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Dear Readers,

As the new president of Ohio Dominican University, it is my honor to present the second issue of our scholarly journal *Dominican Studies*. I applaud this venue as a distinctive way in which our Catholic University in the Dominican tradition engages the community in study and dialogue on issues of concern to the Church, culture and society.

The theme, *The Catholic Intellectual Life*, is a hallmark and founding principle of the academic experience at ODU. It frames the mindset that compels great thinking, dialogue, innovation, and community building. For almost 100 years, our institution has engaged in carrying on a rich tradition of academic excellence that challenges us to be stewards of the dialogue between faith and reason, by transmitting and engaging the community in study and conversation that supports our seeking of truth.

I thank our journal contributors, Suzanne Noffke, OP, Anthony Gittins, CSSp, and Richard Schenk, OP, who have shared a distinctive perspective on the *Catholic Intellectual Life* for our consideration.

Sincerely,

Briand P. Nedwek, Ph.D.
President
Ohio Dominican University

Dear Readers,

It is my honor to present the second issue of *Dominican Studies*, a scholarly journal published by Ohio Dominican University's Center for Dominican Studies. Following the launching of the first issue honoring the 800th anniversary of St Dominic's founding of the first community of sisters in Prouilhe, France, our second issue focuses attention on the theme *The Catholic Intellectual Life*. During his recent visit to the United States, Benedict XVI addressed an assembly of Catholic educators giving words of inspiration, encouragement and hope that were marks of both a universal pastor and scholar. He reminds us that "the apostolate of hope is the center of Catholic education." He further noted that "Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth" (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4).

During a 1996 summer institute of Collegium, where a group of faculty members from Catholic colleges and universities met at Fairfield University to talk about ways to enrich the intellectual and spiritual life on their campuses, Dr. Mary Jo Weaver presented an essay entitled *Rooted Hearts/Playful Minds: Catholic Intellectual Life at Its Best*. In this presentation she said, "the intellectual life is a soul-endangering business that has been around for a long time, echoed and re-echoed in times of turmoil. My own position on this matter is given away in the title: 'rooted hearts and playful minds' means that we can welcome and explore new (even earthshaking) ideas if we have our feet planted in the riverbed of tradition."

In this issue, our authors reflect on the Catholic Intellectual Life from various vantage points with their feet planted in the riverbed of tradition and their hearts open to the gift of the spirit, presenting the reader with both inspiration and challenge. We are grateful for the scholarly contributions of Suzanne Noffke, OP, Ph.D. Anthony Gittins, CSSp and Richard Schenk, OP. The lens of their view of the Catholic Intellectual Life is explored through the insights of St. Catherine of Siena, the call to discipleship, and the life of study and the common good. It is our hope, that in keeping with the Dominican tradition of sharing the fruits of one's study and contemplation, this issue will serve as another experience of sharing St. Dominic's legacy of "the holy preaching."

Sr. Catherine Colby, O.P.

Catherine Colby, OP, Ed.D.
Vice President for Mission and Identity and
Director, The Center for Dominican Studies

The Intelligent Life: Insights from Catherine of Siena

By Suzanne Noffke, OP

Questioning Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) about the theme of this issue of Dominican Studies, the intellectual life, presents a bit of a problem, since this woman, though she bears the titles patron of the Order of Preachers and Doctor of the Church, was not in any sense an academic. She had, in fact, no formal education at all, and probably knew how to read and write only on a fairly elementary level. It is obvious, however, both from her dictated writings and from the stories of her life that she was a woman of extraordinary native intelligence and insatiable intellectual curiosity — always, and usually explicitly, within the context of the faith which permeated her life and thinking like a dye. Though she never composed anything like a theological “summa,” a study of her works in chronological order reveals a mind constantly sifting theological concepts and weaving them together into a synthesis uniquely hers.

Catherine did want to understand the substance of faith and elucidate it for others. *Fides quaerens intellectum!* (“Faith seeking understanding!”) Yet she sought to understand not simply as one understands a syllogism or even a theological argument. Her ultimate and persistent quest was the God whom dogma and theology make but a stuttering attempt to encompass in words. And her purpose in writing was to lead others in that same quest. So it makes sense, from Catherine’s perspective, to approach the theme not from the vantage point of the academic “intellectual” but from the deepest sense of “intelligence.” I have in fact, out of this very instinct, almost always in my English rendition of her works translated Catherine’s Tuscan *intelletto* as “understanding” rather than as the more cerebral “intellect.”⁽¹⁾

Catherine herself never actually uses the phrase I have used in the title to this essay, “the intelligent life,” and only once does she use the word whose English cognate is “intelligence.” Still, one can find in her writings a clear interpretation of life lived intelligently, in genuine understanding.⁽²⁾

Trinitarian Imaging

Catherine’s interpretation of all human living is anchored in her Augustinian description of the divine Trinity and of the human soul as image of that Trinity. Very briefly, the Father is power — infinite capacity to hold in generative love all that is. The Son, the Word, is infinite knowing — wisdom. And the Spirit is love, clemency, mercy, compassion. But the one is never without the others. “Did your Wisdom come into the world alone?” Catherine asks God. “No. For Wisdom was not separate from Power, nor was Power without Mercy. You, Wisdom, did not come alone then, but the whole Trinity was there.”⁽³⁾ And so it is in every aspect of the story of creation and salvation addressed by Catherine.

The human soul images the Trinity, with memory not simply as recollection but as the capacity to hold, understanding as knowing, and the will as loving. And here, too, the one is never without the others; they are interdependent, constantly interacting.

Our will, wanting to love something, moves our understanding to see. And when our understanding senses that the will ... wants to love, it centers its attention on the indescribable love of the eternal Father, who has given us the Word, his Son. And so our will reaches out with indescribable love for what our understanding has seen. With a firm hand it takes the treasure it has drawn with its love and places it in our memory, so that it acknowledges and is grateful for the graces and gifts it sees it has received from its Creator.⁽⁴⁾

This is the “order” of life within the human spirit, an order which carries over into the life of faith. “Once we have put the three spiritual powers of our soul in order and lifted them up high on the energy of love and gathered

them in God's name (I mean, tuned our memory to hold God's gifts and graces; our understanding to comprehend what Wisdom, God's Son, wants; and our will to love in the gentle Mercy that is the Holy Spirit), then God dwells within our soul by grace." ⁽⁵⁾

The Word and Understanding

For Catherine as for Augustine and for Aquinas after him, within this order understanding, image of the Word, "is the most noble aspect of the soul [because] it is moved by the will, and it in turn nourishes the will." ⁽⁶⁾

But understanding, reflecting the divine Word it images, is more than mere rationality. Though it is in itself a light drawn from God, "the true Light," it needs "the form of faith" to "give life and lead [one] in the way of truth.... Without faith [one] would come to darkness." ⁽⁷⁾ Unenlightened by faith, reason in Catherine's perspective is devoid of true meaning for a fully human life. Assuming this to be true, she writes,

The hardness of our hearts would surely be melted and dissolved if only we would use our reason — I mean, if only we would with the light of reason and most holy faith look at the great love within us and the great price paid for us. But those who live without reason can never see or know this. Because they do not know, they do not love, and because they do not love, it is impossible for them to come to any virtue. ⁽⁸⁾

But "in the light of faith [we] gain wisdom in the Wisdom that is the Word." ⁽⁹⁾ It is understanding enlightened by faith, therefore, that is truly image of the Word.

Understanding as image of the Word, then, is far more than simply "knowing" with the mind. Its object is not simply "truths," but Truth. Understanding as image of the Word encompasses all that is and the *relatedness* of all that is, an insight wonderfully reflected in Catherine's prayer to Saint Paul as she celebrated in 1377 the latter's conversion: "You joined your power of understanding with the Son, the Word, understanding perfectly the whole order ordained by the Word who is Wisdom itself. This is the order that is to lead created things to their goal — and their goal is the same as their origin." ⁽¹⁰⁾

The Word, Wisdom, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, is in fact the particular object and focus of understanding enlightened by faith. "Your understanding will see its object, Wisdom, God's Son, and will enjoy it, and from this wisdom you will receive light beyond the natural," she writes. ⁽¹¹⁾ "Christ is the rule we must all follow. This is what our enlightened understanding sees and contemplates as it gazes steadily into the eye of God's divine charity and goodness." ⁽¹²⁾

This Word incarnate is the ultimate revelation of the Truth of God, written in Mary's flesh and on the cross as in a book whose chapters, when completely written, open with scarlet letters illuminated in the blood of the crucified.

The Holy Spirit's hand has written the Trinity in you [Catherine says to Mary], by forming within you the incarnate Word, God's only-begotten Son. The Spirit has written for us the Father's wisdom, which this Word is, and has written power for us, because God was powerful enough to accomplish this great mystery. And the Spirit has written for us his own — the Holy Spirit's — mercy, for by divine grace and mercy alone was such a great mystery ordained and accomplished. ⁽¹³⁾

"This book was written ... not with ink but with blood.... Who is so simple and dense, so dull-witted as not to know how to read these chapters?" ⁽¹⁴⁾

Other images cast further light on the intimate relationship between the divine Word and understanding.

In *The Dialogue*, Catherine compares the human person to a tree planted in the earth.⁽¹⁵⁾ “Uprooted from the soil, the tree would die fruitless.” This soil, this earth, the human reality, is encompassed by a circle that is knowledge of the infinite and unending God and of one’s self in God. “You can go round and round within this circle,” she says, “finding neither end nor beginning, yet never leaving the circle.”

This tree is planted within the circle by the hand of creative love, but requires also the work of human freedom. By the light of understanding, free choice

sees where the tree ought to be planted. Now if this worker didn’t have this wonderful power of understanding and didn’t see, there might be an excuse. Free choice could say, ‘I was free, but I didn’t see where I could plant my tree....’ But free choice can’t say that, because it has understanding that does see, and reason — understanding that is a bond of rational love with which to bind and engraft the tree into the tree of life, Christ gentle Jesus.⁽¹⁶⁾

Catherine, as always, assumes the role of faith. The tree that is the human person is meant to be “bound and engrafted” into Christ, who in the mystery of his living, dying, and rising has become the “tree of life,” engrafted into the tree of human nature which had by sin become “wild.”⁽¹⁷⁾ It is a mutual engrafting: the divine Word into humanity and humanity into the Word.

Planted in earth, the tree’s roots reach down through the soil to drink in the water of life, the blood of crucified Wisdom incarnate infused with the fire of the Spirit, Love. And that water, that blood, becomes the tree’s very sap, feeding its pith, patience, its willingness to be one with the crucified.⁽¹⁸⁾

Engrafted into the trunk of this tree is a shoot which taps into the very Wisdom of the Word; this is discernment. Like the tree into which it is engrafted, discernment can be fruitful only if it, with the entire tree, embraces and reaches through the soil in which that tree is planted, if it embraces the truth of the human reality within the circle of God. That embrace of reality is humility. “For discernment and charity are engrafted together and planted in the soil of that true humility which is born of self-knowledge.”⁽¹⁹⁾ This discernment, engrafted so that it taps into the sap of love and wisdom flowing as one at the heart of the tree, “is actually an offshoot of love, a light and a knowledge the soul has of herself and of God.”⁽²⁰⁾

Shifting to yet another image, Catherine says that, just as the eyes allow the human body to see, the spirit sees “with the eye of understanding within.”⁽²¹⁾ But once again the object of understanding (truth) and the object of the will (love) are joined in the perspective of faith. “Since we are made of love, created for love’s sake,” she writes, “we cannot live without love; nor would we love without light. So if we want to love, we have to see.”⁽²²⁾ At baptism the eye of understanding receives the “pupil of faith,” a pupil which, according to medieval physiology, is not just an opening in the eye but the very light which enables the eye to see.⁽²³⁾ Sometimes, Catherine more explicitly distinguishes truth as the actual light, underscoring that for her there is ultimately no truth that is less than truth seen in faith. “How we need this light of truth! In it is our salvation. But I see no way for us to have this lovely light for our understanding without the pupil of most holy faith which is within this eye.”⁽²⁴⁾ And more: the light is the very Spirit of God, “light and fire,”⁽²⁵⁾ teacher who pours into understanding a light of wisdom (the Word), enabling one to discern and choose what is true and loving, what will honor God.⁽²⁶⁾ With this light, understanding is “not unenlightened or dull-witted, but orders our lives in wisdom and great discernment.”⁽²⁷⁾ “Without this light everything is done in death; we walk in the dark so ignorantly and blindly that we discern truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth, light as darkness and darkness as light.”⁽²⁸⁾ “We have lost our knowledge of ourselves, and so we don’t even recognize that we are sick.”⁽²⁹⁾

Discernment is in fact, says Catherine, “nothing else but a true knowledge of ourselves and of God.”⁽³⁰⁾ “If you want love..., you must open the eye of your understanding to see where and how love is to be found. And you will find it within your very self. How? When you recognize your nothingness. And once you see that of yourself

you do not even exist, you will recognize and appreciate that God is the source of your existence and of every favor above and beyond that existence.”⁽³¹⁾

The Enemies of Understanding

This double knowing to which we have already alluded several times is the heart of growth into truth and love; it is the very rhythm of life in faith, of “intelligent living.” The more one comes to know oneself and sees God at work within oneself, the more one comes to know and love that God. And the more deeply one knows God, the more truly one comes to know oneself. Neither knowledge is whole without the other; each “seasons” the other, the rhythm spiraling deeper and deeper in the grasp of Truth. As noted earlier, one “can go round and round within this circle, finding neither end nor beginning, yet never leaving the circle.” But if self-knowledge were isolated from knowledge of God, “there would be no full circle at all. Instead, there would be a beginning in self-knowledge, but apart from [God] it would end in confusion.”⁽³²⁾

For knowing only ourselves, or wanting to know God without knowing ourselves, would not be a knowledge grounded in truth.... All we would derive from knowledge of ourselves alone would be weariness and confusion. So our soul would dry up and, if we were to go on like this without anything to counterbalance it, we would end in despair. And if we wanted to know God without knowing ourselves, the fruit we would derive would be the fetid fruit of a terrible presumption that both feeds pride and feeds on pride. So the light must see and know in truth. It must season knowledge of self with knowledge of God, and knowledge of God with knowledge of self. Then we will reap neither presumption nor despair. When the two sorts of knowledge are in mutual relationship, we will reap the fruit of life.⁽³³⁾

“Confusion,” as a long tradition of spirituality has understood the term, is the bewilderment of directionlessness, of not knowing who one really is or where one is going. In such “confusion” one cannot live intelligently, with true understanding. The eye of understanding is robbed of light, darkened, distorting both knowledge of self and knowledge of God — distorting, in fact, all knowing.

Since Catherine images the light of the eye, the pupil, as truth or faith, one might expect that loss of light would be brought about by infidelity or unbelief. Catherine, however, places the immediate blame not there but on the “lie” of self-centeredness, the lie of creating and living in a cramped universe whose center is oneself. “Even though our eyes may have the ability to see, and even though they may have light, if they aren’t open, their ability to see will do us no good. Our soul’s eye is understanding, and it has the light of faith to the extent that the veil of selfish love hasn’t covered it up.”⁽³⁴⁾ This “veil of selfish love” is a cloud, a cataract that distorts understanding’s perception so that one can no longer discern between what is physically or spiritually harmful and what is good. “And this spoils our spiritual sense of taste, so that good things seem bad and bad things good.... We go about like blind fools, following our weakness, driven completely by passion without reason’s light. We are like animals who, because they are irrational, let themselves be guided by their selfish instincts.”⁽³⁵⁾ It is a sickness of sight. “A healthy eye looks at the sun and sees light. But a sick eye sees nothing but darkness when it looks into such lightsomeness — and it is no fault of the light ...; the fault is in the sick eye.”⁽³⁶⁾

As divorcing self-knowledge from the knowledge of God leads to “confusion” and possible despair, self-centeredness leads to presumption, to misplaced trust in self, which also “darkens the mind’s eye” and keeps people from seeing or being open to or understanding God’s providence. And so, “though everything is upright, they see it all distorted. Blind as they are, they see light as darkness and darkness as light. So because their service and trust are set on darkness, they fall to complaining and impatience.”⁽³⁷⁾ And then, for lack of light, “desperately wanting to be relieved of weariness or afraid of sinning,” they fancy “taking on something so dangerous as to risk both soul and body at one blow!”⁽³⁸⁾ Confusion and presumption all at once!

Still, says Catherine, it is ultimately unbelief — or disbelief — that clouds the eye of understanding, for “if we truly believed that everything that is (except sin) comes from God, and that God cannot want anything but our good..., self-centeredness would not obscure the light of faith.”⁽³⁹⁾

The Intelligent Life and the Intellectual Life

In Catherine’s view, then, the intelligent life is a life of clear-headed understanding, firmly rooted in an honest and loving embrace of one’s human and earthly reality, yet in faith tapping into and fed by divine Wisdom, the Word, fused with the fire of the Spirit, Love, and therefore acting in truth and love.

We noted at the outset that Catherine was not an “intellectual” in any academic sense. Yet she does have a few observations to propose concerning those who were such intellectuals. In her conviction that there is no genuine access to truth without faith, she cannot imagine God granting eternal life to the pagan philosophers — in spite of their continence and material simplicity — because their choice of these “was not spiritual,” not made for God’s honor and praise, but only “for love of science and their will to learn it.” In fact, she places them in hell!⁽⁴⁰⁾

But she has high praise for Christian intellectuals such as Jerome and Augustine, Dominic and Thomas Aquinas, whose scholarship is permeated with faith.

Learning in itself is good and perfect [she writes], when the scholar is at the same time good and honorable and humble. But if learning is combined with pride, indecency, and sinful living, it is venomous and understands nothing but the letter of Scripture. It understands in darkness, for it has lost the light of reason and its eye of understanding is clouded over.⁽⁴¹⁾

In the light of faith “the doctors and the other saints came to know the truth in the midst of darkness, and from the darkness light was made. For understanding existed before Scripture was formed; so learning came from understanding, for in seeing is discernment.”⁽⁴²⁾

Holy Scripture, she writes, had “seemed darksome because it was not understood. This was no fault of Scripture, but of the listener who failed to understand.” So God sent saints like Augustine and Jerome, who were

enlightened by Truth, understood and knew Truth in the midst of darkness,” as “lamps to enlighten blind and dense understandings. They raised their mind’s eye to know the truth in the midst of darkness, and the Fire, the one who accepted their sacrifice, carried them off and gave them light, not naturally but beyond all nature, and in the midst of darkness they received the light and so came to know the truth.”⁽⁴³⁾

This sort of learning was the “hallmark” of Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers, says Catherine. “He took up the task of the Word, [God’s] only-begotten Son. Clearly he appeared as an apostle in the world, with such truth and light did he sow [God’s] word, dispelling the darkness and giving light.” But she stresses that it was at the “table of the cross” that Dominic wanted his followers to learn.

He wanted his children to do nothing else but stand at this table by the light of learning to seek only the glory and praise of [God’s] name and the salvation of souls. And so that they might attend to nothing else, he relieved them of worry about temporal things and wanted them to be poor.... And because indecent living beclouds the mind’s eye..., he established the third vow, continence, and wanted them to observe it completely in true perfect obedience. For he did not want anything to impede that light by which they would better and more perfectly acquire the light of learning.⁽⁴⁴⁾

As for Thomas,

he gained his knowledge more from the study of prayer and the lifting up of his mind and the light of understanding than from human study. He was a light that [God] sent into the mystic body of holy Church to disperse the darkness of error.... With his mind's eye he contemplated [God's] Truth ever so tenderly and there gained light beyond the natural and knowledge infused by grace.... He was a blazing torch shedding light within his order and in the mystic body of holy Church. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

The Intelligent Life and the Common Good

Catherine, however, couches all of faith-filled life within the context of relationships, the context of the common good. "Each of you has your own vineyard. But every one is joined to your neighbors' vineyards without any dividing lines. They are so joined together, in fact, that you cannot do any good or evil for yourself without doing the same for your neighbors." ⁽⁴⁶⁾

The "intelligent life," therefore, is no private, individual preserve. As with Jerome and Augustine, Dominic and Thomas, every person's light is to be at the disposition of others, and every person has need in turn of the light God has granted to others.

Is there any servant of God so enlightened that no one could possibly see more than that person? No. In fact, it is essential that God's servants share with each other the light and the gifts and graces they receive from God in order to display God's magnificence and maintain the order of charity, and to show that the light and magnificence of gentle Truth is not limited but infinite.... No one is so enlightened as not to need light from others — and often. Nor do God's servants wear themselves out talking, peddling their view of things to others. Instead they try to restrain their own views and immerse them in God's sweet view of things. ⁽⁴⁷⁾

Yet, says Catherine, one must in the end, after listening to others, discern for oneself, as best one can, where truth lies and act accordingly in good conscience. "You can't resist God," she writes to a distressed Daniela da Orvieto.

Still, you would like to do as God's servants say, trusting in their light and knowledge more than in your own — and yet you seem unable to do so. Now I'm answering you simply, according to my own limited and lowly view, and not imposing anything at all on you in any definitive way. I say only, respond to whatever you feel called to that doesn't come from yourself.... Fear and serve God selflessly, and then don't be bothered by what people say, except to have compassion for them. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

As with Daniela, so with everyone who would live intelligently in faith: insight must bear fruit in action. "If a woman has conceived a child but never brings it to birth for people to see, her husband will consider himself childless. Just so, I am the spouse of the soul, and unless she gives birth to the virtue she has conceived [by showing it] in her charity to her neighbors in their general and individual needs, ... then I insist that she has never in truth even conceived virtue within her." ⁽⁴⁹⁾

"No more silence!" Catherine warns a hesitant cardinal. "Shout out with a hundred thousand tongues! I am seeing the world going to ruin because people are not speaking out!" ⁽⁵⁰⁾ "Truth does not remain silent when it is time to speak," ⁽⁵¹⁾ she writes to her own confessor Raimondo da Capua, "for it is not afraid of worldly people.... And truth is silent when it is time to be silent, but though silent cries out with the cry of its willingness to suffer." ⁽⁵²⁾ And again, to Bishop Angelo Carraro:

The light distances us from the lie of our selfish sensuality and makes us run along the way of Christ crucified, who is Truth itself.... Everything we do is done prudently and with the light of great discernment. And just as we act prudently, so we also speak or are silent as prudence dictates.... Don't

let any sort of fear make you keep silent about the truth, but be generous and free, ready to give your life if necessary, thoroughly drunk on the blood of the humble spotless Lamb.⁽⁵³⁾

And so we come back to the heart of it all. The “intelligent life,” according to Catherine of Siena, is grounded in the Word, divine Wisdom, and so must come to expression in the world. But grounded in the Word, it is necessarily grounded also in the cross, ready with the Word incarnate to serve the needs of the world “even to the point of death.”⁽⁵⁴⁾

FOOTNOTES

1. The etymology of the word bears this out, since the Latin antecedent is a combination of *lego* (“to choose”) and *inter* (“between” or “among”), and the English *understanding* comes from the proto-Germanic *stand-* (“stand”) and the proto-Indo-European **ntar* (“between” or “among”).
2. Though I have occasionally translated her *intelletto* as “intelligence,” she actually uses the word *intelligenza* only once. Yet this single instance is telling. In Letter T252 she tells Pope Gregory XI: “Open your mind’s eye; see and understand” (*Uprite l’occhio de lo ’ntelletto, e con intelligenza vedete*, literally, “Open your mind’s eye and see with understanding”).
3. Prayer 1.
4. Letter T95, to certain Florentine youths. (The prefix “T” to the letter numbers indicates the numbering used by Niccolò Tommaséo in his edition. All citations from Catherine’s letters are taken from *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, 4 vols., trans. Suzanne Noffke, Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2008.)
5. Letter T259, to Tommaso d’Alviano.
6. *Dialogue* 51. The word used for the will here as often elsewhere is *affetto*. Cf. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 82, aa. 3–4. All citations from *The Dialogue* are from *The Dialogue of Catherine of Siena*, trans. Suzanne Noffke, New York: Paulist Press, 1980, with the chapter number following the title.
7. *Dialogue* 98. Cf. Jn. 12, 35–36.
8. Letter T369, to Stefano di Corrado Maconi.
9. *Dialogue* 167.
10. Prayer 4. Cf. Jn. 8, 25 (Vulg.): “So they said to him, ‘Who are you?’ Jesus said to them, ‘The Beginning, who am speaking to you.’” Also 1 Cor. 15, 22–25: “Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again, but each one in proper order After having destroyed every sovereignty, authority and power, he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father.” All citations from Catherine’s collected prayers are from *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena* (trans. Suzanne Noffke, 2nd ed., San Jose: Authors Choice Press, 2001).
11. Letter T286, to Alessa dei Saracini.
12. Letter T109, to Bérenger, abbot of Lézat. Cf. Rom. 4, 4–5: “Now a person’s wages are counted not as a favor but as the worker’s due. But when a person does no work, yet believes in the one who justifies the sinful, that faith is given credit as justice.” (Vulg.)
13. Prayer 18.
14. Letter T309, to Giovanni da Parma.

15. *Dialogue* 10.
16. Letter T113, to Bandeçça Salimbeni.
17. She is taking a bit of liberty with Rom. 11, 17. Cf. Letter T156, to Giovanni Perotti: "We are wild trees, and must be engrafted, through love and desire for God, into this sweet tree, Christ crucified."
18. *Dialogue* 10, 23.
19. *Dialogue* 9.
20. Letter T213, to Daniella da Orvieto.
21. Letter T307, to a woman in Florence.
22. Letter T113, to Bandeçça Salimbeni.
23. *Dialogue* 46.
24. Letter T173, to a brother who has left his order.
25. Letter T44, to Antonio di Ciolo.
26. Letter T267, to Raimondo da Capua.
27. Letter T245, to Guasparre da Genova.
28. Letter T341, to Angelo Carraro.
29. Letter T312, to Giovanna d'Angiò.
30. Letter T173, to a brother who has left his order.
31. Letter T354, to Pentella of Naples.
32. *Dialogue* 10.
33. Letter T51, to Felice da Massa.
34. Here the movement of the will precedes the movement of understanding. Usually it is the other way around.
35. Letter T350, to Charles V, King of France.
36. *Dialogue* 41.
37. *Dialogue* 136.
38. Letter T201, to Giovanni, Carthusian of Santa Croce in Rome.
39. Letter T39, to Jacomo Tondi.
40. *Dialogue* 150.
41. *Dialogue* 127.

42. *Dialogue* 85.
43. *Dialogue* 85.
44. *Dialogue* 158.
45. *Dialogue* 96, 158.
46. *Dialogue* 24.
47. Letter T250, to Giovanni di Gano da Orvieto.
48. Letter T316, to Daniella da Orvieto.
49. *Dialogue* 11.
50. Letter T16, to a great prelate, February to April 1376.
51. Cf. Eccl. 3, 7.
52. Letter T284, to Pietro di Luna.
53. Letter T341, to Angelo Carraro.
54. This is an expression Catherine uses so often as to need no citation.

Intellectual Life, Inner Knowledge and Experience of Discipleship

By Anthony J. Gittins, CSSp.

PREAMBLE AND PARABLE

This article will consider the proposition that the Christian vocation to an intellectual life requires a serious commitment to the integrity of scholarship, which in turn includes readiness to formulate probing questions, openness to honest dialogue, and willingness to risk making discoveries that will lead to our conversion by causing us to change our views and modify our behaviors; these are necessary implications of both a commitment to scholarship and the pursuit of truth, wisdom, and God. Second, I will urge that unless the intellectual pursuit of knowledge is itself appropriately yoked to the pastoral encounter with our sisters and brothers, then it will remain unbalanced and ungrounded. And yet – and this is the third strand of my argument – without our pastoral concern being adequately rooted in theory and principle (that is, built on a solid intellectual foundation), it too is in serious danger of becoming injudicious and inadequate. What all this amounts to, in the context of the present issue of Dominican Studies, is that an authentic Catholic intellectual life is not only intellectually demanding, but more; it requires that we discover the fine balance between the contemplation of truth and pastoral action: no easy thing at all.

A story from the Central Pacific, a parable of sorts, might help to focus us. From many of the low-lying atolls -- which may be a thousand miles from a desired landfall – mariners used to navigate enormous ocean-going canoes accommodating sixty or more people. They did this without compass or sextant, and thanks to their fine-tuned skill of reading the stars, the waves and the clouds until, after several weeks at sea, they reached a destination no more than a quarter mile across and no higher than the palm-trees that broke the horizon. When I asked rather naively how they had managed such extraordinary feats, a wise and genial elder patiently explained that it took a lifetime: literally.

First, a local boy, perhaps even as young as six, would be identified as a potential master mariner by people in the community who knew what qualities to look for. Then he would spend all his days, until the weeks and months became years, watching and listening, learning and practicing and making mistakes, under the tutelage of other, trusted sailors. While still a youth he would take his place as an eager but inexperienced observer alongside a weather-beaten elder, sitting straight-backed on the canoe's hard boards and with eyes scanning the horizon, the firmament, and the waves all around. The novice would feel both the exhilaration and the terror of an almost endless adventure through massive swell and crashing seas. Gradually and cumulatively he would learn the lore of the ocean and the enormous responsibility of carrying several score members of his community on the journey of their lives. And finally, when he had become old himself and destiny beckoned, he would take full command of canoe, crew, and precious cargo; he would also face the greatest challenge of his life.

The island cultures of the Pacific were built on inter-island exploration, trade, and colonization and the islanders came to be known as some of the finest mariners in the world. So in the 1970s, when the traditional ocean-going canoes were banned (because considered too dangerous by bureaucrats in far-off Australia), and replaced by craft of steel with engines instead of oars, it is not surprising that this caused a highly emotional response from people who felt their very identity was being impugned. Some rushed to join the world's Merchant Navies so as to be able to live as seafarers. Others continued to build the mighty canoes in case the law was reversed. But for many, life had changed radically, and things would never be the same.

Traditionally, a whole lifetime spent in preparation for a great voyage was considered eminently worthwhile and indeed a life well spent, though no formal study or book-learning was involved; all necessary knowledge would

be accumulated by the direct method, or by first-hand experience. The process is known as the apprentice model of learning, and it has been used by a myriad of cultures in different ways. It is, of course – and here we come to my point – the method of Jesus. It is both the way (so tradition says) Jesus learned the carpenter’s trade and the method he taught his own disciples; and this causes me to wonder what today’s Catholic intellectuals may need to recall, or perhaps even learn about the method itself, and its implications and applications.

When two of John the Baptist’s disciples became interested in following Jesus, he told them, perhaps disingenuously, to “come and see” for themselves what would be involved (Jn 1:39). The synoptic accounts show Jesus saying simply “follow me” (Mt 3:19; Mk 1:18), and Simon, Andrew, James and John “left everything and followed him.” They would learn by doing (and the apprentice model includes helping people to learn from their inevitable mistakes). Evidently the process was effective: after Peter recovered from his betrayal of Jesus, he demonstrated his Easter faith in the Risen Lord (Acts 4: 20, 31). This is faith coming painfully to birth, but born of having known Jesus directly, not simply from ratiocination: we are told that the crowds “were astonished at the assurance [now] shown by Peter and John, considering they were uneducated laymen; and they recognized them as associates of Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Peter’s oratory and witness to Jesus clearly bespeaks his intimate acquaintance with his master. It is reminiscent of Paul’s later conviction, “I know whom I have believed” (2 Tim 1:12): this is an explicit claim to a real and life-changing experience.

We have, then, examples of the apprentice model of learning from the Pacific atolls and from Jesus himself, who taught people to become disciples by staying close to him and learning directly. By contrast, many of today’s teachers – astrophysicists, philosophers or theologians – use what Paulo Freire called the *banking method*, and might be more inclined to give a learned lecture, recommend a recent textbook, or advise on a prestigious university. The difference is not only of emphasis and style, though: Jesus was very intentionally identifying a discovery process rather than a detailed program or formal job-description, closer to Freire’s *conscientization*.⁽¹⁾ And because the invitation was extended not only to contemporaries of Jesus but to all with ears to hear and internalize the good news (see Matt 11:15), others have striven, in various well-tried ways, to learn the real meaning of discipleship: not all have succeeded very well, according to the criteria Jesus employed. Let us explore why.

TWO FACES OF KNOWLEDGE

A useful distinction can be made here.⁽²⁾ *Outer knowledge* is what we call *knowing about* something or someone, and it can be gained from the Internet or the library. For most of us, knowledge about ocean depths, mountainous peaks, or tropical rainforests is clearly outer knowledge. But we can also have outer knowledge of people: we can know something about people of the African savannah or the Pacific islands without ever having visited those places or met actual people. Curiously though, even if we have visited, it is still possible that we only *know about* (rather than actually *know*) the people: tourism tends to promote a “home away from home” experience that allows us to travel to other lands without ever really encountering local people in any close or intimate way. But outer knowledge – which can sometimes be perfectly appropriate – is very different from *inner knowledge*, which is empirical, or knowledge by experience. Inner knowledge comes from actually knowing a person or location, and the quality of such knowledge depends very much on circumstances; a degree of intimacy or familiarity is involved.

“Catholic Intellectual Life” is a snappy and arresting theme for a theological journal, which can surely be explored in very many ways. The Anselmian definition or summary of theology as “*fides quaerens intellectum*” invites a reflection on the implications of faith seeking understanding, in relation to the kind or kinds of knowledge or understanding which may be sought, whether by theologians in general or Catholic intellectuals in particular. For there is potential danger that a certain level of understanding of theology might well confer

outer knowledge, knowledge about God, about Jesus, or about doctrines or dogmas, yet fail to bring theologians to an intimate and experiential knowledge of God: to actually knowing God, knowing Jesus, and knowing other people as our own siblings. Theology that only teaches about God, is clearly inadequate fuel for authentic Catholic intellectual life, if Catholic means etymologically, 'belonging to the whole' and implies theologically, being a Christian.

The first authority for consideration is from four centuries ago. In *True Christianity*, Lutheran theologian Johannes Arndt wrote:

Many people think theology is mere science, but it is a *living experience and practice*. Everyone wishes to be a servant of Christ but no one wishes to be his follower. But a true servant must be Christ's follower. It is now the desire of the *world to know all things*, but that which is better than all knowledge, namely *to know the love of Christ* (Eph 3:19), no one desires to learn.⁽³⁾

To aver that theology is, or should be, "a living experience and practice" is to say that it strives for inner knowledge of God and is therefore to imply that such knowledge is actually attainable. This is, of course, one of the more radical claims of Christianity: that the faithful can and should actually have a developing relationship with God. But Arndt's formulation could equally well be reversed, to read: any living experience [of God] and practice [of Godly matters] is theology. This would be authentic theology, and theology as a way of life rather than simply an academic or intellectual exercise. This would indeed be *fides quaerens intellectum*: the faith that seeks understanding, an active faith that grows and deepens, the faith spoken of in the Letter of James as the faith that proves itself by good works (Jm 2:14-17). This kind of theology would be the daily practice of discipleship – a word (Gk, mathētēs) the root of which simply means "one who learns, a learner"; "learning"; or "to learn." What Arndt called *True Christianity* is effectively what Jesus called discipleship, and to learn it effectively one has first to "come and see" and thus encounter Jesus, then to go and put into practice what has been learned.

The challenge for Catholic intellectuals – particularly theologians – is to identify and strive to live with the tension that can arise when theory encounters practice. One alternative would be to emphasize the theoretical component of theology – by pursuing epistemological issues or deriving secondary and tertiary conclusions from first principles – at the expense of direct, hands-on pastoral experience of actual people in the empirical world. Another alternative would be to get caught up in the kind of unreflective activism that ultimately leads, via stress and decreasing effectiveness, to burnout. Outer knowledge therefore, is only one aspect of theology; it needs the corrective of inner knowledge. The philosophical project of the contemplation of Truth needs the philanthropic project of an encounter with one's neighbor; and Jesus explicitly identified himself with such a person. Whatever we do or fail to do to our fellow human beings is a measure of the quality of our theology (see Matt 25:35). Jesus is quite clear: it is not those who say Lord, Lord, but those who do the will of his Father who are true disciples and embodiments of good theology (see Lk 6:46; Mt 7:21). Even Satan is credited with outer knowledge, but that is clearly inadequate for, as the Letter of James says again, "the demons have faith and they tremble with fear" (Jm 2: 19).

I recently came across an early novel by David Lodge. The protagonist is a 'failed' priest, now middle-aged and ruefully reflecting on the arid lectures in systematic theology that he used to deliver as a seminary professor. He recalls having read the Matthew 25 passage to his students. Now, years later, he comes across the text of that lecture, which is laced with a mixture of cynicism and insight. This is what he had written about the Matthean passage:

Pure myth. But on what grounds does Christ the King separate the sheep from the goats? Not, as you might imagine, fervency of religious faith, or orthodoxy of religious doctrine, or regularity of worship, or observance of the Commandments, or indeed anything 'religious' at all ... The virtuous seem quite

surprised to be saved for *this* reason, doing good in an unselfish but pragmatic – an essentially this-worldly sort of way. It's as if Jesus left this essentially humanist message knowing that one day all the supernatural mythology in which it was wrapped would have to be discarded. ⁽⁴⁾

Here Lodge puts his finger precisely on the danger of theological punctiliousness, religious formalism or conventional piety that are not supported or infused with what in Hebrew is called *tzdekah*, a combination of the English notions of justice and charity combined, ⁽⁵⁾ and practiced through actual interactions with real people. It is reminiscent of an aphorism of Viktor Frankl that runs: "To love you must encounter." This is surely a particularly appropriate test of any authentic theologising: it is impossible to love in theory or in the abstract. Love has to be embodied, incarnate, and relational, or it is only notional. For God does not make abstractions but only actual persons, and it is not possible to love a concept or category. Indeed, "people in general" do not exist, only flesh and blood exemplars of people. Jesus did not love "the poor" in general but individuals in particular, not "prostitutes" or "sinners" as categories, but the actual women and men he encountered. This was his pastoral strategy, his way of doing theology by gaining inner knowledge of the divine in every person. And anyone who claims to love the God who cannot be seen but does not love the neighbor in plain sight is a liar (see Jm 2:14-24). Jesus did his theology 'on the road': both by contemplation and by encounter, the twin paths to inner knowledge. Not that he failed to think, to ponder and to reflect – that is, to use his mind, his intellect; but his thinking was constantly tested in the fires of his daily encounters. It needs to be the same with us.

REVERSAL OR REVOLUTION

Over the past few decades, practitioners of the specialty of mission theology have undertaken some very deep soul-searching. Challenging a not always implicit view that a central aim of foreign or overseas missionaries was to convert the people they encountered, was the slowly-forming question: "Who then will convert the missionary?" Conversion came increasingly to be viewed as an ongoing process that needs to mark the entire life of any disciple, including every missionary, rather than a simple event marking the ('other's') passage from unbelief to belief and thus located further and further in one's past as one aged. The interaction that came to be characterized as "mission in reverse" identified the missionary's own maturing conversion which occurs as the result of his or her response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit brought about through the actual daily interactions with local people and a particular cultural ethos. The major agent of conversion, far from being the missionary through presence and teaching, was increasingly identified as God's own Spirit working through local media. To intellectualize theology in general or conversion in particular, while neglecting the existential experience of daily encounters and their potential for grace and conversion would be thus to drive a wedge between theory and practice, theology and spirituality, intellectualization and incarnation.

Mission in reverse constitutes a direct challenge to intellectual complacency, personal self-sufficiency, professional expertise and comfortable certainties. It requires the building up of relationships, thereby allowing the teacher to become a learner, the speaker a listener, the host a stranger/guest, and causing conventional and problematic power structures to be dissolved or resolved. Without such reversals there simply cannot be true mutuality; without authentic mutuality there is virtually no possibility of our hearing the call to our own conversion; and without our personal, ongoing conversion, our intellectual, pedagogical or homiletic pursuits will lack both credibility and grace. But what came to be called 'mission in reverse' should not be narrowly applied to the conversion experience of those who travel far from home: its explication can appropriately apply to anyone, anywhere, including intellectuals from their ivory towers to the halls of academe.

It is far from my intention to antagonize or polarize the academy or intellectual life on the one hand, and mission and ministry on the other; rather, I want to encourage them to plight their troth and engage in a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship. For, just as an intellectual life that is not grounded in reality will fail to persuade others or to facilitate our own conversion, so experience alone is insufficient. Both are required.

Experience can so easily be invoked to justify prejudice and inflexibility, as in “from my experience I can tell you never to give money to a panhandler.” Wisdom seems to be a delicate combination of knowledge and experience, for if knowledge alone were adequate, all intellectuals and certainly all theologians would be wise; and if experience alone were sufficient, all elderly people would be wise. There is a very insightful verse in one of T.S.Eliot’s poems:

There is ... at best, only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience.
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and *falsifies*;
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been. ⁽⁶⁾

If we hope for personal transformation (conversion perhaps, or wisdom), we must do considerably more than fall back on our “experience” – unless it is authenticated by careful reflection and appropriate insight; for authentic experience, in Eliot’s phrase, is “a true and shocking valuation of all we have been,” in other words a shock to the system, a call to reappraisal, and – for anyone involved in Catholic intellectual life, particularly if it involves pedagogy – a spur to a very seriously reworking of what we teach, and how. The academic microcosm can become congenial and affirming, and yet produce “armchair” professionals, including theologians. An effective corrective to the armchair is the highway or the byway and the challenges posed – by those who live, subsist, or merely exist there – to theological theorizing. Theologian José Comblin once said that “the task of liberating the world has been entrusted to the poor” – along with the *koinonia* and in some relationship with the *ekklesia* perhaps; and his bold assertion is a corrective to any tendency to overrate professors and theologians *as such*. It may remind us that the resources for improved theorizing and better teaching are human beings as much as data banks: the *anawim*, Yahweh’s poor, as much as any computer or sophisticated *Power Point* presentation.

THE CALL FOR INTEGRATION

Let me illustrate, by several examples, the need for integration between outer and inner knowledge or theoretical and practical data, and for bridge-building between the academy and the marketplace or the library and the pew.

First, Sir James Frazer, classicist, folklorist and anthropologist (1854-1941): between 1890 and 1915, he published, in twelve volumes, the compendious *The Golden Bough*, containing virtually everything known about exotic “tribal” people across the globe. When asked whether he had actually met any of the people whose stories were included, Sir James famously remarked, “heaven forbid!” Most of the information had been accumulated at second hand; it was all outer knowledge: “armchair anthropology.” But for the past century, the method of cultural anthropologists has been that of participant observation or fieldwork, designed to facilitate inner knowledge of people, behavior, and belief. Such a methodology acknowledges the irreducibility of experience: the notion that we cannot validly represent other people unless they themselves are given voice. Reducing or standardizing everyone to a generic “American” or “African” and so on, and presuming to speak on their behalf, would be a distortion. Anyone whose understanding of other people and their ideas is only based on *knowing about* or outer knowledge, bears some serious responsibility for gaining some experiential *knowing* or inner knowledge.

Intellectuals in general may be prone to emotional or social isolation. Catholic intellectuals, as disciples of Jesus, must therefore strive to remain engaged with and responsive to their sisters and brothers: this is a measure of the faith they profess. A palpable gap may develop, between what we proclaim and the One we proclaim. If the

classroom becomes an isolated and privileged enclave, cut off from the sights and sounds and experiences of the community, and the library a hall of antiquities rather than a resource for the better teaching of Godly living, then what has been achieved? Only an intellectual or academic agenda that is fine-tuned to the experiences and deep concerns of the people of God will save the discipline of theology (and allied fields) from the fate of phrenology or phlogistics.

The second example is the founder of my own religious Congregation, Francis Libermann⁽⁷⁾ (1802-1852) from whose biography we find this thumbnail sketch. It shows a fine synthesis between the theoretical and the practical, and an awareness of the danger of accumulating knowledge at the expense of commitment to action:

Libermann was not without intellectual curiosity, though it rarely surfaced. He was largely uncritical towards those he trusted. His intelligence was of an essentially practical bent and had a cutting edge. Theories were a luxury unless they led to decisions. If he considered the will more important than the intellect, this was no speculative conclusion. It was simply that, in looking around him, *he saw more people who knew what to do than those who were prepared to do it.*⁽⁸⁾

The final sentence puts the distinction very clearly: accumulation of knowledge (*scientia*)⁽⁹⁾ is very different from commitment to right action (*phronesis*), and awareness of orthodoxy is very different from orthopraxis or right action.

My third example is Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), who became very concerned that the Church was insisting on orthodoxy and conformity at the expense of orthopraxy and creative responses to need:

I think certainly that the *Ecclesia docens* is more happy [when everyone waits for her lead, respects her initiatives and agrees with her official proclamations] than when she cuts off the faithful from the study of her divine doctrines and the sympathy of her divine contemplations, and requires from them a *fides implicita* in her word, which in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition.⁽¹¹⁾

Here Newman is attempting to identify what happens when intellectual life is stifled, thinking is not encouraged or actually forbidden, and simple obedience or conformity is expected. His diagnosis of indifference (coming from the educated elite) or superstition (from the formally uneducated) has proved to be very shrewd. His own struggles to exercise his enormous intellectual gifts and at the same time to be compassionate and pastorally responsive brought him great heartache. Here he is again:

This age of the church⁽¹²⁾ is peculiar. In former times, primitive or medieval, there was not the extreme centralization which is now in use. If a private theologian said anything free, another answered him. If the controversy grew, then it was sent to a Bishop, a theological faculty, or to some foreign University. The Holy See was but the court of ultimate appeal. Now, if I, as a private priest, put anything into print, Propaganda answers me at once. How can I fight with such a chain on my arm? There was a true private judgment in the primitive and medieval schools, -- there are no schools now, no private judgment (in the religious sense of the phrase), no freedom, that is, of opinion. *That is, no exercise of the intellect.* No. The system goes on by the tradition of the intellect of former times.⁽¹³⁾

This passage not only captures the experience of this intellectual heavyweight but appears sadly prescient a century and a half later. When the freedom and exercise of the intellect is hampered, truth is the first casualty. Yet we return to the corollary: unless the intellectual life is yoked to a commitment to encountering the other and to accumulating inner knowledge, we cannot appropriately speak of a truly Catholic/ Christian intellectual life. The method of Jesus – the apprentice model of learning – formed the earliest disciples, both by inviting them to a close relationship with Jesus, and by virtue of his own boundary-breaking encounters with people on

the edges, the margins of social life. Those of us called to the intellectual life must remember that we are also called – and it is essentially the same call – to discipleship, to knowing our sisters and brothers, and thereby to knowing Jesus. We must remain faithful but also bold.

A final quotation can act as a clarion call to integration and bold discipleship:

All of us long for a Pentecostal Church – a Church in which the Spirit rules and not the letter; a Church in which understanding breaks down the fences we erect against each other. We are impatient with a Church that seems so un-Pentecostal, so narrow and fearful.

This evokes memories of the words of Jesus: “Do not be afraid. I am with you.” It is a helpful reminder to keep building, integrating, synthesizing, joining together and not driving apart, for this is the way to prepare for the *basileia*, the realm of God. It is the work of a lifetime and work that takes a lifetime. And it may also be worth noting the particular circumstances of that encouraging quotation. The occasion was an Episcopal ordination; the date was Pentecost Sunday 1977; and the author was the bishop-elect himself: Joseph Ratzinger, also known as pope Benedict XVI ⁽¹⁴⁾ who, thirty years on, is still called to move beyond fear and fence-building as he strives to integrate the intellectual and pastoral dimensions of discipleship.

Footnotes

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. ‘Conscientization’, an instrument for the transformation of the social order, is a theoretical-practical phenomenon. (See Colin Crowder in *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. Allan Bullock and Stephen Trombley (eds.). HarperCollins, London, 1999:159).
2. I adapt theologian H. Richard Niebuhr’s “inner/outer knowledge”, and anthropologists Terence Ranger and John Weller’s “inner/outer history” here.
3. Johannes Arndt, *True Christianity*. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ. 1979 (1606): 21-2. Emphasis added.
4. David Lodge, *Paradise News*. Penguin Books, London, 1991: 356.
5. A short but excellent treatment of this notion can be found in Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility*. Schocken. New York, 2005: 32-33.
6. T.S.Eliot, *Four Quartets*. New York. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971:81ff.
7. Francis Libermann, founder the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary, which was fused with the Congregation of the Holy Ghost to become the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, now commonly call the Spiritans.
8. Bernard Kelly, *Life Began at Forty: The Second Conversion of Francis Libermann*. Paraclete Press, Dublin, 1983.
9. *Scientia* (Latin) is knowledge gained from systematic study, often of principles, and theoretical in nature.
10. *Phronesis* (Greek) is from a root meaning thought or thinking, indicates acting as a result of contemplation, or thought that leads to committed action.
11. John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*. John Coulson (ed.). Sheed and Ward, New York. 1961.
12. Newman was writing in 1859.

13. Newman, *op. cit.* 44. Emphasis added.

14. Quoted by John Jay Hughes, *America*, March 19, 2007:23.

The Life of Study and the Common Good

Richard Schenk, O.P.

I. Introduction

Ohio Dominican University hosts a lecture series entitled “Dominican Life of the Mind”. The lectures in this series are meant generally to encourage reflection upon ideas and events that can shape our culture. The particular question that I wish to pursue in my own reflections here is this: what can the Dominican Order’s ideal of study, past and present, contribute to the culture of a university that understands itself in the service of not only personal advancement but also the advancement of the common good?

In recent centuries, many religious orders have founded universities, and each could point to an aspect of its own unique charism as a fitting heritage or legacy for these institutions: say, the Benedictines with their transmission of cultural memory, the Jesuits with their mediation of social conflicts, the Salesians with their vocational training for the poor, or the Christian Brothers and Ursulines with their passion to be educators. I want to examine how the Dominican Order’s ideal of study, past and present, is concentrated in the somewhat inaccessible word: “wisdom”.

It wouldn’t make a great t-shirt: “Wisdom: We do it at Ohio Dominican University”. Wisdom is not as catchy as, say, the advertisement of one computer giant, whose ads show a young urban professional next to the motto: “I have theory. What I need is action”. The recruitment office of the university is unlikely to modify this slogan to read: “I’ve had action, what I need is wisdom.” True, “wisdom” is not as vague as that other watchword which many universities under pressure from the accreditation companies have put into their mission statement: “excellence”. Even, or perhaps especially, the more mediocre institutions obediently claim as required that they are “dedicated to excellence”, as if they had forgotten all those Platonic dialogues that once forced us to say excellence-in-what: not excellent con-artists nor excellent weapon-smiths, but then excellence in what? Ironically, such parroted claims to be “dedicated to excellence” often betray a thorough mediocrity. “Wisdom” is less formal, it is more concrete than “excellence”. It is also less formal and more concrete than “veritas”, or truth, the cherished motto of the Dominican Order as a whole even prior to obtaining “official” status in the 19th century ⁽¹⁾. John Harvard must have seen this watchword in the emblems of the walls and windows of the former Dominican Blackfriars at Cambridge, which had been absorbed in 1583 into Emmanuel College, Cambridge ⁽²⁾. Veritas soon became the watchword of John’s academy for preachers, and it would remain just that even after this initial foundation grew into Harvard University. And yet, even if more concrete than excellence or truth, wisdom, too, can mean many things, and so the question remains: what kind of wisdom could the Dominican legacy of this university offer to enrich the academic culture?

Amidst all the emotional misgivings suggested by the insuitability of wisdom or “sapientia” as a popular codeword for the university t-shirt, we could articulate three central challenges:

1. Wisdom means too many things.
2. Even if you could narrow and define the meaning of wisdom, it could never be taught as are the arts and sciences; you cannot offer a major in wisdom.
3. Even for those who have gained some form of wisdom, there is nothing to be done with it once they have it; so it is a private matter, irrelevant to the common good.

We will need to address all three of these concerns, if the Dominican heritage of wisdom is ever to contribute to university culture. But let me begin these reflections with an initial section, looking (I.) at the genesis and shape

of the sapiential ideal of study in early Dominican history, before (II.) taking up the three concerns mentioned and using them to test the current articulation of the Dominican ideal of study.

II. The Place and Character of Study in the Early Dominican Order

Academic studies occupied a central place in the Order of Preachers from its very beginning, several generations before a definite ideal of wisdom began to interpret and shape them. To tell that story we must first recall St. Dominic, about whom many of you might already know a great deal. I ask for your patience. Despite contradictory claims made in the 14th century that tell us more about the course of the Order's first completed century than about St. Dominic, Dominic was not a professor of theology at the papal curia or any other faculty.⁽³⁾ And yet he was venerated from early years of the Order on as a "doctor veritatis", who had "freely poured out waters of wisdom"⁽⁴⁾. Dominic was not someone for whom studies and books were a fetish. As a student, he had even sold his rare and expensive books to aid the victims of disease and drought⁽⁵⁾. Dominic discourses with skeptics of the Christian faith, at public gatherings and public taverns, but not as a professor at the university. And yet he came to see academic study as a necessary means to address directly a different kind of disease and hunger: the plague of disbelief, the hunger for genuine faith, both acute forms of suffering in his own day. Chosen in 1203 and again in 1206 as a *socius* for embassies of Diego, bishop of Osma in Spain, to Northern Europe, Dominic experienced the widespread inability of the people especially of Southern France and Northern Italy to believe fully in the Christian faith. Against the "Albigensian" heresy with its claim that our earthly history is largely cut off from the realm of a benign and providential God, there were bald counter-assertions of the truth of Christian truth, and soon there would also be military battles around it (and around the question of French unification), but there was little preaching or argumentative discourse by representatives of the Church willing to live a life as austere as the leaders of the heretical movements.

To characterize different kinds of saints, one could argue that there is one genus or family of those saints who seem to begin with the love of God or Christ and then move to the love of creatures; St. Francis is an example of this family of sanctity. And there is a second genus or family of saints, like Dominic, who move from the love of creatures to the love of God. Dominic was one of those many saints moved by the recognition of human misery to seek the mercy, the "misericordia", of God. That is something he shares with all the saints of this second family. What sets him apart within this genus, the specific difference from most other saints of this kind, is this: the specific "misery" towards which Dominic's own "misericordia" was directed was first and foremost the inability of so many in his age to believe aright. One remarkable sign of this is that nearly all of his prayers of which we have any report are prayers that seek God's mercy: either directly for those weak in faith; or indirectly for them, namely for God's grace on this new "Order of Preachers", who could enter into fruitful discourse about the faith.

Now this might sound far too specialized to be a model for the university. But the apostolic goal of proclamation and dialogue required study, the study of the faith and the study of cultures and philosophies. The new religious significance of study became clear only gradually as Dominic gathered an Order of Preachers and shaped the life, the apostolate, and the locations of his followers. Bishop Diego and his canon and socius Dominic had met the disheartened papal legates in southern France in 1206; just now, this spring, as we are commemorating the 800th anniversary of this meeting, there is a conference of historians in France trying to reconstruct the precise details and importance of these interchanges. What is clear is that, following his second trip as socius of Bishop Diego, Dominic stayed on in the Languedoc region between Toulouse and Montpellier even after the bishop had returned to Spain and died there at the end of 1207. Following the assassination in the first weeks of 1208 of one of the legates, Peter of Castelnau, open warfare broke out between the opposing parties. Prior to this, Diego and Dominic had been able to establish a monastery and safe-house for women who had converted from Albigensianism, and it was from here that Dominic was able to preach in the area as well as in the cities of Toulouse and Carcassone. Other Catholic preachers began to join him here. After over 8 years, during a lull in the hostilities in 1215, Dominic was finally able to move with his small band of preachers to Toulouse, where

they founded a diocesan institute of religious life and preaching. Dominic joined with the others in his small foundation there in attending the academic lectures of Alexander Stavensby at the Cathedral Chapter school; it was an option for the academic model of the cathedral schools rather than for the more spiritual style of the monastery schools with their tradition of *lectio divina* ⁽⁶⁾. In January of 1217 Pope Honorius issued a letter which Dominic would be able to present to the faculty and students of the University Paris, inviting them to found a papally approved studium at Toulouse as the seed of a new university there. Dominic's initial idea for an answer to the contemporary crisis of faith was not only a new religious community, but a new university. Less than a month before, Honorius had given papal approval to what the pope himself now insisted be named "the Order of Preachers", moving it beyond its initial limits as a diocesan institute. Dominic seems never to have presented the papal letter of invitation to the University community at Paris to bring them to a new foundation at Toulouse. Instead, he decided, several months after requesting this authorization, to do just the reverse and send the brethren from Toulouse to established universities ⁽⁷⁾. In August of 1217, he decided against the advice of most of his advisors to disperse his young community, which had been eight years in the making and had now existed less than two years after the first formal house was founded in Toulouse. Dominic sent seven members to the university of Paris, four to Spain, others to the university of Bologna, and some of the younger and simpler brothers to the non-university town of Orléans (only in 1235 would the pope grant to Orléans the status of a university). Dominic left only a minor presence of his foundation in Toulouse. The gamble paid off, however, not only because the following month saw hostilities resume at Toulouse with the Albigensian reoccupation of the city and the renewed siege upon it by the Catholic forces, but also because of the growing association of the Order with the university communities and the university ethos.

Arguably, the strongest testimony for St. Dominic's sense of studies does not come from the universities, but from the interior life and the apostolic ministry of the priories themselves ⁽⁸⁾. In what is perhaps his most obvious shift from monastic life, Dominic replaced the monastic emphasis on handwork with the multiple practices of academic study ⁽⁹⁾. The superiors were told that they could dispense from common prayer and other regular observances, if on any occasion study or preaching demanded it. Dominic's visitations would focus on study and preaching. Liberal provisions were made for the purchase and maintenance of books and libraries. No priory was to be founded that could not find along with a suitable prior also a "lector", or teacher. The lector of each convent was expected not only to direct *ad intra* the intellectual studies of the brethren, but to arrange for regular public disputations *ad extra*. The initial popularity of the young Order, the reason why cities were eager to make their foundation possible, was in good part that the priories provided something analogous to a community college for theology, to which also the non-Dominican clergy and the laity had access. Admitting that this ideal of each priory as a publicly accessible school of theology had not always been realized, the general chapter of Valenciennes in 1259 passed legislation that called for the gradual closure of houses without an active lector ⁽¹⁰⁾. For their part, the Dominican friars, including prior and lector, were obliged by this legislation to attend these very same disputations: no doubt, helping to insure a consistently higher level of quality ⁽¹¹⁾. As we now know much better after recent research by Michèle Mulchahey and others, an intricate network was created, linking prioral studia with provincial and general studia ⁽¹²⁾. Numerous novel techniques were developed to encourage the brethren individually and communally to "semper studere" ⁽¹³⁾: to study at all times, a task designed not just for the exceptional foundations but, in ways often forgotten today, for each priory and the common life of its members.

These structures of study had developed prior to any programmatic identification of wisdom as a goal expressive of their characteristically Dominican nature. The vocabulary of wisdom followed the practices of study. But especially after several sobering experiences of Dominicans' attempting merely charismatic preaching or direct political control, the alternative, "sapiential" ideal of Dominican life increasingly came to be recognized as normative for the entire Order. In the year after brother John of Vicenza had proclaimed 1233 as the "Year of the Great Alleluia" and allowed himself to be declared Duke of Verona, the General Chapter forbade the direct involvement of brothers in political offices and ordained that only brethren with adequate academic preparation should be allowed to preach ⁽¹⁴⁾.

While the provisions of the Constitutions for local and provincial study were meant in the first instance for the good of those localities, they also allowed the preparation of the best students to study in the general studia set up at the universities and often functioning as a part of them. The legislation from 1259 demanded

„...that provincials are to inquire diligently as to which of the young brethren are fit for study and capable of progressing in this quickly, and that they are to promote them in their studies; that such an inquiry is also to be carried out each year by the visitators of each priory, and that they are to pass on the results to the provincial chapter; that no brothers are to be sent away to the general houses of study in the Order unless they are especially willing and able to study (*bene morigerati et apti ad proficiendum*).”

It was only a matter of time until these structures produced university professors of theology. While it was not unheard of for non-Dominicans (e.g. the Franciscans Odo Rigaldi and Roger Bacon) to begin their commentaries on the *Sentences* with references to the wisdom sought in systematic theology, the Dominican professors of the period show a far more definite tendency in this direction. Wisdom as the *Leitmotiv* of these works, similar to our doctoral dissertations, was not exclusively Dominican, but it was characteristically Dominican⁽¹⁵⁾. It is represented by the works of Richard Fishacre, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Robert Kilwardby, Ulrich of Straßburg, Bombolognus de Bononia and Hannibaldus de Hannibaldis⁽¹⁶⁾. The identification of wisdom as the goal of theology separates all these Dominican theologians from the merely charismatic and directly political model of the Dominican mission discredited by John of Vicenza; they shared many convictions about what wisdom is not, but they did not agree to the same degree about what wisdom is, beyond its being aided by academic study.

In his contribution to the Festschrift for Joseph Ratzinger's 60th birthday, two volumes which were dedicated to the theme of worldly vis-à-vis divine wisdom⁽¹⁷⁾, Richard Schaeffler was able to show that alternative understandings of wisdom can be distinguished from one another according to how they relate wisdom to both the various academic disciplines or sciences and to piety. This parallels roughly the question as to the interrelatedness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit wisdom, knowledge and piety (*sapientia, scientia* and *pietas*)⁽¹⁸⁾. The form of wisdom characteristic of Franciscan theology at this time is marked by a close affinity between wisdom and piety, leading typically to the attempt to bind the various academic disciplines ever more closely to the faith, theology, or mystical union of the individual soul with God: *De reductione artium ad theologiam*⁽¹⁹⁾. Bonaventure shows himself here to be a genuine disciple of St. Francis, who tied wisdom to pious simplicity: „Ave, regina sapientia, Dominus te salvet cum tua sorore sancta pura simplicitate”⁽²⁰⁾. For many Franciscan theologians, unlike Bonaventure, wisdom would be equated with and thus eclipsed by humility⁽²¹⁾.

By contrast, the form of wisdom characteristic of Dominican theology during the same period tends to stress the abiding importance of the various disciplines for wisdom; and as such it becomes a hallmark of Dominican study. The stress dwells less upon the personal union with God implied by wisdom as upon its communicable implications. For the former tendency, the private metaphor of tasting (*sapere*) sweetness had been frequent; while, for this second conception, the social metaphors of shared water is common, as already in the antiphon for St. Dominic: „...aquam sapientiae propinasti gratis”⁽¹⁾. Ulrich of Straßburg returns to this metaphor to stress the continuous passing on of wisdom⁽²²⁾. His contemporary and fellow-student, Thomas Aquinas, uses this water imagery at the beginning of his teaching career to define programmatically the work of the theologian: *Rigans montes de superioribus suis*⁽²³⁾. These forms of wisdom are meant to have a wider impact on society.

After strong criticism both from inside the Dominican Order and outside, the theology of Thomas Aquinas (†1274) slowly gained favor and even a favored status within the Order. And it was therefore Thomas' notion of wisdom through which later Dominicans tended to understand their mission, especially but not exclusively their academic mission.

Thomas distinguished but also interrelated three notions of wisdom:

1. philosophical wisdom;
2. theological wisdom;
3. wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Let us look briefly at these three levels of wisdom.

1 - Thomas draws upon Aristotle's notion of wisdom for his notion of philosophical wisdom. In this view, wisdom is what makes an interdisciplinary synthesis possible. Even in the trades, the architect can be called wise as compared to the masons, the carpenters, the painters etc. Knowing better the purpose of the whole, the architect can imagine better what is needed where and judge whether the specialists' works fit into the whole; as the much cited phrase has it, "it is the office of the wise to order." And yet the architect cannot as architect do well the work of the mason, the carpenter, or the painters. There is need for a higher unitive perspective AND a need for specialization, a mix of a certain collaboration or solidarity among specialists and a subsidiarity that respects the work of each specialist. Philosophy, too, is called wisdom inasmuch as it can bring the individual arts and sciences into conversation with one another and synthesize a new and much needed whole. It does this by reaching the higher ground or perspective, having a less restricted methodology; and for this reason there is no major in wisdom: it is what allows the specialized fields to enter conversation with one another. While respecting the work of the more specialized arts and sciences, philosophical wisdom can often judge whether or not the specialists' work fits into the whole. For example: if psychiatry were to limit itself to chemical therapies, if sociology were to limit itself to economic analysis, if anthropology were to limit itself to the analysis of power structures, philosophy might offer critical insights into the more properly personal dimensions of human life. To use Schaeffler's analysis, this Thomistic notion of wisdom is characterized by a high regard for the specialized arts and sciences.

2 - At a second level, theological wisdom seeks to preserve this basis of philosophical wisdom and develop it, adding to its synthesis the voice and reflected experience of faith. Unlike philosophical wisdom, there is no form of genuinely theological wisdom which is purely theoretical. It is more comprehensive, and thus needs necessarily to be concerned about the private and the social implications of virtue and sin, of faith and disbelief, of church and society, and of the academic disciplines. It retains "a primacy of the speculative", avoiding the revisionist models of history or theory often offered by purely pragmatic or functionalistic thinkers. It makes a place for theology amidst the other university disciplines and social voices, but at the same time it also overcomes the temptations to fideism and retains the respect for the pre-theological disciplines. Thomas Aquinas' sense of theological wisdom and its conversation partners comes close to John Henry Newman's 1854 essay on the *Idea of the University*, which demands both the specialization of the many academic disciplines and their conversation with one another, including their conversation with theology.

3 - Wisdom as a gift of the Spirit is prepared in Thomas' view by lower forms of wisdom, and it follows their pattern. While anyone so gifted is moved by the Holy Spirit beyond their own talents, these talents and virtues are typically drawn into the process. As flowing from charity, affectively and connaturally, "the spirit of wisdom" in this sense loves not only God but also loves what God loves, loves the benevolent plans of God for the created order and its history. Even less than theological wisdom could "the spirit of wisdom" be purely speculative or indifferent to the course of history, especially when that history is opposed to God's antecedent and unconditional will for the world. In other words, such a gift is more passionate, it suffers together with those who suffer, it opposes most what is most opposed to God's benevolent designs for the world: a principle of reaffirming God's desired order by exercising a preferential option for the suffering⁽²⁴⁾. In the spirit of subsidiarity, it respects the other disciplines mentioned. Wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this sense gives us a more acute sense of what is wrong and must be changed, it provides us with motivation to seek a better reality, but it

does not of itself supply the answers. In the view of St. Thomas, wisdom of this kind can help us to identify false answers that would increase rather than alleviate suffering, but it cannot replace the need for conversation with the academic disciplines, technological know-how and political reason. It is not an excuse for the “fundamentalisms” of political self-righteousness on the right (the doctrinaire) or the left (the “Gutmensch”), which assumes in either variation that it can largely dispense with detailed expertise and experienced prudence; rather, this kind of wisdom seeks the support of subsidiary disciplines.

III. The Place and Character of Study in the Dominican Order of Today

These suggestions found in the example of St. Dominic and his early followers, including the reflections of Thomas Aquinas on the interrelated forms of wisdom and their ties to charity and mercy, have not gone unnoticed by the Dominican Order today. For the sake of brevity, I want to refer here only to the document on “the intellectual life” drafted by the General Chapter at Providence in 2001 and recalled by the Chapter of Krakow in 2005 ⁽²⁵⁾. It is the arguably the most official statement of the present Dominican self-understanding on the matter, and the text to a large degree speaks for itself; after the historical section above, we can now cite it here at length. The title of the document is programmatic: “Misericordia Veritatis”, something that the text also names “intellectual compassion”.

This text begins its reflections on “The Call to the Intellectual life of the Order Today” by recalling the example and foundational work of St. Dominic and the ideal of study in the early years of the Order of Preachers, including the reconfiguration of this central practice and work of the Order by St. Thomas’ reflections on wisdom and mercy. While stressing the apostolic and compassionate goal of study, the text also seeks to avoid a short-sighted pragmatism. Genuine knowledge of God and of humankind condition and fulfill each other.

- (104) Thanks to St Dominic’s innovative spirit, study ordered to the salvation of souls was involved intimately in the purpose and regular life of the Order. St Dominic himself led the brethren to places of learning in the largest cities so that they might prepare for their mission. “Our study must aim principally, ardently, and with the greatest care at what can be useful for the souls of our neighbors” (LCO 77,1). From then on, study would be linked essentially to the apostolic mission of the Order and to preaching the Word of God.
- (107) Our constitutions point out the contemplative dimension of study by calling it a meditation on the multiform wisdom of God. To dedicate oneself to study is to answer a call to “cultivate the human pursuit of truth”
- (LCO 77,2). One could say that our Order is born of this love for truth and of this conviction that men and women are capable of knowing the truth. From the start, the brethren were inspired by the innovative audacity of St. Dominic who encouraged them to be useful to souls through intellectual compassion, by sharing with them the *misericordia veritatis*, the mercy of truth. Jordan of Saxony states that Dominic had the ability to pierce through to the hidden core of the many difficult questions of their day “thanks to a humble intelligence of the heart” (*humili cordis intelligentia: Libellus*, No. 7, MOPH XVI, Roma 1935, pg. 29).
- (106) It is into a studious and concerned wisdom of this sort that Thomas Aquinas inscribes the Dominican vocation – *contemplari et contemplate aliis tradere* (cf. *STh* II-II 188, 6 as well as *STh* I 1, 4; II-II 45, 3 co). Wisdom of this kind tells us not only of what is eternal, but also of the “...regulae contingentium, quae humanis actibus subsunt” (*STh* II-II 45, 3 ad 2; vgl. 19, 7). “It belongs to the gift of wisdom not only to meditate on God but also to direct human actions. Such direction is concerned first and foremost with the elimination of evils, which contradict wisdom. That is why fear is called the beginning of wisdom, because fear moves us to move away from evils. Ultimately, it has to do with the

aim of how everything might be led back to the order justly due it: something which belongs to the idea of peace" (*STh* II-II 45, 6 ad 3). Sapiential study thus unfolds itself necessarily as intellectual compassion: a form of compassion which presupposes insight (*intellectus*) gained or developed by study; and a form of insight which leads to compassion. "For even as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so is it better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation than merely to contemplate" (*STh* II-II 188, 6 co.). Thus, even though God's mercy and compassion are made available to the world in a multitude of ways, through the Dominican charism it is available through study and the consolation of truth.

- (105) Within the Order, study should not be considered in a pragmatic way, as if it were only an apprenticeship for a trade. Rather, study belongs to the contemplative dimension of our Dominican life, a vital part of its cognitive aspect. And yet, while drawn first toward contemplating God and God's works, theological wisdom comes to share with the Spirit's gift of wisdom the love of God and of God's works, a holy joy in the contemplation of their fullness as well as a holy sorrow at any wounding of their being.
- (113) The manifold crisis about human dignity is also a crisis about God. It belongs to Dominican study to grasp the link between the two, tracing where our loss of God leads ultimately to our loss of human dignity and finding both with each other again. For this reason it is as impossible for Dominican study to neglect the fundamental questions of God, salvific history or the ultimate truths of creation as it is to neglect the questions of the peace, justice, and stewardship to which the Gospel leads us.
- (108) Study is thus linked with that *misericordia* which moves us to proclaim the Gospel of God's love for the world and the dignity which results from such love. Our study helps us to perceive human crises, needs, longings, and sufferings as our own (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *STh*, II-II 30, 2 co: "...Quia autem tristitia seu dolor est de proprio malo, intantum aliquis de miseria aliena tristatur aut in quantum miseriam alienam apprehendit ut suam").

The document not only refers to the connection of wisdom and mercy in general and in the early days of the Order, it also describes something of the situation of today in which the search for sapiential study is especially urgent. The call of Vatican II for us to share in the joys and hopes, but also in the tears and fears of our day takes on a new significance in the postmodern age, where the anxiety is deep and widespread that we human beings have significant access neither to truth nor to freedom nor to hope. Even the modern convictions of universal human rights are placed in question by the postmodern fragmentation into cultural relativity.

- (109) The intellectual mission of the Order calls us to share not just the "gaudium et spes", but also the "luctus et angor" of our time, its tears and fears: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of just such people..." (*Gaudium et spes* 1).
- (110) The historical developments of recent times have been ambivalent. On the one hand, human rights have been declared more clearly than ever before, and technical and medical advances have done much to reduce useless toil and physical suffering. But by their many theoretical reductionisms and many of their political and social developments, especially those depriving whole categories of people of their human rights, the last two centuries have also intensified the self-doubt which was never far from human life, leaving a heritage which characterizes the beginning of our present century as well. No less urgently than St. Augustine, each person in our time can say, "Quaestio mihi factus sum" (*Confessiones* X 33).

- (111) This questioning of human value is an intrinsic part of today's most pressing *quaestiones disputatae*. The self-doubt about human dignity colors the three ancient questions which since Kant have been said to constitute together the encompassing question, What is a human being? These three questions, What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for? raising interrelated doubts about the capacity of human beings for truth, for freedom, and for eternal life, call for the intellectual compassion acquired in good part by the labor of study. Assiduous study of today's *quaestiones disputatae* should lead us to understand the pressures to doubt, without submitting to the despair about human dignity: "Credidi, etiam cum locutus sum, ego humiliatus sum nimis; ego dixi in trepidatione mea: omnis homo mendax" (*Psalms 116/115*, 10-11).
- (112) Feeling the trepidation of our times, especially about our capacity for truth, and seeing the manifold humiliation of human life as our own, and yet bringing to the world the confidence of the Gospel together with its concomitant demand for justice and peace, Dominican study is to be marked by both a habit of humility and a confidence in the "paracletic" mission of the church, defending the dignity proclaimed in creation and redemption and helping to make faith believable in our day. In this way Dominican study can and must serve the *misericordia veritatis*.

The text of the Chapter recalls the need of this wisdom to listen to sources outside our own culture and times; it calls for dialogue and memory, for conversation with "the Other" than ourselves, others both contemporary and historical:

- (114) Dominicans share with others the lot of our times. Consequently, Dominican study is marked by dialogue and cooperation in the pursuit of truth. In order to defend the dignity of creation in our own times and in our future, Dominican study seeks to be "anamnetic" (recollective), recalling the sufferings and injustices of the past along with the riches and achievements of those who have gone before us.
- (115) Our confidence to take part in the *quaestiones disputatae* of our day must derive from our confidence that we are the heirs to an intellectual tradition which is not to be preserved in some intellectual deep-freeze. It is alive and has an important contribution to make today. It rests upon fundamental philosophical and theological intuitions: an understanding of morality in terms of the virtues and growth in the virtues; the goodness of all creation; a confidence in reason and the role of debate; happiness in the vision of God as our destiny; and a humility in the face of the mystery of God which draws us beyond ideology.
- (116) This is a tradition of immense importance in a world that is often tempted by an intellectual pessimism, a lack of confidence that the truth can be attained, or by brutal fundamentalism. It is founded on the confidence that we have a *propensio ad veritatem* (*LCO 77,2*). It is of immense importance in the Church, which is often divided by ideological divisions with theologians sniping at one another from opposing trenches, and in which there is often a fear of real intellectual engagement with those who think differently.
- (117) Like the *misericordia* that it cultivates, Dominican study is a permanent way of life, nourished by contemplative and communal resources. Aiming at the perception and alleviation of human need, Dominican study must value especially the resources offered by philosophy together with its neighboring human, social, and natural sciences. The future of our philosophic tradition belongs to the most urgent questions facing the intellectual mission of the Order.

The Chapter sought to retrieve a key aspect of the Thomistic notion of wisdom: its relation to other disciplines which preserve their relative autonomy. Their principles and implications can be reviewed but not redesigned by wisdom, which therefore seeks to foster conversations among the various disciplines of philosophy, the arts and the sciences. Wisdom of this kind also seeks to foster the search for truth in processes of dialogue among cultures, epochs, and religions.

- (118) Brothers in many parts of the world feel that, even though philosophy seems more important than it has been in the past, there are also growing doubts that we are providing the right kind of philosophical formation for our brothers. We have tended to see it as a rather tiresome passage toward theology, as a place to acquire a vocabulary we will later use in theology. By situating truth in the fact and possibility of human experience, philosophy helps to uncover the root of a truth and to let us know how what has been claimed is true (“rationibus...investigantibus veritatis radicem et facientibus scire quomodo sit verum quod dicitur”: Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales* IV, art. XVIII).
- (119) Philosophy must be understood in the context of its neighboring social, natural, and human disciplines that give us insight into the human condition and our place in the cosmos. As Dominicans we have a special responsibility to the heritage of St. Thomas that we have received, but if we take seriously the radicality of the Gospel, our preaching must likewise be attentive to new knowledge and new ways of understanding the world around us. Because God reveals his plan to us in a multitude of ways, we must maintain the delicate unity-in-tension between faith and reason: “Deprived of what revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal. Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so runs the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being” (*Fides et Ratio*, 48).
- (120) This means that every province, vice-province and vicariate of the Order must evaluate its philosophical curriculum regularly to assure that the philosophical formation which our brothers receive prepares them for the challenges of their day.
- (121) The goal of the Order is not to create intellectuals but to form preachers who can proclaim the Gospel on multiple frontiers of the modern world. These include the frontier of poverty resulting from economic globalization; the frontier of personhood and human dignity in the field of bioethics; the frontier of Christian experience faced with religious pluralism; and the frontier of religious experience faced with atheism, materialist indifference and new forms of idolatry.
- (122) Since its earliest days, the Order has promoted fearlessly a spirituality of dialogue. In today’s pluralistic world, the challenges of dialogue have never been greater. Today our world calls us, first, to persevere in the conversion of churches toward the unity of the Church of Christ. This demands, first of all, the examination of conscience and the purification of memories. Second, it calls us to learn that a universal truth can enter into the particularity of culture and history. Third, it calls us to study and preach the *kenosis* of God, who came down into the flesh of the world and the limits of our language and culture.
- (123) In this dialogue we must take care not to lose “passion for ultimate truth and our ardor for research.” This will require that we develop a new theology of mission and evangelization as we face a crisis of meaning, a plurality of theories with which we may not agree, and even indifference. True

dialogue involves deepening our own identity and allowing ourselves to be truly vulnerable so that we can listen to others and hear their pain.

- (124) What kind of men and women do we need for this new work? Today's preacher-theologians will be reasonable and well informed about the various disciplines, without being specialists in all of them. They will need to be wise men and women who can orient others and themselves toward their final destiny. They will not be afraid of reaching the limits of reason and will be open to the "foolish wisdom" of the cross. "The wisdom of the Cross...breaks free of all cultural limitations which seek to contain it and insists upon an openness to the universality of the truth which it bears" (*Fides et Ratio*, 23). Precisely where modern science gives us cloudy complexity, Dominicans will be men and women not of easy answers but of difficult questions, inspired by the passion for truth.

IV. Conclusion

So, what does all of this mean? Should ODU get the Wisdom t-shirt after all? Something like "Wisdom: our heritage and our service". But then "Wisdom" on the front of the shirt would need an asterisk referencing a long explanation on the back; and, while admittedly some of us might have more room on our t-shirts than others, there is probably just too much explaining to do in the space allowed. The central question identified at the beginning of these reflections was: what can the Dominican Order's ideal of study, past and present, contribute to the culture of a university that understands itself in the service of not only personal advancement but also the advancement of the common good? The challenges to the suggestion that this contribution could be found in the Dominican ideal of wisdom have been met.

1. Wisdom can indeed mean many things, but the sapiential sense of study reached in the first fifty years after the beginning of the Order of Preachers displays a high level of specificity that characterizes the kind of study that should mark the work of the university today.
2. That gift of the Holy Spirit which we call wisdom is the fulness and capstone of what we can aspire to by way of wisdom, and it is admittedly beyond the virtues that can be acquired by academic reason and discipline. As such, it cannot be never be taught or laid claim to as are the arts and sciences; and yet it flourishes especially well in their context, and it calls for them as what it needs to carry out its own purpose. Together with the interdisciplinary dynamic of philosophical and theological wisdom, this *spiritus sapientiae* fosters a flourishing academy: it furthers the disciplines, their conversation with one another, and their discursive dialogue with the non-academic and non-Christian worlds.
3. Wisdom of this kind also seeks an application of knowledge to praxis and to the common good. It narrows the gap between theory and praxis, it fosters critical and self-critical reflection upon the impact of arts and sciences upon the cultural and natural geographies affected by them.

In the context of the political action that is included in the ultimate goals of such wisdom, the conversation among theologians, philosophers and experts from, say, technological, medical, juridical, and economic fields is one that both demands (solidarity) and protects (subsidiarity) the competence of each. Involving the Order and the wider Church in shaping society, it is a conversation that will also demand and protect the involvement of laity and clergy. The university is meant as one of the preeminent places where those conversations should be prepared and cultivated. In this ideal of wisdom, the university has the task of cultivating a "Life of the Mind" that does not stay in the mind, much less in one mind, but involves the body, the society, societies and their many voices along with many more generations before and after the one presently living. In J.H. Newman's view, this conversation among academic disciplines, including theology, if that conversation is sufficiently wide and deep and far-reaching, is what makes any university a university. This is the ideal of wisdom that can guide

ODU in embracing its legacy, contributing to our world, and continuing to grow as a, well, yes, excellent university.

Footnotes

1. Guy Bedouelle, *Dominikus. Von der Kraft des Wortes* (Graz et al., 1984) 172.
2. Cf. F.A. Reeve, *Cambridge* (London, Clowes 1964) 59. The author thanks Fr. Fabian Parmisano OP for the reference and its background.
3. Cf. Bedouelle, *op. cit.* 171.
4. Antiphon „O lumen“.
5. Cf. Vladimir Koudelka, *Dominikus* (Olten et al., Walter 1983) Text 13 (pg. 80 sq.), citing Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 10.
6. Cf. Bedouelle, *op. cit.*
7. For a slightly later development cf. Marie-Humbert Vicaire, *Roland de Crémone ou la position de la théologie à l'université de Toulouse*, in: *id.*, *Dominiques et ses Pr[^]cheurs* (Paris et al., Cerf 1977) 75-100.
8. Although the oldest version of the „Ancient Constitutions“ dates from over 10 years after Dominic's death, it provides a good sense of the trajectory of the initial legislation.
9. Cf. Vladimir Koudelka, *Dominikus* (Olten et al., Walter 1983) 176 sqq.
10. „If in any province it is not possible that there be lectors at each of the priories, it is at least to be provided for that the brethren, especially the young brethren, are not to be assigned to these priories but that they rather be sent to places which do have lectors; If not enough lectors can be found for lecturing publicly, at least some should be provided to lecture in private or at least to deal with history or pastoral cases or something of this kind, lest the brethren be idle;
 1. That the visitators are to inquire diligently each year concerning the lectors with regard to what they have lectured on during the year, which questions they have disputed and how they have solved them. They are to inquire among the priories they visitate which ones still lack lectors, and they should make a report to the provincial chapter about this. The provincial and the diffinitors are to make a report to the general chapter, especially about the more notable deficiencies which they have found in this regard.”
11. *Op. cit.*: „That the brethren who skip classes be severely punished;
 2. That during the time assigned for the lectures the brethren not be occupied with celebrating masses or anything of this kind, nor are they to go into the city, except for in cases of great necessity;
 3. That even priors are to go to classes just as the other brethren, whenever this is manageable;
 4. That lectors between assignments also attend classes and especially the disputations.”

12. M. Michèle Mulchahey, „First the Bow is Bent in Study“. Dominican Education before 1350 (Toronto, PIMS 1998); for older literature cf. William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order, Vol. II: Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500* (New York, Alba 1973).
13. Cf. Bedouelle, *op. cit.* 159 sqq.
14. Cf. Augustine Thompson: *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford 1992); und Thomas Kaeppeli und Emilio Panella: *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi, Vol. IV* (Rom 1993) 159-161.
15. Cf. the helpful distinction drawn by Simon Tugwell, *The Way of the Preacher* (Springfield u. a. 1979) S. 3: „In the pages that follow, I shall not be particularly concerned to isolate anything as being distinctively or exclusively Dominican. What I am looking for is rather the typically Dominican. There is, after all, only a limited number of ingredients available for constructing a form of religious life, and few of them will really be the exclusive property of anybody. But different orders, different traditions, even though they use the same material, can still use it in a way which is characteristically their own.“
16. Cf. Friedrich Stegmüller, *Repertorium Commentariorum in Sententias Petri Lombardi* (Würzburg 1947).
17. R. Schaeffler, *Spiritus sapientiae et intellectus - spiritus scientiae et pietatis. Religionsphilosophische Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Weisheit, Wissenschaft und Frömmigkeit und ihrer Zuordnung zum Geiste*, in: Walter Baier u. a. (Hrsg.), *Weisheit Gottes - Weisheit der Welt* (Festschrift für Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger zum 60. Geburtstag) EOS, St. Ottilien 1987, 15-35.
18. „*Spiritus sapientiae et intellectus - spiritus scientiae et pietatis. Religionsphilosophische Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Weisheit, Wissenschaft und Frömmigkeit und ihrer Zuordnung zum Geiste*“, in: Walter Baier u. a. (Hrsg.), *Weisheit Gottes - Weisheit der Welt*, a.a.O., S. 15-35.
5. Zu Bonaventuras auf affektive Einigung mit Gott angelegter Vorstellung von Weisheit vgl. Marianne Schlosser: *Cognitio et amor. Zum kognitiven und voluntativen Grund der Gotteserfahrung nach Bonaventura* (Veröffentlichung des Grabmann-Institutes 35) Paderborn u. a. 1990; und Werner Hülsbusch: „'Christus - Gottes Weisheit' nach Bonaventura“ in: Walter Baier u. a. (Hrsg.), *Weisheit Gottes - Weisheit der Welt* (Festschrift für Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger zum 60. Geburtstag) EOS, St. Ottilien 1987, Bd. II, S. 739-752. Selbst wenn Dominikaner, wie etwa Robert Kilwardby, Bonaventura in der affektiven Lozierung der Weisheit folgen, tritt das Element mystischer Einigung hinter die Mittelbarkeit der Weisheit zurück. So definiert Kilwardby den Gegenstand der Weisheit präzise als die *incommutabilis iustitia*, der sich ein weiser viator insofern nähert, als er *ex testimonio suae conscientiae* eine Entsprechung seines Lebens oder seiner Gesellschaft dazu feststellen kann (*Quaestiones in librum tertium Sententiarum*, Teil 2: Tugendlehre, hrsg. von Gerhard Leibold, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Herausgabe ungedruckter Texte aus der mittelalterlichen Geisteswelt, Band 12) S. 140 f.
19. For St. Bonaventure's view of wisdom as affective union with God cf. Marianne Schlosser: *Cognitio et amor. Zum kognitiven und voluntativen Grund der Gotteserfahrung nach Bonaventura* (Veröffentlichung des Grabmann-Institutes 35) Paderborn et al. 1990; and Werner Hülsbusch: „'Christus - Gottes Weisheit' nach Bonaventura“ in: Walter Baier et al. (ed.), *Weisheit Gottes - Weisheit der Welt*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 739-752. Even for those Dominicans like Robert Kilwardby who follow Bonaventure both generally and in the affective, God-centered definition of wisdom, the concern for mystical union is less prominent here than the concern for the communicability of wisdom. Kilwardby defines the object of wisdom as *incommutabilis iustitia*, with which the wiser among earthly pilgrims measures society, albeit *ex testimonio suae conscientiae*; cf. Robert Kilwardby, *Quaestiones in librum tertium Sententiarum*, Teil 2: Tugendlehre, ed. Gerhard Leibold, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Herausgabe ungedruckter Texte aus der mittelalterlichen Geisteswelt, vol. 12) 140 sq.
20. „*Salutatio virtutum*“, in: *Kritische Edition der Opuscula*, pg. 427.

21. For contrasting emphases on humility resp. wisdom in the religious art of Franciscan and Dominican contemplative nuns in 13th century Regensburg cf. Hilarius Barth: „Liebe - verwundet durch Liebe. Das Kreuzigungsbild des Regensburger Lektionars als Zeugnis dominikanischer Passionsfrömmigkeit“, in: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg 17 (1983) 229-268.
22. De summo bono I 1, 1 (ed. Burkhard Mojsisch, Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi I, 1, Meiner, Hamburg 1989, pg. 4, lin. 38-41).
23. Cf. James A. Weisheipl: Friar Thomas D’Aquino, Doubleday, Garden City 1974, cap. 2, pg. 71 sq.
24. For the parallel between the ordo of sapiential theology and the fundamental option of political theology cf. R. Schenk, Theologie oder Politik? Die Weisheit im Spannungsfeld von universalem Ordo und Option für die Armen, , in: Jahrbuch fuer Philosophie des Forschungsinstituts fuer Philosophie Hannover, Vol. 11, 2000, eds. R. Schenk, V. Hoesle, and P. Koslowski (Vienna, Passagen 2000) pg. 189-210.
25. In the Acta of the 2005 General Chapter Krakow, the chapter on intellectual life and preaching begins: “(1) L’étude, recherche de la vérité, est inséparable de la mission de prédication de l’Ordre. Le chapitre de Providence parle de la mission intellectuelle de l’Ordre comme d’une «miséricorde de la vérité» (Misericordia veritatis, P 104-201). Nous renvoyons à ce texte, toujours susceptible d’inspirer la vie intellectuelle de l’Ordre, et sur lequel se fonde ce que nous voulons proposer ici.”

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Suzanne Noffke, OP, Ph.D. a noted scholar and author is a member of the Sisters of Saint Dominic of Racine, Wisconsin. After completing undergraduate studies and teaching for four years at the elementary and secondary levels, she pursued graduate studies in linguistics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, completing her dissertation research in Jerusalem, Rome, and London under an NDEA-Fulbright-Hayes Fellowship in 1966–1967 and receiving her doctorate from the University of Wisconsin in 1968. She has taught at Dominican College in Racine and Holy Redeemer College in Waterford, Wisconsin, and served as her religious congregation’s president from 1970 until 1976. Since 1976 she has been occupied in researching, translating, and interpreting the works of Catherine of Siena. Besides numerous articles, papers, and lectures in this field, her publications include annotated translations of the works of *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue* (1980), *The Prayers* (1983; 2nd edition 2001), and to date four volumes of *The Letters* as well as a book of essays, *Catherine of Siena: Vision Through a Distant Eye* (1996; reprint 2006). Since 1983 Suzanne has also been engaged in researching, presenting, and writing the history of the Racine Dominicans. The first volume of that history, *Embrace the Swelling Wave: The Dominicans of Racine, Wisconsin*, was published in 2004. For this work she has received an Award of Merit for Distinguished Service to History from the Wisconsin Historical Society. She currently lives in Racine, Wisconsin, continuing her work on the remaining volume of *The Letters of Catherine of Siena* and a thematic anthology of Catherine’s writings as well as the second volume of the history of the Racine Dominicans, lecturing, teaching occasional short courses and study tours, and conducting retreats based on the life and thought of Catherine of Siena. She is affiliated with the Department of History of the University of Wisconsin–Parkside as a Scholar in Residence.

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