DOING THEOLOGY AT THE MEDIEVAL UNIVERSITY: THOMAS AQUINAS, JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, AND PETER AURIOL IN DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT: *In this paper, I dwell on a thirteenth and fourteenth-century debate on what it meant to do theology in the Middle Ages. The paper stresses the plurality of approaches to theology, as they evolved in the setting of the medieval university. The first section presents this setting by considering the most important institutional and intellectual framework, viz., the medieval course of studies, the offices at the university, and the Aristotelian theory of science. As I argue in the second and third sections, the debate on what it meant to do theology in the later Middle Ages was heavily indebted to both the university setting and to Aristotle's ideas on science. By presenting the accounts of Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and Peter Auriol, I would like to suggest that even within its rather rigid boundaries late medieval theology came to a theory of theology that was potentially pluralistic. This debate and its preliminary outcome, therefore, might serve as a reflection of a cross-cultural exchange.*

In the history of Christianity, we associate only few periods with a specific region or continent. This, however, is the case with the Middle Ages, for at least in its technical or historiographic sense we apply this term to the years, say, between 500 and 1550 AD, as they went down on the European continent. Whereas for the same years in other areas we may use terms like Post-Classical or Pre-Columbian Era, the Middle Ages always seem to connote Europe. It may therefore seem odd to include a paper on theology in the Latin Middle Ages in this essay collection that originates in an academic exchange between the Universities of Ghana, Legon and Basel. For the sake of argument, one could indeed think that my text should better be published in a European rather than in an African journal.

Yet, a reflection on what it meant to learn and teach theology at the medieval university may also function as a bridge connecting

Basel with Legon, Africa with Europe.[37] As I hope will be clear from the following remarks, theologians at the medieval university dwelt on problems similar to those in contemporary theology. Although they thought about them in quite a different way and came to quite different solutions compared to our contemporaries, these intellectuals were equally concerned about the relation between theology and science on the one hand as well as theology and faith on the other. Today we contextualize these problems and our theologies in a completely different way, but the fundamental trouble is the same: How can theology, science, and faith – whatever these terms may mean co-exist in such a way that none is simply reduced to another and that each has a well-contoured profile? It is this question that connects both Basel and Legon theologies with the Middle Ages, and perhaps with one another as well.

One reason for which I think that medieval thought may have this function is its equidistance to our respective cultural, theological, and intellectual backgrounds. What we look at when we study medieval theology is a sufficiently circumscribed complex, which as such allows us to identify the origins, the developments, and the consequences of virtually all topics that the medieval debated. Contemporary theologies from both continents of course make different claims of heritage with regard to medieval thought, but if we take the Middle Ages in their own right, they are indeed equidistant from our way of thinking. Accordingly, I do not want to argue for a privileged access to medieval thought by any contemporary strand of theology. The scope of my article is therefore limited to the introduction of a 'third player'. In itself, this player is not impartial or neutral at all. At the same time however, it is equally alien to our respective backgrounds.

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[37] I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the overwhelming hospitality and 'esprit de corps' that I had the privilege to experience during our stay at the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana (Legon) in January 2015. The lively exchange and discussions with students and colleagues were stimulating for my work, just as they were but the beginning of which will hopefully be an opportunity for collaboration in the future.

Hence, the intellectual bridge between Legon and Basel that I am inviting the reader to walk is made of ideas from a past that has no prejudice to its future, that is to say, our present. I will construct this bridge in three steps. First, I shall provide some institutional and intellectual background, namely on the medieval university and the Aristotelian framework of theology. In the second part I will introduce Thomas Aquinas' (c. 1225-1274) and John Duns Scotus' (c. 1266-1308) view of the relation between theology, science, and faith, while in my third part I will present Peter Auriol's (c. 1280-1322) model of "declarative theology" that, seen against the background of his predecessors, marks a strong alternative within the medieval debate. The article, therefore, is meant to provide an introduction not only to the debate on theology at the medieval university but also to its diversity in the 13th and 14th centuries.

I. Acquiring Intellectual Habits: The Medieval University and its Aristotelian Framework

Contrarily to my remarks about the discontinuity between the Middle Ages and Modernity, the title of this paper seemingly suggests a strong continuity between medieval and our times. Even more than this, as academics we are heirs to a medieval invention that since its beginnings bore the name "universitas". However, while we commonly use this term as referring to the universality of knowledge that is taught at a university, the medieval gave it a social, legal, and political meaning. The first "universitates" were founded in Bologna in nowadays Italy, notably not by the masters but by the students of jurisprudence. It was the students who formed "universitates" as corporate bodies by way of which they could fight their masters for certain 'cultural' liberties at school. Thus, in Bologna the term "universitas" denoted an exclusive community of students. At the university of Paris, which was founded shortly after Bologna at the turn towards the 13th century, the same term referred to an inclusive community of students and masters. The "universitas magistrorum et scolarium Parisiensium", i.e. the community of masters and students in Paris,

served as a vehicle for obtaining legal privileges and political autonomy from the Bishop of Paris. Further down the Middle Ages, it was the Parisian rather than the Bolognese model that gained influence all over the continent.[38]

Theology as an academic discipline was invented in this university environment.[39] Students could enrol in an institutionalized curriculum and were awarded with academic degrees. As the idea of the medieval university suggests, there was a clear-cut distinction between students and masters. Yet, especially in what we may call systematic theology, the teaching was largely done by bachelors who had not yet acquired the formal requirement for becoming masters.[40] The medieval bachelors of theology were accomplished by academics. It was not at all uncommon that when they received their Bachelor's degree they had already spent circa 14 years at the university – the first seven years as students of philosophy at the Faculty of Arts and the following seven years at the Faculty of Theology.[41] After this long period of learning and teaching, only a few obtained the licence to teach and subsequently had the chance to become masters at an

[38] For an excellent introduction to the beginnings and the medieval evolvement of the university, see Jacques Verger, "The Universities and Scholasticism," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, vol. V: c. 1198–c. 1300,* ed. David Abulafia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 256-276.

[39] This, of course, does not mean that before the rise of the universities there was no theology. Rather, it is fair to say that theology in the sense of an intellectual investigation into the contents of Christian faith is as old as Christianity itself. For a concise survey of the origin of the term "theologia/θεολογία" see Ferdinand Kattenbusch, "Die Entstehung einer christlichen Theologie. Zur Geschichte der Ausdrücke θεολογία, θεολογεῖν, θεολόγος," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 11 (1930), 161-205.

[40] Thus, we have to carefully distinguish between university degrees and offices. A *baccalarius sententiarius* could in fact act as teacher even before he obtained his full degree (*baccalarius formatus*) and the licence to teach as a "regent master"; for more on this, see Palémon Glorieux, "L'enseignement au moyen-âge. Techniques et méthodes en usage à la Faculté de Théologie de Paris, au XIII^{e} siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 43 (1968), 94-100.

[41] A full-blown medieval university consisted of four faculties. At the entrance level everyone had to study the liberal arts (grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) before being admitted to the "higher faculties" of jurisprudence, medicine, or theology.

advanced age. The invention of the university thus entailed the invention of the professional academic. Being a professional, therefore, is a very important dimension of 'doing theology' at the medieval university.

The way the medievals reflected on 'doing theology' had a straightforward connection to this institutional background. First, as I have just mentioned, they conceived themselves as professional theologians. Thus, when they reflected on their occupation, they did not do this just incidentally but with the firm objective to provide a theoretical foundation of their own profession.[42] But more importantly, they derived the theoretical framework of their self-understanding from their own education in the liberal arts. The liberal arts had a long-standing history that went all the way back to the Classical Age, but with the dawn of the universities they were mainly taught according to the newly translated works of Aristotle, who became such a pre-eminent authority that he was simply called *the* philosopher ("philosophus"), without further qualification.[43] Doing theology at the medieval university, therefore, meant to teach and learn a kind of theology that was dealing with Aristotle; be it that the pagan philosopher was 'christianized', or that he served as the point of departure for theologies with different orientations (e.g. towards Neo-Platonism or Augustine).

The passages of Aristotelian philosophy that are most relevant for our topic originate in the 'philosopher's' theory of science and in his philosophical psychology. Rather than being a system of

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[42] The importance of this topic is emphasized by its position in one of the main literary genres of medieval theology, namely in the commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, where it habitually appears at the very beginning. For more on this, see Florian Wöller, *Theologie und Wissenschaft bei Petrus Aureoli. Ein scholastischer Entwurf aus dem frühen 14. Jahrhundert,* Texte und Studien zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 6-13.

[43] The significance of the astonishing arrival of Aristotle at the medieval university is difficult to overestimate. For a concise overview of the effect that Aristotelianism had on medieval philosophy see Paul Vincent Spade, "Medieval Philosophy", *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 2009, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ medieval-philosophy/ (15 July 2015), and the references given there.

thought or set of ideas, science, according to Aristotle, is defined by a certain method of demonstration or proof and constitutes a quality of the soul. Regarding the latter, Aristotle's basic assumption is that any given substance can take on certain qualities. Take, for example, as a kettle stands on a burning stove and it becomes hot. Aristotle thought that, strictly speaking, it is not the kettle that becomes hot, but rather that the quality of 'being hot' attaches itself to the kettle. Therefore, the kettle itself (the kettle insofar it is nothing else than a kettle) does not undergo any change while being heated or cooled down again. All what happens is that the qualities of 'hot' and 'cold' attach to and detach from the kettle. Roughly the same holds true for science as a quality of the soul. Science or (to use a less improper translation of the Greek *episteme*) scientific knowledge attaches itself to the soul. However, if we compare the intellect's acquisition of science with the kettle's warming, an important difference emerges, for according to Aristotle, the kettle may lose the quality of being hot, while the intellect retains its knowledge. The intellect might of course lose its knowledge as well, but this does not seem to happen just as easily and quickly as with the qualities of the kettle. Therefore, knowledge can be said to stick to the intellect and thus dispose of it in a less ephemeral manner.[44]

This 'sticky' quality is a habit, Aristotle tells us.[45] Just as a simple quality, a habit is ontologically different from the subject, in which it inheres; but unlike a simple quality a habit disposes the subject for certain acts. Take, for example, the virtue of justice, which, according to Aristotle, is a habit just like knowledge. The soul acquires the habit of justice by executing just acts and is thus disposed to further acts of justice. Hence, from a just judge, who has passed just sentences, we may not only expect that she has the virtue of justice, but also that she will pass further just sentences. Generally speaking, therefore, the intellect acquires a habit *P*

[44] See Aristotle, *Categoriae* 8 8b26-35.
[45] See Aristotle, *Metaphysica* V 20 1022b10-11.

through acts of *P* and is thus disposed for further acts of the same kind *P*. In the case of knowledge, this then means that a human being does not know anything right from the start, but only by virtue of the acquired habit of science he or she may be called a scientist; and as such we may expect further science from her or him. To the medievals, this basic theory of science as a habit of the intellect seemed to perfectly capture what was going at the university. Medieval academics kept acquiring knowledge for a long time, before they started to teach ever more; which is to say that they performed acts of knowledge that flew forth from the habit which they had acquired through other acts of the same kind.

In another way, however, medieval thinkers struggled with this concept of science, for not all disciplines at the medieval university complied with what Aristotle had taught about the proper acts of the scientific habit. He had defined the act of knowledge as the insight into the truth of a proposition by way of demonstration, so that scientific knowledge relies on the proof that a proposition is *necessarily* true. Now, the paramount device for providing this crucial condition of knowledge was the syllogism. Take, for example, the proposition 'All Greeks are mortal'. To know this proposition, according to Aristotle, means to hold it true on the grounds of the two premises 'All Greeks are human beings' and 'All human beings are mortal'. From these premises the necessary truth of the conclusion 'All Greeks are mortal' can be inferred, precisely because the premises themselves have already been proven to be true. Scientific knowledge, therefore, rests on previous knowledge to which the same condition of necessary truth applies.[46]

To sum up, the Aristotelian concept of science was founded on two assumptions. Firstly, on a psychological level the 'philosopher' taught that science was a habit.

[46] For a more thorough presentation of Aristotle's account of science, see Robin Smith, "Aristotle's Logic, 6. Demonstrations and Demonstrative Sciences," *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy,* 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ aristotle-logic/ (20 August 2015).

To this theory the medieval academics were generally sympathetic, as they thought that it nicely reflected their own experience, not least at the university. Secondly, Aristotle defined an act of knowledge as the insight into the necessary truth of a proposition by way of demonstration. Medieval thinkers embraced this idea wholeheartedly, although they struggled with applying it to some of their academic disciplines. More precisely, it was the requirement of any proper knowledge to be inferred from previous knowledge that was required to be equally proven to be true. This problem stirred the medieval debate on the concept of science. With regard to the reflection on what it meant to do theology at the medieval university, this assumption was perhaps the heaviest but also the most productive burden.

II. Theology between Knowledge and Faith: The Accounts of Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) and John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308)

From what I have said thus far, the fundamental problems of the debate on the scientific character of theology quickly become apparent. The medieval academics reflected on their own occupation or profession (as I may stress) at the university in the Aristotelian term of habits. During their studies they assumed to acquire one or many of such habits that comply in different degrees with the notion of scientific knowledge. The medievals believed that a mathematician, for example, had the scientific habit of mathematics, just as a grammarian was assumed to have the scientific habit of grammar.

One highly problematic case, however, was theology. Given that to have a scientific habit meant to have insight into the necessary truth of a proposition by way of demonstration, virtually every medieval theologian felt that there was a fundamental disagreement between theology and science. Nobody in the Middle Ages would have maintained, for example, that a proposition such as ‘God is one and triune’ could be proven to be necessarily true on the grounds of previous knowledge. Many argued that theology rests on revelation, as it might be found in Scripture or in the teachings of the Church, rather than on any sort of knowledge that

is proven to be necessarily true. The debates on these questions were controversial. At times, medieval theologians accused their colleagues who belonged to the school of thought that theology was more than more a particularly informed variation of faith to be, the ruin of the Church. Whereas those who argued for a properly scientific habit of theology were blamed for academic elitism.[47] This is not the place to recapitulate the whole history of the problem.[48] Yet, by briefly presenting the most prominent arguments for and against a properly scientific character of theology in the Middle Ages, I hope to trace out the field of the debate.

The classical account of theology as a science goes back to Thomas Aquinas. The 'Angelic Doctor' argued that theology indeed complies with the notion of science, because, according to Thomas, it relies on 'previous knowledge', from which the necessary truth of a theological proposition can be inferred. From this, however, it does not follow that theologians can actually perform the acts of gaining insight into the 'previous' truths, because in this life the ordinary theologian remains in a state of partial ignorance. To him, many propositions in theology remain obscure and unintelligible. Therefore, theology is not a complete science, as it were, but rather a "subaltern" science; which is to say that *within* theology the human intellect does not gain insight into the necessary truth of all the 'previous knowledge' on which theology is founded.[49]

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[47] One such polemical controversy dragged on for about 20 years at the end of the thirteenth century. For more on this, see Wöller, *Theologie*, 80-93, and Katherine König-Pralong, *Le bon usage des savoirs. Scolastique, philosophie et politique culturelle*, Études de philosophie médiévale 98 (Paris: Vrin, 2011), 81-90 and 111-123.

[48] For the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, an attempt has recently been made by Francesco Fiorentino, *Conoscenza scientifica e teologia fra XIII e XIV secolo*, Biblioteca filosofica di Quaestio 19 (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2014).

[49] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, quaestio 1, articulus 2, co., ed. Leonina 4 (Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1888), 9a: "Respondeo dicendum sacram doctrinam esse scientiam. Sed sciendum est quod duplex est scientiarum genus. Quaedam enim sunt, quae procedunt ex principiis notis lumine naturali intellectus, sicut arithmetica, geometria, et huiusmodi. Quaedam vero sunt, quae procedunt ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, sicut perspectiva procedit ex principiis notificatis per geometriam, et musica ex principiis per arithmeticam notis". Aquinas' *Opera omnia*, according to

> It is in this second way that sacred doctrine is a science. For it proceeds from first principles known by the higher science, viz., the science had by God and the blessed in heaven. So just as music takes on faith the principles handed down to it by arithmetic, so too sacred doctrine takes on faith the principles revealed to it by God.[50]

There is nothing mysterious about the subaltern character of theology, Thomas argues. For we may find other disciplines that are equally subaltern to a 'higher' science. Take the example of music, which, according to medieval standards, is about numerical proportions. Now, in order for us to have insight into the truth of a numerical proportion, we must first gain some previous knowledge, e.g. about numbers. This, however, does not pertain to the science of music itself, but rather to arithmetic. Thus, *within* the science of music we take this previous knowledge for granted, which is tantamount to saying that we take over the principles of music from arithmetic. Therefore, music is subaltern to arithmetic.

Now, the same applies to theology, Thomas tells us. Theology, as we are able to do it, rests on 'previous knowledge' that is proven to be necessarily true, not *within* theology but by higher sciences, namely by the sciences of those who are able to gain insight into the necessary truth of propositions such as 'God is one and triune'. These are the sciences of God and (with some qualifications) the blessed souls that are assumed to directly dwell on God's essence.[51] Once the human mind does theology, it accepts the principles of theology from these higher sciences, as they are

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the currently best editions, are availabe through the *Corpus Thomisticum*, ed. Enrique Alarcón, http://www.corpus thomisticum.org/ iopera.html (15 July 2015).

[50] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, quaestio 1, articulus 2, co., translated by Alfred J. Freddoso, http://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/Part% 201/ st1-ques01.pdf, p. 3 (15 July 2015); ed. Leonina 4 (as note 13), 9a-b: "Et hoc modo sacra doctrina est scientia, quia procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae scilicet est scientia Dei et beatorum. Unde sicut musica credit principia tradita sibi ab arithmetico, ita doctrina sacra credit principia revelata sibi a Deo."

[51] In scholastic theology, the science of the blessed souls (*scientia beatorum*) functions as a threshold for theological evidence. What the blessed cognize by way of their direct access to the divine truths must not be attained by the human mind, which, despite of

handed down in Scripture or the creed. Therefore, theology is subaltern to the sciences of God and the blessed. For his vision of theology as a subaltern science, Thomas referred to Aristotle, who indeed had introduced the idea of subalternating (i.e. the 'higher') and subaltern (i.e. the 'lower') sciences.[52] However, many medieval thinkers felt that Aquinas' application of this idea to theology was rather mysterious; their main reason being that Thomas talked about "faith" by way of which theology accepts its 'previous knowledge'.[53]

The difficulty was that faith was largely thought to be incompatible with science. For, again according to Aristotle, faith (*pistis* or "fides") is a different habit and thus a different way of holding a proposition to be true. For example, if I have faith in the truth of the proposition 'All Greeks are mortal', I firmly believe the proposition to be true, without having proven its truth, which is to say that I do not have insight into its necessary truth on the grounds of previous knowledge. On account of this definition of faith it is clear why the medievals held faith and science as incompatible; for if the truth of a given proposition is founded on demonstration, the intellect knows this truth (or holds it in the habit of science), whereas if a truth is *not* founded on demonstration, the intellect believes this truth (or holds it in the habit of faith).[54] Many of Aquinas' readers were troubled by this

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its amazing capabilities, may in no way trespass this boundary. For more on this, see Wöller, *Theologie*, 83-85.

[52] An excellent study of the subalternation of sciences in Aristotle, Aquinas, and others may be found in Stephen J. Livesey, *Theology and Science in the 14th Century: Three Questions on the Unity and Subalternation of the Sciences from John of Reading's Commentary on the* Sentences. *Introduction and Critical Edition,* Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 25 (Brill: Leiden, 1989), 20-53.

[53] In another text, Aquinas is even more explicit by arguing that the human mind receives the principles of theology through "infused faith" ("… in quantum per fidem nobis infusam inheremus ipsi prime veritati propter se ipsam," Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boetium de trinitate,* quaestio 2, articulus 2, co., ed. Leonina 50 (Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1992), 95b; see this text online in the *Corpus Thomisticum* [as note 13]).

[54] Aristotle deals with *pistis* and *episteme* in *De anima* III 3 428a18-24 and *Topica* I 1 100b19-21

problem, and among them was the Franciscan philosopher and theologian John Duns Scotus.[55]

Scotus argued for a clear distinction between science, faith, and theology. Against Aquinas, he pointed out that because knowledge rests upon previous knowledge, the intellect cannot know a conclusion by way of inferring it from a premise that it only believes to be true, which seemed to have been Aquinas' assumption. According to Scotus, from a premise held in the habit of faith, only such a conclusion can be reached that is equally held in the habit of faith and not in the habit of science. However, this is not what happens in theology, Scotus thinks. A theologian begins a syllogism from a premise that she holds in the habit of faith, as for example from what she finds in Scripture. Then, by "mixing in philosophy (which without any doubt is of great value, especially if it is metaphysics)", she adduces further arguments to the passage from Scripture and from there reaches her conclusion, which she does not hold in a habit of science but in a habit "different from faith".[56] Doing theology, therefore, neither means to know nor to believe in any strict sense; rather, it is something "different from faith".[57]

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[55] It is important to stress that Scotus was neither the first nor the only theologian to criticise Aquinas' idea of the subalternation of theology. For an excellent survey, see Camille Dumont, *La théologie comme science chez les Scolastiques du treizième siècle. Histoire de la question "utrum theologia sit scientia" de 1230 à 1320* (Louvain, 1962).

[56] John Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, distinctio 24, quaestio unica, ed. Vaticana 21 (Vatican Press: Vatican City, 2004), 148, nr. 61: "Si autem exponit per alias scientias, ad quod ultimo devenerunt doctores immiscendo philosophiam sacrae Scripturae (quod sine dubio multum valet, et praecipue metaphysicalia), ut veritas Scripturae … intelligatur, tunc dico quod conclusio non habet maiorem certitudinem quam altera praemissarum quae minus certa est … Ideo nec conclusio erit demonstrativa, generans scientiam, quamvis possit generare habitum alium a fide." For the context of this passage, see Wöller, *Theologie*, 269-272.

[57] For an excellent introduction to theology according to Scotus, cf. Stephen F. Brown, "Scotus' Method in Theology," in *Methodologica ad mentem Joannis Duns Scoti* (PAA Edizioni Antonianum: Rome, 1995), I: 229-243.

III. Potentially Pluralistic: Peter Auriol's (c. 1280-1322) Account of Declarative Theology

There are two main upshots in Scotus' idea of what it meant to do theology at the medieval university. Firstly, when he said that theologians make use of philosophy and, especially, metaphysics, Scotus argued for a specific integration of philosophy and theology to the extent that theology benefits from philosophy. At the same time, however, he also emphasized the distinction between these two disciplines, when he claimed that theology was distinct from science (which, I take it, includes philosophy) and to a lesser degree from faith. This leads to Scotus' second point: theology has its own dignity, which, in medieval terms, is to say that it is a proper habit. According to Scotus, the theological habit is compatible with faith, so that the intellect can believe the truth of a proposition *and* hold it in the habit of theology.[58]

Peter Auriol, another Franciscan theologian, remarked that all this is nicely said. However, to state that in theology the intellect acquires a habit "that is not science and yet is different from faith is insufficient … because it is not made clear what that habit is."[59] For if in the habit of science, the intellect gains insight into the truth of a proposition by way of demonstration, whereas in the habit of faith the intellect assents to such truth without any proof, it is hard to see any alternative or middle ground where the habit of theology fits in. According to Auriol, Scotus' definition lacked precision, above all as what regarded the acts of the proper habit of theology. Auriol's own definition of the theological habit was this:

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[58] See John Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, distinctio 24, quaestio unica, (as note 20), p. 149, nr. 64.

[59] Peter Auriol, *Scriptum in primum Sententiarum*, prologue, sect. 1, ed. Buytaert, Eligius M. (The Franciscan Institute: St. Bonaventure, NY, 1952), p. 153, nr. 74. For more on Peter Auriol, see the *Peter Auriol Homepage* (administrated by Russell L. Friedman and Florian Wöller), http//www.peterauriol.net (20 August 2015) as well as Friedman, Russell L., "Peter Auriol", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2009, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/auriol/ (20 August 2015).

> [The habit of theology] is only declarative, for every habit that makes something to be better imagined by the intellect without producing any assent is declarative.[60]

Here Auriol tells us what the intellect, having acquired the habit of theology, does and what it does not do. It "imagines something better" and does not "assent" to it. Hence, in contrast to the acts of the habits of science and faith, in theology the intellect does not affirm the truth of a proposition (be it with or without a demonstration), but instead it has a better understanding or "imagination" of this truth. Now, this does not mean that theology does not care for truth. Rather, according to Auriol, before the intellect 'does' theology it already has the habit of faith and thus believes the contents of faith to be true. Then theology takes over, by way of which the intellect only comes to a better understanding of these truths that it formerly believed to be true and therefore assented to them. Thus, through theology the assent to truths of faith neither increases nor decreases, but rather stays the same as in the habit of faith. The 'understanding without assent' is what Auriol calls the act of the declarative habit of theology.[61]

On the face of it, Auriol seems to only emend and extend Scotus' account of theology. Like Scotus, Auriol, by arguing for the compatibility of faith and theology, drew theology closer to faith and farther from science. Furthermore, by claiming that theology presupposes faith and adds further 'declarations', Auriol made his account of declarative theology sound very similar to what Scotus had said about the role of philosophy within theology. But while it may be correct to acknowledge this similarity, Auriol went much further. He fundamentally transformed the way in which medieval theologians thought about their profession. I shall make this the conclusion of my paper.

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[60] Peter Auriol, *Scriptum*, prologue, sect. 1 (as note 23), p. 112: "… huiusmodi habitus est tantummodo declarativus. Omnis enim habitus, qui facti aliquid imaginari melius per intellectum absque omni adhaesione

[61] For a much more detailed analysis of Auriol's declarative theology, cf. Wöller, *Theologie*, 277-288.

As I have said above, Peter Auriol's declarative habit of theology bears the characteristic that it does not generate any form of assent. This is hard to understand, of course, for Auriol seems to tell us that we can think about a proposition without assenting to it, be it in an affirmative or negative manner. But this is not exactly what Auriol has in mind, for according to him, the assent comes 'before' theology, viz., through the habit of faith. Thus, Auriol can say that if you ask theologians "why they believe [in an article of faith], they will not answer that they believe because of theological arguments but because of faith."[62] Therefore, theology does not influence faith in any direct manner. By explaining the content of faith (not by demonstrating), theology only makes the intellect better understand and "imagine", so that from theology alone, no human intellect will ever be brought to assent or faith.

If we now look back on Aquinas' and Scotus' positions, the transformation of theology in Auriol becomes clearer. According to Aquinas, the human mind gains knowledge through theology, which is to say that it assents to theological conclusions and holds them to be necessarily true on account of the respective demonstrations. According this account of theology, the intellect cannot but assent, as it is coerced to affirm a proposition on the grounds of its necessary truth. Scotus, on the other hand, seemed to hold that by doing theology the intellect comes to a more elaborate habit of faith, as it were. He argued for a model of theology that was yet different from faith but considered conclusions from such premises that were held in the habit of faith. Accordingly, doing theology according to Scotus means to corroborate and intensify faith.

Peter Auriol's model of a declarative habit dissociates theology from both faith and science. His claim that in contrast to faith and

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[62] Peter Auriol, *Scriptum in primum Sententiarum*, distinctio 48, articulus 3, eds. Schabel, Chris/Wöller, Florian (http://www.peterauriol.net/auriol-pdf/SCR-48.pdf, version 1 of October 1, 2014), 16, ll. 793-4: "si tales amotis dubiis interrogentur cur credunt, semper respondebunt quod non propter huiusmodi rationes sed propter ipsam fidem."

science, theology does not entail assent may seem as a degradation of theology, because doing this kind of theology does not lead to the intellect holding the truth of a proposition with any greater certitude than without theology. But what I think is more important to note is that declarative theology opens up for more than just one truth; be it, as in Aquinas, a necessary truth or, as in Scotus, a firmly fixed truth of faith. Declarative theology is indeed potentially pluralistic, as it opens up for different explanations and declarations of the contents of faith. Even if these explanations turn out to be dissonant and perhaps incompatible, in declarative theology there is room for debate without the risk of diminishing or increasing the certitude of religious belief.

This brings us back to where we started, for my main objective with this paper was to show the multifaceted way in which late medieval theologians thought about their own profession. Yet, I also hope to have made a point for Peter Auriol's potentially pluralistic model of theology. Now, I do not want to suggest declarative theology as a viable account for contemporary debate but rather leave it in the Middle Ages and thus consider it in its own right. However, I also think that taking into account the medieval debates may prove to be useful for an ongoing exchange between Legon and Basel, Ghana and Switzerland.