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Thomism and the method of critical thought.

Roland Goddu
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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THOMISM AND THE METHOD OF
CRITICAL THOUGHT

ROLAND GODDU

1962

THOMISM AND THE METHOD OF CRITICAL THOUGHT

by
Roland Goddu

A problem presented in partial fulfillment
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1962

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Situation of the Problem--Will Rogers once said, "There are always three sides to a position: my opinion, your opinion, and the right answer." A similar dilemma situates the problem which the author approaches in this paper. There are many teachers today, in public school systems across the nation, who accept Thomistic principles as fundamental in education. There are also many who accept Dewey's principles.

General Presuppositions--The author stands firmly involved in the Thomistic position. An honest appraisal of this situation revealed that, nowhere in St. Thomas Aquinas, is any specific practical method for research of thought presented.¹ Certainly, a method is suggested and evolves from the general theoretical principles and presentation, but this practical aspect of the Thomistic position was never clearly stated by St. Thomas Aquinas. Thus Thomism is incomplete, in a practical sense. Its principles are clearly stated, but, their application to precise areas has not been formulated, except by interpreters.

¹

Emile Simard, La Nature et la Portée de la Méthode Scientifique. (Quebec: Laval, 1958), p. 284.

Education faces the problem of communication. Ideas² and reality must be presented to learners, or to a knower. The soundness of these ideas or of reality is not to be discussed. These objects of learning may be misunderstood if a precise and definite method of approach does not make them clear and round in my mind or writings, but ~~it~~^{they} must in some way be made clear to that other mind, over there.

Alternatives--Since there is no specific method clearly stated in St. Thomas Aquinas, two alternatives are left to a Thomist. He may either complete the Thomistic theory by evolving a method from the principles and presentation, or he may attempt to integrate a practical method suggested by a different philosopher.

Evidently the latter step entails certain risks. The Thomist must be careful to accept only a philosopher's method without misinterpreting the implications of the method which depends on a philosopher's presuppositions and principles which are different from Thomism. The Thomist must also apply the method to the same specific area and from the same point of view which the philosopher intended.³

2

St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's 'De Anima'.
Book III, Chapter VII, paragraph 764.
cf. De Magistro, Book II.

3

John Courtney Murray, S. J., We Hold These Truths.
(N. Y. : Sheed, 1960), p. 22.

In this search for a method, the author followed the second alternative suggested above. He attempted to find out if Dewey's method of critical thought could be used by a Thomist. This became the following problem: Can there be any principles in Thomism which explain or allow a situation which would be similar to the situation in which Dewey suggests his method? The confused aspect of the original situation which Dewey spoke of struck the author as being similar to a situation which was the result of the principles of act and potency, especially because of the appetite aspect of potency.⁵

Statement of the Problem--To state the problem clearly: Because Thomism is unfinished and does not state a definite, precise method for research can Dewey's method of critical thought be acceptable to a Thomist without injury to Thomistic principles, or Dewey's position? The area in which this problem will be resolved is in the notion of the "situation" as confused and indeterminate, held by St. Thomas and/or Dewey.

⁴
John Dewey, How We Think. (New York: Heath, 1933).
Chap. VI.

⁵
St. Thomas Aquinas, De Potentia. Chap. I, art. I
in corpus.

Review of Related Materials--Research for this paper in the area suggested that Thomism was usually used as a criterion by which to judge Dewey but that little work was undertaken to use Dewey. Dewey himself and most of his disciples made no attempt to relate their theory or method to a position outside of pragmatism.⁶ The few works found which approached a problem of finding points in Dewey acceptable to a Thomist, touched on general theoretical points and not this specific problem.⁷ The material reviewed did not prove relevant to this specific area except to present a warning that the misinterpretation or coloring of either position cannot be the foundation for a scientific answer to a problem.⁸

6

N. J. Fleckenstein, Critique of John Dewey's Theory of the Nature and the Knowledge of Reality in the Light of the Principles of Thomism. (Thesis). (Washington: C. U., 1954)

7

J. K. McGreary, "Matrix of Dewey's Theory of Education," Education, LXVIII, (March, 1948), pp. 438-448.

8

G. E. McDonald, "Co-operation in Education Between the Thomist and Experimentalist," Educational Administration and Supervision, VI, (January, 1960), 13-25.

Outline of Procedure--Since no work was found relevant to the problem, the original works of the two authors were used as foundations for the discussion. As suggested above, this paper will now fall into four parts: Firstly, the description of St. Thomas' notion of potency as it explains the indeterminacy of a situation; secondly, Dewey's conception of the situation, the situation's effect on the situation; thirdly, a comparison of the two notions of situation and the possible use of the method of critical thought in the situation dependent on Thomistic principles; fourthly, a general resume of the conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER II

POTENCY IN ST. THOMAS

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Purpose--The aim of this section is to present St. Thomas' explanation for the indeterminacy of a situation. Both the principles of act and potency are the basic explanation for this indeterminacy, but potency and certain Thomistic implications of tendency will be found to be the greatest influences on the indeterminacy of a situation.

Definition of Reality--For St. Thomas a situation is reality and part of reality. Reality is all that surrounds a thinking man, all that is out there, which includes that thinking man. Reality is that tree, the sun, the airplane flying overhead, etc. A situation is a part of that reality, and made up of that reality. The thinking man is part of reality, but inasmuch as man is thinking about reality, or that situation, reality remains outside of that man.² Reality

¹
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Phys. lib. I, lect. I no. 1-4.

²
St Thomas Aquinas, De Veritate. Quest. 10, art. 4
Jacques Maritain, Existence and the Existent,
(New York: Doubleday, 1956). p. 20-21

is determining what I think about, as much as, how I think. For this reason, thinking man looks at reality in two ways. Thinking man looks at reality and thinks about it as it is, outside of himself. This St. Thomas calls physical reality.³ Thinking man looks at reality and thinks about it as he has it in his mind. This St. Thomas calls metaphysical reality.⁴ In both cases, thinking man starts outside of himself, in reality. Reality is the source, and control, for his thinking about physical or metaphysical reality. When I think about my hand as it is now, writing this paper, I am thinking in physical reality. When I think about my hand, as it is a hand, capable of writing this paper, I am thinking in metaphysical reality. What I know about my hand, as it is a hand, must correspond to what I know about my hand writing this paper. Reality forces this comparison. But I know it is easier to find out about my hand as it is a hand, than to think about my hand as it is writing this paper. So it is with

³ St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Meta. lib. V, lect. 4, no. 795.

⁴ Ibid. No. 796

a situation, reality. I can think about that reality out there as it is changing out there. But if I bring it into my mind, and think about reality out there as reality, I can know it more clearly, even if, I must go back out there to certify my conclusions.

Presuppositions--Let us state some of our presuppositions.

1. There is reality.
2. Man is part of reality.
3. Man knows reality by/with his intellect.
4. Reality has an explanation.
5. Man can know this explanation.
6. Reality has a physical, out-there, meaning for and because of thinking man.
7. Reality has a metaphysical, isness, meaning for and because of thinking man.
8. Physical reality is particular. Metaphysical reality is universal.⁵ e.g. that plane flying by, out-there, can only be that one combination of acts, situations. That plane flying by as a plane, can be any plane as a plane in my mind.

⁵
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Anal. Post. 11b. I, lect. 42, no. 3.

Outline of Point of View--In this chapter, reality is our interest. That is to say physical reality or that particular situation as it is actually, that steak dinner now being eaten. To explain this physical reality we will start out-there in physical reality. Through our senses we will abstract from out-there (physical reality) to find principles which we will expand to explain that situation, taking that situation as common to all situations. This method of approach is not a clearly stated method in St. Thomas, but it is presented as a result of the intellect's ordinary method of operation. St. Thomas proceeds in this way sometimes to present and explain principles. In other places he simply deduces principles. His work hints that this outlined procedure, could be an approach.⁶

Problem to be Explained--Let us state a situation, a reality out-there to explain, to find principles for. Yes, that cigarette will do, that one you are holding in your left hand right now. It is reality, it is a situation. Let us limit the situation to the cigarette itself. That cigarette is out-there, it is a physical reality. It is a cigarette as cigarette out-there, it is a physical reality. Let us think

6

Hans Urs von Balthasar, Science, Religion and Christianity. (London: Burns and Oates, 1958). p. 31
 St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Meta. proemium.

of it as a cigarette out-there. It is something. This cigarette can be lit with a match, and it burns. This goes on out-there and affects my idea of cigarette out-there. To think of it, the out-there has changed. The cigarette out-there has changed to something different called ashes. Here is the problem. In physical reality that cigarette changes to ashes. This is an indeterminate situation, since something changes, the cigarette could have changed to something other than ashes, e.g. food. It could also remain cigarette. But it does not.

St. Thomas' Position--To explain this reality out-there and keep contact with it, St. Thomas explains the cigarette as made up of parts which allow for change. Whatever makes up cigarette, must allow it to become ashes, and food, and, in the ultimate, must allow continual interchange.⁷

Matter and Form--We had something called cigarette, which was a real thing, something out-there, and this something became ashes. For St. Thomas the explanation of this change is found by having one characteristic which can only be cigarette, or ashes or food, and one characteristic which

⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, Com in Phys. lib. I, lect. 10, No. 3.

can be all of these, ashes, or food. The first characteristic is called form,⁸ that which makes a thing to be what it is, that which makes something be something, that something, cigarette; that something, ashes; that something, food. The second characteristic is called matter,⁹ that which accepts any forms, and which underlies all change. Matter allows this cigarette to be, these ashes to be, this food to be. Matter takes on any form and for that reason is called the changeable aspect, that which allows change.¹⁰ Form is definite and non-changeable in itself, though a being can change forms but in so doing changes the kind of being it is. Form is delimitation to a definite pattern.¹¹ Matter is receptivity to any delimitation. In the change from cigarette to ashes, matter is what makes the passage from cigarette to ashes. Form is what makes the something at one moment cigarette and at another ashes.¹²

⁸
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Meta. lib. VII, lect. 7, no. 1419.

⁹
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Phys. lib. I, lect. 15, no. 9.

¹⁰
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com in Phys. lib. I, lect. 15, no. 11

¹¹
St. Thomas Aquinas, "De Virtutibus," Questionis Disputatis. in principium, art. II, corpus.

¹²
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Meta. lib. VII, lect. 7, no. 1419.

Indeterminacy in Reality--If reality can change from one thing to another, the reality, that situation out-there is changing. Since it is changing, it is indeterminate. It does not have a definite pattern. It is clearly and definitely not the same out-there. Since thinking man depends on what that reality out-there is, and it is changing, thinking man must realize that he has an indeterminate state of affairs in reality and ultimately in his mind.¹³ If thinking man knows that cigarette clearly in reality out-there and when he looks again the cigarette is ashes, there is a confused state of affairs.

Matter and Indeterminacy--The real reason for this confusion is matter, that which is pure possibility, pure receptivity. That matter which underlies cigarette, and ashes, and food, underlies all possibilities. It is not form since form is the definite aspect, that which is cigarette, ashes, food. St. Thomas calls matter, pure¹⁴ potency.

Potency--The term pure is used in comparison to¹⁵ impure or secondary potency. This impure potency, is the

¹³ St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica. I pars quest. 75, art. 6, in corpus

¹⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas. Com in Phys. 11b. I, lect. 15, no. 11.

¹⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, De Potentia. Quest. I, art. 1, c.

possibility which a thing has to take on, different aspects of the same form. That cigarette which we have been talking about can be many kinds of cigarette, a plain end, a filter end, it can be an english oval, a turkish or american but in all these cases it is still a cigarette. Even if this form "cigarette" has determined the pure potency of matter, it still can take different specific shapes or forms which depend on impure or secondary potency. The cigarette, even as out-there, must also have a possibility to the form plain-end cigarette, etc.

Matter and Potency--Potency means possibility to, As such it is a broader concept and real principle of reality than matter. Not in the fact that matter is not potency, but rather that the reality and concept "matter" applies to a special realization of potency. It is much easier to see how secondary potency causes an indeterminacy of situation, of reality. Fundamentally the only difference between pure and secondary potency is in the type of form each allows.

16

St. Thomas Aquinas, De Potentia. Quest. I, art. 2
ad. 2

Pure potency only accepts different absolute forms. The matter of cigarette accepts anything that is not cigarette. When the cigarette becomes ashes, this depends on matter, even if the secondary potency prepared the change by making the cigarette filter-end, which that man prefers to smoke. Pure potency and matter are strictly speaking, the same. Secondary potency is the aspect of potency which does not strictly apply to matter.

The "Apetere" of Matter--In that reality out-there, indeterminacy is caused by potency, pure and secondary. At this point, St. Thomas differs from Aristotle, for he introduces into this potency the notion of "apetere."¹⁸ For St. Thomas "apetere" means a desire toward. This is not active. Desire in the conception of St. Thomas is an openness toward an end. This seems like a limitation to pure possibility. In a sense it is. But the limitation is caused by reality and not in the conception of possibility and desire.

Divine Orientation--Since that cigarette is already out-there, it has the limitation of being out-there, and

¹⁷
ad 21 St. Thomas Aquinas, De Potentia. Quest. I, art. 11

¹⁸
no. 3. St. Thomas Aquinas, Com in Phys. lib. II, lect. 2,

so does its matter have the limitation of being out-there. Matter for St. Thomas is a principle of reality as it is out-¹⁹ there. Matter is limited to reality, what it was, it is, and can be. If thinking man places himself outside of reality to think about reality, he is taking a divine point of view, and from this point of view reality has limits which the divine has given it; thus matter had the limits of reality. And the indeterminacy of the situation is limited. That cigarette in the mind of God has a definite pattern. Not an openness to anything but an openness to all dependent on a certain sequence.²⁰

Intellectual Orientation--If thinking man places reality in his mind, he again limits reality, this time to his conception of it. And the pure possibility of matter takes²¹ on the limits of man's conceptions. That cigarette out-there as man can understand it, is limited to humanly understandable deductible forms. It cannot become other than what man thinks or makes it become. Matter is an

19

St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica. I pars. quest. 3, art. 2.

20

St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Phys. lib. I, lect. 1

21

St. Thomas Aquinas, De Veritate, quest. 10, art. 4

openness to all that man knows and can know. Here again a sequence will be present in Man's conception of the known.

Real Orientation--If thinking man looks at reality outside of himself, with himself a part of it, matter becomes pure possibility. There is no way of knowing the divine pattern, or limiting reality to man's pattern. Reality is there outside and independent of man, with man a very small part of it.²² In this case ~~of~~ the openness of matter to all forms is not limited. That cigarette through change can become anything. It is from this last point of view that St. Thomas places himself. Reality out-there is explained by matter and form, potency and form or act. The indeterminacy depends on potency, both matter and secondary potency. Because of its pure possibility, matter contains an appetite, a desire to all forms at once, even if in reality it can have only one at a time.²³ This continual appetite of matter, possibility of any form, causes the indeterminacy of reality.

22

Hans Urs von Balthasar, Science, Religion and Christianity. p. 69.

23

St. Thomas Aquinas, De Ente et Essentia. c. 2, p. 12.

The End of Matter--St. Thomas also takes the next step into saying that this appetite of matter is end oriented. He admits that he cannot explain this from considering simply reality out-there, though he suggests that certain hints are given, by the development of reality.²⁴ His proof for this statement remains in placing himself outside of reality as it is out-there and seeing the divine plan.²⁵ Because this plan is in reality out-there, even if it is not known in reality out-there, St Thomas introduces the end orientation into his conception of possibility. Matter always seeks the most perfect form, the one which completely limits its possibility. Its desire is not satisfied until it accepts this pure form.²⁶ When that cigarette out-there turns to ashes, reality does not show its end orientation, but simply a possibility to change, to reality of a form which did not contain pure possibility. Only from outside of that reality out-there, can a pattern be found in tobacco plant, to cigarette, to ashes.

²⁴
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Phys. lib. II, lect. 4,
no. 5.

²⁵
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com in Meta. lib. IX, lect. 1

²⁶
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com in Phys. lib I, lect XV,
no. 10.

Pure Potency + "Apeters"--The theoretical framework for the indeterminacy of a situation is relatively simple for St. Thomas. The situation is complex because it has two aspects one which is changeable, one unchangeable. The unchangeable aspect as it is, in reality out-there, can not control or limit the changeable aspect, save for a very limited length of time.²⁷ During this limited length of time the situation has a definite absolute constancy, but it is indeterminate from a relative, or secondary point of view. That reality out-there is indeterminate because of its potency. Pure potency or matter, causes its absolute indeterminacy because of its pure possibility which is an appetite toward pure form.²⁸ Because there is no pure form, except as seen from outside of reality where it is taken as a whole and complete, this appetite means an openness to all forms. That cigarette is a cigarette for a definite length of time, its change is dependent on the appetite of matter to become other, in the example, ashes.

Relative Potency + "Apeters"--This absolute change, which is allowed by absolute indeterminacy, precludes a relative

27

St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol. Quest. 10, art. 4, c.
cf. Com. in Phys. lib IV

28

St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Phys. lib I, lect. 13, no. 9.

change allowed by relative indeterminacy, or secondary potency. Because of its continual appetite, even a definite form which limits matter does not satisfy matter.²⁹ This form is continually undergoing relative or secondary changes which are preparing the absolute change. That cigarette changed shape, color, etc., during the time it was a cigarette, these changes are relative or secondary changes and depend on secondary potency.

Extent of Potency--Basically potency overflows the actual form that it has in reality out-there and because of this causes the indeterminacy of reality. This overflow causes the secondary changes, as well as the absolute changes, and, is the evidence that points to a continual appetite for another form. Matter in that cigarette has greater possibilities than that cigarette. Matter tries to overcome this by secondary changes of color, shape. But even then, matter has unlimited possibilities which it desires to have contained.³⁰

²⁹
St. Thomas Aquinas, De Potentia, Quest. 1, art. 1, c.

³⁰
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Meta. lib IX lect. 2.

Resume--Reality is out-there, changing. Thinking man is part of it because he is real. This reality seems indeterminate to man. But it really is not, if man could get outside of it to grasp it. Even in its actuality as out-there with its indeterminacy, some absolute, be it the simplest form, delimits it in a pattern.

CHAPTER III

DEWEY'S METHOD OF CRITICAL THOUGHT

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Aim of Thought--This chapter will present Dewey's method of critical thought with special emphasis on suspension and its foundation in situation. Reflection in a confused situation follows certain general steps, the most important of which is suspension of judgment precisely because the confused situation is problematic.¹

A Problem Situation--Early last evening, the lights went out in the library at home. A definite reading assignment had to be done for a Monday seminar. The situation was problematic. The method Dewey calls of critical thought, is a formalization of one of the approaches man makes to transform a confused situation to a clear, coherent situation. Dewey does not present this method as the method but rather as one of the soundest patterns that man uses to control a situation with his intellect. Dewey even states that this is only an "outline of indispensable traits of reflective thinking and not a method of "thinking."

¹ John Dewey, How We Think, (New York: Heath, 1933), p. 74.

The Method of Critical Thought--Basically, Dewey's² method as outlined has five steps, or states of thinking, once a problem situation is experienced. Immediately as the lights went out, many possible reasons for this occurrence came to mind. This is the suggestion aspect of the outline. The thinking man jumps to possible solutions to the problem. When the lights went off, immediately came to mind such things as replace the fuse, go to the kitchen to read, turn on the switch, an electrical storm, etc. It is to be noted that these solutions were suggested even before the problem is understood. They are immediate responses to a situation which is problematic and confused.³

Intellectual Emphasis--The next state is one of intellectualization in which the problem passes from a general problematic topic which was directly experienced to a problem to be solved. The lights went off. This was a problematic situation. Many different suggestions came to mind which could not solve the problem since no one had clearly stated the problem in their mind. The person was reading and had to

²
Ibid. p. 72

³
John Dewey, Essays on Experimental Logic. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917). p. 184.

organize, and evaluate the situation as creating a problem. This was done when it was realized that the reading had to be done and lights were necessary for reading. Now the problem⁴ passed from a real situation, to an intellectual plane. The thinking man had grasped the situation in his mind. He could not think about it. This is a very important step, for here the thinking aspect comes into play. If the intellect is not put to use, there is no inquiry simply reaction. This is the difference between realizing in the mind that the lights need to be put on, and bumping into a tree, then walking around it which is a simple reaction.

Hypothesis--Once the problem is intellectualized, the suggestions which first occurred must now be organized as hypothesis. They must be taken in some kind of sequence, not all at once and intellectually pursued. They are considered as guides to the observation of the problem.⁵ But more important they lead to the recognition of factual material which surrounds the problem. At this step, the intellect is actually operating. There is no action in the situation, all goes on in the mind

⁴ John Dewey, Logic, The Theory of Inquiry. (New York: Holt, 1938). Chapter IV.

⁵ John Dewey, How We Think. p. 75.

where facts are accumulated by observation which suggests certain paths to follow. The organization of data leads to an aiding hypothesis. In our case at point, with the light last night, the suddenness of the occurrence, suggest that the electricity failed suddenly. This gives ground to the hypothesis of burnt fuse, broken wire, short circuit, the switching off of the light, burnt bulbs, etc. This state leads to the next category in the outline.

Reasoning--Once the hypotheses have been presented because of observation and fact, the intellect elaborates these ideas individually. The thinking man reasons. He takes one hypothesis at a time and follows it through. When the suggestion of a fuse is presented, the thinking man organizes all the facts around this hypothesis. If the fuse is the answer, there must be some fact which will bear this up. But no observation was made of switching on new lights, in the room. The lights just went off. Then the fuse could have been faulty or overheated. This last elaboration allows that maybe it was the fuse. But the other hypothesis must also be taken through the same process. The hypothesis of the electrical storm is plausible because of the suddenness of the occurrence. But when the man looked outdoors he saw

lights on at the neighbors which disallowed this hypothesis. Here again there is an overlap of phases.

Testing--The reasoning about the hypothesis is a purely elaborative process which only clears up and specifies the suggested ideas. When an overt or imaginative action, as looking out the window occurs, we pass to the testing stage of the process.⁷ This testing process goes on in the mind of the individual who is reflecting. There is no actual, exterior action on the confused situation yet, though the situation is slowly clearing up. The actual problem is lessened at least intellectually by specification and reflection. Its actual solution will occur only after all the alternatives have been considered and a definite plan of action is decided upon.⁸ In our example, checking the fuse seems the only alternative, even if it were far-fetched. It is the reasonable path of action after intellectual consideration. Certainly other alternatives, electric storm, burnt bulb, burnt wire are plausible. But this latter seems to be the alternative which should be put into action to clear up the confused situation and solve the problem. Only by action will this alternative be really tested.

⁷
Ibid, Chapter VII

⁸
John Dewey, Essays on Experimental Logic. p. 94.

Openness to Repetition--If this action proves incorrect, a return to the intellectual process should be made to present new and clearer alternatives.⁹ This whole process is evaluated by its final effect on the problem situation. The testing process is evaluated by its final effect on the problem situation. The testing process must take this into consideration, by intellectually evaluating consequences of the alternative solutions in action.

Suspension--The development of this method of critical thought depends on three aspects, a problematic, confused situation, a suspended state of affairs and a clear solution. The suspended state of affairs is of extreme importance. Suspension of action makes the difference between critical thought and all other mental processes.¹⁰ All the clarification, reasoning and testing depend on the subsequent and continued presentation of alternatives. The fuse solution must be kept in abeyance, while, the electrical storm solution is inspected, and both of these are left non actualized while the burnt wire theory is examined. This suspension is in action, in the actual situation and has consequences in the intellect.

⁹ John Dewey, Experience and Nature, (New York: Open court, Second Edition, 1929). p. 323.

¹⁰ John Dewey, How We Think, p. 103

The method clearly shows that suspension of action is essential to it, so that different hypotheses may be examined. But this suspension is basically dependent on the confused situation. For once the situation is clear, the relevant action, found by the method suggested, will take place in the situation.

Situation and Suspension--Suspension is the characteristic of this method. Some of its foundations are found in the notion of situation. For our purposes here, we are interested in the confused situation. The confusion is what gives rise to suspension. If the lights go off, and I know why, there is no confusion and because of the confusion, suspension. Confusion in a situation is what creates a problem as well as allows for suspension.¹¹ What is this confusion, this perplexity of the situation?

Complexity of a Situation--Its explanation can be found in the situation itself. A situation for Dewey is something with many aspects, it is not a single, isolated object but rather the life and act of environment.¹² If it is considered

11

John Dewey, Experience and Nature. p. 338

12

John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry. p. 113

as an object, it is as part of the total environment. This situation is complex and non-isolatable.¹³ That cat sleeping on the bed is a situation as part of the total environment, the total life of which this situation is a "clue or guide in use-enjoyment."

Actuality of a Situation--This situation is not and cannot be conceptual as a situation. It is in the realm of experience with its direct implications.¹⁴ That cat sleeping there is part of the realm of experience and is the real experience. As situation it is not liable to knowledge.

Situation as a Foundation to Thought--When this cat sleeping there is taken as an object of knowledge by man, it is no longer a situation as situation. The realm has changed. Certainly the realm of discourse depends on the realm of experience as a precondition.¹⁵ But a situation is not of the same order as concept. The situation is independent of discourse or knowledge. As Dewey says "one cannot decline to have a situation." The cat sleeping on the bed is a situation for me, because it is part of my total environment, not because of any knowledge I would have of it. It is not felt,

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John Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 339

14

John Dewey, Essays on Experimental Logic, p. 15

15

Ibid. p. 214

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 it is had. This situation is not called reality, it is simply a situation which man has. That cat sleeping on the bed is directly had by me, before it is stated or conceptualized. In fact, this intellectual action changes the situation to a different situation, that of a thinking man intellectually discoursing about that cat sleeping on the bed.

Influence of Situation--The situation is first and foremost in Dewey's mind. It determines man by this direct action of experience, then this situation because it is had, influences all subsequent selection and weighing of observed facts and their conceptual ordering.¹⁷ This seems to mean that the intellect itself is part of a situation influenced by total environment. This allows that thinking man to be creating a situation by his thinking.

Complexity of a Whole--The confusion or perplexity of the situation arises from its being a whole, a total environment. The direct experience of a situation does not always immediately present the total environment, the whole. For

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John Dewey, Logic, The Theory of Inquiry, p. 117

17

Ibid. p. 122

this reason the situation is confused. That cat sleeping on the bed during the fire can be directly present to me, but not in its place in my total environment for me. For that reason, the situation is confused and will be, till I can have this experience of that cat sleeping on the bed during the fire, in its proper place in my total environment. The transition between the two is made by controlled inquiry,¹⁸ which suspends action to clarify a situation. A confused situation is one had without its unifying qualities. The situation itself as had is lacking in some important aspects. This lack creates the confusion, which must be cleared as by reflective thought, which points out the unifying quality of the situation¹⁹ in the total environment. The cat sleeping on the bed during the fire becomes that cat sleeping on the bed during the fire taken out of the house. The taken out of the house, is the link which brings that cat sleeping on the bed during the fire from a confused to a clear position in my total environment.

Resume of Chapter--Dewey's method of critical thought is made up of five terminals: (1). suggestion, (2). statement of the problem, (3). hypothesis, (4). reasoning,

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John Dewey, How We Think, p. 63

19

John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, p. 110

(5). testing.²⁰ This is an intellectual process which makes the transition from a confused situation to a clear situation by the suspension of action. The confused situation is the source of all the trouble, but it is real because of the lack of completion of the whole environment in an experience.²¹ The notion of clear situation to be attained draws the fundamental characteristic of this method, suspension, from the confused situation. Having no lights to read by leads to having lights to read by, with a suspension of action to find how to get lights.

²⁰ John Dewey, How We Think, p. 72.

²¹ John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, p. 112.

CHAPTER IV

A COMPARISON OF POSITIONS

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Aim of Chapter--The two preceding chapters have been expository. This chapter will try to compare what has been developed to show the difference and likenesses which can be found in the exposition. This chapter will organize the data to answer our problem question. Can a Thomist use the method of critical thought without acting in contradiction to his principles? The first section will present the dissimilarities which are the result of different fundamental positions. The second section will state likenesses in the specific area treated which would allow for the acceptance of the method of critical thought by a Thomist. The conclusion will be presented in the next chapter.

General Differences--The fundamental dissimilarities which come from the different philosophical principles of St. Thomas and Dewey are evidently still contained in this exposition. Basically St. Thomas allows for an absolute in reality, and knowable by man.¹ Dewey holds that all is

¹
St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in 'De Anima.' Book III, Chap. II, lectis 8, no 718.

relative and that knowledge has no value for itself, but only value in an action.² The approach which each takes to what is to be known, or to be acted upon is distinct. St. Thomas approaches this which he calls reality, as something distinct and absolute out-there. All of the philosophy starts and ends out-there. There it is, independent of individual man.³ On the other hand, Dewey approaches this, which he names situation, from the action point of view, as man is part of it. The actuality of the situation is dependent on action.⁴ The situation is approached as dependent of this man, and controlled by this man.⁵ For Dewey, the situation is action for individuals, approached from these individuals influences and interactions. For St. Thomas, the reality is out-there in action, but approached outside of individual action.

Approaches--Actuality--When that car is tooting its horn, St. Thomas has an absolute controlling the car and the tooting; but, Dewey presents that car as a situation

² John Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 165

³ Etienne Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, (New York: Scribner's 1938). p. 70-71.

⁴ John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, p. 114.

⁵ John Dewey, How We Think, p. 227-229.

which is in action, with no absolutes, simply action. St. Thomas limits reality to action defined by nature and defined by action.⁶ Dewey makes the situation simply action with no determinacy save that given by the individuals in the action.⁷ St. Thomas has a framework in which the car and the tooting fit. Dewey rejects a framework and makes the car and the tooting an aspect of something being done.

Actuality--Even if both St. Thomas and Dewey take opposite positions as to the approach to reality and situation. The question remains as to whether, they are both trying to approach the same thing from their divergent positions. From the exposition of both positions it seems clear that they are trying to explain the same fact even if they give different meanings and value to this fact. Both seem to be trying to cope with a something of which man is part because he is real and in action. At the same time, both seem to present man in some of his intellectual actions independent from this actuality. This actuality is a changing situation for both men. Though for St. Thomas this changing situation has a dual character which is intrinsic to it.⁸ For Dewey

⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, Com in Phys. lib. II, lect, iv. no. 5

⁷ John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, p. 116

⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, De Potentia, Quest. I, art. I, ad. 1 ad corpus.

the changing situation cannot be explained but simply controlled.⁹
 He is not interested in what makes it change intrinsically,
 but what makes it changing for this man in this situation.
 St. Thomas presents a reality which has principles. Dewey
 presents a reality which is what it is, and does not have
 principles which constitute it.

Method of Critical Thought in Actuality--What St. Thomas
 names reality and what Dewey names situation seem to be ob-
 jectively the same thing, even if each give their modifications
 to this actuality. Dewey's method of critical thought is for-
 malization of an intellectual approach to one aspect of this
 actuality.¹⁰ That car tooting its horn is an actuality which
 Dewey calls situation and which St. Thomas calls reality.
 St. Thomas' explanation in no way states how man will grasp
 this situation or action. Dewey does present man in this
 situation. But this is not the subject for the method of
 critical thought unless a problem is created for this man's
 action by the tooting car.¹¹ Dewey's method of critical thought

⁹
 John Dewey, Democracy in Education, (New York:
 Macmillan, 1961). p. 132-136

¹⁰
 "A Symposium of Reviews of 'Logic: The Theory of
 inquiry'." Journal of Philosophy, XXXVI, (October 12, 1939).
 p. 561-581

¹¹
 D. S. Mackay, "What Does Mr. Dewey Mean by an 'Inde-
 terminate Situation'?" Journal of Philosophy, XXXIX,
 (February 12, 1942)

controls a confused state of affairs in this actuality. St. Thomas explains why this actuality is confused. Dewey faces the confused actuality with a method for control in human action. Reality for St. Thomas is clear because of the form aspect. For Dewey a situation is cleared by action which is the result of the critical method.

Form and Clear Situation--The indeterminacy of the actuality for St. Thomas is caused by a continual desire to be completed by the ultimate form.¹² This is quite similar in actuality to the passage from a confused state to a clear state which is the foundation for the method of critical thought in Dewey.¹³ Because the situation must become clear, man uses the method of critical thought, with its suspension aspect. Because potency desires the final complete actuality.

Unity of Method to Explain Indeterminacy--The indeterminacy of the situation caused by the Thomistic principle of potency is the aspect of the situation which in one type

¹² St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Phys. lib. I, Lect. 15, no. 10.

¹³ John Dewey, How We Think, p. 113.

of actuality Dewey grasps by a method. But, Dewey's method is limited in the situation it approaches, by the type of situation it can be applied to, and by the type of method it is.¹⁴

Intellectual Aspect of a Situation--The type of situation which is open to the method of critical thought is a confused state of affairs in which the intellect of man is confused.¹⁵ This is the intellectual aspect of the situation, which causes man to try to solve the problem intellectually. Bumping into a tree is a situation, but it is not subject matter for the method of critical thought since there is really no problem. A complex situation in which man must act is the subject matter of this method.¹⁶ A teacher must get to school, but his car is broken down and it is raining. This is subject matter for the method of critical thinking, because someone must think about action to take in a situation.

¹⁴ John Dewey, Essays in Experimental Logic, p. 231-241.

¹⁵ John Dewey, How We Think, p. 75

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 77

Actual Aspect of Situation--This action to take is the second aspect of the method. It is an actual method, it is interested in doing, not in speculation. The intellectual process of the method, not only starts in actual situation, but also results in an action. This is not an ethical situation but a present, everyday action. The method of critical thought is not of ethics, it is an actual operation in a situation.¹⁷

Suspension and Indeterminacy--The suspension of judgment which is the fundamental aspect of the method of critical thought has a definite relation to the confused state of affairs.¹⁸ It is also a logical consequence of the "appetere" aspect of potency. The ultimate determination of the actuality is continually changeable. So must the understanding of the actuality be continually changeable. This is the value of suspension of judgment. That cigarette burning can become ashes, but it also can become many things because of its appetite. Maybe in this actual situation the turning on of the lights by flicking on the switch seems the only logical solution, but there are definitely other possible solutions to the problem

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John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, Chap. IV

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John Dewey, How We Think, p. 72

which maybe are more complete and more actual in the long run. This continual openness is based on the "apetere" of potency, but it is clearly taken into consideration by the suspension aspect of the method of critical thought.

Critical Thinking as a Formalization--The indeterminacy of the situation is the foundation for this method of critical thought, and it is the continual emphasis of St. Thomas in his explanation of reality. Dewey even recognizes indeterminacy in his actual method, which he simply presents as a formalization of the approaches which have been taken.¹⁹ This does not disallow other emphasis in approach which will either change or mitigate the general pattern which is suggested. Even with regard to his method, Dewey says that it is also indeterminate and changing in actuality. All that is presented is a formalization after fact.²⁰

Resume of Chapter--St. Thomas and Dewey have different meanings for actuality. Much of this difference is based on fundamental philosophical principles. Some of the differences arise from different approaches to actuality. St. Thomas

19
Ibid. p. 99

20
John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry. Chap. VI.

goes out into the actuality to explain it. Dewey approaches
the situation from human action in it. Even if these differences
are clearly stated at least one similarity is found that is
that in St. Thomas' reality there is indeterminacy and in Dewey's
situation there is confusion. Because of this changeable as-
pect of reality, a method facing this indeterminacy and con-
fusion could be used to control both reality and situation.

²¹
no. 553 St. Thomas Aquinas, Com. in Meta, lib. iv, lect. 11

²²
Minton, 1931). p. 84 John Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization, (New York:

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

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Aim of Chapter--This chapter will summarize the findings of the preceding chapters, with regard to the problem question. Can a Thomist use Dewey's method of critical thought without contradicting his principles?

Aspects of the Method which Apply to a Thomistic Position--It seems that he can. Dewey presents this method as a formalization of an intellectual process. This process is not dependent on his conception of philosophy, but rather on actual situations. Since a Thomist is interested in a practical method with which he can approach reality, this process seems acceptable to his position or to any position. The method does not follow from a definite conception of reality, a system already thought out.¹ The method, as presented, is a formalization of actual process, and as such is independent of the thinker, the object, and the conception of the object, the thinker and their interaction.

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Emile Simard, La Nature et La Portée de la Methode Scientifique, (Quebec: Laval, 1958). p. 18.

Reason for Relation--The method of critical thought simply expects that a situation is confused. Since St. Thomas explains reality by principles which allow indeterminacy and confusion, this method can apply to a Thomistic reality.

Limitations--But it can not apply to all of a Thomistic reality, but only to that which is problematic in its confusion.² The distinction limits the scope of the method to areas of practical intellectual interest on the part of the thinker who is part of the situation and reality.

"Apetere" in Action--The "apetere" aspect of potency which St. Thomas develops seems to have some comparability in its foundations in tendency toward and ultimate, perfect form with the confused to clear aspect of a situation which introduces the suspension as the fundamental characteristic of method of critical thought. This suspension allows a method which tends toward the clearest solution.³ This is much as "apetere" keeps potency tending toward the most perfect form.⁴

² Lucien Dufault, La Philosophie de la Nature, (Unpublished manuscript, Dept. of Philosophy, Oblate College, 1960). p. 29

³ Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School, (New York: Columbia University, 1961). p. 738.

⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, De Potentia, Quest. IX, art. VII, ad. 6.

Answer to Problem of Paper--The actual conclusion of this paper is that in a definite, and particular area of practical action dependent on the intellect, a Thomist can use the method of critical thought, without contradiction to his principles if he accepts this method as a formalization of a process which could take a different form.

Value of Indeterminacy--There are many aspects of the object of the method of critical thought upon which St. Thomas and Dewey do not agree, especially, its knowability, its reality. They do agree on an indeterminacy in action. This slight agreement is what allows the use of the method critical thought by a Thomist. This slight agreement is also that which limits the area of application to a small area of practical actuality.

This man acting in this situation is the area of application of the method. Only where man must decide through an intellectual process what action he will make, can the method apply.

Further Study--Many problems of differentiation and correspondence still remain. One area for further study which this study has suggested, is the area of knowledge, its

meaning, value, and the intellect and its consequences. This study has convinced the author, that no understanding of either man can be had by judging or criticizing one by the other.

The philosophical premises are so distinct that it seems that only in areas in which each is lacking can an effort be made to fill the lack by a development which one or the other has made. The author thinks that the method of critical thought can be such an item, completing in practical action some principles which St. Thomas has left theoretical.

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PROBLEM APPROVED BY:

Philip Edeley
Ralph Pippert
(Problem Committee)

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