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Concluding remarks

It should be clear from the above that Hervaeus' work on second intentions addresses a number of interesting philosophical and theological questions which he does not perfunctorily answer in the same way as Thomas Aquinas. Hervaeus has his own unique approach to the issue of intentions and he had much influence on proponents and opponents of later Thomistic thought. In calling Hervaeus simply a Thomist we would not be doing justice to the complexity and originality of his work.

Intentions were under discussion before Hervaeus, but the growing importance of the subject at the time is reflected in the fact that Hervaeus was the first to write a separate, substantial work about second (and first) intentions in which he took great pains not simply to show their exact nature, describing subtle differences in our ways of using the word 'intention' and interpreting the concept, but primarily to show in what sense the second intention is the proper subject of logic. Hervaeus' theory about intentions was a reaction to the traditional, epistemological approach of intentions and intelligible species in the work of Thomas Aquinas and contemporary thinkers such as Radulphus Brito, and his theory was both defended and challenged. He had a strong influence on later thinkers, not only on his near-contemporaries such as Peter Auriol, Francisco de Prato and Ockham, but also on the Thomists of the period from the early 14th century until the Renaissance. It is probably to Hervaeus that we owe the term '*intentionalitas*', but again, the interpretation of this term is not obvious. For modern readers, intentionality would be a relation of knower to known object; for Hervaeus, intentionality is a relation of the known object to the knowing intellect.¹ Such differences must be clearly understood in order to avoid misunderstandings when we compare medieval and modern theories about relations in general and the relation of intentionality in particular.

Universals and intentionality are still under discussion in modern philosophy; this discussion is relevant to any modern theory of cognition

¹ As he repeatedly states in *De secundis intentionibus*. See tables 1 and 2.

or metaphysics, for instance John Searle's. Searle's way of dealing with the past as regards theories of intentionality is 'simply to ignore it, partly out of ignorance of most of the traditional writings on Intentionality and partly out of the conviction that my only hope of resolving the worries which led me into this study in the first place lay in the relentless pursuit of my own investigations.'² Though there is no disputing the validity of pursuing one's own investigations, I cannot agree with the whole of this approach; it can be very profitable to know why some theories were rejected, and to evaluate to what extent these rejections are based on assumptions that would still apply in (one's own) modern thought. Of course one must realize that it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, not to apply modern interpretations to ancient or medieval concepts, if only subconsciously. Whether we wish to avoid this or not – and some interpreters do feel that we have every right to read the past with modern eyes – we should at least be aware of the issue. Nor should we forget how much the meanings and connotations of identical terms can differ between thinkers from different time periods as well as between contemporaries.

To fully appreciate this, it is important not to rely entirely on the handbooks and thereby running the risk of repeating old errors over and over again. To name just one: many historians of philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries have classified theories and thinkers as realistic, nominalistic or conceptualistic. This leads to a rather lazy and anachronistic labelling of theories on the basis of the terminology used, and ignores the more or less subtle differences. It also obscures the fact that thinkers can have 'realist' ideas on certain subjects and 'conceptualist' ideas on others. If ancient and medieval theories on intentionality deserve our attention, as many scholars feel they do, let us at least attempt to be as 'objective' as possible and examine these theories as they were written down by their inventors, with every possible consideration for their chronological, geographical and ideological context.

Commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*, initially no more than an obligatory part of the theology curriculum, had in Hervaeus' time come to serve as the vehicle for original theological and philosophical ideas, which were often elaborated by their authors at a later stage. Unfortunately, of many of these commentaries we possess only manuscripts, or sometimes incunabula, and the same applies to many other medieval

2 *Intentionality*, ix.

works on philosophy. This means that we have only limited knowledge of a substantial part of the writings of many medieval authors, which compromises the very basis of our judgements about the value of their theories.

Fortunately, the 20th century saw a revival of interest in medieval thought, not only regarding theology but also logic and semantics, not only by major thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, but also by less well-known figures such as Hervaeus Natalis. A study of the past requires easy accessibility of its sources. A critical edition of Hervaeus' *De secundis intentionibus* may offer scholars of 14th-century philosophy easier access to his thoughts. With this critical edition of the first two parts of Hervaeus' work, I hope to have offered a modest contribution to such accessibility.

