

THE DE MAGISTRO
OF
ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. THOMAS

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Jerome Edward Wirth
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St. Meinrad Seminary
College of Liberal Arts
St. Meinrad, Indiana

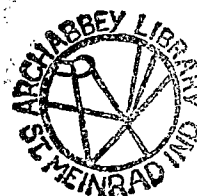


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INTRODUCTION

St. Augustine's De Magistro is a short and relatively minor work among his treatises. However, it became an influential work in the Middle Ages, for it was made the subject of discussion and commentary. In our day, too, it has been studied as a possible source of truth in philosophy and in discussions of problems concerning the value of a language.¹

St. Augustine wrote this dialogue at Tagaste, Africa in 389. The conversation with Adeodatus his son is an actual report.² Because of the literary genre used, that is, dialogue, the work appears as a leisurely discussion between Augustine and his son, Adeodatus. His work in composition is, then, quite different from St. Thomas' De Magistro.

St. Thomas wrote his work, Truth, during the years 1256-1259 while he served his first term as professor at the University of Paris. The Teacher which is an integral section of Truth, is composed in the special genre that is called the Disputed Question.³ This work is much shorter, more compact, yet more comprehensive in thought than Augustine's treatise. Each article consists of at least four parts: 1) difficulties; 2) arguments to the contrary; 3) reply; 4) answers to difficulties.

The purpose in comparing St. Augustine to St. Thomas lies primarily in what Etienne Gilson has stated about history and philosophers; "This history should convey to its readers an invitation to establish personal

contact with at least three main schools of thought which no Christian philosopher can afford to ignore. Augustine...Thomas Aquinas...Duns Scotus."⁴

More specifically, the reason for this comparison lies in the fact that these two great men wrote their work about the Teacher with the same purpose of trying to set forth a doctrine of teaching and learning. Because the doctrine of the two men are significant, a comparison of their doctrine should lead one to a "personal contact" with their thought.

Since each author's approach and style are so different--Augustine uses dialogue and Thomas uses syllogistic propositions--the procedure of this thesis will be, first, to set the doctrine of each in a short summary. Then a detailed analysis of Augustine's doctrine on teaching will be given. In the next chapter, a comparison of St. Thomas to St. Augustine is made. Then, the conclusions will be given.

CHAPTER I

The De Magistro of St. Augustine in Outline

St. Augustine's Task in De Magistro is to show the necessity of positing the doctrine of divine illumination. Since man's intellect is incapable of grasping the nature of known objects, man must rely on God for all knowledge. Augustine's reason for positing "illumination" arises from his explanation of the cause and guarantee of the truth of man's judgments. Augustine's approach to his thesis is focused upon the derivation of ideas from the mere sight of things and from the sounds of words. These preliminaries prepare the path for the position that words do not give absolute certainty. When the Saint introduces the doctrine of "light" and "teacher", it is in relation to this problem of truth and certainty.

Augustine's interest in the derivation of ideas from words and things is the starting point of the De Magistro. He therefore begins by explaining the purpose of speech. This purpose, he says, can be twofold: to teach or to remind. Even mental prayer serves to remind "since the memory in which the words inhere, by recalling them, brings to mind the realities themselves, of which the words are signs."¹

By stating that words are signs even in prayer, Augustine then shows that man can only learn the meaning of words through words. He, however, allows an exception in this general rule: although words are signs of the existent, words may also signify a thing that does not exist, because

they can "signify some state of the mind when it sees not reality."²

With this introduction, St. Augustine has formulated a provisional proposition that nothing can be made known without a sign. He makes an exception in case of actions. If a person, while walking, is asked what walking is, does walking of itself answer the question? Augustine answers negatively, but "if he does not ask while we are actually doing them [walking], we can by doing it after he puts this question, show what he is asking about, by means of the reality itself, rather than by a sign."³

After showing that reality can be manifested by performing the reality after inquiry, Augustine, then, introduces the other problem whether or not signs can be manifested by signs. Signs, he concludes, can be manifested either by the same signs, as for example when one says "gesture" --for the thing signified by this word is still a sign; or by different signs, as for example when one says "stone"--for the word is a sign, but what is signified is not a sign. Signs, then, are those things which signify anything. Words are included among signs; "although every word is a sign, not every sign is a word."⁴ Signs also include themselves in the things they signify, as for example, "when we say 'sign'", that signifies not only other signs, whatever they are, but also itself; for it is a word, and all words are certainly signs."⁵

If signs signify themselves as well as other signs, Augustine concludes that all words are nouns. His reason is based on the argument that if one can say "a noun is that by which anything is named," all words must be nouns.⁶ He then classifies signs into four categories, namely, signs which signify themselves; signs with reciprocal signification; signs whose

range of signification applies also to another; and signs whose sole difference lies in their sound.⁷ From this detailed treatment of signs, Augustine stresses the importance of directing the attention of signs to the realities signified. This study of signs as such, as it was said, is a necessary preliminary to the certainty of words.

Augustine now raises the critical problem of the validity of words and of knowledge in relation to reality. Augustine evaluates reality as follows: "Knowledge or realities which are signified, even though it may not be superior to the knowledge of signs, is at all event superior to the signs themselves."⁸ Because of cause and effect, he concludes that words themselves are not sufficient to cause knowledge of the realities in man. It then follows that teaching and signifying are different things, for "we give signs in order to teach, but do not teach in order to give signs."⁹ Teaching by means of signs is usually necessary although some people can be taught certain things without signs.¹⁰

St. Augustine now approaches the burden of his work in his first definite proposition. He states that a sign does not teach, for "when a sign is presented to me, if it finds me ignorant of the reality of which it is a sign, it cannot teach me anything."¹¹ Only by seeing the reality does one learn the sign. Man cannot understand the spoken words, for he can only hear them. The sound is not perceived by means of the signs, but by the fact that it strikes the ear. "We learn the signification, however, by seeing the reality which is signified."¹²

If man can only hear the spoken word and can understand reality by sight only, the purpose of words, therefore, are to direct the attention

of the listener to what is being said. As a result, words do not teach man reality. Only after the reality is known, does one know the word and its meaning. "Words possess only sufficient efficacy to remind us in order that we may seek things, but not to exhibit the things so that we may know them."¹³ The only possible conclusion for Augustine must inevitably follow.

St. Augustine, therefore, presents his conclusion in his second proposition: even words are not the reason for our attaining truth. To reach truth, God must be the only teacher of man since man cannot teach one another. "Regarding, however, all those things which we understand, it is not a speaker who utters sounds exteriorly whom we consult, but it is truth that presides within, over the mind itself."¹⁴

Since God is the true teacher, the function of words can only admonish or prompt man to seek the truth within himself. Furthermore, words can only represent ideas and questions which are so put to man as to correspond to his capacity for interior learning.¹⁵

Augustine has based the De Magistro upon the extensive analysis of signs and their import. He wants to emphasize the necessity of using signs as well as their inadequacy, at least so far as the truth and certainty of our knowledge are concerned. St. Augustine proves that words of themselves cannot make man see the intelligible realities within the mind. Only the power and wisdom of God can bring this manifestation about. "Again, as physical light is necessary that we may perceive corporeal realities, so the divine wisdom must illumine the human mind."¹⁶

CHAPTER II

The De Magistro of St. Thomas in Outline

St. Thomas begins with the question whether man can be called a teacher or only God alone. His approach to the question is straightforward. He leaves no doubt that not only God but man as well can be called a teacher.

St. Thomas states his position regarding teaching as follows:

To teach implies the perfect activity of knowledge in the teacher. The teacher must have the knowledge that he is to impart to another explicitly and perfectly, as it is to be received in the one who is learning through instruction.¹

Teaching, he says, is not a transfer nor transfusion of knowledge; neither does it primarily deal with the presentation of symbols or signs. However, teaching produces learning that is entirely the person's self activity. Learning is not therefore the passive reception of instruction and assertions of the teacher. The teacher is merely an extrinsic proximate agent² or is the mediate cause of knowledge. "In the pupil, the intelligible forms of which knowledge received through is constituted are caused directly by the agent intellect and mediately by the one who teaches."³

St. Thomas gives two ways in acquiring knowledge. First, whenever the natural reason of man reaches knowledge of unknown things, this process is called discovery. In the second way, whenever one aids a learner's natural reason, this process is called instruction.⁴ However, man can learn by himself, for "through the light of reason implanted in him and without

the help of another's instruction, one can undoubtedly acquire knowledge of many things he does not know."⁵ St. Thomas notes that man cannot be called his own teacher nor be said to teach himself from his own personal discovery. "In a sense, one can be a cause of his own knowledge, but he cannot be called his own teacher or be said to teach himself."⁶

All knowledge proceeds from previous knowledge. The reason is that man must interpret signs if he is to know. When he comes to a conclusion, he must know beforehand what the subject and predicate are.⁷

For certain seeds of knowledge pre-exist in us, namely, the first concepts of understanding. These are either complex assertions, or simple, as the notions of being, of the one, and so on which the understanding grasps immediately.⁸

The method of acquiring knowledge is through the means of the internal principles and these principles are the active causes of the forthcoming knowledge. Therefore, a conclusion is contained in certain seminal principles, for man learns by being led from general principles and notions of the mind to the actual knowledge of particular things.⁹

Because of self-evident principles, St. Thomas states that man can know with certitude. He says: "For from these self-evident principles he realizes that what necessarily follows from them is to be held with certitude, and what is contrary to them is to be rejected completely."¹⁰

For the learner to know with certitude, the knowledge to be acquired through the internal principles, and which exists potentially in the learner, must be raised from potency into act by the process of teaching. It is brought to actuality from this state or potency through a proximate

external agent.¹¹ Consequently, the knowledge of the teacher is not the same as the pupil, nor is knowledge itself a passive potentiality. The knowledge pre-exists in the active sense for "otherwise man would not be able to acquire knowledge independently."¹² The potentiality is raised to act through sensible signs, "which are received in the sensitive faculty and it uses these intelligible forms to produce in itself scientific knowledge. For the signs are not the proximate efficient cause of knowledge, but reason is..."¹³

In conclusion, St. Thomas has based the De Magistro upon self-evident principles, and from which principles he proves that man is also a teacher. "Man can truly be called a true teacher as he teaches the truth and enlightens the mind."¹⁴

CHAPTER III

Analysis from St. Augustine's Viewpoint

St. Augustine's approach to the conclusion that God alone is the True Teacher is based on man's incapacity to receive things and external signs into his own being. By showing that signs do not present reality to the knower, St. Augustine draws the conclusion that even words as signs are not the reason for attaining truth. Not even with words do we teach. Consequently, God is the only teacher of man.

Augustine questions the purpose of speech; he presents two possible reasons for speaking: "either to teach or to remind others of ourselves."² An immediate problem arises about prayer. The problem can offer some difficulty, for prayer is not to teach nor is it to remind God of anything. But the problem is resolved by postulating the necessity of speech in prayer "to manifest the mind as the priests do, not that God may hear, but that men may hear and, by being reminded, may with one accord dedicate themselves to God."³ From this argument Augustine solves the function of speech, for when

A person strains his mind toward something, although we utter no sound, yet because we ponder the words themselves, we do speak within our minds. So too, speech serves us only to remind since the memory in which the words inhere, by recalling them, brings to mind the realities themselves, of which the words are signs.⁴

For example, the word "nothing", signifying non-existence, is no

proof for a denial of signs, because this word "nothing" does signify some state of the mind. Even the word "from" signifies another sign by which the meaning is reached.⁵ Therefore words do signify something even if it is a state of the mind.

The next logical question in Augustine's search for the validity of words is whether or not any thing can be known without a sign. When the Latin word "paries" is pronounced, the reality of that word can be shown without using any words.⁶ For example, deaf persons by means of gestures can communicate most of their wishes, and actors can enact stories by pantomime. As it was said above, the word "from" can also be communicated by another sign. It therefore remains that a sign must always be used to indicate the reality. "He too, though not using a word for a word, will still be indicating a sign by a sign."⁷

Augustine's first argument that man cannot teach through signs begins with the explanation that a person can be taught reality without words. Augustine asks whether the action of walking signifies the reality when a person who is walking is asked what walking is. If the teacher walks to teach what walking is, this is not sufficient to teach the one who asks, unless some sign is added. The sign must be added because there are many factors involved in walking which could mislead the learner as to whether it was the substance of the action or to some accident of it. If the person does not ask while the action is being performed, the action can be demonstrated after the question is asked.⁸ Augustine's full argument against man as a teacher is not completed until he develops his doctrine of the superiority of reality over sign.⁹

A hint is given of man's incapacity to teach in his explanation of the word "stone". Augustine agrees that signs are manifested by means of signs, for by signs one teaches or brings to mind either the same signs or different signs. For example, "gesture" or "letter" signify other signs, but whenever the word "stone" is used, the word is not a sign. "It signifies something, but what is signified is not, in turn a sign."¹⁰

Since a sign is defined as everything which signifies anything, most words are included under signs. As signs, all nouns are words, and furthermore, all words are nouns. "In fact all the parts of speech are also nouns because pronouns can be added to them and of all of them, it can be said that they name something..."¹¹ However their applicability is not identical: a word means a sound striking the ear, whereas a noun is a mental resemblance.¹²

Augustine concludes this discussion of signs in as much as they signify other signs by suggesting to Adeodatus that they consider the other division of signs--signs as signifying reality.¹³

The general topics, such as, the purpose of speech, the value of signs as signifying other signs, and the provisional proposition that nothing can be known without a sign, have been a prelude to the forthcoming discussion. The first section however is necessary as the basis for the problems of teaching through the use of signs.

Augustine then discusses in the second section the necessity of directing attention to the realities themselves as signified. When one questions what man is, it depends on what is sought by the questioner whether the answer is an "animal" or a "noun". The former is said from

the viewpoint of the thing which it signifies; the latter from the standpoint of being a sign.¹⁴ It should be noted that in the common usage and meaning, a word is used to signify the reality of the thing, as in the example of man. It is referred to the reality of man, not to the part of speech that might be wanted unless otherwise indicated.¹⁵

However, the realities signified are to be esteemed more highly than their signs. "For whatever exists for the sake of something else must be inferior to that for whose sake it exists".¹⁶ Knowledge is superior to a sign, for a sign exists for the sake of knowledge. For example, knowledge of "filth", for which the name "filth" has been conceived, is esteemed more highly than the name itself. It is not true however that the knowledge of realities is always superior to the knowledge of a sign, for if the name "filth" is preferable to the reality it signifies, so also the knowledge of this name is to be preferred to the knowledge of that reality, even though the name itself is inferior to that knowledge.¹⁷

From this statement, Augustine is implying that one cannot come to a knowledge of things through signs, because the knowledge of things is more excellent than the knowledge of signs. Since the effect cannot be more excellent than its cause, no one can impart or teach knowledge to another.¹⁸

To Augustine, the example of walking and other such actions which show the reality itself without signs are sufficient proofs to conclude that some people can be taught certain things without signs. He will conclude, as will be seen, by denying entirely the validity of signs in the acquisition of knowledge.

To establish the validity or falsity of signs, Augustine says that man either knows or does not know the things which a sign represents.

"For when a sign is presented to me, if it finds me ignorant of the reality of which it is a sign it cannot teach me anything; but if it finds me knowing the reality, what do I learn by means of the signs?"²⁰

For example, if a man does not know what a stone is, he does not know what the word "stone" means. The word is merely a sound until the reality is learned; it is not learned by any signifying, but by seeing the reality. The sign is learned from the thing already known instead of the reality being learned from the sign.²¹ If a reality is not known, one cannot learn anything from the sign. The conclusion follows that man cannot be taught by another.

As Augustine had previously said, the reality is learned, not by any signifying, but by seeing it. Since the two elements in that sign are the sound and the signification, a person will certainly perceive the sound, but he does not perceive that sound by means of the sign, for the sound only strikes the ear. The signification is learned only by seeing the reality.²²

We learn the meaning of the word--that is the signification that is hidden in the sound--only after the reality itself which is signified has been recognized, rather than perceive that reality by means of such signification.²³

Augustine's distrust in words now almost amounts to the complete rejection of words; yet he does trust spoken words, but only in so far as they serve merely to suggest that the person look for realities. The person learns nothing but the sound and noise of words.²⁴

The knowledge of reality produces the knowledge of words. When words are uttered, one either knows or does not know what they signify. If he knows, he recalls rather than learns. If he does not know, he does not

recall.²⁵

If however a story is told, he believes it rather than knows it; for whatever he understands, he either knows or believes. But he does not know all he believes. The story can only be believed, because he does not see the reality itself; consequently he does not learn the story by means of the words.²⁶

When words are spoken to a listener, the listener does not consult the speaker for the truth of what he understands, but the truth within, which is Christ as the Teacher. This consultation is the Divine Illumination.²⁷

Augustine's explanation for the proof of the internal light is based on what has already been presented. Just as one consults light regarding colors, consults elements of bodies regarding sensible objects, and consults mind regarding senses, so also one consults truth within himself through reasoning regarding the objects of his intelligence; through the realities he learns. Now words have the same sound for the person who sees the object as for the one who does not see it. The seen object is impressed on the mind and committed to the memory. If the same words are later spoken to him, he does not learn the reality from the sounds of the words, but only recognizes and remembers reality from images that had been stored away within himself. If he has had no sense knowledge, i.e., has not seen the realities, he merely believes the words rather than learns from them.²⁸

When a person expresses in speech things which has been perceived by the intellect and by reason, these things are beheld immediately in the interior light of Truth. If the listener hears and sees those things

interiorly, he knows the speaker's words not by the words but by contemplation.²⁹

If a person should reverse his stand on a matter by affirming it later on, "this happens by reason of the weakness of his vision, not permitting him to consult that light regarding the matter as a whole."³⁰ Often questioning, which enables a person to see parts of the whole, is also based on his capacity to learn from the divine illumination.

Augustine again illustrates by example that nothing can be taught by words. If a pupil is told that wise men are superior to fools, he would certainly agree. If the teacher would tell his pupil that "man flies", the reaction could be either of rejection, of puzzlement, or of belief. The pupil would of course answer in the negative. Even if he did believe it, he did not know it; whereas, he knew the first statement about wise men and fools to be true. He did not learn anything from the teacher, for the pupil was unaware of the latter statement, but he did know the former. Therefore, if the pupil knows it is a false statement, he naturally opposes it. If he does not know whether it is true, he either believes it, or expresses an opinion, or is in doubt. If he knows it is true, he bears witness to the truth. In none of these cases does he learn.³¹

The one who on hearing my words does not know (emphasis mine) the reality, and the one who knows that what he has heard is false, and the one who, if he were asked, could have answered precisely what was said, demonstrate that they have learned nothing from by words.³²

After his treatment of words which do not always reveal the mind of the speaker,³³ Augustine further develops his doctrine of teaching. Teaching is not the process of the teacher's thoughts being perceived and grasped by

the pupils, but teaching is the transfer of the branches of learning by which the pupils consider within themselves whether what has been said is true. "For who would be so absurdly curious as to send his child to school to learn what the teacher thinks?"³⁴

When words of wisdom and the science of virtue correspond to what a pupil realizes within himself to be true, the pupil learns; one should praise not so much the teacher, as the person taught. Man cannot be called "teacher", because there is no time between the time of speaking and the time of knowing. "And because they are quick to learn internally following the prompting of the one who speaks, they think they have learned externally from the one who was only a prompter."³⁵

Thus we should no longer merely believe, but also begin to understand how truly it has been written on divine authority that we should not call anyone on earth a teacher, since 'There is one in heaven who is the teacher of all'.³⁶

CHAPTER IV

Analysis and Comparison from St. Thomas' Viewpoint

St. Thomas' view of reality substantially differs with Augustine's outlook on man. It will be seen in this chapter that Thomas' thought exceeds Augustine's philosophy of teaching by adding another factor. Where Augustine makes Christ the only teacher, Thomas makes man a co-ordinator in teaching.

Thomas' explanation for the acquisition of knowledge primarily lies in certain seeds of knowledge pre-existing in man, namely the first concepts of understanding. These concepts can be either complex, as for example, axioms, or simple, as for example, notions of being. It is by the light of the agent intellect and through the species which is abstracted from known sensible things that these concepts are known.¹

Furthermore, from these general principles, conclusions are included in these seminal principles. Learning means that the "mind is led from these general notions to actual knowledge of the particular thing which it knew previously in general and, as it were, potentially."²

By the use of Aristotelian terminology, Thomas explains that potency can be in natural things either in an active or a passive way. It is active when an intrinsic principle has enough power to flow into perfect act. An example of active potency is the natural power within man to restore his own sick body to health. It is in passive potency, as it happens when the internal principle does not have enough power to bring it into act.³

An external agent can therefore help an internal agent to provide the means by which the internal agent can act when the object is pre-existing in the active potency. By the use of medicines a doctor can assist the principle agent (nature) which uses the help (medicine) as instruments for healing. However, if the object is in passive potency, the external agent becomes the principle cause for the potency-to-act transition.⁴

In view of what has just been said, knowledge must pre-exist in the learner as active potency. If knowledge were in passive potency, man would not be able to learn by his own efforts.

Through the light of reason implanted in him and without the help of another's instruction one can undoubtedly acquire knowledge of many things which he does not know. This is clear with all those who acquire knowledge through discovery.⁵

So just as there are two ways of healing, so also there are two ways to knowledge: discovery is man's natural reasoning power reaching knowledge of things previously known to man's intellect; instruction is that process whereby someone aids the learner's natural reason.⁶

When he stated that knowledge presides within and over the mind itself, Augustine made knowledge to exist because of the interior light. However, Thomas states that knowledge arrives from the first principles. While the knowledge in a learner is in active potency, it is not yet in complete actuality, but so to speak, is in the seminal principles: the universal concepts which the learner knows are the universal seeds of all forthcoming knowledge. These seminal principles are not developed by a created power that infuses them into the man, but these seminal principles in a primitive and virtual way can develop into actuality by means of

activity of created power.⁷

For example, the forms that pre-exist in matter are in potency only. They are brought from potency to actuality through a proximate external agent, and not only through the First Agent.⁸

Thomas succinctly states his position on the acquisition of knowledge from the internal principles:

Knowledge is acquired by someone through an internal principle, that which is the active cause of the knowledge, that which has the knowledge to be acquired only partially, that is, in the seminal principles of knowledge, which are the general principles.⁹

Thomas treats this acquisition from the viewpoint of teaching and learning. The link between knowledge itself and the transfer of that knowledge (teaching) resides in signs and the certitude which is caused by the principles.

Teaching implies the perfect activity of knowledge in the teacher who explicitly and perfectly causes knowledge in another through instruction.¹⁰ However what is proposed to another must be included in self-evident principles. If that proposed by the teacher is not included in the principles, or a teacher does not make it clear that it is included, the teacher can not cause knowledge in the pupil; the pupil might be taught only an opinion or he might only have faith (belief) in the proposed things. St. Thomas states:

Even this (opinion or faith) is in some way caused by inborn first principles, for from these self-evident principles he realizes that what necessarily follows from them is to be held with certitude, and that what is contrary to them is to be rejected completely and that assent may be given to or withheld from whatever neither follows necessarily from nor is contrary to self-evident principles.¹¹

Augustine states that there is no scientific knowledge without certitude, for if it was not scientific knowledge, it could only be an opinion or belief, since sensible signs cannot produce certitude.¹²

However, Thomas answers this statement by asserting the certainty of scientific knowledge in the principles. This certainty arises from the certainty of principles, for the conclusions are known with certainty when they are reduced to the principles. The certainty is due to the light of reason implanted within man by God. Teaching from without comes from man when he reduces conclusions to the principles. These conclusions, however, would not reach the certainty of scientific knowledge unless the certainty of the principles to which the conclusions are reduced are within the person.¹³

As it now has been seen, to learn from a teacher means the application of general self-evident principles to certain definite matters and from these to proceed to other particular conclusions. One is a teacher who by signs shows his pupil the reasoning process which he himself uses. Through this instrumentality of signs the pupil then arrives at new knowledge by means of natural reason.

Therefore just as the doctor is said to heal a patient through the activity of nature, so a man is said to cause knowledge in another through the activity of the learner's own natural reason, and this is teaching. So, one is said to teach another and be his teacher.¹⁴

Signs are necessary for the communication between teacher and pupil because the concepts of the teacher must be conveyed to the learner through some sign. A teacher, who is a kind of univocal agent, communicates knowledge to the pupil in the same way in which he himself has it. This

way proceeds from cause to effect. By showing certain sensible signs to the external senses, the teacher brings from potency into act that which was implicitly contained in the principles.¹⁵

The teacher does not cause truth in the pupil; instead he causes the knowledge of the truth in the pupil. Truth in any proposition of a teacher is true before the pupil knows the knowledge of that truth, since truth does not depend on the learner's knowledge of it, but on the existence of things.¹⁶

Although knowledge is an accident, teaching is not merely the transfer of knowledge from teacher to pupil; it is rather the knowledge that arises in the learner through teaching itself. This new knowledge of the pupil is similar to the teacher's, because this new knowledge had been raised from potency to act within the pupil.¹⁷

Moreover, knowledge is not the mere representation of things in the soul.¹⁸ The fallacy of this argument lies in the failure to see the teacher as the mediate cause of knowledge. When the teacher sets intelligible things before the pupil, the agent intellect derives the intelligible likenesses from them and causes them to exist in the possible intellect. Therefore, the words of the teacher efficiently cause knowledge.¹⁹

At this junction, it has been seen how Thomas' philosophy of teaching and knowledge differ from Augustine's. However, there are certain areas which ought to be brought out in a fuller contrast to better understand each man's position.

Thomas objects to Augustine's position that words of the teacher do not teach: if a pupil is asked a question, he could correctly answer the problem before the teacher tells him the answer.²⁰ Thomas' proof against

this fallacy lies again in the principles. The answer of the pupil refers to the principles which he already has within himself. Through these principles he proceeds to those conclusions which the teacher is teaching him. It is not the principles that he learns from the teacher but only the conclusions.²¹

Thomas also answers Augustine's ideas concerning the knowledge of a stone.²² It is true to a certain degree that one knows beforehand the things which are taught through signs. Before the meaning of "man" is learned, something about "man" is known beforehand, such as the meaning of animal, of substance, or, at least, being as being. What the subject and predicate are must be known before the conclusion is taught. It is also necessary that one has knowledge of the principles, for the principles are the means by which the conclusion is taught.²³

Augustine's explanation that learning is nothing but remembering²⁴ is very unsatisfactory in Thomistic thought. Thomas bases his argument upon agents. Anything which removes an obstruction is a mover only accidentally. If lower agents did nothing but bring hidden things into the open by taking away the obstructions which hid the forms and habits of sciences and virtues, all lower agents could act only accidentally. However, not all lower agents do act accidentally and consequently this theory of Augustine could not be true.²⁵

Another point that Augustine had treated in his work was his doctrine of signs and senses. He states that only sensible signs affect the senses; they do not affect the intellect.²⁶ Thomas however bases his doctrine of knowledge upon the senses. The intellect derives intelligible likenesses

from sensible signs which are taken in the sensitive faculty. After the intellect produces scientific knowledge from these likenesses, conclusions are drawn from the principles by the efficient cause of knowledge, reasoning. It is therefore reasoning, not signs, that produce the conclusions. Signs are the only means to knowledge.²⁷

The last comparison rests on Augustine's long explanation of teaching and walking.²⁸ Thomas answers Augustine by stating that knowledge of things is produced in the learner through principles, not through the knowledge of signs. Knowledge of things is proposed to the learner through signs and is applied to other things which had been unknown. "Knowledge of principles produces in us knowledge of conclusions; knowledge of signs does not."²⁹

After seeing the points of disagreement, there is one point on which both Augustine and Thomas somewhat agree. Both agree that God teaches interiorly, if one means that God as Creator can cause knowledge in man through intellectual light and self-evident primary concepts. "For he adorned the soul itself with intellectual light and imprinted on it the concepts of the first principles, which are, as it were, the sciences in the embryo, just as He impressed on other physical things the seminal principles for producing all their effect."³⁰

After this concession to Augustine, Thomas stands firm in his position that man can teach one another, for "to teach can still be used in a proper sense in the way we have explained."³¹

CONCLUSION

It has been shown how Augustine formulated his doctrine from the explanation and study of signs and concluded by admitting divine illumination. The study of signs was only a preliminary to the rest of the De Magistro, for the exploration and study of knowledge by seeing things and hearing sounds of words developed into the proposition that words cannot give absolute certainty. If words cannot give certainty, man finds his true knowledge within himself.

The doctrine of divine illumination may still be somewhat vague in reader's mind, especially as to how this illumination operates. Although Augustine never stated it, some interpreted him as meaning that the soul attains its concepts by seeing the divine ideas, or that God imprints on man's intellect a representation of reality; again others interpret him as meaning that the internal light is the ultimate source of truth, or that God creates in man a power which is equivalent of the agent intellect of St. Thomas.¹

Augustine's usage of the divine illumination however suggests that Augustine meant it to be the very source and basis for truth. His procedure seems to point out that all truth has foundation directly and indirectly in God and that all knowledge of truth owes its existence and reliability to God himself.

On the other hand, St. Thomas' doctrine of De Magistro illuminates

Augustine's doctrine by adding another element to learning and teaching. Although God is the principal agent in the communication of new knowledge (he is the author of the intellect and the creative cause of actual perception of truth and certitude of what is proposed to him²), co-operation of a teacher can also help a student to knowledge. Even if the pupil learns by his own power without a teacher, his mind can still proceed from the first principles and then draw new conclusions; whereas Augustine emphasizes the total reliance on God, Thomas emphasizes the self-activity of man.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

¹ St. Augustine, The Teacher, translated by Joseph M. Colleran, C.S.S.R. (Westminster: Newman, 1950), p. 115.

² Vernon J. Bourke, Augustine's Quest Of Wisdom, (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1945), p. 114.

³ St. Thomas Aquinas, The Teacher, West Baden translation, Introduction by James Collins. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953), p. vi.

⁴ Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 544.

Chapter I

¹ St. Augustine, De Magistro, 1, 1, 2 (PL 32, 1195): ...cum memoria cui verba inhaerent, ea revolvendo facit venire in mentem res ipsas quarum signa sunt verba.

² Ibid. 2,3 (PL 32, 1196):...affectionem animi quamdam...hoc verbo significari dicimus potius, quam rem ipsam quae nulla est?

³ Ibid. 3,6 (PL 32, 1198): Sed si id his roget quae agere possumus, nec eo tamen tempore quo agimus roget, possumus post ejus interrogationem id agendo, re ipsa potius quam signo demonstrare quod rogat.

⁴ Ibid. 4,9, (PL 32, 1200): Quamobrem cum omnia nomina verba sint, non autem omnia verba nomina sint.

⁵ Ibid. 4, 10 (PL 32, 1200-1201): Nam cum dicimus, signum, non solum signa caetera quaecumque sunt, sed etiam seipsum significat; est enim verbum, et utique omnia verba signa sunt.

⁶ Ibid. 4,10 (PL 32, 1200-1201)

⁷ Ibid. 6,17 (PL 32, 1204)

⁸ Ibid. 9,28 (PL 32, 1211): Cognitionem rerum quae significantur, etsi non cognitione signorum, ipsis tamen signis esse potiore.

⁹ Ibid. 10,30 (PL 32, 1212): Nonne recte dicit, qui dicit idea nos significare ut doceamus?

¹⁰ Ibid. 10,31 (PL 32, 1213)

¹¹ Ibid. 10,33 (PL 32, 1214): Cum enim mihi signum datur, si nescientem me invenit cujus rei signum sit, docere me nihil potest.

¹² Ibid. 10,34 (PL 32, 1214): ...significationem autem re, quae significatur, aspect.

¹³ Ibid. 11,36 (PL 32, 1215): Haetenus verba valuerunt, quibus ut plurimum tribuam, admonent tantum ut quaeramus res, non exhibent ut noverimus.

¹⁴ Ibid. 11,38 (PL 32, 1216): De universis autem quae intelligimus non loquentem qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus veritatem.

¹⁵ Ibid. 12,40 (PL 32, 1217):

¹⁶ Joseph M. Colleran, The Teacher, (Westminister: Newman, 1950) , p. 117.

Chapter II

¹ S. Thomae Aquinatis, Quaestiones Disputatae, Vol. I, De Veritate, (Marietti, 1949), Q. 11, art. 2, p. 228.: Doctrina autem importat perfectam actionem scientiae in docente vel magistro; unde oportet quod ille qui docet vel magister est, habeat scientiam quam in alio causat, explicite et perfecte, sicut in addiscente per doctrinam.

² Ibid. art. 1, p. 225.

³ Ibid. art. 1, p. 226: Quod in discipulo describuntur formae intelligibiles, ex quibus scientia per doctrinam accepta constituitur, immediate quidem per intellectum agentem, sed mediate per eum qui docet.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. art. 2, p. 228: Dicendum, quod absque dubio aliquis potest per lumen rationis sibi inditum, absque exterioris doctrinae magisterio vel adminiculo, devenire in cognitionem ignotorum multorum.

⁶ Ibid. Et sic quodammodo aliquis est sibi ipsi causa sciendi, non tamen potest dici sui ipsius magister, vel seipsum docere.

⁷ Ibid. art. 1, p. 227.

⁸ Ibid. art. 1, p. 225: Quod praeexistunt in nobis quaedam scientiarum semina, scilicet primae conceptiones intellectus, quae statim lumine intellectus agentis cognoscuntur per species a sensibilibus abstractas, sive sint complexa, ut dignitate, sive incomplexa, sicut ratio entis, et unius, et huiusmodi, quae statim intellectus apprehendit.

⁹ Ibid. p. 226.

¹⁰ Ibid. art. 1, p. 226: Ex ipsis enim principiis se notis considerat, quod ea quae ex eis necessario consequuntur, sunt certitudinaliter tenenda; quae vero eis sunt contraria, totaliter respuenda.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 226.

¹² Ibid.: Alias homo non posset per seipsum acquirere scientiam.

¹³ Ibid.: Quod ex sensibilibus signis, quae in potentia sensitiva recipiuntur, intellectus accipit intentiones intelligibiles, quibus utitur ad scientiam in seipso faciendam. Proximum enim scientiae effectivum non sunt signa, sed ratio...

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 227: Quod homo, verus et vere doctor dici potest, et veritatem docens, et mentem quidem illuminans.

Chapter III

¹ De Magistro 1,12,40 (PL 32, 1217)

² Ibid. 1,1 (PL 32, 1195): ...et duas jam loquendi causas constituo, aut ut doceamus, aut ut commemoremus vel alios vel nosmetipsos.

³ Ibid. 1,2 (PL 32, 1195):...sicut sacerdotes faciunt, significandae mentis suae causa, non ut Deus, sed ut homines audiant et consensione quadam per commemorationem suspendantur in Deum.

⁴ Ibid. ...etiamsi quisquam contendat, quamvis nullam edamus sonum, tamen quia ipso verba cogitamus, nos intus apud animum loqui, sic quoque locutione nihil aliud agere quam commonere, cum memoria cui verba inhaerent, ea revolvendo facit venire in mentem res ipsas quarum signa sunt verba.

⁵ Ibid. 2, 3. (PL 32, 1196)

⁶ Ibid. 3, 5. (PL 32, 1197)

⁷ Ibid. 3, 6, (PL 32, 1198): Quare hic quoque non quidem verbo verbum, sed tamen signo signum nihilominus indicabit.

⁸ Ibid. 3, 6, (PL 32, 1198)

⁹ See Ch. III, 17.

¹⁰ De Magistro, 4,7 (PL 32, 1199): ...sed id quod eo significatur, non continuo signum est.

¹¹ Ibid. 7, 20 (PL 32, 1206): Docuit enim rationomnes partes orationis etiam nomina esse, quod et pronomina his addi possunt, et de omnibus diu potest quod aliquid nominent...

¹² Ibid. 7, 20 (PL 32, 1206)

¹³ Ibid. 8, 21 (PL 32, 1207)

¹⁴ Ibid. 8, 24 (PL 32, 1209)

¹⁵ Ibid. 8, 24 (PL 32, 1209)

¹⁶ Ibid. 9, 25 (PL 32, 1209): Quidquid enim propter aliud est, vilius sit necesse est quam id propter quod est.

¹⁷ Ibid. 9, 27 (PL 32, 1211)

¹⁸ De Veritate, Q. 11, art. 1, p. 223.

¹⁹ Ibid. 10, 32 (PL 32, 1213)

²⁰ Ibid. 10, 33 (PL 32, 1214): Cum enim mihi signum datur, si nescientem me invenit cuius rei signum sit, docere me nihil potest: si vero scientem, quid disco per signum?

²¹ Ibid. 10, 33 (PL 32, 1214)

²² Ibid. 10, 34 (PL 32, 1214)

²³ Ibid. ...vim verbi, id est significationem quae latet in sono, re ipsa quae significatur cognita, discimus, quam illam tali significatione percipimus.

²⁴ Ibid. 11, 36 (PL 32, 1215)

²⁵ Ibid. 11, 36 (PL 32, 1215)

²⁶ Ibid. 11, 37 (PL 32, 1216)

²⁷ Ibid. 11, 38 (PL 32, 1216)

²⁸ Ibid. 12, 39 (PL 32, 1216-1217)

²⁹ Ibid. 12, 40 (PL 32, 1217)

³⁰ Ibid. 12, 40 (PL 32, 1217): ...fit hoc imbecillitate cernentis, qui de re tota illam lucem consulere non potest.

³¹ Ibid. 12, 40 (PL 32, 1217)

³² Ibid. (PL 32, 1217-1218): Quia et ille qui post verba nostra rem nescit, et qui se falsa novit audisse, et qui posset interrogatus eadem respondere quae dicta sunt, nihil verbis meis didicisse convincitur.

³³ Ibid. 12, 41 (PL 32, 1218)

³⁴ Ibid. 14, 45 (PL 32, 1219): Nam quis tam stulte curiosus est, qui filium suum mittat in scholam, ut quid magister cogitet discat?

³⁵ Ibid. 14, 45 (PL 32, 1219)

³⁶ Ibid. 14, 46 (PL 32, 1220): ...ut jam non crederemus tantum, sed etiam intelligere inciperemus quam vere scriptum sit auctoritate divina, ne nobis quemquam magistrum dicamus in terris, quod unus omnium magister in coelis sit (Matth. xxiii, 8-10).

Chapter IV

¹ De Veritate, Q. 11, art. 1, p. 226.

² Ibid. p. 225: Quando ergo ex istis universalibus cognitionibus mens educitur ut actū cognoscat particularia, quae prius in potentia, et quasi in universali cognoscebantur...

³ Ibid. p. 225.

⁴ Ibid. p. 226.

⁵ Ibid. art. 2, p. 228: Dicendum, quod absque dubio aliquis potest per lumen rationis sibi inditum, absque exterioris doctrinae magisterio vel adminiculo, devenire in cognitionem ignotorum multorum.

⁶ Ibid. art. 1, p. 226.

⁷ Ibid. p. 227.

⁸ Ibid. p. 225.

⁹ Ibid. art. 2, p. 229: Quando autem alicui acquiritur scientia per principium intrinsecum, illud quod est causa agens scientiae, non

habet scientiam acuirendam, nisi in parte: scilicet quantum ad rationes seminales scientiae, quae sunt principia communia.

- 10 Ibid. p. 229.
- 11 Ibid. art. 1, p. 226.
- 12 See Ch. III, 31.
- 13 De Veritate, art. 1, p. 227.
- 14 Ibid. p. 226: Sicut ergo medicus dicitur causare sanitatem in infirmo natura operante, ita etiam homo dicitur causare scientiam in alio operatione rationis naturalio illius: et hoc est docere; unde unus homo alium docere dicitur, et eius esse magister.
- 15 Ibid. art. 3, 232.
- 16 Ibid. art. 3, 232.
- 17 Ibid. art 1, p. 227.
- 18 See Ch. III, 28.
- 19 De Veritate, art. 1, p. 227.
- 20 See Ch. III, 33.
- 21 De Veritate, art. 1, p. 228.
- 22 See Ch. III, 21.
- 23 De Veritate, art. 1. p. 226.
- 24 See Ch. III, 25.
- 25 De Veritate, art. 1, p. 225.
- 26 See Ch. III, 24.
- 27 De Veritate, art. 1, p. 227.
- 28 See Ch. III, 8.
- 29 De Veritate, art. 1, p. 226: Cognitio enim principiorum facit in nobis scientiam conclusionum, non cognitio signorum.
- 30 Ibid. art. 3, p. 231: ...quia et ipsam animam intellectuali lumine insignivit, et notitiam primorum principiorum ei impressit, quae sunt quasi

quaedam seminaria scientiarum; sicut et aliis naturalibus rebus impressit seminales rationes omnium effectum producendorum.

³¹ Ibid. art. 1, p. 226: ...nihilominus tame et sanare et docere proprie dicitur modo praedicto.

Chapter V

¹ St. Augustine, The Teacher, Translated by Joseph M. Colleran, C.S.S.R. (Westminster: Newman, 1950), p. 121.

² St. Thomas Aquinas, The Teacher, West Baden translation, Introduction by James Collins. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953), p. x.

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