

# Theology intertwines with science - Part 2

By C.S. Morrissey

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*This is the second part of a two-part article. Please see the July 25 "B.C. Catholic," or [bccatholic.ca](http://bccatholic.ca), for Part 1.*

Our culture sets up a false opposition between science and theology. I, as a Thomist, a follower of St. Thomas Aquinas, sum this problem up in two words: "science, interrupted." What I mean is that this false way of thinking tears apart the unity of all the sciences. St. Thomas, however, considers theology to be a science.

In our modern culture, "ideoscopic science" (the knowledge possessed by a specialized few) is what is exalted most of all. We are told not to trust our common sense or everyday experience. Scientists are allegedly the highest authorities.

If you think I am exaggerating, I'm not. Just look at our use of the word "science." It has been hijacked to now refer only to modern science ("ideoscopic science"). Our culture thinks of experimental science as the only real science.

But, as we learned in Part 1, the traditional conception is that theology and philosophy (divine and human wisdom) are sciences too. They are doctrines, teachable things, real wisdoms: true sciences too.

I'm not exaggerating about the problem with this way of thinking. Look at what you think of when you use the word "doctrine." Do you think of science? Well, you should.

St. Thomas did!

This is why Thomism is so important. It provides us with the right way of beginning to think about our current intellectual and cultural problems. Let me leave you with a

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**All truth  
is God's  
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picture:

Divine science is the large circle that contains all. Think of the rich soil of a global garden from which everything grows. All truth is God's truth. Within that garden lies a much smaller circle of human wisdom ("cenoscopic science"): what anyone, in principle, can know from common experience, by using their own natural human powers. It is like the stem at the centre of

a flower.

Where is modern science ("ideoscopic science") in this picture? It is wrong to oppose it to common human wisdom. Think instead of cenoscopic science as the stem, and ideoscopic science as the petals. The petals presuppose the stem, and they can only grow on it.

(Put another way: yes, Galileo's telescope extends our knowledge; but it presupposes that we have bodies and brains and eyes to look through the telescope with! Ideoscopic science thus presupposes and cannot be founded on anything other than ideoscopic experience.)

Thus all human knowledge, cenoscopic or ideoscopic, is organically linked. Modern science is a beautiful flower. It extends the stem of human science into what it was meant to blossom into.

Because all truth is God's truth, modern science enriches whatever theology can doctrinally outline for us. At Catholic universities we are invited to deepen our knowledge of God's beautiful garden. I say we should take St. Thomas Aquinas as our gardener guide, as we cultivate our knowledge, because he knows best how philosophy and theology are sciences too.

I leave you with one of his sayings, showing you how to use the flower stem (human wisdom's "cenoscopic" knowledge

of nature) to think about the connection between the soil (theology's "divine science" of revealed knowledge) and the flower's blossoms (modern "ideoscopic" science):

"If anyone says that something is sin because it offends God, the thinking falls short. For God has so created human beings that it is impossible for us to offend God except by acting contrary to what our nature prescribes as good for us" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, 122, 2).

In other words, a specialized knowledge of nature can ultimately never be at odds with the science that it presupposes (and upon which its truth must grow): namely, the wisdom that is both human and divine.

Or to put it briefly: if you really think about it, what God says always makes supreme sense.

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*This is Part 2 of a summary of a talk he gave June 19 at the "Catholic After Hours" Church history seminar series at the Irish Heather Pub in Gastown. □*

