

**JACQUES MARITAIN AND PAUL MURRAY'S THOMISTIC INSIGHTS FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS ON HOW TO 'EAT THE BOOK'**

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**Abstract**

*Truth is the object of the intellect. Intellectual life is understood in the Dominican tradition as a good in itself. As Paul Murray puts it, 'Dominicans in every age tend to insist that there can be no serious awakening to God without an awakening in the mind.' In his article, 'Eat the Book: Study in the Dominican Tradition', Murray touches on several things necessary to succeed as an intellectual in our time. These insights are very profitable to young scholars, who are often aspiring for assiduous learning. This article explores how people like St Dominic, St Thomas Aquinas, Jacques Maritain and Murray have understood the Catholic intellectual tradition and valued education and their contributions towards it, especially on how to approach the sacred order of things. Questions like, how is study an intellectual and how is spiritual discipline conceived within the Dominican Order are the heart of this work. Hence, the paper attempts to discuss the indispensable value of reading and the disposition necessary for the acquisition of knowledge. This will enable moral living, spiritual purification, and wisdom that embodies the harmony between faith and reason, prayer and study, intellect and sanctity.*

**Keywords:** Intellect, Study, Vocation, Truth, 'Eat the Book'

**1. Introduction**

At a time when the habit of deep reading is rapidly eroding due to excessive reliance on information technology, artificial intelligence, and digital tools in the process of knowledge acquisition, the task of promoting academic discipline has become increasingly pronounced. As Muyiwa Falaiye notes

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in his foreword to *Philosophy: A Guide for Beginners*, ‘in a world where the culture of reading is fast disappearing, encouraging students and the general public to turn to books can be a herculean task. The task becomes even more herculean if the book is a philosophy book.’<sup>2</sup> Falaiye’s observation projects a worldwide intellectual illness in which reliance on technological convenience often seems to replace the arduous but rewarding labour of study. It is within this framework that the rigorous tradition of Dominican study, particularly as articulated by St. Dominic and St. Thomas Aquinas, offers a countercultural and necessary model of scholarship. This paper aims at navigating the Dominican tradition of study, with particular reference to the place of the human intellect, the knowing process as conceived by Aquinas and echoed in the lived example of St. Dominic himself. The inquiry raises some key questions: how did St. Dominic perceive the value of study in relation to preaching and combating heresy? How is study as an intellectual and spiritual discipline conceived within the Dominican Order? What is the Thomistic understanding of the intellect, and how should young scholars, particularly seminarians interested in intellectual life, approach studies and see studies as part of their mission to defend and proclaim the Catholic faith?

The method employed in this paper is primarily expository. It focuses on the values and practices of study in the Dominican tradition. Primary sources, such as the writings and life of St. Dominic, the scholarly works of Aquinas, especially his famous *Letter to Brother John*, in which he outlines principles for effective study.<sup>3</sup> And Aquinas’ integration of prayer with intellectual pursuit teaches us that study is not a purely rational activity but a form of spiritual service too.

The Thomist, Jacques Maritain’s *Three Essays* offers practical and spiritual insights on philosophical scholarship that would serve as a coping mechanism for initiates in philosophy overwhelmed by the demands of deep thoughts. Maritain’s pedagogical and moral insights within the

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<sup>2</sup>Muyiwa Falaiye, foreword to *Philosophy: A Guide for Beginners*, by Anselm Jimoh (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2014), vii.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Letter to Brother John on the Method of Study*, in *The Aquinas Catechism: A Simple Explanation of the Catholic Faith by the Church’s Greatest Theologian*, trans. Joseph Collins (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2000), 237–239.

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Dominican tradition of study propose a balanced model for approaching philosophy (and other disciplines) today, not just as academic disciplines, but suggests the moral disposition needed for philosophical inquiry, and how the beginner in philosophy can find guidance.<sup>4</sup>

### **2. Study as A Sacred Duty**

The early life and mission of St. Dominic de Guzmán reveal a profound reverence for learning, which he held as a sacred activity. As Paul Murray recounts, quoting Jordan of Saxony's *Libellus: On the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers*, Dominic's 'eagerness to imbibe the streams of holy scripture was so intense and so unremitting that he spent whole nights almost without sleep, so untiring was his desire to study... he was able to penetrate the mysteries of difficult theological questions with the humble understanding of his heart.'<sup>5</sup> From the outset, Dominic's intellectual commitment was not merely academic; it was spiritual. His learning was out of love: love for God, the Church, and the salvation of souls.

This vision for study as both an intellectual and spiritual discipline became a defining feature of the Order of Preachers. As early as 1215 or 1216, Dominic was already attending the theology lectures of Alexander Stavensby in Toulouse, accompanied by some of his early followers.<sup>6</sup> Recognising the importance of sound theological formation, Dominic later sent brothers to the renowned centres of learning at Paris and Bologna, establishing an enduring Dominican presence at the centre of medieval intellectual life. This emphasis on rigorous and doctrinally rooted study was later enshrined in the Dominican Constitutions, which state:

Studies enable the brothers to ponder in their hearts the manifold wisdom of God, and equip them for the doctrinal service of the Church and of all people. They ought to be all the more committed to study because in the Order's tradition, they are called to stimulate people's desire to know the truth.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Jacques Maritain, *Three Essays* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1952), 15–19.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: A Drink Called Happiness* (London: Burns & Oates, 2006), 19.

<sup>6</sup> Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 41.

<sup>7</sup> *Constitutions of the Order of Preachers* (Rome: General Curia of the Dominican Order, 2010), LXXVII.

Furthermore, the constitutions emphasised that this sacred task demands discipline, the full application of one's intellectual faculties, and the careful study of the Church Fathers and the works of theologians. Dominican study integrates faith, reason, and culture, encouraging a full engagement with philosophical wisdom to deepen the understanding of divine revelation. Among all Dominicans, Aquinas stands out as the Order's model of scholarly virtue. The constitutions themselves affirm this:

For the Church and particularly for the Order of Preachers, the best teacher and model for the accomplishment of this noble task of studies is St. Thomas whose teaching the Church commends because of its enriching influence on the intellectual life of the brothers.<sup>8</sup>

Aquinas, building upon the legacy of Dominic, embodies the harmony between faith and reason, prayer and study, between intellect and sanctity. His scholastic method was not only rigorous and systematic but also deeply contemplative. His famous prayer before study reveals this integration: 'Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom...grant me a keen understanding, a retentive memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally.'<sup>9</sup> For Aquinas, knowledge was a form of participation in God's light. His intellectual vocation was inseparable from his theological and spiritual mission: to explain, defend, and transmit the truths of the Catholic faith with clarity and charity.

Furthermore, Jacques Maritain, a 20th-century philosopher deeply rooted in Thomistic vision, revisited this vision of studies in Aquinas in a world that had become increasingly sceptical of truth as found in religion and metaphysics. In his *Three Essays*, Maritain speaks to the existential struggle of the beginner in philosophy, reminding the reader that true philosophical inquiry requires not only intellectual effort but also moral and spiritual purification. He advocates for what he calls the 'purity of the

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<sup>8</sup> *Constitutions of the Order of Preachers* (Rome: General Curia of the Dominican Order, 2010), LXXXI.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Prayer Before Study," in *The Aquinas Prayer Book*, ed. Robert Anderson and Johann Moser (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2000), 25.

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gaze,' an interior disposition that allows the intellect to see reality as it is, unclouded by pride or prejudice.<sup>10</sup>

For the beginner, especially in today's distracted culture, Maritain offers both a cautioning off the problem and a remedy. He insists that philosophy is not merely a critical discipline, but a way of life, echoing Aquinas and Dominic. Philosophy, rightly pursued, disciplines the mind to love wisdom and disposes the soul toward truth. Maritain's emphasis on interiority, contemplation, and moral asceticism reflects the very ethos Dominic sought to instil in his brothers.

It follows that, from Dominic's sleepless nights of Scripture study, to Aquinas's silent contemplation in front of the Eucharist, to Maritain's modern articulation of the philosophical vocation, we see a continuous Dominican thread of study as a sacred duty. Study is a labour not for prideful gain or of ambition, but of love offered for the salvation of souls and the building up of the Church. At a time when intellectual life is often fragmented or trivialised as not necessary, the Dominican philosophical tradition calls us back to the integrity of mind and heart, where learning becomes 'a sacred activity.'

### **3. Truth as the Object of the Intellect**

Aquinas and Maritain, though separated by centuries, converge in their understanding of the human capacity to know and the nature of philosophy as a search for the truth. For Aquinas, the intellect is a natural capacity for thought, a gift bestowed by God, giving him the ability to grasp reality through reasoning, understanding, and judgment. Aquinas insists that the intellect is not the very essence of the soul, as it is in God, whose essence is His act of knowing, but rather one of its powers, distinct from other faculties such as sensation and nutrition. Aquinas writes:

The intellect is a power of the soul, and not the essence thereof; for the essence of the soul is compared to its power as that which is potential to that which is actual. Now it is manifest that the soul is compared to the intellect as that which is potential to that which is actual; for the intellect is not always

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), 13–14.

in act, but sometimes in potentiality. Therefore, the intellect is a power of the soul, and not its essence.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike God, who is His own act of understanding, man participates in truth through a faculty ordered toward it, and this faculty, though immaterial, operates within the embodied condition of the unity of body and soul. Aquinas' insistence on the immateriality of the intellect is not just an abstract metaphysical claim but the foundation of human dignity and freedom. Because the intellect is immaterial, it is not limited to the singular and particular, as sensation is, but can transcend the material to grasp universals, causes, and incorporeal realities such as justice, truth, and wisdom. He remarks elsewhere:

The operation of the intellect has its origin in the senses; yet, in the present state of life in which the soul is united to a body, our intellect cannot actually understand anything except by turning to the phantasms.<sup>11</sup> This shows both the dependence of intellect upon the senses, which is the material cause of knowledge or its starting point and its transcendence over them in its ability to universalise and abstract.

Maritain, in his work *An Introduction to Philosophy*, presents philosophy as an intellectual quest, ordered not merely to knowledge for its own sake but to truth as such:

Philosophy is a quest for wisdom. It aims to reach, by the natural light of reason, a knowledge of the ultimate causes of all things, the highest and most universal principles. It is an intellectual endeavour, free yet rigorous, that seeks to discern and articulate the underlying structures of reality.<sup>12</sup>

In the face of modern and postmodern challenges, Maritain believes metaphysics provides the foundation of philosophical inquiry, disposing human reason toward the causes and principles that structure being itself.

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province,

I, q. 79, a. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1931), 1.

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Philosophy, then, becomes the disciplined exercise of the intellect, applying rigorous rational analysis in the quest for truth. In line with Aquinas' famous distinction between the passive and active intellects, it is evident that there are truths learned and truths received through grace. The passive intellect, likened to a blank slate or *tabula rasa*, receives intelligible forms abstracted from sense data, while the active intellect, which is the 'a participation in the divine intellect', actualises potential knowledge by abstracting universals from particulars. Aquinas explains:

Just as the senses are not always in act, but sometimes in potentiality, so too the intellect is sometimes in act and sometimes in potentiality. And so that it may be reduced from potentiality to act, it needs an agent, which makes things intelligible in act, by abstracting the intelligible species from material conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Knowledge, then, proceeds as the universal is drawn from the particular, enabling man to move from the multiplicity of sense experience to the unity of intelligible truth. For Aquinas, this process culminates in contemplation: The contemplative life is more excellent than the active, because contemplation pertains to that which is best in man, namely the intellect, and it has its end in itself, since the end of contemplation is truth.<sup>14</sup>

Maritain, on his part, insists on the autonomy of philosophy as distinct from theology; he sees philosophy as a bridge to theology, preparing the way by establishing rational foundations upon which faith may be built. In *The Range of Reason*, he makes clear:

Philosophy prepares the way for theology, but does not usurp its place. By reason alone philosophy can attain to certain truths of the highest order, yet faith elevates reason beyond its limits, perfecting rather than destroying it. Philosophy is autonomous, but not sovereign.<sup>15</sup>

Yet for both Aquinas and Maritain, philosophy cannot be reduced to speculation. Aquinas stressed that study itself is a form of asceticism, a

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<sup>13</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 79, a. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 180, a. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason* (New York: Scribner's, 1952), 24.

purification of the mind ordered to truth. As Sertillanges reminds us in *The Intellectual Life*:

The life of the mind demands silence, recollection, and an inner purity. Study, when pursued in this spirit, is not idle curiosity but a sacred labour, whereby the soul ascends towards truth. What we have won by study and considered carefully must be guarded with fidelity, against both forgetfulness and the scruples of unnecessary doubt.<sup>16</sup>

Maritain, too, insists that philosophy has ethical dimensions. It must not remain detached but should engage questions of morality, justice, and human flourishing. He declares:

The work of philosophy is not purely speculative. It has an ethical vocation: to guide the person toward the good, to illumine conscience, and to provide foundations for the just ordering of society. Without this moral dimension, philosophy risks becoming sterile.<sup>17</sup>

In both Aquinas and Maritain, the unifying theme is that truth is not only known but also lived out daily, loved, and proclaimed. Aquinas insists that the intellect's end is not mere admiration of truth but truth as known, possessed, and enjoyed.<sup>18</sup> Maritain echoes this when he insists that philosophy confronts humanity with ultimate questions of meaning, purpose, and transcendence, disposing human reason toward God as the fullness of truth.

Ultimately, the harmony between Aquinas and Maritain lies in their shared conviction that intellect and philosophy find their final rest in God. Aquinas teaches that in this life the intellect knows through phantasms, but in the next (heaven) it will be elevated by divine light to behold God directly in the beatific vision.<sup>19</sup> Maritain, reflecting on this destiny, affirms: The vocation of philosophy is not exhausted in the natural order. Its true grandeur is to prepare the soul for wisdom, which is not merely knowledge

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<sup>16</sup> A.G. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 49.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, 42.

<sup>18</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 16, a. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 12, a. 1.

but union with the living God. Thus philosophy, in its highest calling, becomes a handmaid to contemplation and a pathway to the eternal.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4. On the Vocation of the Young Philosopher in Our Time**

The vocation of philosophy as Maritain understood it is nothing less than the search for truth within the concreteness of human existence. Maritain constantly returned to Aquinas' conviction that truth is the adequation of the intellect to reality (*adaequatio intellectus et rei*), and that the human person, by virtue of his intellectual nature, is ordered toward truth as to his natural end. Philosophy, therefore, is not a pastime activity, but a vital necessity of human existence, providing clarity and coherence to a world increasingly fragmented by scientism, relativism, and scepticism. For Maritain, the philosopher ought to respect the integrity of reason and wisdom capable of guiding both individual conscience and the broader culture. Maritain's thought is steeped in the metaphysical vision of Aquinas, for whom the intellect is the noblest faculty of man. Aquinas posited that 'the end of the intellect is truth. The good of the intellect is the truth about the first principle, namely God, from whom all things derive, and in whom they find their consummation.'<sup>21</sup>

Maritain argues that philosophy is inseparable from its metaphysical foundation. He claims that any philosophy that abandons metaphysics reduces itself to mere analysis of concepts or technical problem-solving, failing to answer the deepest questions of existence. Philosophy must remain 'the wisdom of first principles,' for only then does it fulfil its noble vocation. As Maritain write:

Philosophy does not create truth. It uncovers, it lays bare, and it renders intelligible those truths which are inscribed in the very structure of reality. It is the task of the philosopher to follow the light of the intellect to its ultimate horizon.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Scribner's, 1959), 18.

<sup>21</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.3, a.8.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1931), 15.

In an age dominated by empiricism and positivism,<sup>23</sup> Maritain saw clearly the danger of divorcing philosophy from metaphysics and theology. Philosophy, though distinct from theology, is nonetheless oriented toward it, for faith perfects reason without destroying the autonomy of reason. The philosopher, working ratiocinatively, can prepare the way for theology by ridding the mind of error and articulating rational foundations for belief. This is why he referred to philosophy as a ‘prelude to wisdom,’ a bridge from human reason to divine revelation. In his work *The Degrees of Knowledge*, he affirmed: ‘Philosophy, while distinct from theology, is not closed in upon itself. It is open, by its very nature, to the supernatural, for truth itself is one, and every ray of the created intellect seeks the sun from which all light proceeds.’<sup>24</sup> Yet Maritain was insistent that philosophy must not remain an esoteric discipline imprisoned in itself. He states that it must engage with life, culture, and society. Philosophy has an ethical dimension because the truths it uncovers bear directly upon what human beings ought to do. From Aquinas’s doctrine of natural law, Maritain defended the idea that moral principles are inscribed in human nature and discoverable by reason. The philosopher thus has a duty to reveal and clarify these principles, to defend the dignity of the human person, and to resist ideologies that degrade or instrumentalise man. As Aquinas noted, ‘the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature’s participation in the eternal law,’<sup>25</sup> and Maritain, extending this insight into the twentieth century, making it the centre of his philosophy of human rights and democracy.

Maritain’s insistence on the unity of knowledge also flowed directly from his Thomism. For him, the fragmentation of modern intellectual life was a symptom of deeper metaphysical confusion. Philosophy, rightly understood, integrates the various domains of human knowledge: science, art, politics, and theology into a coherent whole. He believed that philosophy must act as a ‘guardian of universality,’ resisting the reduction

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<sup>23</sup><https://www.britannica.com/topic/positivism/Logical-positivism-and-logical-empiricism> accessed on 11th Feb. 2026

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.91, a.2.

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of truth to empirical fact or subjective preference. In *The Philosopher in Society*, another Philosopher, James Schall captured this well. He says: The true philosopher, in Maritain's sense, is never content with partial truths. He presses on toward the whole, knowing that to neglect the higher dimensions of reality is to betray the vocation of reason itself.<sup>26</sup>

Equally important was Maritain's conviction that philosophy is dialogical. It is not a monologue but a centuries-long conversation, stretching from Plato and Aristotle through Aquinas to modernity and beyond. Every genuine philosopher enters into this dialogue, responding to predecessors, correcting errors, and handing on truth to future generations. This dialogical character reflects the communal nature of the human reason, for we seek truth not in isolation but in community. In this sense, Maritain saw philosophy as an influence on cultures, shaping the moral views of societies and guiding their causes for justice. At the same time, Maritain did not forget the existential aspect of philosophy. Philosophy speaks not only to the intellect but to the whole human person, who longs for meaning and transcendence. As he put it in *Existence and the Existent*:

Philosophy is not satisfied with what appears; it seeks that which is. And in seeking being itself, it confronts the mystery of existence, which stirs the heart as well as the mind, summoning man to discover his place in the cosmos and his orientation toward the Absolute.<sup>27</sup>

This existential character is precisely what makes philosophy indispensable in modern life. In a world threatened by nihilism, consumerism, and other 'isms,' the philosopher serves as a witness to meaning. Philosophy, rooted in metaphysics and open to theology, gives man the tools to resist hope, and by doing so resist despair. It also leads to a rediscover of his dignity as a creature made in the image of God. Essentially, Jacques Maritain's Thomistic understanding of philosophy portrays it as a quest for truth grounded in metaphysics, animated by reason, open to theology, and oriented toward the good of both the individual and society. Philosophy, therefore, must clarify concepts,

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<sup>26</sup> James V. Schall, *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>27</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948), 41.

defend ethical truths, unify the sciences, engage culture, and sustain dialogue across ages, cultures and traditions. It must remain faithful to its existential significance, guiding human beings toward meaning and, ultimately, toward God. In Maritain's own words: 'to philosophise is to live in the presence of the eternal, to question time in the light of that which is timeless, and to walk, step by step, toward the fountain of all wisdom.'<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the philosopher in modern life is not a detached academic from reality, but a servant of truth and wisdom. In resonance with Aquinas, Maritain reminds us that philosophy is both speculative and practical, both contemplative and ethically active, with the task of leading man out of confusion into clarity. It is this vocation that makes philosophy not only relevant but indispensable in our age.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Dominican tradition of intellectual life is rooted not in arbitrary studies or inquiries. Its origins are trace to a devoted scholar who spent his nights wrestling with truth in prayerful study. St. Dominic de Guzmán, whose sleepless vigils were filled with Scripture and the writings of the Fathers, shows forth the conviction that study is never an end in itself but a way of life and a path to holiness. Sources on the life of St. Dominic reveal that he would keep 'all night in church, so that he scarcely took any rest,' pouring himself over sacred texts and pleading with God for light to preach effectively to others.<sup>29</sup> In Dominic's case, studying became a form of asceticism, a purification of mind and heart, a kind of fasting of the intellect, preparing him to become a vessel of truth. His studies were inseparable from prayer and mission. Thus, at the beginning of the Dominican charism of preaching, study was defined as a spiritual necessity, an offering of the intellect to God for the sake of preaching salvation.

In Aquinas, the intellect is ordered to truth as its perfection: *verum est bonum intellectus*, for according to him, truth is the good of the intellect.<sup>30</sup> Unlike God, whose intellect is His very essence, the human intellect is a

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<sup>28</sup> Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Ferdinand Joret, *Dominican Life* (London: Mediatrix Press, 1937), 615.

<sup>30</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

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faculty of the soul, a power that must be cultivated through experience, reasoning, and grace.<sup>31</sup> Aquinas insists that 'truth is the end of the intellect, and the end of a thing is its perfection or good.'<sup>32</sup> Thus, the act of knowing is not a neutral exercise but a fulfilment of the human spirit. He emphasises the immateriality of the intellect, grounding its capacity for abstraction, self-reflection, and free choice.<sup>32</sup> This capacity makes humans capable of knowing not only sensible things but also incorporeal realities such as: wisdom, justice, and God himself.<sup>33</sup> For Aquinas' mind, study and contemplation are the highest human activities, ordered toward God, who is 'the ultimate end of all our knowledge and desire.'<sup>34</sup>

Studies, as 'a loving gaze upon truth'<sup>35</sup> finds its embodiment in Dominic's lived conviction that study is not simply academic acquisition but is ordered toward contemplation, which is both intellectual and spiritual perfection.

Jacques Maritain, on his part, considers philosophy first and foremost a quest for truth, 'an intellectual endeavour that seeks to discern and articulate the underlying principles and causes that govern the world.'<sup>36</sup> He upholds metaphysics as the foundation of philosophy, affirming with Aquinas that no true philosophical inquiry can avoid the question of being itself.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Maritain insists on the role of reason as the guiding principle of philosophy: rational analysis, conceptual clarity, and critical inquiry are essential in pursuing wisdom.<sup>38</sup> Philosophy as he states serves as a *praeambula fidei*, preparing the ground for faith, clarifying the concepts by which theology can speak of God, and establishing the rational

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<sup>31</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 79, a. 1.

<sup>32</sup> John Peterson, *Aquinas: A New Introduction* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 96. <sup>32</sup> Adam Wood, *Thomas Aquinas on the Immateriality of the Human Intellect* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II.66.4.

<sup>34</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 1, a. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 180.

<sup>36</sup> Montague Brown, *The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain: From Modernity to Post-Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 71–72.

<sup>37</sup> William L. Portier, *Maritain in the Making* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 42–43.

<sup>38</sup> James V. Schall, *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 37.

basis for belief.<sup>39</sup> He argued that philosophy ‘should not be a detached and purely intellectual pursuit but should also address questions of morality and ethics,’ shaping the conscience and guiding human action.<sup>40</sup> He insisted that philosophy has existential significance, orienting individuals toward the meaning of their lives and their relationship with the transcendent. Philosophy, he believed, ‘contributes to the betterment of society’ by engaging with political, cultural, and moral issues, providing a coherent worldview that integrates science, art, and theology.<sup>41</sup> Here, we see Maritain’s devotion to Dominic’s and Aquinas’s heritage: study and philosophy are not detached ‘fantasies’ but responsibilities, ordered to truth and to the good of souls.

The vision of the three figures in this work reveals a synergy. Dominic lived out study as sanctification; Aquinas showed forth the metaphysical and theological nature of the intellect necessary in study, while Maritain carried the Thomistic tradition of philosophical study into dialogue with modern culture. Dominic’s vigils of prayerful study are echoed in Aquinas’s conviction that contemplation is the intellect’s highest act, and both resonate in Maritain’s insistence that philosophy has existential and cultural relevance. This paper communicates the fact that truth sought after through study leads to sanctification by contemplation, and offers to man the transformation of individuals and society. In the end, philosophy and theology converge in what Aquinas called *contemplatio veritatis*, the loving gaze upon truth that fulfils the deepest hunger of the human intellect. This is the vision that should guide young scholars as they embark on the loving search for wisdom, of ‘eating the book’ as Murrey describes it in the Nigerian society and elsewhere.

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<sup>39</sup> Portier, *Maritain in the Making*, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Portier, *Maritain in the Making*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner’s Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), 112–113.