PREFACE

At the end of my inaugural address *Medieval Reflections on Truth*, delivered at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam on November 9, 1984, I committed myself, as is not unusual for a new professor, to a rather ambitious program. I announced that the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals would be "the subject of my research over the coming years." The doctrine has indeed engaged me intensively throughout the last decade, and I have never regretted my choice. Inquiry into its history and systematic dimensions has confirmed my conviction that such investigation is of signal importance for the understanding of medieval philosophy. The present study concerns that part of my inquiry devoted to the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

My work has profited from the support and encouragement of several persons and institutions. I would like first to express my gratitude to the Philosophy Department of the Vrije Universiteit for the ample room it gave to my research and for the stimulating discussions of our Research Group. The first chapters of this book were written during my tenure as Fellow of the Institute of Philosophy at the Catholic University of Louvain (September 1992-February 1993). The matchless facilities and ambience of the oldest university in the Low Countries make it one of my favourite places to study. From the days of my dissertation studies in Louvain onwards, I have enjoyed the friendship of Carlos Steel, the current President of the Institute. I thank him for a critical interest in my work spanning several years.

I was provided with opportunities, on a number of occasions, to present papers on parts of my research for discussion with colleagues. These exchanges were extremely enriching; they opened new perspectives and acquainted me with different approaches. I would like to mention (in chronological order) my lectures at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto (Walter H. Principe and Stephen Dumont), Cornell University (Norman Kretzmann), the University of Notre Dame (Mark D. Jordan), the University of Leiden (Proclus Symposium in honour of Lambert Marie de Rijk), the Catholic University of Louvain (Cardinal Mercier Lectures), the Boston Colloquium of Philosophy (Stephen
Brown), the University of Iowa (Scott MacDonald), the University of Cologne (Albert Zimmermann), the University of Bochum (Theo Kobusch) and the University of Bonn (Ludger Honnefelder). One of the most attractive elements of the study of medieval philosophy is its international character—in this respect it resembles the scholarly community in the Middle Ages.

Since February 1, 1994 I have had the privilege of serving as Director of the Thomas Institute at the University of Cologne. From the very outset, I have been able to rely on the unremitting assistance of Andreas Speer. The final preparation of this study owes much to the faculty and graduate students of the Institute. Bernd Roggenkamp and Martin Pickavé finalized the bibliography. Martin Tracey improved the English text with great precision. I would especially like to thank Nicola Senger, for her great efforts in editing the manuscript, and Wouter Goris, who made the final corrections and composed the indices.

Grateful acknowledgement of financial support should finally be made to the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), whose munificent grant made the completion of the English translation of this study possible. For a substantial part of the translation, I could once more appeal to Donald Morton, who has translated several of my previous studies. I am grateful to him for this long-standing collaboration.

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