



Sveučilište u Zagrebu

Faculté des études croates

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L'ENSEIGNEMENT PHILOSOPHIQUE DE THOMAS D'AQUIN SUR L'HISTOIRE

THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

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Sous la direction de :
M. Anto Gavrić, Professeur des Universités

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THOMAS AQUINAS' PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHING ON HISTORY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Supervisor:
Professor Anto Gavrić, PhD

Zagreb, 2026

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Cette thèse de doctorat est dédiée à saint Thomas d'Aquin, à l'occasion du triple anniversaire thomasiens célébré de 2023 à 2026 : le 700^e anniversaire de sa canonisation en 2023, le 750^e anniversaire de sa mort en 2024, et le 800^e anniversaire de sa naissance en 2025-2026.

C'est dans ce sillage mémoriel que je tiens à exprimer mon profond respect, ma déférence et ma vive gratitude à la mémoire du Père Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., rappelé à Dieu en août 2025. Puisse cette étude être reçue comme un humble témoignage de fidélité à l'exigence scientifique et spirituelle qu'il a léguée aux études thomasiennes.

Je tiens aussi à exprimer ma profonde gratitude à mon directeur de thèse pour son précieux accompagnement et ses conseils avisés tout au long de cette recherche.

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NOTICE BIOGRAPHIQUE DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE

Anto Gavrić, religieux dominicain, est professeur ordinaire à la Faculté de philosophie et des sciences des religions de l'Université de Zagreb, où il dirige également l'Institut de saint Thomas d'Aquin depuis 2016. Né en 1968 à Gornja Vrućica (Bosnie-Herzégovine), il a accompli ses études universitaires à Zagreb puis à l'Université de Fribourg (Suisse), où il a soutenu en 2003 sa thèse de doctorat en philosophie médiévale sous la direction du professeur Ruedi Imbach, avec la mention *summa cum laude*. Sa thèse portait sur le *De modis rerum* de Rémi de Florence, O.P. († 1319), dont il a établi l'édition critique accompagnée d'études doctrinales approfondies ; elle a été publiée aux éditions Academic Press Fribourg dans la collection *Dokimion*.

Ses recherches s'inscrivent principalement dans le domaine de la philosophie médiévale, avec une attention particulière à la métaphysique thomasiennne et à sa réception, à l'histoire de l'ordre dominicain, ainsi qu'aux rapports entre philosophie, théologie et éthique. Il est membre de la Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale (SIEPM) et a participé à de nombreux colloques internationaux en Europe et au-delà. Son œuvre comprend plusieurs monographies, des contributions à des ouvrages collectifs et des articles publiés dans des revues à comité de lecture, parmi lesquelles *Divus Thomas*, *Filozofska istraživanja*, *Obnovljeni život*, *Nova prisutnost* et *Diacovensia*. Il a en outre dirigé et codirigé plusieurs volumes collectifs et assuré la direction scientifique d'une édition croate des œuvres choisies de Thomas d'Aquin.

Sur le plan institutionnel, le professeur Gavrić a exercé les fonctions de prieur provincial de la Province dominicaine de Croatie de 2008 à 2016, après avoir été prieur du couvent dominicain Saint-Hyacinthe à Fribourg de 2003 à 2008. Il a également assumé la charge de vice-doyen de la Faculté de philosophie et des sciences des religions de l'Université de Zagreb de 2017 à 2022.

RÉSUMÉ

La question de savoir si Thomas d'Aquin a réfléchi philosophiquement sur l'histoire demeure largement débattue. Une opinion répandue, présente depuis la critique baconienne du XVII^e siècle et encore défendue au XX^e siècle par Gilson et Dempf, soutient que l'Aquinate, centré sur l'universel et l'immuable, serait dépourvu de tout sens de l'histoire. La présente dissertation conteste cette opinion. Son objectif est de reconstruire systématiquement l'enseignement philosophique de Thomas d'Aquin sur l'histoire à partir des éléments dispersés dans l'ensemble de son corpus.

La méthode adoptée est celle de la reconstruction philosophique : identification des passages pertinents, analyse herméneutique dans leur contexte originel, synthèse selon la logique interne de la pensée thomasienne, et systématisation scientifique. La recherche s'articule en cinq chapitres. Le premier situe l'enseignement thomasien face aux grandes figures de la philosophie de l'histoire – Vico, Hegel, Marx, Dilthey, Herder – et montre que Thomas a, au moins partiellement, élaboré les mêmes questions avec une approche distincte. Le deuxième établit les fondements préliminaires : la connaissance historique effective de Thomas et sa conception métaphysique du temps. Le troisième, cœur de la démonstration, analyse les causalités naturelle, humaine et divine du devenir historique et leurs relations mutuelles. Le quatrième dégage les grandes étapes de l'histoire – création, gouvernement providentiel, fin ultime – en traitant en particulier de la question du progrès et de la régression. Le cinquième examine les limites et la portée de la connaissance philosophique de l'histoire, notamment la question des représentations cycliques et linéaires du temps.

Les résultats montrent que l'enseignement thomasien repose sur quatre affirmations : l'existence d'une histoire universelle intelligible ordonnée par la providence divine ; l'historicité réelle mais non constitutive de la nature humaine ; la réalité irréductible de la causalité humaine inscrite dans un ordre de causalités qui la fonde ; et la possibilité, mais aussi les limites, d'une connaissance philosophique du devenir historique. Thomas d'Aquin répond ainsi, selon une logique fondée sur la transcendance de l'être plutôt que sur l'immanence du devenir, aux questions que les philosophies modernes de l'histoire ont cru déceler comme des lacunes de sa pensée.

Mots-clés :

Thomas d'Aquin, philosophie de l'histoire, causalité, providence divine, temps, historicité, progrès, connaissance historique, cause première, cause seconde.

PROŠIRENI SAŽETAK na hrvatskom jeziku

Filozofski nauk Tome Akvinskog o povijesti

Cilj istraživanja

Svakom temeljitom čitatelju Tome Akvinskoga nameće se sljedeće pitanje: je li ovaj veliki skolastički mislilac XIII. stoljeća uopće filozofski promišljao o povijesti? Dugo je prevladavala tvrdnja, koja je i danas prisutna, da Toma – usmjeren prema univerzalnom i nepromjenjivom – nije imao smisla ni interesa za povijesna zbivanja. Ta tvrdnja ima dugu povijest. Njezine prve izričite filozofske temelje postavio je Francis Bacon u XVII. stoljeću, a u XX. su je stoljeću prihvatili i branili autori poput Étiennea Gilsona i Aloïsa Dempfa.

Cilj ove disertacije nije polemičko pobijanje te tvrdnje. Njezin je zadatak drukčiji i zahtjevniji: sustavno rekonstruirati filozofski nauk Tome Akvinskoga o povijesti polazeći od elemenata razasutih u njegovu korpusu od gotovo trideset osam tisuća stranica. Pritom Akvincu ne želimo pripisati disciplinu koja mu je strana niti ga proglasiti pretečom filozofije povijesti u modernom smislu. Namjera je u njegovu djelu pronaći, analizirati i sustavno povezati elemente koji čine koherentno, premda nesistematizirano, filozofsko promišljanje o povijesti.

Metoda

Metodološki pristup ove disertacije obuhvaća četiri koraka. Prvi je korak identifikacija relevantnih mjesta u Tominu korpusu: od izlaganja Aristotela i teoloških suma do prijepornih pitanja i biblijskih tumačenja, u kojima on izravno ili neizravno obrađuje teme koje bismo danas svrstali u filozofiju povijesti. Drugi korak obuhvaća hermeneutičku analizu tih mjesta unutar njihova izvornog konteksta. Treći je korak sinteza u skladu s unutarnjom logikom Tomine misli, dok četvrti donosi znanstvenu sistematizaciju koja otkriva strukturu njegova nauka o povijesti.

Ovakav pristup zahtijeva temeljno metodološko razlikovanje između legitimne rekonstrukcije i anakrone projekcije. Pripisivati Tomi moderne kategorije, poput hegelijanske dijalektike, marksističkog materijalizma ili Diltheyeve hermeneutike doživljaja, značilo bi iskriviti njegov nauk. S druge strane, metodološki je legitimno i plodno postaviti Tominu korpusu filozofska pitanja kasnijih mislilaca kako bismo ustanovili je li on ponudio drukčija rješenja.

1. poglavlje: Poteškoće problema

Prvo poglavlje ima dvostruku zadaću. S jedne strane prikazuje stanje istraživanja, odnosno argumente za i protiv koji su, od Bacona do Binottija i Torrella, izneseni o postojanju

filozofskoga promišljanja o povijesti u Tominu djelu. S druge strane ukratko predstavlja reprezentativne figure filozofije povijesti, Vica, Hegela, Marxa, Diltheya i Herdera, s komparativnom namjerom da pokaže kako je Toma barem djelomično razradio iste čimbenike i aspekte koje su i ti mislioci tematizirali, ali uz drukčiji pristup i filozofske zaključke.

Ključni je rezultat ovoga poglavlja identifikacija triju temeljnih tvrdnji humanističkih filozofija povijesti koje predstavljaju prešutan izazov Tominu nauku. Prva tvrdi da ne postoji univerzalna povijest jer filozofija može proučavati samo posebne povijesti kultura i civilizacija bez razumljiva jedinstva. Druga smatra da je čovjek bitno povijesno biće, produkt svoga vremena i sredine, bez stabilne naravi koja bi prethodila njegovu postajanju. Treća navodi da je ljudska uzročnost jedina dovoljna za objašnjenje tijeka povijesti, čime se svako pozivanje na božansku uzročnost metodološki isključuje. Na te tri tvrdnje sljedeća poglavlja pružaju jasan Tomin odgovor.

2. poglavlje: Preliminarna pitanja: Tomin odnos prema povijesti i vremenu

Filozofsko promišljanje o povijesti ne zahtijeva detaljno poznavanje historiografije, ali pretpostavlja barem određenu bliskost s povijesnom građom, kritičku svijest o izvorima i temeljit metafizički pojam vremena. Ovo poglavlje pokazuje da Toma Akvinski zadovoljava oba uvjeta.

Što se tiče povijesnoga znanja, Toma je poznavao izvore, vladao je kritičkim metodama i koristio se povijesnom građom u filozofskim i teološkim djelima. Tražio je autografe, uspoređivao prijevode, utvrđivao autentičnost tekstova, postavljao *status quaestionis* i istraživao *intentio auctoris*. Njegova hermeneutika biblijskoga teksta, a posebno naglasak na doslovnom ili povijesnom smislu, upućuje na to da stvarni događaji u vremenu nose razumljivo značenje koje se ne može svesti na alegoriju. Povijest za Tomu nije sirova građa koju treba nadići, već red zbilje s vlastitom dosljednošću i spoznajnom vrijednošću.

Kada je riječ o metafizičkom pojmu vremena, Tomina analiza otkriva tri elementa odlučujuća za filozofsko promišljanje o povijesti. Prvo, vrijeme je realno, kontinuirano i mjerljivo; ono nije iluzija niti ravnodušno protjecanje, nego objektivna mjera kretanja materijalnih zbilja. Drugo, vrijeme više dovodi do propadanja nego do nastajanja, tako da samo svrhovitost djelatnoga uzroka daje bivanju smisao i pravac. Bez svrhe vrijeme je tek raspadanje. Treće, vrijeme postoji samo u odnosu prema vječnosti koja ga obuhvaća i mjeri, a da joj ono samo ne pripada. Vremeniti svijet stoga ima strukturu usmjerenoga putovanja, a ne slijepoga procesa. Na tim

trima postavkama: realnosti vremena, ovisnosti napretka o svrhovitosti djelatnoga uzroka i podređenosti vremena vječnosti, otvara se pitanje uzroka koji pokreću tijek povijesti.

3. poglavlje: Uzroci povijesti

Ovo je poglavlje srž disertacije. Analizom prirodnih, ljudskih i božanskih uzroka povijesnoga zbivanja pokazuje se da Toma Akvinski raspolaže naukom o povijesnoj uzročnosti koji je istovremeno složen i uređen.

Prirodna uzročnost, koja obuhvaća nebeska tijela, živa bića i njihova kretanja, predstavlja trajno tlo na kojemu se odvija povijest. Ona je realna i tvori okvir svakoga povijesnoga događaja, ali nije dovoljna da objasni povijest u njezinoj specifično ljudskoj dimenziji. Upravo ta nemogućnost pružanja potpunog objašnjenja otvara pitanje ljudske uzročnosti.

Ljudska proizvodna, etička, ekonomska i politička uzročnost uvodi u povijest dimenziju razmišljanja, slobodnoga izbora i moralne odgovornosti. U tome leži specifična postojanost ljudske povijesnosti, metafizički utemeljena u spoju duše i tijela te u naravnoj usmjerenosti volje prema univerzalnom dobru. Čovjek je slobodan, to jest uzrok samoga sebe u svojim kretanjima i sudovima, jer je obdaren slobodnom voljom. Ta sloboda ne znači neovisnost o redu uzroka koji je nadilaze, nego potvrđuje da je čovjek stvarni i nesvodivi uzrok njemu vlastitih povijesnih učinaka.

Uzročnost duhovnih supstancija i napose božanska uzročnost upotpunjuju ovaj red, a da ga pritom ne razaraju. Ključno je razlikovanje između prvoga uzroka i drugotnih uzroka; oni ne pripadaju istoj kategoriji pa njihovo djelovanje u istom učinku nije puko zbrajanje, nego uređena podređenost. Povijesni se učinci ljudskoga djelovanja mogu u cijelosti pripisati slobodi drugotnih uzroka i u cijelosti se mogu pripisati božanskoj providnosti, i to ne prema proporcionalnoj podjeli, nego prema dvama uzročnim načinima koji su nesvodivi jedan na drugi.

Poglavljje se zaključuje analizom odnosa između različitih vrsta uzročnosti. Toma uspostavlja hijerarhiju koja nije mehanička nego analogna: svaki uzrok djeluje na vlastiti način: nužno ili kontingentno, slobodno ili po naravi. Božanska providnost, upravo zato što je univerzalna uzročnost bitka, ne nameće nužnost onomu što je po svojoj naravi kontingentno.

4. poglavlje: Velika razdoblja povijesti

Četvrto poglavlje razrađuje ono što bi se kod Tome Akvinskoga moglo nazvati filozofijom povijesnih epoha. Razlikuju se tri temeljne etape: stvaranje, providnosno upravljanje i krajnja sreća.

Stvaranje je apsolutni početak koji uvodi vrijeme i uspostavlja poredak svemira. Pritom nije riječ samo o teološkom iskazu. Toma pokazuje da se nužnost stvaranja može i filozofski utemeljiti jer svaka dvojna mogućnost u uređenju svemira upućuje na apsolutnu volju Stvoritelja kao jedini dostatan razlog.

Providnosno upravljanje čini osnovu povijesnoga tijeka. Ono poštuje dosljednost drugotnih uzroka, ali ih istovremeno usmjerava prema cilju koji ih nadilazi. Pitanje napretka i nazadovanja, koje Toma obrađuje u spoznajnoj, moralnoj i političkoj dimenziji, otkriva da on istovremeno priznaje realnost napretka i njegovu unutarnju krhkost. Napredak je realan u filozofskoj spoznaji, jer kasniji mislioci nadograđuju otkrića svojih prethodnika, kao i u političkim institucijama, gdje prirodni zakon dozrijeva u pisano pravo, a ono u složenije ustanove. No taj napredak uvijek ugrožavaju slabljenje ljubavi i zahlađenje volje. U povijesti ne postoji ni automatski napredak ni neizbježan pad. Umjesto toga vlada napetost između svrhe koju povijest dobiva od svoga Stvoritelja i slobodnoga odgovora ili odbijanja ljudskih uzroka koji tu svrhu ostvaruju ili razaraju.

Konačna sreća, kao treća i završna etapa, predstavlja krajnju svrhu kojoj je podređeno cjelokupno povijesno zbivanje. To je svrha koja nadilazi vrijeme i koji ljudska narav priželjkuje, ali ga ne može doseći vlastitim snagama. Upravo taj filozofski paradoks naravne želje za nadnaravnom svrhom daje Tominoj viziji povijesti linearnu i usmjerenu strukturu, nesvodivu na antičke cikluse ili hegelovsku dijalektiku.

5. poglavlje: Kritički osvrt na filozofsku spoznaju povijesti

Peto je poglavlje epistemološke naravi. Ono postavlja pitanje: što filozofija doista može spoznati o povijesti? Koliko daleko seže ta spoznaja i gdje su njezine granice?

Spoznaja pojedinačnih stvari, što je nužan uvjet svake povijesne spoznaje, suočava se s temeljnom strukturom ljudskoga uma. Um ne doseže ono pojedinačno na izravan i neposredan način, već refleksivno: povratkom na vlastite čine i na osjetilne slike koje su im potpora. Filozofska je spoznaja povijesti stoga realna, ali nepotpuna. Ona može zahvatiti univerzalne uzroke zbivanja, velike etape i trajne strukture, ali ne može s dokaznom izvjesnošću doseći slučajne događaje u njihovoj neponovljivosti.

Odavde proizlazi posebna metodološka važnost argumenta prikladnosti (*argumentum convenientiae*). Kada strogi dokaz nije moguć – što je u filozofiji povijesti čest slučaj – Toma ne odustaje. On traži razloge prikladnosti koji, iako nemaju snagu nužnoga dokaza, ipak omogućuju određeno razumijevanje nenužnoga. To je Akvinčev način filozofske spoznaje povijesti u onim njezinim dijelovima koji su nesvodivi na nužnost.

Razmatranje cikličkih i linearnih predodžbi vremena pokazuje da Toma izrijekom odbacuje ideju vječnoga vraćanja istoga. Uskrsnuće mrtvih, neopoziva jedinstvenost utjelovljenja i posljednji sud nameću povijesti usmjerenu strukturu koja se ne može zatvoriti u sebe. Krug i pravac za Tomu nisu ravnopravne figure. Prevladava pravac: izlazak iz Boga (*exitus*) i povratak Bogu (*reditus*) – ali ne prema automatskoj dijalektici, nego prema slobodnoj odgovornosti svakoga ljudskog uzroka unutar providnosnoga poretka.

Zaključne napomene

Na kraju ovoga istraživanja moguće je formulirati kako bi izgledala filozofija povijesti Tome Akvinskoga kada bi bila sustavno izložena. Ona bi počivala na četiri temeljne tvrdnje. Prvo, postoji razumljiva univerzalna povijest čije jedinstvo ne proizlazi iz imanentne ideje ni iz dijalektike proturječnosti, nego iz usmjerenosti svih stvari prema transcendentnoj svrsi po božanskoj providnosti. Drugo, čovjek je u svom konkretnom bivanju povijesno biće, ali je njegova narav stabilna, a njegova svrha nadilazi vremenito postojanje. Treće, ljudska je uzročnost realna, nesvodiva i dostatna za objašnjenje njoj vlastitih povijesnih učinaka, ali ona pripada redu uzroka koji je utemeljuje, a ne razara, i kojemu ona nije vrhunac. Četvrto, filozofska je spoznaja povijesti moguća, ali ograničena: ona može zahvatiti trajne uzroke i strukture zbivanja, no ne i nenužne događaje u njihovoj pojedinačnosti. Stoga ona prihvaća da se tamo gdje strogi dokaz nije moguć postupa argumentima prikladnosti.

Ove četiri tvrdnje odgovaraju na tri teze humanističkih filozofija povijesti ustanovljene u prvome poglavlju i ujedno ih nadilaze. One pokazuju da Toma Akvinski nije zanemario pitanja za koja su moderni mislioci držali da nedostaju u njegovu nauku. On je na njih odgovorio, ali prema logici utemeljenoj na transcendenciji bitka, a ne na imanenciji postajanja.

Toma Akvinski ostavlja u baštinu pouku koja nadilazi samo pitanje filozofije povijesti. Suočivši njegov nauk s filozofijama koje apsolutiziraju imanenciju – bilo da je riječ o hegelovskom Duhu, marksističkoj materiji ili dilthejevskom subjektu – te nasuprot skepticizmima koji odbacuju svaku razumljivost bivanja, može se reći da on s vedrinom koju može utemeljiti samo metafizika bitka ustraje u tvrdnji da je povijest realna, da su njezini uzroci spoznatljivi, da je

usmjerena prema svojoj svrsi te da čovjek, premda povijestan u svojem postojanju, nije rob svoga vremena. A možda je upravo to ono što suvremena misao treba iznova otkriti.

Ključne riječi:

Toma Akvinski, filozofija povijesti, uzročnost, božanska providnost, vrijeme, povijesnost, napredak, povijesna spoznaja, prvi uzrok, drugotni uzrok.

EXTENDED SUMMARY in English

Thomas Aquinas' Philosophical Teaching on History

Aim of the Research

Does Thomas Aquinas have a philosophy of history? This question may seem surprising. A widespread opinion – present since at least Francis Bacon's critique in the 17th century and still defended in the 20th century by authors as significant as Étienne Gilson and Aloïs Dempf – holds that Aquinas, focused as he was on the universal and the immutable, had no philosophical interest in historical becoming. His enormous corpus contains no treatise on history, nor does he define history as an autonomous object of inquiry. At first glance, he appears to confine it to a simple *narratio rei gestae* – a narrative of accomplished facts, devoid of demonstrative value in the Aristotelian sense.

The present dissertation contests this view. Its aim is not to attribute to Aquinas a discipline foreign to him, nor to claim for him the anachronistic title of "philosopher of history." Its goal is more modest and, precisely for that reason, more rigorous: to systematically reconstruct, according to the internal logic of Aquinas's thought, the philosophical elements of a reflection on historical becoming that are scattered throughout his entire corpus. The hypothesis guiding this research is that the absence of formal thematization does not imply the absence of reflection. These two concepts are distinct, and a careful reading of Aquinas reveals a coherent, albeit unsystematized, philosophical account of history.

Method

The methodological approach adopted here consists of four steps. The first is the identification of relevant passages within the Aquinas's corpus – including commentaries on Aristotle, theological *summae*, disputed questions, and biblical commentaries – where questions pertaining to what we would today call a philosophy of history are treated, directly or indirectly. The second is the hermeneutical analysis of these passages within their original context, determining their precise meaning without importing modern categories. The third is a synthesis of these isolated meanings according to the internal logic of Thomas's thought. The fourth is a scientific systematization that reveals the structure of Aquinas's teaching on history.

This approach requires a fundamental methodological distinction between legitimate reconstruction and anachronistic projection. To attribute Hegelian dialectics, Marxist materialism, or Dilthey's hermeneutics of lived experience to Aquinas would be to distort his

thought. However, it is methodologically legitimate and philosophically fruitful to address his corpus with philosophical questions formulated by later thinkers in order to determine whether he offered alternative solutions to those same problems.

Chapter 1 – Difficulties of the Problem

The first chapter has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it presents the state of the research: the arguments that have been advanced from Bacon to Binotti and Torrell, both for and against the existence of philosophical reflection on history in Aquinas's work. On the other hand, it offers a selective survey of the key figures in the philosophy of history, including Vico, Hegel, Marx, Dilthey, and Herder, with a precise comparative aim: to show that Aquinas had already, at least partially, addressed the same factors and aspects that these thinkers thematized, but with a different approach and different philosophical conclusions.

The central result of this chapter is the identification of three fundamental claims of humanist philosophies of history that constitute an implicit challenge to Aquinas's position. The first claim is that there is no universal history, as philosophy can only study particular histories of cultures and civilizations without their totality forming an intelligible unity. The second holds that man is essentially a historical being, a product of his time and environment, without a stable nature that would precede or transcend his becoming. The third states that human causality alone is sufficient to account for the course of history, whereby any reference to divine causality is methodologically excluded. To these three claims, the subsequent chapters provide an articulated Aquinas's response.

Chapter 2 – Preliminary Questions: Aquinas's Relation to History and to Time

Philosophical reflection on history does not require detailed knowledge of historiography. It presupposes, however, at least a certain familiarity with historical material, a critical awareness of sources, and a rigorous metaphysical concept of time. This chapter shows that Thomas Aquinas satisfies both conditions.

With respect to historical knowledge, Aquinas was far from indifferent to history; he knew the sources, mastered critical methods, and exploited historical data in his philosophical and theological works. He sought autographs, compared translations, established the authenticity of texts, set out the *status quaestionis*, and sought the *intentio auctoris*. His hermeneutics of the biblical text, particularly the primacy he accords to the literal or historical sense, implies that real events in time bear an intelligible significance that is irreducible to allegory. History for

Aquinas is not raw material to be transcended, but an order of reality with its own consistency and cognitive value.

With respect to time, the analysis of Aquinas's work reveals three elements decisive for philosophical reflection on history. First, time is real, continuous and measurable; it is not an illusion or an indifferent flux, but the objective measure of the movement of material realities. Second, time produces more corruption than generation, and only the finality of the agent confers meaning and direction on becoming. Without purpose, time is merely disintegration. Third, time exists only in its relation to eternity, which encompasses and measures it without belonging to it. The temporal world thus has the structure of an oriented itinerary, not a blind process. On these three acquisitions – the reality of time, the dependence of progress on the finality of the agent and the subordination of time to eternity – the question of the causes that drive the course of history is opened.

Chapter 3 – The Causes of History

This chapter constitutes the heart of the dissertation. By analysing the natural, human, and divine causes of historical becoming, it shows that Thomas Aquinas possesses a doctrine of historical causalities that is at once complex and ordered.

Natural causality, encompassing celestial bodies, living beings, and their movements, constitutes the permanent ground on which history unfolds. It is real and constitutive of the framework within which every historical event takes place. It is not sufficient, however, to account for history in its properly human dimension. Its explanatory insufficiency opens the question of human agency.

Human causality – whether productive, ethical, economic, or political – introduces into history the dimension of deliberation, free choice, and moral responsibility. It is here that the specific consistency of human historicity resides, metaphysically grounded in the composition of soul and body and in the natural orientation of the will towards the universal good. Man is free, being the cause of himself in his movements and in his judgment, because he is endowed with free will. This freedom does not mean independence from the order of causes that surpasses it; it means, however, that man is a genuine and irreducible cause of the historical effects that are properly his own.

The causality of spiritual substances and, above all, divine causality complete this order without destroying it. The key lies in the distinction between the first cause and secondary causes. Since they do not belong to the same category, their conjunction in one and the same effect is not an

addition but an ordered subordination. The historical effects of human actions are entirely attributable to the freedom of secondary agents and entirely attributable to divine providence – not according to a proportional division, but according to two causal modes irreducible to one another.

The chapter concludes with an analysis of the relations between the different kinds of causality. Aquinas establishes a hierarchy that is not mechanical but analogical: each cause acts according to its own proper mode, whether necessarily or contingently, freely or by nature. Divine providence, precisely because it is the universal causality of being (*esse*), does not impose necessity on what is by nature contingent.

Chapter 4 – The Great Stages of History

The fourth chapter develops what might be called Aquinas’s philosophy of historical epochs. Three fundamental stages are distinguished: creation, providential governance, and final happiness.

Creation is the absolute first beginning that introduces time and establishes the order of the universe. This is not merely a theological assertion. Aquinas shows that the necessity of creation can be philosophically grounded, as every reason for a particular disposition of the universe points to the absolute will of the Creator as the only sufficient reason.

Providential governance constitutes the warp and weft of the course of history. It respects the consistency of secondary causes while orienting them toward a goal that transcends them. The question of progress and regression, treated in its cognitive, moral, and political dimensions, reveals that Aquinas simultaneously maintains the reality of progress and its intrinsic fragility. Progress is real in philosophical knowledge, as later thinkers build on what earlier thinkers discovered, and in political institutions, where natural law matures into written law, and law into more complex institutions. However, this progress is always threatened by the weakening of charity and the cooling of the will. There is no automatic progress in history, nor is there an inevitable decline. Instead, there is a tension between the purpose history receives from its Creator and the free response – or refusal – of the human causes that realize or undermine it.

Final happiness, the third and concluding stage, represents the ultimate end toward which all historical becoming is ordered. This is an end that transcends time and which human nature desires without being able to reach by its own powers. It is precisely this philosophical paradox – a natural desire for a supernatural end – that gives Aquinas’s vision of history its linear and oriented structure, irreducible both to Greek cycles and to Hegelian dialectics.

Chapter 5 – Critical Reflection on the Philosophical Knowledge of History

The fifth chapter is epistemological. It asks: what can philosophy know about history? How far does that knowledge extend, and where are its limits?

The knowledge of singular things, as a necessary condition of all historical knowledge, comes up against the fundamental structure of human intelligence. The intellect does not reach the particular directly and immediately; rather, it reaches it reflexively, by returning to its own acts and to the sensible images that support them. Philosophical knowledge of history is therefore real but incomplete. It can grasp the universal causes of becoming, the great stages, and the permanent structures, but it cannot reach contingent events in their singularity with demonstrative certainty.

Hence the special methodological importance of the argument of fittingness (*argumentum convenientiae*). When demonstration is not possible – which is frequently the case in the philosophy of history – Aquinas does not fall silent or abdicate. He seeks reasons of fittingness which, though they do not achieve the necessity of proof, nonetheless provide a degree of intelligibility to the contingent. This is the specific mode of philosophical knowledge of history in those aspects that are irreducible to necessity.

The examination of cyclical and linear representations of time shows that Aquinas explicitly rejects the eternal recurrence of the same things. The resurrection of the dead, the irrevocable singularity of the Incarnation, and the last judgment impose on history an oriented structure that cannot close upon itself. The circle and the straight line are not equivalent figures for Aquinas. The line prevails: the going forth from God (*exitus*) and the return to God (*reditus*), not according to an automatic dialectic, but according to the free response of each human cause within the providential order.

Conclusions

At the end of this inquiry, it is possible to formulate what the philosophy of history of Thomas Aquinas would be if it were systematically set forth. It would rest on four fundamental claims.

First, there exists an intelligible universal history whose unity derives neither from an immanent idea nor from a dialectic of contradictions, but from the ordination of all things to a transcendent end by divine providence. Second, man is a historical being in his concrete existence, but his nature is stable and his finality transcends temporal becoming; human historicity is real without being constitutive of his deepest being. Third, human causality is real, irreducible, and sufficient

to account for the historical effects that are properly its own, yet it inscribes itself within an order of causalities that founds it without suppressing it. Fourth, the philosophical knowledge of history is possible but limited: it can grasp the permanent causes and structures of becoming, but not contingent events in their singularity, and it must accept that where demonstration is impossible, it proceeds by arguments of fittingness.

These four claims respond, term by term, to the three theses of humanist philosophies of history identified in the first chapter, and they go beyond them. They show that Aquinas did not ignore the questions that modernity believed it had detected as lacunae in his thought. He answered them, but according to a logic grounded in the transcendence of being (*esse*) rather than in the immanence of becoming.

Thomas Aquinas bequeaths to us a lesson that goes beyond the question of the philosophy of history. Faced with philosophies that absolutize immanence – whether the Hegelian Spirit, Marxist matter, or the Diltheyan subject – and faced with skepticisms that renounce all intelligibility of becoming, he maintains that history is real, its causes are knowable, and its end is oriented. He affirms with serenity that man, though historical in his existence, is not the slave of his time. Perhaps that is precisely what contemporary thought most needs to rediscover.

Keywords:

Thomas Aquinas, philosophy of history, causality, divine providence, time, historicity, progress, historical knowledge, first cause, secondary cause.