

The Aquinas Lecture, 1981

RHYME AND REASON
St. Thomas and
Modes of Discourse

Under the auspices of the
Wisconsin-Alpha Chapter of Phi Sigma Tau

By
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To My Father

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Prefatory

The Wisconsin-Alpha Chapter of Phi Sigma Tau, the National Honor Society for Philosophy at Marquette University, each year invites a scholar to deliver a lecture in honor of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The 1981 Aquinas Lecture *Rhyme and Reason: St. Thomas and Modes of Discourse* was delivered in the Todd Wehr Chemistry Building on Sunday, February 22, 1981, by Ralph M. McInerny, the Michael P. Grace Professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.

After completing his undergraduate studies at St. Paul Seminary, Dr. McInerny earned a M.A. at the University of Minnesota and a Ph.L. and a Ph.D. at Université Laval. After a year at the Creighton University, he began his teaching career at Notre Dame in 1955 where he became Professor of Philosophy in 1969. Since 1978 he has been the Michael P. Grace Professor of Medieval Studies at Notre Dame as well as Director of both the Jacques Maritain Center and the Me-

dieval Institute. After having served as Associate Editor for ten years, he became Editor of *The New Scholasticism* in 1976.

Since 1967 Dr. McNerny has published fourteen novels and has delighted mystery fans with his Father Dowling stories. In Philosophy his books include: *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas* (1961), *From the Beginnings of Philosophy to Plotinus* (1963), *Thomism in an Age of Renewal* (1966), *Studies in Analogy* (1968), *Philosophy from St. Augustine to Ockham* (1970), and *St. Thomas Aquinas* (1977). His published articles in books and journals number over fifty.

Dr. McNerny received an Honorary Doctor of Letters Degree from St. Benedict College in 1978. He served as President of the American Catholic Philosophical Association in 1971-2 and is a member of over a dozen medieval, philosophical, and literary associations.

To Professor McNerny's distinguished list of publications, Phi Sigma Tau is pleased to add: *Rhyme and Reason: St. Thomas and Modes of Discourse*.

RHYME AND REASON

St. Thomas and Modes of Discourse

Prologue

I think it was Collingwood who remarked that the oldest extant historical document refers wistfully to the good old days, gone alas like our youth too soon. So too, already in the Fourth Century B.C., Plato spoke of an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy. If it is an old one, it is also, to say the least, an odd quarrel. By any account, Plato is one of the most poetic philosophers, not only because of the literary achievement the dialogues are universally recognized as being, but also because of the myths he fashioned to carry the burden of his most cherished tenets.

Furthermore, Socrates, the main character in so many of the dialogues, is represented awaiting execution in his cell, writing poetry, something he does in response to a divine call. Likewise, Boethius, at the opening of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, unjustly condemned to death, has given

himself over to the poetic muses. These questionable ladies are driven from the cell by Dame Philosophy who sternly advises Boethius to seek comfort in more substantial stuff, namely philosophy. Yet Dame Philosophy often expresses herself in verse as she administers the needed therapy. Whatever the opposition between philosophy and poetry is meant to be, it clearly is not an easy one to characterize.

The issue is not clarified by noticing the supposed antiquity of the quarrel and consulting Plato's predecessors. One of the most noteworthy things about Greek philosophy is that it went on for generations before it began to express itself in prose. It did not go from bad to verse but perhaps the other way around. The fragments of the Pre-Socratic philosophers that have come down to us are, by and large, in poetic form. It is true that we find Heraclitus criticizing the views of the theological poets, but it is the doctrine, not the poetry, that is his target. So too with Plato the quarrel turns on the false and demeaning things the poets have said of the gods, a charge which raises questions about the

way in which a poem means and the manner in which it may be said to be true—or false.

However obscure the quarrel can seem, it is perennially renewed. Philosophers often dismiss arguments, positions, pieces of discourse, as poetic, as pretty but imprecise, perhaps even meaningless. The poet functions as a sort of frothing dithyrambic foil for the philosopher. "Bards tell many a lie," Aristotle quotes, and it is unmistakable that he takes his own efforts to be a corrective not only of those predecessors he recognizes as philosophers but also of theological poetry and myth as well. My distinguished predecessor in this lecture series, Professor Victor M. Hamm, had many important and illuminating things to say on this topic.¹ If I presume to take it up anew in this place it is with the sense of depending upon and adding to what he had to say. John of Salisbury quotes Bernard of Chartres to the effect that we are dwarfs who stand on the shoulders of giants and thus see farther than they did. I prefer T. S. Eliot's variation on this in "Tradition and the Individ-

ual Talent." Eliot imagines a critic asking why we should read the old writers since we know so much more than they did. "Yes," he replies, "and they are what we know."

What I propose to do in this lecture is, first, to examine the ancient quarrel in its ancient setting, with particular reference to Aristotle. Next I will turn to an examination of what St. Thomas can teach us on this matter. I end with some suggestions about the style of philosophy that are meant to be of significance for its substance as well.

1. *An Ancient Quarrel*

It is well known that Aristotle had a way of beginning his treatises with an account of what his predecessors had to say about the questions he intends to address. It is equally well known that Aristotle considers what he has to say as marking a significant advance over his predecessors' doctrine. That is, there is a contrast suggested between adequate and inadequate philosophy. But what would be the con-

trast between philosophy and non-philosophy? What criteria enable us to identify discourse as philosophical discourse?

One contrast very prominent in both Plato and Aristotle is that between the philosopher and the Sophist. To philosophize is to be in pursuit of wisdom and ultimately of such knowledge of the divine as is possible for mortal man. For the Greeks, philosophy was not a career but a vocation, a way of life. The tribe of Sophists was the target both of Plato's rhetorical invective and of Aristotle's more dispassionate analysis of their arguments. Although their approaches to the Sophist differed, Plato and Aristotle agreed in thinking that the trouble with the Sophist was in large part a moral one. Doing it for money is symptomatic of something far worse. The Sophist was only pretending to do something; he was mimicking or parodying something of whose importance neither Plato nor Aristotle had the slightest doubt. The Sophist was pretending to be wise. Really to be wise is to love wisdom, to seek it all the days of one's life and for itself alone. Unlike Lady Anne

Gregory, of whom Yeats wrote that "only God could love you for yourself alone and not your yellow hair," Lady Wisdom is the terminal object of desire. Seeking wisdom is the whole point of life; it is in that that human perfection and happiness consist. The term "philosophy" conveys the sense and purpose of life, the fundamental ordination of the human person to a felicitic and aretaic goal.

Notice that the charge against the Sophist is not that he said what is not true. A conceptual mistake, an error in thought, is not, just as such, a moral fault. The charge against the Sophist is not simply that what he says is false, though that too is involved; rather and more profoundly the charge is that the Sophist knows this and does not care. The difference is that between saying something false and deceiving, telling a lie. By contrast, the philosopher, in seeking wisdom, is held to moral rectitude and, again in different ways, both Plato and Aristotle insist on the connection between moral and intellectual virtue. Here then is a first sense of non-philosophy: Sophistry.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle would contrast philosophy with either mathematics or natural science. These and other disciplines and arts are necessary for the being or well-being of wisdom. The order of learning that St. Thomas gleaned from various passages of Aristotle went like this: first one should learn logic, then mathematics, then natural philosophy, then moral philosophy and finally what we have come to call metaphysics.² A not wholly dissimilar paideia can be described in the *Republic*. The regimen of the philosopher was intellectual and moral; it embraced a plurality of practises and disciplines teleologically ordered to such knowledge as men could attain of the divine. And the appropriate expression of that culminating knowledge was contemplation.

What then, aside from Sophistry, is excluded? In the *Poetics* we are told (1451b1) that poetry is more philosophical and serious than history. Surely this suggests that both history and poetry can be contrasted with philosophy. The reason for the ranking is that poetry deals with universals and history with particu-

lars. The contrast seems to be between type and individual. If philosophy and poetry differ, how can the difference be characterized? Sometimes it seems to disappear altogether. "And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (whence even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom, for the myth is composed of wonders)." (*Metaphysics*, 982b18) What we might expect to find here is that philosophy and poetry in their different ways provide accounts which dissolve wonder. But this is not what the passage says. The myth is not said to assuage wonder but to be composed of wonders. The *philosophos* begins with wonder and replaces it with an account; the *philomythos* loves an accumulation of wonders. This is most suggestive. The *terminus ad quem* of the lover of myth is the *terminus a quo* of the lover of wisdom. Nonetheless, we should remember that philosophy is fulfilled in contemplative awe.

If we turn now to a passage in which Aristotle criticizes Plato, another element is added. "But further all things cannot come from the forms in any of the usual

senses of 'from.' And to say that they are patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors." (999a19 ff.) In Book Beta of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle lists among the problems or *aporiai* of the science he is seeking this: Are the principles of perishable and imperishable things the same? Notice the way in which he refers to some of his predecessors.

The school of Hesiod and all the theologians thought only of what was plausible to themselves, and had no regard to us. For, asserting the first principles to be gods and born of gods, they say that the things which did not taste of nectar and ambrosia became mortal; and clearly they are using words which are familiar to themselves, yet what they have said about the very application of these causes is above our comprehension. For if the gods taste of nectar and ambrosia for their pleasure, these are in no wise the causes of their existence; and if they taste them to maintain their existence, how can gods who need food be eternal?—But into the subtleties of the mythologists it is not worth our while to inquire seriously; those, however, who use the language of proof we must cross-examine . . . (1000a9 ff.)

Theological poets, who speak mythically, are contrasted with philosophers who speak apodictically. The matter remains subtle, however, since Aristotle goes on to quote some *verses* of Empedocles whom he does not number among the theological poets.

We now have an adverbial characterization of the discourse of the philosopher and we can identify the non-philosopher as one who does not speak apodictically. Can we replace these negations? The non-philosopher is the poet and his language is metaphorical. Here we have an Aristotelian expression of the ancient quarrel of which Plato spoke. You might rightly wonder—being philosophers all—how I managed to move so easily between myth and metaphor, conflating the two as I have done. The theological poets are said to express themselves mythically and the mark of poetic expression is metaphor. That is how I make the connection.

If we were to consult the *Index Aristotelicus* of Bonitz for occurrences of *mythos*, we would find ourselves referred mainly to the *Poetics*. The term is translated as plot and this is a new and quasi-

technical use of it.³ The plot is the logic of the events depicted on the tragic stage, the *σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων*,⁴ and it is a subtle blend of show and tell. Myth in the sense of plot is not verbal; it is only when Aristotle speaks of diction, the speeches of the characters, that the problem of metaphor is raised. The plot, the *mythos*, is a *logos* (1460a27-8), the intelligible structure of the events. If the term "myth" is used in a new way in the *Poetics*, the old meaning is also there, as when Aristotle says that the tragic poet takes the old *mythoi* and imposes a *mythos* on them. (1451b24) Why is it important to note this?

We have seen Aristotle refer to the theological poets as precursors of philosophy and give us an adverbial expression of their difference from the philosopher. What the adverb modifies is an accounting, discoursing. Is there a counterpart, in this stage antecedent to philosophy, to the logic of action which is the tragic plot and to the metaphor which is a feature of its diction? The tragedy cannot be equated with what is said; rather there is an enact-

ment, an imitation of *praxis* (1450a3-4), which includes among other things speeches employing metaphor. That is precisely the difference between narrative poetry and dramatic imitation. We have been taught to think that there is something ritualistic and dramatic which preceded the accounts of the theological poets. Gilbert Murray's suggestion that tragedy has its ultimate origin in the *Molpe*, which includes a *mimesis*, a dramatic imitation, as well as the telling of a tale, provides us what we want.⁵ The *Molpe* can be considered a ritualistic song-and-dance performance. Thus, myths in the usual sense involve a doing as well as a saying, and that is also true of myth in the technical sense of the *Poetics*.

The upshot of these considerations is that the myth which preceded philosophy and in some sense is superseded by it, while its language is characterized as metaphorical, is not to be identified with the myth and metaphor which are achievements of a conscious kind and which are contemporaneous with philosophy. This means that the one contrast will not wholly

do for the other; the distinction between philosophy and preceding myths is not the same as the distinction between philosophy and poetry.

A word about antecedent myths. Schelling has taught us⁶ to classify views on myth under three headings: (1) myths taken as first steps towards a scientific explanation; (2) myths taken as deliberate allegories which must be interpreted to get at their literal truth; (3) myths taken to have their own truth which is irreducible to that of science. One of the fascinating things about Aristotle is that we can see him embracing at different times each of these three views on myth. Passages we have already looked at, where philosophy is seen as a replacement of myth, exemplify the first view. The second view is present when he entertains the view that history is cyclic. In the past philosophy flourished and myths are a popular expression of austere philosophical truth.⁷ Given that, when philosophy has fallen into disuse and only the myths remain, we can probe them for the literal truths they encode. Finally, in the *Poetics*,⁸

discussing the truth of poetry, Aristotle can be seen to take some version of the third view.

If we now return to the adverbial contrast of philosophy and theological poetry and ask after the provenance of "apodictically," a quite definite conception of philosophical discourse emerges from the fact that it is in the *Posterior Analytics* that Aristotle provides us with an analysis of apodictic discourse. Apodictic discourse is nothing other than the demonstrative syllogism. If "apodictic" modifies syllogism, there are other modifiers as well. If some discourse is apodictic, other is dialectical or probable, yet other rhetorical or persuasive. Some discourse is only seemingly sound and it is noteworthy that one way the syllogism can fail to be valid is when one of its terms is used metaphorically.⁹ Whence emerges a stern picture, a cascade, a declension from the most effective kind of discourse. Dialectical discourse is less than apodictic and rhetorical discourse is lesser still. Sophistical discourse simply drops off the scale and so too, it would seem, does poetic

discourse which is characterized by metaphor.

It may well be asked if this negative attitude adequately sums up Aristotle's appraisal of poetry. Were this all he had to say on the subject, it would be curious that the *Poetics* ever got written or, if written, why it does not seem to be more like the *Sophistical Refutations*. I will not pursue the matter now because I want to draw attention to the austere conception of philosophical discourse the negative attitude seems to invite.

Aristotle's reader will not long wonder where he might go to find the sort of apodictic discourse that is ranked above the discourse of the theological poets. He has it right before his eyes, an Aristotelian treatise. Nonetheless, given the analysis of the apodictic in the *Posterior Analytics*, he may be puzzled. Developed with a keen eye on what, a century later, would be codified in Euclid's *Elements*, the *Posterior Analytics* present a view of *episteme* which seems seldom exemplified by the Aristotelian treatises, certainly only most imperfectly exemplified by them.

This has led, you will know, to studies which ask what Aristotle's actual method was, as opposed to the ideal sketched in the *Posterior Analytics*.¹⁰ And he will find in the treatises clues to the discrepancy. It is the mark of the wise man to ask for only as much precision as the subject matter allows. (1094b12) Disciplines can be ranked in several ways, either by method or by the dignity of the subject matter. (*De anima*, 402a) Discourse about the highest things is dissatisfying from the point of view of strict scientific rigor, but it is nonetheless most desirable because of the eminence of its objects.

But such clues aggravate rather than alleviate the problem. We are still confronted with a methodological *cadenza*, a falling away from the rigor Aristotle seems to want to attribute to philosophical discourse. However difficult it may be to realize that rigor, Aristotle has, perhaps *malgré lui*, bequeathed us an ideal of philosophical discourse which ill accords with the actual history of the discipline. If we needed a single couplet to express the way in which philosophical language,

austerely understood, differs from poetic language, the obvious candidate would be literal/metaphorical. And the tough-minded philosopher has little difficulty in knowing what to make of metaphorical language. It is meaningless. Thus spake any number of philosophers not so many decades ago and it was not only poetry proper—or improper—that fell on the other side of meaningfulness. The tribe of which I speak was practising a discipline which oddly had no history. It was always just coming into existence with the development of a new litmus test which, applied to historical philosophers, found them wanting in the extreme. Metaphysics and ethics were cast along with poetry into that outer darkness where there is metaphorical weeping and gnashing of teeth. Such an attitude begets a fairly univocal notion of the appropriate style of philosophy.

Not that we need to turn to such iconoclasts of unlamented memory in order to find the thin conception of philosophy and its appropriate style. A bald and barefoot statement of the conception is this: Philosophy inhabits an island of rational dis-

course lapped on its eastern shores by the dark irrational tides of primitive ritual and myth. Out of this unpromising scum—no wonder Thales was enamored of water as the principle of all things—philosophy scuttled ashore and swiftly learned to speak in those dulcet and intellectually satisfying tones we all know and love so well. This achievement is threatened by a willed plunge into the irrational. Looking westward, philosophy, like stout Cortez, surveys the unsettling seas of poetry, of drama, of metaphorical discourse. The philosopher must ever be on his guard against his putative fellows who would cry out with Leopardi

Il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare:
To sink in such a sea were sweet to me.

Are we not all, to some degree, in the grips of that very narrow conception of the nature of philosophical discourse? When we think of a piece of philosophy, we are likely to think of an article in *The Review of Metaphysics*, *Mind*, *The Philosophical Review* or, if we have been well brought up, *The New Scholasticism*. As

for longer examples, we would imagine a book the chapters of which look pretty much like articles of the kind just mentioned. Well, I have already disclosed the sordid secret that the first philosophers wrote in verse. This may not disturb our sense that we now know a piece of philosophical discourse when we see it and that having regular lines that rhyme would be a sufficient sign that the discourse we are confronted with is not philosophical. That is, we may feel, philosophy has long since outgrown its original confusion of literary genres. But has it?

I owe to Julian Marias, in his *Philosophy as Dramatic Theory*,¹¹ the reminder that philosophy has made use, over the centuries, of the following genres: poetry, aphorisms, dialogues, lecture notes, commentaries, meditations, autobiography, treatises, essays, prayers, fragments and *pensées*, disputed questions, *summae*, on and on. With this reminder before us, would we still want to say—taking into account Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Heidegger—that philosophy has at last evolved beyond a variety of genres

and learned to settle for a single recognizable one? I think not. Consequently, if we wish to examine the difference between philosophical and poetical discourse, with an eye to saying something about philosophical style, we must from the beginning eschew a simplistic notion of the kind of discourse philosophy is.

2. *Iuxta mentem divi Thomae*

If we can believe Curtius, the ancient quarrel lay dormant throughout the early Middle Ages until it flared up again with St. Thomas Aquinas. Referring to Thomas's theory of knowledge and art, he writes, "Behind this opposition, to be sure, there lies the eternal quarrel between the philosopher and the poet. Thomism made the quarrel flare up anew."¹² Now, it can be taken as a maxim that, when Curtius is sure, wise men doubt. What is the basis for his judgment?

But the *artes*, in which Thierry of Chartres still saw the sum of philosophy, had now to resign any such claim. Their framework had become too narrow for the enlarged realm of

profane disciplines. Thomas Aquinas' dictum, 'septem artes liberales non sufficienter dividunt philosophiam theoreticam,' announces a new era.¹⁸

Elsewhere,¹⁴ it is clear that Curtius takes this statement to put an end to the confusion of philosophy and poetry. "The old connection between *artes* and philosophy is severed at a blow."

This is an odd interpretation. It is true that prior to the introduction of the complete *corpus Aristotelicum* toward the end of the Twelfth Century, there were many who took the liberal arts, the trivium and quadrivium, to be identical with secular learning and to constitute the sufficient propaedeutic for the study of Holy Scripture. If secular learning is identical with philosophy and if philosophy is identical with the liberal arts, then there is indeed an identification of secular learning and the arts. But to call this an identification of philosophy and *poetry* would be a strange simplification. After all, numbered among the liberal arts are arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. What the context of the Thomistic passage quoted by Curtius

makes clear—and it is not without significance that Curtius quotes it at second hand¹⁵—is that the liberal arts tradition is deftly subsumed within the wider Aristotelian conception of philosophy.

Having divided philosophy into theoretical and practical, Aristotle goes on to enumerate three theoretical sciences, natural philosophy, mathematics and theology, and three practical sciences, ethics, economics and politics.¹⁶ No mention of poetry.¹⁷ Does that mean philosophy is thereby distinguished from all arts, including poetry? Not at all. The arts of the trivium are reduced to logic and the arts of the quadrivium to mathematics and thus the liberal arts make up the first two stages in that order of learning which, as we mentioned earlier, Thomas gleaned from Aristotle.¹⁸ Poetry is found in the liberal arts as an aspect of grammar. Whatever St. Thomas's views on the relationship between philosophy and poetry, they can scarcely be found in the passage cited by Curtius.

Later, in discussing Albertino Mussato, Curtius states the matter in a way incon-

sistent with his other remarks, those just mentioned. "It is clear that the Dominican [Mussato] is not concerned with 'attacking' or 'belittling' poetry, but with assigning it a place in the system of disciplines which Thomas had firmly established. The crucial point of the discussion is the question of the nature of the metaphors found in the Bible."¹⁰ Here we have a more accurate portrayal of Thomas's position. Poetry is not so much distinguished from philosophy as it forms part of the network of disciplines which can be brought together under that commodious term. He who pursues wisdom, it seems, must concern himself with poetry as a discipline required for the *esse* or *bene esse* of wisdom. This is what we must now examine.

a) *The Least of Doctrines*

We have seen that "apodictic" modifies the discourse or syllogism Aristotle apparently takes to be characteristic of philosophy, whereas "metaphorical" modifies mythic and poetic discourse. Since apodictic reasoning is the subject matter of the

Posterior Analytics, we are not surprised to find Thomas, in his proemium to his commentary on that work, develop a hierarchy of discourse.

“Man lives by art and reasoning,” Thomas quotes, and by this is set off from other animals. The latter live by natural instinct and are as it were acted on rather than act, whereas man is directed in his actions by the judgment of his own reason. The various arts have been devised by man in order that he might proceed easily and in an orderly fashion. Whence comes the definition of art as “*certa ordinatio rationis quomodo per determinata media ad debitum finem actus humani perveni-ant*: the fixed orientation of reason thanks to which human acts attain their fitting end in a determinate way.”²⁰

What is obvious from this opening of the proemium of the commentary is that “art” is being used to cover the whole range of disciplines. Not operative yet is the distinction elsewhere made between science and art; then art will be restricted to the status of a virtue of practical reasoning.²¹ The common use of the term is

already required for an understanding of the phrase "liberal arts." A fortiori it is needed when "art" ranges over all disciplines.²² Any reader of Aquinas is familiar with his habit of using terms in a common and proper sense. *Abstractio* is sometimes distinguished from *separatio*, when the two terms are used in a narrow or proper sense; used commonly *abstractio* embraces *separatio* and *abstractio* (in the narrow sense). So too *separatio* sometimes includes *abstractio* and *separatio* (in the narrow sense).²³ If the terms in question had but one sense, we would be confronted with the crudest confusion. In much the same way, the common meaning of "art" is not operative when art is distinguished from science.

In the text we are examining, Thomas is of course concerned with logic, the art directive of the very act of reason itself. Manual skill involves reason's direction of bodily movements; logic is reason's directing of reasoning itself. This is why logic is called the *ars artium*.²⁴ Logic, in turn, will be subdivided if there are different rational acts to be directed. Thus, the

logical art of defining, and attendant arts, bear on *intelligentia indivisibilium sive in-complexorum*, what has traditionally been called simple apprehension. A second act of reason, composition and division, calls for the logic of propositions. The third act directed by logic is discourse.²⁵

The maxim that art imitates nature is invoked to establish that artful or rational acts mimic, to the degree this is possible, natural activities. But the latter are of three major kinds. Sometimes nature acts with necessity and cannot fail, whereas at other times nature acts in such a way that frequently or for the most part its ends are achieved. And, of course, it follows from this that sometimes nature fails.

These three are also found in acts of reason. There is a certain process of reason involving necessity, in which the lack of truth is impossible: it is through this process of reason that the certitude of science is achieved. There is another process of reason in which truth is arrived at by and large but necessity is not had. A third process of reason is such that reason fails to arrive at truth because of a defect in its starting point. . . .²⁶

Thomas can now link these distinctions to syllogism and identify the works of Aristotle's *Organon* which treat the special art in question. In what he calls judicative logic, reasoning resolves a judgment into principles with certainty and this either because of the form of reasoning as such, thanks to the shape of the syllogism, something discussed in the *Prior Analytics*, or because of the matter, the kind of principles to which resolution is made, namely those which are per se and necessary. This point is often made by distinguishing necessity of consequences from the necessity of the consequent.²⁷

There is also a logic of discovery which does not always involve necessity. The notion of types of discourse falling away from apodictic or necessary discourse having been introduced, Thomas spells out the declension of modes we talked about earlier. "In processu rationis, qui non est cum omnimoda certitudine, gradus aliquis invenitur, secundum quod magis vel minus ad perfectam certitudinem acceditur: a hierarchy can be discerned in that process of reasoning in which there is not perfect

certitude insofar as it attains more or less closely to certitude."²⁸ It is on the bottom rung of this hierarchy that we find poetic argumentation.

Dialectical or probable argument is productive of opinion and the logical art concerned with it is developed in the *Topics* of Aristotle. Rhetorical argument is productive of *suspicio*, perhaps renderable as surmise, and is dealt with, needless to say, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. What is opined or surmised? The object of knowledge, opinion or surmise is, as Thomas puts, one side of a contradiction. That is, what is to be determined by these processes of reason can be formally expressed as "p v -p?" The apodictic or demonstrative syllogism enables one to conclude that p is necessarily true and -p necessarily false. It is that exclusion of the contradictory of what one holds to be true that is only imperfectly present in dialectical and rhetorical discourse. How does poetry fit into this scheme?

Sometimes thought inclines to one side of a contradiction on account of a representation,

in the way in which a man may abominate food if it is distastefully represented to him. The *Poetics* is concerned with this sort of thing since the poet commends the virtuous by means of a fitting representation.²⁹

This is, you will agree, a surprising passage. While it may be attractive in the way in which it links poetry with other modes of discourse, providing us with a sense of "poetic argumentation," it makes of poetry a *pis aller* of an apparently expendable sort. Surely arguments of another kind can be fashioned on behalf of the desirability of virtue over vice. Poetry thus seems merely a way of doing something that can be better done otherwise. Furthermore, the overtly moral purpose of poetry that Thomas stresses leaves a great deal to be desired. It would be easy to go on a bit about the diminished view of poetry Thomas has here—and I shall do so in a moment—but we must not leave this passage without drawing attention to something of importance.

In the movement—downward—from dialectical to rhetorical discourse, we might want to make explicit what Thomas leaves

implicit, namely that rhetorical persuasion does not address pure intellect but appeals to the emotions as well. The further move to poetry might then be taken to carry this more than intellectual appeal along with it, the representation of which Thomas speaks eliciting a response not narrowly rational though not thereby irrational or "emotive." It is here we can see, I think, the genesis of Maritain's extension of St. Thomas's notion of the judgment by connaturality or inclination to poetic knowledge.³⁰ Let us return now to the base place to which Thomas has relegated poetry.

As it happens, texts which assert the diminished conception of poetry occur precisely where St. Thomas is intent on overcoming it. For example, in the prologue to his *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, when he asks if the mode of Scripture should be *artificialis*, he entertains this objection:

The same mode should not be common to sciences which differ maximally. But the poetic [mode], which contains the least truth, differs maximally from that of this science which is

most true. Therefore, since the former makes use of metaphorical locutions, the mode of this science ought not be the same.³¹

The objection captures nicely the notion of poetry and metaphor Thomas embraced when commenting on the *Posterior Analytics* and we can see why, confronted with the undeniably metaphorical nature of so many Scriptural passages, that notion should cause him trouble. Notice first of all his direct response to the objection.

Poetic knowledge is concerned with things which because of their defect of truth cannot be grasped by intellect; that is why reason must be seduced by means of similitudes. Theology, on the other hand, deals with things above reason and that is why the symbolic mode is common to them both since neither is proportioned to reason.³²

This is not a defense of poetry that would commend itself to Shelly or perhaps to many others; yet something suggested in the Aristotelian commentary is absent from it, namely, that poetry does in one way what could be done better in another. Here poetic language is necessi-

tated by the want of truth in the things talked about, the want of determination or necessity or fixity in its subject matter. Accordingly, when God, who exceeds our capacity to understand, is the subject, a similar deficiency is felt and recourse is had to metaphor.³³

The parallel discussion in the *Summa theologiae* puts the contrast somewhat differently. "The poet uses metaphors for the sake of representation because a representation is naturally delightful to men, but Sacred Scripture employs metaphors out of necessity and utility."³⁴ The objection to which this is a response has described poetry as *infima inter omnes doctrinas*, the least of doctrines. The *Sed contra* gives us a kind of definition of metaphor. "Tradere autem aliquid sub similitudine est metaphoricum: metaphor treats of a thing through a likeness of it." When we consider the reason St. Thomas gives for the need of metaphor in speaking of God a serious difficulty arises. The principle he invokes for this necessity would appear to entail that all talk about God is

metaphorical. That, as you will know, is not a conclusion Thomas could accept.

b) *Metaphor and Analogy*

We have seen a number of passages in which St. Thomas says some rather slighting things about poetic language and the put-down does not seem to be put aside when he justifies the use of metaphorical and symbolic language in Scripture. The elements of this justification can easily appear to call into question talk about God which aspires to be other than metaphorical, whether such talk occurs in natural or supernatural theology. This is something which must interest any effort to discover the nature of the distinction between poetry and philosophy.

The hierarchy of discourse provides us with a way of distinguishing philosophy from poetry if the former makes use of the apodictic and the latter makes use of the metaphorical or symbolic mode. But a moment's reflection makes it clear that we cannot rest with such a simplistic solution. When St. Thomas compares philosophical

disciplines, he says that this can be done in two ways, either with reference to their objects or their modes. On the basis of modes, mathematics is going to come out far ahead of both moral philosophy and metaphysics. On the basis of objects, metaphysics is going to rank higher than any of the others.³⁵ Now "metaphysics" is the term we use to designate the treatise in which Aristotle is concerned with the culminating goal of philosophy, wisdom: such knowledge as men can achieve of the divine. Theology, discourse about God, is the telos towards which the whole philosophical enterprise tends. Consequently, if all talk about God is metaphorical, and if metaphor is the mark of poetic discourse, the very foundation of a distinction between philosophy and poetry is in jeopardy. Clearly this is not a matter we could pass over undiscussed.

Consider now the following argument St. Thomas fashions in discussing the prevalence of metaphors in Scripture.

It is fitting that Sacred Scripture should treat divine and spiritual things under the likeness

of the corporeal. God provides for all things in a manner befitting their natures. But it is natural to man that he should come to intelligible things by way of the sensible, because all our knowledge takes its rise from sensation. Hence in Sacred Scripture spiritual things are fittingly presented to us by way of bodily metaphors.³⁶

The key to the argument is the claim that our knowledge begins with sensible things; they are what we first know and talk about. Knowledge of them provides us with a basis for knowing suprasensible things, divine and spiritual things, and we transfer the terms used to speak of sensible things to spiritual things. Nothing will be more familiar to the student of St. Thomas than this claim but, in this context, it has a surprising implication. The context is a justification of bodily metaphors in speaking of spiritual things. The question is: How can we possibly speak of them otherwise than metaphorically?

The question can be answered and the difficulty resolved only if the principle here invoked can accommodate the claim that sometimes the transfer of terms from

sensible to spiritual things does not involve metaphor. We do not find in St. Thomas any suggestion that we have a special spiritual vocabulary. The terms that make up the language of theology are always terms which have a prior use to speak of ordinary physical things. Our knowledge of God is gained from knowledge of creatures. But the way in which we name or talk about things reflects the way we know them. Thus God is always denominated from creatures and talked about with reference to them.³⁷ Metaphor thus seems to be an ineluctable mark of theological discourse.

The difficulty before us directs us to passages in Thomas where we are most likely to find him saying things about our subject. Needless to say, St. Thomas wrote no treatise on poetic discourse or on metaphor; for that matter, he wrote no formal work on language as such. We will find his views on these topics embedded in discussions of various problems, not quite *obiter dicta*, but nonetheless rather strictly confined to the narrow issue before him. A Thomistic theory of poetry is necessarily

a posthumously constructed one, built up from hints and inchoative asides. On the difference between metaphorical and non-metaphorical discourse, we find such help as we do mainly in discussions of talk about God.

There is little doubt that the most influential work on a significant aspect of St. Thomas's theory of language is the opusculum *De nominum analogia* written by Cardinal Cajetan during the summer vacation of 1498.³⁸ Basing himself on a text to be found in St. Thomas's commentary on the *Sentences*, Cajetan distinguished three kinds of analogous term: analogy of inequality, analogy of attribution, and analogy of proportionality. The third kind of analogy is further distinguished into analogy of proper proportionality and analogy of improper proportionality, that is, metaphor. Some of you will know that I have been a critic of this portion of the teaching of the great commentator on the *Summa theologiae*. It is precisely in his commentary on *Ia*, q. 16, a. 6, a parallel text to that from the *Sentences* which provides the structure of Cajetan's opuscu-

lum, that one sees how unsure a guide in these matters the cardinal is. In the *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas wrote this: "Sed quando aliquid dicitur analogice de multis, illud invenitur secundum propriam rationem in uno eorum tantum, a quo alia denominantur: when something is said analogously of many it is found according to its proper notion in one of them alone from which the others are denominated."³⁹ This is a remark of quite general scope. Unfortunately, not only is Cajetan unable to accept it as the definition of the analogous term, he suggests that it is better thought of as inapplicable to a truly analogous term!⁴⁰ Cajetan had written his little work on analogous names prior to commenting on the *Summa theologiae* and his own theory has a way of getting between him and the text of St. Thomas.

This is not the time for me to rehearse arguments I have developed at length elsewhere.⁴¹ For now I wish only to draw attention to the way in which Cajetan links metaphor and analogy while wishing to distinguish the two. This is exactly what we find in St. Thomas. In his treatise on

the divine names, Thomas asks if any term is properly said of God,⁴² and the discussion makes it clear that he is asking whether any term is said of God other than metaphorically. We have already seen why this must be a problem for him. If the human mind is such that it must derive knowledge of God from knowledge of creatures, and if our language reflects the trajectory of our knowing, then all terms applied to God will be drawn from talk about creatures. But to speak of something in terms appropriate to something else is to speak metaphorically of it. This and other objections set the stage for the discussion whose thesis is, "Non igitur omnia nomina dicuntur de Deo metaphorice, sed aliqua dicuntur proprie: not all names are said of God metaphorically, but some are said properly."⁴³

What is needed is a criterion for distinguishing proper from improper predication or naming. We know God from the perfections in creatures which proceed from Him, perfections which exist in God in a more eminent way than they do in creatures. Our intellect grasps them in

their creaturely mode and that is how our terms signify them. Two aspects of the names attributed to God must therefore be considered: the perfection signified and the way of signifying it. If we attend to the perfection signified and not to the creaturely mode embedded in the signification, some names can be said properly of God and indeed more properly of Him than of creatures.⁴⁴ “Quantum ad modum significandi, omne nomen cum defectu est.”⁴⁵

Why is it that only some and not all words signifying perfections can be attributed to God so long as we prescind from the creaturely mode of having the perfection? Surely all created perfections proceed from God as cause, and effects are said by Thomas to be like their causes. The answer is that there are some perfections which are proper to creatures as such and not simply in the way the creature has them. It is one thing to speak of words like “being,” “good,” “wise” and “just” and quite another to speak of “stone” and “fire” and “lion.” Existence and goodness are found in limited ways in creatures and this

is reflected in the meanings of "being" and "good." Leoninity is as such a limited perfection. To say that God possesses or is it in an unlimited fashion would be to speak of God inappropriately, as corporeal.⁴⁶ The criterion we seek, put in Thomas's quasi-technical vocabulary is this: when the *res significata* does not include limitations, though the *modus significandi* does, the word can be said properly of God; when the *res significata* includes limitations, the word can be said of God only metaphorically.⁴⁷

Was Cajetan wrong to suggest that the metaphor is a kind of analogous term? If "properly" is attached to analogy and "improperly" to metaphor, then metaphor is distinct from and not a type of analogous term. Nonetheless, as I have argued elsewhere, St. Thomas uses both "metaphor" and "analogy" in wide as well as restricted senses.⁴⁸ It is in their restricted or narrow senses that they are distinguished from one another; in its wide sense we are justified in taking metaphor as embracing metaphor and analogy, in their narrow senses, and analogy, in the wide sense, as

embracing metaphor and analogy, in their narrow senses. Far from jeopardizing the clarity of the distinction between metaphor and analogy, these precisions are a condition of its intelligibility.

Such discussions enable us to generalize about metaphorical talk. When a man is called a lion, the intent is not to say that he is another instance of the type, though that is intended when he is called an animal. We cannot find in the meaning of "lion" the reason for calling a man one. Where then is the reason to be found? St. Thomas's suggestion is that the similarity is neither univocal nor analogical, both of which depend upon meanings. Rather the metaphorical extension of a term is grounded in something associated with the things of which the term is properly predicated. It is because of his roaring or his courage, traits associated with lions though not part of the meaning of "lion," that Richard is called a lion.⁴⁹

We have then the solution we sought. Although in explaining metaphor St. Thomas invokes our mode of knowing God, which goes from creatures to God

and involves the extension to Him of terms first fashioned to speak of creatures, not every such extension is merely metaphorical. This enables us to avoid saying that the language of metaphysics and of theology is poetic. Nonetheless, as we have seen, it does not enable us to say that such language is apodictic. And that, as the sequel will show, has important consequences for our view of philosophical style.

3. *Three Spectra of Discourse*

We have seen St. Thomas develop from Aristotelian sources a hierarchy of modes of discourse based on types of argument. There is argument in the strict sense which concludes with necessity some necessary truth; that was the meaning of apodictic discourse. There is argument which provides grounds for holding something to be true without enabling us wholly to exclude its contradictory; this was the meaning of dialectical discourse. There is argument less rigorous still, which provides both intellectual and appetitive grounds for hold-

ing something to be true; this is rhetorical or persuasive discourse. Finally, poetic discourse is taken to be a kind of argument which by means of representations induces us to accept something because it is pleasing. *Id quod visum placet.*

If discourse can be ranged on a scale or spectrum in terms of types of argument, another spectrum could be established in terms of the musical aspect of language. One way of comparing poetic language with philosophical language is to say that the latter addresses itself directly to understanding, whereas the former works not only with the meanings of words, but also, perhaps chiefly, with the musical aspects of the vehicle of meaning, articulated sound.⁵⁰ This point was made to excess by the Symbolists when they held that the essential effect of poetic language can be achieved with nonsense syllables. There is, of course, something to be said for this. T. S. Eliot tells of his initial appreciation of Dante when, knowing only how to pronounce Italian, he savored the music of the *Divina Commedia* without being able to understand what he was reading. Hugh

Kenner, in *The Pound Era*, has similarly argued that the poetic effect is essentially detachable from cognitive meaning.⁵¹

Imagine a scale at one end of which there are only modulated sounds: humming, perhaps tra la la, where our attention is directed to pitch and rhythm alone, to ordered measured sound. The basic vehicle of language is musical in this way, and the music does not stop when meaning is added to it.⁵² At the other end of the scale, we can imagine language so used as to diminish or conceal its musical side. In between would fall those uses of language in which theatrical and rhetorical and forensic effects are achieved by artful employment of the music of language. In poetry, with its measured lines, its alliteration, its rhymes which organize and group units of meaningful sound, we would have a perfect vocal music to enhance and supplement and in some cases to supplant cognitive meaning. Notice that, since there can be no language without music—sound as vehicle, sense as tenor—the language of philosophy is not and cannot be artless; it can only be good

or bad art. It could be argued that the rhetoric of philosophical language is a consummate art—if the best art is that which conceals itself. Like the music of the spheres, the philosophical use of language might be seen as striving to make the vehicle of its sense inaudible. I shall return to this.

Far more than the meanings of words must be understood if we are to understand what another says. The contemporary notion of a speech-act rings the changes on this truth.⁵³ What we do when we speak is not exhausted by what the words or sentences we say mean: we assert, we reply, we refer to objects, we make a promise. In J. L. Austin's phrase, we *do* things *with* words. The things we say are part of a vast network which must be known by those who would understand us. A sentence does not *express* how it is to be understood. That is why to know a language is to know so much more than what the words and sentences mean. This seems to be part of what Wittgenstein was getting at with the concept of a language-game.

The speech-acts in which some pieces of discourse are embedded may seem so simple as to be transparent or even absent. Thus, if the philosopher's use of language is typically to explain and argue and to make clear the way things are, then the fact that his words refer as well as mean or state answers to presumed questions may seem presuppositions so stable and obvious as to be beneath notice. We might even—wrongly—think that this is a feature of discourse in which indicative sentences predominate. It is when we are saying something which has the effect of promising, marrying, cursing, praying, beseeching, consecrating bread and wine, inducing awe in our listener, on and on, that we are more likely to be aware of the drama which sustains performative utterances and thanks to which the spoken effects the illocutionary act it does.⁵⁴

There have not been wanting philosophers who thought that indicative sentences whose truth or falsity seems easily settled—"the cat is on the mat" is a favored example—are the standard use of language, since such language *seems* to require very

little attention to a dramatic setting to catch its point. Mention of that dramatic setting as a vehicle of which meaning in the narrow sense is the tenor may seem superfluous, even an affectation. This supposedly standard use of language might be better regarded as an achievement and a luxury.

I think of the great opening chapter of the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle puts before our eyes the panorama of human rational activity. He pictures man as immersed in the world and first overcoming his ontological isolation by means of perception in a decidedly practical setting: the beast's concern for survival, for food, for sex. That beast survives in our own perception, but we can, beyond looking-out-for, also just look. This is an adumbration of *theoria*. Aristotle moves on, from outer to inner sense, from experience to art, the emphasis remaining on the practical which is accorded chronological (and thus linguistic) primacy. *Theoria*, like play, requires leisure and can only come when concern for the next meal and whether we will have one is no longer a matter of con-

stant concern. In this perspective, making utterances like "The cat is on the mat" could function as a triumphant and reassuring remark. Or one of warning. The beast is back. If Tarzan says it to Jane, it may be in a husky warning whisper. Decadents like ourselves might utter it to illustrate internal rhyme or iambic trimeter. What "The cat is on the mat" *means* does not decide what we are *doing* when we say it. What does decide? The context. The understood context.

Considerations such as these must affect the way in which we speak of philosophical discourse. If we take the first spectrum, the ranging of discourse in terms of types of argument, it turns out to be impossible to think of philosophical discourse as an unalleviated suite of apodictic utterances, of demonstrative syllogisms, as if philosophy amounted to nothing more than assigning values to the variables in a formal system. For one thing, as Aristotle observed, dialectic is indispensable to all disciplines.⁵⁵ This being the case, we expect to find dialectical considerations permeating any philosophical effort. Added to this

is the fact that rigor is a function of subject matter. It is a mark of the wise man to demand only as much precision as the subject matter allows. We have already indicated how this affects our expectations of metaphysics. An equally striking looseness is to be found in practical philosophy because of the contingency and variability of its subject matter.⁵⁶ In short, the first spectrum having to do with types of argument does not provide us with any single measure of the appropriate style of philosophical discourse.

Earlier I mentioned the variety of genres in which philosophers have expressed, and continue to express, their thought. How is it that Thales and Heraclitus and Plato and Aristotle and Marcus Aurelius and Boethius and Anselm and Hume and Nietzsche and Heidegger can be found classified in the same section of our libraries and anthologized in books which introduce beginners to philosophy? And what is one to make of a Kierkegaard who employed as well as discussed something he called indirect communication? One who has a univocal and narrow concep-

tion of philosophy will have a correspondingly exiguous notion of philosophical discourse. He may be inclined to dismiss the majority of philosophers as simply not making the grade. Someone like Kierkegaard might be dismissed with the observation that he is out to change our lives, not merely to change our minds with an argument. But when did philosophy cease to be an effort to become a certain sort of person?

St. Thomas accepts the classical view of philosophy which saw it as a cluster of disciplines and activities teleologically ordered to the acquisition of wisdom described as such knowledge as men can attain of the divine. This telos is the human good and it cannot be separated from either moral philosophy or its culmination in contemplation. Surely if we ask what the purpose of doing moral philosophy is we must locate that purpose *extra genus notitiae*. The reflections which make up moral philosophy in the classical sense are meant to affect our lives, to guide actions, to aid in the acquisition of character. The human good turns out to be a cluster of

virtues, practical and theoretical, the doing well of the many modes of rational activity of which a human is capable.

You see what I am getting at. If we have a diminished view of what philosophy is, we will have a correspondingly thin notion of what philosophical discourse can be. Plato's warnings about the dangers of dialectic, in his sense of that term, have to do with the dangerous divorce of the play of argument from the point of seeking arguments at all. Philosophy is not a skill which enables us to triumph momentarily over interlocutors. It is not the pursuit of clarity and precision disengaged from the uses and point of clarity and precision. It is not a career. It is a vocation. It is the quest for human perfection in all its amplitude. St. Thomas could not, of course, be content with the pagan conception of what the amplitude of the human good truly is, but that is another point. My present point is that, with a classical conception of philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom, the quest for human perfection, we will expect and welcome a variety of styles and literary genres. Some styles and genres will be

more appropriate to one portion of the philosophical task than to others, but that is just what we should expect.

One of the banes of modern philosophy has been its tragic desire for a single method which would enable us to solve all philosophical problems. Such a desire has as its immediate effect the restriction of what counts as a philosophical problem. And the first casualty of it is the loss of the conception of philosophy as a way of life, as a way of becoming someone, not just an accomplished disembodied thinker, but a fulfilled human being. Its effect on the conception of what moral philosophy is and what it is out to do has been particularly unfortunate, as is being increasingly recognized by such philosophers as Iris Murdoch, Alisdair MacIntyre and G. E. M. Anscombe.⁵⁷ Practical reasoning becomes a problem or is reduced to theoretical thinking. Desire and appetite become surd elements which can ground a calculation but themselves escape appraisal. Philosophy becomes a skill instead of a concatenation of virtues.

4. *The Artful Philosopher*

If the hierarchy of arguments does not serve up the single type appropriate to philosophy, we are saved from seeing the place of poetry in that hierarchy as a dismissal of it. Metaphysics and morals are essential ingredients of philosophy and neither is noteworthy for its apodictic mode of arguing. Curtius suggested that St. Thomas did not so much mean to belittle poetry as to locate it within a far wider frame than was possible prior to the advent of the integral Aristotle in the West. When Thomas speaks of poetry he does so in terms of making, an activity of the practical intellect.⁵⁸ Poetry, as a species of art, is a species of *recta ratio factibilium*: an intellectual skill which produces artifacts, poems. The medium of poetry is language; the poem is an arrangement of words. In one of his essays, T. S. Eliot speaks of the poet at his typewriter. If you feel, as I did when I first read it, a little shiver of distaste at the phrase, perhaps this is due to our image of the poet working with a quill pen, but in any case we

think of the poet fashioning on the page the artifact that is his peculiar opus. He may have composed it in his mind beforehand, more likely he falls into intermittent silences at the typewriter, he may afterward recite from memory what he has written, but it is difficult to speak of the poet at all if not as a writer. The novelist, too, and even more obviously, is a writer. Doubtless you know someone who intends to write a novel but never has; you would hesitate to call him a novelist. Is it possible that he has a novel in his head?

I now draw your attention to an astonishing fact. When philosophers speak of what philosophers do they almost never mention writing. You may think that this is because philosophers are usually teachers, but teaching too is seldom mentioned when the tasks of the philosopher are enumerated. If it were, however theoretical the activity of philosophizing is taken to be, teaching would have to be recognized, as it was by St. Thomas, as a practical activity.⁵⁹ It is an art. So too when the philosopher writes—we all do and far too much—he is practising an art. He is pro-

ducing an artifact, a piece of prose. The activity in which he is engaged bears a strong family resemblance to what the poet is doing at his typewriter. Yet Brand Blanshard's little book *On Philosophical Style* is all but unique.⁶⁰ Why is this?

By and large, when people pursue graduate studies with an eye to the Ph.D., they study everything but teaching, despite the fact that what they aspire to be is *doctores*, teachers. I mean that they do not study it formally. They do study their teachers, witness the activity in which they are engaged, and doubtless, at least in a negative way, gain a sense of how it ought to be done. Graduate students get some training in writing. They produce an enormous amount of papers and eventually a dissertation. Nonetheless, it would not be too much to say that the concentration is almost exclusively on the content of these products. The form is considered a negligible factor, or something that will simply take care of itself. Haven't they been speaking prose all their lives? It is as if the writing is all but inessential to what is being done. This is false.

Try to imagine a Husserl or a Wittgenstein knowing what he thinks without writing in order to find out. The shudder felt before the image of the poet at his typewriter could be matched by picturing the philosopher at his, but in this case not because another writing instrument is envisaged as more appropriate. Yet philosophical thinking is all but inseparable from the art of writing. Sometimes, as in the cases just mentioned, the writing is not for publication. The philosopher is writing *ad seipsum*; the product is inchoative, searching, tentative. Whatever Wittgenstein's intention, most of what he wrote is finding its way into print. One half expects to see an announcement of the imminent appearance of his Baby Book. When the philosopher does write for publication, he is by definition engaged in a conscious art. In this sense, the philosopher is a poet, a maker, an artist. And, as often as not, a bad one.

Earlier considerations suggest ways in which we might describe elements of his art, but they also prevent us from developing a univocal and narrow notion of philo-

sophical style. In saying that a scale could be developed in terms of the music of language, I suggested that poetic discourse draws attention to the music of its medium, of words in juxtaposition and sequence, so that their meanings alone cannot account for the effect the poem has on us. You do not need a philosopher to tell you that this will not deliver up a single set of criteria for a poem's being a poem. There is an almost infinite variety among the poems that have been made already. Who are we to say that the future will only reproduce the past? It is by his craft that the poet puts the music of language to his purposes. If the philosopher too is an artist of language, he must be equally artful in suiting language to his purpose. Here too, as we have seen, it would be wrong to think that his purpose is everywhere the same. Is Ortega's *Meditations on Quixote* philosophical? Is Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* a philosophical work? Anyone who insists that philosophy is always and everywhere engaged in the pursuit of rigorous proof is going to have an extremely meager philosophical library. If we take

a more commodious view and say that philosophical thinking is the amassing of considerations on behalf of a truth, we will have a way of accounting for the vast and multifarious literature which has traditionally been recognized as philosophical. We will even find ourselves constrained to admit as philosophical all sorts of writings which, usually for unexamined reasons, we had not previously thought of as philosophical. Were Chesterton and Belloc philosophers, at least sometimes? I think so. They give me reasons for thinking that something is true and they do so in ways artfully adapted to that purpose.

I have in this lecture examined the relation between philosophy and poetry with an eye to saying something about the philosophical rather than the poetic art. It may seem to you that I have brought philosophy and poetry quite close together, perhaps even too close. Often of course they are manifestly different, but sometimes the distinction blurs. Santayana once wrote a book entitled *Three Philosophical Poets*.⁶¹ It is a book with which it is a delight to disagree and from which it is impossible

not to learn. Consider the following passage from it.

The reasonings and investigations of philosophy are arduous, and if poetry is linked with them, it can be artificially only, and with a bad grace. But the vision of philosophy is sublime. The order it reveals in the world is something beautiful, tragic, sympathetic to the mind, and just what every poet, on a small or on a large scale, is always trying to catch.⁶²

The poet and the philosopher, in the practise of their respective arts, seek to give us, in their different ways, beyond and through their artifacts, a sense of the way things are. It is possible to think of them both as aiming at contemplation.

A philosopher who attains it is, for the moment, a poet; and a poet who turns his practised and passionate imagination on the order of all things, or on anything in the light of the whole, is for that moment a philosopher.⁶³

The thrill we feel in reading that sentence was intended by Santayana. It is a legitimate and integral effect of philosophical writing akin to the geometer's acronymic and triumphant Q.E.D. The philosopher

ignores such aspects of his writing at his peril. Paul Claudel has a devastating essay on Descartes whom he judges to have been a bad thinker because he was a bad writer.⁶⁴ Many philosophers have triumphed over their bad prose but it is a risky gamble.

Let me conclude with a remark on the style of St. Thomas. You will know the variety of genres represented in his *Opera Omnia*: treatises, commentaries, polemical works, disputed and quodlibetal questions, letters, prayers, hymns, *summae*, compendia, biblical exegesis. Both Chenu⁶⁵ and Pieper⁶⁶ have commented on the style of St. Thomas. Pieper begins by comparing it with St. Augustine's and one fears the worst. He stresses the brilliance of style, the verbal grace, the music of Augustine's prose, its personal tone. The contrast with St. Thomas suggests itself. But listen to Pieper.

But at bottom Thomas wishes to communicate something else entirely, and that alone; he wishes to make plain, not his own inner state, but his insight into a given subject. Such an aim does not, of course, exclude grandeur of

form; it does not exclude beauty. And that austere kind of beauty is certainly found in the writings of Thomas. There are numerous indications, moreover, that Thomas strove for such beauty.⁶⁷

Thomas Aquinas as artist. I hope I have prepared you for that description of him. If the tribe of Thomists has served his memory poorly, some of our fault may lie in the fact that we have not imitated him in this.

NOTES

1. Victor M. Hamm, *Language, Truth and Poetry*, Marquette University Press, 1960.
2. "Et inde est quod philosophorum intentio ad hoc principaliter erat ut, per omnia quae in rebus considerabant, ad cognitionem primarum causarum pervenirent. Unde scientiam de primis causis ultimo ordinabant, cuius considerationi ultimum tempus suae vitae deputarent: primo quidem incipientes a logica quae modum scientiarum tradit, secundo procedentes ad mathematicam cuius etiam pueri possunt esse capaces, tertio ad naturalem philosophiam quae propter experientiam tempore indiget, quarto autem ad moralem philosophiam cuius iuvenis esse conveniens auditor non potest, ultimo autem scientiae divinae insistebant quae considerat primas entium causas."—*In Librum de Causis* (ed. Saffrey; Louvain, 1964), p. 2.
3. Gerald Else, *Aristotle's Poetics*, pp. 242 ff.
4. *Poetics*, 1450a15. See my "Metaphor and Fundamental Ontology," in *Studies in Analogy*, Nijhoff, 1968.
5. Gilbert Murray, *The Classical Tradition in Poetry*.
6. *Introduction à la philosophie de la mythologie*, Aubier, Paris, 1945.
7. *Metaphysics*, 995a3-6; *De coelo*, 270b5-9; 248a2-13 and *Meteor.*, 339b19-30.
8. Chapter 25. S. H. Butcher, in *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (Dover Books, 1951), devotes a chapter to Poetic Truth, pp. 163-197.
9. *Sophistical Refutations*, cap. 17.
10. M. LeBlonde, *Logique et Méthode chez Aristote*.
11. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971, pp.

- 1-35; see too Richard McKeon, "Imitation and Poetry," in *Thought, Action and Passion*, University of Chicago Press, 1954, pp. 103-4.
12. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, Princeton University Press, 1953, pp. 220-1.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 57, note 65. Curtius depends on M. Grabmann, *Mitteralterliches Geistesleben*, II, (1936), p. 190.
 16. See my *From the Beginnings of Philosophy to Plotinus*, Volume 1 of *A History of Western Philosophy*, Notre Dame, 1963, pp. 222-8.
 17. I would be less than candid if I did not point out that Aristotle sometimes (*Metaphysics*, 1025b25) divides philosophy into theoretical, practical and productive.
 18. Consider the context of the snippet Curtius took from Grabmann: "Ad tertium dicendum quod septem liberales artes non sufficienter dividunt philosophiam theoreticam, sed ideo, ut dicit Hugo de Sancto Victore in III sui *Didascalon* [sic], praetermissis quibusdam aliis, septem connumerantur, quia his primum erudiebantur, qui philosophiam discere volebant. Et ideo distinguuntur in trivium et quadrivium, 'eo quod his quasi quibusdam viis vivax animus ad secreta philosophiae introeat.' Et hoc etiam consonat verbis Philosophi in II *Metaphysicorum*, quod modus scientiae debet quaeri ante scientias; et Commentator ibidem dicit, quod logicam, quae docet modum omnium scientiarum, debet quis addiscere ante omnes alias scientias, ad quam pertinet trivium. Dicit autem in VI *Ethicorum*, quod

mathematica potest sciri a pueris, non autem physica, quae experimentum requirit. Et sic datur intelligi, quod post logicam consequenter debet mathematica addisci, ad quam pertinet quadri-
vium; et ita his quasi quibusdam viis praeparatur animus ad alias philosophicas disciplinas."—*In Boethii de trinitate* (ed. Wyser), q. 5, a. 1, ad 3m.

19. Curtius, *op. cit.*, p. 217.
20. *In Libros Posteriorum Analyticorum Expositio*, proemium, n. 1.
21. See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book Six, Chapters 3 and 4.
22. *In Boethii de trin.*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3m, in fine,
23. One can see this in the just mentioned commentary on Boethius. In article one, Thomas writes, "Sic ergo speculabili quod est obiectum scientiae speculativae, per se competit *separatio* a materia et motu . . ." Article three begins by saying that "intellectus secundum suam operationem abstrahere possit" but subsequently Thomas restricts abstraction to thinking apart what does not exist apart and separation as thinking apart what does exist apart.
24. *In Libros Posteriorum Analyticorum Expositio*, proemium, n. 3.
25. *Ibid.*, n. 4.
26. *Ibid.*, n. 5.
27. These considerations fall to the *Posterior Analytics*.
28. *Ibid.*, n. 6.
29. "Quandoque vero sola existimatio declinat in aliquam partem contradictionis propter aliquam repraesentationem, ad modum quo fit homini abominatio alicuius cibi, si repraesentetur ei sub

- similitudine alicuius abominabilis. Et ad hoc ordinatur *Poetica*; nam poetae est inducere ad aliquod virtuosum per aliquam decentem repraesentationem."—*ibid.*, n. 6.
30. See my article "The Aesthetics of Jacques Maritain," forthcoming in *Renascence*.
31. "Praeterea, scientiarum maxime differentium non debet esse unus modus. Sed poetica, quae minimum continet veritatis, maxime differt ab ista scientia, quae est verissima. Ergo, cum illa procedat per metaphoricis locutiones, modus hujus scientiae non debet esse talis."—*In I Sent.*, prologus, a. 5, obj. 3.
32. *Ibid.* "Ad tertium dicendum, quod poetica scientia est de his quae propter defectum veritatis non possunt a ratione capi; unde oportet quod quasi quibusdam similitudinibus ratio seducatur: theologia autem est de his quae sunt supra rationem; et ideo modus symbolicus utrique communis est, cum neutra rationi proportionetur."
33. ". . . et, quia etiam ista principia [revealed truths] non sunt proportionata humanae rationi secundum statum viae, quae ex sensibilibus consuevit accipere, ideo oportet ut ad eorum cognitionem per sensibilibus similitudines manuducatur: unde oportet modum istius scientiae esse metaphoricum sive symbolicum sive parabolicum."—*ibid.*, body of the article.
34. *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 1, a. 9, ad lm.
35. See *In I de anima*, lect. 1, nn. 3-6 and *In Boethii de trin.*, q. 6.
36. *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 1, a. 9, c.
37. *Ibid.*, q. 13, a. 1: "Secundum igitur quod aliquid a nobis intellectu cognosci potest, sic a nobis potest nominari. Ostensum est autem supra quod

Deus in hac vita non potest a nobis videri per suam essentiam; sed cognoscitur a nobis ex creaturis, secundum habitudinem principii, et per modum excellentiae et remotiois. Sic igitur potest nominari a nobis ex creaturis . . .”

38. The work is found in the Thomas De Vio Cardinalis Caietanus (1469-1534), *Scripta Philosophica*, edited by Zammit and Hering, Rome, 1952. “. . . de nominum analogia in his vacationibus edere intendo,” n. 1. “Completo in conventu S. Appollinaris, Papiae suburbio, die primo Septembris MCCCCXCVIII,” n. 125.
39. *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 16, a. 6.
40. *In Iam*, q. 16, a. 6, n. VI: “Ad secundum vero dubitationem dicitur quod illa regula de analogo tradita in littera, non est universalis de omni analogiae modo: imo, proprie loquendo, ut patet I *Ethic.*, nulli analogo convenit, sed convenit nominibus *ad unum* vel *in uno* aut *ab uno*, quae nos abusive vocamus analogae . . . Esse ergo nomen aliquod secundum propriam rationem in uno tantum, est conditio nominum quae sunt *ad unum* aut *ab uno*, etc.: et non nominum proportionaliter dictorum.”
41. See my *The Logic of Analogy*, Nijhoff, 1961; the discussion of Thomas in Volume 2, *A History of Western Philosophy, From Augustine to Ockham*, Notre Dame, 1969; and *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, G. K. Hall, 1978.
42. *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 13, a. 3.
43. *Ibid.*, sed contra est.
44. *Ibid.*, c. “Deum cognoscimus ex perfectionibus procedentibus in creaturas ab ipso; quae quidem perfectiones in Deo sunt secundum eminentiorem modum quam in creaturis. Intellectus autem noster eo modo apprehendit eas, secundum quod

sunt in creaturis: et secundum quod apprehendit, ita significat per nomina. In nominibus igitur quae Deo attribuimus, est duo considerare, scilicet, perfectiones ipsas significatas, ut bonitatem, vitam, et huiusmodi; et modum significandi. Quantum igitur ad id quod significant huiusmodi nomina, proprie competunt Deo, et magis proprie quam ipsis creaturis, et per prius dicuntur de eo. Quantum vero ad modum significandi, non proprie dicuntur de Deo: habent enim modum significandi qui creaturis competit."

45. *Summa contra gentiles*, I, cap. 30.
46. *Q.D. de potentia*, q. 7, a. 5, ad 8m: "Similiter consideranda sunt in creaturis quaedam secundum quae Deo simulantur, quae quantum ad rem significatam, nullam imperfectionem important, sicut esse, vivere et intelligere et huiusmodi; et ista proprie dicuntur de Deo, immo per prius de ipso et eminentius quam de creaturis. Quaedam vero sunt secundum quae creatura differt a Deo, consequentia ipsam prout est ex nihilo, sicut potentialitas, privatio, motus et alia huiusmodi: et ista sunt falsa de Deo. Et quaecumque nomina in sui intellectu condiciones huiusmodi claudunt, de Deo dici non possunt nisi metaphorice, sicut leo, lapis et huiusmodi, propter hoc quod in sui definitione habent materiam."
47. Thomas takes over from Pseudo-Dionysius, a three-stage approach to the divine names. ". . . tripliciter ista de Deo dicuntur. Primo quidem affirmative, ut dicamus, Deus est sapiens; quod quidem de eo oportet dicere propter hoc quod est in eo similitudo sapientiae ab ipso fluentis: quia tamen non est in Deo sapientia qualem nos intelligimus et nominamus, potest vere negari, ut dicatur, Deus non est sapiens. Rursum quia sapientia non negatur de Deo quia ipse deficiat

a sapientia, sed quia supereminetius est in ipso quam dicatur aut intelligatur, ideo oportet dicere quod Deus sit supersapiens."

48. See my "Metaphor and Analogy," in *Inquiries into Medieval Philosophy*, ed. James F. Ross, Greenwood Publishing, Westport, Conn., 1971.
49. *Ibid.* pp. 87-90.
50. This spectrum was suggested to me by the essay "The Immediate Stages of the Erotic," in Volume One of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, Princeton, 1959.
51. University of California Press, 1971, "Words Set Free," pp. 121-144.
52. Think of the etymology of *verbum* in *verberatio*. Cf. *Q. D. de Veritate*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 8m.
53. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, 1965; John R. Searle, *SpeechActs*, Cambridge, 1969.
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