



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

BASIC WRITINGS OF SAINT

THOMAS AQUINAS

(VOLUME ONE - I)

RELIGION

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VOLUME ONE - I

CHINA SOCIAL SCIENCES PUBLISHING HOUSE

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

BASIC WRITINGS OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

EDITED AND ANNOTATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY
ANTON C. PEGIS

VOLUME ONE – I

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PREFACE

THE purpose of the present edition of St. Thomas' *Basic Writings* has been to prepare a useful and reasonably clear English text for students. I have not intended to make a completely new translation, but to revise, correct and annotate the edition generally known as the English Dominican Translation of St. Thomas begun in 1911. The cloud of anonymity surrounding this labor was dispelled about ten years ago when, in the Introduction to the third volume of the treatise *On the Power of God*, Father Laurence Shapcote, O.P., is acknowledged as the man "by whom alone the entire work of translation has been done."

It has not been difficult to choose the writings of St. Thomas included in this Random House edition. The First Part of the *Summa Theologica* surely comprises the most widely read group of treatises in St. Thomas. The selections in the second volume also suggest themselves inevitably to anyone who wishes to present St. Thomas' conception of the life of man within the divine government and of the principles, internal and external, which man needs and can find in working out his destiny. The introduction, notes, bibliography and index aim at giving to the text its proper historical setting, and to the reader the means of studying St. Thomas within that setting.

The extent of my indebtedness in the preparation of the text will be recorded in the Introduction. Here I should like to express my thanks to those whose co-operation and generosity have facilitated this work: to the Rev. L.-M. Régis, O.P., now director of the Institut Médiéval Albert le Grand in Montreal, as well as to the Dominican Fathers in Ottawa, for permitting me to use the notes in their edition of the Piana text of the *Summa Theologica*; to the Rev. Gerald B. Phelan, President of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto, and to the Rev. Ignatius Eschmann, O.P., of the same Institute, for kindly checking some references in Averroes, Ptolemy and Jean de la Rochelle; and to my assistant during 1942 and 1943, Miss Mary C. Caffrey, of Hunter College, for her help in the preparation of the notes. To my publisher, Mr. Bennett Cerf, I am particularly indebted for his enthusiasm for St. Thomas Aquinas; and to Mr. Saxe Commins, who has guided me, gently but firmly, during the long process of seeing the manuscript through the press, I wish to express my appreciation of his long-suffering patience.

A. C. PEGIS

July, 1944

INTRODUCTION

I

An approach to the thirteenth century

THERE are some moments in history which have had a crucial significance for philosophy. Thus, the fourth century B.C., when the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle came into existence, was a time of epochal importance. Consider how many philosophical principles and doctrines which have been the common possession and the common debating ground in European thought originated with Plato and Aristotle. So, too, the transition from the twelfth to the thirteenth century was such a crucial historical moment. The exact meaning of that transition, it is true, has not always been clearly perceived. But in our own day there are indications that the middle ages in general and the thirteenth century in particular are no longer painted either in dyslogistic black or in eulogistic white. For, as the result of the labors of historians from Ehrle to Gilson, we are beginning to see the magnitude of the situation produced by the intellectual forces at work in Europe from about 1130 to the end of the thirteenth century.

It is known that during the years 1130-1280 the Latin West came into contact with the works and ideas of the great Greek, Jewish and Arabian philosophers. Here are eminent names which the early middle ages for the most part did not know at all, or knew very imperfectly: Aristotle, Avicenna, Algazel, Averroes, Avicbron, Maimonides, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, Philoponus, Simplicius and Proclus. The early middle ages knew Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation*. By the middle of the twelfth century, the *Phaedo* and *Meno* of Plato were translated into Latin, and we also find the whole of the Aristotelian *Organon* finally in use. This is not a very substantial philosophical literature even when we supplement it with the works of Porphyry, Boethius and Macrobius; for Plato was still known by the allegorical and obscure story of the origin of the world in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle was still known as a logician. The twelfth century made valiant efforts to dispel the obscurity of the *Timaeus* and to transcend the logic of Aristotle. Witness the efforts of Peter Abelard and of the cosmologists at Chartres to arrive at a true world of creatures. Yet it is clear that the twelfth century was philosophically very young; its really dazzling imagination was far in advance of its reason, and its philosophers had the innocence, the daring and the impetu-

ousness of the enthusiastic young men who, in the Athens of Pericles, had been the constant companions of old Socrates. And though this twelfth-century youth might have developed, in its own good time, into a philosophical manhood, just as the fifth century B.C. developed into the fourth, the entry into the Latin world of an enormous Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophical literature rapidly precipitated for Christian thinkers a conflict which no preceding century had fully known or experienced, the conflict between Hellenism and Christianity. A sophisticated Greek reason, with sophisticated traditions and masters, is abroad in the thirteenth century, a reason which could not but be attractive because of its brilliance, dangerous and difficult because of its remarkable development, no less dangerous because of its errors.

The situation in the thirteenth century would have been difficult enough if the issue at stake had consisted merely in the reception of the philosophical treatises of Aristotle and his commentators. For even if the Christian world had been prepared for this intellectual invasion, the first full-dress philosophical meeting between Greek and Christian thought would have been an event of far-reaching consequences. But this meeting took place under circumstances which could only increase the dangers and complicate the difficulties confronting Christian thinkers. Not only did they have to deal with the philosophical ideas of Aristotle and his disciples and commentators, they had also to learn how to become philosophers. What is philosophical truth and what is it to be a philosopher? After all, how could one hold a philosophical conversation with Aristotle, unless one had already mastered the intellectual grammar of philosophy?

For centuries Christian thought had learned, and had meditated deeply on, the grammar of the love of God. But in the presence of Greek philosophy, those who had hitherto spoken the language of supernatural devotion were called upon to learn in addition the natural language of reason seeking to understand the world and itself. Early mediaeval thinkers knew the external world more as worldliness than as a reality. Being devout masters of the interior life, they knew only that world which they could build within their search for the vision of God; and *such* a world was built, not on a knowledge of things, but on the discipline of a loving union with God. Such a world was an interior castle of perfection, a spiritual mirror in which each soul might experience the mystery of the divine love. But when we go from the twelfth century of St. Bernard to the thirteenth century of St. Thomas, we meet the world in all its reality, we meet reason in all its naturalness, and in addition to that Christian wisdom which is a supernatural gift we meet the wisdom, so eminently embodied in Aristotle, which is the connatural work and vision of the human reason. As it has well been said, whereas early mediaeval thought lived on the mysteries of the ways of God to man, the thirteenth century inaugurates the era when the Christian reason sought to discover and to trace the ways of man to God.

This is no minor change that is taking place, nor is the fundamental issue concerned merely with the various crises precipitated by Aristotelianism. There are, no doubt, great external changes to which one could point as signs of the times. Thus, the transition from the twelfth century to the thirteenth is symbolized by the transition from the Paris of Abelard and the Cathedral School of Notre-Dame to the Paris of the University of Paris. We might call this the transition from logic to metaphysics, or from Aristotle as the author of the *Organon* to Aristotle as the author of the *Metaphysics*, the *Physics*, the *De Anima* and the *Ethics*. The transition is likewise symbolized by a development in Christian thought itself. The great thinkers of the early middle ages were sons of St. Benedict, but with the thirteenth century the great thinkers of Europe were the sons of St. Francis and St. Dominic. The change is not a question of the color of a man's habit. It is a question of going from the monastery of St. Anselm of Canterbury and St. Bernard of Clairvaux to the university of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure and Duns Scotus.

But we must look behind these changes in order to reach the basic issue at stake. That issue is the nature of *wisdom*, involving not only a struggle between Christian wisdom and the philosophical wisdom of the Greeks, but also a debate among Christian thinkers as to the conditions governing the reception of Greek philosophy. In the presence of the philosophical wisdom of Plato and Aristotle, which had sought to penetrate to the ultimate nature of reality, Christian thinkers were called upon to discover within themselves a human wisdom in order to understand and to judge the wisdom of the Greeks. For the wisdom of the great contemplative and Benedictine centuries had been a spiritual and monastic wisdom, a wisdom that was the reward of religious perfection, a wisdom that was a gift of the Holy Ghost. Such a wisdom was the great ideal of a Hugh of St. Victor who loved the arts deeply, but who loved man more. The world within which logic served was for Hugh a religious world, and the reason which learned such a logic was the reason of a monk who looked forward, not to philosophy, but to reading and meditation, and to the maturity of being pleasing to God. If Hugh thought of ancient philosophers, it was not as philosophers but almost as religious solitaries. In his eyes, their wisdom was a devout meditation, and had they been Christians they would undoubtedly have been monks, just as their wisdom would have been the flowering of a life of prayer.

It is this cloistered wisdom which the thirteenth century inherited from St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Anselm of Canterbury, St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. Between this wisdom and the wisdom of Greek philosophy there was, not necessarily a conflict, but certainly a diversity. Christian thinkers therefore had to discover and to grow in a new dimension. In brief, in the presence of the Greeks, the problem of Christian thinkers was not only a question of avoiding Greek

errors, it was also a question of discovering the point of view of natural wisdom. In other words, the question was the discovery of the *natural* in its proper specification.

The issue is posed for St. Thomas at the very outset of the *Summa Theologica*. Is theology a wisdom? It is objected that it is not a wisdom because "this doctrine is acquired by study, whereas wisdom is acquired by God's inspiration, and is accordingly numbered among the gifts of the Holy Spirit."¹ To answer this question is, in reality, to reconcile the monastery and Greek metaphysics. Consider St. Thomas' answer:

"Since judgment pertains to wisdom, in accord with a twofold manner of judging there is a twofold wisdom. A man may judge in one way by inclination, as whoever has the habit of a virtue judges rightly of what is virtuous by his very inclination towards it. Hence it is the virtuous man, as we read, who is the measure and the rule of human acts. In another way, a man may judge by knowledge, just as a man learned in moral science might be able to judge rightly about virtuous acts, though he had not virtue. The first manner of judging divine things belongs to that wisdom which is numbered as a gift of the Holy Ghost: *The spiritual man judgeth all things* (1 Cor. ii. 15). And Dionysius says: *Hierotheus is taught not only as one learning, but also as experiencing divine things*. The second manner of judging belongs to this doctrine [theology], inasmuch as it is acquired by study though its principles are obtained by revelation."² To diversify wisdom in this way—to distinguish between learning divine things by experiencing them and learning them by the human understanding of revelation, to recognize therefore the meaning and the method of reason in all its naturalness—is, in its largest terms, the problem facing the thirteenth century. Hitherto Christian thinkers had sought wisdom and understanding in a truly breathless way: in the ecstatic vision of God. But confronted by Greek reason, they began to discover another understanding and another wisdom; and alongside the contemplative and the mystic there began to emerge within Christian thought the theologian and the philosopher, even as alongside the monastery there emerged the university. In truth, this is the moment when the Fathers are joined by the Schoolmen.

That is why the coming of Greek philosophy was bound to be a decisive event. Not only had Christian thinkers to learn the nature of philosophy, they also had to learn it from the very men whose philosophies they were concerned to judge and to assimilate. They began reading Aristotle and Avicenna and Avicbron and they were introduced to a whole world of new doctrines and principles. The philosophers had definite notions on the nature of God, the divine knowledge, the procession of the world from God, the constitution of things, the nature of man and of human knowledge.

¹ S. T., I, q. 1, a. 6, obj. 3 (p. 10).

² *Ibid.*, ad 3 (p. 11, where the references to Aristotle and Dionysius also will be found).

Could Christian thinkers accept Aristotle's doctrine of the eternity of motion? Avicenna's doctrine of the agent intellect? Avicbron's doctrine of universal matter? These doctrines embodied truths which, as the philosophers thought, claimed acceptance because they had been demonstrated. To find them wrong on theological grounds was scarcely an answer. The unity of Christian wisdom demanded that the errors of the philosophers be not merely condemned, but also proved to be errors; just as the same Christian wisdom demanded that the truths of the philosophers be accepted by being proved. For there is no other honor that philosophers need or want than that their demonstrations stand the scrutiny of those who are seeking truth.

Such was the problem that took shape in the thirteenth century. It called for the establishment of a universal Christian synthesis which would receive all the truths that the philosophers had to teach, which would know how to reject and refute their errors, and which could defend the cause of reason on its own ground and with the tools of philosophy.

It was in this world that St. Thomas Aquinas lived.

II

The spirit and significance of St. Thomas Aquinas

If the eminence of a thinker is to be measured by the learning and devotion with which he enters into the problems of his age, then there are many men in the thirteenth century who deserve to be called eminent. However they may differ from one another, William of Auvergne, Roger Bacon, St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas are all occupied with the common problem of the thirteenth century—the problem of incorporating within Christian thought the immense learning and wisdom of Aristotle and his commentators. None of these men can be accused of failing to make a serious and strenuous effort to diagnose the issues which Greek and Arabian learning posed for the thirteenth century; nor can they be accused of reaching easy decisions at the moment of disagreeing with one another on the ideals which should rule their synthesis of Christian thought with Greek and Arabian philosophy. There was every reason for them to seek syntheses of diverse and conflicting inspirations, since the very notion of a universal Christian synthesis, a synthesis which was fully aware of the meaning of wisdom in all its amplitude, was itself a new phenomenon.

The Augustinian synthesis of St. Bonaventure, the Avicennian synthesis of St. Albert the Great, the revelationist synthesis of Roger Bacon—these were genuine attempts to be, each in its own way, universal answers to the problem of the relations between Hellenism and Christianity. The same may be said of the Averroistic synthesis of Siger of Brabant. Two things distinguished St. Thomas Aquinas from his contemporaries, namely,

his unwillingness to accept either Avicenna or Averroes as the official spokesman of Aristotelianism and, what is even more important, his equal unwillingness to consider Aristotle himself as the official spokesman of philosophy. These are, both in themselves and in their consequences, important decisions. By not confounding Aristotelianism with the highly Platonic philosophy of Avicenna, St. Thomas was able to profit by all the criticisms that Aristotle had leveled at the Platonic Forms. By not confounding Aristotelianism with Averroism, he was able to incorporate the Aristotelian physics within Christian thought without, however, falling victim to its eternalistic and necessitarian presuppositions. Finally, by refusing to identify philosophy itself with Aristotelianism, by silently bending Aristotle to the cause of philosophy, and often by freely criticizing him, St. Thomas Aquinas was able to make the Philosopher a worthy vehicle of reason within Christian thought. At a moment when it was needed, if only to stem the rashness of his contemporaries, St. Thomas Aquinas was perpetrating a philosophical revolution by freeing philosophy from the philosophers and by reading the history of philosophy from the absolute point of view of philosophy itself.

Now this revolution goes much further than a simple refusal to follow the ways of his contemporaries. To be sure, it was a refusal. St. Thomas refused to accept either the Avicennianism of William of Auvergne, or the much bolder efforts of Roger Bacon to make Avicennianism the philosophical tool of a conception of revelation which threatened to reduce philosophy to the literal sense of Scripture. He opposed the Avicennian psychology of St. Albert the Great. He refused to identify Aristotelianism with Averroism, whether to espouse it with Siger of Brabant or to damn it with St. Bonaventure. Without any doubt, St. Thomas was a man of many refusals, and that is why he could not but stand somewhat alone. For his decisions were bound to be displeasing to the Augustinian theologians whose Augustinianism he was ruining by his critique of Plato, just as they were bound to be displeasing to the Averroists of the faculty of arts in the University of Paris whose life he threatened by his effort to free Aristotle from Averroes. What, then, lies behind this many-pronged refusal?

In one sense, such a question is really a pseudo-question. If to ask, why did St. Thomas think as he did, means to search out some hidden and ultimate secret in his mind, dominating all decisions, then it most assuredly is a pseudo-question. For if the philosophical significance of St. Thomas is not to be found in his diagnosis of Greek and Arabian philosophy as in an open book, then it simply does not exist. There is no private or esoteric reason why St. Thomas thought as he did, no secret motive, no hidden thesis, no neat formula in which the historian might ultimately entrap him—as though to say: there, *there* is the essence of Thomism! It is an illusion for the historian of philosophy to think in this way. For the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas is not *his* private possession; it is as open as his

criticism of the Greeks, and, like the tantalizing smile of the Mona Lisa, it means as much or as little as that criticism. This is a hard conclusion—especially for the historians. When St. Thomas himself reconstructs the history of philosophy, it is actually *philosophy* whose rise among men he is recording. It is as impossible to understand St. Thomas' reconstruction of that record without seeing the truth on which it depends as it is to miss the smile of reality in the record. The Mona Lisa which is reality is not always enigmatic, rich though it be in mystery. It has its absolute moment of lucidity, and the historian of philosophy can see it in history if he has seen it in reality.

This is to say no more than that St. Thomas saw the history of philosophy in the *present*. He made the thinkers of the past his contemporaries by seeing them in that present which is reality itself. His criticisms of them were no personal quarrel; they were a vindication of their common vision, that very vision which he had and which they had helped him to achieve. And when St. Thomas looked at the history of philosophy in this way he found, amid a variety of opinions and conflicts, of persons and traditions, a basic thread and pattern. This could not but be so. Philosophical truth, as St. Thomas sees it, cannot be a provincial episode in any age. Plato and Aristotle were men as well as Greeks. That is why St. Thomas' efforts to find the basic pattern of the history of philosophy aimed uniquely at making that history philosophically intelligible. It was particularly necessary for the thirteenth century that this be done if Christian thinkers were to assimilate successfully the enormous and complex philosophical literature of the Greeks and the Arabs. There was only one way in which to bring order out of confusion, and that was to discover the nature of philosophy itself. In short, to discover philosophy in the history of philosophy was the only means of voicing for that history its most permanent message. The successful diagnosis of the history of Greek and Arabian philosophy was thus for the thirteenth century an indispensable objective. For, to see the history of philosophy with true philosophical order, to understand, as a consequence, the compelling and permanent motivations of the development of philosophical doctrines in history, *this* was to free the thirteenth century of the danger of historicism in the presence of Greek and Arabian thinkers.

It was no historical accident, therefore, that the more St. Thomas sought the guiding thread of the history of philosophy, the more he turned towards Plato and Aristotle. Plato represents for St. Thomas a philosophical tradition in European thought which had explored in detail the possibilities of one approach to reality—an approach that in St. Thomas' estimation men ought to refuse. On the other hand, Aristotle's opposition to Plato was no mere ancient Greek quarrel, but a permanently human one. For there is a potential Plato in every man, as well as a potential Aristotle; and to see Plato and Aristotle in the image of man is to understand in a philosophical way those virtualities in their doctrines which were already explicit his-

torical realities by the time of St. Thomas Aquinas. Whatever errors they may have in common, it yet remains that Plato and Aristotle represent the two basically different approaches to reality that are philosophically possible. The great concern of Plato had been to give to knowledge a sure and firm foundation in reality. But as St. Thomas looked at Plato, what he saw was that Plato had succeeded, not in founding knowledge in reality, but in putting it there. From this point of view, the Platonic error would consist in supposing that the intellect's picture of reality *was* reality; and to St. Thomas this meant, at once, the destruction of reality and the permanent dislocation of the human intellect in the presence of reality. The great virtue of Aristotle as a philosopher (granting his errors) was that he did not allow the human intellect to impose itself upon the world. In this fact lay the strength and significance of his anti-Platonism. The Aristotelian man has always lived in a genuine world of things; the Platonic man has always been, as a philosopher, the victim of his own intellect. So, at least, St. Thomas leads us to think.

That is why in reducing the history of philosophy to the fundamental issues separating Aristotle from Plato, St. Thomas was saying that that ancient quarrel was a contemporary one for the thirteenth century because, being a universally philosophical one, it was also a permanent crossroad for all philosophers. If it is true, as has been said, that a great painter is one who knows where to sit, it is no less true that a great historian of philosophy is one who knows how to stand on the crossroad of history.

It was the merit of St. Thomas that he contributed decisively to the discovery of that crossroad. There were men in his age who had a vaster acquaintance with Greek and Arabian thought. Roger Bacon and St. Albert the Great had an encyclopedic interest in the past, and an encyclopedic knowledge of it. Yet, learned though they were, both of these men scarcely had a critical understanding of the philosophical significance of the history they otherwise knew so well; and that is why it is not unjust to say that they were lost in the bypaths of their own learning. For philosophy lives on order, and not simply on learning, however vast; which means also that the history of philosophy is an exotic Babel without the discovery of that order. That is why St. Thomas undertook very early to discover the philosophical key to the history of Greek and Arabian philosophy. The historian of St. Thomas is making no remarkable discovery in saying this. On the other hand, he would not be true to St. Thomas if he did not say it, and if he did not recognize how much the philosophy of St. Thomas is a distinctive phenomenon in the thirteenth century.

None of St. Thomas' contemporaries intended to say that philosophy was whatever the philosophers had thought it to be. After all, that would have been the sheerest historicism. Nor did they wish to accept the errors of the philosophers. Nor was the issue even one of discovering the exact meaning of the doctrines of the philosophers. St. Albert the Great, for example,

had a remarkable understanding of the psychology of Avicenna. We must be prepared to go much further than this if we are to see the real significance of St. Thomas. What does a philosophical understanding of the history of philosophy involve? It involves nothing less than the discovery of philosophy itself. Only he who knows philosophy can see the history of philosophy in its light. If there is philosophical truth, then it and it alone is the real location of the meaning of the history of philosophy. The point is not only that the history of philosophy, being the history of ideas, is fundamentally intelligible and demands an intelligible reading. Merely to know the history of philosophy as intelligible is not to be free of error. For philosophy, being the work of the human intellect, reflects its author as well as reality. And it is not at all surprising that philosophers should people reality with what they think it to be rather than with what it is. Still less should it be surprising that the major problems of the history of philosophy center around this fact.

To read the history of philosophy, therefore, not only in its intelligibility but also in its truth, to go beneath the mask of Narcissus that covers so much of that history, such was the aim of St. Thomas. By 1259 St. Thomas knew clearly what he had to do to achieve this aim. He saw that, since the Arabs had learned their philosophy from the Greeks, it was necessary for him to discover Greek philosophy behind Avicenna and Averroes. More than this, since he found so much Platonism in those who were supposed to be the disciples and commentators of Aristotle, he was driven to look more directly into the meaning of Platonism and particularly into the quarrel of Aristotle with it. It is not extreme to suggest that when St. Thomas succeeded in disengaging Aristotle from Platonism and in seeing the full power of the Aristotelian critique of Platonism, he had in his hands the solution to the major issue of the thirteenth century. An Aristotle so disengaged was able to expose the basic errors of Platonism. An anti-Platonic Aristotle—an Aristotle who saves the reality of sensible things, who defends the unity of man, and who refuses to make reality to the image and likeness of the human intellect on the pretext of giving to knowledge a basis in reality—was a veritable defender of Christian thought at the point of its greatest vulnerability, the age-old Platonism of St. Augustine and Boethius.

Seen in this light, the Aristotelianism of St. Thomas Aquinas is perfectly understandable. But this is only part of the story. In the struggle between the Augustinian Platonism of the faculty of theology in the University of Paris and the growing Averroistic Aristotelianism of the faculty of arts, what enabled St. Thomas to oppose his fellow professors of theology without turning to Averroism? Let us agree that an anti-Platonic Aristotle could and did separate St. Thomas Aquinas from Platonism, whether Christian (St. Augustine) or Jewish (Avicenna) or Arabian (Averroes). But what was it that separated Aristotle from Averroes? The classic theses of

Averroistic Aristotelianism—the doctrine of the radical eternity of the world; the denial of an immediate divine providence over the world of sensible things; the doctrine of the unity of the intellect among men and, therefore, the denial of personal immortality—are abhorrent to all Christian theologians. And we have only to read St. Thomas' firmly worded polemical tract, *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists*, in order to see how his usual calm is particularly ruffled by the Averroistic psychology of Siger of Brabant. Now if St. Thomas had thought that Averroes was entirely wrong in his interpretation of Aristotle, his resolute separation from Averroes would be understandable. But one can hardly read the treatise on creation in the first part of the *Summa Theologica* without being convinced that, in St. Thomas' view, the eighth book of Aristotle's *Physics* does intend to argue the eternity of time and motion; and this can mean only that an anti-Averroistic Aristotelianism on this pivotal point must be likewise anti-Aristotelian.

This conclusion is not as confusing as it seems. For St. Thomas is not the first to treat Aristotle in this way. In fact, the general attitude of St. Thomas towards the *Physics*, and particularly towards the force of the doctrine of the eternity of motion, is already suggested in Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. How are we to reconcile the *Physics* with *Genesis*, and the proof of the eternity of the world with that beginning in which God created heaven and earth? From Maimonides St. Thomas accepted and developed a notion which affected in a decisive way the character of the demonstration in the eighth book of the *Physics*. Aristotle's proof, according to this notion, rests on an assumption and holds good only within that assumption. The assumption is that the origin of the world is by way of motion. This means that Aristotle set out to prove the eternity of the world in the *Physics* against those who, accepting the eternal existence of matter, argued that the world came into existence by generation. In other words, what Aristotle is contesting is the propriety of saying that the world is not eternal when it is granted that matter is. For, given that matter is eternal, and that the world comes to be by generation and motion, how is a *beginning* of motion possible? Aristotle is really laboring the impossibility of saying that motion begins by motion. The force of his argument therefore would be that, *if* the world comes to be by generation, then its coming-to-be must be without beginning; for movement cannot begin by being absolutely potential, or it would never exist, nor can it begin by being actual without presupposing a prior movement as its cause. This is another way of saying that it could not *begin* at all; and this must mean that there is no first moment of motion.

Put in this way, the argument of Aristotle really proves, not that the world is eternal, but that, absolutely speaking, it cannot come to be by motion. Now, precisely, how does this affect the doctrine of creation? The answer, surprising as it may seem, is: not at all. Aristotle does not even