

FROM FANJEAUX TO PARIS – THE DOMINICANS EMBRACE THE UNIVERSITY

(Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs Paul R. Douillard, Ph.D. delivered the following message March 25, 2009 for The Caldwell College annual Founder's Day Celebration)

Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution on the Catholic University begins by stating "BORN FROM THE HEART of the Church, a Catholic University is located in that course of tradition which may be traced back to the very origin of the University as an institution." The 13th century saw both the establishment of the Order of Preachers in the south of France by St. Dominic and the participation by two of the most well-know Dominicans, St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas in the life of the European university, especially the University of Paris. In this talk, I will argue that the events in the south of France that led Dominic to establish the Order of Preachers set the stage for the subsequent embrace of the University by the second generation of Dominicans. I will then consider the ways in which the ideas of St. Albert and especially St. Thomas helped shape the character of the Catholic university and how these can serve as guides to those of us who are engaged in furthering the mission of a Catholic institution of higher learning in the Dominican tradition.

It was in 1203, while traveling through the south on France on his way to Denmark that St. Dominic first encountered the group known as the Albigensians. This heretical group held a dualist position, claiming that this world is the result of two opposing principles, one good and one evil. They taught that the material world including the human body was created by the evil principle and is thus the source of all sin. The spiritual world, including the human soul, on the other hand was created by the good principle and the Albigensians seem to have held that Jesus was sent by God to liberate the human soul from all of the evils associated with the material world. As a result of this doctrine much of the Old Testament, and especially the creation story in Genesis, was rejected as the product of the evil principle. The New Testament, on the other hand was seen as the product of the good principle since it taught liberation from the evils of the material world. In order to understand the attractiveness of this doctrine, we need to appreciate the conditions that existed in the region around Toulouse in the early part of the 13th century. Most of the local clergy were uneducated and seemed more interested in

material goods than in spiritual matters. The Albigensian leaders on the other hand practiced extreme asceticism that emphasized the wickedness of all material things and the goal of liberation of the human soul from its imprisonment in the body. When contrasted with the “excesses of outward splendor” of the Catholic clergy, including the papal legates sent from Rome to combat the heretics, it is not surprising that the Albigensian movement gained such popularity among the local people.

When St. Dominic began his apostolate in the region around Fanjeaux, he immediately saw that the failure of the Cistersians, who had been given the responsibility to oppose the heresy by the papacy, was due in part to their display of worldliness and their indulgent life-style. St. Dominic insisted upon an austere manner of life and then proceeded to participate in theological disputations with the Albigensians.¹ While he was not successful in all of these encounters, the simplicity of his way of life along with the power of his intellect persuaded many to return to the Catholic faith. In Prouille, at a site that can be seen from an overlook in Fanjeaux, St. Dominic established the first community of nuns in 1206. This community continues to exist to this day and is seen by many as the birthplace of the Dominican family.

One of the major themes in St. Dominic’s preaching against the Albigensians is the teaching about the goodness of all of creation – both the spiritual and the material domains. He insisted on the truth of Genesis that there is only one creator God and all that was created by Him is good. Sin is not the necessary effect of the material world and the imprisonment of the human soul therein but rather the result of a free choice made by Adam and Eve. I believe that it is the emphasis on the teaching about the goodness of all of creation, along with St. Dominic’s strong belief in the need for study that led the second generation of Dominicans, especially Sts. Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas to embrace the University.

The European universities, and especially the University of Paris, were undergoing major changes during the 13th century. It was during this time that most of the major theoretical writings of Aristotle were reintroduced to the Latin speaking west. After the emperor Justinian closed the schools of philosophy in Athens in 529, the study of Aristotle’s writings was relocated to the Middle East and North

¹ Weber, Nicholas. "Albigenses." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. 22 Mar. 2009

Africa. In the 10th century, the Arabic philosopher Al-farabi (870-950) had as one of his goals “to introduce philosophy into a society from which it was absent or to restore it once it had become obscured or destroyed.”² Thus began a tradition of commentaries on Aristotle by Arabic scholars that continued uninterrupted until the 13th century. Among the Arabs, Al-farabi was known as the “second master” after Aristotle who was almost universally acknowledged as “The Master”. Perhaps the most well-known of subsequent Arab thinkers were Avicenna and especially Averroes, who lived in Muslim Spain during the 12th century. Averroes’ commentaries on Aristotle’s writings were well known in the Latin West where he frequently was referred to as “the commentator.” In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante places the philosophers in a special place in Limbo where they are presided over by Aristotle who is identified as “the master of the men who know” along with Averroes, “of the great Commentary”.³ While Aristotle’s writings on logic, especially the *Categories*, *On Interpretation* and the *Prior Analytics* along with his rhetoric were known to earlier Christian writers, these were used primarily to develop the skills of argumentation and persuasion needed to defend the Christian faith in sermons and theological disputations. In the 13th century, gradually all of Aristotle’s writings reached the Christian west from the Muslim world accompanied by profound and learned commentaries, particularly by Avicenna and Averroes. Here was a corpus of works touching upon every possible subject matter and claiming to provide an approach to genuine knowledge (Επιστήμη in Greek, *scientia* in Latin) based on human reason alone.

The introduction of Aristotle into the university was not without great controversy. In 1210, a provincial synod at Paris ruled that Aristotle’s “natural philosophy” could not be “read”, that is “lectured on” in the Faculty of Arts at Paris. In 1215, when Robert de Courçon approved the statutes of the University of Paris, one of them forbade the Arts masters from lecturing on Aristotelian metaphysics and natural science. In 1231 Pope Gregory IX ordered that the works prohibited in 1210 not be used until they could be examined by a theological commission to remove any errors.⁴ This is the world that the second generation Dominicans,

²Alfarabi, *The Attainment of Happiness*, 63.

³ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy. Inferno*. Canto IV, 130-145.

⁴ Spade, Paul Vincent and Gyula Klima and Jack Zupko, "Medieval Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

Albert and Aquinas, encountered in Paris. Armed with Dominic's exhortation to pursue study and his firm conviction on the goodness of creation, they were well prepared to take leadership roles in the ongoing transformation of the University of Paris, the preeminent university in Europe at the time.

It is not accidental that part of our science building is named in honor of Albert the Great, Albertus Magnus. If creation is a biblical concept, implying the necessity of a creator God, its philosophical equivalent is the concept of "nature." It should not be surprising then that Albert should be drawn to the study of nature and to Aristotle's writings on natural philosophy and biology. Albert wrote "The aim of natural science [is] to investigate the causes that are at work in nature" (*De Miner.*, lib. II, tr. ii, i). And "In studying nature we have rather to inquire what Nature with its immanent causes can naturally bring to pass" (*De Coelo et Mundo*, I, tr. iv, x).⁵ While the concept of creation gives an explicit reference to an extrinsic cause (the creator), the philosophic concept of Nature references immanent or intrinsic causation. In his major writing on Nature, the *Physics*, Aristotle defined nature as "a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute."⁶ Albert has been given the title of "Doctor Universalis" (Universal Doctor), in recognition of his extraordinary genius and extensive knowledge, and especially in the knowledge of nature. Among his writings were treatises on logic, the physical or natural sciences, biology, psychology, ethics, politics, and metaphysics along with works of theology, sermons and biblical commentaries.⁷

The most prominent Dominican of the 13th century, however is St. Thomas Aquinas. In 1567 Pope Pius V proclaimed him a Universal Doctor of the Church and in 1880 Pope Leo XIII designated him patron saint of all Catholic universities, academies, colleges, and schools throughout the world.⁸ "Through his detailed

⁵ Kennedy, Daniel. "St. Albertus Magnus." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. 22 Mar. 2009

⁶ Aristotle, *Physics*, Book II, chapter 1, #20.

⁷ Kennedy, Daniel. "St. Albertus Magnus." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. 22 Mar. 2009

⁸ Kennedy, Daniel. "St. Thomas Aquinas." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 14. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 22 Mar. 2009

commentaries on virtually all of Aristotle's major treatises and the extensive use that he makes of Aristotelian materials in his theological works, Aquinas did more than anyone else to establish Aristotle as the leading philosophical authority in the Christian West."⁹ The study of philosophy was so well established in Aquinas' thought that the "first article of his best know work, the *Summa Theologiae*, does not ask whether the study of philosophy is permissible and desirable but whether besides the philosophic disciplines another science, namely sacred doctrine, is necessary."¹⁰ Aquinas' response to this question provides us with the clearest account of his understanding of the character of human knowledge accessible by the philosophic disciplines or sciences and its relation to Christian faith. As a student of Aristotle, Aquinas acknowledged that human beings are rational animals and that "all men by nature desire to know."¹¹ In fact, Aquinas writes that "Among all human pursuits, the pursuit of wisdom is more perfect, more noble, more useful, and more full of joy."¹² Moreover, he acknowledges that "that with which the human reason is naturally endowed is clearly most true; so much so, that it is impossible for us to think of such truths as false."¹³ His extensive use of Aristotelian terminology as well as his acceptance of Aristotle's distinction between the speculative and the practical sciences support the claim that he is indeed the most illustrious of all Christian Aristotelians.

However, unlike some of the other commentators on Aristotle, Aquinas holds that another science besides the philosophic disciplines is indeed necessary. He bases this position on the claim that human knowledge, even that possessed by the most intelligent of men, is necessarily limited. In fact, Aquinas uses the very words of Aristotle in support of his position. When speaking of the very limited character of the knowledge that natural human reason can provide to us about divine things, he writes: "The remark of Aristotle likewise agrees with this conclusion. He says that "our intellect is related to the prime beings, which are most evident in their nature,

⁹ Fortin, Ernest. "St. Thomas Aquinas." *The History of Political Philosophy*. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. p. 248.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 250.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book A, chapter 1, 980a, 1.

¹² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book I, chapter 2, #1.

¹³ *Ibid*, chapter 7, #1.

as the eye of an owl is related to the sun” [*Metaphysics* Ia, 1]”¹⁴ As the owl is blinded by the excess of light that comes from the sun, so too the human intellect is blinded by the excess of “light” that comes from God. With regard to knowledge of divine things, Aquinas states that: “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. For then the knowledge of God, which especially renders men perfect and good, would come to be possessed only by a few, and these few would require a great deal of time in order to reach it.”¹⁵ This is the case because human reason takes the origin of its knowledge from sensible things and is always in some ways tied to the sensible world.¹⁶ Human reason is even limited in its knowledge of sensible things. Again referencing Aristotle’s own words Aquinas states: “And so he says in the *De animalibus* [I, 5] that, although what we know of the higher substances is very little, yet that little is loved and desired more than all the knowledge that we have about less noble substances. He also says in the *De caelo et mundo* [II, 12] that when questions about the heavenly bodies can be given even a modest and merely plausible solution, he who hears this experiences intense joy.”¹⁷ In one of his biological works, *On the Parts of Animals* (*De animalibus*) Aristotle has written: “Of things constituted by nature some are ungenerated, imperishable, and eternal (i.e. the heavenly bodies), while others are subject to generation and decay (i.e. bodies found on earth – especially plants and animals). The former are excellent beyond compare and divine, but less accessible to knowledge. The evidence that might throw light on them, and on the problems we long to solve respecting them, is furnished but scantily by sensation; whereas respecting perishable plants and animals we have abundant information, living as we do in their midst, and ample data may be collected concerning all their various kinds, if only we are willing to take sufficient pains.”¹⁸ Since human knowledge always begins with the senses, of necessity we can only have “scant conceptions” and mere “conjectures” of celestial things. We know from experience that our senses, and especially the sense of sight, can deceive us in regard to distant and/or

¹⁴ Ibid, chapter 3, #6.

¹⁵ Ibid, chapter 4, #4.

¹⁶ Ibid, chapter 8, #1. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book A, chapter 1.

¹⁷ Ibid, chapter 5, #5.

¹⁸ Book I, chapter 5, 644b.

moving objects. Aristotle goes on to say that “in certitude and in completeness our knowledge of terrestrial things has an advantage. Moreover, their greater nearness and affinity balances somewhat the loftier interest of the heavenly things that are the objects of the higher philosophy.”¹⁹ This allowed Aquinas to introduce a novel approach to one of the most vexing issues at the heart of the quarrel between philosophy and revealed religion – the opposition between the biblical doctrine of creation and the philosophic doctrine of the eternity of the world. Aquinas contends “that the reasons advanced by Aristotle in favor of the eternity of the world are at best only probable. His argument generally tends to follow Aristotle’s *Topics*, where the eternity of the world is presented as a dialectical problem or as belonging to the class of problems that reason cannot solve.”²⁰

Since according to Aquinas, there is a built-in limit to human knowledge based on reason, it is not possible for philosophy to disprove the claim that there exists a kind of knowledge beyond philosophy having as its source revelation from God. As Aquinas states “Just as, therefore, it would be the height of folly for a simple person to assert that what a philosopher proposes is false on the ground that he himself cannot understand it, so (and even more so) it is the acme of stupidity for a man to suspect as false what is divinely revealed through the ministry of the angels simply because it cannot be investigated by reason.”²¹ While Aquinas never claims that he can demonstrate or prove through the use of reason the truths of faith, he nonetheless does claim that “those who place their faith in this truth, however, “for which the human reason offers no experimental evidence,” do not believe foolishly, as though “following artificial fables” (2 Peter 2:16).”²²

Thus in introducing the notion of a twofold mode of truth Aquinas finds a middle way between the extreme positions espoused by some in Paris. On the one hand, he rejects the position of those like Étienne Tempier, the bishop of Paris who held that philosophy and especially Aristotle endangers faith and must be abolished. On the other hand, he also rejected the position of the so-called Latin Averroists,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Fortin, Ernest. “St. Thomas Aquinas.” *The History of Political Philosophy*. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. p. 269.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book I, chapter 3, #4.

²² Ibid. Book I, chapter 6, #1.

represented by Siger de Brabant who drew inspiration from the interpretation of Aristotle put forward by Averroes. The basic tenet of Latin Averroism was the assertion that reason and philosophy are superior to faith and knowledge founded on faith. For Aquinas, philosophy and faith are both sources of genuine knowledge although since through revelation human beings share in God's knowledge through faith, it is necessarily superior to the admittedly limited knowledge available to human reason. He writes: "The same thing, moreover, appears quite clearly from the defect that we experience every day in our knowledge of things. We do not know a great many of the properties of sensible things, and in most cases we are not able to discover fully the natures of those properties that we apprehend by the sense. Much more is it the case, therefore, that the human reason is not equal to the task of investigating all the intelligible characteristics of that most excellent substance."²³

"The success of that enterprise, it should be added, was never complete or unchallenged. Because of its boldness, Aquinas ran afoul of the two most powerful (although numerically unequal) groups in the West. He aroused the antagonism of the traditional theologians, who resented the intrusion of an unregenerate pagan in the Christian fold and reproached Aquinas with having sundered the unity of Christian wisdom."²⁴ In fact in 1277 when it was announced that Tempier and others wished to condemn the writings of St. Thomas, on the plea that they were too favorable to the unbelieving philosophers, Albert made one final journey to Paris to defend the memory of his disciple who had died in 1274.²⁵ And, Aquinas also "incurred the wrath of the newly emancipated philosophers (the so-called Latin Averroists), who objected to the enslavement of the very philosophy that they could credit with having made them free"²⁶ by making it subservient to Christian faith (the handmaiden of theology.)

²³ Ibid, Book I, chapter 3, #5.

²⁴Fortin, Ernest. "St. Thomas Aquinas." *The History of Political Philosophy*. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. p. 271.

²⁵ Kennedy, Daniel. "St. Albertus Magnus." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. 22 Mar. 2009

²⁶ Fortin, Ernest. "St. Thomas Aquinas." *The History of Political Philosophy*. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. p. 271.

“The delicate balance that Aquinas was able to establish between the extremes of faith and reason was disrupted less than three centuries later”²⁷ when Martin Luther called for a thorough reformation of the church. Included in one of the three treatises of 1520 that are the heart of his protest against the church of his day, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, is a section on the need for the reformation of the universities. Here Luther writes:

What else are the universities, unless they are utterly changed from what they have been hitherto, than what the book of Maccabees calls *gymnasia epheborum et graecae gloriae*? (i.e. places for training youth in the Greek way of life) What are they but places where loose living is practiced, where little is taught of Holy Scriptures and Christian faith, and where only the blind, heathen teacher Aristotle rules far more than Christ? In this regard my advice would be that Aristotle’s *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Concerning the Soul*, and *Ethics*, which hitherto have been thought to be his best books, should be completely discarded along with all the rest of his books that boast about nature, although nothing can be learned from them either about nature or the Spirit...I dare say that any potter has more knowledge of nature than is written in these books and it grieves me to the quick that this damned, conceited, rascally heathen has deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians with his misleading writings. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins.

Luther goes on to say:

I would gladly agree to keeping Aristotle’s books, *Logic*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics*, or at least keeping and using them in an abridged form, as useful in training young people to speak and to preach properly.²⁸

A second development that disrupted and even shattered this balance was the rise of modern natural science in the 16th and 17 centuries. In a letter written by Galileo to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany that serves as a defense of his novel approach to things in the heavens, the author appealed to the tradition of the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Martin Luther. *Three Treatises*. “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation.” Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. # 25. pp. 92-94.

twofold mode of truth. In the letter he argues that this tradition clearly distinguishes between truths originating from Biblical authority and those that come from science. Of the former he states “I should judge that the authority of the Bible was designed to persuade men of those articles and propositions which, surpassing all human reasoning, could not be made credible by science, or by any other means than through the very mouth of the Holy Spirit.” On the other hand, truths that come from science, such as those introduced by Copernicus, do not depend on the authority of sacred writings. Rather, Galileo writes that Copernicus “stands always upon physical conclusions pertaining to the celestial motions, and deals with them by astronomical and geometrical demonstrations, founded primarily upon sense experience and exact observations.”²⁹

However, there is something very untraditional about Galileo’s approach that is often unrecognized. In a speech given in 1959 as part of the Gifford Lecture series entitled The Relevance of Science, the renowned physicist Carl von Weizsacker wrote about what he calls the “Myth of Galileo.”

Modern science has an historical myth of its own. It is the myth of Galileo. This myth asserts that in the dark ages the speculations of Aristotle, unfounded on observation, were held in high esteem, but that Galileo broke the path for science by describing the world as we really experience it. Like every myth, this myth expresses some truth; certainly it is right in its very high valuation of Galileo. But I think that it completely distorts the nature of Galileo’s real achievement. I should try to describe his achievement exactly the opposite of the myth. Hence I say: the late middle ages are in no way dark ages, they are a time of high culture bristling with intellectual energy. They adopted Aristotle because of his concern about reality. But the main weakness of Aristotle was that he was too empirical. Therefore he could not achieve a mathematical theory of nature. Galileo took his great step in daring to describe the world as we do not experience it. He stated laws which in the form in which he stated them never hold in actual experience and which therefore cannot be verified by any single observation but which are mathematically simple. Thus he opened the road to a mathematical analysis which decomposes the complexity of actual phenomena into single elements. The scientific experiment is different from

²⁹ Galileo. *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*. “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina. New York: Anchor Books, 1957. p. 179-183.

everyday experience in being guided by a mathematical theory which poses a question and is able to interpret the answer. It thereby transforms the given “nature” into a manageable “reality.” Aristotle wanted to preserve nature, to save the phenomena; his fault was that he made too much use of common sense. Galileo dissects nature, teaches us to produce new phenomena; and to strike against common sense with the help of mathematics.³⁰

It is Galileo’s mathematical approach to nature that leads him to claim to possess certitude regarding celestial beings. Following the example that had been set by Aquinas, the Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine was willing to accept the Copernican position as being a mere conjecture and one which was in fact superior to the Ptolemaic hypothesis but he rejected any claim made by Galileo that it was the truth. “First I say that it appears that... Sig. Galileo did prudently to content [himself] with speaking hypothetically and not positively, as I always believed Copernicus did. For to say that assuming the earth moves and the sun stands still saves all the appearances better than eccentrics and epicycles is to speak well. This has no danger in it and suffices for mathematicians. But to wish to affirm that the sun is really fixed in the center of the heavens and merely turns upon itself without traveling from east to west, and that the earth is situated in the third sphere and revolves very swiftly around the sun, is a very dangerous thing...”³¹ It was Galileo’s mathematical approach to nature that gave him the confidence to claim that the geocentric position was false and the heliocentric position true.

The claim to absolute certitude for philosophy and the sciences following the example of Mathematics was being made at the same time by the French philosopher René Descartes. The most public of his writings, the *Discourse on the Method for Conducting One’s Reason Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences* was published in 1637, four years after Galileo’s treatise the *Dialogue Concerning the Two World Systems* was condemned by Rome. In the *Discourse* Descartes argues that the certitude of Mathematics is due to the fact that its truths are not

³⁰ Carl F. von Weizsacker, *The Relevance of Science*. “The Myth of Galileo”. 1959 Gifford Lecture. London: Collins, 1964. p. 104.

³¹ Robert Bellarmine. *Opere*, xii, 171-72. *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*. New York: Anchor Books, 1957. p. 162-163.

dependent on accepting as true the world as presented to us by the senses.³² Rather, he claims that Mathematics and a mathematical science of nature will give humanity access to certain knowledge of all things. “Those long chains of utterly simple and easy reasonings that geometers commonly use to arrive at their most difficult demonstrations had given me occasion to imagine that all things that can fall within human knowledge follow from one another in the same way, and that, provided only that one abstain from accepting any of them as true that is not true, and that one always adheres to the order one must follow in deducing the ones from the others, there cannot be any that are so remote that they are not eventually reached nor so hidden that they are not discovered.”³³

A second characteristic of modern natural science is the goal of mastery of nature. In presenting the reasons why he considers the scientific ethos superior to religion, the 20th century biologist and entomologist from Harvard University, Edward O. Wilson mentions first and foremost “its repeated triumphs in explaining and controlling the physical world.”³⁴ The 17th century English philosopher, Francis Bacon wrote in the “Preface” to *The Great Instauration*, a work that called for a complete overhaul of the state of knowledge that “I am laboring to lay the foundation, not of any sect or doctrine, but of human utility and power.”³⁵ In the *Discourse on Method* Descartes elaborates upon this theme and writes:

For these notions made me see that it is possible to arrive at knowledge that would be very useful in life and that, in place of that speculative philosophy taught in the schools, it is possible to find a practical philosophy, by means of which, knowing the force and actions of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us, just as distinctly as we know the various skills of our craftsmen, we might be able, in the same way, to use them for all the purposes for which they are appropriate, and thus render ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature.³⁶

³² Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part IV, #36.

³³ Ibid, Part II #19.

³⁴ Edward O. Wilson. *On Human Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 9.

³⁵ Francis Bacon. *The Great Instauration*. “Preface.” New York: Odyssey press, 1965. p. 310.

³⁶ *Discourse*, Part VI, 61-62.

Descartes goes on to identify the two major benefits that humanity will reap from this new science of nature – technology and medicine:

This is desirable not only for the invention of an infinity of devices that would enable one to enjoy trouble-free the fruits of the earth and all the goods found there, but also principally for the maintenance of health, which unquestionably is the first good and the foundation of all other goods of this life, for even the mind depends so greatly on the temperament and on the disposition of the organs of the body that, if it is possible to render men generally more wise and more adroit than they have been up until now, I believe that one should look for it in medicine.³⁷

Where does this leave those of us in the 21st century who continue to pursue the mission of the Catholic university in the Dominican tradition? Let me suggest that Aquinas' balanced, albeit delicate, approach to the introduction of Aristotle into the university can serve as a model for us in dealing with modern science and its effects on our world. We should not shun science like some fundamentalists do but rather acknowledge and even embrace the knowledge that it has given us about the natural world. However, there now seems to be a greater willingness to acknowledge that science can only provide us with a limited knowledge of the world around us and that this limit is due to the very method that has made modern science so successful. This opens the door to the possibility that genuine knowledge from sources other than science can be pursued by us and the university, especially the Catholic university must be open to this possibility. The same goes for the advances in technology and medicine that have flowed from modern science. I don't think that anyone can doubt the benefits that these have brought to humanity. However, technology and even medicine can sometimes dehumanize us – they sometimes create a very artificial world where we feel alienated not only from those around us but even from our very selves. The Catholic university must provide us with the opportunity to critically examine the “advances” in technology and medicine and to assess whether or not these are genuinely good for us. In this way we will fulfill the motto “sapientia et scientia”, wisdom and knowledge that is found on the seal of Caldwell College. Thank you.

³⁷ Ibid.