Dear Alumnae and Alumni:

2015 has been an eventful year for us here in the Philosophy Department. This fall, four new colleagues have joined our faculty, two as affiliates and two in regular positions. The regular positions—to explain for those who may not be intimately familiar with university structures—are tenured or tenure-track, that is to say, they come with an employment guarantee after an extended probationary period. Tenure is meant to establish a special bond of commitment between the university and its faculty; it emphasizes that a faculty member is more than an “employee,” but rather a member of a self-governing, stable community who is as committed to the university as the university is to him or her. Affiliates, by contrast, are colleagues who are appointed full-time, but for a limited term. Many universities now make a lot of affiliate appointments to avoid the long-term commitment that comes with a tenure-track position. Affiliate appointments are most appropriate for younger colleagues who are just out of grad school: for these faculty members, an affiliate position can be a useful way to prove themselves before they apply for the more prestigious tenure-track jobs.

One of our new colleagues is more than a colleague (if such a thing exists): Jonathan Sanford is not only a philosophy professor, but also the new dean of Constantin College. Given the importance of Dr. Sanford’s function, two of our majors, Benjamin Bravo and Charlie Archer, have conducted an extended interview with him that we are sharing with our alumni in this newsletter, along with shorter pieces by our other new colleagues.

But this is by far not all that has happened on the third floor of Braniff over the past few months: we have had a dissertation defense, we brought together colleagues from UD and other institutions for a Saturday workshop on the Thomistic problem on analogy, we heard a brilliant young speaker from Baylor explain the thought of St. Bonaventure, several UD faculty members traveled to Mexico City to deepen our relationship with the Instituto tecnológico autónomo de México … and and and. We hope you find our accounts of these activities interesting and inspiring.

A happy new year 2016!

Philipp W. Rosemann

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Upcoming Events:

- January 28, 2016
  2016 Aquinas Lecture
  Dr. Eileen Sweeney
  Open to the Public
- April 7, 2016
  Genealogies of Modernity
  Dr. Ryan McDermott
  Open to the Public
2016 Aquinas Lecturer: Professor Eileen Sweeney, UD Class of 1979

The 2016 Aquinas Lecture is going to be delivered by Professor Eileen Sweeney, a UD alumna who is professor of philosophy at Boston College. After graduating magna cum laude from UD in 1979, Professor Sweeney completed her studies at UT Austin, where she received her doctorate in philosophy with a dissertation on Aquinas’s notion of science. Her first teaching position was at Marquette University, whence she moved to Boston College, where she has taught since 1990.

Professor Sweeney is an expert on medieval philosophy, with an emphasis on the thought of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. She has written three books and about thirty articles on medieval philosophers, especially St. Anselm and St. Thomas Aquinas. Her 2016 Aquinas Lecture will be entitled, “Aquinas as Ecstatic Aristotelian: Literary Reflections on the *Summa theologiae*.”

The lecture will explore the ways in which Aristotelian and biblical authorities are deployed and intertwined in the *Summa*, stretching, sometimes beyond the breaking point, the Aristotelian notions which function as the primary vehicle of explanation of the notions of will, passion, and virtue. Aristotelian *aorēsis* is satisfied with the fulfillment of nature imminent in the thing, while Scripture spurs us outside of ourselves and our natural telos toward ecstatic transcendence. Paradoxically, however, and repeatedly in the *Summa*, Aristotelian language provides the impetus forward toward *ecstasis*, while the language of Scripture punctuates arguments, functioning as a reminder of earthly gravity. These literary and rhetorical elements help provide the horizontal sense of the text across its many questions, articles, and objections, countering effectively, if we are attuned to them, the vertical dissolution of the text into discrete arguments and positions, and giving us a deeper sense of how the *Summa* might have been intended rhetorically and not just doctrinally as that beginning textbook for those coming out of the study of Aristotle in the arts faculty to the study of Scripture in *sacra doctrina*.

Please see the back page of this newsletter for further information on Dr. Sweeney's lecture.

Cont’d from page 3  For what is the true lesson of Rome? Is it not, in the end, that Rome is everywhere—that everything human is precious, and that the greatest gift is to live at all?

Such, at least, the lesson seems to me today. I discovered it last night, not in Plato or in Aeschylus after all but in a poem of Milne to which my own Christopher Robin, Jeffrey, was listening quietly as he had a little something to fill him up before bed:

Where am I going? The high rooks call:
“*It’s awful fun to be born at all.*”
Where am I going? The ring-doves coo:
“We do have beautiful things to do.”
If you were a bird, and lived on high,
You’d lean on the wind when the wind came by,
You’d say to the wind when it took you away:
“That’s where I wanted to go today!”
Where am I going? I don’t quite know.
What does it matter where people go?
Down to the wood where the blue-bells grow—
Anywhere, anywhere. I don’t know.

May you find Rome wherever the wind blows you.
A View from Rome, by Dr. Christopher Mirus

The students are gone, Christmas has passed, campus is quiet. The vineyard lies bare beneath Rome on the horizon. There are as many children as grown-ups living here at the moment, eight of each. The oldest child, Lola Hatlie, turns six today; the youngest, Caroline Reedy’s little brother, will be born next month. In another ten days the student life staff will return; a week after that a hundred students will pour off buses and out of taxis, calling out to friends and little suspecting—despite all they’ve heard—how busy their next few months will be.

Our family—Ellen, Jeffrey, Nathaniel, and I—settled here last August in what might have been just such an expectant quiet, had it not been for the arrival of three baby Rome professors, all with families. The vines were heavy then with unripe grapes, the faculty apartments with confused human beings. It’s hard to imagine a warmer welcome, though, or indeed a warmer place to live: here one is, above all, taken care of. The student life staff is in fact a faculty and student life staff, and indeed on a given, usually blue-skied afternoon one might well email the dean about a necessary repair, only to find that between emails he is keeping an eye on one’s children playing with his own.

Precisely in such a place—where each detail of our life has been considered with such kindness; where, more crucially, scores of bright students from a wealthy and powerful nation are shepherded each year with such unfailing love (love fortified, of course, with a healthy sense of humor, and a willingness to impose stiff fines for the commission of youthful follies)—one is forced to ask an unforgiving question. What, after all, is the difference between the University of Dallas Rome semester and a group of wealthy Americans—wealthy, at least, if one consider the world as a whole—enjoying themselves abroad?

The question has answers of course, some unique to the individual, some common to us all. For one thing, few groups of wealthy tourists are exhort ed quite so often by a chaplain to turn from sin and to seek holiness: few are advised quite so forcefully, for instance, that some of them ought to be giving up alcohol for Advent. Above all, there is this little matter of lectures to be attended, of essays to be written and examinations passed. There is a course of studies that cultivates sober passion and depth of insight, that proposes for emulation the greatest and most challenging achievements of our past. When the heart is open such studies, in their essential religious context, deepen the meaning of what we see here in Europe, turning tourists into students and students into dreamers.

Such generalities are not enough, of course. To see this we need only consult the parents throughout the world who would pay more in blood than we pay in money to transform their children’s young adulthood into that of our students—or, for that matter, the children who would do likewise to secure for their parents a small basement apartment in a Roman villa. The only real answer to such a question is personal, and it can take only one form: the decision to open myself once-and-for-all-and-again-and-again to grace, and to act decisively and lovingly in favor of the good that lies within my reach.

Paradoxically, though, this very answer brings us to a level of introspection at which the question itself loses its edge, as it turns out that we Romers were not really so privileged as we had dreamt.

Cont’d previous page
The Bonaventure Renaissance: A Role for UD

Since Pope Leo XIII promulgated his famous encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in 1879, the study of St. Thomas Aquinas has been central at Catholic universities, colleges, and seminaries worldwide. Even after the enthusiasm for Thomism waned somewhat after the Second Vatican Council, Thomas continued to be regarded as the scholastic thinker *par excellence*—even at secular universities, where sometimes reading a few pages from the *Summa* constitutes the entire treatment of medieval philosophy.

Not everyone in the Church, however, was entirely happy with the pride of place that *Aeterni Patris* accorded to St. Thomas among the scholastic thinkers. Above all, members of the Franciscan orders continued to work in their own intellectual tradition, which included such luminaries as Alexander of Hales (the first Franciscan professor at the University of Paris), St. Bonaventure, Francis Bacon, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. Thus, as the Dominicans launched the famous Leonine edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas in the 1880s, the Franciscans began to publish the no less impressive *Opera omnia* of the Seraphic Doctor. Over the next one hundred years or so, the Collegium S. Bonaventurae at Quaracchi, near Florence, became the leading center of Franciscan scholarship, producing not only the *Opera omnia* of Bonaventure, but also editions of many other scholastic texts in the Franciscan tradition, such as Alexander of Hales’s *Glossa* and the works of some lesser-known Franciscan thinkers. In the United States, in 1940 a group of Franciscans founded the Franciscan Institute—located in St. Bonaventure, New York, no less! Like its Italian counterpart, the Franciscan Institute focused on the scholarly work of editing texts as the foundation for the further study of the Franciscan intellectual tradition. The Franciscans at St. Bonaventure initially concentrated on the works of William of Ockham and Adam of Wodeham; more recently, they have taken up editing (and translating) Duns Scotus.

Although since the 1880s Franciscan scholarship has never been totally interrupted, after Vatican II there was a decline in interest. So, in good times as in bad ones, Franciscan scholarship continued to parallel Thomistic studies. Vocations of future Franciscan scholars became rare, just as many Dominicans turned away from St. Thomas. The past few years, however, have seen a reversal of this trend. The Franciscan Institute, for example, has recovered from a period of sluggishness. It has recently embarked on a new and expanded series of the works of St. Bonaventure in translation, among other projects. An independent researcher, Br. Alexis Bognolo, has undertaken the gigantic project of translating all of Bonaventure’s *Commentary on the Book of Sentences*—3,900 pages of Latin text—into English. Volume I has already appeared (and can be purchased here: http://franciscan-archive.org/bonaventure.html). A group of scholars around Boyd Taylor Coolman (Boston College), Ian Levy (Providence College), and Lydia Schumacher (Oxford) is planning a major Bonaventure conference for 2018.

And what is the role of UD in this Bonaventure renaissance? Although our Philosophy Department has long had a series of strongly Thomistic faculty members—Frederick Wilhelmsen being the best-known among them, closely followed by his student, Father James Lehrberger—UD has also cultivated the Franciscan intellectual tradition. Cont’d next page
Dr. William Frank has published books and articles on Scotus, as well as offering many graduate courses on Franciscan authors over the years, especially on the Subtle Doctor. Dr. Matthew Walz has an abiding interest in St. Bonaventure, on whom he taught a graduate course a couple of years ago. This fall, Dr. Philipp Rosemann studied Joseph Ratzinger’s book on *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* with a group of graduate students. Dr. Rosemann was particularly interested in the relationship between truth and time according to the Seraphic Doctor, since history has become such a central topic in post-Hegelian philosophy. Is there perhaps a Bonaventurian answer to this challenge?

Finally, the Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations series is sponsoring a major project that aims at the publication of Alexander of Hales’s *Glossa* in a bilingual Latin-English edition. This project is being coordinated by Boyd Taylor Coolman and Ian Levy, who have already signed up translators for all of the eight volumes. Volume 1, translated by the late Father Roland Teske, is ready for publication. (Further information is available at [http://www.dallasmedievaltexts.org/alexander-hales-project/](http://www.dallasmedievaltexts.org/alexander-hales-project/)).

There is perhaps one important difference between earlier generations of Franciscan-studies scholars and the younger colleagues who are driving the current renaissance. In the wake of *Aeterni Patris*, scholarly work on the Franciscan tradition was typically carried out at Franciscan institutions, by Franciscans—just as Thomistic studies were dominated by Dominicans. Nowadays lay scholars play a much more significant role. What is more, interest in Franciscan thought is no longer confined to Catholic circles. One finds it in places as unlikely as Baylor, the world’s largest Baptist university, where a young theologian from Yale, Junius Johnson, is preparing both a translation of Bonaventure’s treatment of the Eucharist in his *Sentences* commentary and a major study of Bonaventure’s theological system. Dr. Johnson visited the University of Dallas this fall, where he addressed a standing-room audience in the Gorman Faculty Lounge on the topic of the *Reduction of the Arts to Theology*. Dr. Johnson interpreted this very short text as a key to the structure of the Seraphic Doctor’s theology. The students were so enthralled by the presentation that they were hardly willing to let Dr. Johnson depart after his lecture.

What is it about St. Bonaventure that appeals to contemporary minds and souls? It may well be the fact that Bonaventure combines the scholastic approach that is so typical of Thomas Aquinas with an older language that is steeped in biblical images. This language resonates with souls who are tired of the calculating rationality of our contemporary culture, in which everything is measured scientifically and has a price. For the mindset conditioned by the disenchantment of the rationalist, secular world, Bonaventure bids us see that each thing is what it is, yes, but it is also more. Creatures are shadows, echoes, pictures; they are vestiges, images, and displays presented to us for the “contuition” of God. Bonaventure speaks almost literally about the “book of nature.” His philosophy and theology teach us how to read this book in which each creature shows us what it is itself in this visible world but also how, being itself, it also signifies the invisible things of God.

Finally, Bonaventure combines his marriage of scholasticism and biblical language with a kind of “soft radicalism”: all the arts “reduce” to theology, which is the undisputed queen of the sciences; but theology itself must humbly acknowledge that it culminates in a mystical vision that lies beyond all comprehension.
An Interview with Dean Jonathan Sanford

In August, Constantin College acquired a new dean, Dr. Jonathan Sanford, who previously taught at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. As a philosophy professor, Dr. Sanford was also appointed to a position in the Philosophy Department. Seniors Benjamin Bravo and Charlie Archer have interviewed him for our alumni newsletter.

How did you end up coming to UD? I was invited to consider applying for the deanship—somebody had nominated me and I was contacted by the chair of the search committee. It was the core curriculum that made me even begin to consider moving down here, because I am a tremendous fan of the core curriculum. I came down twice as part of the interview process and I really fell in love with the University of Dallas. As happy as I am to belong to UD’s Department of Philosophy, it was ultimately a matter of determining whether to accept the offered deanship of the Constantin College of Liberal Arts that led to my becoming part of the department.

I have known about the University of Dallas for a very long time. There has been a lot of exchange both at Franciscan University, where I was before, as well as with the high school I attended in South Bend, Indiana. One of my former teachers, Dr. Rollin Lasseter, when I was in high school was helping out with a classical education school in Irving, The Highlands, and then he was also teaching part-time for the University of Dallas. He would talk about Dallas, and other people I knew would talk about Dallas back when I was in high school. I saw it as a progression from the education that I was pursuing in high school, which was a classical education. I did not apply to Dallas. Texas seemed too far away, and I was interested in a program in classical languages—that interdisciplinary Great Books program that I participated in at a Jesuit university, Xavier University in Cincinnati, because that is where my interest lay at that time. When I was working on revising the core curriculum at Franciscan, in collaboration with colleagues there, I was peering across several states over at Dallas, virtually, through the website, and also through conversations with a former faculty member here, John Crosby, who is a dear friend of mine and was in the Philosophy Department for many years at the University of Dallas. He and I were partners in crime, so to speak, in moving forward with the new core curriculum at Franciscan.

So, that’s a long-winded way of saying that I have known about and admired the University of Dallas for a long time and was attracted to the deanship because I would be able to play a primary role in leading its progress, particularly on the undergraduate level, and knew already a number of the members of the Philosophy Department—some of them personally and others by reputation—and was happy to be considered for inclusion in the department.

(Charlie) Well, I’m glad you came.

(Ben) What, so far—I know it’s been very new—but what has been the best thing about UD? Wonderful students. It really is the case that we attract students who are sincere inquirers after the truth and are also very serious about pursuing development in other facets of their lives, spiritual as well as communal, and I have admired the students that I have gotten to know. I am very pleased with the new colleagues that I have and find myself to feel very much at home amongst them.

I will say something about the character of the place that is very attractive (which I could have included in the answer to the other question). I find there to be an easy relationship between thinking about the theological virtues, the intellectual virtues, and the moral virtues as part of the very ethos of this institution. That is to say, to put it negatively, one does not find conflict over the pursuit of the intellectual virtues with the pursuit of the theological virtues. It is strange to think that one would, within the context of the University of Dallas, and yet there is within Christianity in America, and even some segments of Catholicism, a certain anxiety that too much study, particularly of certain disciplines, might lead you away from a rich spiritual and religious life. I just find the absence of that concern here. And the potential to really develop a comprehensive articulation of the right and proper relationship between growth in those particular virtues—classes of virtues, I should say.” Cont’d next page.
What is your specialty in philosophy? Like a lot of the faculty here, I specialize in a number of areas. So, my most recent book is on virtue theory, virtue ethics specifically, but I tend to think of it in terms of virtue theory, and there is a distinction between virtue ethics and virtue theory. One can be a supporter of virtue theory and not a virtue ethicist.

My dissertation was on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* in conversation with Max Scheler. Max Scheler was an early twentieth-century phenomenologist. I wrote that dissertation under a medievalist who is also an analytic philosopher. So, that reflects some of my own pedigree—heavily continental and ancient Greek formation in my undergraduate and early graduate days. I continued work in ancient Greek philosophy and then complemented it with studies in medieval philosophy, focusing particularly on Anselm. I have a number of publications that deal with St. Anselm. I also took courses that focused on elements of analytic philosophy, particularly as they are applied to both metaphysics and moral philosophy. So, what I try to be sensitive to in my research is the distinction between ancient and modern approaches to philosophy, and to focus on where those divides are, and then to bring particularly the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition to bear on contemporary problems in both metaphysics and moral philosophy. Most recently in moral philosophy, although I edited a book on metaphysics that deals with elements of that.

How did you get involved in the administration of higher academics? By accident. I certainly did not set out in my career to become an administrator. I was asked to be chair of my department at a very early stage of my career. I was twenty-nine, or thirty, and three or four years into my assistant professorship position at Franciscan University and the vice-president of academic affairs at the time asked me to serve as chair. I was already getting involved in some faculty politics, and found I was a decent chair, a pretty good chair. I served in that capacity for five years. At the same time I was involved in what my old institution called the Faculty Welfare Committee, which was our main body that would seek to promote issues and concerns that were central to the faculty. I served on that committee for four years—two years as chair—but throughout the four years I took a leading role in its activities.

I also found myself critical of many administrative practices, and saw as one of the significant flaws in current administrative practices, the lack of individuals who had any significant academic experience or background. When I was so busy after we had a regime change at my old institution, I finally promised my wife that I would step back from being the chair of this Welfare Committee. I informed the vice president of academic affairs at the time that I would be stepping back and just focusing on my department. He said, “What if there was a way to share your time and bring to fruition some of the things that have been important to you?” One of those was the new approach to the tenure and promotion review process at the university. I had just led the faculty through a new comprehensive approach to that in which we changed our clocks and increased our expectations for faculty members. And I thought “OK, that might be interesting.” And then he also said, “You could work on faculty development.” Which was another thing that I was pressing for—more money for faculty initiatives. So I thought, “OK, if I could have the same amount of time and step back from doing all this work for free, and teach a little bit less and do some of this administrative work, I could do some good, and then go back to teaching full-time.” And so I found that I was doing important and valuable work in that administrative capacity.

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First, I was the assistant vice-president for academic affairs, the VPAA at that institution is like a provost—so I was like an assistant provost—and then an associate VPAA when my duties and time commitments increased with the administrative work. And then the funny thing was I was this past year thinking once again of going back to the faculty full-time. I felt as though I had accomplished what I wanted to: we had a new core curriculum, a new faculty development approach, and the new approach to tenure and promotion was going well. And I was considering just stepping back, and that was when UD “interfered” with my plans with the way that they—it sounded a little funny when I first saw the job notice—they were advertising for a “champion of the liberal arts.” My wife teased me and said, “Well, maybe we can get you a T-shirt that says ’Champion of the Liberal Arts.’” But that actually appealed to me, as corny as it sounds, and I thought, “Well, that is something that I really care about.” And I thought, “Really, my mission is not to this specific Catholic university where I was, but I am interested in seeing all boats rise in Catholic education in the United States.” And I looked to, as I was saying before, the University of Dallas as a paradigm. And I thought, “Well, here I am being presented with an opportunity to take an even more significant role in moving forward those causes that are near and dear to my heart,” as they are to many faculty members and students, and I felt some moral compunction to take the position. It was hard, because we were established in Steubenville, Ohio, and it caused some significant disruption for our family. I really felt as though I had some obligation—a kind of calling that I needed to respond to—but it was also a great opportunity to learn to serve in new ways.

Charlie) Do you—our next question follows up very nicely on this—do you have a vision for the role of Catholic higher education in America, specifically, liberal-arts universities like UD? Yes, I am convinced that liberal-arts education is the path to genuine education. And there are a number of elements to this. One, of course, is the cultivation of genuine leisure. We have become dominated in our post-secondary concerns by a utilitarian attitude that demands that we know, from the very first day students step on a college campus, what they are going to do for the rest of their lives. Parents demand to know what the earning power of different degrees will be. We have created some significant anxiety in students because of this. And I am not suggesting we should not care at all about careers, but rather we need to put the essence and purpose of education, first and foremost, before the student. And we must seek to defend a vision of what it means to be a fully educated human being, and why that is significant. I think all the elements are in place here at the University of Dallas for articulating this view. I gave one piece of it—maybe is sounded too triumphalist at the Phi Beta Kappa Symposium—but one way that I am thinking about this is by way of a metaphor. We are seeking to shape living cathedrals through the education that we provide, a genuine liberal-arts education. So that our students become “beautiful” in this extended sense, and themselves transformed—and ultimately points of transformation for others.

Louise Cowan, who just died today, had it as her goal, and that of her husband, both to revive the Western intellectual tradition and to transform culture. And I think education is the only lasting way to do that, and a genuine liberal-arts education is one in which the student is transformed and becomes a person who cannot only think for him- or herself, but who, in turn, seeks to promote those genuine goods in his or her life and in the lives of others.

Ben) You have sort of already answered this, so we might skip it, but our next question is: what is the importance of the core in our liberal-arts education here? The core establishes an appreciation for the breadth and diversity of human inquiry. It cultivates the habits of mind that are necessary for achieving both an integrated view of each area of human discovery as well as providing the necessary foundation for growth in a major area.
The core forces students to think outside of narrow “tracks” and to explore subjects that they would otherwise not explore. But, fundamentally, it is a matter of shaping the habits of mind, the intellectual virtues, that are necessary for truly becoming clear and competent thinkers in their own right.

(Charlie) You mentioned the Cowans, I did not know that Louise had died today, I certainly will pray for her ... 2:30 this morning. She was surrounded by her family—her son and daughter-in-law and two of her grandkids.

(Charlie) That is good. How do you see the Cowans’ legacy playing out at UD in your time here? Well, I am working through Donald Cowan’s *Unbinding Prometheus* right now, which is a series of lectures that he gave on the meaning of education. He and Louise were explicit in their promotion of a vision that sought to educate the whole person. They sought to emphasize especially a literary and humanistic approach to education. I am a little bit more Aristotelian in my way of approaching many of the same subject matters, but in terms of overall orientation and shared reflection on the essence and purpose of education, I see myself as very much trying to pull forward what they have planted here. This is after there was, I guess, a period in which the University of Dallas was a little bit less sure if it should maintain the kind of national reputation that it had achieved, and whether it should weaken its core curriculum and bow to some of the contemporary pressures. But, under President Keefe, we have realized that we can maintain that legacy and do these additional things. It is not an “either/or,” it is a “both/and.” I appreciate that allowance of the “both/and.” So, I am pushing especially for recovering and articulating even more broadly this vision—first and foremost of undergraduate education (I am the dean of the undergraduate college), but it shares this with the other colleges and schools of the university. To advance our national reputation as well as to serve our local students in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and so on and so forth.

You can see other features of the legacy of Louise and Donald Cowan nearby—not just with the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture—but there are many schools dedicated to classical education in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. More than any other place in the country. The variety of schools is truly remarkable: charter schools now as well as Protestant and Catholic and secular variations on classical education. That movement is carried on by many of the former students of Donald and Louise, alumni of the University of Dallas, and those that they have influenced. So, we are already living amidst the legacy of Louise and Donald Cowan, not just in this university, but in this area. And with the spread of the classical education movement across primary and secondary schools in the country.

(Ben) The last question I think we should ask is in relation to a *Forbes* article that recently appeared, which cited the university as the foremost liberal-arts college in Texas and one of four in the nation to acquire a grade of excellence in all seven subjects. Could you give a brief response to that? It is good to be recognized for what we are. So, “ACTA” is the acronym for American Council of Trustees and Alumni. It is an organization to pay attention to because it does not look at extraneous factors, like what your student body thinks about the cafeteria, or how big your endowment is, or what have you. It looks at the content and quality of your education. And when you look at the content and quality of the education we are providing at the University of Dallas, we are peerless. Well, I guess we have three other peers in the United States (laughter), but peerless in the state of Texas and darn near peerless in the United States. And I hope that that changes. Going back to the paradigm issue, it would be wonderful if a recognition such as that will have a broad impact on conversations in higher education, where we cannot hide any more behind the achievement of a degree, or a certain GPA; for those external awards, it has been proven, do not necessarily mean that students have learned more. Our students have learned more. They have developed precisely those habits of mind that we mentioned before in the context of the question having to do with the core.

(Charlie and Ben) Thank you very much. You’re welcome.
Dr. Cynthia Nielsen: a brief intellectual biography

Although I have spent significant time at the University of Dallas—both as a graduate student and as an adjunct professor—this is my first year teaching as an assistant professor of philosophy. It has been a fantastic first year, and I am both honored and excited to work with my new colleagues and with UD students. Since I am a new faculty member (at least new to some), I thought it might be helpful to provide a short intellectual biography in a rather informal “key.” My biography will also reveal the underlying coherence of my diverse research interests.

I earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Jazz Studies and Performance from the University of North Florida, and my principal instrument is jazz guitar. Prior to my decision to enter graduate school and study philosophy, I played semi-professionally in various jazz groups in the DFW area. As is well known, African Americans have been key contributors to jazz, and the history of African Americans’ struggle for civil rights and equal opportunities is intertwined with the history of American jazz. Given the focus of my undergraduate degree, as well as my existential experience of playing in ethnically diverse jazz orchestras and studying the history of jazz, I naturally developed a deep and abiding interest in the topics of race and racialized practices.

After completing my undergraduate studies, I decided to spend some time in Moscow, Russia, where I taught conversational English and had the opportunity to work with Russian orphans and pensioners. This was a life-changing time for me, as I was confronted with many of my own cultural prejudices and learned to appreciate cultural differences and ways of being. Now fast-forward several years to my graduate studies at UD. It was there that I first encountered the classical texts of the Western tradition, which opened up for me new intellectual and imaginative horizons—fruitful ways of seeing and thinking about God, the world, myself, and others. As a result of my studies, I thought it not only possible but personally important to integrate my musical knowledge and experience with the philosophical knowledge acquired through my graduate work at UD; thus, for my dissertation I choose a topic that would bring together my interest in race, oppression, and human freedom, thereby enabling me to show how premodern thinkers such as Augustine and Scotus have extremely valuable contributions to make in contemporary discussions on these topics.

Although Hans-Georg Gadamer’s name does not appear in my dissertation title, his dialogical spirit animates my approach to the central themes and thinkers of my project. That is, one might characterize my work as a “hermeneutics of the other;” wherein one approaches the other with an openness to hear the other’s voice and to allow his or her claims to challenge, expand, and potentially alter one’s self and world. Furthermore, my interest in Gadamer dates back to my graduate days, as my focus text for my comprehensive exam was Truth and Method, and as a graduate student I published an article on Gadamer and Augustine entitled, “St. Augustine on Text and Reality (and a Little Gadamarian Spice),” in the Heythrop Journal (2009).

Given this background, it should not be surprising that my current research focuses on Gadamer’s work concerning the ontology of art presented in his magnum opus, Truth and Method, as well as in several essays found in volumes 8 and 9 of his Gesammelte Werke. I am particularly interested in bringing Gadamer’s insights regarding art’s dynamic ontology, its communal dimensions, and its ability to communicate truth into conversation with twentieth-century music and art.

In closing, I am thrilled to be a part of the UD community and to have the opportunity to work with and learn from our talented students and seminarians, who exhibit a love for learning and a genuine appreciation for a liberal-arts education—two traits not often found in students of the twenty-first century.

Examining Experience and Existence, by Dr. Catherine Nolan

Some cultural phenomena fascinate me deeply. While I am Canadian by birth, I received my undergraduate degree at Ave Maria College, in Michigan, my MA at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, and my PhD at SUNY Buffalo in New York. Besides my time in Canada and the United States, I have studied and worked at missions in Central America, and the contrast has led me to notice how easy it is, in more developed countries today, to live from day to day focused on our experiences. In our work, we focus on lowering our stress levels; in relaxing, we turn to TV, movies, novels, and video games. Smartphones allow us to fill other moments by watching news, reading about what our friends have been doing, and following the lives of celebrities.

But ought we to live in this way? On some occasions, it seems obvious that our focus on immediate experiences leads us to neglect more valuable possibilities. In the past, I have taught courses to students who, when I have entered the classroom, would be sitting in complete silence focused only on their cell phones—and by ignoring each other in this way, they miss the companionship and intellectual stimulation of their peers. In some universities, students have even requested “trigger warnings” to alert them of potentially unpleasant classroom experiences, even when these are reading classical texts or discussing historic events: they are focused not on what they could become by learning from these sometimes painful experiences, but on avoiding the pain.

Students at the University of Dallas are, however, wonderfully aware of their opportunities to learn. I have been consistently impressed by the way they discuss their classes together, converse with their professors, and are willing and eager to discuss even the most contentious problems. This past fall semester, I had the chance to teach a section of Philosophy of Being—a course which focuses on metaphysical theories. The study of being is crucial in answering the question of how we ought to live, since to answer it we need to know what kind of being we are.

Contemporary thought occasionally goes so far as to equate what one experiences and what one is. We see this perhaps most clearly in the recent controversy surrounding people who believe they experience life as a member of the opposite sex and have made public requests to be acknowledged as members of the opposite sex. Is there nothing essential to femininity and masculinity? Is it no more than a way one can experience one’s self and the world? Focusing exclusively on our experience makes it impossible to answer these questions; we need to once again look at what we are.

My particular interest is in bioethical issues: I believe that engaging in this kind of thought becomes crucial when human life is at stake. More and more often, I hear that euthanasia ought to be permitted for someone whose quality of life has degraded: in other words, it is permissible to destroy a human being if one’s human experiences are more unpleasant than pleasant. In other cases, people argue that having less-than-human experiences (or no experiences) means that one is not a human person: euthanasia is also defended when the patient is unconscious and cannot be resuscitated, or even merely suffering from advanced Alzheimer’s or dementia. This claim is one that we encounter in beginning-of-life issues as well; a popular justification for early abortion is based on the fact that very young fetuses do not experience pain.

As Catholics, we need to be ready to answer such challenges, which means that we need to learn more about what we are, instead of allowing ourselves to be constantly distracted by what we experience. Our philosophical tradition is a rich resource to explore here—answers to so many new questions that people raise today can be found in an examination of Plato, Aristotle, or Aquinas. This is why I am so glad to be at the University of Dallas; we have the opportunity to ground our thought thoroughly in the great thinkers of the past, and the freedom to engage with the questions of our age and culture.
How to speak about God?
A Workshop on Analogy

On Saturday, November 21, professors and students from the University of Dallas, Southern Methodist University, Ave Maria University, and the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México gathered in the Gorman Faculty Lounge for a day-long workshop on the problem of analogy. The workshop was divided into two parts. In the morning, four presenters read papers devoted to the three fundamental options that exist for human language concerning God. Some thinkers in the Western tradition have maintained that God’s transcendence makes it impossible to apply any concepts to God except metaphorically. In the workshop, this approach was exemplified by Maimonides, on whom Dr. Joshua Parens spoke in his contribution. At the opposite end, so to speak, we have philosophers and theologians arguing for univocity. Duns Scotus famously argued that, if language about God is to be meaningful, it must be univocal; for there can be no syllogistic reasoning involving ambiguous terms. Dr. William Frank and Dr. Bruce Marshall (SMU) both explored Scotus’s univocal concept of being in their papers. The media via between metaphorical predication and univocity is analogy, famously defended by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae* and other writings. Fr. James Lehrberger’s paper served to introduce Thomas into the discussion, vividly contrasting the Thomistic position with Locke’s view on the status of concepts as mere ideas in the human mind.

During the afternoon, several presenters offered further interpretations of analogy. Dr. Chris Malloy drew attention to some difficulties in Thomas Aquinas’s distinction between “proper” and “improper” discourse regarding God. The difficulties arise from the fact that Aquinas’s list of proper terms includes some unlikely candidates, such as “refuge” and “fire.” Dr. Philip Gonzales spoke on Fr. Erich Przywara’s attempt to update the Thomistic theory of analogy in his work *Analogia entis* (1932)—a difficult book that was highly influential among German and French thinkers, but that has just now appeared in English translation. Prof. José Pantaleón Domínguez Esponda (ITAM) introduced the audience to the Spanish Dominican Santiago Ramírez, who devoted a four-volume work to the theory of analogy (1970). Professor Domínguez had some helpful Powerpoint slides to distinguish the various types of analogy according to Ramírez’s interpretation of Aquinas. Finally, Dr. Steven Long from Ave Maria discussed Thomas’s proper proportionality as the most appropriate type of analogy in language about God (and this as opposed to the analogy of attribution). Both Long’s and Domínguez’s papers delved deeply into some of the intricacies of interpreting Thomas’s theory of analogy.

There was lively discussion throughout the day, which ended with a meal that brought the participants together in a more informal, convivial atmosphere.
John Macready defends dissertation on Hannah Arendt

On December 4, 2015, John Douglas Macready defended his dissertation and delivered a public lecture on the notion of human dignity in the thought of Hannah Arendt. In the following text, Dr. Macready offers our readers a brief reflection on his work on the dissertation. (And, by the way, congratulations, Dr. Macready!)

The political philosophy of Hannah Arendt is currently experiencing a renaissance. Aside from the academic interest in her thought, which has produced numerous books and articles over the last decade, Arendt has also been the subject of Margarethe von Trotta’s recent film Hannah Arendt (2013). Although she is often viewed as a controversial thinker, her philosophical interrogations of totalitarianism, evil, human rights, and the role of thinking in moral judgments have made her work especially relevant for our age. In a time of rapid technological advancement that promises both to enhance our capacities and diminish our humanity, Arendt would remind us that we are conditional beings who condition our world and are, in turn, conditioned by it. In an age of global terrorism, she would remind us of the dangers of ideology and the importance of independent thinking. In an era of increased political polarization, Arendt would have us understand that we are co-builders of a common world that both unites us and keeps us separate. At a time when the number of refugees fleeing political violence has reached proportions unseen since the Second World War, she would remind us that every human being has a right to a place in the world. Arendt’s work offers pertinent insights for thinking through our contemporary political landscape.

For the last few years, I have been actively participating in this Arendtian renaissance through my research and writing. My research has focused on how Arendt understood human dignity. In the preface to The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951), she claimed that human dignity needed a “new guarantee,” but in her concluding remarks to the book, she claimed that inherent human dignity did not exist and was “the last and possibly most arrogant myth we have invented in all our long history.” The disjunction between these two claims and the philosophical problematic that they constitute in Arendt’s work led me to investigate what she meant by the concept of human dignity and how this concept informed her theory of human rights. This investigation became the basis for my dissertation, “A Fragile Nobility: Hannah Arendt and the Political Meaning of Human Dignity.”

While it is clear that human dignity was a central concern in Arendt’s political philosophy, the meaning that she ascribed to it was notoriously ambiguous. This lacuna in her work creates a conceptual gap between her theory of human rights and the source of these rights. In order to bridge this gap, I conducted a hermeneutical survey of Arendt’s use of the concept of human dignity in her published work, lectures, letters, and journals in order to excavate the latent meaning she ascribed to it and demonstrate how it functions as a philosophical justification for her theory of rights. Cont’d next page
In the dissertation, I argue that Arendt's experience of political violence and genocide in the twentieth century, as well as her experience as a stateless person, led her to rethink the concept of human dignity in order to retrieve the political experience that gave rise to it. She was seeking to move beyond the traditional accounts of human dignity that relied principally on the status and stature of human beings in order to retrofit the concept for the political realm through her notion of stance—how human beings stand in relationship to one another. From this vantage point, Arendt reconceived human dignity as a worldly phenomenon and advocated for a view of human dignity that I call conditional dignity—the view that human dignity is dependent on political action, namely, the preservation and expression of dignity by the person who bears it, and/or the recognition by the political community to which the person belongs or seeks membership.

Arendt's notion of conditional dignity is situated within her political ontology and informs her notion of political personhood, which relies on a recognitive politics that emphasizes the co-responsibility of individuals and political regimes to insist upon the right of human beings to have a place in the world. It is precisely this "right" to have a place in the world—the right to belong to a political community and never to be reduced to the status of stateless animality—that indicates the political meaning of human dignity in Arendt's political philosophy. By excavating the latent meaning of human dignity in Arendt's political philosophy and elucidating her political ontology, it becomes possible to bridge the conceptual gap between Arendt's theory of the right to have rights and the source of this right.

Arendt's rethinking of human dignity is all the more relevant in light of the recent Syrian refugee crisis. The Syrian civil war that began in the spring of 2011 has resulted in the departure of over four million Syrians from their country to escape political violence. The scale of this humanitarian crisis resembles the European humanitarian crisis brought about by German anti-Semitism in the 1930s, one that first prompted Arendt to begin rethinking human dignity and human rights. The request for asylum by Syrian refugees constitutes a moral demand for the recognition of their dignity and their right to have a place in the world. The demand itself is an assertion of their dignity, but in spite of the claim that all human beings have an inherent worth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signatory countries like Hungary and Canada have denied asylum to Syrian refugees with devastating consequences. Arendt would remind us that metaphysical claims about intrinsic human dignity have little currency when the chips are down, and that apart from the political actions of assertion and/or recognition, human dignity cannot appear in the world. Whether or not human dignity will remain a compelling justification for human rights will depend upon the acknowledgement of its worldliness—the fact that it must be given space to appear in the world. Only then, as Arendt reminded us, can the dignity of persons show itself to us and call us to our common responsibility to guarantee it.
On August 17th through 19th of 2015, a group of UD faculty visited the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM). Among them was Philosophy Department faculty member, graduate director, and Braniff dean Dr. Joshua Parens. Other UD faculty members attending were Drs. Bainard Cowan (Cowan Chair and Braniff Graduate School), Alexandra Wilhelmsen (Modern Languages and Literatures), Gregory Roper (chairman of English), and José Espericueta (Modern Languages and Literatures). As has already been reported in these pages, previously Dr. Rosemann, chairman of Philosophy, gave a well-received lecture at ITAM. And Dr. Carlos McCadden, the head of the Department of General Studies, visited UD last year to tell the UD community about ITAM’s unusual core curriculum and to learn about UD’s undergraduate core. The Department of General Studies provides a rigorous, if brief, seven-course sequence of courses required of all ITAM undergraduate students. Because of the focus of ITAM and the character of Mexican higher education, ITAM’s core, though it starts almost as broadly as UD’s, becomes much more focused on the history of Mexico and on its economic, social, and political past, present, and future than is UD’s core on the United States. In brief, ITAM’s core is more pragmatic, and UD’s more liberal in the classical sense. Leaving aside the core, ITAM is one of the most important and influential universities in Mexico. And it is far broader than the qualifier tecnológico would seem to indicate.

Drs. Rosemann and Espericueta worked with Dr. McCadden to arrange the UD faculty visit. Through extensive discussions and in consultation with interested UD faculty, they agreed to hold a conference on tradition. What is the character of tradition? Cont’d next page
What is its relation to innovation and the health and vitality of a cultural, intellectual, and political community? The UD faculty mentioned above wrote papers, their papers were assigned respondents at ITAM, and during their visit the papers and responses were presented before various ITAM audiences. Through a process of consultation and exchange among the UD faculty, the focus of the conference shifted a bit toward a focus on the Western tradition. What characterizes it, what are its limits if any, and what are its prospects?

On Monday, Dr. Bainard Cowan presented a lecture titled “Lines of Derivation in the West: From Tradition to the Americas.” It explored the ways in which the US imaginary and the Mexican, and more generally Latin American, imaginaries differ, due in no small part to the deep influence of Protestantism on the US and the influence of Catholicism on Latin America. Dr. Valeria Zepeda of ITAM, who since the UD visit to ITAM has also visited UD in the beginning of November, responded to his paper. Dr. Parens presented a lecture titled, “What Is the Western Tradition? The Case of Islamic Thought.” It discussed varying views of the relation between Islamic thought and the West; some say that Islam is non-Western and others that it is Western. What, then, is meant by being Western? Prof. Roberto Zocco of ITAM responded. On Tuesday, Dr. Espericueta presented a lecture titled “Fukú and the Post-Colonial Legacy of the West in The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao.” It explored the character of the Western colonial influence on the Dominican Republic through Junot Díaz’s best-selling novel—which treats colonization through the lens of one family and the strange fukú or curse colonization cast upon that family. Dr. José Manuel Orozco Garibay, an important Mexican philosopher, responded to Espericueta. Dr. Alexandra Wilhelmsen offered “Reflections on the Dynamic Aspect of Tradition in Western Civilization.” Through a wide-ranging discussion of historical and cultural influence in the West, especially Spain, Dr. Wilhelmsen focused on the peculiar knack of the Western tradition for absorbing the influence of other civilizations, exemplified by its absorption of Islamic decorative and architectural motifs in art and architecture called mudéjar. Unfortunately, due to illness her respondent was not available. Finally on Wednesday, Dr. Roper delivered “The Irreverent Reverence of Western Culture through Chaucer’s Nun’s Priest’s Tale.” It explored the ways in which Chaucer’s characters display their reverence for the Western Christian tradition not only through more traditional expressions of reverence, but also through apparently irreverent questioning of the tradition. Dr. Charles Gutiérrez responded to Roper.

Our hosts at ITAM were generous in every respect, including but not limited to the academic. We stayed at beautiful lodgings close to campus; we were treated to wonderful food both on and off campus; and we were taken to important destinations in Mexico City by amazingly generous faculty and friends of the administration of ITAM.

Among the important effects of the meeting; Plans are under way to propose a concentration in Latin American Studies, spearheaded by Dr. Espericueta. Discussions have begun regarding the next conference with papers by ITAM faculty and UD faculty respondents. And discussions begun previously about the possibility of a joint master’s program in Inter-American Relations between Braniff and ITAM’s General Studies, which began before this visit, continue.
Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews recently published a detailed, and very appreciative, review of Dr. Robert Wood’s new book, a collection of essays written over his long career. We are reprinting the review here, with the kind permission of its author, Dr. Daniel Dwyer of Xavier University in Cincinnati.

In this book, Robert E. Wood has collected 22 articles published over more than four decades. He includes a preface and an introductory chapter that address how the essays intersect thematically. Given the vast amount of historically informed philosophical terrain he covers, I can only do justice to the book by picking out certain major themes present in almost all of the essays. Although Wood’s cast of characters is impressively vast, starting from the Presocratics up through the late Heidegger, his interest is not primarily directed toward the historical interpretation of what these Western philosophers used to think, but rather toward how they speak to the contemporary human condition and the “things themselves.” It is thus an attempt at a fusion of philosophical horizons. He argues that philosophy is a matter of critical and systematic claims about the whole (xxi). By *philosophia* he means “the enduring quest for the manifestness of the Whole to which we are directed by the ever-manifest but usually only implicitly given character of our own immanent structure” (31). Wood maintains that he studies how each thinker is both critical of and assimilates the thought of what precedes him, but that he does so “not to perform some antiquarian scholarly exercise but to come into an essential relation to the matters considered” (108). I will reflect on this particular hermeneutic at the end of the essay.

I will lay out what I take to be four key themes addressed by Wood in almost all of the articles in this rich and satisfying collection: (1) the descriptive-phenomenological method employed throughout the essays, (2) a primarily anthropological approach to human beings’ orientation to what he refers to alternately as the whole, the totality, and plenitude of Being, (3) the centrality of the heart as the originary locus of the erotic tendency to confront the whole of Being, and (4) the pervasive interpretation of the late Heidegger’s notion of meditative or indwelling thinking. I will end by reflecting on the value of Wood’s reading of the history of certain philosophers as a textual approach to perennial themes in philosophy (indeed, there are very few secondary works cited, which, given Wood’s goals, is perhaps a virtue of the collection).

First, Wood’s method is to explicate the sense of classic texts in the Western philosophical canon in the spirit of what he calls a descriptive phenomenology, which articulates “how things present themselves in the field of experience” (xi). As Cont’d next page
Wood puts it, “The basic structure of this field calls for the interpretation of what is described directly, especially as present in the texts of the philosophic tradition. That same structure orients us beyond current understanding and calls for dialogue” (ibid.). Descriptive phenomenology is not necessarily a contrastive term here. Indeed, the only article in which he goes into detail about a specifically transcendental phenomenology is entitled “The Phenomenologists,” and even there his preferred vision of phenomenology focuses mostly on intentionality and the existential phenomenology of the late Heidegger. Wood thus uses descriptive phenomenology largely as a term of art that commits him to no particular school of thought—exegesis is not theory-laden for Wood. He calls Plato a “proto-phenomenologist” (21) because he provides a fundamental phenomenological inventory of the basic framework of the field of experience” (30). Evidently, for Wood, what makes phenomenology in his sense descriptive is its focus on the eidetic features of human experience: “it is the presence of the eidetic that allows us to move from sensory gawking and emoting to understanding” (133). Put thus, almost all of the thinkers he discusses in the book are contributing to a project of descriptive phenomenology, despite their differences.

The second major theme discernible in the collection concerns human nature’s orientation to the whole. There is a pervasive bipolarity to be noted in his philosophers’ thought concerning the constitution of the human being. On the one hand, there are the biologically grounded, animalistic, and genetic components that confront the sensory world, and, on the other, there is our peculiar humanness that is “ontologically referred, via the notion of Being, to the whole of what is” (xx). For Wood, “[h]uman nature has a double ground. On the one hand, there is the obvious biological ground …. On the other hand, there is, less obvious, what I call the ontological ground” (446). In Heideggerian fashion, the human being is the locus of the question of Being. Far from being a rigid intellectualist, Wood argues that despite the gap—or empty space of meaning—between the sensory and the totality, “the meaning of the Whole … [is] the object of our deepest human desire” (xxiv). In Platonic fashion we are oriented toward a totality that we do not and cannot possess. In an essay on Buber and Marcel, Wood makes this point a bit clearer when he says the question of wholeness regards both the wholeness of one’s own being and one’s relation to the wholeness of what is. What is necessary “is a return to a lived sense of the Whole itself from the abstract delineation of the encompassing framework of all our dealings in relation to that Whole” (418). Clearly, for Wood, there is a non-discursive orientation to and contemplative beholding of the Good, where we dwell in the Good and not simply think, speak, and argue about it.  

Photo by Justin Schwartz
Wood’s third main theme is what could be characterized as an erotic anthropology of the heart. According to him, “[h]eart and the limits of its desire initiate Western metaphysics. Not thought, not logic or reason, but “the heart” with its desire is first” (13). The heart is the locus of one’s biological givens and spontaneous preferences, choices, and thoughts. More specifically, Wood contrasts “the Me, … the sum total of genetic, cultural, and historical-personal determinations concretely making me, Me … [and that] dimension of Me that points beyond everything objectifiable to the Plenitude” (161). The Platonic resonances are hard to overlook: “eros is the ground of the soul … [and] seeks identity with the undying Whole. As an object of eros, the Whole is manifest in its beauty” (38). Wood is therefore no Cartesian intellectualist. As he writes, the “heart is the medium between the too-often dichotomized literalism of a mechanized body and a logicized reason” (14). The heart is thus the locus of “our reference to everything and to everything about everything. It thus has an erotic structure in the Platonic sense: it is an oriented emptiness, an emptiness aimed at plenitude” (275). Wood compares Plato’s Good to Heidegger’s Being, in that the latter “is correlative not to intellect but to the emotional attunement that Plato designates as Eros” (144).

Fourthly, Wood focuses on the indwelling meditative thought (das besinnliche Nachdenken) described in the writings of the late Heidegger. One of the key distinctions present in many of the essays is that between representational-calculative thinking and meditative thinking. Correlative to this distinction is that between the orthotic level of truth (conceptual, discursive formation) and the alethic level of truth. Whereas orthotic thinking “constructs and is ultimately governed by the will-to-power,” meditative thinking “lets beings be” (138). Wood’s gloss on alete he doxa is “manifest appearance,” direct insight into universal relations” (25). Here one notes again Wood’s descriptive-phenomenological approach, which he locates in most of the thinkers he discusses, as an eidetic insight into universal characteristics of human experience and the beauty, truth, and goodness in Being. What is evident in Wood’s readings of the history of philosophy is the insistence on the emptiness of the notion of being without a correlative reading of the anthropological nature of the human heart’s desire for and meditative thought about aspects of the Whole of Being. In this sense, we could interpret Wood’s attempts to get at the core of the continuing dialogue between and among the great Western philosophers as an investigation of the intentionality or directedness of human nature beyond itself toward the plenitude of Being. In this respect, Wood waxes eloquently on the Heideggerian theme: “One can come away from beings with their data and laws: such favors can be seized: beings can be raped. But their being, their presence, must be left be, reverently, before their real secret is revealed” (178). Wood’s collection is a serious endeavor to take the history of thought as a continual dialogue across generations among philosophers who are addressing sufficiently similar topics, both anthropological and ontological. It does indeed appear in many of the essays as if the anthropology were driving the ontology. And yet there is almost always a meditation on the mutual interpenetration of both directions of inquiry. The main thesis of most of the articles could be summarized by saying that the whole or totality toward which the human being is oriented or referred is quite often recalcitrant to full disclosure, but that fact in no way eradicates the human desire for a certain conception of the fullness of being.

The book as a whole does not attempt to establish a hermeneutic that would justify that these thinkers are all aiming at the same project or at the “things themselves.” In this light, one might get the impression that this is Wood’s cumulative effort to arrive at Woodian themes by organizing the material such that the anthropological and ontological themes become manifest in highly selective readings. Yet he does speak of aspiring to a Gadamerian fusion of horizons, and his readings do get at points of serious overlap, which span ancient, medieval, and contemporary thought. In sum, Wood is calling his readers to re-engage with the whole of the history of Western philosophical thought, seeking continuity of themes without overlooking discontinuity of emphases. In clear prose, acute insights, and a thorough grasp of a wide diversity of thinkers, Wood presents to historians of philosophy a master’s synoptic view of how it all (might) make sense.

AQUINAS AS ECSTATIC ARISTOTELIAN:
Literary Reflections on the *Summa Theologicae*

BY

EILEEN SWEENEY '79
Boston College

PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Thursday, January 28, 2016 | 7:30 p.m. | Lynch Auditorium
Reception to follow in Gorman Faculty Lounge

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