

# CULTURE AND THE THOMIST TRADITION

After Vatican II

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## FOREWORD

First and foremost, this book is an analysis of differing approaches to the philosophy and theology of culture in the ‘academy’ of our day. It is also, however, an indictment, and at times a searing one. It would be a pity if the formal restraint of its language deflected the reader’s attention from the passion that underlies it. It seems well to begin this foreword here.

The *gravamen* from which the book sets out is chiefly of interest to Catholic Christians in its readership – but owing to the global influence of their religion this can hardly be a parochial beginning. Tracey Rowland brings an accusation of superficiality – of damagingly facile optimism – against the Catholic Church of the 1960s and 1970s. Naively, at the Second Vatican Council (1962–5), in the course of preparing a ‘pastoral constitution’ on the rôle of the Church in the ‘modern world’, hierarchs and theologians offered a vote of confidence to the Western-derived culture of modernity, without due consideration of that culture’s rooted inconveniences and flawed presuppositions. A religion with a substantial intellectual patrimony of its own, and a claim, in divine revelation, to a fulcrum independent of the world’s fashions, managed to pass up the chance of offering a theological critique of the ‘down’ side to that Liberal–humanist wave, which then as now was inexorably spreading. The reason, as Rowland hints, is surely to be found in a fear of ‘integralism’.

Integralism is the notion that the Church, though her own vocation be exclusively supernatural, nonetheless has the right, when majoritarian, to dictate to natural society’s shapers the form their work should take. But, in the anti-integralist counter-claim that the cultural realm is a law unto itself, the principal theological error of integralism – the separation into two separate realms of nature and grace – continued to live and thrive unnoticed. A framework of thought that would sever the arts and sciences from theology in the name of the autonomy of the secular actually condemns nature to separation from grace. Furthermore, to cite a theological master, Romano Guardini, whom Church authorities might have consulted but did not, culture is never, in point of fact, self-created from its own essence. Agents with their own philosophies, thinkers with their own agenda, lie behind its various developments, and the more diffuse their influence the more potentially

pervasive. But just how healthful *were* the influences thus tacitly invoked to replace the strains of Christendom?

More recently, through the magisterial teaching of a subsequent pope, John Paul II, and the growing corpus of reflection on culture produced by theologians associated with the multilingual journal *Communio*, some hope has emerged that the difficulties created by such thoughtless strategies can be made good. And here Rowland's spadework helps considerably to fill with solid earth the ditch that has opened up between, on the one hand, the Catholic doctrinal, liturgical and spiritual tradition and, on the other, a cultural formation largely incapable of acting as its vehicle. Positively, Rowland seeks a proliferation of cultures where (in the technical but by no means inaccessible vocabulary she introduces) 'any given *ethos* is governed by the Christian virtues, the process of self-formation or *Bildung* is guided by the precepts of the Decalogue and the revealed moral law of the New Testament and the *logos* or form is provided by the "identities in relation" logic of the Trinitarian processions'. A Catholic culture, unlike a Protestant, never mind a secular, version of the same, will always be, in the historian Christopher Dawson's favoured word, 'erotic': unified in its various domains by a passionate urge for spiritual perfection.

It may at once be surmised that the overall thrust and tone of this book, despite severity of strictures, is in dogmatic terms enormously constructive, but how, by that very token, is it not also sectarian? This brings me to the second of Rowland's *gravamina*, which concerns the deficiencies of the secular culture now predominant, deficiencies for which a theologically forged statement of the proper structure of culture may act as a helpful foil.

The Liberal tradition of secular humanism, which by fits and starts has come gradually to dominate Western civilization since the seventeenth century, carries with it an anthropology and, behind that, a metaphysic (or anti-metaphysic) of its own. Its individualism – 'self-centricity' – is inseparable from its increasingly subjective view of beauty, goodness and truth – its rejection, in other words, of these qualities as the 'transcendental properties of being' for which classical Christian thought took them. The subjectively valued individual in an objectively valueless world resembles the smile on the face of the Cheshire cat. Hardly surprisingly, then, that by the late nineteenth century the philosophical frailties of the Liberal tradition were becoming apparent. An alternative arose, with the philosopher and cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche as its fountain-head, which capitalised on the philosophical frailties of Liberalism, at once radicalising its individualism and unmasking its illusion that in a heartless cosmos respect for human hearts still makes sense. The Liberal emphasis on personal autonomy now becomes the Nietzschean imperative to self-assertion in a world where the only beauty is exultation in self-created power. Postmodernism, inasmuch as it is the victory of Nietzsche over the Liberals, takes force as the key to meaning in culture. It is only by violence that one arbitrary meaning is assigned where another, equally groundless, would do.

Rowland believes that classical Christian thought – which she takes to be a synthesis of patristic and medieval thinking at their best, and represented with peculiar acuity in the Thomist tradition – will, when confronted with these Liberal and Nietzschean strands in modern sensibility, remain paralysed or even impotent – ‘in crisis’ – until it undertakes a strenuous criticism of the new. Without this enquiry, it will resemble a surgeon who, not knowing where to cut, cannot heal.

The scope of the investigation is as wide as the cultural domain itself. Nothing can be exempted, from the market place to the bedroom, the artist’s studio to the shopfloor. In the analysis of what a variety of modern institutional ways of behaving do to us she is greatly indebted to the neo-Aristotelianism of the ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre, who emphasises the need for institutions to require virtue and also engender it. (But she goes beyond him in asking that they be quasi-sacramental: a hospital must be hospitable, and so have Eucharistic undertones, if it is to suit sickly humanity under the regime of grace.)

In considering the vagaries of souls immersed in mass culture, she appeals to the dogmatic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar for whom the test of culture is whether it mediates an experience of the transcendentals congruent with the grace of the Incarnation, without which participation in wider culture will be impoverishing, not enriching. Here, over against modernity’s cultivation of deliberate forgetting, she stresses the importance of memory. Through memory, those features of the human past that can add to sapiential experience may be corporately celebrated, as in historic Christianity’s cycle of feasts and the sequence, determined not only by human biology but also by the significance of the life of Christ, of its sacramental rites of passage.

From two American thinkers, William Norris Clarke and David Schindler, she takes the idea – appropriate to the image of the Trinity in man – of an underlying form in all human activity that combines ‘substantiality’ with ‘relationality’. We are only ourselves in relation to others, yet in relation to others we are truly ourselves. We must be abroad for the sake of others if we are to be at home with ourselves. It is chimerical to suppose that such refined metaphysics is superfluous for cultural activity, irrelevant to the management of political parties or the devising of a popular song. Every practice will always turn out to have some kind of an ‘onto-logic’, and so a spirituality or anti-spirituality that animates it. If it is not Trinitarian – which is as much as to say, if it does not bear the form of love – then it will, in the modern era, almost certainly be mechanistic and controlling, for the underlying logic of the Enlightenment traditions is that ‘self-centric’ variety which most naturally expresses itself in reliance on technique, privileges go-getting activity not contemplative receiving, and treats efficacy as assertion rather than creative generosity.

Over against Thomists of another ilk, Rowland considers herself a ‘post-modern Augustinian Thomist’. By these words she not only declares some of

her fellow-disciples of Thomas imperceptive (too ready to make an accommodated peace with Liberal modernity), she also summarises in a phrase her own programme for the re-energising of Christendom. She will retain the universalism of Thomas, as expressed in natural law thinking, the validity of moral absolutes, and the ubiquitous relevance, under grace, of the virtues. But she will embody that universalism in a cultural form that, like the Augustine of the *Confessions* and the *City of God*, values narratives. To shape an ethical identity adequately fitted to the state of the world requires exposure to the cumulative story of grace's supervening in, through and beyond, the fabric of the temporal. In a society seared by sin, egregious in errors, 'plain persons' can best find the principles of the homespun natural philosophy they need through pondering the experience of beauty, goodness and truth which memory contains. This is true above all of the memory of how the transcendentals broke upon humankind in the unique peace of the Kingdom, in the world of the Resurrection revealed by anticipation in the crucified and exalted God-man, Jesus Christ. And how, finally, is this 'postmodern'? Chiefly by an unflinching rejection of the characteristic languages of modernity, even at their most seductive (such as the language of human rights).

Here the present writer, for whom such 'rights' are simply the dependent reflection, in human subjects, of the objective order of the world, cannot follow her, and yet he is brought back gratefully to her thought at last. In his view, what is objectionable about the 'rights industry' is the tone in which, in advanced Liberal societies like the United States, such rights can be asserted. A braying, litigious tone used in one's own regard betrays not only an absence of the undertow of thanks which should always be present for the gift of existence but also a practical unawareness of the true *scandalum magnum* of the public world, the plight of its poor. If Tracey Rowland's book does not touch closely on either of these themes – the metaphysics of being and the 'preferential option for the poor', it is still highly relevant to the re-awakening, in the circle of the virtues unknown to modernity, of that quality of modesty which instinctively thanks God and restrains self. In this way, her study can serve tacitly these further dimensions as well as the many realms the author consciously touches and illuminates. I wish her book a wide and fair hearing.

Aidan Nichols OP

# INTRODUCTION

In the first half of the twentieth century, Thomist scholars sought to defend St Thomas from the charge of having neglected the theme of culture. Augustinus Fischer-Colbrie and Robert Brennan both argued that, although Aquinas wrote no treatise on the subject of culture, 'he knew all the principles that form the groundwork of a philosophy of culture', and, further, that the belief in the 'modern' discovery of culture merely illustrates the ignorance of Rousseau and other Romantic and post-Enlightenment philosophers of the richness of the Thomistic framework.<sup>1</sup> The underdeveloped account of culture from the perspective of the Thomist tradition has, however, continued to be the subject of criticism. For example, Fergus Kerr has observed that 'traditional theology overlooks the way that human beings are rational creatures immersed in history', whereas Nikolaus Lobkowitz has stated that 'Aquinas did not develop anything like a theory of history and therefore was not very interested in culture either'.<sup>2</sup> One way of reconciling the two perspectives is to conclude that, while St Thomas did foreshadow aspects of contemporary accounts of the philosophical and theological significance of culture, his intellectual projects were not focused on the rôle that culture plays in the formation of the soul because he wrote during a period in history when Christendom was at its zenith. Although, he noted that Gothic tribesmen did not regard stealing as morally wrong until after they had been Christianised, he did not develop this observation into a full theory of how persons are influenced in their moral development by the culture of the community into which they have been born. If thirteenth-century Paris had been occupied by Islamic and Gothic tribesmen as well as by Dominican and Franciscan friars and lay Christians, and if the city were surrounded by pagan temples and mosques as well as by Benedictine abbeys, then the effect of such a social framework upon moral formation may have required analysis. However, Aquinas wrote at a time when all the arts, the working week, the holidays, the kings and the laws were overtly Christian.<sup>3</sup> For Aquinas, Christendom was the presumed context for his audiences.<sup>4</sup> The Church was the teacher of the truth, the dispenser of the mysteries, the barque of fellow travellers. In effect, Aquinas shifted to the Church much of the rôle of the



polity in Aristotle. In this classical Thomistic model, Christians immerse themselves in the culture of the Church, and the Church, through her sacraments, liturgies, scholarship, religious and laity, Christens the world.

Since Aquinas could assume Christendom as a 'given', the rôle of culture in moral formation was not a problematic requiring his attention. The development of a 'postmodern' Thomism in which the concepts of culture and tradition are central has only become necessary at this juncture in history when Christendom is but a historical memory for a significant proportion of the population, and the Christian soul is forged within a complex matrix of institutions founded upon a mixture of theistic, quasi-theistic and anti-theistic traditions.

The apparent endorsement of this complex matrix by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* has, however, complicated the response of the Thomist tradition to this need for an explicitly theological understanding of the realm of culture.<sup>5</sup> The Thomist tradition now finds itself in a position where it is intellectually engaged on two fronts: there is the continuing engagement with the Liberal tradition, which is now into its third century, and there is the engagement with the late Romantic Genealogical tradition. Both the Liberal tradition and the Genealogical tradition are themselves engaged in a confrontation in which the key issue is the culture of modernity and its Enlightenment-derived conceptions of rationality. This means that if the proponents of the Thomist tradition seek to engage the ideas of these rival traditions they need to know where they stand on the definitive issues of the culture of modernity and its conception of rationality.

This work is therefore addressed most generally to the problematic of the Thomist tradition's need for an understanding of the theological significance of culture, and, second, to the specific issue of the value to be given to the culture of modernity. Whereas some scholars believe that the culture of modernity is neutral in relation to the flourishing of Christian practices, or even a second *praeparatio evangelii* in the manner of classical culture, other scholars who identify with the tradition regard the culture of modernity as the very solvent of Christian practices. In particular, there presently exists a quite dramatic disjunction between the apparently positive treatment of modern culture in *Gaudium et spes* and contemporary critiques of modern culture or select aspects thereof as a 'culture of death' (John Paul II), a 'polity of death' (Catherine Pickstock), a culture with the form of a machine which is resistant to grace (David Schindler) and a culture which is toxic to the flourishing of virtue and the precepts of the natural law (Alasdair MacIntyre). The issue of the culture of modernity can therefore be described as a 'crisis point' for the tradition, that is a problematic which will test the tradition's success or failure in making rational progress towards some further stage of development.

In his analysis of epistemological crises within traditions, Alasdair MacIntyre argues that any resolution of such crises will embody three necessary elements:

First, this in some ways radically new and conceptually enriched scheme must furnish a solution to the problems which had previously proved intractable in a systematic and coherent way. Second, it must also provide an explanation of just what it was which rendered the tradition, before it had acquired these new resources, sterile or incoherent or both. And third, these first two tasks must be carried out in a way which exhibits some fundamental continuity of the new conceptual and theoretical structures with the shared beliefs in terms of which the tradition of inquiry has been defined up to this point.<sup>6</sup>

Part I of this work is therefore devoted to an examination of the elements of the ‘crisis’ created by the tradition’s undeveloped account of the rôle of culture in moral formation, and in particular the treatment of culture in *Gaudium et spes* and in post-Conciliar magisterial thought. From this examination three conclusions are reached:

- 1 that the Thomist tradition requires a theological hermeneutic of culture;
- 2 that the ambivalence of the tradition in relation to the culture of modernity continues to impede the tradition’s development; and
- 3 that the tradition requires an account of the influence of culture on moral formation in such a way that it does not lead to relativist conclusions or otherwise undermine the universality of the natural law doctrine.

Part II focuses on the first and second of these unresolved issues. It will be argued that the culture of modernity’s dominant Liberalism may be construed as an example of what John Paul II calls ‘a philosophical system, an ideology, a programme for action and for the shaping of human behaviour’ which is hostile to the integrity of the self and hence to the ideals and practices of the Thomist tradition. The argument is developed by subdividing the concept of culture into the categories used by the German *Kulturgeschichte* school: *Geist*, *Bildung* and *Kultur*. These categories are related to the Greek concepts: *ethos*, *nomos* and *logos*. Chapter 3 therefore focuses on an account of the *Geist* or *ethos* of modern institutional practices, Chapter 4 on rival accounts of *Bildung* or self-formation, and Chapter 5 on the *logos* of the *Kultur* or civilisation of modernity. Each of these chapters also relates back to a particular aspect of the problematic treatment of the concept of culture in *Gaudium et spes*. Chapter 3 juxtaposes Thomist critiques of modern institutional practices with the Conciliar deference to the knowledge of ‘experts’, Chapter 4 questions the

apparent Conciliar endorsement of ‘mass culture’ and relates the problem of mass culture to the Conciliar recognition of a ‘right to culture’ and Chapter 5 seeks to qualify the Conciliar endorsement of *Gaudium et spes* paragraph 59 – the ‘autonomy of culture’ principle – by examining contemporary developments of de Lubac’s argument that ‘no culture is really neutral’ and hence autonomous.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, Part II provides both a recommendation for a radically new and conceptually enriched scheme, in response to MacIntyre’s first necessary element of a resolution to an epistemological crisis, and an explanation of just what rendered the tradition, before it had acquired these new resources, sterile and incoherent, in accord with MacIntyre’s second necessary element of a resolution.

A sub-issue within the broader ‘crisis’ is that of the preferred methodology of the Thomist tradition. As a generalisation, it can be said that contemporary Thomist scholarship is characterised by a division between two influential schools: the proponents of the so-called Nouvelle Théologie, with their emphasis upon historical scholarship, a retrieval of Patristic thought and critiques of neo-scholasticism; and the projects of Anglo-American scholars who adopt the methodology of twentieth-century British analytical philosophers and apply this methodology to a study of Thomist concepts – a methodology which includes as a central element the need to exclude historical from philosophical argument. This division is the subject of numerous articles in contemporary journals and is described as a quarrel between Anglo-American ‘analytical Thomists’ and Continental Balthasarians.<sup>8</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, whose early academic training was in analytical philosophy, has suggested that the analytical school’s strengths and weaknesses derive from its exclusive focus on a rigorous treatment of detail – one that results in a piecemeal approach to philosophy, isolable problem by isolable problem. He suggests that its literary genres are the professional journal article and the short monograph.<sup>9</sup> From the Continental perspective, the analytical Thomist’s approach looks suspiciously Cartesian and its anti-historical character runs counter to the argument that concepts do not in fact operate within historical and cultural vacuums. A shorthand description of the Balthasarian methodology may be found in the following statement by David Schindler:

The ‘analytic’ precision sought with respect to the object (other), in short, is first that sought by the lover (integrative clarity in the service first of ‘aesthesis’), rather than by the technologist (fragmented clarity for purposes primarily of control).<sup>10</sup>

In Kantian terms, this means that ‘synthetic thought’, which requires what von Balthasar calls ‘seeing the form’, is as important as ‘analytical thought’ and should precede the piecemeal rigorous treatment of detail. Although Balthasarians acknowledge that philosophers across a range of disciplines might endorse the same concepts, the Balthasarian idea of the

‘symphonic’ quality of truth means that von Balthasar’s disciples are more interested in how the concepts are related to other elements of the tradition, and the history of their formulation, development, and cultural embodiment, than they are in demonstrating, for example, that a particular concept to be found in Aquinas may also be found in Kant, or has resonances in Heidegger or is presumed by Wittgenstein.<sup>11</sup> The Balthasarians aim to demonstrate the splendour of the truth by sewing together a rich tapestry of biography, poetry, history, Trinitarian analogies, logical analysis and the truths of Revelation. This is also consistent with the Radical Orthodoxy approach, which seeks to ‘unite exegesis, cultural reflection and philosophy in a complex but coherently executed collage’.<sup>12</sup> In effect, this means that they ‘smudge’ the boundaries of philosophy, theology and literature, and are generally indifferent to the claims of those who would enforce the interdisciplinary boundaries drawn by philosophers of the Enlightenment(s) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The three chapters in Part II therefore follow the methodological approach typical of scholars associated with the Radical Orthodoxy and Balthasarian circles of alternating between sociological, philosophical and theological arguments and drawing upon a symphony of authorities, the most significant in this instance being Alasdair MacIntyre. The contribution of MacIntyre is undoubtedly seminal for the development of a ‘postmodern’ Thomism that takes into account the importance of culture in moral formation, for MacIntyre has highlighted more effectively than anyone else within the Thomist tradition the nature of the relationships between moral inquiry and social practices. This work does not seek to offer a comprehensive analysis of MacIntyre’s critique of the culture of modernity, but rather focuses upon select aspects of that critique which relate to:

- 1 the problems created by the treatment of culture in *Gaudium et spes* as identified in Chapter 1;
- 2 the need for a theological hermeneutic of culture; and
- 3 the appropriate place of the concept of culture within the Thomist tradition’s account of moral and intellectual formation.

Although MacIntyre has been described variously as a ‘Communitarian’, a ‘Virtue-Ethicist’, a ‘Revolutionary Aristotelian’, a ‘Romantic Thomist’ and a ‘postmodern Thomist’, it is suggested that the most appropriate categorisation of MacIntyre’s position, from the publication of *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* onwards, is that of a ‘postmodern Augustinian Thomism’ – an example of what Gratian and medieval canonists described as a *concordantia discordantium canonum* – a synthetic reconciliation of apparently rival principles.<sup>13</sup> MacIntyre’s position may be classified as ‘postmodern’: first, it is constructed from a perspective that views the primary problem as the culture of modernity and its need of transcendence; second, although he has a place

for metaphysics within his intellectual framework, this place is not foundational in an epistemological sense – rather the starting point is that of the soul caught within the contradictions of the culture of modernity; and, third, he incorporates critiques of the Liberal tradition from the Genealogical and Marxist traditions and focuses the attention of the Thomist tradition upon the issue of the rôle of culture and a narrative tradition in moral and intellectual formation. This interest in the relationship between ‘culture’ and the formation of the soul, is a quintessential postmodern theme.

On its own however, the term postmodern carries the negative connotation of a mere *bricolage* – an assemblage of haphazard or incongruent elements – and thus the added Augustinian adjective has at least two advantages. First, it helps to associate MacIntyre’s philosophical enterprise with the Augustinian theology of grace associated with the Nouvelle Théologie scholars, whose insights it will be argued are necessary for the theological grounding of MacIntyre’s otherwise sociological and philosophical critique of modernity. Second, the qualifier ‘Augustinian’ helps to convey the idea that central to the synthesis is an interest in the typically Augustinian themes of the relationship between the secular and the sacral orders, the rôle of memory in the formation of the soul and the importance of a narrative tradition for intellectual and spiritual development. Indeed, given the significance of the Augustinian element, one can argue that MacIntyre’s project exhibits some of the characteristics of what Romanus Cessario calls the ‘custom of reading Aquinas as if he were Bonaventure’.<sup>14</sup>

MacIntyre’s work alone does not however provide a comprehensive postmodern Augustinian Thomist critique of the culture of modernity and understanding of the rôle of culture in moral formation. For this it is necessary to venture beyond the boundaries of philosophy to the realm of theology. This is because the culture of modernity and its practices have been formed not only by the severance of the orders of faith and reason, but also, more fundamentally, by those of nature and grace. To this end, it will be argued that explicitly theological arguments, such as those of David Schindler and Kenneth Schmitz, need to be linked to the more sociological and philosophical analysis of MacIntyre in order to develop the tradition in a manner that gives it the theoretical capacity to critique the culture of modernity (the engagement with the ‘moderns’) and simultaneously to engage the arguments of the postmodern Genealogists. Whereas MacIntyre’s work examines the relationship between culture and virtue, and offers a critique of the culture of modernity as a complex inter-relationship of norms and institutions that are hostile to the flourishing of virtue, Schindler and Schmitz supplement this with a critique of the culture of modernity from the perspective of its resistance to grace, including, of course, infused or supernatural virtue.

Schindler and Schmitz may also be classified as postmodern Augustinian Thomists. Although they are not generally known by any particular label, they are both members of the Thomist tradition in the broad MacIntyrean

sense: they both belong to the *Communio* school of theology, which derives its lineage from von Balthasar, de Lubac and the *Ressourcement* movement with its interest in retrieving the treasury of Patristic thought, and they are both interested in developing a postmodern metaphysics of the person.<sup>15</sup> This particular metaphysical outlook draws an analogy between the rôle of relationality in an account of the Trinitarian processions and the rôle of relationality in an account of human identity. They both agree with Jacques Derrida's rejection of the principle of simple identity, and thus are united with the postmoderns against the presuppositions of Cartesian rationality. Like MacIntyre, they agree with the postmodern Genealogists that conceptions of reason are not theologically neutral, and, again like MacIntyre, they argue that this does not necessarily lead to nihilism.

The major concern within the tradition regarding any acknowledgment of the significance of culture for moral formation is that it will subvert the centrality of the doctrine of the universally objective natural law in Thomist ethics. Romanus Cessario alludes to this concern in the following paragraph:

The term 'human experience' has been made to carry considerable theological weight in recent decades. Theologians influenced by Marxist thought find the category fruitful for theological analysis and critique, as did authors involved in the Modernist crisis at the turn of the century. It would be unfortunate if reaction to these schools of thought resulted in a wholesale rejection of such an important element in Christian moral theology.<sup>16</sup>

In Part III the focus is therefore on the third unresolved issue – that of the need for an account of the rôle of culture in moral formation which does not undermine other elements of the tradition. This is necessary both to:

- 1 meet arguments from within the tradition against historicism and ethical relativism; and
- 2 satisfy the third of MacIntyre's criteria for overcoming an epistemological crisis within a tradition.

In Chapter 6 it will be argued that, far from fostering ethical relativism, MacIntyre's concept of a narrative tradition can serve as a bridge between the realms of faith and reason, and, further, is necessary to keep the tradition from falling into a one-sided emphasis on either faith or reason, such as is characteristic of Kantian rationalism and Barthian fideism. Moreover, without the experience of the practices of a narrative tradition and reflection upon them, persons are less likely to perceive the principles of Aristotelian–Thomist practical rationality and the goods of human flourishing as self-evident.

## INTRODUCTION

The final chapter seeks to demonstrate that this emphasis given to the rôle of culture and a narrative tradition within a postmodern Augustinian Thomism need not displace the natural law doctrine of Thomist ethics. However, it will be acknowledged that there are differences between the account of natural law found in the works of MacIntyre and Schindler and the presentation of this doctrine by ‘New Natural Law’ theorists. In particular, MacIntyre explicitly rejects the project of transposing the natural law doctrine into the language of natural rights; and, although Schindler and Schmitz have not gone as far as an outright rejection of this project of transposition, they have acknowledged problems inherent within it. In the final section of this chapter, MacIntyre’s arguments against the adoption of the natural rights discourse by Thomist jurists and moral philosophers are defended and related to ideas in previous chapters regarding the tacit interpretation of meaning and the expressivist account of language.

In the Conclusion, the elements of a postmodern Augustinian Thomism will be summarised and tested against Alasdair MacIntyre’s three criteria for overcoming a crisis within a tradition.