riferimento ad altro da cui, pertanto, è essenzialmente distinta. Quindi la *reductio* prende la dimensione di una vera e propria *mediazione* (fondazione e razionalizzazione) del *dato* che altrimenti resterebbe infondato. ‘Verbum . . . est medium metaphysicum reducens, et haec est tota nostra metaphysica . . . scilicet illuminari per radios spirituales et reduci ad summum.’ *In hexaëm.*, 1.17” (Fernando Gneo, “La *reductio artium ad theologiam* secondo S. Bonaventura,” in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge*, Actes du Quatrième Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale [Montréal: Institut d’Etudes Médiévales, 1969], pp. 634–35; hereafter cited as *ALPMA*). This same organic unity of the sciences moving toward the vision of God is the object of development in *De donis spiritus sancti* 4.2 ff. (5:474a ff.).

³*De reductione artium ad theologiam* 5 (5:321a).

⁴“Horum ostium est intellectus Verbi increati, qui est radix intelligentiae omnium; unde qui non habet hoc ostium, intrare non potest. Philosophi autem habent pro impossibili quae sunt summe vera, quia ostium est eis clausum” (*In hexaëm.* 3.4 [5:343b]). Christ as the source of the illumination of the sciences entitles him alone to be called “teacher.” “Merito igitur soli Christo et non alii attribuenda est auctoritas officii, ut singulariter *unus Magister* dicatur, eo quod ipse est fontale principium et origo scientiae humanae. Under sicut unus est sol, tamen multos radios emittit; sic ab uno Magistro, Christo, sole spirituali, multiformes et distincti rivuli ab uno fonte egrediuntur, unus tamen est fons, qui in tot rivulos sine sui defectibilitate (se) multiplicat; sic ab uno fonte aeterno ab uno Magistro, Christo, sine sui defectibilitate egrediuntur rivuli diversarum scientiarum” (Sermo i, Dominica xxii post Pentecostem, “Magister, scimus quia verax es et viam Dei in veritate doces” [9:442a]; cf. “Christus, unus omnium magister” 7–9 [5:569a–b]).

⁵“Propositum igitur nostrum est ostendere, quod in Christo *sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae Dei absconditi* (Col. 2.3), et ipse est medium omnium scientiarum” (*In hexaëm.* 1.11 [5:331a]). The remainder of this initial *Collatio* is devoted to demonstrating that Christ is the medium for metaphysics, physics, mathematics, logic, ethics, politics, and theology.

⁶“Secundo docet, ubi debet *incipere*: quia *a medio*, quod est Christus: quod medium si negligatur, nihil habetur” (*In hexaëm.* 1.1 [5:329]).

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the ultimate intelligibility or meaning of each thing—and so the inquiry of any science only reaches a definitive or stable grasp of its subject matter when it is found in its relationship to Christ, the integral subject of theology.⁷

Aquinas, in sharp contrast, distinguishes irreducibly among the sciences in terms of their proper subject matter, but unites them theologically without annihilating these distinctions. There was that theology which was metaphysics, whose essential function as first philosophy was the analytic examination and establishment of the initial presuppositions of all the other sciences: their initial assertions, axiomatic sets, foundational prerequisites, and primitive concepts.⁸ There was that other theology, or *sacra doctrina*, whose relationship with philosophy or the sciences was threefold:

Therefore in *sacra doctrina* we are able to employ philosophy in three ways. First, to demonstrate those things which are the preambles of faith, which it is necessary to know in faith, as those things which can be established by natural reasons about God, as for example that God is, that He is one, and other things of this type or whatever is established about either God or man in philosophy, which faith presupposes. Secondly, to clarify through some resemblances those things which are of faith, as Augustine in his work *On the Trinity* employs resemblances taken from philosophic teachings to clarify the trinity. Thirdly, to resist those who speak against the faith, either by showing those things to be false or by showing that they are not necessary.⁹

⁷“Clavis ergo contemplationis est intellectus triplex, scilicet intellectus *Verbi increati*, per quod omnia producuntur; intellectus *Verbi incarnati*, per quod omnia reparantur; intellectus *Verbi inspirati* per quod omnia revelantur. Nisi enim quis possit considerare de rebus, qualiter originantur, qualiter in finem reducuntur, et qualiter in eis refulget Deus, intelligentiam habere non potest” (*In hexaëm.* 3.2 [5:343a]). For Christ as the integral subject of theology, cf. *In I Sent.*, Prooemium 1 (1:76). For this reason, only theology or *sacra doctrina* was a *scientia perfecta*, “quia incipit a primo, quod est primum principium, et pervenit ad ultimum, quod est praemium aeternum. . . .” It is as perfect wisdom that it completes what philosophy can only begin: “Ipsa enim sola est *sapientia perfecta*, quae incipit a causa summa, ut est principium causatorum, ubi terminatur cognitio philosophica; et transit per eam, ut est remedium peccatorum; et reducit in eam, ut est praemium meritorum et finis desideriorum” (*Breviloquium* 1.1 [5:310a–b]).

⁸“De quibus omnibus est theologia, id est scientia divina, quia praecipuum in ea cognitorum est deus. Quae alio nomine dicitur metaphysica, id est trans physicam, quia post physicam discenda occurrit nobis, quibus ex sensibilibus oportet in insensibilia devenire. Dicitur etiam philosophia prima, in quantum aliae omnes scientiae ab ea sua principia accipientes eam consequuntur” (*Expositio super librum Boethii de trinitate* 5.1.c [hereafter cited as *In de trin.*]; cf. *In metaphysicam Aristotelis commentarium*, Prooemium. S.T., I,1,8.) Yet the sciences remain irreducibly distinct from each other and metaphysics. Cf. *In de trin.* 5.1, ad 6.

⁹“Sic ergo in *sacra doctrina* philosophia possumus tripliciter uti. Primo ad demonstrandum ea quae sunt preambula fidei, quae necesse est in fide scire, ut ea quae naturalibus rationibus de deo probantur, ut deum esse, deum esse unum et alia huiusmodi vel de deo vel de creaturis in philosophia probata, quae fides supponit. Secundo ad notificandum per

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What Aquinas is elaborating is an intimate unity without a reduction.¹⁰ Philosophic reflection or science stands as the human propaedeutic to the initiations of sacred teaching in faith; *sacra doctrina* conjoins its own inquiries with the philosophic for the disclosures of its own subject matter; and finally theology, judging the products of other inquiries as coordinate with or repugnant to its own evidence, turns to philosophic investigation for the examination of these contradicting positions. For Aquinas, theology integrates the work of the other sciences like a medieval cathedral, not by identifying with them or transposing them into theology, but by giving them an order, a context in man's radical orientation toward truth, since it belongs to wisdom to give order and judgment.¹¹

My point is not that either Bonaventure or Aquinas is uniquely correct, but that both of them make theology a different kind of thing, an architectonic knowledge in serious and systematic sympathy with the sciences and arts of these times. The *Summa Theologiae* or the *Reductio Artium ad Theologiam* evince this contact, and the varieties of other possible ways in which this conjunction could emerge are indicated within the writings of their colleagues and successors.

This is not the case in contemporary theology—and not because “knowledge has expanded beyond the possibility of a single man to comprehend what is known.” I suspect that this has been the case for thousands of years. Rather, since the Renaissance, theology has attempt-

aliquas similitudines ea quae sunt fidei, sicut Augustinus in libro de Trinitate utitur multis similitudinibus ex doctrina philosophicis sumptis ad manifestandum trinitatem. Tertio ad resistendum his quae contra fidem dicuntur sive ostendendo ea esse falsa sive ostendendo ea non esse necessaria” *In de trin.* 2.3.

¹⁰ “Aquinas makes the contrast between the two ways of ordering the sciences explicitly: “. . . aliarum scientiarum principia vel sunt per se nota, et probari non possunt: vel per aliquam rationem naturalem probantur in aliqua alia scientia. Propria autem huius scientiae cognitio est, quae est per revelationem: non autem quae est per naturalem rationem. Et ideo non pertinet ad eam probare principia aliarum scientiarum, sed solum iudicare de eis: quidquam enim in aliis scientiis invenitur veritati huius scientiae repugnans, totum condemnatur ut falsum: unde dicitur II Cor. 10 [4]: consilia destruentes, et omnem altitudinem extollentem se adversus scientiam Dei” (*S.T.* 1,1,6, ad 2). The further and more positive relationship of *sacra doctrina* to secular knowledge is explained in a previous answer to an objection: “. . . haec scientia accipere potest aliquid a philosophicis disciplinis, non quod ex necessitate eis indigeat, sed ad maiorem manifestationem eorum quae in hac scientia traduntur. Non enim accipit sua principia ab aliis scientiis, sed immediate a Deo per revelationem. Et ideo non accipit ab aliis scientiis tanquam a superioribus, sed utitur eis tanquam inferioribus et ancillis; sicut architectonicae utuntur subministrantibus, ut civilis militari. Et hoc ipsum quod sic utitur eis, non est propter defectum vel insufficientiam eius, sed propter defectum intellectus nostri; qui ex his quae per naturalem rationem (ex qua procedunt aliae scientiae) cognoscuntur, facilius manuducitur in ea quae sunt supra rationem, quae in hac scientia traduntur” (*S.T.* 1,1,5, ad 2).

¹¹ “Cum enim sapientis sit ordinare et iudicare . . .” (*S.T.* I, 1,6; cf. *In meta.*, Prooemium). For the fundamental relationship between faith and truth, cf. *S.T.* II–II,1,1.

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ed to become a “science,” as opposed to a “wisdom,” that is, a specialized knowledge alongside of others, one knowledge among many, sometimes forensic, sometimes constructive, often out of touch with scientific investigations or finding itself more threatened than enriched by the new science. The physics and mathematics of the thirteenth century posed enormously vital questions to theology as it touched upon the transcendence or simplicity of God, the nature of infinity, or the reality of Christ. It would be difficult to trace a similar dialogue in the nineteenth century, as the location for theology had often become the isolated seminary or the professional and self-sustaining divinity school, with textbooks become polemical and parochial, theology feeding off theology, theology responding to other theologies.¹² Even today, despite the enormous changes within divinity studies, it remains true to assert that, by and large, systematic theologians are relatively unimportant within American intellectual culture, that they neither enlighten nor contextualize vitally what we are about, and that the architectonic has passed to sociology, education, and psychology, to novelists such as Thomas Mann or James Joyce, or to philosophies such as existentialism or the positivism of the unified sciences.

If this is true, then the rearticulation of the architectonic is one of the primary tasks of contemporary theological methodology: How can theology engage the other disciplines, the arts and sciences, the various works of men? One will not repeat the solutions of Bonaventure and Aquinas because our questions are different, but move to a resolution structured by variant theological methodologies and occasioned by the uniqueness of our problems. Much of the vitality and the energy of theology should issue from the questions and concepts, the experiences and reflections that at first sight have nothing to do with theology, which emerge from men in the vastly different aspects of the human, gathering a depth of contact with the human even more effectively when it is mediated through the arts and sciences, mediated by study, discipline, and refinement.

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But this is not enough if theology is to exist as an academic and serious knowledge. It must not only be related to the other sciences, but it must possess a reflective seriousness about its own procedure which would insure the validity and strength of its assertions. Another reason that so

¹² Cf. the judgment of Father Charles E. Curran in his presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America (Detroit, June 15–18, 1970), in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention* (Bronx, N.Y., 1970), pp. 219–20.

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much constructive theology fails to tell upon the culture lies with the internal weakness of the discipline. Would it be unfair to maintain that theologies rise as quickly as a passion and then as easily slip from presence and memory, that terms are used casually and emotively, that hard evidence is often wanting or mingled indiscriminately with conclusions, that historical assertions are oversimplified to the point of parody, that current prejudices are rhetorically engaged, and that sweeping generalizations are made whose warrant seems slender upon analysis?¹³

McKeon has indicated how the development and application of the liberal arts—exegetical grammar, judicative rhetoric, with logic or dialectic—led to the formation of a theology, moving from the resolutions of discordant canons to the elaboration of *sententiae*, initially through a *Sic et non* and then through the compilations of Peter Lombard. What I should like to argue is that our contemporary theology could well take a leaf from this history, that our discussions of methodological reform within theology might learn from the development of those hundreds of years in which systematic theology was emerging. A new articulation and application of the liberal arts to theology in the form of “theological arts” could steady and strengthen a discipline which often seems vague and inconsequential. This would not be to impose an a priori procedure upon theology, but to induce and generalize what are already pervasive skills in the workings of the better theologians; what I should like to suggest is that these need to be articulated, specified, established, regulated, and interrelated if theology is to deal in a careful, productive manner with serious meaning and truth.¹⁴ I should list at least four.

First, hermeneutics or semantics—what the Middle Ages often called grammar and which Marius Victorinus followed by Rabanus Maurus defined as the *scientia interpretandi*.¹⁵ It is the primary ability to deal with

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 220–24.

¹⁴ It is critically important not to read into the medieval *artes liberales* the doctrines and practices of the twentieth century on humanistic education. In the Middle Ages, the liberal arts were universal skills or developed abilities or disciplines which could be brought to bear upon any subject matter. Cf. Richard P. McKeon, “The Transformation of the Liberal Arts in the Renaissance,” in *Developments in the Early Renaissance*, ed. Bernard S. Levi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1972), pp. 164–68. Aquinas agrees with Hugh of St. Victor that these arts must first be learned by anyone who wishes to do philosophic reflection (cf. *In de trin.* 5.1). Contrast this approach with the more content-oriented approach of Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., *A History of Theology*, trans. and ed. Hunter Guthrie, S.J. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968), pp. 12–14.

¹⁵ Maximi (*sic*) Victorini, *De arte grammatica*. “Grammatica quid est? Scientia interpretandi poetas atque historicos et rectis scribendi loquendi ratio” (cf. Heinrich Keil, ed., *Grammatica Latini* [Lipsiae: Teubner, 1855–80], 6:188). The attribution of *De arte grammatica* is notoriously problematic. For an identical definition, see Audacis, *De scauri et palladii libris excerpta per interrogationem et responsionem*, *ibid.*, 7:321. While Donatus himself does not define grammar, Sergius does, commenting upon Donatus: “Ars grammatica

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structures of meaning, of symbols within their own context as well as within their effective histories and successive applications, and of literary form, so that poetic statement is not physics and mathematics is not theology. It is both the ability to receive and the ability to author, to read and to speak (write) in such a way that the symbols deliver meaning, that what is read or what is said “makes sense.” This skill in interpretation is imperative not only for biblical criticism as *Formgeschichte* or *Redaktionsgeschichte*, but also for the writings of Fathers or councils and, through philosophical semantics, the history of philosophic thought. It is not a mastery of each of these fields, but a theological discipline which enables one to move through these texts with sensitivity and insight, looking for clues and pluralistic meanings within the abiding richness of statements, without simple-minded reduction of assertions to a single series of meanings or nonsense.

Second, methodology or argumentation. In the second book of his *Eruditio didascalica* or *Didascalicon*, Hugh of St. Victor collapses the distinction between rhetoric and dialectic to allow the former Ciceronian understanding of rhetoric to emerge: an ability to investigate either by discovery or invention and to articulate, order, and revise what has been obtained.¹⁶ Methodology as a pervasive art within theology should be,

praecipue consistit in intellectu poetarum et in recte scribendi loquendi ratione.” *Explanationum in artum donati*, *ibid.*, 4:486. Cf. also Aspri, *Grammatici ars*: “Grammatica est scientia recte scribendi et enunciandi interpretandique poetas per historiam formatam ad usum rationemque verborum” (*ibid.*, 5:547). Dosithei Magistri, *Ars grammatica*: “Ars grammatica est scientia emendati sermonis in loquendo et scribendo poematumque ac lectionis prudens praeceptum” (*ibid.*, 7:376). It was this tradition that Rabanus Maurus recapitulates for the Middle Ages in the *De clericorum institutione*, in which he repeats the definition of Marius Victorinus and applies this art to scriptural interpretation. The cleric must learn the figures such as “allergoria, aenigma, parabola. Quorum omnium cognition propterea Scripturarum ambiguitatibus dissolvendis est necessaria quia sensus ad proprietatem verborum sic accipitur, absurdus est” (*De clericorum institutione*, 3.18; *PL* 107:395b). Baldwin maintains that *grammatica* dominated the trivium until a shift of emphasis began in the eleventh century. *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928). John of Salisbury urges grammatical studies in the model of Bernard of Chartres, which was the interpretations, imitation, and discussion of great writings (*Metalogicon* 1.24. *PL* 199:853 ff.). For the subsequent history of the use of grammar in the Middle Ages, see J. Reginald O’Donnell, “The Liberal Arts in the Twelfth Century with Special Reference to Alexander Nequam,” *ALPMA*, pp. 126–35, with the discussion which follows on pp. 148–56. See also, in the same volume, Heinrich Roos, “Le Trivium à l’université au XIIIe siècle,” pp. 193–97 and the discussion which follows on pp. 198–203.

¹⁶ Hugonis de S. Victore, *Eruditionis didascalicae* 2.31. “Ratio disserendi integrales partes habet, inventionem et iudicium; divisas vero, demonstrationem, probabilem, sophisticam. Demonstratio est in necessariis argumentis, et pertinet ad philosophos. Probabilis pertinet ad dialecticos et ad rhetores. Sophistica ad sophistas et cavillatores. Probabilis dividitur in dialecticam et rhetoricam, quarum utraque integrales habet partes inventionem et iudicium. Quia enim ipsum genus, id est *artem dissertivam*, integraliter constituunt, necesse est ut in compositione omnium specierum ejus simul inveniatur. Inventio est quae docet invenire argumenta et constituere argumentationes. Scientia iudicandi, quae de utroque,

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similarly, either the ability to establish or discover evidence or to search out the implications and entailments of evidence; it formulates genuine questions and provides for a clear movement toward the foundations of discussion or the area of investigation and a precision or modesty about what is asserted in consequence of the data given or the facts formulated. In both Bonaventure and Aquinas, argumentation and its evidential basis are precise, and the question to be treated is carefully determined. Thus, each resolution is open to counterargument on either the meaning of terms, the adequacy of evidence, or the movement of thought.¹⁷ Methodology as an art would not set out the various pro-

judicare docet" (PL 176:764; emphasis mine). It was this combination of rhetoric and dialectic which was the "dissertive art" and which with grammar formed the trivium, which Hugh called *logica*. Thus he can write: "Logica dividitur in grammaticam et disertivam [sic]. Dissertiva dividitur in demonstrationem probabilem et sophisticam. Probabilis dividitur in dialecticam et rhetoricam" (*Eruditiones didascalicae* 3.1; PL 176:765).

¹⁷ The formative influence of the liberal arts on Aquinas is interesting to trace through his studies at the University of Naples. Peter Calo notes that he was sent to Naples "ut esset grammatica, dyalectica, et rhetorica eruditus adprime." This purpose was somewhat aborted, as none of the early biographers mention any study of rhetoric. While they agree that Aquinas's studies in the trivium were confined to grammar and logic, they disagree about the division among instructors. Peter Calo: "Nam cum martinum praeceptorem in grammatica in brevi excederet, traditus est magistro petro ybernico, qui in logicalibus et naturalibus eum instruxit" (*Vita* 4, *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis*, curia et labore D. Prummer, O.Pr. [Saint Maximin (Var): Revue Thomiste, 1911-], fasc. 1. p. 20; hereafter cited as *Fontes*). William of Tocco: "Unde puer de utriusque parentis consilio Neapolim mittitur, ut sub Magistri Martini grammaticalibus et logicalibus, et Magisteri Petri de Ibernica studiis in naturalibus edocetur" (*Vita* 5, *Fontes*, fasc. 2, p. 70). Bernardus Guidonis: "... persuasit parentibus ejus ut neapolim mitteretur ad studium liberalibus artibus imbeundus. . . . In brevi itque tempore cum in grammaticalibus et logicalibus ac in naturali philosophia plurimum profecisset . . ." (*Vita* 4, *Fontes*, fasc. 3, p. 170). Why no study of rhetoric? Perhaps the clue lies with Peter of Ireland. There is an unedited manuscript in the Vatican library which may cast some light upon this absence, Peter's commentary upon the *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *On Interpretation* entitled *Scriptum super porfirium peremeneas magistri petri de ybernia conventus frarum minorum de Bononia*. Peter writes: "Amplius autem ad scientiam rationalem transire oportet. sed quia naturales scientie non sunt presentis intentionis omissis illis ad rationalem scientiam transeamus. est ergo notandum quod de signis oportuit haberi scientiam. signum enim idem est quod sermo, sed dicit plato in timeo quod sermones inventi sunt ut per ipsos presto sint mutue voluntatis iudicia. et dicit tullius eloquentia vero sine sapientia est quasi gladius in manu paralitici. eloquentia est quasi gladius in manu furibundi. ideo non solum oportuit habere scientias reales ad sapientiam ordinatas ideo etiam scientias sermocinales ad eloquentiam ordinatas et sic includitur evidenter quod non sufficiunt scientie reales nisi habeamus sermocinales sive rationales. possunt autem sermocinales scientie distingui diversimode secundum diversas acceptationes sermonis. in sermone enim sunt tria subiecta sermonis: veritas, bonitas, sive decor. primo modo de sermone est grammatica; secundo modo, logica; tertio modo rhetorica. vel aliter quod sermonis proprietates quedam sumuntur a parte vocis sive significati generalis, ut congruum et incongruum; quedam vero ex parte specialis significati in complexione unius ad alterum, et huiusmodi est . . . ; autem alia passio que significatur sequitur in respectu ad nos ut persuasio. primo modo, grammatica; secundo modo, logica; tertio rhetorica. nam rhetoris officium est persuadere iudici ut moveat ipsum ad partis adverse indignationem et ad sue partis favorem" (*Vat. lat.* 5988; punctuation added). For Peter, rhetoric dealt with beauty or ornamentation rather

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cedures of the diverse divisions within theology; that should be the function of the subject and problems of each. Nor does it indicate a mastery of each of these methods. It is, rather, a pervasive skill or a sensitivity to argument and to evidence, to the strength of conclusions and their warrants within data, and, negatively, to the substitutions of sophistry, pretensions, and empty claims.

Third, philosophy. McKeon maintains that it was the dialectic or logic of Peter Abailard which turned attention to the truth of statements, to consideration of what they were about.¹⁸ Philosophy became in the Middle Ages the “art of arts and discipline of disciplines,” and as a theological art it can still serve this analytic function of searching out the basic principles and assertions about reality which are presupposed whenever one puts a predicate upon a subject or engages in an action of freedom.¹⁹ Theology, as any human enterprise, is ineluctably involved in philosophic commitments, in an ontology which distinguishes the real from the unreal or in an ethics which involves motive and value. The choice before the reflective mind is not whether such philosophic commitments will be present; they will always be present. The choice is whether this abiding presence will be attended to and articulated and open to correction. Philosophy, precisely as a skill, as an ability brought to bear upon significant discourse or valued action, is a perception of the ultimate dimensions of experience and things, of thought and intention, or of terms and categories either admitted or assumed.

And, finally, history: the ability to deal with change and sequence in human development, whether it be the history of a people or a church, the evolution of a concept like “person” or “substance,” or the maturation of personal religious experience.²⁰ History as an art is not a mastery of one particular field or series of narrations, though it may be learned through such a mastery. It is, rather, a kind of consciousness which studies things in their development. With such a historical conscious-

than with truth or goodness and not so much with the intrinsic meaning of the text, but rather with its effect upon an audience. Perhaps we can guess for these reasons that Saint Thomas was moved from dialectic or logic directly to the study of natural philosophy.

¹⁸ So also Ludwig Hödl: “Das will heissen: diese Momente und die durch sie bedingte äussere und innere Gestalt der scholastischen Theologie rühren von der Überformung der Theologie durch die Dialektik der Artes liberales her. Im 12. Jahrhundert verdichtete sich das Artes-Wissen in der Dialektik und normierte so als dialektische Erkenntnis auch die Theologie, aber nicht nur sie, auch die Jurisprudenz, und die Medizin standen in Banne der Dialektik” (“Die Dialektische Theologie des 12. Jahrhunderts,” *ALPMA*, p. 138).

¹⁹ Hugh of St. Victor cites this as a standard definition of philosophy: “Aliter: ‘Philosophi est ars artium, et disciplina disciplinarum,’ ad quam omnes artes et disciplinae spectant” (*Eruditionis didascalicae* 2:1. *PL* 176:751).

²⁰ History as a liberal art did not emerge until the Renaissance transformed the liberal arts from a command of methods to a command of certain subject matters or fields. For this change, see McKeon (n. 14 above), pp. 166 and 175.

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ness, one deals much more with themes in their variations through diverse patterns in the evolutions and declines of theology rather than as univocal statements and repeated actions.

It seems to me that these basic skills should be part of every theologian's work. They are not simply functional specialities which spell each other off in a concatenated progression of a single work, "successive stages in a process from data to result."²¹ Not that they contradict the division of theology into functional specialities. What they attempt is quite different: skills employed simultaneously and in mutual involvement on work that is significantly theological. As the emergence of the liberal arts led to the formulation of the theologies of Aquinas and of Bonaventure, my argument is that a careful formulation of theological arts could have a similar revitalizing effect upon contemporary theology.²²

III

Besides the implications of theology as a wisdom among other knowledges and the internal energizing of theology with careful and educated habits or arts, there remain the context, the sensibilities and intentions, the questions or issues out of which it arises. For Bonaventure and Aquinas, these were deeply religious: the desire of a man to be with God, the movement of man toward the ecstatic possession of God in contemplative love. McKeon has emphasized strongly Bonaventure's way of affectivity, which Bonaventure himself contrasted to the speculative indifference of geometry: "Such is the knowledge which is taught in this book. For this knowledge aids faith, and faith is in the intellect in such a way that by its very nature it is oriented to move affectivity. And this is obvious. For the knowledge that Christ has died for us and similar knowledge moves a man to love unless he is unmovable in his sins. This is not knowledge like that other, that the diameter is incommensurate with a side."²³

Saint Thomas's answer read differently, but it also placed *sacra doctrina* within the context of man's religious act, his movement toward God.

²¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), p. 126.

²² These four theological arts are not unlike those disciplines elaborated at the University of Chicago in the Division of the Humanities and studied in four interdepartmental committees (see Richard P. McKeon, "Autobiography," in *Thirteen Americans: Their Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. Louis Finkelstein [New York: Harper & Bros., 1953], pp. 90 ff.).

²³ "Talis est cognitio tradita in hoc libro. Nam cognitio haec iuvat fidem, et fides sic est in intellectu ut, quantum est de sui ratione, nata sit movere affectum. Et hoc patet. Nam haec cognitio: quod Christus pro nobis mortuus est, et consimiles, nisi sit homo peccator et durus, movet ad amorem; non sic ista: quod diameter est asymeter costae" (*In I sent.*, Proemii [1:136]; cf. *De reductione artium ad theologiam* 26 [5:325b]).

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Aquinas assigns the very necessity of this teaching to that inner orientation.²⁴ The focus of theology was principally upon God and only those aspects of human activity “through which a man is ordered to the perfect knowledge of God, in which eternal happiness consists.”²⁵

Again, this is a focus that could well be restored, not returned to the religious questions of the thirteenth century but integrated in terms of the religious problematic of our own times: Where are you, my God, and how shall I find you? This searching question may arise from reflections upon the individual value of human life, the profound injustice in contemporary social and economic structures, the history of slaughter which our century has written, or the possibilities raised by the biological, behavioral, and physical sciences. Perhaps the religious inquiry which characterizes our age is the quest for the silent, for the absent God through the study of religious experience and of the God who reveals himself in so many guises through these experiences and their consequences.

* * *

What I am proposing, then, in response to the inquiry of Richard McKeon—as a continuation of his inquiry—is that the achievements we celebrate now indicate lines for the development of contemporary theology: a theology which emerges from the religious sensibilities and questions of our own time, which is structured and energized by serious and careful employment of hermeneutics, methodology, philosophy, and history as permeating skills or theological arts, and which is in vital contact with the knowledges and works that men are about.

²⁴ *S.T.* I,1,1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I,1,4.