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A THOMISTIC RESPONSE TO CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHIES ON EDUCATION

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The educational system is faced with multiple threats: both external and internal. Externally, technological advancements have begun to change the economic landscape. The development of creative artificial intelligence, for instance, has threatened certain labor groups as robots automate not only repetitive labor but also intellectual endeavors such as adaptive communication at diverse levels. Pedagogy would have to adjust to meet novel demands created by this tipping point in the contemporary world order, leading to an overemphasis on contemporary learning institutions to prioritize the future employability of their students. This paper is both a pause and a reflection, going back to the foundation of this entire pedagogical scheme: the human person. First, it will provide various philosophical perspectives on man by St. Thomas Aquinas or the Angelic Doctor; second, it would argue that the multimodal processes created by technology has created an artificial emphasis on the quantitative as against the qualitative aspects of the human person; third, this paper would contend that such quantitative emphasis has become the unfortunate guide by which some pedagogical policies are implemented; and fourth, it would suggest ways by which universities can realign themselves back to their true pedagogical mission, going beyond their corollary objective to provide employment to their students, and by intellectually leaning on the conceptual implications of the philosophy of the human person by the Angelic Doctor.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, educational Pragmatism, Philosophy of Man, Thomas Aquinas, tyranny of the metrics,

INTRODUCTION

This article is not a critique of contemporary educational systems in general, nor is this a call to return to medieval teaching processes. Rather, it questions some of the ways in which many educational institutions adjust their teaching policies to meet market demands, or, as many contemporary writers term it, the "commodification /

commercialization of education." This refers to the consideration of the pedagogical process as an entity that is basically marketable; as such, it produces graduates that can fill a market need. An apparent example of this happened when nursing schools sprouted all around the Philippines in response to global demands, starting in the '70s, proliferating around the '90s, and continuing up until recent times. In a news article by the Philippine Star last October 15, 2026, the Philippine government pursued the shutdown of nursing schools for being substandard, triggered by failures by a lot of students to pass the board examinations for nurses. This sorry state, I surmise, emanates from the tendency of private school owners to capitalize on the desires of the populace to work abroad for economic reasons. In such a case, at least for some, there is the tendency to create a scenario of uncanny connivance between the students and the school to provide a mass-based certification for employment purposes rather than create a principled adherence to the Code of Ethics for Filipino Nurses where "quality and excellence in the care of patients are the goals of nursing practice," among others.

Currently, courses in the IT (Information Technology), Computer Science and Engineering, Data Science and Analytics, Aviation are also popular because of perceived market needs. While these are useful courses, it seems, however, that there is a tendency for students to take up subjects that would prepare them for their future jobs, slowly veering away from the concept of education as emanating from wonder and curiosity, including fields that should lead them to a good and moral life. This "education for a job" mentality has diluted the "soft skills" of the students, the latter emanating from the supposed interest and love for learning acquired by studies that relate directly to one's personality. As narrated in a news article by GMA News last August 13, 2025, Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Chair Dr. Shirley Agrupis pointed out a study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and by direct interaction of the commission with industry leaders that employees lack such soft skills, which include, among others, critical thinking. Since soft skills belong to the generic capacities of the student, such an assertion leads to the notion that hard skills of future employees, which aim to empower them with job-specific capabilities, are actually founded on the pedagogical states of personhood.

CONTEMPORARY THEORIES AFFECTING EDUCATION

The aforementioned situations, however, cannot be fully blamed on the nature of business itself. It is natural for business owners to maximize profit wherever they can find it, even if it falls within the confines of education as a marketing product. In other words, the failure of education, in most cases, does not even emanate from the failure of governments, or further than these, sinister motives from authorities, as some conspiracy theorists claim. The reason might be as simple as the lack of understanding of what education truly should be. This paper deals precisely with this latter position - that aside from the confusion of the nature of education and its role in perfecting human life, systemic problems emanating from developments in technologies and communication have swayed the educational process further away from its original intent[1] in the name of adaptability to the frenzy of competitions created (Carr 2003, 10).

Such a scenario has been preempted recently with discussions, for instance, on game theory, where independent decisions are analyzed within the framework of competition. Since the advent of ranking systems in education, aggressive advertising has increased as universities attempt to get higher rankings, which, most believe, would eventually translate to more enrollments.[2] In this way, rankings become a tool for marketing, and the institution having more students means greater chances of surviving the competitive educational world (Carmichael 2005, 14). The concept of surviving, albeit important for continuity, reduces education to a bitter pill, a necessary step taken as a part of a process for a successful career. Thus, the student who is not intent to learn because of the value of education, enrolls for the sake of establishing a lucrative career, inadvertently rewards the educational institution that adjusts its curriculum and policies to both the bare minimum requirements of the government and the current market demands for corporate manpower. The historical idea of learning for the sake of perfection of man's capacity for knowledge may no longer appeal to the contemporary student, not necessarily for lack of any idealism but because he or she was placed systemically in a scenario where they are forced to choose courses where there is a high probability of financial success in their careers. In dynamic game theory, where moves end up being interactive and sequential, backward induction would ultimately show a negative view of education in the end.

It should be noted, however, that game theory was originally designed to clarify the competitive interplay between two people in a zero-sum[3] interrelationship (Levy 2004, 60), assuming actions that are motivated by selfishness and mutual distrust. Seen in this light, while game theory can bring to the fore certain aspects of contemporary educational issues and problems, other theories may tackle the other variables at play.

One of these is the idea of McDonaldization,[4] proposed by the American sociologist, George Ritzer (1983, 100), which deals with the rationalization of systems in institutions. McDonaldization is the natural offshoot of game theory because its four fundamental principles - efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control - are basically geared towards being more productive than the organization's competitors. Commenting on the effect of McDonaldization on education, Ritzer argues that the quantitative evaluation scores of teachers eventually reward those who provide an easy environment to the students, sometimes even at the expense of learning.

Another issue he mentioned is the difficulty of rating researchers qualitatively, leading universities to resort to quantitative indicators, with a mere count of publications and citations serving as the basis for determining a researcher's quality. He provides the example of a relatively poor writing job being singled out for citation to be criticized, yet receiving a high qualitative score. These two examples continue to haunt the educational arena despite warnings way back in 1983, and, paradoxically, they are even worsening. The global ranking systems and the continued adherence to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) system have entrenched these problems in stone, exacerbated by the need to rate hundreds of universities of diverse specializations, and to provide certifications of different processes and procedures. Indicator-based checklists are more needed to fulfill these tasks, leading to stronger McDonaldized mechanisms in the educational system. While there are attempts toward integrating quality-based indicators - like the creation of the ISO 26000 for

social responsibility and additional indicators for work on the humanities - the burden of providing unquestionable results for ranking systems pulls these efforts back to quantified methodologies. The limitations and issues surrounding these quantified processes of evaluation have been discussed thoroughly (Muller, 2018), showing that the search for a common and observable standard of evaluation often tends towards unquestionable quantified matrices, often leaving behind the essential, qualified indicators. In research, for instance, writers are often gauged based on their citation index without considering the qualitative content of these citations. Paradoxically, it may happen that a lot of people may have negative comments against a certain author, raising his citation index, leading to the false impression that he is a good writer.

Perhaps this sorry scheme would correct itself in the same way that the market forces adjust towards a certain form of equipoise through balance and counter-balance of opposing forces. In evolutionary theory, this may be construed as a kind of altruism which is paradoxically found in a supposedly purely selfish environment geared towards survival as the sole objective of all species. The traditional Darwinian explanation centers on the "group selection hypothesis," which holds that altruists are evolutionarily superior to selfish individuals. Yet, in the educational levels, these "superior" universities whose ideal mindset is not in tune with the market demands may end up being eliminated due to a lack of students.

Other evolutionary theories (Dawkins, 215) that explain altruism as the offshoot of those who sacrifice for the sake of its group may be akin to educational institutions that attempt to feign ideal notions in order to save the overall reputation of education in the country. However noble this may be, they would probably find themselves eliminated in the process.

This elimination may occur in multiple ways. If the main purpose of tertiary education today is merely to build a corporate career, then subtle changes in the industry would send ripple effects to university enrollments. Contemporary requirements for rank-and-file jobs, for instance, may have their own training programs for the worker to specialize in very specific work conditions. Training for these tasks can be taught to K-10 or K-12 graduates, eliminating the need for any college degree. If ever educational institutions, on the other hand, go beyond the work skills high school graduates possess, adjustments to the needs of labor may divert away from developing the holistic human person and focus solely on the very specific skills. For instance, technical and profession-based skills for doctors, lawyers, and engineers would be overly dependent on focusing and limiting learning for the sole purpose of passing board examinations. For this reason, some students disdain the inclusion of general subjects in their curriculum and, worse, some training centers resort to mere mnemonics to help trainees hurdle these examinations. This reductionist view of education will require constant changes in the curricula, creating confusion in educational systems, which function as diploma mills for future employees armed only with very specific work-oriented skills and aptitudes.

From this perspective, the question remains as to whether treating an educational organization through these contemporary lenses can lead to its development or whether it would actually survive in its traditional form. Otherwise, these tertiary institutions would be reduced to a mere conglomerate of scientific certification programs in order to cater to contemporary demands. This kind of

paradigm would, at first, lead to the demise of the humanities in education, and the appreciation of science only to the extent it is necessary for career advancement. The actions by educational institutions that could be construed as cooperative - leading to the continued valuation of the Millennials and Gen Z populace of acquiring tertiary education, or more specifically humanities-based courses - could come in the form of attempts to compensate the financial contributions of other courses to supplement other courses that are not earning in compliance to government policies. But this would be a short-lived solution in the long term because McDonaldized rationalizations would eventually interpret this policy as ineffective and inefficient.

Everything is not hopeless in these cases. The 1980 University of Michigan tournament of Robert Axelrod, calling for a Tit-for-Tat (TFT) Strategy - where cooperative and uncooperative acts are immediately reciprocated accordingly - had surprising results because by societal punishment of purely selfish and uncooperative acts, a system of cooperation ensues, giving benefit to the group as a whole while at the same time providing a seemingly paradoxical justification of altruism. Neil Levy sees this strategy, which, when integrated with exaptation (where an organism changes its original evolutionary situation by way of adaptation), could serve as an evolutionary basis of contemporary morality. If educational institutions were to engage in a TFT relationship, the question remains - assuming Levy is right - whether these reciprocities would be able to save the educational system embroiled in the systemic traps involving game theory, McDonaldization, and evolutionary theories.

Such an TFT would come in the form of sacrificing enrollment by team players for the sake of preventing the downgrade of educational values that are not necessarily profit-creating ventures. If, however, the real objective for students is to utilize education as pragmatic stepping stones, and for educational institutions to rationalize their profit systems, it would be difficult to sustain excellence and nobility in education if these are simply not feasible. Slowly, the educational system would continue to regress. Thus, there is a need to solidify the philosophical position of the educational system as a whole. Various philosophies of education have affected contemporary teaching valuation.

These aforementioned contemporary theories have long been influenced in one way or another by various philosophies of education. These confluences of various modes of thought have led to a breakaway from traditional presentations of ideal perspectives towards a more adaptive form of complexity theory. Keith Morrison attempted to answer questions arising from the characteristics of school reactions to a dynamic and changing environment, to wit: curricula, aims and values, connectedness, and pedagogy, among others. He further notes that such a theory is principally a reaction to the static presuppositions of positivism, warning nonetheless that complexity theory5 does not tackle all the aspects of educational theory, such as ethics and values. There are foundational reasons for such an assessment. One of these is the idea that one's educational belief is merely and totally a product of one's environment (Morrison 2008, 16), as was asserted by the behaviorists who came into its own period of popularity in the early 20th Century. Such does not take into account that the fusion of horizons runs both ways, between the person and his environment. Second, schools and families can oftentimes affect their own inspirations/stressors, and thus the line between environment and people is further blurred. In other words, theories that are too

environment-bent fall into circular arguments insofar as it is the very people themselves who comprise such an environment. It seems that complexity theory is an offshoot of constructivism where the student adapts his learning as a reaction to the elements outside of himself and thus the educational system that forms his personality must teach him how to survive. Constructivism, however, restricts and reduces the objective of education to mere survivability and goes against the common experience that appreciation of learning continues despite the absence of any harsh condition.

Corollary to this constructivist pedagogical thought is the merger between education and the science closest to it - neurological science. Stephen Campbell (2011, 10) perceives educational neuroscience[6] as a research field that utilizes the methodologies of neuroscience optionally while utilizing other effective ones already established in the field. The common purpose of educational neuroscience is to understand the intricate psychophysiological interplay between the learning consciousness and the human brain. One common position of neuroscience, shared by Campbell, is the inevitable link between consciousness and matter. Simply, it tackles the gap between mind and matter in the realm of education, including their causal prioritizations. If mind determines matter, for instance, Campbell argues that it would create substantial changes in the way educational systems are conducted, recognizing the causative role that the mind engages the world, treating the student as an empowered individual, rather than as being influenced passively by the world. It seems that neuroscience, in this sense, would provide a crucial contribution to the development of education that would not only increase the efficient and effective delivery of pedagogical processes, but would also provide a scientific foundation of education that is acceptable both to scientists and humanities-based academics. However, systemic issues that cover the governance of educational institutions cannot simply be solved by the neurological-scientific perspective of education. Campbell was correct in noting that neuroscience processes should not restrict in any way the methodologies of education, and as such, should be treated only as an optional way in understanding its intricacies. Thus, as such, science would prove useful as a contemporary basis for a sound philosophy of education, strengthening the ideal of an academic *bildung* - the inner force towards self-realization and development. Nonetheless, other philosophies are still needed to complement the limitations inherent in neuroscience as the sole basis to understand philosophy of education in general.

The tendency of researchers to lean towards constructivism and neuroscience portrays a more generalized conflict among pedagogical thinkers regarding the role of scientism vis-à-vis the arts and humanities in the holistic understanding of the intricacies of education, as David Bridges describes it, as "two cultures" embroiled in a contrasting war of methodologies. He succinctly distinguished at the onset the difference between the mere utilization of the scientific method and scientism, where such methodology becomes the sole basis of all conclusions and decisions. Thus, he described scientism, among others, as confidence in numbers, quantification, and correlational studies, while at the same time doubting the results in any study that does not utilize these trilateral principles, even in studies of semi-qualitative research, such as those in education and social studies. It is the latter that has been controversial inasmuch as the notion of evidence-based research has been generally confined to the

inductive method. This has led to the downplay of the qualitatively imposed peer review process as unreliable, expensive, and cumbersome (Bridges 2017, 40).

On the contrary, the imposition of quantitative ways of measuring excellence in research, such as indices and citations, is raised to the pedestal.[7] He provided two answers to this academic perplexity, to wit: first, scientific research, even those which purports to be evidence-based, are theory-laden, which means that an interpretative framework - mostly qualitative - are utilized in explaining results; second is, simply, the myth of science where numerous examples have shown that the way science is collated, interpreted, and presented. He noted that even Einstein's Theory of Relativity began with the creative imagination of the scientist long before any evidence had presented itself. Bridges has established the need to re-assert the call for humanities-based researchers to universities to avoid the contemporary temptation to emphasize the quantitative over the qualitative aspects of pedagogical research. As mentioned earlier, the convenience of easily established consensus offered by quantitative standardizations in ranking universities has led to an overemphasis on inductive and scientific studies to the point where these institutions reward these publications to the detriment of other qualitative and unrewarded papers.

Thus, there is a need to re-assess whether this paradigm has worked so far as pedagogical philosophy has attempted to contemporize itself with the commercialization of the economic conditions of the student. It is imperative to determine whether such adjustments can be considered as a form of pedagogical retrogression. One such analysis emanates from Richard Pring (2004, 105-106) as he exposes the moral dimensions of education[8] in the light of these aforementioned changes. The same foundation axiom was utilized with the reminder that the role of the teacher is to bring the student from ignorance to knowledge. With this, Pring, however, emphasized critical engagement between students and the teacher, establishing not only a professional relationship between the two camps, but also a moral one. Further such critical engagements[9] between people also create a custodial relationship to ensure that values are preserved through posterity, creating a moral bond between the parties whereby generations of teachers and learners carry on the traditions of worthwhile living (Maritain 1948, 215). Pring notes that if teaching is viewed in this way, then the current process, which links pay with performance, might seriously impede this traditional relationship, specifically because language begins to change as to how teachers are evaluated - a conglomerate of business terms that has become the new norm in teaching as a practice. As a business process, teaching now becomes embroiled in the process of acquiring objectives and targets, reducing pedagogy into a mere business product. At this point, teachers now become obsessed more with productivity targets rather than the original intent of teaching as moral action.[10] He notes, for instance, the role that a teacher plays in creating good citizens for a country (Loomis and Rodriguez 2009, 22) - something which can be learned even by those who are not academically inclined. In more ways than one, this paradigm inches closer to the very educational philosophy of the Angelic Doctor. The aim of this paper is to present his philosophy as being perennially relevant despite the presence of contemporary complexities, comforts, and conveniences.

THE PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

There are several teachings of the Angelic Doctor in his Summa Theologiae (ST) and other works that may bear on discussions of pedagogical philosophy, specifically in light of the aforementioned discussions. Since the Angelic Doctor did not directly create a distinct chapter in his works dealing directly with education, there are indirect references in his teachings that serve as conceptual foundations, such as: his presentation on both truth and falsity; on how truth is treated as a virtue; and on the interplay between the intellect as both active and passive. Yet, to completely understand these disparate concepts, a holistic understanding of the place of man in the grand scheme of things as envisioned by the Angelic Doctor is likewise needed. This includes man as a material and spiritual being (Brock 2021, 88);[11] how man integrates knowledge by way of abstraction; how faith and reason are integrated; the interplay between cardinal and theological virtues; the relation between education and the common good; and most importantly, the realization that God is the ultimate efficient and final cause of man. These, together with the specific issues, provide a clearer picture of how the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor remains relevant to contemporary issues in education.

Man is the subject of educational philosophy itself, but to consider him as being endowed with a soul that is both incorporeal and subsistent yet substantially united to the body[12] as the Angelic Doctor has averred (Amerini 2013, 40), immediately eludes the consideration of the contemporary scientific mind. While most science-based studies are made by researchers who may belong to one religion or another, with their faith-based dogmas are rarely included in policy determinations. Yet, the serious acceptance of the soul and its nature is the beginning of a radical shift in pedagogical thinking. The recognition that the intellect and will as the speculative and appetitive intellectual powers of the soul respectively bring into fore the *per se* operation of the human soul (*ST*. Ia. 75. 1c)[13] that readily distinguishes him from the other animals. From such, human pedagogy ought to be in line with the ancient idea of the perfect life - consisting of the perfection of the hierarchical powers of man - as a path to human happiness - which the Angelic Doctor has elevated to man's beatific vision of God (*ST Supplementum*. 92. 1c).[14] This position emanates from the soul's incorruptibility as a substantial form that, as aside from unifying matter into something determined, functions independently from matter thereby surviving its dissolution. In other words, the recognition of an after-life extends the vision of education beyond mundane matters and includes the development of a strong spiritual life for the student.

The Angelic Doctor has explained that the intellect is a power of the soul in created beings, and as such operates in relation to universal being. Since it is not in act in relation to all things intelligible, it is in potency to what is knowable. In other words, it functions as a sort of *tabula rasa* in relation to the intelligible species, being actualized by something already in act. Further, since the passive intellect is such in relation to the whole universal being, it is still superior and nobler despite the vegetative power being active and the sensitive power being passive to particular things (*ST*. 1a. 79. 1-2c). This implies that the excellence of this power does not rely simply on the state of the power of the soul, but also on its object.[15] In other words,

learning is an interaction between the powers of the soul and the object known which may have varying degrees of nobility and perfection. This gives us a viewpoint of education as being reduced if its sole purpose is preparing a person to establish a mundane career.

The teacher, in this sense, brings into fore the active potentialities of his or her students – provided by the Divine Creator as the latter maximizes and fulfill all of their capacities. His or her function is similar to the doctor/healer whereby the natural healing capacities of the patient are emphasized, leading to the idea that education is a confluence between the teacher and nature itself – being the intellect's participation to eternal law, and hereby to eternal truth (De Magistro. 1c). This teaching by the Angelic Doctor has been reiterated by Pope Leo XIV in *Drawing New Maps of Hope*, when he emphasized that education is a shared and collective endeavor, acting as a community to instill the understanding that "desire and the heart must not be separated from knowledge: [as] it would mean splitting the person." (Pope Leo XIV 2025)

The sensitive powers are actuated and terminate outside the soul itself and thus are not generally termed as active while the intellect is considered both passive and active. The intellect being active is something quite unique because it is beyond the scope of science to explain. This is because the objects of science - namely, sensible things - do not possess their intelligibility subsisting independently of matter. With the fact that the passive intellect, despite its materiality, would be unable to bring out the universal from the phantasms except by way of abstraction, exposing the existence of the active intellect as a prerequisite for understanding (*ST*. la. 79. ad3). The degrees of abstraction whereby understanding material things, represented as phantasms in the communal sense, can be seen both from the perspectives of their material and immaterial properties, with the former producing knowledge of data and the latter producing mathematics. A third level, with the abstraction process being a capability of an intellectual soul, purely immaterial concepts could be assimilated, despite being received through material mediums. These three movements basically justify the idea that purely evidence-based science needs an interpretive framework before such can be made intelligible to scientific communities. In other words, even scientific research needs qualitative and non-material assumptions before it can be applicable in the universal sense, despite having achieved satisfactory statistical compliances and reliability requirements. The fact that such tools aim to predict outcomes on the holistic levels of things shows attempts to utilize these for universalized understanding.

Such insight brings into memory *The Idea of a University* by Cardinal Newman – written in 1852 - which describes the conceptual conflict between the sciences and the humanities, including the ends of the teaching of religion. Here, he reminded his audience – scientists of a university – that the supposed conflict and the distrust this scenario creates is actually just a misunderstanding as regards the interplay between the natural and supernatural, reminding everyone that the advances in science do not touch the truths of the supernatural (Newman 1996, 438).

One forgotten aspect of real education is the fact that the human intellect tends towards truth for its own sake. In this sense, the Angelic Doctor emphasizes that the teacher does not cause truth; rather, knowledge adjusts because truth depends on the existence of things (*De Magistro*. ad 3). Pragmatism, by redefining this truth in terms of utility, has created the idea that, as mentioned earlier, education is a process towards

creating and maintaining a career for economic purposes, whereby an educated person must be seen as also being financially successful. This may be the case in contemporary experience; it may have the side effect of considering studies that are not feasible to be simply a waste of time and resources, where parents discourage their children from taking courses in humanities and other similar fields.

What pragmatism misses is the point of the Angelic Doctor that, metaphysically, the intellectual speculative powers tend towards truth in the same sense that the intellectual appetitive powers tend towards the good, either essentially or accidentally (*ST*. llallae. 109. ad2).[16] Similar to the truth of a house design being dependent on the engineers and architects who created it, the Angelic Doctor insists that judgment is based on what is in the object essentially, rather than on what is in it accidentally. In this perspective, truth simply cannot be defined based on its accidental relation with utility, rather it ought to be defined on how things relate to the intellect, and only secondarily should it be understood in its relationship with utility. In a similar vein, policies on education, based on truth, cannot similarly be dependent on simple utility, but on the understanding of the more universal, efficient and final causes surrounding the pursuit of truth. Further, since, according to the Angelic Doctor, being itself is the cause of truth in the intellect, the pursuit of truth ultimately tends to the most perfect being which is God who as First Truth is Truth Himself (*ST*. 1a. 16. 5c). If education is the process of man's acquisition of truth, then its ultimate final cause ought to be God, and with this are included all the moral and social implications emanating from this perspective. Further, the idea of the Angelic Doctor that knowledge is acquired by way of composing and dividing shows that the interplay between the inductive and deductive processes in learning and the qualitative (form being the principle of unity) and the quantitative (matter as the principle of division) aspects of research are essential to the pedagogical process.

Contrary to truth is falsity. The Angelic Doctor asserts that one of the ways by which falsity occurs is when artificial things fall short of their supposed form or operation, or in the case of man, being a voluntary agent, falls short of his ordination or predestination, as when he sins. Such is different from mere negation, which, as privation, asserts nothing. Since falsity is not founded on truth but rather in the person asserting that which falls short of the standard/ordination, then character plays a crucial role in this pursuit. In other words, education would always entail a moral perspective and the acquisition of virtue is an essential component of learning both from the educator and for the student. If a university, for instance, exaggerates its capabilities in whatever sense during its accreditation evaluations, such cannot be construed as mere negation; rather, it borders within falsity (*ST*. la. 17. 1c).[17]

This is the reason why it is timely to express the opinion of the Angelic Doctor that truth is also a virtue. Specifically, it is a special virtue that has commonalities with justice, inclining to that which is less. What are the implications of these? First is that truth is a virtue or a disposition of the soul to search for truth. Knowledge is thus geared towards the engagement of being, ultimately leading to God who is the Subsistent Being. This leads to the notion that since the perfection of the intellect is knowing the true, and that true and good are convertible, then it can be said that every truth is from God (*De Veritate*. 8. 8c). The intellectual powers, both speculative and appetitive, are primarily spiritual powers, and as such, would greatly be reduced if it is

not congruent with the ultimate end of man. This spiritual dimension of knowledge would lead to the notion that education is not a mere tool to advance man towards his mundane and temporary goals but to prepare him to meet his Creator.

Second is that truth is a part of justice, annexed to it as a secondary virtue in the light of being directed to another person and by setting up equity between signs and things. This exposes a social dimension in education inasmuch as it prepares a person to love-the-other by way of the common good. The latter is a *bonum honestum* or a good-in-itself (Maritain 1966 ,53), going beyond the system of pragmatic advantages and utilities. Education must contribute to a harmonious and peaceful world, not just a world of prosperity, and must create not only skillful students, but also moral ones.

And third, truth, as mentioned, inclines to that which is less (*ST*. IIaIIae. 109. 1-4c). As such, it is a manifestation of the logical relation between the universal and the particular whereby what is true for the latter is also true for the former, realistically leading to humility (Fox 2020, 31). Thus, a person who humbly restricts himself from expressing all of his achievements, presenting only what is needed in a situation, continues to stay within truth;[18] but the moment he exaggerates or goes beyond what he has, then he moves towards falsity. Some may consider that falsity is really not a matter of pedagogical urgency as the truth-falsity dichotomy may have evolved or is currently irrelevant in today's issues. But these contrary concepts reflect on character and virtue as disposition, which redounds to one's integrity and reputation – still relevant today. Thus, truth and falsity function as the metaphysical foundation of rectitude and probity in education, even in today's world.

The fact that truth is treated as a virtue in the Thomistic sense is another aspect of education which is often overlooked in the creation of contemporary policies, specifically if the administrators are bent on satisfying the demands of populist market forces. Yet, following the Thomistic argument, if truth in relation to the person is a virtue, then education is inevitably tied up with the acquisition of this virtue in its pursuit of truth. In other words, morality is an essential component of education with the beatific vision of God as its ultimate final cause.

The tendency of educational institutions to accept only what is current literature in research ought not to prejudice the introduction of ideas which, despite their time-situation, introduce truth to the intellect of the reader. The more knowledge moves towards the First Principle, the more it is no longer subject to changes, making these timeless. Moral principles, to which the study of virtues is determined, for instance, are not subject to current events or preferences. Seen in this way, pedagogical science remains subservient to a wider understanding of the philosophy of education as the latter provides the first principles – setting the extensive parameters of teaching as a relation between man and man, knowing their role in the universe which they did not create. This would establish wisdom in knowing their place in the greater scheme of things.

CONCLUSION

A metaphysical understanding of how man obtains knowledge, and on how it plays a part in leading man towards his ultimate end, would provide a comprehensive view of the role of schools and universities in the holistic development of its subject.

The set-up of educational systems after the industrial revolution has significantly changed, especially now that it is inevitably tied up with cost issues vis-à-vis the leaps and bounds of technological development, which may, in the minds of many, be an unbridgeable chasm between the Middle Ages and contemporary times. Yet man still, and will remain, a being with intellectual, speculative, and appetitive powers moving towards what is good, and ultimately to God himself.

This extra-mundane perspective of man, way beyond the McDonaldized parameters of the worker's career, creates a more holistic understanding of education as perfective of man's powers. As regards this, the Angelic Doctor asserts that Divine Truth is the measure of all truth, permanently establishing truth as something beyond material considerations (*Summa Contra Gentiles*. 1. 62. 5). Such a perspective by the Angelic Doctor goes beyond simple altruism in evolutionary theory – the latter being limited to simple survival, adding an eschatological dimension to education. It does not, however, lower the value of neuroscience or the influence of game theory as these are strategic means to organizing the material aspects of education. Rather, these parameters are expanded, exposing the limitations of scientism, resulting in the idea that education brings into focus the perfection of the spiritual powers of man, establishing any emphasis on the quantitative evaluation of education as a form of reductionism. Thus, from the perspective of the Angelic Doctor, education is a relationship between two persons where one guides a student not only in terms of information acquisition but in the acquisition of wisdom.

The contention that the Angelic Doctor is a thirteenth-century philosopher (and would thus be unable to fathom contemporary issues) is shown to be inappropriate because the first principles of reality, in this case, pedagogical perfection, are unchanging, especially noting that it is reducible to the deep recesses of man's spiritual nature. In this sense, a teacher is not tasked to merely impart skills, but to establish an ethical bond with his or her students and develop them into holistic persons – good employees with character and moral credibility. This is in line with the teachings of the Angelic Doctor that truth is the end of speculation (*Ethica.* 1. 8).

Thus, from the Angelic Doctor's point of view, and generally, the Catholic and Christian perspective, there remain certain absolute pedagogical concepts founded on the unchanging humanity of the student-subject. So much so that if a student, for instance, utilizes novel tools like artificial intelligence in writing homework, it still redounds to the fundamental question of truth and honesty; or when a teacher encounters a student with mental health problems, he or she cannot simply dismiss it as simply outside the obligations of his or her paygrade because to love and care for one's student remains fundamental to pedagogical development. This leads to the importance of educational institutions to develop the students' *secular conscience* leading them to recognize, in the spirit of the gospels, the dignity of the human person who "while part of the State, yet transcends the State because of the inviolable mystery of his spiritual freedom and because of his call to the attainment of supra-worldly possessions" (Maritain 1943, 31).

NOTES

1. One possible reason why most of the time the idea of teleology as a determinant of educational policy is that teleological thinking has more often than not attributed to utilitarianism rather than to ethics. David Carr exposes this: "It would be hard to exaggerate the difficulties that confusion over the meaning of the simple preposition 'for' – particularly the failure to appreciate that there is a significant non-instrumental use of 'for' – has created for educational philosophy in general and for the business of curriculum planning in particular. The chief confusion is a muddling of what might be called instrumental and non-instrumental or teleological senses of 'for'. It is not uncommon, even in mainstream philosophy, to find these senses run together – perhaps partly because one of the most famous ethical theories (utilitarianism) is both a teleological and an instrumental theory: utilitarians define goodness in terms of the beneficial outcomes or consequences of actions." See David Carr, *Making Sense of Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy and Theory of Education and Teaching*, (RoutledgeFalmer, London and New York, 2003): 10.

2. In game theory, such interactions between universities could be characterized as both a sequential-move or dynamic game. Fiona Carmichael describes this: "In each of these examples one of the players moves first and another sees the first player's move before deciding how to respond. This means that the order of moves is important and the analysis of this type of game has to take this into account. It is not always easy to do this using pay-off matrices and therefore sequential games are usually analysed using game trees or extensive forms…" See Fiona Carmichael, *A Guide to Game Theory* (Pearson Education Limited, England, 2005): 14.

3. Neil Levy describes this interrelationship in a zero-sum game: "Most of the games we are familiar with are *zero-sum* games. In a zero-sum game, the gains of one player automatically translate into the losses of another. In these games, cooperation between opponents is out of the question: only one player or team can win." See Neil Levy, *What Makes us Moral: Crossing the Boundaries of Biology*, (Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2004): 60.

4. George Ritzer describes rationalization in this way: "A wide-ranging process of rationalization is occurring across American society and is having an increasingly powerful impact in many other parts of the world. It encompasses such disparate phenomena as fast food restaurants, TV dinners, packaged tours, industrial robots, plea bargaining and open-heart surgery on an assembly-line basis." See Ritzer, George, "The 'McDonaldization' of Society," *The Journal of American Culture, Volume 6, Issue 1,* (March 1983): 100.

5. Keith Morrison describes this interplay: "What has happened here? The organism is responding to the environment by reconfiguring itself and metamorphosing in order to survive: it is an open system responding to its environment. The process involves self-organization, and the slime mold, reinvigorated, is capable of survival; the whole process is dynamic." See Keith Morrison, "Educational Philosophy and the Challenge of Complexity Theory," *Complexity Theory and the Philosophy of Education*, edited by Mark Mason (Fabulous Printers Pte Ltd, 2008): 16.

6. Stephen Campbell reiterates the importance of this argument in his overall perspective and purpose of education: "What counts to me, as an educator, is that mind actually does have an effect on matter, and that means presupposing that one's mind can, at least to some extent, have causal effects on others, and on one's own brain and body in particular. Prima facie, such a view runs contrary to a fundamental philosophical commitment of most, if not all, scientists—viz., the notion that mind cannot have any causal efficacy whatsoever. To presuppose otherwise, however, would be to eliminate volition as a human characteristic, to render experience a matter of happenstance, and to deny any sense of moral agency or empowerment to learners. I find this unacceptable. Hence, I prefer to consider mind and brain different aspects of a unitary 'mindbrain', and to identify the study of the mindbrain as the true object of educational neuroscience." In other words, he argues that the idea of mind as passive is against the foundations of any pedagogical philosophy. See Stephen Campbell, "Educational Neuroscience: Motivations, Methodology, and Implications," *Educational Neuroscience*, (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication, 2011): 10.

7. David Bridges describes this sorry state in this manner: "On the basis of the prejudices and priorities that I have indicated, however, whole swathes of educational research rooted in particular in the theory and methods of inquiry from within the humanities tradition, along with critiques of the normative and ideological framing of policy and policymakers' assumptions about what might count as working, are 'systematically' excluded from the evidential base that is offered to policymakers, excluded from 'systematic' reviews of such evidence, excluded from major research indices (the Education Resources Information Centre, for example), and marginalized in the competition for research funding." It seems that this is not only happening in the UK but also in various universities worldwide. See David Bridges, *Philosophy in Educational Research: Epistemology, Ethics, Politics and Quality*, (Springer International Publishing, 2017): 40.

8. Richard Pring, however, clarifies that even government is included in this business model: "This quality assurance requires a system - a mechanism for establishing the purposes, for deciding upon the criteria which demonstrate the achievement of those purposes, and for checking whether those criteria have been applied. Such a mechanism is increasingly modelled on that of industry. Thus, distinctions are made between quality control and quality assurance. 'Quality' is seen in terms of fitness for purpose, that purpose being established partly by the customers of the service but mainly by the government as the custodian of the interests of the customer." See Richard Pring, *Philosophy of Education: Aims, Theory, Common Sense and Research*, (Continuum, London, 2004): 105-106.

9. Such idealism should not be a product of the interplay of rewards and punishments. Jacques Maritain explains: "Moreover, from the moment when ethical comportment is not a mere waking dream guided by the fear of social penalties or the concern to justify oneself in the eyes of other men; from the moment when man has truly crossed the threshold of moral life; from that moment, as has already been indicated, universal law is vitally interiorized, embowled, existentialized in the dynamism of the individual subject tending towards the ends which are of importance to him above all else." Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1948): 215.

10. Many philosophers share this viewpoint. Steven Loomis and Jacob Rodriguez acknowledge science without compromising the role of morality in pedagogy: "In spite of the obvious power of technical models of thought, the moral law does not disappear. It continues to set nontrivial ethical demands on institutional participants and social institutions. The stress in our book is on the active negotiation of error in social structures (see the complementary work of MacIntyre 1999), which requires a strong, not a weak will; it requires rationality and reason working in unison. In other words, it requires the proper function of mature human beings." See Steven Loomis and Jacob Rodriguez, *C.S. Lewis: A Philosophy of Education*, (Palgrave MacMillan, US, 2009): 22.

11. Stephen Brock clarifies that while the soul as form functions as determinant, matter is not reduced to accidents. He explains: "Of course, for Thomas as for Aristotle, it is not the matter but the form which gives the species to a thing; and similarly with an action. But this does not mean that the matter and its dispositions are merely accidental to the thing. In things composed of matter and form, the matter, too, up to a point, enters into the full definition of the thing. It does so to the extent that it is proportionate to the form. In so doing, it also adds certain secondary—but not accidental—determinations to the thing, e.g., necessary qualitative predispositions, the distinction and distribution of the thing's parts, etc." See Stephen Brock, *Action and Conduct: Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action*, (The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC, 2021): 88.

12. The reconciliation of these characteristics is not without controversy. Fabrizio Amerini avers: "Up until now, we have seen the arguments that Thomas uses to reject the idea that the soul is a (separate spiritual) substance and that he concludes that the soul is a form… Thomas's greatest difficulty is in reconciling two theses that seem irreconcilable: on the one hand, the thesis that the soul is the form of the body, and on the other hand, the thesis that the soul's intellectual operation takes place in separation from the body. Throughout his career, Thomas undertook at length to demonstrate that these two ideas are consistent." See Fabrizio Amerini, *Aquinas on the Beginning and End of Human Life,* (translated by Mark Henninger), (Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, 2013): 40.

13. The Angelic Doctor defines the soul as: "To seek the nature of the soul, we must premise that the soul is defined as the first principle of life of those things which live: for we call living things 'animate,' [*i.e., having a soul], and those things which have no life, 'inanimate." Now life is shown principally by two actions, knowledge and movement." What he was trying to emphasize here is that this movement functions as a power which is independent of matter (*Summa Theologiae. Ia. 75. 1c).*

14. The Angelic Doctor explains the argument from the notion that intellect knows what is intelligible to this faculty having its fulfillment in the beatific vision: "Hence if there be a self-subsistent thing that has nothing in itself besides that which is intelligible, such a thing can by itself be the form whereby the intellect understands. Now, a thing is intelligible in respect of its actuality and not of its potentiality (Met. ix): in proof of which an intelligible form needs to be abstracted from matter and from all the properties of matter. Therefore, since the Divine essence is pure act, it will be possible for it to be the form whereby the intellect understands, and this will be the beatific vision (*Summa Theologiae. Supplement: 92. 1c*).

15. The Angelic Doctor presented this argument in reply to the objection that since the passive intellect is already immaterial, then abstraction can occur in the absence of any active intellect: "Sensible things are found in act outside the soul; and hence there is no need for an active sense. Wherefore it is clear that in the nutritive part all the powers are active, whereas in the sensitive part all are passive: but in the intellectual part, there is something active and something passive" (*Summa Theologiae. Ia. 79. ad 3*).

16. This position makes the true and the good convertible. However, they differ when it comes to the consideration that truth is a special virtue because good cannot be such since it functions as the genus of virtue. Here, we could imply that a person who is virtuously truthful would necessarily be good. The Angelic Doctor explains: "The true and the good are convertible as to subject, since every true thing is good, and every good thing is true. But considered logically, they exceed one another, even as the intellect and will exceed one another. For the intellect understands the will and many things besides, and the will desires things pertaining to the intellect, and many others. Wherefore the 'true' considered in its proper aspect as a perfection of the intellect is a particular good, since it is something appetible: and in like manner the 'good' considered in its proper aspect as the end of the appetite is something true, since it is something intelligible. Therefore, since virtue includes the aspect of goodness, it is possible for truth to be a special virtue, just as the 'true' is a special good; yet it is not possible for goodness to be a special virtue, since rather, considered logically, it is the genus of virtue" (*Summa Theologiae. IIaIIae. 109. ad 2*).

17. Artificial things can be false in the following sense according to the Angelic Doctor: "Now natural things depend on the divine intellect, as artificial things on the human. Wherefore artificial things are said to be false simply and in themselves, in so far as they fall short of the form of the art; whence a craftsman is said to produce a false work, if it falls short of the proper operation of his art" (*Summa Theologiae. Ia. 17. 1c*).

18. This attitude was correctly attributed by Matthew Fox to the Angelic Doctor himself: "Aquinas is in love with truth and truth seeking. He is a hunter-gatherer after truth, a model and saint and doctor of the church who fulfills that very important archetype of the hunter-gatherer that I wrote about in my book *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*. Aquinas is a walking archetype and a story of our pursuit of truth. All his life, he sought truth, whether by way of science or philosophy, observation or contemplation, the scriptures of the theologians commenting upon them." See Matthew Fox, *The Tao of Thomas Aquinas: Fierce Wisdom for Hard Times* (iUniverse, Bloomington, Indiana, 2020): 31.

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