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AQUINAS AND ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY: NATURAL ALLIES?

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

I

For over forty years now, developments in mainstream Anglo-American philosophy have been significantly affected by a handful of students of the work of Thomas Aquinas, while attention to his work by some of the same people has helped to establish one more version of Thomism.[1] This interaction is little recognised by philosophers at large or indeed by the majority of Thomists. For one thing, as we shall see, Aristotle is often at the forefront, with the presence of Aquinas somewhat concealed. On the other side, the vast majority of Thomists throughout the world remain gloriously ignorant of any other tradition than their own. The recent papal encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, for example, addressed to philosophers among others, recommends Aquinas's philosophy of being as a way of combating scepticism, subjectivism, relativism, scientism, nihilism etc. While not unfriendly allusions are made to phenomenological, hermeneutic and post-modern tradition(s), there is no informed reference to analytic philosophy, let alone recognition of the decades of intense and fruitful argument on precisely these matters.[2]

Analytic philosophy—unbelievably—is regularly dismissed as nothing but "talk about talk", or deplored as reluctant or even impotent to discuss the Big Questions (evil, death, the meaning of life, etc.). Worse still, in the judgement of many Christian theologians, and Catholics especially, it is, in John Haldane's words, "something to be avoided as a serious threat to one's grasp of God, goodness and truth".[3]

It is hard to understand how anyone who has ever even dipped into the writings of philosophers from G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell to Willard Van Orman Quine, Donald Davidson, Hilary Putnam and such like, could think their work is mere "talk about talk", or that they never advert to the Big Questions. Essays such as Russell's "Mysticism and Logic" and "The Place of Science in a Liberal Education" would not make Christian theologians happy; but their beauty and passion are surely undeniable.[4] Putnam's

work, for a quarter of a century now, has dealt with some of what must by any standards be regarded as some of the most fundamental and persistent problems in philosophy: the nature of truth, knowledge and rationality.[5] It would not take long, in a good bookstore or library, to see that, compared with recent products of Continental philosophy and Thomistic philosophy, Anglo-American philosophers have no reason to be embarrassed.

Amazingly, to philosophers in the analytic tradition, Catholic theologians at the present time, if they regard philosophy as a congenial or anyway unavoidable interlocutor, mostly prefer to engage with Continental philosophy: phenomenology, *Seinsdenken*, the hermeneutic tradition, deconstruction, etc. As regards modern philosophy, that is to say, they find Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida and their kin much more accessible, more challenging, or anyway less threatening, than Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, Davidson, and their followers. They are unlikely to be studying the works of Thomas Aquinas.

II

"While it is fairly clear what Thomism is", so Dagfinn Føllesdal says, "it is far from clear what is meant by 'analytic philosophy' ".[6] However diverse the forms that Thomism takes, presumably he means, they may all be traced back to a single corpus of writings. Mainstream Anglo-American philosophy is plainly not a monolithic homogeneous tradition either—on the contrary, there has always been much internal conflict. While librarians and booksellers have little difficulty in deciding which authors belong on which shelves, there is now considerable dispute among philosophers of a broadly analytic persuasion as to what counts as analytic philosophy and how it originated. It is sometimes contended that there is nothing special about analytic philosophy—that all philosophy is in some sense "analytic".[7]

Then, even while recognizing the difference in the respective canons, post-Nietzschean and post-Fregean, analytically trained philosophers have sought recently to bring out how much the two traditions have in common. Richard Rorty, for example, contends that "post-phenomenological" philosophy and "post-analytical" philosophy are converging, even merging. Since he is inclined to blur the distinction between philosophy of any kind and literary studies in general, his view is perhaps not very helpful. His point is that analytic philosophers lean towards science for their examples while in the Continental tradition philosophers prefer to look to poetry—just a matter of emphasis. There is obviously something in this claim: from Frege to Quine and Davidson philosophers turn to mathematics and physics for examples, whereas Heidegger and Derrida happily invoke poetry and fiction. In the end, however, for Rorty, philosophy is "culture criticism".[8]

Others acknowledge the difference but highlight what the traditions have in common. Samuel C. Wheeler III, himself an analytic philosopher, argues

in detail that, beneath the obvious surface differences, there are commonalities in strategy and concern between Donald Davidson and Jacques Derrida.[9] Henry Staten, comparing Derrida and Wittgenstein, argues that Derrida is a lot more sensible than some think (the dust wrapper carries enthusiastic endorsement by Derrida himself).[10] Simon Glendinning reads Wittgenstein in the light of Heidegger and Derrida, again undermining the supposed gap between analytic and Continental philosophers.[11] J. E. Malpas argues that Heidegger's notion of truth as *aletheia* complements Davidson's insistence on the presuppositional character of truth, with both emerging as opponents of relativism about truth.[12]

Such efforts are welcome. For theologians, particularly, these comparisons offer the opportunity to approach major figures in the analytic tradition in the light of the Continental philosophers with whom they are more likely to be *au fait*. Independently of such explorations of common problems and strategies in current practice in the two schools, a number of recent historiographical studies trace the origins of analytic philosophy back to the time before the trajectories divided. Michael Dummett, for example, himself a major figure in analytic philosophy contends that the two schools have common roots, chiefly in the work of Bolzano and Brentano.[13]

Dummett attacks the very idea of "Anglo-American philosophy": a misnomer, which has the "vicious effect" of encouraging philosophers to think that they need not read, let alone write in, any language but English. Moreover, far from being created in Cambridge by G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, in the opening decade of the twentieth century, as many would have supposed until recent genealogical investigations,[14] the sources of analytic philosophy, Dummett argues, lie in the writings of philosophers writing in German—which "would have remained obvious to everyone had it not been for the plague of Nazism which drove so many German-speaking philosophers across the Atlantic".[15]

Dummett first realized this by examining the career of Gilbert Ryle, the most prominent philosopher at Oxford in the 1950s, editor of *Mind* for many years, creator of the Oxford B.Phil.,[16] author of *The Concept of Mind* (1949). Before 1939, he used to lecture on Bolzano, Brentano, Frege, Meinong and Husserl—"It is a great pity that little of his knowledge of those authors was preserved in print, and, equally, that, as far as I can see, little that he learned from them survived into his later work".[17]

Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848) belongs as much to the history of mathematics as to that of philosophy. He developed a form of logico-ontological atomism directed against radical scepticism and subjectivism. Essentially, he sought to secure the objectivity of knowledge by positing non-linguistic entities (ideas, propositions, and truths) independent of human cognition. In effect, Bolzano anticipated Frege's sharp distinction between logic and psychology, breaking radically with the tendency in the empiricist tradition to

found logic on psychology and in the Cartesian tradition to confuse logic and epistemology.[18]

For Dummett, Gottlob Frege (1848–1925) is the key figure in the development of analytic philosophy. Yet, if Frege is "the only grandfather" of analytic philosophy, then Bolzano was "a great-grandfather": "In Bolzano there is the same rejection of the psychological approach that one finds in Frege, but not the richness of the semantic analysis".[19] That is to say, putting it simply, there are truths which are there whether or not they are discovered by human beings: the laws of logic are not identical with, or derived from, the ways in which the human mind works. From the outset, Bolzano and Frege rejected psychologism: the result of failing to understand that logic is a normative discipline, giving laws of truth to which thought ought to conform, thus in no way a construction based on patterns to which our thoughts do in fact conform.

Of course all this is much disputed: that analytic philosophy originated principally in Frege's rejection of psychologism—in effect, of Cartesianism and empiricism. In various forms, psychologism remains a tempting option: Quine's interest in naturalised epistemology and the later Wittgenstein's attempts (as some would say) to base logic and mathematics on our natural reactions, for example. Frege's concern to secure objectivity for logic and mathematics leads to accusations of Platonism: the view that abstract objects, such as those of mathematics, are real, independent, and timeless entities, which are there, whether or not human beings discover them.

The point here is, however, that the question is at the centre of debate in analytic philosophy. Since the appearance in 1959 of the translation (by J. L. Austin) of Frege's *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*, and particularly with Michael Dummett's seminal paper on "Truth",[20] there has been deep and wide-ranging conflict between those who affirm, and those who deny, the real existence of mathematical objects, but also of other minds, moral and aesthetic properties, the past and the future, universals, possibilities, and the external world. The debate spreads all the way through metaphysics, philosophy of mind and perception, epistemology and ethics.

While Thomists are (or should be!) realists, the realist/anti-realist debate in analytic philosophy owes nothing to them, even indirectly.

Franz Brentano (1838–1917), ordained priest in 1864, was a zealous Thomist from student days (he was to leave the Church because of the infallibility dogma). Brentano's thesis, as it is called, first proposed in 1874, is to the effect that it is the *intentio*, the directedness of the mind to an object, which marks off the mental/psychological from the physical.[21] He believed he was retrieving the medieval notion of the intentionality of mental states: that is to say, one cannot believe, wish or hope without believing, wishing or hoping *something*. This seemingly platitudinous claim opened the way to reconnecting beliefs, thoughts, wishes, etc. with things—thus overturning the solipsistic assumptions in much post-Cartesian philosophy.

This too has given rise to much debate. Under the heading of externalism philosophers contend that what is thought, or experienced, or said, is essentially dependent on items or aspects of the world external to the mind. It is not just that mental states are typically caused by factors in the environment. The claim is that thoughts, experiences, *et cetera*, could not exist as they now do without the subject's being embedded in an external world of a certain kind—which it is now up to the philosopher to describe. Over against this, obviously, is the "Cartesian" separation of the mental from the physical, in many different versions, including the very plausible assumption that we have "privileged access" to the contents of our own minds, such that solipsism may become quite tempting.[22]

The turn against subjectivism, in the analytic school, thus owes a great deal to Brentano's retrieval of the medieval Scholastic idea, that mental states are what they are by reference to something other than themselves.[23] That our mental states depend on objects in the environment remains the minority view in current debates: the mind, or more commonly now the brain, is supposed to construct items in the external world from representations of these items, impressions, sense data, raw feels, neurophysiological occurrences, *et cetera*.

Second only to the realism/anti-realism debate in analytic philosophy there is this dispute within the philosophy of mind, dividing those who defend some form of externalism (the mind as situated in the world) and those who advocate some kind of representationalism (minds have no immediate knowledge of the world). Clearly these disputes are interconnected, with the first occupying the traditional ground of metaphysics and the second the field of epistemology.

Far from there being an unbridgeable gap between the philosophical assumptions of Thomism and analytic philosophy, then, the truth is that, under the heading of intentionality—that what our understanding grasps primarily and most readily is the specific nature of material things—one of Thomas's most distinctive assumptions has been central all along. A thesis in nineteenth-century Aristotelian Thomism, one may say, had a crucial effect in twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy.

III

Where the analytic tradition departed radically from the Continental, according to Dummett, was that the analytic school took the "linguistic turn", whereas followers of Husserl did not do so. Frege's idea that the analysis of thought is what philosophy is about, and that this analysis proceeds through the analysis of language, was, according to Dummett, the decisive factor.[24]

This debt to Frege, on the other hand, is not what led to "linguistic analysis", "ordinary language philosophy" or "Oxford philosophy", so Dummett insists. From his days as a young philosopher in Oxford, he was out of sym-

pathy with that "amazingly complacent" movement. He regarded, and regards, Gilbert Ryle and J. L. Austin, the leading Oxford philosophers in the 1950s, as quite unimportant. They were much overrated by visiting American philosophers; "Oxford philosophy" acquired a reputation in the United States from which he dissociates himself. He stood apart, along with others such as Elizabeth Anscombe ("needless to say") and Philippa Foot.[25]

No doubt both Dummett and the other two were regarded, and regarded themselves, as mavericks on the Oxford scene at the time. From this distance, however, neither Anscombe nor Foot seems so eccentric. Ryle's book, *The Concept of Mind* (1949), a landmark attack on the Cartesian myth of the self as "the ghost in the machine", is very much an essay in philosophical anthropology in the spirit of Aristotle. The new generation of philosophers in Oxford were all more or less openly students, not so much of Frege as of Aristotle.

J. L. Austin is also clearly in the Aristotelian tradition.[26] In the classic paper "A Plea for Excuses" (1956), for example, his scrupulous examination of the kind of thing that we say when trying to excuse ourselves is, as he says, a contribution to an examination of freedom and responsibility. He observes that this is only one way of proceeding ("talk about talk" we may say), which he justifies on the grounds that "our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connections they have found worth marking, in the lifetime of many generations". This, in turn, means that we can learn important things about freedom and responsibility by attending to what we find appropriate and inappropriate to say. As he insists, this is "not merely looking at words . . . but also at the realities we use words to talk about". Once again, this sounds very like Aristotle's method of "setting down the appearances (*phainomena*)" and attending to "the things that we say (*ta legomena*)".[27]

Elizabeth Anscombe (no admirer of Ryle's philosophy) and Philippa Foot, distinctive as each is, and different from Ryle and Austin, nevertheless also shape their projects around the relationships between philosophical psychology and moral philosophy. Moreover, in doing so, they too appeal to Aristotle. For many years now, a small number of philosophers in the analytic tradition have been reading Aristotle, but also Thomas Aquinas, more or less obviously, in ways which enable them to resist, criticise and reshape the agenda in ethics. Few as these philosophers are, they have exercised an influence far beyond their tiny number. Through them, Thomas has long been an important resource, with some of his key ideas incorporated, anonymously or obliquely, into mainstream philosophy.

As Hayden Ramsey notes, analytic philosophers owe gratitude to Thomists—and other Aristotelians—for initiating and extending the retrieval of "virtue ethics".[28] By the same token, Thomists, and others concerned with Christian ethics, owe gratitude to analytic philosophers. Indeed, as John Greco notes, analytic philosophy and Thomism have long been

natural allies, in regard to ethics, though on neither side is this much understood or appreciated.[29]

Here again, the existence of lively debates within analytic philosophy seem unknown to Thomists. It is, of course, excusable to disregard analytic philosophy as offering little or nothing to Thomists or Christian theologians in general. For example, many philosophers in the analytic tradition defend, and have defended for over fifty years, positions and projects, which belong to the family of utilitarian theories. These might simply be regarded as wrong. That does not mean that the entire tradition can be ignored. On the contrary, there is a debate. Versions of emotivist and utilitarian ethics have been extremely controversial for half a century. It is hard to understand why philosophers interested in inquiry and argument should avoid engaging in this debate.

Nor is this a merely academic matter. Utilitarianism, after all, is not just a cluster of theories. On the contrary, in societies like ours in which success, achievement, happiness, *et cetera* are measured in economic terms, utilitarianism as a philosophical theory expresses the view of life (love, family, death, and so on) that determines political and social planning, as well as the individual's desires and aspirations.

The antecedents are well known. In John Stuart Mill's statement of the position (first in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1861), "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness". As every first-year philosophy student knows, Mill's conception of happiness recognised qualitative differences between different kinds of pleasure ("better a Socrates satisfied than a pig satisfied"), over against the position expounded in 1789 by his great predecessor Jeremy Bentham ("other things being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry").

To many people now, Mill sounds aristocratic and elitist; Bentham, on the other hand, seems to voice in advance the values of our pluralistic egalitarian mass culture. Such views frequently go with emotivism ("it's right if it feels right to me"): the function of ethical utterances in conversation is to express emotional or affective states of one's soul, rather than to state truth or falsehoods about what is the case in the realm of actions or events. The emotive theory first appears in the inaugural years of analytic philosophy, at Cambridge. The classical text is *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards. Little read nowadays by philosophers, or anyone else, the book amounts to a manifesto for the "technologico-Benthamite age".[30]

Ogden, at Bertrand Russell's suggestion, had translated Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (thus inviting the wholly misguided logical-positivist reading). He went on to invent Basic ("British American Scientific International Commercial") English: surviving in a diluted form in programmes for teaching English to foreigners but originally much more ambitiously intended to replace "ordinary language" by the kind of logically perfect ideal language recommended by Russell. Richards had already intro-

duced "analytical" methods into literary criticism. He distinguishes between the referential use of language and the emotive use, poetry being concerned exclusively with the latter, and as having a "therapeutic" function. Almost single-handedly, Richards created the New Criticism which dominated literary studies in American universities for decades.

Much more might be said. This perhaps suffices to indicate the roots of the utilitarian and emotivist components of Anglo-American culture in the early years of what would become analytic philosophy. Under such labels as expressivism, non-cognitivism, quasi-realism, projectivism, *et cetera*, the theories continue to proliferate. Prevalent as these ideas are in standard moral and political discourse in the English-speaking world (not only there!), as well as in the theorising of many analytic philosophers, their authority has never gone unchallenged.

Without tracing the genealogy back to the beginning, we must content ourselves here by highlighting a few of the classics in the canon of the long resistance to the hegemony of non-cognitivist utilitarian ethics. The point to be established is that the opposition within analytic philosophy to these ideas owes a good deal to philosophers who have studied the work of Thomas Aquinas.

IV

To begin with, as a glance into any history of analytic philosophy would show, the revolt against the versions of moral philosophy we have just sketched is usually dated from Elizabeth Anscombe's paper "Modern Moral Philosophy", published in 1958.[31]

Anscombe did not think of herself as practising analytic philosophy, as distinct from some other kind, even less as doing "linguistic analysis". She never shows any knowledge of, let alone interest in, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger and the like. This does not mean that she was indifferent to the history of philosophy, as English-speaking philosophers have often been accused of being. She published a dozen notable essays on earlier philosophers including Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Hume and Brentano, as well as Aquinas and Wittgenstein, nearly all deserving and indeed demanding close attention. The seminal paper itself includes a reading of the history of philosophy.

The main theme is as follows. We should jettison the concepts of moral obligation and moral duty, of what is morally right and wrong, and of the moral sense of "ought"—"if this is psychologically possible"—on the grounds that these are "survivals, or derivatives from survivals, from an earlier conception of ethics which no longer generally survives"—these concepts "are only harmful without it". These concepts, in Anscombe's view, depend for their sense on belief in God as lawgiver and judge—a belief which, she thinks, few in our society now retain. That is why, she thinks, the

concepts now only do harm: it is a form of false consciousness to go on using moral language which is now uprooted and detached from its original home in biblical revelation. We need to take the "moral" out of ethics and return to something like the philosophy of psychology to be found in pre-Christian thinkers such as Aristotle. This means that we need to rehabilitate the concept of virtues as "excellences"—intellectual as well as social skills.

Anscombe never mentions Thomas Aquinas. It is solely to Aristotle that she directs philosophers who seek to break out of the Kantian ethics which is now so injurious, as she thinks, in a post-Christian culture. Anscombe's book *Intention*, a classic in twentieth-century English-speaking philosophy—ninety-four pages in length—appeared in 1957. Here again, while she refers a few times to Aristotle and to Wittgenstein, she does not make anything of Aquinas.

It seems to have been her work on translating Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, and no doubt many conversations with Wittgenstein himself, that allowed her to see that, in his relatively few and always somewhat enigmatic remarks about intentions and reasons for action, she had the basis of powerful arguments against behaviourist attempts to explain action in mechanistic-causal terms; or, more positively, she could have the clues to retrieve something like Aristotle's concept of practical reasoning.[32]

Readers of *Intention* are usually left dissatisfiedly wondering what an intention is; it takes many re-readings to understand that what Anscombe means us to see is that we do not need to ask. There is no such thing as we think an intention is—or so she contends. Of course, not everyone agrees with her. Intentions, we are strongly inclined to think, are antecedent events inside our heads which explain our intentional actions.[33] For many philosophers, this supposition is translated into the theory that intentional actions are movements caused by certain mental states or events, the occurrence of which explain the occurrence of these movements. Of course there are many variations on this causalist thesis; but Anscombe's objection, to put it simply, is that, whereas causalist theories are all supposedly very "scientific", they only substitute neurophysiological occurrences for the hypostatised introspectable mental items we are more likely to postulate. While there may in fact often be mental events which immediately precede intentional actions—hesitations, qualms, calculations, and so on—most of what we do intentionally (Anscombe wants us to remember) is neither preceded nor accompanied by such occurrences.

In short, prompted by her reading of Wittgenstein, Anscombe treats as a myth the parade of mental events that supposedly determine one's intentional acts. She reminds us of the obvious fact that our psychological concepts are grounded in the natural reactions and attitudes that we have to the world. In other words, most of what we do, intentionally, purposely, voluntarily, is provoked or guided by events in the world, and happens without our having to stop and think—which does not mean that it is unintelligent

and unintentional. On the contrary, Anscombe wants us to see that our actions and reactions can be intended, reasonable, and explicable, though not preceded or accompanied by our first entertaining thoughts and intentions. Indeed, she might say, this is how things usually are. As Wittgenstein famously remarked: "voluntary movement is marked by the absence of surprise".[34]

V

The project of getting the word "moral" out of ethical discourse and returning to something like Aristotle's account of what we call "virtue" as one kind of "excellence" among others was not advanced very far by Anscombe; it has been brilliantly achieved by Philippa Foot. They were colleagues. Foot's first published papers appeared in 1957. When she collected her papers in 1978 she dedicated the book to Iris Murdoch, expressed gratitude to Donald MacKinnon as her first teacher in moral philosophy, and referred to many lunchtime discussions with Elizabeth Anscombe.[35] In her second collection, published in 2002, Foot repeats her gratitude to Anscombe, this time thanking her specifically for helping her to see the wrong-headedness of the distinction between "evaluative" and "descriptive" language. Finally, as she writes in the preface to her recent book, *Natural Goodness*, "It will be obvious that I owe most to the work of Elizabeth Anscombe, and to early discussion with her".[36]

The essay "Virtues and Vices" which opens the first collection mentions Thomas Aquinas in the second paragraph—"it is best when considering the virtues and vices to go back to Aristotle and Aquinas". Foot has already referred to herself, in the very first sentence of the essay, as a moralist "working within the school of analytic philosophy". Foot contends that we can learn a great deal from Aquinas that is not in Aristotle: "It is my opinion that the *Summa Theologica* is one of the best sources we have for moral philosophy, and moreover that St Thomas's ethical writings are as useful to the atheist as to the Catholic or other Christian believer". Again: "it was reading Aquinas on the individual virtues that first made me suspicious of contemporary theories about the relation between 'fact' and 'value' ".[37]

We may surely assume that Foot and Anscombe discussed Aquinas together during some of their lunchtime conversations. Foot's moral philosophy remains a minority enterprise—the majority of Anglo-American moralists (Catholics included) defend some version of utilitarianism, often accompanied by some non-cognitivist theory. Nevertheless, as a quick glance through the current journals would show, moral realism, or ethical naturalism, flourishes; and Foot's name appears.

Natural Goodness—at just under one hundred and twenty pages—is longer but will clearly also, like Anscombe's *Intention*, become a classic of modern moral philosophy.[38] Here, in wonderfully lucid prose and with many exam-

ples from current politics and ethics, Foot sets herself against the whole subjectivist movement in ethics, deriving (as she assumes) from David Hume. She ranges over such topics as practical rationality, erring conscience, and the relation between virtue and happiness, ending with a critique of Nietzsche's immoralism.

The main theme, to simplify, is that evaluations of human will and action have the same conceptual structure as evaluations of characteristics and operations of other living things: "Life will be at the centre of my discussion, and the fact that a human action or disposition is good of its kind will be taken to be simply a fact about a given feature of a certain kind of living thing".[39]

Foot takes up Anscombe's discussion of promising: "getting one another to do things without the application of physical force is a necessity for human life". This is what Anscombe, a little arcanely, called an "Aristotelian necessity"—"that which is necessary because and in so far as good hangs on it".[40] In the sense that it is necessary for plants to have water, for birds to build nests, for wolves to hunt in packs, and so on, and of course allowing for the vast differences embodied in culture and language, so Foot maintains, human necessities, and that means skills at coping, are similarly related to what human beings are and what they do. For example, human parents are simply failures to the extent that they do not teach their young the basic skills they need to survive. Quite seriously, Foot likens the basis of moral evaluation to the basis of the evaluation of behaviour in animals. For human beings, she argues, the following and teaching of morality is something necessary, vital, for our survival, just as flying is for birds, *et cetera*.

What Foot likes is the thought that the evaluation of moral action is set in the wider context of the evaluation of other features of human life but also of evaluative judgements of the characteristics and operations of other living things. There is nothing unique or *sui generis* about moral behaviour—what is morally good or bad is what is positive or negative for the kind of living beings that we humans are. The "moral" is an aspect of what is "natural" for our kind.

Foot never evinces the least interest in religion. For Aquinas, as she of course knows, all living things are creatures—there are certain necessities about how they are to behave if they are to flourish, certainly, but Aquinas's account of flourishing is ultimately theocentric. Yet, Foot urges, philosophers should not be embarrassed to recognise teleological language. It is not merely a leftover from theology. On the contrary, natural-teleological judgements, as she calls them, organise and articulate the necessities and capacities of our form of life.

Foot cites Peter Geach: "Men need virtues as bees need stings".[41] The naturalistic theory of ethics which Foot keeps on the analytic-philosophical agenda is mainly Aristotelian—but there is no doubt that it is deeply indebted also to her years of studying Thomas Aquinas.

VI

In the work of philosophers such as Anscombe and Geach it is difficult, and ultimately fruitless, to separate ethics from philosophical psychology, logic from epistemology, metaphysics from natural theology. As just noted, we could have taken Geach instead of Foot as an example of the interaction of moral philosophy and the study of Aquinas. Another of the ways in which Geach has affected developments in the last half-century of English-speaking philosophy is, however, his contribution to the dislodging of "abstractionism".[42]

Mental Acts is a wholesale attack on *The Concept of Mind*. Basically, "the entire programme seems to me misconceived".[43] According to Geach, reports of mental acts are logically different from reports of physical events, and here he cites Wittgenstein and Aquinas in support; but Ryle's view is that psychological statements, while not reports of mental acts understood as private events, are hypothetical statements about overt behaviour—and that's all.

In other words, Ryle may have learnt from Wittgenstein to reject the picture of mental acts as radically private events inaccessible to anyone else—but he has succumbed to a crassly behaviourist alternative. Admittedly, Geach concedes, Ryle is inconsistent: he allows some reports of mental acts without translating them into hypothetical statements about overt behaviour, though his deflationary practice of referring to them as "itches", "tingles", "tweaks" and suchlike, as Geach says, is "highly depreciatory". Mainly, however, Ryle runs "counter to a very deep-rooted way of thinking", by explicitly and repeatedly comparing psychological accounts of behaviour to physical events. The ways we picture "the mind" are potentially misleading, Ryle sees, and indeed the philosophers he calls "the Cartesians" have, he thinks, been misled into picturing the mind as "the ghost in the machine", the agent or site of mysterious non-physical states, happenings, and acts. Yet, he keeps suggesting the radically different account, according to which all talk seemingly about what is going on in one's mind is really only a way of talking about one's body. Contrary to what ordinary ways of speaking suggest, there really are only physical objects and physical happenings.

Ryle's view is perhaps more ambivalent than Geach's polemic allows. Ryle's adoption of Wittgenstein's attack on the Cartesian self was threatened with misunderstanding, given the way that he opted for a semi- behaviourist reduction of the mind as the alternative.[44] Overtly, *Mental Acts* is an attack on Ryle's behaviourist tendencies but, less obviously, Geach is even more dismissive of Aquinas's "soi-disant followers".[45] They are inclined to abstractionism, a complete misreading of Aquinas.

By abstractionism Geach means the assumption that psychological words are given a sense "privately", by the private and uncheckable performance of consulting one's own psychological experiences (another version of psy-

chologism in effect). Those who hold this view need to notice Frege's distinction between sense (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*). What Wittgenstein denied was not the private reference of psychological expressions—that "pain" stands for an experience that may be totally "private" (I grit my teeth, you have no idea that I am in pain at all; I am much more sensitive than you, it is no surprise that you don't understand how acute the pain I have is; etc.). Wittgenstein's point was that psychological expressions could not receive a sense, by our just attending to our experiences.

The classical statement of abstractionism, Geach says, is to be found in Locke: psychological concepts are abstractively derived from inner experience; we are supposed to possess a quasi-sense that is related to mental occurrences in much the same way as our senses are to physical occurrences.[46]

According to Geach—though he names no names—many would-be Thomists are abstractionists, in the sense he has defined. This is despite the fact that Aquinas himself holds anti-abstractionist views. In comparing the mind's concept-forming power with a light that enables the mind's eye to see the intelligible features of things, on analogy with how the bodily eye sees colours, Aquinas is careful to note that the analogy works only if we take it that colours are generated by kindling the light. In other words, the light does not just reveal colours that already existed in the dark, so to speak (cf. *ST* 1a 79, 3 ad 2). Moreover, when he says that we frame a judgement in words, our use of concepts is to be compared, not with seeing something, but rather with forming a visual image of something we are not now actually seeing, or even never have seen (*ST* 1a, 85, 2 ad 3).

In other words, both as regards the formation and as regards the exercise of concepts Aquinas rejects abstractionism—forming or having a concept never means being able to recognise some feature we have found in direct experience; rather, the mind makes concepts. "We must resist the perennial philosophical temptation to think that if a thought is to be true to reality, then it must copy it feature by feature, like a map".[47]

VII

Much more might be said about the interaction of analytic philosophers with the study of Aquinas. Most Thomists have little interest in analytic philosophy, as we noted (§I). This is less excusable than it perhaps used to be, now that the origins of analytic philosophy are being explored: Brentano's Aristotelian-Thomist thesis helped to constitute the analytic-philosophical school (§II). Admittedly, the moral philosophy that has dominated for decades is incompatible with Catholic Christian ethics (§III). On the other hand, in the work of Anscombe (§IV) and Foot (§V), we have very fine philosophers who challenge the dominant utilitarian/emotivist ethics, appealing to Aristotle but clearly with Aquinas in the background. That

analytic philosophy has never been a monolithic homogeneous tradition is plain: there has always been debate. To a philosopher trained on Frege's distinction between reference and sense, many would-be Thomists have been inclined to misread Aquinas in Cartesian/empiricist terms (§VI).[48]

This does not mean, however, that competent readers of Aquinas are always happy with the use made of Aquinas by analytic philosophers. M. W. F. Stone, for example, argues that talk of Aquinas's naturalistic theory of ethics is highly contentious.[49] At its weakest the theory holds that moral predicates can be identified somehow or other with facts about the natural world. More strongly, naturalism in ethics is the idea that goodness and rightness can be related to a set of natural properties. In whatever form, naturalism rejects any theory according to which moral properties are unique and *sui generis*.

According to Stone, however, Aquinas cannot be "hijacked" to produce a naturalist ethics or for that matter an anti-naturalist theory. There are important texts, which simply contradict each other. In one passage, much cited by proponents of naturalistic ethics, Aquinas writes as follows: "all things to which men have a natural inclination are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit" (*ST* 1–2.94.2). In other words, our moral ends are natural ends, much as Philippa Foot contends.

On the other hand, in an equally important passage Aquinas writes this: "moral ends are only accidentally related to a natural thing, the notion of a natural end is accidental to the moral end" (*ST* 1–2. 1, 3 ad 3). This seems an explicit denial that the object of a moral end is supplied by anything natural. Here, the moral and the natural seem quite clearly distinct, and quite specifically the idea that the moral can be founded on the natural seems to be excluded.

Stone's argument, positively expressed, is that we have to attend to Aquinas's account of the roles of reason and will in his explanation of human action. By the standards of modern ethical naturalism, he contends, what Thomas says is bound to appear ambiguous. His anxiety about much recent appeal to Aquinas in virtue ethics stems from his suspicions of the desire to connect goodness and rightness with facts in the natural world. This would simply have been incomprehensible to Aquinas. Like all the medievals, Thomas was concerned, in ethics, to develop a theory of practical conduct in which the agent's actions would be judged from the perspective of the ultimate end. In short, curtailment or suspension of the theocentric intention of Aquinas's ethical considerations is bound to distort his account.

Even here, however, one might contend that analytical-philosophical misreadings, if that is what they are, sharpen understanding of what Thomas actually means—thus bringing him and philosophers of the analytical school into the kind of debate, in metaphysics and in ethics, which both he and they would regard as essential.[50]

NOTES

1 For Wittgensteinian Thomism see Roger Pouivet, *Après Wittgenstein, saint Thomas* (Paris: PUF 1997), discussing G. E. M. Anscombe, P. T. Geach and Anthony Kenny; and for Analytical Thomism see *The Monist* Vol. 80 (1997), pp. 485–618; *New Blackfriars* Vol. 80 (1999), pp. 158–216, edited by John Haldane, with Select Bibliography, pp. 214–216, including work by Anscombe, Geach, Kenny, and Haldane himself, as well as David Burrell, Brian Davies, John Finnis, Norman Kretzmann, Alasdair MacIntyre, Christopher Martin, Herbert McCabe, Hugo Meynell, Hayden Ramsay, James Ross, Eleanore Stump, Linda Zagzebski, among others.
2 *Faith and Reason* Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II (London: Catholic Truth Society 1998).
3 *New Blackfriars* Vol. 80 (1999), p. 168.
4 First published in 1914 and 1913 respectively, these essays appear in Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963).
5 See for example Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981).
6 *New Blackfriars* Vol. 80 (1999), p. 175.
7 Some say "analytic", others say "analytical": it seems purely a matter of euphony.
8 Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), passim.
9 Samuel C. Wheeler III, *Deconstruction as Analytic Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
10 Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).
11 Simon Glendinning, *On being with others—Heidegger-Derrida-Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 1998).
12 J. E. Malpas, *Donald Davidson and the Mirror of Meaning : Holism, Truth, Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
13 Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1993).
14 In the now quite extensive literature see *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume VI: The Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* edited by Peter A. French and others, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981) and more recently P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); *The Story of Analytic Philosophy: Plot and Heroes* edited by Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar (London: Routledge, 1998); *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy* edited by Hans-Johann Glock (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); *Early Analytic Philosophy: Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein* edited by William W. Tait (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1997); and *Future Pasts: The Analytic Tradition in Twentieth-Century Philosophy* edited by Juliet Floyd and Sanford Shieh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
15 Dummett, p. ix.
16 Bored by reading doctorate dissertations running to 100,000 words by recent graduates, Ryle took the lead at the University of Oxford in creating the B.Phil., three stiff papers and a compact, rigorously argued dissertation of 30,000 words, for the elite; still regarded (not only at Oxford) as the most testing qualification for teaching analytic philosophy.
17 Dummett, pp. ix–x; Ryle's review of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* might have been mentioned, in *Mind* (1929), reprinted in Gilbert Ryle, *Collected Papers* volume 1 (London: Hutcheson, 1971); it might even be that *The Concept of Mind*, that classic of "Oxford philosophy", owes a good deal to the philosophical anthropology which Ryle found in *Sein und Zeit*.
18 Bolzano, ordained as a Catholic priest in 1805, much too early for him to be any kind of Thomist, belonged to the "Bohemian Enlightenment"; he was forced out of the ministry in 1819 by imperial decree on account of supposed heterodoxy and political unreliability.
19 Dummett, p. 171.
20 Originally in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* NS Vol. 59 (1959), pp. 141–162; reprinted in Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978).
21 For Brentano see *The Philosophy of Brentano* edited by Linda L. McAlister (London: Duckworth, 1976).
22 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).
23 It was probably through the Cambridge philosopher/psychologist G. F. Stout (1860–1944) that Brentano's thesis reached Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore.
24 Dummett, p. 4: "What distinguishes analytical philosophy, in its diverse manifestations, from other schools is the belief, first, that a philosophical account of thought can be attained

through a philosophical account of language, and, secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained".

25 Dummett, p. 170.

26 Dummett, p. 168: "I thought he was a very clever man, but I felt his influence on philosophy to be noxious"—through the formalization of Austin's *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford 1961), the posthumously published text of lectures at Harvard in 1955, particularly by John Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge, 1919) "speech-act theory" has spread quite widely into literary criticism and theory and into feminist theory (as in Judith Butler). "A Plea for Excuses", Austin's Presidential Address to the Aristotelian Society in 1956, appears in his *Philosophical Papers* edited by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

27 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1145b1ff; see the seminal essay by G. E. L. Owen, "Tithenai ta phainomena", in Suzanne Mansion, ed., *Aristote et les problèmes de méthodes* (Louvain, Publications Universitaires, 1961), pp. 83–103.

28 *New Blackfriars* Vol. 80 (1999), p. 198.

29 "Whereas almost all of Continental philosophy has gone 'post modern', Anglo-American philosophy continues to defend truth and objectivity. Ironically, analytic philosophy has become the natural ally of Thomism and Catholic philosophy. But old images die hard. The developments in analytic philosophy that have turned it from natural enemy to natural ally have gone largely unnoticed by Thomist philosophers, largely because of the historical, institutional and cultural barriers that are now firmly in place." *New Blackfriars* Vol. 80 (1999), pp. 182–183.

30 F. R. Leavis, *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (London; Chatto & Windus, 1969), passim.

31 Originally in *Philosophy* Vol. 33 (1958), reprinted in her *Collected Philosophical Papers Volume III* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981).

32 The thesis is worked out in much greater detail by Charles Taylor, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (London: Routledge, 1964).

33 See Rosalind Hursthouse, "Intention", in *Logic, Cause and Action: Essays in honour of Elizabeth Anscombe* edited by Roger Teichmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), pp. 83–105—a collection which is the best introduction to the seminal contributions Anscombe has made to metaphysics, ethics, and the philosophy of mind and action.

34 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), §628.

35 Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices and other essays in moral philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981). Iris Murdoch, hostile to Aristotle, preferred to retrieve Plato to combat the antimetaphysical ethics of the day; see *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1970); Donald M. MacKinnon was one of the most influential teachers of ethics and philosophical theology at Oxford, Aberdeen and finally Cambridge.

36 Elizabeth Anscombe died on 5 January 2001, a few weeks short of her eighty-second birthday.

37 Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices*, pp. 1–2.

38 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

39 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, p. 5.

40 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, p. 15; citing Anscombe, *Collected Philosophical Papers Volume III*, p. 18.

41 Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 17; one of the first contributions to "virtue ethics", largely a reading of Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2 and 2-2.

42 Peter Geach, *Mental Acts: Their content and their objects* (London: Routledge, n.d. but actually 1957).

43 Geach, 4.

44 Ryle and Wittgenstein were friends in the 1930s; in 1942, after considering the question, Wittgenstein said that Ryle was one of the only two philosophers who understood his work, see Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1990), p. 436 (the other was no doubt Rush Rhees).

45 Peter Geach, *Mental Acts*, p. 131.

46 Peter Geach, *Mental Acts*, p. 21.

47 Peter Geach, *Mental Acts*, p. 41.

48 P. J. FitzPatrick, an analytically trained philosopher with a sound knowledge also of Aquinas, deals with neoThomism very succinctly: "Neoscholasticism", in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* edited by Norman Kretzmann and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 838–852.

49 "Practical Reason and the Orders of Morals and Nature in Aquinas's Theory of the *Lex Naturae*", in *Mind, Metaphysics, and Value in the Thomistic and Analytical Traditions* edited by John Haldane (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2002), pp. 195–212.

50 In metaphysics the seminal essay is by Peter Geach, in *Three Philosophers* by G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), pp. 65–125; the other two philosophers are Aristotle and Frege; for a brief but impressive argument that Geach's Fregean reading converts Thomist realism into Scotist conceptualism see Stephen Theron, "The resistance of Thomism to analytical and other patronage", *The Monist* Vol. 80 (1997), pp. 611–618; for a sympathetic reading see *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas Introductory Readings* edited by Christopher Martin (London: Routledge, 1988).