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## *Regina artium: Theology* and the humanities

*Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. (Jas 1.17)*

### I

Two topics should be distinguished: that of theology *and* the humanities, and that of a theology *of* the humanities. The first concerns the relation of theological studies to humane studies, and has evoked two sorts of inquiries. In the period before theology embedded itself in the university as a distinct academic discipline, treatments of this topic took the form of questions about the propaedeutic function of the liberal arts, the cycle of studies whose origins lay in the educational culture of antiquity: theology is contemplation of the revealed wisdom of God, the liberal arts are its (potentially unruly) *ancillae*, in the service of a Christian culture at whose centre lay the exegesis of Scripture. As theology acquires some of the properties of an academic discipline, and especially after the growth of the modern research university from the mid-eighteenth century, the question shifts to become one about the relation of theology as one discipline to the humanities as another cluster of disciplines. This more recent way of asking the question, forms of which remain the conventional approach in the modern university, has rarely proved fruitful; the very terms in which the question is asked defeat in advance any theologically satisfactory answer. This, because whether by intention or neglect, the demotion of theology to the status of being one – insecure – discipline alongside (and increasingly harried by) others inhibits

theology from furnishing a comprehensive account of the nature and ends of intellectual activity *in toto*, and so of humane studies.

This leads to the second topic, that of a theology of the humanities. A theology of the humanities is an account of the ways in which humane studies are an element in the moving of created intellect by God. Clarity about the relation of theology *to* the humanities is achieved only when we are able to provide a satisfactory theology *of* the humanities. In formal terms: didascalics – the question of what is to be studied and in what sequence – is a function of metaphysics. Theology supplies such a metaphysics of created intelligence, its origin, nature and ends, grounding the arts of human intelligence in the eternal self-communicative wisdom of God himself. The domain of the intellectual life, theology tells us, is not simply one of education and research, *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft*, and the various disciplinary and curricular forms by which they may be ordered. These are temporalities, whose end lies not wholly in themselves but in serving as instruments of God's illumination of us as he conducts us towards the light of truth after primitive disaster cast us in the shadows.

Why inquire into this second topic? Because all intellectual enquiry and educational practice, all research and teaching and learning, is informed by an underlying account of the intellectual life and its goals, even when our thinking about such matters is not made explicit. Part of the travail of much contemporary higher education (especially in British universities) is the flimsiness and ignobility of its understanding of what it is about, and, consequently, its helpless conformity to wider cultural expectations. Theological reflection can release us from these expectations; indeed, only theology can do so, by speaking of the arts of created intelligence in the light of God who knows all things and makes creatures to know. A theology of the humanities recognizes the place of intelligence within the economy of God's life-giving and restorative love for rational creatures, and locates the ground of that economy in the eternal wisdom of God himself. Theology, that is, sees that the movement of created intellect is not self-bestowed or self-derived, but a movement from above, a gift which comes down.

Theology can release us from the instinctive secularity in which we think of intellectual inquiry in the humanities or any other domain as a matter of free natural spontaneity. In practice, however, theology has often failed to effect the release. In large part this has been because theology has allowed itself to be outwitted or captivated by the very conventions whose malignity it ought to have exposed. Theology has commonly been content to take refuge in a lesser calling, to settle into the reduced role of being one discipline alongside others, and to permit its content to be supplied by natural religion rather than by the wisdom which comes down from the Father of lights. Theology's capacity to explicate and commend a way of thinking about the humanities depends upon its willingness to think out its own understanding of the economy of knowledge, trusting that its exegetical and dogmatic resources are adequate to the task. Most of all, theology is

required to contribute to the flourishing of the universe of letters by pressing the claim – utterly counter-intuitive within the constraints of contemporary research cultures – that the motion of the mind is of God.

It has often proved illuminating to trace the issues by studying epochs in which theology's relation to the liberal arts (or philosophical faculty, as earlier nomenclature had it) became a matter of intense dispute, such as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, or the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The disputes might be studied through key episodes (the foundations of the universities of Paris, Göttingen or Berlin), or key texts (Bernard's Letter 190, Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties*, Schleiermacher's *Kurze Darstellung*). This may be useful in displaying the issues in sharp profile; but it too readily persuades us to consider them in agonistic terms, to think that conflict between the theology faculty and the faculty of arts is the natural state of affairs. To break free of this, we may ponder a text in which the harmony of theology and the arts is considered not merely possible but normal, and in which their occasional conflict is explained in terms of the way in which intellectual activity is caught up in the as yet unfinished redemption of all things. The text is Bonaventure's *Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, written probably quite late in the life of the Seraphic Doctor (perhaps around 1270).<sup>2</sup> It is an exquisite text, an elegantly patterned, economical and spiritually charged articulation of a Christian metaphysics of created intelligence in which all the arts are moved by divine wisdom. Such virtues are in themselves enough to commend the text to our attention. But there is more: both in his person and his particular historical location, Bonaventure stands at a point in the development of theology as a university discipline at which speculative theology has not yet lost touch with positive divinity and retains a sense of theology's contemplative character and of its saturation by Holy Scripture. As an inheritor of the sometimes conflictual reappraisals of the relation of theology to the liberal arts in the twelfth century, Bonaventure offers a theological rationale for the arts which goes far beyond simply registering their utility to the student of Scripture, as had been done earlier in the tradition of Augustine by, for example, Rupert of Deutz or Hugh of St Victor in the *Didascalicon*. Drawing on neo-Platonic antecedents, Bonaventure proposes that the arts are intrinsic to the mind's

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<sup>1</sup>On the earlier period, see, for example, G. R. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology. The Beginnings of Theology as an Academic Discipline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); H. de Ridder-Symoens, ed., *A History of the University in Europe 1: Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 2 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); O. Pedersen, *The First Universities. Studium Generale and the Origins of University Education in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 271–301; on later developments, see now T. A. Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup>Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, ed. Z. Hayes (St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1996); references in the body of the text are to this edition.

ascent to God because they themselves are irradiated by the same divine wisdom in which theology instructs us; the mind's performance is itself a movement by and towards its creator. We shall have cause to question Bonaventure's slight treatment of the mind's estrangement from God. Yet, that aside, he may help derail some of the conventions through which we are kept from making progress – by his uncluttered sense that created intelligence is flooded by divine light, and by the simple fact that it never occurs to him to think that the arts of the mind may be secular.

I proceed by (1) a reading of Bonaventure's text; (2) some reflections on his understanding of the divine economy which undergirds the *Reduction*; (3) some more general comments on the theology of the intellect, the humanities and institutions of humane learning.

## II

The *Reduction* in its entirety is governed by the text from James 1.17 with which it opens: 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.'<sup>3</sup> The citation of a biblical text might easily be passed over as casual or merely decorative; but, as in other writings of Bonaventure on the nature of creaturely knowledge,<sup>4</sup> it serves as the 'authority' for what follows. The citation is not so much the identification of data or the statement of a norm as it is the evocation of the given epistemological and ontological order within which his reflection takes place and by which it is directed. Bonaventure is a positive divine, one for whom the mind's powers are encompassed and accompanied by a gift and light which are not of the mind's invention. Scripture is the presence of this *positum* of divinity, and, as Scripture is announced at the beginning of a passage of reflection, an entire conception of the nature of created intelligence breaks to the surface.

The James text speaks of a single source of light variously refracted. It identifies 'the source [*origo*] of all illumination' but 'at the same time it suggests that there are many lights which flow generously from that fountal source of light' (§1). It is this liberality of emanation which is for Bonaventure fundamental in understanding the nature and operations of the arts of the mind, for each of the arts is illuminated by a light which itself flows from the Father of lights. For Bonaventure, the term 'arts' encompasses both intellectual skills and practices; the arts are the deliberate ways in which rational creatures make material and intellectual culture. Bonaventure offers a fourfold division. First, there is the 'exterior light' or 'light of mechanical art' (§1) which 'sheds its light on the forms of artefacts', by which he means those arts directed

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<sup>3</sup>Inexplicably, the English translation renders *descendens a Patre luminum* as 'from the God of lights'.

<sup>4</sup>Such as the sermon *Christus unus omnium magister* or the fourth and eighth of the *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti*.

towards the production of things ‘external to the human person and intended to supply the needs of the body’ (§2), and so ‘servile and of a lower nature’ (§2) in that they furnish only external consolation and comfort. (It is worth noting by way of parenthesis that a couple of deft sentences from Bonaventure are all it takes to expose the miserable shallowness of our present ‘knowledge economy’ and its incapacity to envisage goods beyond bodily consolation and comfort.) Bonaventure lists seven such arts – his list derives from Hugh’s *Didascalicon*,<sup>5</sup> but is later expanded to cover the whole sphere of material and aesthetic culture as Bonaventure knows it: weaving, armour making, agriculture, hunting, navigation, medicine, the dramatic arts. Second, there is the ‘inferior light’ or ‘light of sense perception’ (§1), in which natural forms are illuminated ‘by the aid of corporal light’ (§3); here Bonaventure offers a brief account of the operations of the five senses derived from Augustine’s *On Genesis* in terms of ‘similarity and correspondence between the sense-organ and the object’ (§3).<sup>6</sup> Third, there is the ‘light of philosophical knowledge’, that is, the light ‘which enlightens the human person in the investigation of intelligible truths’ (§4). This is called ‘interior’ because ‘it inquires into inner and latent causes through principles and learning and natural truth, which are connatural to the human mind’ (§4) – it asks, not just what happens when we produce or sense, but when we engage in intellection. Bonaventure provides a threefold division of this knowledge as rational, natural and moral philosophy, considering respectively the truth of speech, of things and of conduct. ‘Just as we find in the most high God efficient, formal or exemplary, and final causality, since “God is the cause of being, the principle of intelligibility, and the order of human life”, so we may find these in the illumination of philosophy, which enlightens the mind to discern the cause of being, in which case it is physics; or to know the principles of understanding, in which case it is logic; or to learn the order of living, in which case it is moral or practical philosophy’ (§4). Alongside this, Bonaventure offers another anatomy of philosophical knowledge which almost corresponds to the seven liberal arts as studied in the philosophical faculty: rational philosophy divides into grammar, logic and rhetoric, natural philosophy considers physics, mathematics and metaphysics (music is absent and the other *quadrivium* subjects are assimilated to physics and mathematics).

Over and above these three lights there is a fourth, ‘which provides illumination with respect to saving truth’; this is ‘the light of sacred Scripture’ (§5). For Bonaventure, what is illumined by this light is not simply one domain alongside the others. The light of Scripture is ‘superior’, partly because of its object and purpose – ‘it leads to higher things by revealing truths which transcend reason’ (§5) – and partly because of its mode of acquisition – *non per inventionem sed per inspirationem a Patre luminum*, not by invention but

<sup>5</sup>*The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor*, ed. J. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

<sup>6</sup>Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* III.6–7.

by inspiration. But it is also clear that the light of Scripture is superior because it is not simply one of the set of other illuminations of the arts of the mind, but that which affords comprehensive illumination of technical, intellectual and moral culture in its entirety. The illumination given by Scripture pervades and interpenetrates the whole of creaturely knowing; it is its surrounding atmosphere, not simply another set of materials on which to go to work.

Holy Scripture is to be understood according to its one literal and threefold spiritual senses. As Bonaventure's text proceeds, the latter three senses come to the fore as basic to the process of reduction. The allegorical sense is that 'by which we are taught what to believe concerning the divinity and humanity' (§5), namely, the eternal generation and incarnation of the Word; the moral sense is that 'by which we are taught how to live' (§5), that is, 'the pattern of human life' (§5); and the anagogical sense is that 'by which we are taught to cling to God' or, 'the union of the soul with God' (§5).

At the beginning of the *Reduction*, then, Bonaventure presents the several arts of knowing, hierarchically ordered from technical to philosophical, as acts in which creatures illuminate the world only insofar as their acts are themselves illuminated. Only as acts of knowing are bathed in light can they be the means of seeing our way around the world or of giving ourselves a truthful picture of it. This is why the light of Holy Scripture is not commensurate with the other lights, but the light upon which their particular lights depend.

[A]s all these lights have their origin in a single light, so too all these branches of knowledge are ordered to the knowledge of sacred Scripture: they are contained in it; they are perfected by it; and they are ordered to the eternal illumination by means of it. Therefore all our knowledge should come to rest in the knowledge of sacred Scripture, and particularly in the anagogical understanding of Scripture through which any illumination is traced back to God from whom it took its origin (§7).

It is precisely this process of tracing all knowledge back to God [*refertur in Deum*] – scarcely imaginable by us in a culture in which the finality of all things in God has ceased to stir the mind – which is the heart of the project of *reductio*.

Bonaventure announces that project in the simplest terms: 'Let us see . . . how the other illuminations of knowledge are to be traced back [*reduce*] to the light of sacred Scripture' (§8). We may pause a moment over the term 'reduction' itself.<sup>7</sup> To offer a 'reduction' on the various arts of human

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<sup>7</sup>On the wider metaphysical and cosmological setting of *reductio*, see C. Bérubé, *De la philosophie à la sagesse chez Saint Bonaventure et Roger Bacon* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1976), pp. 265–72. More generally, see G.-H. Allard, 'La technique de la "reductio" chez Bonaventure', in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, vol. 2 (Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1974), pp. 395–416.

knowledge is to secure their unity on the basis of a principle which is at once metaphysical, cosmological and theological or spiritual, namely that all created realities, including created acts and arts of knowing, are caught up in the process of coming from and returning to God the supreme good. This circular history, the economy of emanation from and return to the point of origin, is what creaturely being is, and it is what is known when creatures know themselves and other created realities. Created being and knowing are not a mere random assemblage of disparate entities and operations; they are at their deepest level one thing, by virtue of their origin and term in God. A 'reduction' of the history of creation isolates for thought and contemplation the single rhythm which underlies all its disparate manifestations. Creatures have their being as they are conducted back to God; their form *is* this movement of return, a movement made explicit in theology or Holy Scripture. Reduction of the arts to theology is, therefore, a matter of plotting the arts as undertakings within the comprehensive movement of created being. The reduction brings to consciousness this unified process. It answers the questions: 'What do we know when we know?' and 'What do we do when we know?' by referring them to a prior question: 'In what movement do creatures participate?' Answering this question in terms of a scriptural economy of the coming forth of creation from God and its return to him, reduction thinks of creaturely being and knowing as more than phenomenal, more than surface motion. It is worth pointing out that this is not 'reductive' in the bad sense – not, that is, a repudiation of the 'surface' of created being and activity, a refusal of exteriority or the triumph of pure intelligibility over the merely visible.<sup>8</sup> Rather, reduction discloses what such surfaces are: created beings and acts, phenomenal beings and acts with depth, and so, in their very visibility, *signs*.

Most of Bonaventure's text is given over to undertaking such a reduction in the three realms illuminated by the first three lights – the realms of mechanical art, sense perception and philosophical knowledge. It would be laborious to trace all three in detail, and for our present purposes we may restrict ourselves to one example, namely, the reduction of rational philosophy to theology (§§15–18).

As his reduction proceeds, Bonaventure gives an analysis of the elements of a particular art, that is, of some act which we might call 'intelligent making'. The aim of the reading is to make us aware of the deeper motion of this particular art, and so to show how the operation of human intelligence signifies the active presence of divine wisdom. This is accomplished by applying the techniques of spiritual exegesis, thereby disclosing the allegorical, moral and anagogical layers of meaning within the art under discussion. By so doing, reduction shows that this art participates in, and in its own operations manifests, the wider history of God's dealings with

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<sup>8</sup>For worries along this line, see Allard, 'La technique de la "reductio"', p. 403.

creatures, the most salient features of which are the incarnation of the eternal Word, the moral life and the union of the soul with God. How, then, may 'divine wisdom' be 'found in the illumination of rational philosophy' (§15)? Rational philosophy concerns itself with speech, the topic dividing into inquiries into the person of the speaker, the delivery of speech and its purpose. In considering the speaker, the reduction unearths the allegorical weight of that with which rational philosophy is concerned. Speech signifies a 'mental concept' (§16); the process of signifying is to be understood as communication of what has been interiorly conceived through the assumption of external form. The 'inner concept is the word of the mind and its offspring which is known to the person conceiving it. But in order that this concept becomes known to the hearer, it assumes the form of the voice; and by means of this clothing, the intelligible word becomes sensible and is heard externally. It is received into the ear of the listener and yet does not depart from the mind of the person uttering it' (§16). And, the reduction continues, 'It is something like this that we see in the eternal Word. God conceived the Word by an eternal act of generation . . . but that the Word might be known by human beings who are endowed with sense, the Word assumed the form of flesh, and "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", while remaining "in the bosom of the Father"' (§16, ET altered).

Again, in considering the delivery of speech, we may discern 'the pattern [*ordo*] of human life' (§17). Speech fulfils its nature when it displays 'fittingness [*congruitas*], truth [*veritas*] and style [*ornatus*]' (§17). And '[c]orresponding to these qualities, all acts of ours should be characterised by measure, beauty and order so that they may be measured by reason of modesty in external works, rendered beautiful by purity of affection, and ordered and adorned by uprightness of intention' (§17). Thus, the *moral* sense of rational philosophy. Finally, in relation to its purpose, speech aims 'to express, to instruct and to persuade' (§18) – ends which can only be achieved by correspondence to the soul. Speech 'never expresses except by means of a likeness; it never teaches except by means of a convincing light; it never persuades except by power; and it is evident that these effects are accomplished by means of an inherent likeness, light and power intrinsically united to the soul' (§18). Hence, rational philosophy harbours an anagogical meaning: 'As nothing can be known perfectly by means of speech except by reason of a power, a light, and a likeness united to the soul, so, too, for the soul to be instructed in the knowledge of God by interior conversation with the divine, there is required a union with the one who is "the brightness of the divine glory and the image of the divine substance, upholding all things by the word of divine power"' (§18).

It would, doubtless, be easy to dismiss this and the rest of Bonaventure's reduction as fanciful, no more than a set of quaint analogies between the various arts and the truths of Christian dogma, morals and ascetics. But that response may well indicate our instinctive preference for the literal and the secular – for surfaces beneath which nothing lies – which reading Bonaventure

ought to unsettle, because for him human culture is *layered*. Put differently, for Bonaventure there is no literal or natural meaning and activity which is not illuminated by and ordered towards the wisdom of God. The arts, therefore, are an economy of production, communication and speculation constituted by that wisdom, and their very performance is suffused by and drawn towards the light of God. 'It is evident', he concludes,

how the manifold wisdom of God, which is clearly revealed in sacred Scripture, lies hidden in all knowledge and in all nature. It is clear also how all divisions of knowledge are servants of theology, and it is for this reason that theology makes use of illustrations and terms pertaining to every branch of knowledge. It is likewise clear how wide the illuminative way may be, and how the divine reality itself lies hidden within everything which is perceived or known. And this is the fruit of all the sciences, that in all, faith may be strengthened, God may be honoured, character may be formed, and consolation may be derived from union of the spouse with the beloved, a union which takes place through charity: a charity in which the whole purpose of sacred Scripture, and thus of every illumination descending from above, comes to rest – a charity without which all knowledge is vain because no one comes to the Son except through the Holy Spirit who teaches us all the truth, who is blessed forever (§26).

With this in place, we may take a step back and look at some underlying principles of the *Reduction*. First, Bonaventure's text is informed throughout by exegesis and doctrine. We have already noted the role played by the opening quotation from the Letter of James in giving explicit direction to the argument. No less important is the dogmatics, even though in this severely economical text dogmatic principles are largely implicit (they could be reconstructed from elsewhere in Bonaventure's writings: the sermons, the collations on the gifts of the Spirit and on the hexameron, the *Sentences* commentary). The project of reduction presupposes a theology of God and creatures, and of the order of their relations enacted in the economy of creation and salvation through which their union is perfected. For Bonaventure, the sheer liberality of the triune creator is rooted in his infinite blessedness in himself, such that he gives life not out of need for self-completion, but out of love. This liberality takes form in the divine Word, who, by virtue of his eternal generation shares the fullness of the divine essence and *sapientia* and so is the origin, principle and cause of all created wisdom; and God's liberality is shed abroad among creatures by the Spirit. The creatures of such a God have their being in his infinite resourcefulness, and their temporal course in all its activities is the realization of union with God. Contemporary readers of mediaeval texts, eager to discover in them a metaphysics of participation prior to the fateful separations of the fourteenth century, are sometimes prone to treat their exegetical and dogmatic content in too cursory a way and to turn them into exercises in metaphysics. Bonaventure certainly offers

a metaphysics of the arts of intelligence; yet it is a metaphysics in which Trinity, Christ the teacher and the Spirit who gives all good things are not illustrative but primitive.

Second, the theological metaphysics of the arts of intelligence which Bonaventure sets out concerns the graced character of created being and its operations, by virtue of which creatureliness is a *sign*. To be a creature is to be ‘anticipated . . . by divine grace’, *praeventus . . . divina gratia*.<sup>9</sup> In terms of the arts of the mind, this means that intellectual acts are not in themselves illuminative but illuminated, flooded by the light of God, who alone is the *origo omnis illuminationis*, the *fons lucis* (§1). In the collation *De dono intellectus*, Bonaventure argues that the mind enlightens only as it is enlightened. ‘Every act of the intelligence comes from that fount of intelligence’;<sup>10</sup> the mind’s activity requires ‘a brightening through a divine influence’,<sup>11</sup> or ‘the assistance of a superior and higher light’.<sup>12</sup> To change the image somewhat: creaturely intelligence takes place in the ordered double movement of divine giving and creaturely return. ‘If’, Bonaventure says in *De dono scientiae*, ‘the Lord is a great teacher and grantor of gifts . . . it is proper that we run back to that fount to pursue illumination’.<sup>13</sup> Notice that what Bonaventure is describing is not simply some sort of spiritual preparation for intellectual work, but rather the intellect in act: the work of the mind is the act of running back to God as *doctor*, *grantor* and *fons*. This is why intelligence and prayer cannot be prised apart, the latter made into pious preliminaries to aid the mind in directing itself along the right course. ‘No one can illumine the hearts of men except him who knows the consciences of men’; and so, ‘in the beginning, let us beg God’.<sup>14</sup> That act – *in principio rogemus Deum* – is the basic act of intelligence.

All this shows that the distinction of uncreated and created being and intelligence is entirely natural to Bonaventure, and is not effaced by what he has to say in the *Reduction* about how divine wisdom lies hidden within the arts of human intelligence and about how such arts may serve in the return of creatures to God. Bonaventure, of course, makes much use of the notion of exemplarity in his theological metaphysics of creation. Created realities are external expression of the divine Word, the internal divine self-expression who contains within himself all the divine ideas which are the exemplars of creatures. Leaving aside the question of whether this is too closely wedded to an emanationist understanding of the act of creation, we may

<sup>9</sup>Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (St Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002) Prologue 4.

<sup>10</sup>Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (St Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008) VIII.6.

<sup>11</sup>Bonaventure, *Collations* VIII.15.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. VIII.20.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. IV.1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. VIII.1; see also IV.1; *Itinerarium*, Prologue 1, I.

nevertheless note how decisive exemplarity is for the project of reduction. Objects of knowledge, knowing subjects and their acts of knowing all stand in relation to anterior eternal ideas by which they are informed, and are most fully understood within that relation, which is essential, not accidental. A reduction of the arts of the mind is a raising to consciousness of the relation which these arts bear to their exemplars in God's own wisdom and knowledge, and of the path along which they move to their end in God.

The arts, we might say, *signify*.<sup>15</sup> They are not pure acts of will or of instrumental reason, because in their very intentionality and productiveness they are illuminated by and directed towards divine light. We find this reduction oddly forced (can sense perception really be an analogy of eternal generation and incarnation? we ask), lacking Bonaventure's conviction that the surface does not exhaust the reality of any creaturely act. The phenomenal surface is significative, disclosing its origin and term. What seem random associations are indications of the ontological depth of creatures and their acts, which bear a reference to the *fons* at a level beyond that of consciousness or intention. All sorts of cultural activities – making shelter and food, commerce, drama, arts of speech and speculation – are disclosive once they are 'read' within the comprehensive context of creatureliness as a movement of divine love. In performing such acts, creatures do more (but not *less*) than what presents on the surface; as they do these things, they are moved by and move towards God.

Theology's primary task in the reduction of the arts is to draw attention to this movement, because theology is the knowledge of the ways of God and creatures which is proffered in Holy Scripture. Bonaventure does not think of theology as one discipline or art alongside others, partly because he is writing at a time when the conception of theology as a discrete field of inquiry is still coalescing, more profoundly because he does not consider theology to be a special science treating a special set of transcendent objects alongside or over against disenchanting 'natural' objects. Theology is a comprehensive account of all things in the light of God. There is no conflict of the faculties between the arts and theology, because theology is not a 'faculty' but a culture, a mode of thought, prayer and holiness which permeates all acts of intelligence.<sup>16</sup> Further, the reduction is a refusal of the secularity of the arts, for there is no secular realm, no entity or act or art which has its being and motion in itself and is knowable apart from God.

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<sup>15</sup>On the work of human intelligence as sign, see J. Milbank, 'The Conflict of the Faculties. Theology and the Economy of the Sciences', in M. Nation and S. Wells, eds, *Faithfulness and Fortitude. In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), pp. 39–57; Davies, *The Creativity of God*; R. Williams, *Grace and Necessity. Reflections on Art and Love* (London: Continuum, 2005).

<sup>16</sup>By contrast, in distancing his account of Bonaventure from Gilson's, C. Cullen tends to separate theology and philosophy more sharply: C. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

There is no pure nature and no pure reason; but there is nature, and reason, and so there are the human arts.

### III

Bonaventure invites us along what have become unfamiliar paths in thinking about the relation of theology and the humanities. On the one hand, a reduction of the arts to theology suggests that theology need not cast itself as a homeless discipline, hovering on the edge of the academy and wondering how to secure a place for itself; from its exegetical and dogmatic stores, theology is capable of providing a sort of ‘first philosophy’ of the life of the mind, a description of the condition and operations of created intelligence. On the other hand, a reduction of the arts to theology declines to consider the intellectual arts as wholly profane phenomena, which must either be repudiated as necessarily hostile to theology or affirmed in their independence as the triumphant revenge of the philosophical faculty. Within the terms of Bonaventure’s theocentric humanism, there need be no final contest between the arts and theology, because ‘reduction’ affirms and orders both, setting them within a vision of created being and its illumination by God. ‘The university of things is the stairway to ascend to God.’<sup>17</sup>

Before moving to some wider issues, a doctrinal question looms over the project of reduction. What is the place of reconciliation in Bonaventure’s economy of human intelligence? What would become of the reduction of the arts if, alongside the image from James of the breadth of divine illumination we set the Pauline notion that what distinguishes the gentiles from the church is ‘the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart’ (Eph. 4.17f.)? Is Bonaventure’s reduction seriously shaken by the realities of the futility, darkness, alienation, ignorance and callousness of fallen intelligence? Does the distinction between the church and the nations extend into the liberal arts?

The *Reduction* itself is quite generously optimistic, even perhaps a little naïve, about the way in which created intelligence participates in the gathering of all things back to God. The economy of the arts which Bonaventure sketches is not redemptive, and there is little reference to sin. It should immediately be recognized that elsewhere Bonaventure does address the effects of the fall on the realm of the arts. In the collations on the gifts of the Spirit, Bonaventure writes that ‘the first brightness, that of philosophical knowledge, is great according to the opinion of worldly men; but it is easily eclipsed unless a man himself beware the head and tail of the dragon. If anything is interposed between himself and the Sun of justice, he will suffer

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<sup>17</sup>Bonaventure, *Itinerarium* I.2.

the eclipse of stupidity.<sup>18</sup> The forms of the mind's fallenness against which Bonaventure warns his readers are the classical sins of the Augustinian tradition: pride;<sup>19</sup> presumption;<sup>20</sup> ingratitude;<sup>21</sup> disorderly, concupiscent appetite which captures the intellect,<sup>22</sup> arresting the movement of knowledge and so failing to press ahead to the proper term. 'Philosophical knowledge is the way to the other sciences but he who wants to stand still there falls into darkness.'<sup>23</sup>

There is more here than protest against the pretensions of Averroism: we are touching deep currents of Bonaventure's thought. Yet it is curious that they do not find their way into the *Reduction*, with its emphasis on the breadth of the illuminative way. It is a great accomplishment of the *Reduction* to counter the secularity of the arts of intelligence by setting them within the realm of God's resplendent glory. The corollary weakness is inattention to the fact that the glory which illumines all things is not only that of the Father of lights, of Christ the teacher and of the Holy Spirit, but also the glory of the *mediator*. The one by whom the mind is moved to return to God is the one who in the sphere of knowledge has overwhelmed and invalidated a regime of vanity, untruth and self-absorption, and is now renewing the spirit of the mind (Eph. 4.23). Christ is not only *doctor* and *magister* of the mind, nor only the mover and governor of intellectual motion, but also its *priest*, overcoming ignorance and alienation (Eph. 4.18).

To begin to see how the movement of reconciliation extends into the arts of the intelligence, we may briefly recall Augustine's later reflections on the liberal arts in the *De doctrina christiana* and the *Confessions*, well beyond his post-conversion commitment to the value of philosophical retreat and cultivation of the arts which produced the *Soliloquies*, *De academicis*, *De beata vita* and *De ordine*.<sup>24</sup> Brooding over the period in his late twenties

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<sup>18</sup>Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* IV.12.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. IV.12.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. VIII.1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. VIII.2.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. VIII.3–5, 7.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. IV.12.

<sup>24</sup>I prescind from engaging the long-standing debate over Augustine's place in the transition from classical to Christian culture, generated by H.-I. Marrou in *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: Boccard, 1938). In the first edition of his work, Marrou portrayed Augustine as the central figure in the passage from classical intellectual culture (with the liberal arts at its centre) to the culture of mediaeval Christianity. Marrou himself began to call his own argument into question some years later in the second edition of his book, as did others, notably I. Hadot in *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1948), who argued that Augustine did not simply appropriate a settled and systematic classical educational ideal because there was no such ideal for him to take over (for example, from Varro) until at least Cassiodorus in the sixth century. More recent interventions in the debate include C. Harrison, *Augustine. Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); K. Pollmann and M. Vessey, eds, *Augustine and the Disciplines. From Cassiciacum to Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); K. Paffenroth and K. L. Hughes, eds, *Augustine and Liberal Education* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

when he wrote a now-lost work *On the Beautiful and the Fitting*, Augustine asks himself in the *Confessions*:

What did it profit for me that I could read and understand for myself all the books I could get in the so-called 'liberal arts', when I was actually a worthless slave of wicked lust? I took delight in them, not knowing the real source of what it was in them that was true and certain. For I had my back toward the light, and my face toward the things towards which the light falls, so that my face, which looked towards the illuminated things, was not itself illuminated.<sup>25</sup>

For Bonaventure the arts of intelligence are intrinsically illuminated by the Father of lights: the necessity of the conversion and sanctification of those arts and their agents does not break the surface of the *Reduction*. Augustine does not share this serenity, experience having made him quite bitterly aware of the potential for wickedness in the practice of the liberal arts and the rhetorical culture of which they formed part – of the pervasiveness of disordered intellectual appetite, of the terminating of the arts in the knower, of ingratitude.

Whatever was written in any of the fields of rhetoric or logic, geometry, music or arithmetic, I could understand without any great difficulty and without the instruction of another man . . . yet for such gifts I made no thank offering to thee. Therefore my abilities served not my profit but rather my loss, since I went about trying to bring so large a part of my substance into my power.<sup>26</sup>

For Augustine it is not enough to think of the arts as divinely irradiated means of journeying to God, because fallen creatures incorporate the arts into a different and wicked movement of vanity and carnal absorption. In part this is because Augustine does not detach the arts from the way in which the educational arrangements in which they are embedded are a social embodiment and instrument of corruption. His curt summary of his nine years as a teacher of rhetoric runs: 'I was deceived and deceived others, in varied lustful projects.'<sup>27</sup>

Where Bonaventure has a quite tranquil sense of the way in which the arts of intelligence are caught up in the mind's ascent to God, Augustine is a good deal more guarded, as is indicated by his particular use of the image of despoiling the Egyptians in the *De doctrina christiana*:

Like the treasures of the ancient Egyptians, who possessed not only idols and heavy burdens, which the people of Israel hated and shunned, but

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<sup>25</sup>Augustine, *Confessions* (London: SCM, 1955) IV.15.30.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. IV.1.1.

also vessels and ornaments of silver and gold . . . which on leaving Egypt the people of Israel, in order to make better use of them, surreptitiously claimed for themselves . . . similarly all the branches of pagan learning contain not only false and superstitious fantasies and burdensome studies that involve unnecessary effort, which each one of us must loathe and avoid as under Christ's guidance we abandon the company of pagans, but also studies for liberated minds which are more appropriate to the service of truth . . . these treasures . . . must be removed by Christians, as they separate themselves from the wretched company of pagans, and applied to their true function, that of preaching the gospel.<sup>28</sup>

This points us in a different direction from Bonaventure's calmly ordered universe of the human arts. Augustine's appeal to the image of the exodus is at once more social, more conflictual and more discriminatory. The Christian picks over the arts to see what can be salvaged, what must be cast aside by the people of God in the flight from captivity.

Augustine's ambiguity concerning the place of the arts in the Christian and scriptural way of life, his sensitivity to the friction between the divinely instituted culture of the church and the vanity of pagan inventions, comes across in Letter CI, written to an inquirer who had asked for the revised text of Augustine's *De musica*. Augustine speaks at length of the spurious liberty of the liberal arts:

For to men who, though they are unjust and impious, imagine that they are well educated in the liberal arts, what else ought we to say than what we read in those writings which truly merit the name of liberal, – 'if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' For it is through him that men come to know, even in those studies which are termed liberal by those who have not been called to this true liberty, anything in them which deserves the name. For they have nothing which is consonant with liberty, except that which in them is consonant with truth; for which reason the Son himself hath said: 'The truth shall make you free.' The freedom which is our privilege has therefore nothing in common with the innumerable and impious fables with which the verses of silly poets are full, nor with the fulsome and highly-polished falsehoods of their orators, nor, in fine, with the rambling subtleties of philosophers themselves, who either did not know anything of God, or when they knew God, did not glorify him as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; so that, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and to creeping things, or who, though not

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<sup>28</sup>Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* II.40.60.

wholly or at all devoted to the worship of images, nevertheless worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. Far be it, therefore, from us to admit that the epithet liberal is justly bestowed on the lying vanities and hallucinations, or empty trifles and conceited errors of those men – unhappy men, who knew not the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, by which alone we are ‘delivered from the body of this death,’ and who did not even perceive the measure of truth which was in the things which they knew.<sup>29</sup>

Yet even here there is a vestige of Augustine’s earlier esteem for the liberal arts as means whereby, prompted by divine wisdom, we may ascend to truth:

Forasmuch, however, as the powers belonging to numbers in all kinds of movements are most easily studied as they are presented in sounds, and this study furnishes a way of rising to the higher secrets of truth, by paths gradually ascending, so to speak, in which Wisdom pleasantly reveals herself, and in every step of providence meets those who love her, I desired, when I began to have leisure for study, and my mind was not engaged by greater and more important cares, to exercise myself by writing those books which you have requested me to send.<sup>30</sup>

The restlessness which sets Augustine apart from Bonaventure is partly explicable as the reaction of one who, educated to assume a place among the governing élite, found himself precipitated by conversion and ecclesiastical vocation into a new Christian culture which was apostolic and scriptural, rather than rhetorical, in character.

Men uninstructed in any branch of a liberal education, without any of the refinement of heathen learning, unskilled in grammar, not armed with dialectic, not adorned with rhetoric, but plain fishermen, and very few in number, – these were the men whom Christ sent with the nets of faith to the sea of this world, and thus took out of every race so many fishes, and even the philosophers themselves, wonderful as they are rare.<sup>31</sup>

A society with such a foundation, one whose authoritative text lacked literary sophistication and was, indeed, vulgar, could have at best a circumspect attitude to the arts in which Augustine had earlier immersed himself and from which he had expected much. Moreover, the exercise of his pastoral office required Augustine to direct himself not only to a cultural élite but to

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<sup>29</sup>Letter CI.2.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. CI.3.

<sup>31</sup>Augustine, *City of God* XXII.5.

the uneducated, reinforcing the incommensurability of the Christian society and high culture.

Yet none of this need call into question the project of reduction, even if it chastens complacent versions of it. For Bonaventure, theology describes what, according to Holy Scripture, the world is: the temporal passage of created being back to its creator. This history is irreducible to other terms, and so there can be no profane understanding of the arts of the mind, because creatureliness is basic. For Augustine, too, the arts of the mind are not secular, but of divine institution; but they are caught up in wickedness, and discriminating use of them – most of all in the interpretation of the Bible – depends on their being broken away from captivity to vice.<sup>32</sup> The setting for the arts is therefore not simply that of emanation and return but rather the paschal mystery, figured in baptism and repeated in sanctification. 'In the symbol of the cross every Christian act is inscribed.'<sup>33</sup>

## IV

Finally, some more general extensions of what has been found in Bonaventure.

First, a theology of the humanities derives from a more general theology of the intellectual arts – that is, from a theological portrayal of what happens when the reconciled creaturely intellect is at work. That portrayal does not just pick out certain practices, habits or virtues of rational creatures; it speaks of intellectual activity in terms of its origin and end in God. The chief concern of a theology of created intellect is with the hidden inner movement which is the setting for all that the rational creatures of God undertake, including their intellectual dealings with the world in the humanities. What we have found in Bonaventure is a description of the work of the intellect as an element in the economy of God's illuminating presence and gift, an activity in the domain in which all things come down from the Father of lights. To study the humanities is to participate in this movement, to inhabit this domain.

Why is it that we so often find it such an awkward business to articulate the life of study in these terms? Partly, of course, it is because teachers and learners are usually preoccupied with tasks more immediately to hand, and do not often pause to consider the depth of the undertaking in which we are enlisted. But there is a more malign aspect to this failure to set our intellectual activity in relation to God. We have been schooled, both by long-standing cultural convention and by the perversity of fallen nature, into settled antipathy to the theological idea that the movement of the mind derives from

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<sup>32</sup>See *On Christian Doctrine* II.39.58.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. II.40.62.

God. By instinct, we do not consider that God supplies the mind's motion, preferring to associate rational acts with absolute spontaneity or originality. Talk of divine motion – of God's providential and redemptive acts in which he sustains, governs, purifies and directs the intellectual life – seems to us to threaten rational autonomy and responsibility. In the sphere of the intellect, we customarily tell ourselves, we must be our own prime mover, our own first cause. As with moral freedom, so with the life of reason: to speak of God is to take something away from ourselves.

Such oppositions ought not be admitted. There is every good reason for us to renounce the vicious habit which imagines that divine illumination and human intellectual activity are competitive forces, and that the work of the mind must be attributed *either* to God *or* to ourselves. God does not move the mind as an archer propels an arrow, for what God moves is precisely the proper power of the intellect in its dependent but real spontaneity; God moves *from within*, not simply as a causal force from without. Yet in order to grasp this, we have to detach ourselves from the assumption that the *natural* life of creatures is *secular* life, only natural if cordoned off from God's presence and action. Further, we have to retrieve some pieces of theological doctrine which were second nature to Bonaventure but which have drifted to the margins: teaching that createdness is humanly basic, encompassing everything that we do, and teaching about God's presence in the Spirit, sustaining all things in their created integrity.

It is worth adding that this account of the life of the intellect has considerable critical potential. One of the services which it may perform is to offer resistance to the instrumentalizing of the life of study, as it is found in, for example, an understanding of education in which the chief end of intellectual training is the development of the practical skills required for the acquisition of wealth. Study of the humanities is not this; it is, rather, one of the ways in which ignoble appetite is chastened, in which the reconciled children of Adam may find occasions for sanctification by coming to see the human cultural world as suffused by God's illuminating and redemptive judgement.

Second, how does this theology of the intellect shape the practice of studying the humanities? Theology is not competent to make direct recommendations about how the humanities are to conduct their business: it may not, for example, enable us in any straightforward way to decide between empirical and interpretative social science, or between formalism and historicism in literary studies. Rather, theology approaches such matters indirectly, posing questions about the origin and end of humane studies, asking about the movement to which these arts belong. As it contemplates the ways in which all things are taken up into the history of redemption, theology tries to indicate where we are, who we are, in what we are engaged, when we study; and it tries also to depict the intellectual virtues which are fitting in the presence of God the creator

and reconciler. Theology says, in effect: humane studies are creaturely arts, ways in which we inhabit in a reflective way the domain in which God has placed us. And so, for example, though it would be intolerable for theology to prescribe methods of historical study, theology may legitimately articulate an understanding of created and redeemed time, on the basis of which the historian may make determinations about the nature and goals of historical inquiry, and about the methods most suitable to those goals.

Yet theology may only *try* to articulate the nature of the humanities. The queen of the arts is gentle and modest, not a high-handed dominatrix. To be sure, theology is an exercise of apostolic intelligence from which we may legitimately expect instruction about what it means to be and think as a creature: there is no reason for theology to be embarrassed about voicing its understanding of the humanities. But – like all the sciences – theology participates in our fallen condition; as ectypal, not archetypal, knowledge, as science *in via*, not *in patria*, it knows only in part, and can lay no claim to comprehension of the wisdom of God, because its learning is not finished. And yet, again, what theology has been given to know, it knows, and what it knows it seeks to commend.

Third, what are the entailments of this theology of the intellect for the ways in which institutions of higher education are to be understood? It is of course the case that a metaphysics of the arts of the mind is not a sufficient condition for the realization of intellectual life; but it is a necessary condition. Academic institutions are places of thought, including thought about themselves. Members of such institutions who persist in raising issues about the nature of intellectual activity often encounter resistance in the form of amusement, boredom or bureaucratic exhaustion. The prudent Christian response is dogged cheerfulness in asking the really important question: What is the place of higher studies, including study of the humanities, in the redemption of created intelligence after the fall?

By way of an answer, the Christian offers – as we have seen both Bonaventure and Augustine to do, albeit in rather different ways – an account of the life of the mind which talks about human intellectual arts by talking about the creative, revelatory and redemptive works of God. Like any other human activity, the intellectual arts need ordering according to their natures if they are to flourish and be perfected. Such ordering, including the disposition of intellectual fields and of their several modes of inquiry, is not a matter of management but of wisdom, and wisdom is a gift of Spirit. Thus Aquinas:

He who knows the cause that is simply the highest without qualifications . . . is called wise without restriction, since he is able to judge and set in order all things by God's rules. He comes to such judgements through the Holy Spirit: *a spiritual man is able to judge the value of everything*, says

Saint Paul, because . . . *the Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even the depth of God.*<sup>34</sup>

Aquinas's confidence is striking. The Spirit makes it possible to judge and set in order all things by God's rules.

This is why theology asks the question of the place of the academy in the redemption of created intelligence with the expectation of a positive answer. Laments over the ruined state of the modern academy abound, some more immoderate than others.<sup>35</sup> Theology will certainly register the symptoms and feel a tug of conversion away from an institution in defect, because of the academy's capacity to embody and inflame the appetites of disordered intelligence. But to lament is not to despair but to grieve over the failure of some created reality to achieve its perfection; despair stultifies, whereas lament issues in truthful judgement. One initial judgement will be that to Christian faith the disarray of the arts of intelligence is not unexpected, because Adam's children can no more educate and inquire without vanity than they can govern without war. But even here theology should go further, having good reason to consider the academy as within the domain of God's redemptive rule, the domain not only of condemnation but also of forgiveness, vocation and sanctification. Recall Kuyper's derivation of three rules from the application of the principle of *palingenesis* to the cultural and scientific realm: 'All existing things are in ruins . . . there is a means by which these can be restored . . . in part they are already restored.'<sup>36</sup> Different institutions exist at different points in the history of redemption, differing circumstances evoking sharper or softer judgements. But in making such discriminations, theology is not at liberty to consider that the history of redemption has faltered, or all it will see will be decadence: the triumph of secular science, instrumentalization or irony. Theology may not demonstrate 'too little confidence in the one who extends his dominion

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<sup>34</sup>Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIaIIae 45.1 resp.; emphasis upon wisdom as supernatural gift is strikingly absent from the 'public theology' essays of D. Ford on the topic, collected in *Shaping Theology. Engagements in a Religious and Secular World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) and *Christian Wisdom. Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>35</sup>Among theologically informed recent accounts, see J. Milbank, 'The Conflict of the Faculties'; G. D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square. Church, Academy and Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); S. Hauerwas, *The State of the University. Academic Knowledge and the Knowledge of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); A. MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities. A History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (London: Continuum, 2009). T. A. Howard's superbly drawn history *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern University* is deeply instructive for contemporary issues, as is (from a cultural-historical point of view) W. Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>36</sup>A. Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 219.

also over the kingdoms of this earth, nor expect too little by way of signs of this lordship'.<sup>37</sup>

Such hopeful judgements do not arise from nowhere, but from minds and souls formed in patience by divine instruction. They apply a theology of intellectual virtue (and the vices by which it is opposed) derived from exegetical and dogmatic reasoning, directed by contemplation and prayer, and attentive to the past through which we may imagine different and better ways of ordering the affairs of the intellect (thought is often set free by memory). All this, in turn, means that a condition for a Christian understanding of the humanities is the flourishing of theology.

Grasping this requires us to recover a conception of theology as more than simply one more discipline or faculty: as the encompassing ambience of the arts of the mind, through whose practices the natures and ends of creatures and their activities are brought to explicit awareness.<sup>38</sup> Theology inquires, not into one set of objects, but into all possible objects of inquiry relative to God as origin and end. This is why theology may be called the queen of the arts, though that appellation only makes sense against the background of a now lost understanding of the hierarchy of studies in which theology is the point at which the divine illumination of all things is made an object of contemplation.

Theology's vocation to articulate the encompassing context for intellectual inquiry is at present occluded. For a well-ordered theology which reads the history of the world as the history of redemption, there is nothing surprising about this state of affairs. Theology has long experience of the non-evidentness of its principles, and finds instruction in the gospel as to why this is so, and how to conduct itself in advance of a resolution. Composed in this way, theology can approach the matter of its place in the wider universe of letters with a measure of tranquillity. Anxiety, belligerence or self-deprecation in view of the indifference or hostility of other disciplines are unnecessary and self-defeating. They concede too much to currently ascendant models of learning, reinforcing their projection of themselves as possessed of perennial validity; they encourage neglect of theology's contemplative practices and over-refinement of other skills in order to assimilate theology to profane science; they proceed as if theology's social home in the communion of the saints is deficient and in need of supplementation by the academy.

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<sup>37</sup>Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/3, p. 122.

<sup>38</sup>Theological enthusiasm for 'interdisciplinarity' is a poor substitute for a theology of the life of the mind. Not only does it tend to generate material which is theologically jejune, and often mannered, opaque and artificial; it also assumes the very thing which ought to be in question, namely, that theology is a discipline. A sounder approach would be to subsume 'interdisciplinary' engagements under theology's apostolic vocation.

Theology can exist and flourish within or without the academy, and has done so in a large number of ways. No institutional locale is wholly adequate; each exposes theology to a set of vices as well as affording opportunities. What is required in all circumstances is a profound sense that theology is moved, summoned and equipped by its object; prudence in making arrangements about how to live in exile in the unfinished economy of redemption; and hope, for 'we can take courage from the fact that, in the life of the mind as elsewhere, there is always more to hope for than we can reasonably expect'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities*, p. 180.