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The point about being a Christian (other versions of this are no doubt possible!) is that one lives, loves, works, feels and thinks in the light of the disclosure/discovery of a sense of end (*finis, telos*), and hence of a possibility of happiness (*beatitudo, eudaimonia*), which in turn points to a whole style of being-with-others, a particular form of community (*amicitia, koinonia*). In principle this is both nuclear and global. As well as the smaller projects, such as the guerrilla bases, proleptic utopias, regenerating sanctuaries and the like which our local church-communities should be, there must be permanent transformation of the structures of interdependence, ongoing liberation of mankind as a whole, active sponsoring of the righteousness of God which happens as the righting of relationships within society. Salvation occurs as community: that is unmistakably the Christian emphasis. In other words, then, politics cannot be divorced from ethics. It is in the ethical, precisely, that the relation between the personal and the social-political is negotiated. And if that is a commonplace in the tradition represented by St Thomas Aquinas, as it is, however uncharacteristic it may be of many Catholics 'in public life', it is also a principle which is central in the literary-critical tradition developed and sustained by *Scrutiny*.

The plan of this paper, then, is first to outline how the *Scrutiny* tradition forms an essential part of the long revolution against the society which inhibits and falsifies all reference to an ultimate source of meaning and an ultimate ground of being, and then to present what seem to be the primary orientations of the Christian alternative (*agapé* as *amicitia*) as formulated classically by St Thomas. The invoking there of Paul Tillich's language is deliberate: *The Religious Situation*, published originally in 1926, retains its force as an attempt, from the standpoint of 'religious socialism', to connect and interpret the multifarious protests evident then against the society of 'one-dimensional man'.

## §1—*Leavis, Lawrence and Cézanne's apples*

It was in the twenties, the creative decade of our century, that the 'experience of being' which the *Scrutiny* tradition sponsors and mediates originally took shape. The reserves about it, as formulated say by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* and by Terry Eagleton in *The New Left Church*, seem justified; but this criticism issues from within the tradition itself. It takes for granted the essential rightness of what *Scrutiny* is about. It assumes, in particular, that a

literary-critical approach can illuminate the nature of our common experience of being. The point is, then, to stress the uniqueness of the English, or rather Anglo-American, literary-critical tradition since *Scrutiny*, and its coherence and profundity as a method of group self-understanding. For there is, in fact, nothing quite like it in any comparable culture. It has been imported from the United States into the German universities since 1945, but the methodologies of literary studies in France seem to remain much what they were in England in the late nineteenth century, except of course where structuralism has taken hold, and that is something else again. One commonly finds that foreigners who read only our philosophers, and expect of them what they look to their own philosophers for, conclude that our culture has got irretrievably into the hands of positivists, and that we are totally unaware of the meaning of what has taken place. My contention is, however, that it is in this uniquely developed literary-critical tradition, with all its undeniable vulnerability, that we have become able to identify and explore the deep meanings of our experience, and sometimes to resist and reverse the positivist interpretations of it. To put the point provocatively and very schematically: most of what Heidegger can do for one, Leavis does as well or better; or rather, since it is D. H. Lawrence whom he makes accessible and draws on, the creative-critical vision in *his* oeuvre is our best equivalent to Heidegger's *Seinsdenken*. And what we lose in metaphysical range and ontological depth, we may perhaps make up for in particularized insight and imaginative rigour.

What Heidegger can do for one, may be conveniently inspected in many of the articles in *Sacramentum Mundi*, the theological encyclopedia in course of publication under the general editorship of Karl Rahner. Most of the German contributors take for granted the Heideggerian version of the condition of our society. What this amounts to, essentially, is that our culture is interpreted as a technocracy which needs to be saved from itself by education in contemplativity. We suffer, typically, from an 'experience of being', a *Seinserfahrung*, a consciousness, which is a *Seinsvergessenheit*, a certain positivism, an obliviousness to the mystery of being, a systematic indifference to the matter of 'that which makes life significant'. We require to be released from the spell of *rechnendes Denken*, the calculative thinking which sustains technology, so as to be enabled to practise *besinnendes Denken*, the contemplative thinking which opens us, to quote the Leavisian phrase again, to 'that which makes life significant'. It is a familiar pattern. The uses of *ratio* have to be re-rooted in the primacy of *intellectus*; the discursive rationality of *Verstand* must be subordinated once again to the dialectical rationality of *Vernunft*; and so on. There is, in fact, an imperative to contemplativity which is central in Heidegger's later works. And what this means, as Giles Driscoll says (*The New Scholasticism*, Autumn 1968), is that they are 'redolent with allusions especially to the more placid

virtues'. The notion of *Gelassenheit* is important: a certain attitude of poised selflessness in relaxed and total readiness for the self-disclosure of that which is other than oneself, whether text or person or event. It is an openness, a receptivity, a patience, what one might call a 'reverence for being'. And the emphasis is, of course, a deliberate contesting of the dominance in the prevailing image of western man of the aggressive virtues ('go', 'drive', 'push', etc.).

Once one has been alerted to it, the affinity of this language to Leavis's is surely obvious. My point will become clearer, I think, if I quote from P. N. Furbank's fine review of *Lectures in America* (*The Listener*, 30th January 1968): 'Leavis's work (as his use of Blake as a touchstone in his Yeats lecture reminds one) exists to promote a very special kind of "thinking". The phrases he uses about "thinking" are always intensely characteristic: "the friction, the sense of pregnant arrest, which goes with active realizing thought and the taking of real charged meaning", etc. For him, genuine thinking is a matter of "realizing" the realities you are dealing with so concretely, and with such a scrupulous sense of actuality, that a conclusion imposes itself of its own accord. Thought of this kind can only take place in a condition of absolute openness and willessness.' It is just this that Heidegger means by *Gelassenheit*. The review continues: 'However, to preserve the possibility of such a kind of thinking in a world largely run on other sorts is bound to dictate its own life-style. Flexibility calls for a tough bark as well as long roots. Anyone who attempts this unwilful kind of thinking will find plenty of use for his obstinacy and aggressiveness (as who could say Leavis hasn't) in defending a space for it. And there's a price to pay for that too.' It would be easy to prolong the analogy with the Heidegger case. The point that matters here, however, is that P. N. Furbank, presumably without any reference to Heidegger, has identified the special kind of thinking which Leavis's work exists to promote: a self-effacing responsiveness to reality which happens in a condition of absolute willessness. The subject's will-to-power over the object must be converted into the self's responsiveness to the appeal of the other: relationship is exchange, not domination/servility. The famous *dépassement* of the subject/object antinomy which continental philosophers talk so much about, is finally enacted in the literary-critical experience. The much-discussed liberation from subjectivism actually *happens*, intermittently but paradigmatically, in the process of learning to read a poem or a novel. The 'hermeneutical problem', about which such massive treatises are written, must in the end be solved, if at all, *practically*; and 'practical criticism' suggests itself as a modest but verifiable 'solution'.

It would be best, at this point, to re-make a Leavisian analysis of a poem or novel. The act of analysis is defined in these terms (*Education and the University*, page 70): 'Analysis, one would go on, is the process by which we seek to attain a complete reading of the poem—

a reading that approaches as nearly as possible to the perfect reading. There is about it nothing in the nature of “murdering to dissect”, and suggestions that it can be anything in the nature of laboratory-method misrepresent it entirely. We can have the poem only by an inner kind of possession; it is “there” for analysis only in so far as we are responding appropriately to the words on the page. In pointing to them (and there is nothing else to point to) what we are doing is to bring into sharp focus, in turn, this, that and the other detail, juncture or relation in our total response; or (since “sharp focus” may be a misleading account of the kind of attention sometimes required), what we are doing is to dwell with a deliberate, considering responsiveness on this, that or the other node or focal point in the complete organization that the poem is, in so far as we have it. Analysis is not a dissection of something that is already and passively there. What we call analysis is, of course, a constructive or creative process. It is a more deliberate following-through of that process of creation in response to the poet’s words which reading is. It is a re-creation in which, by a considering attentiveness, we ensure a more than ordinary faithfulness and completeness.’

This ‘considering attentiveness’ is what one must *learn*; and learning it is mostly a process of unlearning one’s tendency to dominate a text by one form or another of subjectivizing. This is training for the literary-critical act, a ‘complete reading’, as genuinely *hermeneutical*. One learns to read a poem, one learns to listen to what the poet is saying. But in learning to sort out good poems from bad, by Leavisian analysis, one comes to see that a good poem is one in which the poet himself has attended to his experience (his ‘object’) in precisely the same way, with the same kind of self-effacing responsiveness, as one reads his poem. And it is at this point, in Leavis, that literary criticism, as he says, ‘enters overtly into questions of emotional hygiene and moral value—more generally (there seems no other adequate phrase), of spiritual health’. It is surely little exaggeration to say that Leavis is out to teach us to distinguish between poems in which the ‘object’ is properly respected by the poet and thus brought truly into the light, and poems in which the ‘object’ disappears, in ‘self-cherishing emotionality’, ‘wallowing complaisance’, ‘alcoholic lack of focus’, ‘self-indulgence’, and the like, on the part of the poet. Where poetry habitually subverts the proper relationship between subject and object (poet and reality), there Leavis detects ‘spiritual malady’. What he means, I think, is that it is symptomatic of something deeply wrong in a community if the poets, the most articulate spokesmen of it, commonly ‘indulge themselves’ instead of letting things speak for themselves.

Following Lawrence, Leavis has come more and more to judge literature in terms of whether it issues from some ‘spontaneous-creative fulness of being’ on the poet’s part, or is merely willed into existence by him, forced, contrived, *voulu*. This antinomy may easily

be tracked through the book on Lawrence. Leavis speaks of 'the world of usurping "idea" and will with its triumphs of automatism and mechanical order', and he evokes this in words such as contrivance, insistent will, ingenuity, strain, forcing, 'mental consciousness', 'go', will-enforced idea, the mental 'idea', the conscious mind and instrumentality. Over against this he refers to creative originality, poise, centrality, vital intelligence, *body*; he speaks of 'wholeness of resolution', of 'a resolution of the whole being', of 'a capacity for surrender to the spontaneous life that will cannot command'. He speaks of 'hearkening to deepest needs and promptings', he speaks of something issuing 'out of the depths of his stillness, where the whole resolution is gathered'. It is just this kind of 'resolution' which the later Heidegger means by *Entschlossenheit*. Leavis speaks also of 'the deep spontaneous life over which the conscious mind and will have no dominion', 'the wholeness of the being in which the conscious mind does truly serve the life that transcends it'. He speaks, finally, of 'that life which cannot be commanded, though it can be thwarted, by will and "mental consciousness"'. The antithesis should, of course, be illustrated from Lawrence's own work, which is where the abstract critical language dissolves and becomes vital and particular in the poetic enactment of lives and situations, where the tale itself tells. But the point is plain: over against a dominative attitude to experience and reality which is characterized by strenuous determination to make things as one wants them to be, by forcing them to exist, by imposing and predetermining and the like, there is an approach, a *Seinserfahrung*, which brings into play such things as hearkening, openness, relaxation, surrender, wholeness of resolution, and so on. What is finally at issue, then, is the nature of man as agent, in particular, the nature of *will*: is it to be regarded as something aggressive, as 'drive', as will-to-power; or is it to be re-rooted in something passive, as 'response', as *abandon* (because the stress, in Leavis as in Heidegger, is very reminiscent of that in St Francis de Sales).

Lawrence's work gives us a chance, if we can take it, of breaking the dominance of subject over object, of unlearning the self's habitual overwhelming of the other. 'Morality', he once said, 'is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing *balance* between me and my circumambient universe, which precedes and accompanies a true relatedness.' Human life, for him, is a matter of accomplishing relatedness, and part of the task is to realize how mistaken our common idea of the subject-object relationship is. 'If a novel reveals true and vivid relationships', he said, 'it is a moral work': morals are essentially about relatedness. This is his concern, to help 'in bringing about a state of honesty and a certain trust among a *group* of people, or many people—if possible, all the people in the world. For it is only when we can get a man to fall back into his true relation to other men, and to women, that we can give him the opportunity to be himself. So long as men are inwardly dominated by their own

isolation, their own absoluteness, which after all is but a picture or an idea, nothing is possible but insanity more or less pronounced. Men must get back into *touch*. And to do so they must forfeit the vanity and the *noli me tangere* of their own absoluteness: also they must utterly break the present great picture of a normal humanity: shatter that mirror in which we all live grimacing: and fall again into true relatedness.' But it is in his writing about art that the point comes out most clearly. In 'Art and morality', for instance, a fine essay which appeared in *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, a short-lived precursor of *Scrutiny*, Lawrence argues that Cézanne's painting represents an original and decisive contestation of the prevailing subject-object relationship. Our habit of seeing just as the camera eye sees (photographic realism) turns out to be subjectivization: 'This is the habit we have formed: of visualizing *everything*. Each man to himself is a picture. That is, he is a complete little objective reality, complete in himself, existing by himself, absolutely, in the middle of the picture. All the rest is just setting, background. To every man, to every woman, the universe is just a setting to the absolute little picture of himself, herself.' The significance of Cézanne is that he challenges all this: 'Let Cézanne's apples go on rolling off the table for ever. They live by their own laws, in their own *ambiente*, and not by the laws of the Kodak—or of man. They are casually related to man. But to those apples, man is by no means the absolute.' The point is that Cézanne's art allows the apples their autonomy. Here Lawrence anticipates McLuhan's theory of the isolating eye (the isolated 'I') and Merleau-Ponty's use of art criticism to suggest how the subject-object relation might be righted. Michael Long, in an important essay in *Marxism Today* (November 1966), works this into a whole aesthetic which is also an ethic, no doubt because it is an ontology. 'In Cézanne', Lawrence says in the introduction to his own paintings, 'modern French art made its first tiny step back to real substance, to objective substance, if we may call it so. Van Gogh's earth was still subjective earth, himself projected into the earth. But Cézanne's apples are a real attempt to let the apple exist in its own separate entity, without transfusing it with personal emotion. Cézanne's great effort was, as it were, to shove the apple away from him, and let it live of itself. It seems a small thing to do. . . .' But as Michael Long says, this (the real 'step back'), which seems so small a thing to do, is, in being the attempt 'to stop imposing a subjective will upon nature so that we may apprehend the laws of its own actual existence', implicitly establishing a total definition of how we stand in relation to the world, of what the subject-object relation really is. And here again, then, the crux is the surpassing of the subjective will in a certain experience of letting-be: a *Seinserfahrung* reminiscent of *Gelassenheit*. As Lawrence goes on to conclude: 'A new relationship between ourselves and the universe means a new morality. Taste the unsteady apples of Cézanne, and the nailed-

down apples of Fantin-Latour are apples of Sodom. If the status quo were paradise, it would indeed be a sin to taste the new apples; but since the status quo is much more prison than paradise, we can go ahead.'

§2—*St Thomas, harmony and friendship*

The reason for turning now to recall some themes in the theology of St Thomas Aquinas is simply that his oeuvre represents the classical moment in the Catholic experience of the gospel alternative. It has the advantage of being very remote from our ways of feeling and thinking. St Thomas takes for granted the distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus*, and one could show how he regards discursive types of thinking as creating the context for contemplative insight. In *Shakespeare and the Reason*, Terence Hawkes tries to bring out how this distinction, having hardened into an opposition, becomes important as such in some of Shakespeare's explorations of the nature of being human. Three centuries lie between St Thomas and Shakespeare. The interest of comparing them is that the medieval world is still actively present in Shakespeare although, under pressure from the new Renaissance conception of man and society, it is becoming nervously self-conscious and over-explicit. But reading Shakespeare is a good way back into St Thomas. John F. Danby, in *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature*, suggests how a new sense of the relationship between man (subject) and nature (object) goes with a new version of social experience and a new morality. He argues that *King Lear* is a major statement of the conflict between what was to become the Hobbesian conception of man ('possessive individualism') and the older view, substantially that of St Thomas mediated to Shakespeare's time by such thinkers as Richard Hooker.

In the older conception, as Danby says, 'the idea of nature . . . is always something normative for human beings'; our main task is, in a deep sense, *to conform*: 'each thing in its degree, keeping station, being what it was because of where it was, yet having disposition as well as position—and that disposition a kind of innocent observance of law: the whole system manifesting the virtue of co-operation, regularity, harmony'. This need not mean commitment to the *status quo* no matter what (Danby cites Owst on the social-critical role of the medieval friars). But Nature is evidently 'kind'. There is 'the realizable normative world of "absolute shapes"—that which is constitutive of man's reason . . . and decides that supervening orientation which makes of orderly arrangement an ethical programme too'. Being human is thus essentially a matter of responding to the normative appeal issued by Nature; there is a law inherent in reality, some 'supervening orientation', which confers meaning and purpose on human life. Response, correspondence, is the fundamental structure of being human. Over against this view of experience there is Renaissance individualism—in Danby's

words: 'Nothing supervenes on the isolation of each individual position. Disposition—the idea of orientation in Nature and Man—has disappeared.' There is 'a new sense of the fissuring of man, of a gap between the external and the internal, a possible dichotomy between the social and the spiritual', and so on. To round out the picture: in the figure of Cordelia, so Danby thinks, we are offered a utopian-eschatological *dépassement* of the necessary option between the two doctrines of Nature.

The point is familiar. Iris Murdoch, in various essays, has put it well: 'We no longer see man against a background of values, of realities, which transcend him. We picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world' ('Against Dryness', *Encounter*, January 1961). She insists, rightly, that the world of the Oxford moralists is not substantially different at this point from that of the existentialists. Ethics without metaphysics, a theory of human conduct without a vision of meaning in reality, inevitably means an experience of being human in terms of *projet* rather than of *recueillement*, of will-to-power rather than of responsiveness. While the notion of *electio* (choice) is as central in St Thomas's conception of man as agent as *engagement* (commitment) and *Entscheidung* (decision) are in modern ethical theories, the difference is that for him choice takes place in terms of a certain vision. To say, as he does, that human action is teleological, is as much as to say that it is 'responsive' in structure; it is called, summoned, evoked and provoked, rather than launched, projected, cast out into a world which is otherwise a void of unmeaning and purposelessness. For St Thomas the notion of *ens* (reality of any kind, things, persons) is inseparable from that of *bonum* (things, persons, as attractive, appealing, striking, challenging and so on). The ethical is inseparable from the ontological. To say, as the scholastics used to say, that human conduct displays *finalitas*, is to say that it is *existentzial* in the Heideggerian sense: open, receptive, in a certain sense passive and submissive. Our deciding is finally a kind of accepting, because it happens within a vision of the meaningfulness of being.

What St Thomas does, at the beginning of the *secunda pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* (which constitutes his theological anthropology), is in one way very familiar. He simply affirms that, of the actions which we perform, only those are to be counted 'human acts' which are characteristic of us as human beings. What is different about us, then, is that we are masters of our conduct: *homo est dominus suorum actuum*, one is master of the conduct which expresses and embodies who one is. Much attention will be paid later on in the *Summa* to how we can be deprived of control over our conduct, but at this point St Thomas is conjuring up his image of being human—and this man who is owner of his conduct is not unlike the man in Kant's *Grundlegung* or even the man in Sartre's novels. The notion of *dominium* could easily be related to that of *Eigentlichkeit*, authenticity, perhaps



by way of Hegel's picture of the master-slave relationship: the free man is the man whose action is his own, authenticity is the overcoming of alienation.

Another way of putting this, for St Thomas, is to say that such action issues *ex voluntate deliberata*; it is resolved upon, it springs from mature decision. But the will is summoned by something as end. Action *ex voluntate* is one's own (we make our own history), but it happens in response to that which is the *objectum* of the will, and this is *bonum*, the good. The teleological theory of ethics thus seems to converge with an experience of being human which is *existenzial*: a transcendence which is responsive in structure, an action which is a being-acted-upon, a *projet* which is a *tractio*. The picture is never that of a subject confronting an object, with the subject's will-to-power being exercised dominatively over the passive object; on the contrary, the subject is rather waiting for the call of the object. As St Thomas says: *voluntas fertur in id quod sibi offertur*, the will is borne towards what offers itself to it. The 'object', whether thing or person, offers itself: it evokes and provokes the response of recognition and acceptance. To say this is to make it sound as though the subject's role were quite passive, but the point is rather to retrieve that sense which, for instance, Wordsworth had of the subject: 'creator and receiver both,/Working but in alliance with the works/Which he beholds'. As Terry Eagleton says in the important second chapter in *The New Left Church* (in which what I am trying to say is far better said): 'meaning, significance, is neither totally intrinsic to the object, nor totally conferred by the human response to it. It is, in some way, a process of fusion of the two . . . consciousness and reality are bound up in a single, dialectical interchange.' This is exactly what Heidegger is trying to say in speaking of reality and consciousness in terms of *Sein* and *Da-sein*. And whereas this sense of how meaning occurs is one we have painfully to work out, in the process of un-learning our subjectivism, what is so striking about St Thomas's world is that, being prior to the modern sense of subjectivity, he exhibits a naive and innocent sense of the correspondence between subject and object. In the words of Servais Pinckaers O.P., one of the finest exponents of St Thomas: 'The gravest obstacle in the way of correct interpretation of St Thomas is that our consciousness is haunted by the opposition that we make, before any reflection, between subject and object, between ourselves and the other, between our liberty and our reason; the most spontaneous of our intellectual reactions are loaded with such kinds of a priori categories which form the background of our ideas. But St Thomas does not suffer from this form of intellectual traumatism; his starting-point is beyond this antinomy, in the perception of a higher spiritual harmony that he tries to extend to the whole life of the human spirit.'

We may take it, I think, that the word 'spiritual' there points to the dimension of meaning, where the possibility of significance

occurs. The problem for us is to perceive any harmony. What we find in St Thomas (the assertion would have to be substantiated by close reading), is a pervasive sense of the *convenientia*, the harmony, between man and Nature, between reality and personal existence, between being and human being. It is a sense which we no longer possess, which we must either accept the absence of or which we must attempt, experimentally and tentatively, to discover (this is the purpose of David Jenkins' Bampton Lectures, *The Glory of Man*). One practical attempt has been made locally, in the reaching for self-consciousness of English Catholics, and has failed (cf. Adrian Cunningham: 'Aspects of distributism', *The Newman*, January 1969). But a search for harmony and right relation to nature, if it is candidly seen as part (a significant but minor part) of the search for right relations in society, must always belong to the Christian alternative, which is, if it is anything, the acceptance and verification in conduct of a sense of the meaning of meaning: faith is a search (an *inquisitio*, to use St Thomas's word), within what is felt to be an acquisition of new perspectives and prospects for human existence. But the working-out of this, now, is very difficult; and merely to appropriate St Thomas's sense of harmony would be futile archaeologizing. It would be missing the point of studying him at all, which is precisely to help to define how different our own situation and consciousness are.

Right relationships among persons is perhaps where to start. Alternative world-views spring from whether one regards persons as fundamentally isolated from one another and in permanent conflict, or basically dependent on one another and in underlying mutuality. There is such emphasis, in St Thomas's fundamental moral theology, on the notion of *beatitudo* that it can easily seem, especially if it is read in a subjectivist perspective, as though the happiness in question were the self-fulfilment, the *perfectio*, of the egocentric striving of the individual to find his place in the grand cosmic hierarchy, or something of the kind. Happiness is then envisaged as the total satisfaction of one's desires, but the crucial point is of course whether or not one thinks of the desire for happiness (the hedonistic principle) as being necessarily selfish, in persons so enclosed in themselves that they would be incapable of experiencing any feeling towards others which would finally transcend self-interest (however elaborately disguised and refined). Servais Pinckaers insists, in his commentary on the relevant parts of the *Summa*, that the notion of *beatitudo*, in St Thomas, cannot be understood apart from the experience of *amicitia*, friendship, the realization of the possibility of opening oneself to others, of loving them for themselves, but, paradoxically, of finding one's most authentic and personal fulfilment in so doing. In loving some one for his own sake, in recognizing him, one takes part in creating community. It is to articulate what seems to him involved in the kind of loving which Jesus commends and commands that

St Thomas resorts to the model of *amicitia*. He builds his whole *tractatus de caritate* round the notion of 'charity' as 'friendship'.

One of the curiosities of the history of theology is that St Thomas's way of approaching the nature of 'charity' has not prevailed, at least outside the school particularly devoted to literal exegesis of the master's text, and even there nothing much has ever been done with the idea as compared to valuable and sometimes astonishing elaborations of some other themes original to St Thomas. It is possible that only now, in a society where primary kin-relationships have largely disappeared and a main community problem is the loneliness of urban life, that the experience of friendship is becoming of central importance. The point about *amicitia*, for St Thomas, is that it is *moral*, it has direct and immediate ethical value: friends choose one another, and they choose one another finally with that spontaneity which issues from *voluntas*, from that personal centre where decisions affecting one's whole being are made. One may hazard that the experience of fraternal life in a religious community alerted St Thomas to the possibilities of relationships which are neither natural kin-bonds nor ordinary work-relations, but in some sense *chosen*, either strenuously willed for allegedly high motives or relaxedly accepted out of gratitude and compassion. However that may be, we live in a time when the old family structure must be replaced by a network of chosen relationships: our community is more made than inherited. While St Thomas uses the model to point up aspects of the experience of God in the new covenant and extends it to the case of personal relationships only in a fragmentary and incidental way, the relevance of what he says should be obvious. He insists on three things. The model allows him to point first to the notion of *communicatio*, of there having to be something in common, as the foundation of the relationship (the relationship we have with God is grounded on there being something in common between us and God, and that is nothing else than God himself: the other has given himself to us). In the second place, the model evokes a certain *mutua amatio*, a reciprocity in the relationship, which enables St Thomas radically to exclude the idea that we are related to God in such a way that we are absorbed and merged and fused with the divine reality. Far from being loss of identity or annihilation of one's uniqueness, what happens in the love-relationship which is *agapé* is precisely that one is respected. What happens in *agapé*, is reconciliation, *katallagé*: mutual recognition, forgiveness, a meeting between two independent autonomous beings. And thirdly, the model points to the idea of *benevolentia*: *agapé* is the love which wills the other's good. It isn't possessive and dominative; it isn't the kind of loving in which one is subjected to the other, it's a way of loving in which there is the possibility for those who love one another of becoming freer and more themselves. This is, in fact, the notion of letting-be, *Seinlassen*, such as John Macquarrie employs in *Principles of Christian*

*Theology*: 'Love, in its ontological sense, is letting-be. Love usually gets defined in terms of union, or the drive towards union, but such a definition is too egocentric. Love does indeed lead to community, but to aim primarily at uniting the other person to oneself, or oneself to him, is not the secret of love and may even be destructive of genuine community. Love is letting-be, not of course in the sense of standing off from someone or something, but in the positive and active sense of enabling-to-be. When we talk of "letting-be" we are to understand both parts of this hyphenated expression in a strong sense—"letting" as empowering, and "be" as enjoying the maximal range of being that is open to the particular being concerned.' It is surely there, if anywhere, that the Christian alternative is to be discovered: in a surpassing, in personal and group experience, of the dominative and aggressive style of life and mode of 'loving' which is the 'experience of being', the *Seinserfahrung*, of our 'world', of any 'world'; but it is a possibility given in active experience of being granted ('graced with') the context of meaning for human life in the story of Jesus.

The bringing to consciousness, the recrystallization, of what letting the story of Jesus be the perspective and prospect within which human life is lived involves here and now, is something else again. It certainly must happen in confrontation with every other serious critique of the ongoing society; whatever else the gospel is, it is judgment, *krisis*, of society, the 'world'. It is important, therefore, to keep our thinking and action open to whatever else is happening in the way of inventing some alternative to how things are now. But the gospel is also a promise, an *evangelion*, about what we can be and how we might live together. The classical articulation of that, in St Thomas Aquinas, points to an experience of *beatitudo* which is available in *amicitia*: the happiness which is our destiny is in our coming through to a way of life, a being-with-others, which is characterized by openness, receptivity, reconciliation, forgiveness, a letting-be form of loving. What we have to offer, if anything, is community: 'a state of honesty and a certain trust among a *group* of people, or many people—if possible, all the people in the world'; but that will take resolution, not the false consciousness of those who do not really feel what they want to feel and do not believe what they are trying to believe, but the unbiddable and unmanipulable responsiveness to the sense that the end is in the Jesus story. But for a conclusion that is very like a new start.